

# The Civil-Military Divide in a Weary and Partisan Nation

A Monograph

by

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## Abstract

The Civil-Military Divide in a Weary and Partisan Nation, by COL Kristopher H. Howell, 50 pages.

Effective use of military power by a democratic government requires healthy relations between the people, their elected civilian leaders, and those in the military. This relationship enables and informs decisions that affect all aspects of military policy. Despite this—or perhaps because of it—civil-military relations have been a point of friction within American political culture since the US Constitution's adoption in 1789.

At present, a generation of Americans has grown to adulthood largely untouched by the effects of a continuously committed military. The myriad distractions of the digital information age, combined with a polarized domestic political environment, have resulted in a generation of Americans wholly ignorant of their military's basic organization, function, and role in supporting strategic national objectives. Military and national leadership must take deliberate steps to engage and inform this generation and forge an appropriate relationship between society and the military or risk increased instability for both the military and the republic.

This monograph assesses the divide in the context of a war-weary and distracted nation disconnected from its military and long-term strategic direction. It ultimately provides recommendations to reconnect the military to both the American people and a much-needed grand strategy.

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## Abbreviations

ADMF	Active Duty Master Files from the Defense Manpower Data Center (used by RAND to analyze military pay)
AVF	All-Volunteer Force
GOFO	General Officer/Flag Officer (one-star military rank or higher)
GWOT	The Global War on Terror
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force (NATO force in Afghanistan)
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (also known as: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL); <i>Daesch</i> (anglicized form of the Arabic acronym))
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
RMC	Regular Military Compensation (comprised of basic pay, basic allowance for housing, basic allowance for subsistence, and the federal tax advantages of untaxed allowances)
TISS	Triangle Institute for Strategic Studies

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## Introduction: The Civil-Military Divide

From the time of the Revolution to the present, U.S. civil-military relations essentially have constituted a bargain among the aforementioned parties—the people, the civil government, and the military establishment—concerning the allocation of prerogatives and responsibilities between the government and the military.

—Mackubin Thomas Owens, *What Military Officers Need to Know About Civil-Military Relations*

Effective use of military power by a democratic government requires healthy relations between the people, their elected civilian leaders, and those in the military. This relationship enables and informs decisions that affect all aspects of military policy. Despite this—or perhaps because of it—civil-military relations have been a point of friction within American political culture since the adoption of the US Constitution in 1789. A military theoretically formed of all people and not of a separate warrior elite ensured a shared understanding of the cost of committing the military instrument of power. In practice, however, the nation has usually seen a sharp divide between those who serve in uniform and those who govern. The two sides of the civil-military relationship include three broad subdivisions. In its most basic form, the general population and their elected representatives who lead the nation and exercise authority over the military comprise one side. Active-duty commissioned officer leadership of the military comprises the military side. Together, these three groups comprise the focus of study for the bulk of research and writing on civil-military relations.

The so-called “civil-military gap” or “civil-military divide” most typically refers to a divergence between each side’s understanding of where civil authority—the development of strategy and the decision to employ military force—ends and military authority—control over doctrine, organization, institutional governance, and tactical deployment of military forces—begins. This divergence manifested itself in myriad ways throughout American history, but several identifiable commonalities link the various historical periods of heightened civil-military tensions. The divide often manifests in a lack of trust between civilian and military leaders

regarding military policy. That distrust then starts either a constructive or destructive dialogue between the two sides. Typically, when the dialogue becomes destructive, deliberate action must be used to avoid lasting impairment to the civilian control tradition.

Although the dynamics of the civil-military relationship have remained consistent over time, the environment in which the relationship exists has evolved steadily and significantly. Nevertheless, the United States and its military have survived all previous periods of friction, even recovering after the fracturing of both the nation and its military during the United States Civil War. Now, however, an increasingly complex domestic political environment challenges that capacity to endure without detrimental effects to the nation's defense capacity.

The ever-expanding military implications from the strain of almost twenty years of persistent military conflict, combined with increasingly strident partisan domestic politics, affect the environment in which this relationship exists in ways not previously encountered. Unprecedented access to unprecedented quantities of information – with significant variation in quality and accuracy – is overwhelming each side's ability to engage in effective and appropriate dialogue, as nonpartisan discourse is drowned out by partisan demagoguery. As the nation grows increasingly polarized socially and politically, and divisive rhetoric becomes the norm, this monograph assesses this situation and presents steps the military must take to remain nonpartisan, decrease the current divide, and find a path back to healthy discourse and relations.

As the United States remains committed to the two-decade old Global War on Terror, a generation of Americans has grown to adulthood largely untouched by the effects of a continuously committed military, dulling any true understanding of the effects of a nation at war. The myriad distractions of the digital information age, combined with a polarized domestic political environment, have resulted in a generation of Americans wholly ignorant of their military's basic organization, function, and role in supporting strategic national objectives. Military and national leadership can no longer afford to ignore this problem; they must take deliberate steps to engage and inform this generation and forge an appropriate relationship

between society and the military or risk increased instability for both the military and the republic.

## Literature Review

Abundant scholarship exists on civil-military relations, most recently in the form of articles or peer-reviewed journal submissions. However, despite this recent surge in activity, much of the contemporary discussion of civil-military relations proposes no new theories, nor does it appropriately frame the relationship within the totality of contemporary American society. The majority of the information on this subject continues to frame the civil-military relationship using the theories first posited by Samuel Huntington in 1957 and then further developed by Morris Janowitz in 1960. Additionally, much of the material on this subject falls within three time periods: the first at the initiation of the Cold War; the second after the fall of the Soviet Union; and the third after the initiation of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). Remarkably, the 1998 Triangle Institute for Security Studies (TISS) survey remains the only comprehensive study on civil-military relations since the GWOT started, and most of the works discussed below rely on the data from that project.

This review illustrates Huntington's and Janowitz's enduring theories and the latest efforts to understand this relationship using two studies: The TISS research project of 1998 and the YouGov research project of 2013. These two studies provide much of the raw data behind civil-military relations analysis over the past thirty years, serving as critical primary source data for much of the contemporary analysis conducted by multiple authors. The TISS study informs both of the two most ambitious attempts at analysis in the last twenty-five years. First, Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn's 2001 *Soldiers and Civilians* analyzed multiple aspects of the civil-military relationship using detailed survey data and analysis informed by civilians (the general public), the civil elite (business and government leaders), and the military elite (field grade

officers).<sup>1</sup> Second, the YouGov study offered updated data supporting the analysis of civil-military relations in Kori Schake's and James Mattis' 2016 *Warriors and Citizens*.<sup>2</sup> The YouGov survey follows much the same format as the TISS study, but with updated metrics and modified selection criteria for participants. Compared with the TISS study, the YouGov survey attempts to show longitudinal change over the nearly fifteen years between the surveys. Finally, the military profession and the corresponding civilian leadership relationships are analyzed over time using works from William Skelton, Jason Dempsey, and Thomas Langston. These three authors detail the rise of military professionalism, situate that professionalism in a temporal context, and analyze how a professionalized military engaged with the civilian leaders during past periods of Civil-Military tensions.

## Two Key Theorists and One Challenger

Samuel Huntington published *The Soldier and the State* as the nation transitioned out of the Korean War and fully into the Cold War. Under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the nation struggled to understand the evolving strategic security environment and its requisite military functions and organization. Up to 1945, traditional American military policy eschewed a large standing army. The US Congress mobilized ground forces as needed and quickly demobilized them following conflict termination. However, the end of World War II forced a paradigm shift in United States military policy. Following World War II, the military enjoyed exceptionally high respect of the American people as it returned home victorious. The military was quickly demobilized to a concerning level and then just as quickly grown again for the Korean War. As the Korean War ended with President Dwight D. Eisenhower in office, the nation required a new approach to its standing military. The harsh lessons from rapid mobilizations and demobilizations

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Feaver and Richard H. Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001); Kori N. Schake and James N. Mattis, eds., *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military*, Hoover Institution Press (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Schake and Mattis, *Warriors & Citizens*, 14.

for two wars were fresh. The technical aspect of warfare was evolving quickly with new theories and weapons – specifically nuclear weapons and advancing aviation capability. There now existed a “cold” war with the Soviet Union, which, although it involved most of Europe, depended upon the United States while Europe was still recovering from World War II. And finally, the new liberal world order led by the United States securing trade routes and commodities around the world affected expanded relationships between the military, the state, and the world. The United States led the Western world, and to secure its interests and the new liberal world order it oversaw, required a large standing military during peacetime – a military historically unmatched in size and capability.<sup>3</sup>

This novel concept of security and the liberal world order drove Huntington to analyze the necessity, appropriate use of, and the relationship of the military to the people. Huntington attempted to describe an appropriate theory of civil-military relations to balance the nation’s trust with the concerns introduced by the large standing military. He attempted to balance traditional liberal ideology with the need to counter a real, and seemingly enduring threat from the Soviet Union. His book, *The Soldier and the State*, served as the first “effort to develop a way of looking at and thinking about civil-military relations, in short, a theoretical framework” to move the nation forward into the Cold War.<sup>4</sup> Huntington believed that a nation’s strategy depends on the civil-military relationship between the officer corps and the state.<sup>5</sup> The relationship between the officer corps and the state depends on the professionalism of both the officer corps and a democratic state’s elected leaders. However, the nature of the state’s control of the military institution became Huntington’s contribution to civil-military relations theory.

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<sup>3</sup> In-class discussion, Advanced Strategic Leadership Studies Program Lesson F504, "Theories of Civil-Military Relations," 2 November 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil–Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press., 1957), vii.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

This contribution centered on his idea of “objective civilian control” of the military. Objective control assumes that the statesman is an expert practitioner of diplomacy and policy-making in exactly the same sense that the military officer is an expert in the art and science of warfare. There is no jurisdictional overlap, unless the statesman provides an order which is illegal, immoral, or patently impossible. The military assumes expertise and broad strategic perspective on the statesman’s part and expects the same in return. Huntington refers to the army as “merely a machine in the hands of a superior will. It is passive to the exercise of other governmental functions.”<sup>6</sup> Huntington does not see the military officer as having a capacity beyond the science of warfare and states that the officer serves three roles to the statesman: representative of the military capacity and function to the state; advisor to the state on implications of courses of action from a military perspective; and an executive function to employ the military instrument on behalf of the state.<sup>7</sup> Objective civilian control limits the officer to these roles, and demands rigid subordination of these roles to the state. The statesman and the officer do not overlap in purpose or action, but instead, each element is compartmentalized and professionally serves its purpose.

This reductionist view of the military officer’s roles and actions may appease those concerned about a strong and capable large standing military. Suppose the military is an unthinking instrument alongside other instruments wielded by the skilled statesman. The military’s culture of professionalism ensures it serves in a nonpartisan and idealized role in perfect subordination to the state. In that case, there is minimal if any concern with this standing military. This idealized view of objective control predicated upon a passive and apolitical officer corps conflicts with reality, however. As stated earlier, Dwight D. Eisenhower was President and

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 72.

starting his second term during the writing of this book.<sup>8</sup> He was but one example of how a military officer could have developed political expertise during his career. The acknowledgment of the existence of the politically-skilled officer was one of the means by which Morris Janowitz countered Huntington's theory of objective civilian control as the key component of civil-military relations theory.

Janowitz wrote *The Professional Soldier* in much the same period as Huntington. His book, published in 1960, provided a more nuanced perspective on civil-military relations. Janowitz countered Huntington's cold, scientific perspective with a more pragmatic and flexible view of the relationship between an officer and the state – a theory where the soldier and the statesman work together through exchange of ideas and information in a formalized but interactive relationship. He offered that with the growth of the military profession's technical aspect, the officer would, by necessity of that technical complexity, interact politically to ensure the military's success in serving the state's needs. He also offered an organizational idea of the constabulary force to balance the state's security needs constrained by what he believed to be two opposing views of military culture: the absolutists and the pragmatists, which continue to influence policy over warfare today.<sup>9</sup> Absolutists believe that “the more complete the victory, the greater the possibility of achieving political goals. . . . There is no substitute for ‘total victory.’”<sup>10</sup> Countering the absolutists, pragmatists believe “warfare is but one instrument of international relations, along with ideological and economic struggle. The political objectives of warfare are gained by adapting the use or the threat of violence to the objectives to be achieved.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Robert E. Atkinson, Jr., *The Limits of Military Officers' Duty to Obey Civilian Orders: A Neo-Classical Perspective*: (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College Press, July 1, 2015), 16, accessed December 14, 2020, <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA621435>.

<sup>9</sup> Donald S. Travis, “Decoding Morris Janowitz: Limited War and Pragmatic Doctrine,” *Armed Forces & Society* 46, no. 1 (January 1, 2020): 70, accessed December 17, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X18760272>.

<sup>10</sup> Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960), 264.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*



Janowitz leaned heavily toward the pragmatic view of warfare and state policy. He saw the military officer as a critical component of the political process to inform and guide policy in coordination with the statesman. Janowitz described an improved interaction between the statesman and the officer, which allowed for better mutual understanding, enabling the development of good policy. This improved interaction can empower and inform legislators while preventing them from abdicating their responsibilities to the state.<sup>12</sup> This dialogue's added benefit also prevents the blind followership by the military officer, implicit in the Huntingtonian objective control concept.

Janowitz addressed the large standing military through the concept of a constabulary force. He described the military in this force as not just a tool ready to be used at the whim of the statesman, but as a force "continuously prepared to act . . . [seeking] viable international relations, rather than victory."<sup>13</sup> He advocated replacing traditional militaries with a "policing" force more appropriate to each side's Cold War hegemonic requirements in Europe and elsewhere. Finally, within the constabulary force, Janowitz acknowledged that the military officer will be politically engaged. As such, the military must ensure proper training in civilian supremacy and educate its officers in politico-military affairs.<sup>14</sup> This education should occur during the entirety of the officer's career from pre-commissioning to general officer development course in order to link the tactical to the strategic in tandem the officers' increasing rank and experience.

Huntington saw a separate group of military experts ready to apply their craft and expertise only at the statesman's guidance. Janowitz saw experts who work with the statesman in continuous interaction and engagement, both domestically and internationally. As the Soviet Union fell in 1991, followers of Huntington's and Janowitz' theories found themselves with a

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 357.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 418.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 426.

new question. Do civil-military relations evolve with the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, and if so, how?

Peter Feaver attempts to answer that question in his 2003 book *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations*. Contemplating events of 1989 through 2001, he observed, “. . . it is [now] possible to evaluate whether the United States prevailed *because* it followed Huntington’s prescription or *despite* ignoring his advice. The evidence strongly suggests that the latter is true, hence the need for an alternative explanation: agency theory.”<sup>15</sup> Feaver suggests that Huntington’s theory is not just obsolete due to strategic changes. He claims it is inadequate, suggesting a false dichotomy that a shift from American liberalism to military conservatism was necessary for success in the Cold War. “Huntington’s model of American civil-military relations made only two predictions: change or die.”<sup>16</sup> Rather than Huntington’s simple order-and-obey relationship, Feaver suggests a relationship more apropos to game theory. “Civil-military relations is a game of strategic interaction. The ‘players’ are civilian leaders and military agents.”<sup>17</sup> He ultimately develops this line of argument into an “agency theory of civil-military relations.” The civilian leaders are the principals giving orders and direction, and the agents under the principal’s control are the military. However, unlike Huntington’s theory of objective control, Feaver expects friction, with the adherence to orders occurring within a spectrum of obedience from working to shirking. Within this theory, Feaver focuses his efforts to explain the working and shirking options for the military. Essentially, they do as they are told and work, or they shirk – not doing the work as civilians direct.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 16, Emphasis carried over from original text.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

Within agency theory, the agent has options for action, just as does the principal for control. Feaver explains these options as follows: “Agency theory provides for four general patterns of civil-military relations: military working with nonintrusive monitoring by civilians, military working with intrusive monitoring by civilians, military shirking with nonintrusive monitoring by civilians, and military shirking with intrusive monitoring by civilians.”<sup>19</sup> This theory of options aligns much more closely to subjective control, the antithesis of Huntington’s objective control. It does align with portions of the Janowitzian theory of politically informed, yet nonpartisan, interaction. What Janowitz saw as continual engagement, a dialogue of sorts, Feaver sees as a transactional exchange of control and followership. If the agent acts as desired by the principal (works), the agent gains autonomy. Conversely, if the agent acts in their own interests instead of the principal’s (shirks), the agent loses autonomy.

Feaver sees periods of military adjustment as shirking under intrusive monitoring – for example, the “early post-Cold War friction in . . . civil-military relations.”<sup>20</sup> Agency theory’s ultimate goal is to illustrate that civil-military relations are not defined merely with false dichotomies. His is not the “coup/no-coup” or the “change-or-die” models mentioned earlier.<sup>21</sup> Feaver’s theory updates Janowitz’s arguments, and allows for a continuum of engagement and control. As Feaver sees it, this better explains not only the observations of Cold War civil-military relations, but this also provides an interaction theory to guide engagement in the post-9/11 world and beyond.

Although this book was published early in the GWOT era, Feaver’s agency theory remains applicable to the civil-military relationship that has evolved over the past eighteen years. Its “agency theory” provides a framework for bargaining engagement between the principle and the agents – a Janowitzian political sphere – still relevant today. Feaver suggests that this theory

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

is also only as good as the quality of both the civilian leader principal and the military leader agent.<sup>22</sup> The question of “quality” is pertinent at present and reflects Huntington’s theory of a division of professional capacity between the statesman and the military officer. Essentially, Feaver has developed a blended theory, with portions of each prior theorist, and provides a framework to analyze civil-military interactions.

## Civil-Military Relations and Interwar Adjustments

In his 2003 book *An Uneasy Balance*, Thomas S. Langston focused on the civil-military relationships and tensions following American conflicts – tensions which, when resolved effectively, establish political objectives and guide military organization and purpose. When resolved poorly or not at all, these tensions result in continued friction and an imbalance in strategic ends, ways, and means. Langston stated, “The issue is one of balance. In the aftermath of war, there is an inevitable sorting-out period when a new balance, encompassing both civilian and military conceptions of the usefulness of the armed forces, has to be negotiated.”<sup>23</sup> Langston later summarized this statement simply as “a balance between inward-looking reform and outward-looking service.”<sup>24</sup>

Langston analyzed post-war realignments using three elements: key events, reforms, and service. Key events are those post-conflict actions taken by both the military and civilian leaders that affect the nation and its people—good or bad. Reforms are those actions taken by or directed to the military to reform and reorient military forces for the post-conflict and future environments. Service is the nonwartime commodity provided to the nation by the military during this post-conflict period – this commodity is less related to security through armed capacity but is

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas S. Langston, *Uneasy Balance: Civil-Military Relations in Peacetime America since 1783* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 5.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 31.

instead more akin to peacetime services for the people that justify the continuation of a large standing force.

Langston assessed the following realignment periods as examples of successful realignments: post-Revolutionary War, post-War of 1812, and post-Spanish American War. He assessed the post-World War I and post-World War II periods as examples of poor realignments. Finally, he cited the post-Civil War and post-Vietnam War realignment periods as near-disasters – essentially total realignment failures. The two tables below succinctly illustrate Langston’s analysis on these periods:

Table 1. Postwar Realignments, 1783–1882

Era	Issues	Duration	Resolution	Consequences
Post–Revolutionary War	Fear of military vs. need for security	1783–1802	Small Professional army proves its usefulness at home, is supported by political consensus	Promotion of westward settlement and military competence
Post–War of 1812	Rationalization of the military establishment	1815–1833	Professional military is built up, broadens usefulness at home while preparing for future war	Promotion of national sentiment, democratic rule, and westward expansion; promotion of military competence
Post–Mexican War	Military needed out West; military preparedness feared in context of North/South divide	1848–1860	Professional military stays busy on frontier	Promotion of expansion; competence threatened because military preparedness is politicized
Post–Civil War	Military Reconstruction; how much service is too much?	1865–1882	Reconstruction fails for lack of public will; professionals turn inwards	Military failure in peace missions in the South; military reforms come late; military becomes entangled in partisan conflict

Source: Thomas Langston, *Uneasy Balance: Civil-Military Relations in Peacetime America Since 1783*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003, 8.

Table 2. Postwar Realignment 1898-Present.

<i>Table 2. Postwar Civil-Military Realignment, 1898–Present</i>				
Era	Issues	Duration	Resolution	Consequences
Post–War of 1898	Military reform vs. bureaucratic interests of traditional officer corps, imperial service for the military	1898–1913	Military professionalism increases; military supports US empire abroad	Military usefulness extended as nation develops new external interests
Post–WWI	Military preparations and “citizenship” initiatives vs. the “return to normalcy”	1919–1940	Rejection of war retards war preparedness	Military penetrates public consciousness, studies the requirements of future war, but lacks resources for war preparedness
Post–WWII	Duties of a world power vs. desire for a return to peaceable prosperity	1945–1950	Tensions over military policy resolved only in rush back to war	Beginning of postwar international order and U.S. world leadership, but a near disaster in Korea
Post–Vietnam War	Can the military be used? Can it fight? Who decides when and where?	1973–1984	All Volunteer, Force at home; Vietnam Syndrome abroad; military elite develops an elitist military doctrine	U.S. military weakness challenged around the world; military professionals take charge of military policy
Post–Cold War	Unrivalled military power, for what purpose?	1989–Present	In process	?

Source: Thomas Langston, *Uneasy Balance: Civil-Military Relations in Peacetime America Since 1783*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003, 9-10.

Langston's perspective on appropriate actions between civil and military elements informed this paper when comparing past periods of increased civil-military tensions to present periods analyzed for this monograph.

## Civil-Military Relations Research Studies

There has been little formal analysis of the metrics supporting many of the civil-military relations assumptions throughout the literature. Seeing that many of the hypotheses made on the civil-military gap depended upon subjective analysis, two comprehensive studies provided data to confirm or deny many of the ideas in the past few decades. Two key academic works and one RAND study analyze the data gathered to provide objective analysis on mostly subjective arguments.

The first of these is 2001's *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security*. Editors Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn sought to provide some objective observations regarding the civil-military relationship following the events of the 1990s – the end of the Cold War, the Gulf War's success, and the Clinton Administration's friction with the military. Their book analyzed both sides of the divide or "gap" as referenced in this text.

Regarding the intent of this book, its editors stated:

Civilian and military surveys have not asked important questions regarding the civil-military relationship itself, nor has data been gathered that would allow us to explore the attitudes of each group toward the other. Therefore, the editors . . . organized the 'Project on the Gap Between the Military and Civilian Society' . . . sponsored by the Triangle Institute for Security Studies (TISS) to answer four questions. What is the nature or character of the civil-military gap today? What factors shape it? Does the gap matter for military effectiveness and civil-military cooperation? What if anything, can and should policymakers do about the gap?<sup>25</sup>

Over thirteen chapters, the editors apply the four questions to twelve studies in order to generate the relevant survey data – four comparative analyses of civilian and military opinion, four analyses of civil-military gaps over time, and four analyses of the effects of the gaps against civil-

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<sup>25</sup> Feaver and Kohn, *Soldiers and Civilians*, 5–6.



military effectiveness and cooperation.<sup>26</sup> Ultimately, the editors concluded that “no problem [they] identified [was] so acute or urgent as to require a drastic response. But troubling trends must be addressed . . . by some immediate, if modest, measures, and by serious consideration of more systemic changes.”<sup>27</sup> *Soldiers and Civilians* provided a period-appropriate analysis of civil-military relations in the United States on the cusp of the Global War on Terror. In this paper, *Soldiers and Civilians* serves as the basis for much of the analysis of change and differences over the past thirty years.

The next study, RAND’s 2007 *The Civil-Military Gap in the United States: Does it Exist, Why, and Does it Matter?* also used the TISS data but employed a team of analysts to further develop the meaning behind the data. This study addressed lingering concerns over civil-military relations from the 1990s, and provided analysis of the relationship as the nation moved deeper into the Global War on Terror in Iraq, Afghanistan, and beyond. Over six chapters, this book ultimately drew conclusions about three key areas: views of civil and military elites, the divide’s effect on army operations, and the threat to civilian control. In all these areas, the study found no areas of significant concern or any effect on existing policies.<sup>28</sup> The one concern continually referenced in this period and referenced in this study was the military’s personnel policy – specifically, a policy to build a force representative of the people. These books, published before the repeal of “don’t ask don’t tell” and the integration of women service members into combat arms, saw this now-resolved issue as a critical imbalance with civil society. Many studies reference this personnel policy area reaching back into the Clinton era and lingering well into the GWOT. Although this particular aspect of concern is now resolved, inclusiveness writ large was and remains an issue often cited as a clear indicator of a rift between the military and American

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 469.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas S. Szayna et al., eds., *The Civil-Military Gap in the United States: Does It Exist, Why, and Does It Matter?* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp, 2007), xvii, accessed October 1, 2020, [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND\\_MG379.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND_MG379.pdf).

society. Representation and inclusiveness across the force are now greatly improved; however, personnel policy – specifically in recruiting and retention – remains an issue of separation between the people and the All-Volunteer Force.

Much like *Soldiers and Civilians*, Kori Schake’s and James Mattis’ 2016 *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of our Military* uses both the TISS study and an additional study executed by YouGov to better address civil-military concerns in the period of persistent conflict in the GWOT.<sup>29</sup> This book seeks “to better understand attitudes of the American public about their military forty years into having an all-volunteer force and after fifteen years of being continuously at war . . . [To] produce data to inform both scholarship on civil-military relations and policy debates about a wide range of defense issues.”<sup>30</sup> This book focuses on the enduring effects of continued service in times of military conflict with the continued decrease in population experience with and knowledge of the military. It looks at the past data, analyzes contemporary data, and provides recommendations for the future.

Over eleven chapters, *Warriors and Citizens* ultimately concludes that although there is not an immediate risk of failure related to the civil-military divide, there are issues that, if left unaddressed, could lead to harm for the nation. The most significant area of concern is “an uninformed but admiring public.”<sup>31</sup> Comparing the YouGov study to the TISS study, there was a marked increase of “don’t know” or “no opinion” answers from the civilian population regarding questions related to the simplest national military policy and knowledge. The increasing ignorance of all things military on the part of the populace is the most concerning area, in the authors’ views. This expansive ignorance is a negative consequence of the enduring success of the all-volunteer force and the expanding differential of experiences between the general population and the military. Schake and Mattis conclude that this separation ultimately can affect

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<sup>29</sup> Schake and Mattis, *Warriors & Citizens*, 287.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

strategic readiness due to its potential negative influence on policy and military application by the election of leaders espousing programs inconsistent with or dismissive of strategic requirements. These points and the supporting chapters support multiple areas in this monograph.

## Contemporary Civil-Military Relations

Two final works warrant inclusion in this literature review: Mackubin Thomas Owen's 2011 book, *US Civil-Military Relations after 9/11: Renegotiating the Civil-Military Bargain*, and Ezra Klein's 2020 book, *Why We're Polarized*. Rather than comprehensive studies on the subjects using quantitative analysis, they both present narrative analyses of the contemporary environment.

Owens looked specifically at Huntington's and Janowitz' traditional elements of the civil-military relationship while updating the environment to reflect the contemporary domestic political friction and contemporary military challenges around which the relationship exists. Through five chapters, Owens "examines the character of American civil-military relations since 9/11 . . . placing it in the proper [updated] historical context."<sup>32</sup> Owens reviewed and then used the familiar theories of objective and subjective civil-military control (Huntington and Janowitz) set in the Clausewitzian relationship of the people, the state, and the military leaders.<sup>33</sup>

Using this construct, Owens evaluated the military's role, effectiveness, who serves, and finally proposed a renegotiation of the civil-military bargain for the future. Owens' assessment concluded that there is a rift in both communication and resultant common understanding as the people, their state, and their military have drifted into partisan and divided realms, which rarely align to create a unified strategy. Divisiveness and polarized perspectives create "a disjunction between the military and political realms [in] that war plans may not be integrated with national policy and that strategy . . . in practice becomes an orphan. And in the absence of strategy, other

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<sup>32</sup> Mackubin Thomas Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations after 9/11: Renegotiating the Civil-Military Bargain* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 5.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

factors rush to fill the void, resulting in strategic drift.”<sup>34</sup> Owens’ essential analysis held that there is no longer any specific normalized theory of civil-military relations. The relationship now more closely resembles the political realm of Janowitz and lacks a clear Huntingtonian exchange of commodities. It is a bargained relationship functioning in an environment requiring significant communication and broadly informed understanding. The military must change its rigid structures and historical norms of staffing and development, and the people and state must better execute their civic responsibilities and remain informed and engaged in the strategic national vision.<sup>35</sup>

Ezra Klein’s book examines the domestic political and social environment changes since President Donald Trump’s election. His work offers an interpretation of the increasingly partisan nature of domestic politics and the increasing division of American society into ever-more sharply delineated ideological tribes. This shift in behavior reflects more than just differing ideologies; the present shift enables competing interpretations of the meaning of American values to feed both domestic and international strategy policy, enabled by social media, news, and information targeting algorithms unique to the present time.<sup>36</sup> Klein looks at two key areas: “how and why American politics polarized around identity . . . and what that polarization did to the way [Americans] see the world. . . [and then] the feedback loops between polarized political identities and polarized political institutions that are driving [the American] political system.”<sup>37</sup> His work assists in many areas: examining policy, media, sociology, and the effects of these elements on the United States.

Klein’s book does not directly relate to the civil-military historiography, but it does relate significantly to the contemporary domestic environment in which this relationship operates. His work allows for a deeper understanding of the many variables and forces around this relationship.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 135, 200.

<sup>36</sup> Ezra Klein, *Why We’re Polarized* (New York: Avid Reader Press, 2020), 150–158.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., xxiii.

It serves as a reminder that these increasingly complex systems will not suddenly resolve their differences. Ultimately, Klein's work provides a perspective. He concludes that there are "no solutions, only corrections."<sup>38</sup> Moreover, there are only potential corrections, and each of these corrections has a related effect somewhere across American society's complex system.

## A Weary and Distanced Nation – The Effects of the Global War on Terror

Today's military is a strange sort of animal. It is at once idealized and ignored, celebrated and mistrusted. It is the most impressive public institution we have, but it is increasingly unsure of its own *raison d'être* – and increasingly ill-equipped, despite a wealth of internal talent and external support, to tackle today's most pressing challenges.

— Rosa Brooks, *Civil-Military Paradoxes*

The American people's relationship to the military has consistently evolved throughout the history of the nation. Following every conflict since 1783, the people adjusted their relationship with their armed forces. Thus, every post-war era experienced a slightly evolved civil-military relationship and understanding of purpose. Unlike past post-war periods however, since 9/11 there has been no break in military commitment to allow a reorientation between the military and the population.

For the first time in American history, the nation's armed forces have engaged in conflict continuously for almost two decades. One result is an increasingly weary all-volunteer military, functioning in growing isolation from the domestic environment. The military's purpose, functions, and requirements are increasingly unknown or misunderstood by those whom it serves. The less familiar the military is to the people, the more likely they are to support poor policy and strategically weaken the military and the nation.

## Moving Forward Without an Interwar Period Realignment

The United States has been engaged in the GWOT since the late fall of 2001, with personnel deployed in combat roles the entirety of this period. Significant troop strength variation

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 267.

occurred in both theaters of operation, including a total withdrawal from Iraq between late 2011 through mid-2015 when the emergence of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) compelled the United States and NATO to return to Iraq and Syria.<sup>39</sup> The United States military has been present in Afghanistan since late 2001, supporting Operation Enduring Freedom as part of NATO's International Security Force (ISAF) (2001-2014) or Resolute Support Mission Afghanistan (2014-present).<sup>40</sup> In addition to these significant GWOT operations, the military remains engaged worldwide. The army maintains troop deployments supporting contingency operations in Europe (Operation Atlantic Resolve), the Middle-East (Operation Spartan Shield), and South Korea.<sup>41</sup> In addition to these ongoing contingency operations, the military remains committed in Iraq (Operation Inherent Resolve) and Afghanistan (Operation Freedom's Sentinel and NATO's Resolute Support Mission Afghanistan), combatting ISIS and the Taliban while enabling the Iraqi and Afghan governments.

In *Uneasy Balance*, Thomas Langston writes that “in the most successful postwar realignment, military policy achieved a balance between inward-looking reform and outward-looking service.”<sup>42</sup> Langston asserts that successful realignments are historically rare, with the best being the post-Revolutionary War, the post-War of 1812, and the post-Spanish-American War realignments.<sup>43</sup> In these instances, military policy adjusted to support the nation's emerging

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<sup>39</sup> RAND Corporation, “The Islamic State (Terrorist Organization),” RAND Corporation Topics, last modified October 23, 2020, accessed January 16, 2021, <https://www.rand.org/topics/the-islamic-state-terrorist-organization.html>; Operation Inherent Resolve, “About CJTF-OIR,” Operation Inherent Resolve: One Mission, Many Nations, accessed January 16, 2021, <https://www.inherentresolve.mil/About-CJTF-OIR/>.

<sup>40</sup> CNN Editorial Research, “Operation Enduring Freedom Fast Facts,” *CNN Digital*, last modified October 28, 2013, accessed January 16, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2013/10/28/world/operation-enduring-freedom-fast-facts/index.html>; NATO, “ISAF's Mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014) (Archived),” *NATO*, accessed January 16, 2021, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_69366.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm); NATO, “NATO Resolute Support Afghanistan,” accessed January 16, 2021, <https://rs.nato.int/rsm>.

<sup>41</sup> US European Command, “Operation Atlantic Resolve,” accessed January 16, 2021, <https://www.eucom.mil/topic/operation-atlantic-resolve>; US Army Central, “Task Force Spartan,” accessed January 16, 2021, <https://www.usarcent.army.mil/About/Units/Task-Force-Spartan/>.

<sup>42</sup> Langston, *Uneasy Balance*, 31.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

strategic needs – informed through strategic policy developed by its civilian leaders and in agreement of the people and the military. The military reformed after carefully assessing the military’s requirements to achieve the newly-agreed strategic goals.<sup>44</sup> Langston argues that the best realignments develop through negotiation of internal reforms and external obligations of the military to its nation. However, to adequately conduct this assessment and reform, the military needs an appropriate decrease in engagements.

With no strategic lull, improvements are deferred in favor of meeting ongoing needs (current commitments) while the force’s future requirements (reforms) remain indefinitely delayed. For the military, reform while decisively engaged in overseas combat operations creates a sense of angst, a sense that the people neither see nor understand the strains of the current mission, forcing politically-driven changes on the military when it can ill-afford the distraction. For the people, reform of their military force while it is in contact creates a corresponding sense of angst, with them convinced the military is shirking actions expected by civilian and political reforms.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, the enduring national military commitment to the GWOT has resulted in a nation desensitized to warfare detached from those bearing the burden of combat. In their article *Midlife Crisis? The All-Volunteer Force at 40*, Hugh Liebert and James Golby observe:

As a percentage of the population, today’s military is smaller than at any time since 1936. During World War II, approximately 9% of Americans served in the military. That percentage declined to 2% during the Korea and Vietnam Wars and then fell to less than 1% during the Gulf War. Today, less than half of a percentage of Americans serve in the military, and continued budget pressures make an even smaller force likely in the future.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>45</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 55–74.

<sup>46</sup> Hugh Liebert and James Golby, “Midlife Crisis? The All-Volunteer Force at 40,” *Armed Forces and Society*; *Chicago* 43, no. 1 (January 2017): 117, accessed August 24, 2020, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0095327X16641430>.

Decreased experience with and/or exposure to the military add to the current level of ignorance and misunderstanding of civilians regarding their military. In their writing on connecting with millennials related to military service, Mathew Colford and Alec Sugarman observe that “even students who were passionate about the issue [military service] displayed an ignorance of the basic organization, demographics, and principles of the military.”<sup>47</sup> This observation is not an isolated incident. The YouGov survey for *Warriors & Citizens* found that the increase in civilian answers of “don’t know” or “no opinion” when related to any aspect of military service or policy has grown markedly since the TISS survey in the late 1990s.<sup>48</sup> Ignorance of all aspects of the military among the American people weakens the nation because it allows the unchecked development of ill-informed and improperly focused policy. Additionally, an uninformed polity ultimately results in an uninformed US Congress, as they come from this same pool of people. Without a deliberate realignment period, the people will grow increasingly distant from their military.

### Fiscal Tension – Modernization, Training, or Benefits?

We owe much to our veterans and their families, but we shouldn’t view all proposed defense cuts as an attack on them. Modest reforms to pay and compensation will improve readiness and modernization. They will help keep our all-volunteer force sustainable and strong.

— General Martin Dempsey, “The Military Needs to Reach out to Civilians”

A critical component of the American civil-military relationship is the discourse between lawmakers in the US Congress and the military apparatus writ large regarding budgets, force development, and fiscal priorities. Although processes repeat annually, the effects of decisions

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<sup>47</sup> Matthew Colford and Alec J. Sugarman, “Young Person’s Game: Connecting with Millennials,” in *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military*, ed. Kori Schake and Jim Mattis (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2016), 252.

<sup>48</sup> Schake and Mattis, *Warriors & Citizens*, 19; Jim Golby, Lindsay P. Cohn, and Peter D. Feaver, “Thanks for Your Service,” in *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military*, ed. Kori Schake and Jim Mattis (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2016), 125.



this year will affect military organization and equipment procurement in three to five years and beyond. Decisions made today must be informed through the strategic understanding of the future, not just the readily tangible effects of operations and pressures felt today.

The trust garnered from American citizens by their military remains greater than any other profession. As the YouGov Survey data suggests in *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military*, the military is trusted yet isolated, eliciting a positive view in areas of integration, opportunities, personnel care, and effectiveness—in fact the public majority thinks the military receives less respect than it deserves.<sup>49</sup> Although it is better that the military is trusted and held in high regard than the opposite, this confidence often results in unwarranted support for pay and policy decisions which benefit the individual soldier but seldom contribute to strategic focus or readiness. One critical area that consistently gains almost universal support is soldier and family compensation and benefits.

Over fifty-two percent of the YouGov respondents believed that military members deserve more pay while other professions deserve less pay.<sup>50</sup> This demonstrates the disconnect in the understanding of basic benefits and entitlements for military members and their families. A December 2020 RAND study analyzes the appropriate military pay level compared to civilian pay for those with equivalent education and work statuses.<sup>51</sup> (See Figures 1 through 5.) The study found that the regular military compensation (RMC) (comprised of basic pay, basic allowance for housing, basic allowance for subsistence, and the federal tax advantages of untaxed allowances) places junior enlisted personnel at the 81.5 percentile for pay; noncommissioned officers at 76.1

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<sup>48</sup> Schake and Mattis, *Warriors & Citizens*, 292–293; David T. Burbach, “Partisan Dimensions of Confidence in the U.S. Military, 1973–2016,” *Armed Forces & Society* 45, no. 2 (April 1, 2019): 213, accessed December 17, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X17747205>; Tod Lindberg, “The ‘Very Liberal’ View of the US Military,” in *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military*, ed. Kori Schake and Jim Mattis (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2016), 219.

<sup>50</sup> Schake and Mattis, *Warriors & Citizens*, 293, 304.

<sup>51</sup> Beth J. Asch et al., *Setting the Level and Annual Adjustment of Military Pay* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020), accessed January 15, 2021, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA368-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA368-1.html).

percentile for pay; officers at 84.5 percentile.<sup>52</sup> Averaging across all demographics of personnel in the service using education and years of service compared to civilian equivalents, the aggregate RMC for military members reaches near the 90th percentile in pay.<sup>53</sup>

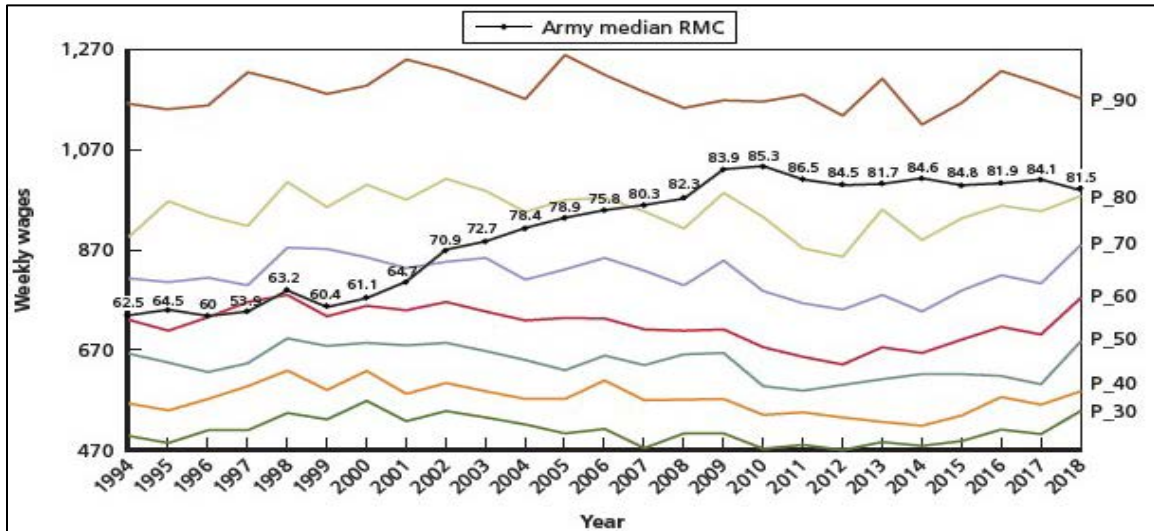


Figure 1. Civilian Wages for High School Graduate Men and Median Regular Military Compensation for Army Enlisted, Ages 23–27, Calendar Years 1994–2018, in 2019 Dollars. Beth J. Asch et al, *Annual Adjustment of Military Pay* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020), 40.

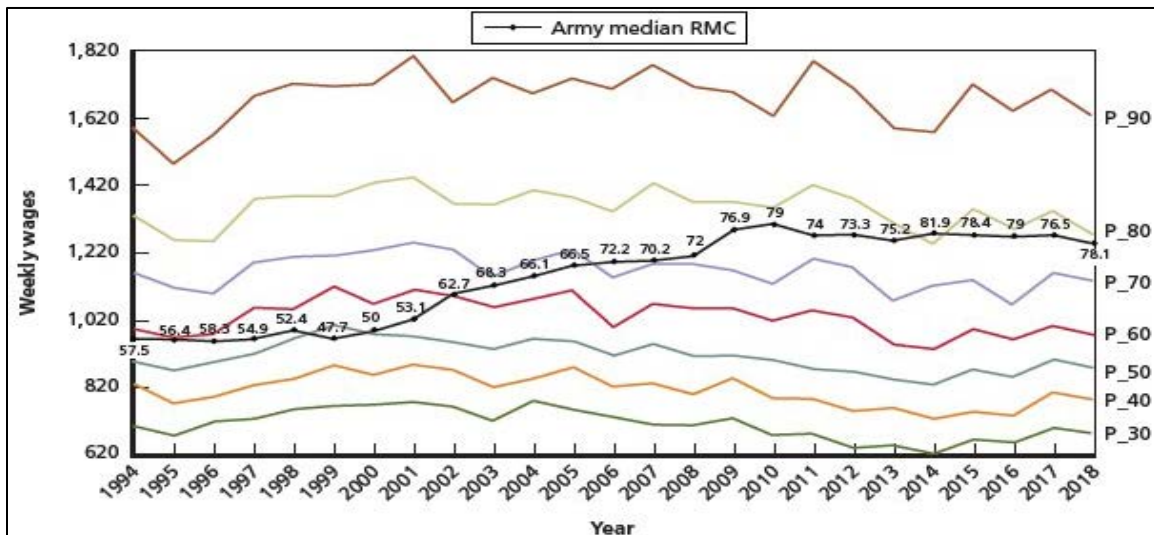


Figure 2. Civilian Wages for Men with Some College and Median Regular Military Compensation for Army Enlisted, Ages 28–32, Calendar Years 1994–2018, in 2019 Dollars. Beth J. Asch et al, *Annual Adjustment of Military Pay* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020), 41.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 40–44.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 44.

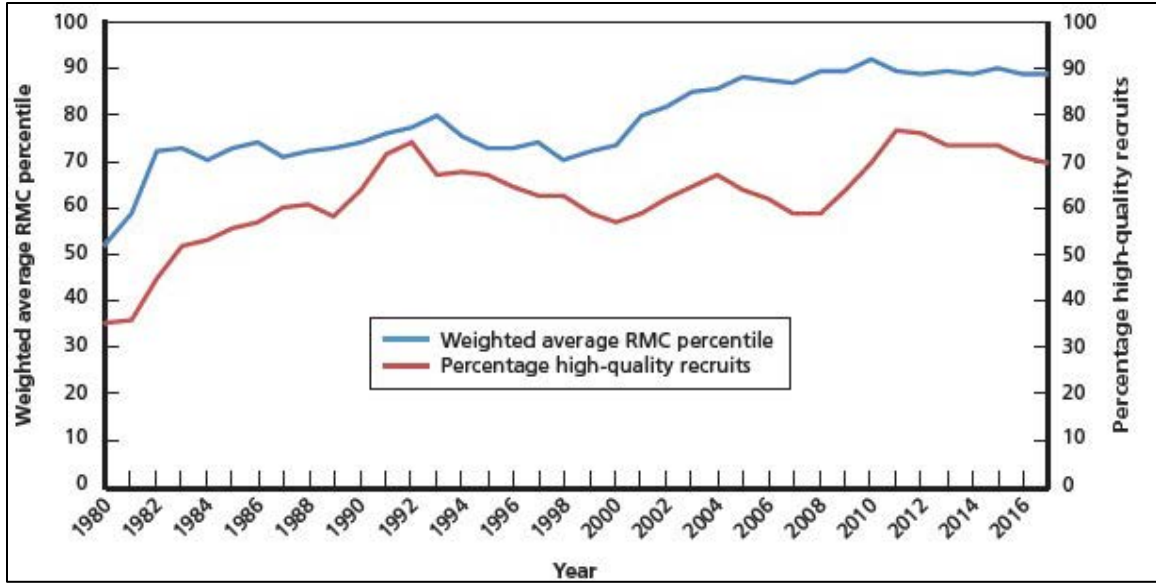


Figure 3. Civilian Wages for Men with Four-Year College Degrees and Median Regular Military Compensation for Army Officers, Ages 28–32, Calendar Years 1994–2018, in 2019 Dollars. Beth J. Asch et al, *Annual Adjustment of Military Pay* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020), 42.

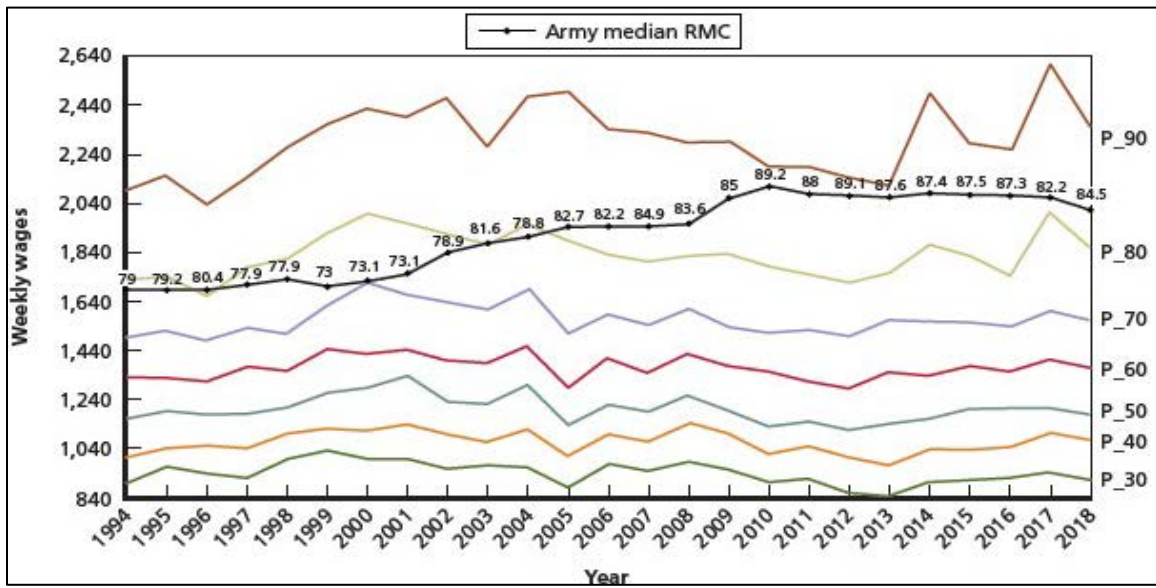


Figure 4. Civilian Wages for Men with Master’s Degrees or Higher and Median Regular Military Compensation for Army Officers, Ages 33–37, Calendar Years 1994–2018, in 2019 Dollars. Beth J. Asch et al, *Annual Adjustment of Military Pay* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020), 43.

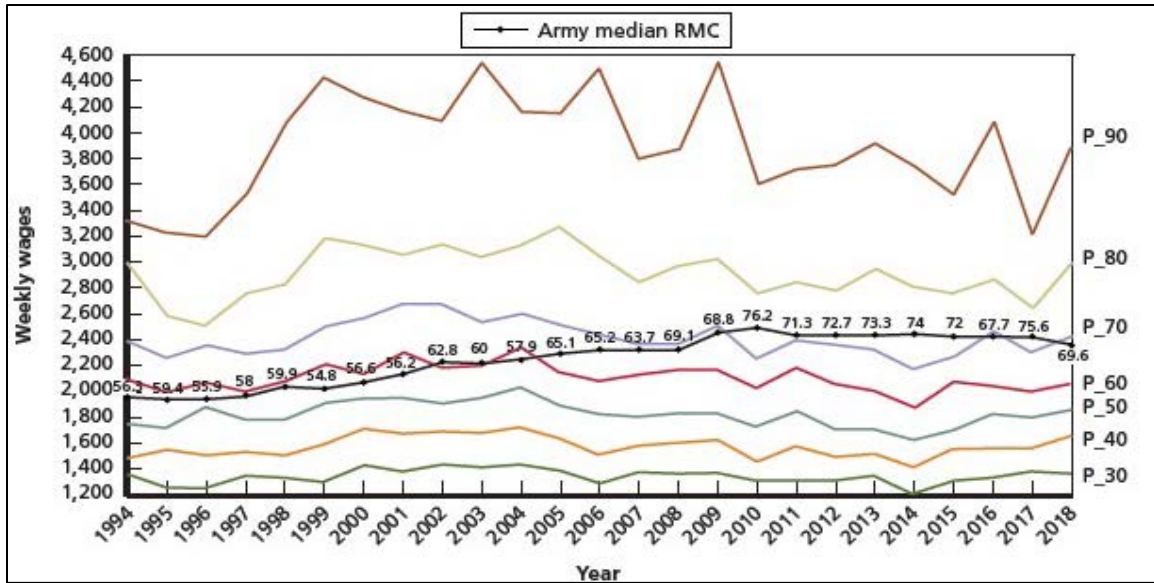


Figure 5. Weighted Average Enlisted Regular Military Compensation as a Percentile of Civilian Wages Weighted by Level of Education and Year of Service, with Education Estimated from the ADMF and Percentage High-Quality Recruits, 1980–2017. Beth J. Asch et al, *Annual Adjustment of Military Pay* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020), 44.

The lack of understanding of military compensation compared to the general population is concerning, as military pay and compensation are public knowledge. The assumption that service members’ pay is inadequate prevents Congress from making hard decisions supporting military budget development and appropriation. No lawmaker wants to be seen as unsympathetic to the military or favoring decisions that do not align with civilian desires regarding military compensation. The myopic focus on compensation results in two things: an increase in budget outlays for personnel costs, or a splitting of priorities between compensation and force development. Interestingly, although most American civilians believe service members should receive more pay, they do not support increasing the military’s budget.<sup>54</sup>

When combined with the high levels of public support for the military, the public ignorance creates a political dynamic in which apportionment of the defense budget skews strongly toward pay and benefits to the detriment of training, equipment, and numbers in the force, key factors in sustaining a strong military capable of winning battles. . . .<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Golby, Cohn, and Feaver, “Thanks for Your Service,” 125.

<sup>55</sup> Schake and Mattis, *Warriors & Citizens*, 305.

Additionally, with overwhelming public support for the military skewed by fundamental misunderstandings of the military as an institution and as a profession, no lawmaker wants to be perceived as anti-military by countering military benefits. As US Air Force veteran Representative Adam Kinzinger (R-IL) observed, “The average person who has never been in the military is scared to death of talking about [benefit changes] because they’re afraid of being labeled anti-veteran or anti-military.”<sup>56</sup> This fear causes many lawmakers to default to support increased pay and benefits without placing the appropriate scrutiny on the wisdom of such increases compared to the enduring requirements of force modernization and development.

The lack of the “breathing space” afforded to a military institution by an interwar period makes it nearly impossible to conduct a deliberate strategic dialogue that addresses the changing objectives and requirements of a nation. Without these discussions, the state cannot settle on a new strategic direction and remains mired in a potentially dangerous status quo. When assessing public commentary on the military, a consistent narrative of the past two decades has been the hardship of military life. Efforts to decrease military hardship are simple to understand, as personal and familial hardship is eminently relatable; therefore, such ideas gain broad support over more complex and abstract strategic issues that remain unclear to the American people. Additionally, a strategically ignorant Congress does not pressure the military for strategic change because it cannot see past the current status quo service to its nation.<sup>57</sup> In turn, an equally indifferent people assume the military is continuing to perform as strategically necessary while other federal agencies more familiar to the populace routinely under-perform or fail outright.

Policy must shift towards modernization at the highest levels. Services are attempting reform, but without a comprehensive understanding of strategic objectives informing the military

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Rosa Brooks, “Civil-Military Paradoxes,” in *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military*, ed. Kori Schake and Jim Mattis (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2016), 51.

means towards those objectives, the services remain mired in a complex system failing in reform while reacting to the mundane.

## Personnel Policy for an Evolving Military

The strategic environment continues to expand in domain with the recent implementation of the Space Force and continued growth of the cyber domain concurrent to consistent commitment of military forces in support of other federal agencies – border security, international partnership, and disaster response. Expanding requirements within both existing and new domains require forces to match those requirements – ever more specialized forces for niche capabilities. The profession has become more than the simple Huntingtonian view of experts in violence. Violence remains, but military members are now much more apropos to the Janowitzian view of the military professional.<sup>58</sup> In the recent decades of varied missions, the military member becomes a statesman, diplomat, technical expert, and at times, one who applies violence.<sup>59</sup> Military recruiting and retention must evolve to bring in and retain the most talented individuals for the evolving force.

As the GWOT progressed, the military made significant adjustments to personnel policy to better reflect the composition of the nation it serves. The repeal of “don’t ask don’t tell” and the opening of all branches to women have allowed the organic development of a military that more closely resembles the people of the nation. The achievement of social, racial, and ethnic representation does not present the same challenges as in the past. The all-volunteer force has evolved to one which is much more representative and inclusive than the force of just thirty years ago. The concerns of the all-volunteer force preying on the poor, the uneducated, and the minority

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<sup>58</sup> Thomas Donnelly, “Testing the ‘Flournoy Hypothesis,’” in *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military*, ed. Kori Schake and Jim Mattis (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 20116), 212–213.

<sup>59</sup> Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations after 9/11*, 135.

populations have not come to fruition.<sup>60</sup> The current research cites that middle-income young Americans are the most likely to serve; however, even this demographic is more heavily representative of southern and rural America – resulting in a lack of understanding of and exposure to the military in the most densely-populated areas of the nation.<sup>61</sup> Despite an increase in a demographically representative military, the emerging concern relates to technical qualifications of individuals beyond that of a traditional combat soldier and engaging an opportunity to better involve the American people with the military.

As previously stated, RAND’s 2020 study on military pay concludes that pay is not a barrier to recruiting quality individuals into military service.<sup>62</sup> The issue is the largely unchanged personnel system adopted in the transition to the AVF in 1973. The military of 2021 continues to recruit and promote officers using a personnel system designed early in the Cold War. The focus of recruiting and retention remains largely on the physical attributes required for ground combat, and this does not appeal to many Americans. Increasingly specialized military requirements often far-removed from the physical battlefield provide opportunity for recruiting well beyond the current pool of middle-class America and those already familiar with military service.<sup>63</sup>

As the world and subsequently the strategic environment for the military has grown increasingly specialized, the military has not fully adjusted. In an effort to better populate the specialized requirements of the modern military, Rosa Brooks suggests the military should “make an effort to recruit far more women, greater numbers of older personnel and college graduates,

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<sup>60</sup> Liebert and Golby, “Midlife Crisis?,” 117; Alair MacLean, “A Few Good Men and Women: Gender, Race, and Status in the Wartime Volunteer Military,” *Population Research and Policy Review*; (August 2018): 608–610, accessed August 17, 2020, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11113-018-9479-z>.

<sup>61</sup> Golby, Cohn, and Feaver, “Thanks for Your Service,” 106–108.

<sup>62</sup> Asch et al., *Setting the Level and Annual Adjustment of Military Pay*, xvii.

<sup>63</sup> Brooks, “Civil-Military Paradoxes,” 58; MacLean, “A Few Good Men and Women,” 609.

and . . . immigrants with vital language skills and cultural knowledge” to better support the broad requirements of tasks now expected of the military.<sup>64</sup>

Additionally, she suggests that the military “urgently needs to experiment with . . . flexible programs, both to bring in outside talent and to permit talented military personnel to gain new skills in the civilian world and then return without career penalties.”<sup>65</sup> The military has recently initiated sabbatical programs and methods to train with industry. However, for those officers who must complete key and developmental positions in their current branch or risk continued service, these new options are not an appealing risk in their currently untested state. The culture and processes supporting personnel policy remain tied to the ongoing ground combat domain as the military environment expands into multiple domain expertise well beyond the beloved ground and air domains of past wars.

## The Hero-Victim Dichotomy

There is no doubt that serving in the Armed Forces brings about personal and professional challenges, but that does not mean that all veterans are ticking time-bombs . . . Most of us [are not] standing on a street corner needing a handout.

— National Veteran’s Foundation, 2016

The final effect of two decades of continuous military engagement relates to the portrayal of military members and combat veterans through the digital online resources and social media. Although veteran portrayal for gain is not a new issue, social media and information targeting algorithms inherent to the internet present this issue in a comprehensive manner. The digital information age strengthens the false dichotomy that veterans fall into one of two categories: the

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<sup>64</sup> Brooks, “Civil-Military Paradoxes,” 58.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 60.



wounded veteran or the triumphant hero.<sup>66</sup> This false dichotomy not only affects poor policy, it also develops a public that cannot identify with the hero and does not desire to become a victim.

Early in the GWOT, Americans felt a deep connection to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. These wars were personal, and the military was seen to be delivering on the people's desires in response to an attack on the nation. Traditional news media members embedded with deployed units, and America saw war from their living rooms. As the wars progressed, this personal element was lost, and as smartphones and social media blossomed, American understanding became increasingly dependent upon digital media instead of personal exposure; Americans became detached and ill-informed. "As a nation, America [remained] at war. As a people, Americans did not."<sup>67</sup> The media, entertainment, and even charitable industries developed the perception of the wounded soldier, not the soldiers themselves.<sup>68</sup>

In *Hero, Charity Case, and Victim: How U.S. News Media Frame Military Veterans on Twitter*, the authors study messaging's influence on the public's perception of military members. As the general population has decreasing exposure to active duty or recent veterans, they lose the ability to counter media perceptions with accurate and personal understanding.<sup>69</sup>

Another study in the United Kingdom concluded that, "given the lack of contact between the Armed Forces and the public, it seems likely that their understanding of their Armed Forces may have become intuitively drawn from the conception of the military role."<sup>70</sup> Both studies

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<sup>66</sup> Lindsey A. Hines et al., "Are the Armed Forces Understood and Supported by the Public? A View from the United Kingdom," *Armed Forces & Society* 41, no. 4 (October 2015): 688–713, accessed January 15, 2021, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0095327X14559975>.

<sup>67</sup> Wittes and Poplin, "Public Opinion, Military Justice, and the Fight Against Terrorism Overseas," 147.

<sup>68</sup> Scott Parrott et al., "Hero, Charity Case, and Victim: How U.S. News Media Frame Military Veterans on Twitter," *Armed Forces & Society* 45, no. 4 (October 2019): 702–722, accessed January 15, 2021, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0095327X18784238>.

<sup>69</sup> Golby, Cohn, and Feaver, "Thanks for Your Service."

<sup>70</sup> Lindsey A. Hines et al., "Are the Armed Forces Understood and Supported by the Public? A View from the United Kingdom," *Armed Forces & Society* 41, no. 4 (October 2015): 704, accessed January 15, 2021, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0095327X14559975>.

found that charitable campaigns for veterans' programs affected the public perception of war-veterans as broken and something to pity.<sup>71</sup>

An overdeveloped sympathy for servicemembers affects lawmakers and civilians' unwillingness to say "no" to military and veteran benefits. Rather than address complex strategic concerns, people remain distracted with this dichotomy and support of service member benefits over complex strategic policy – they default to a guilt tax.<sup>72</sup> As referenced by Kori Schake and Jim Mattis, this results in "a political class with almost no military experience . . . [who] feels it lacks the moral authority to say no."<sup>73</sup> Couple this unwillingness to say "no" with a generation of increasingly entitled veterans and servicemembers, and there is much concern for myopic policy development.

Finally, social media and digital information increasingly perpetuate this false dichotomy further sorting public perceptions on military service into opposing camps rather than a more realistic spectrum of opportunity. These extreme options decrease potential recruits' propensity to serve. If those unfamiliar to the military inform their decision with this false narrative, they will likely choose not serve. This further perpetuates the current trend of recruiters' over-reliance on those personally familiar with military service and who realize that service provides a spectrum of outcomes bridging the gap between the extremes for even the most average of Americans.

### Navigating a Polarized and Politicized Domestic Environment

When it comes to the military, the military belongs to the country. Our defense system belongs to the country. And it's not the president's military, it's the military of the United States of America.

— Leon Panetta, 2017

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 700; Parrott et al., "Hero, Charity Case, and Victim," 715–717.

<sup>72</sup> Burbach, "Partisan Dimensions of Confidence in the U.S. Military, 1973–2016," 214.

<sup>73</sup> Schake and Mattis, *Warriors & Citizens*, 305.

Opposing political ideologies and polarizing rhetoric are not new phenomenon. As will be shown below, social media coupled with the information capacity of the digital information age has resulted in an environment where moderate ideas quickly lose visibility, drowned by counternarratives of the left and the right. Virtual echo chambers further enhance and inform ideas through continuous exposure and passive affirmation provided by audience targeting algorithms. As elected leaders capitalize on political polarization and partisan rhetoric replaces reasoned dialogue, the military finds itself mired between opposing ideologies and at risk of losing both its painstakingly developed moderate voice and its related trusted status. The service chiefs and their immediate subordinates must find an appropriate way to speak to the people and their civilian leaders to enable an appropriately informed dialogue or risk the joint force's hard-won reputation, trust, and professional autonomy.

## Polarization in the Digital Information Age

The polarization of America's polity and that of other free and open societies is destructive.

— H. R. McMaster, *Battlegrounds*

Ezra Klein refers to polarization as an effect of the continuing process of sorting and refining preferences. Sorting first divides ideologies into clear opposing camps, and then reinforcement of ideas within these camps drive individuals and groups towards more extreme ideologies reinforcing their specific views.<sup>74</sup> Polarization itself is not novel, but it has grown markedly in the last two to three decades – specifically after the 2000 election of George W. Bush. Many political theorists credit Karl Rove's efforts as “the architect” for the current polarization when he changed the political landscape in the 2004 presidential reelection of Bush. Rove was the first campaign planner who targeted what would be called the base rather than the broad population. As the size and electoral importance of the middle (those undecided in the

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<sup>74</sup> Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, 31–32.

political spectrum) decreased, Karl Rove realized that energizing a party's base was the way forward. The election of George W. Bush in 2000 started the trend of election wins by slim margins.<sup>75</sup> In two of the last five elections, the Electoral College disagreed with the popular vote. In four of the last five presidential elections, a less-than-five-point margin decided the popular vote.<sup>76</sup> As election cycles evolve from biennial or quadrennial to continuous events, the base further polarizes itself through social media and virtual information echo chambers between election cycles.<sup>77</sup> Klein states, “[people] are open to counterevidence, but [they are] just not getting much of it.”<sup>78</sup> These are indicators of a polarized people.

As political campaigning grew in complexity, it coincided with crucial changes in the information realm. Americans transitioned from main-stream network news to alternative means as cable television took root in the late 1980s. In a short period, the percentages of families tuning into network news decreased by half.<sup>79</sup> This trend towards alternative news sources increased beyond the cable realm and onto the internet through the 1990s. With the advent of smartphones in 2008, news and information quickly moved into the social media realm, where affirming views and information echo chambers surround individuals with affirming views.

Beliefs drive affiliation (sorting according to Klein); affiliation drives further grouping. Continued engagement with a group drives further divisions and movement away from the

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<sup>75</sup> Michael Kirk, “Transcript: Karl Rove -- The Architect,” *Frontline*, last modified 2004, accessed December 28, 2020, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/architect/etc/script.html>; Michael Kirk, “Transcript: America’s Great Divide: From Obama to Trump,” *Frontline*, accessed December 28, 2020, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/americas-great-divide-from-obama-to-trump/transcript/>.

<sup>76</sup> Federal Election Commission, “Election and Voting Information,” *FEC.Gov*, accessed January 18, 2021, <https://www.fec.gov/introduction-campaign-finance/election-and-voting-information/>; National Archives, “Electoral College Results,” *National Archives*, last modified November 12, 2019, accessed January 18, 2021, <https://www.archives.gov/electoral-college/results>.

<sup>77</sup> H. R. McMaster, *Battlegrounds: The Fight to Defend the Free World* (New York: Harper Collins, 2020), 402; Dianne G. Bystrom, Mary C. Banwart, and Mitchell S. McKinney, eds., *AlienATION: The Divide & Conquer Election of 2012* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 329; Klein, *Why We’re Polarized*, 158–159.

<sup>78</sup> Klein, *Why We’re Polarized*, 159.

<sup>79</sup> Bruce Ackerman, *The Decline and Fall of the American Republic* (Harvard University Press, 2010), 27.

middle as louder, more extreme voices overcome moderate ideology.<sup>80</sup> A 2014 Pew Research Study suggests that those willing to compromise (moderates) on critical issues equated to roughly 50% of the public – democrat and republican. This group holds the majority preference towards party compromise on issues. However, this group cedes its voice to the remaining and more extreme 50% who seek only party agreement.<sup>81</sup>

The final area of concern with polarization is that given the continuing growth of alternative news media and social platforms, there is not a simple solution to polarization and fringe growth – it will continue. Politicians remain grouped in political parties which grow increasingly partisan, further increasing the “us or them” divide in the polity. Klein notes that politics, even at the local level, is growing increasingly partisan with constituents less concerned over what is locally relevant and more concerned over national partisanship identity. This results in less localized lawmaking and identity, and more nationalized sorting and identification within the greater national polity.<sup>82</sup> Polarization has now countered the “Founder’s most self-evident assumption: that we will identify more deeply with our home state than with our country.”<sup>83</sup> Moderate identities remain, but their voices are increasingly unheard as the extremes monopolize the nation’s information narrative.

## The Politicization of the Military

As the nation has become increasingly polarized in the last two decades, the military has found itself often used as a political pawn by individuals seeking popularity for office and organizations hoping to glean off the respect and approval given to the nation’s military. Conversely, sitting politicians use the easily reached and broadly identifiable military to move

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<sup>80</sup> Klein, *Why We’re Polarized*, 32-33, 152–153.

<sup>81</sup> Pew Research Center, *Political Polarization in the American Public* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, June 12, 2014), 58–59, accessed December 17, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/06/6-12-2014-Political-Polarization-Release.pdf>.

<sup>82</sup> Klein, *Why We’re Polarized*, 208–209.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

political ideas and agendas. As the digital information age further increases the sorting of all information, the military's necessary work within the political realm risks inadvertent classification among a nation manipulated into communicating and categorizing all information into opposing ideologies.

Huntington's apolitical military, separate from society and objectively serving the state, has proven to be an idealistic myth present only in his theories.<sup>84</sup> The Janowitzian political environment is now ever more appropriate for navigating the spectrum of political affairs in the present domestic and political environs.<sup>85</sup> However, the tenets of Huntington's theory remain deeply ingrained within the active military professional officer corps who largely understand the nonpartisan requirements of the military's subordination to its civilian leaders. Senior military leaders must have significant political acumen to navigate the current environment and provide their unique advice while remaining objective and free from partisan trappings. Subscribing to partisan ideology endangers the critical and creative thinking necessary to support the nation's security navigating a complex and interconnected strategic environment. Civilian perception of partisan military behavior correspondingly endangers the trust placed in the military to provide expert and objective advice free from political influence. As Michael Robinson concludes in *Who Follows the Generals? Polarization in Institutional Confidence in the Military*,

. . . civil-military scholars have stressed that restraint among military elites from political interference is necessary for the preservation of an apolitical military, it is also contingent upon a similar restraint among political elites not to incorporate such interference into partisan strategies.<sup>86</sup>

Retired senior military leader political participation is an area of great concern and is just one symptom of a politicized military.

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<sup>84</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil–Military Relations*, 464–466.

<sup>85</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 426.

<sup>86</sup> Michael Robinson, *Who Follows the Generals? Polarization in Institutional Confidence in the Military*, (Politics and International Relations, September 17, 2019), 45, accessed August 24, 2020, <https://preprints.apsanet.org/engage/apsa/article-details/5d7bf7ebd0706700120e0524>.

In his 2019 monograph, Colonel Nicholas Simontis identifies the 2004 presidential campaign as the point “which marked a significant spike in political activity by retired GOFOs [general officers and flag officers].”<sup>87</sup> In every election since, GOFO participation in presidential elections increased. Although 2004 represented a spike in participation, modern support for presidential candidates first surfaced in 1992. Multiple retired GOFOs supported Bill Clinton’s candidacy against the incumbent, George H.W. Bush.<sup>88</sup> There is much controversy regarding the actions of retired GOFOs in the political realm. The common finding amongst many is that these individuals’ participation is harmful to the active military’s nonpartisan reputation and its role in supporting the nation and its constitution, not a party. The concern with GOFO participation is its amplification of already biased and filtered media. Liberal and conservative news outlets already influence the perceptions of their audiences toward the efficacy of the military.<sup>89</sup> These retired senior leaders’ actions only reinforce the American people’s perception that the military aligns with one party or the other. Despite throw-away disclaimers, when a retired general officer speaks on behalf of a partisan political candidate, he or she creates the perception that their endorsement comes from the military, not from an individual. , Such action risks alienating the military from significant portions of American society.<sup>90</sup>

In his book *Bridging the Military-Civilian Divide*, Bruce Fleming presents the idea that declared support for the military is now itself an example of the partisan divide. He describes this in his observation of conservative (rural) America’s broad support of the military, contrasting

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<sup>87</sup> Nicholas Simontis, “From the E Ring to the Convention Floor: Retired Flag Officers and Presidential Elections: School of Advanced Military Studies Monographs,” 20-21, accessed August 24, 2020, <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p4013coll3/id/3982>.

<sup>88</sup> Richard H. Kohn, “Tarnished Brass: Is the U.S. Military Profession in Decline?,” *World Affairs; Washington* 171, no. 4 (Spring 2009): 78, Accessed August 24, 2020, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3200/WAFS.171.4.73-83>.

<sup>89</sup> Robinson, *Who Follows the Generals?*, 3-5.

<sup>90</sup> Kohn, “Tarnished Brass,” 78.

liberal (urban) America's open challenging of military policies and practices.<sup>91</sup> Ezra Klein also notes the demarcation of broad liberal and conservative identification between urban and rural areas in his article supported by Pew Research polling.<sup>92</sup> This sorting of political ideologies between population areas corresponds to service data as suburban and rural areas serve at rates above urban areas.<sup>93</sup> Combined, all these elements demonstrate a potential trend of ideological distancing and a real trend of personal separation between the military and urban America. As America decreases its direct exposure to and understanding of the military, GOFOS, media, and party actions serve as confusing and opportunistic surrogates to real experience and understanding.

The perceived relationship between the political right and the American military grew increasingly difficult to counter during Donald Trump's presidency. President Trump appointed general officers – active and retired – to multiple vital positions within his cabinet, including John Kelly (USMC retired) as his White House Chief of Staff, James Mattis (USMC retired) as his Secretary of Defense, and H. R. McMaster (US Army lieutenant general) as his National Security Advisor.<sup>94</sup> Whether these appointments were due to demonstrated competence or their understanding of the political realm, by continually referring to these men as “my generals” and the military as “my military,” the president's partisan rhetoric affected the nonpartisan perception

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<sup>91</sup> Bruce E. Fleming, *Bridging the Military-Civilian Divide: What Each Side Needs to Know about the Other, and about Itself*, 1st ed. (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2010), 5.

<sup>92</sup> Ezra Klein, “The Single Most Important Fact about American Politics,” *Vox*, last modified June 13, 2014, accessed December 14, 2020, <https://www.vox.com/2014/6/13/5803768/pew-most-important-fact-american-politics>.

<sup>93</sup> Susan Payne Carter, Alexander A. Smith, and Carl Wojtaszek, “Who Will Fight? The All-Volunteer Army after 9/11,” *The American Economic Review* 107, no. 5 (May 2017): 415–419, accessed August 17, 2020, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/aer.p20171082>; David R. Segal et al., “Propensity to Serve in the U.S. Military: Temporal Trends and Subgroup Differences,” *Armed Forces and Society*; *Chicago* 25, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 407–427, accessed August 17, 2020, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0095327X9902500304>; MacLean, “A Few Good Men and Women.”

<sup>94</sup> James P. Pfiffner, “The Contemporary Presidency: Organizing the Trump Presidency,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 48, 1 (March 2018): 158–162, accessed January 15, 2021, <https://search-proquestcom.lumen.cgsccarl.com/pqrl/docview/2007939670/fulltextPDF/A1D83862384744D0PQ/1?accountid=28992>.



of military and civilian leaders alike. In 2017 former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta boldly responded to the president's rhetoric, stating, "When it comes to the military, the military belongs to the country. Our defense system belongs to the country. And it's not the president's military, it's the military of the United States of America." Retired Lieutenant General Mark Hertling stated more bluntly, "the US Military belongs to the nation, not the president. We're not his."<sup>95</sup> The statements of both Panetta and Hertling demonstrate the concern of too closely grouping the military with one political party. Yes, the president is the commander-in-chief, but he does exercise unfettered control of the nation's military. The insistence of the military's loyalty to the nation is essential, but the message can be better delivered through the application of policy rather than through impassioned pundits speaking on behalf of the military.

Despite the above instances, which risk separating the military from almost half of the nation, public support for the military remains high. In a 2019 Congressional Research Service report, the researchers cite a 2019 Gallup poll in which seventy-three percent of the American public maintains significant trust in the military.<sup>96</sup> This trust remains largely for two reasons: assessed competency and the representative and nonpartisan nature of the military. Nevertheless, this same study cites a growing ". . . concern that [the] norm of nonpartisanship is eroding, citing increased partisan identification among military officers, the behavior of troops on social media, and the increased involvement of retired generals in presidential campaign[s] as evidence . . ." of a potential problem.<sup>97</sup> A partisan military challenges the foundational belief in military subordination to civil authority as even appropriate dialogue becomes categorized as

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<sup>95</sup> Mark Abadi, "Trump Used the Phrase 'my Generals,' and the Military Community Isn't Happy," *Business Insider*, last modified October 18, 2017, accessed January 18, 2021, <https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-my-generals-niger-raid-2017-10>.

<sup>96</sup> Kathleen J McInnis, Congress, Civilian Control of the Military, and Nonpartisanship (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, June 11, 2020), accessed December 20, 2020, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11566>.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

insubordinate rhetoric between opposing ideologies. A highly partisan government combined with a perceived partisan military challenges the very foundations of civil subordination.

The military requires significant trust to operate within the inherently political realm of national ends, ways, and means – ultimately providing advice and capabilities only it can. If the military is categorized with the many partisan pundits and political activists, it risks losing its ability to inform and advise and instead uncomfortably concedes its voice to decrease risk of perceived disloyalty to its leaders.

## A Strategically Informed and Representative Congress

A political class with almost no military experience . . . feels it lacks the moral authority to say no.

— Ken Harbaugh, *New York Times*

Representation of the people defines the very purpose of America’s Congress. As the people have grown more polarized, so too has Congress. Opposing political parties and ideologies are far from unique in American history, but the contemporary information environment again affects representative leadership differently than the past. Although the majority of Americans self-identify towards moderate ideologies, the voices of the extreme gain greater representation from digital media.<sup>98</sup> The louder the voice, the greater the likelihood of elected leaders defining their constituency by that voice – driving policy and agendas. Many in Congress relent to divisive partisan demands in a bow to partisan support from their base. Congress and the executive branch’s inability to inform strategy through comprehensive strategic objectives rather than more myopic partisan concerns has increased in recent years. Partisan positioning and infighting inhibit politicians from seeing the nation’s greater strategic needs as defined through strategy.

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<sup>98</sup> Klein, “The Single Most Important Fact about American Politics.”

Nadia Schadlow highlights this disconnect observing that when the people are confused on strategic reasoning behind the application of force, senior civilian leaders must resolve this confusion by communicating how political decisions are informed to meet strategic ends instead of simply countering political opposition.<sup>99</sup> Without a comprehensive national strategy, strategic objectives rarely enter the lexicon of elected leaders, leaving the American people guessing at the purpose behind military commitments. The 2014 YouGov survey indicates the belief that the military should be employed to obtain “total victory” and then minimally controlled to meet this objective.<sup>100</sup> The issue is the nebulous nature of the phrase “total victory” when separated from strategic context. Schadlow states, “strategy is the overarching glue that brings the public together with civil and military leaders to make sense of the disorder and violence that is war.”<sup>101</sup> The difficult work of developing and enabling strategy must become a priority of Congress to appropriately inform the American people in the commitment of its military to achieve victory. If Congress does not enable and communicate strategy, it too defaults its communication to pundits and a hyper-politicized media.

Congress has to remain strategically informed and, in turn, must ensure the people remain adequately informed. This is not partisanship; this is governance. The civilian leadership must drive policy towards strategic objectives, but instead, partisan rhetoric and posturing drive policy. Lack of decisiveness by Congressional and senior leaders who operate “constrained by public attitudes on defense issues . . . [and fearing] public opposition to their policies . . .” creates further problems.<sup>102</sup> This fear creates weakness in strategy and action at the national level. For instance, President Barack Obama’s “. . . vacillation over enforcement of his Syrian red line . . . [was]

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<sup>99</sup> Nadia Schadlow, “Public Opinion and the Making of Wartime Strategies,” in *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military*, ed. Kori Schake and Jim Mattis (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2016), 168–172.

<sup>100</sup> Schake and Mattis, *Warriors & Citizens*.

<sup>101</sup> Schadlow, “Public Opinion and the Making of Wartime Strategies,” 181.

<sup>102</sup> Schake and Mattis, *Warriors & Citizens*, 301.

affected by the belief that the public would not back another war in the Middle East.”<sup>103</sup> As partisanship replaces discourse, more politicians make or discard decisions only aligned to their partisan base’s will. A national strategy enables strategic decisions within the American people’s intent and desires well beyond the constraints of either partisan base.

### Conclusion – Grand Strategy, Outreach, and a Code of Ethics

When analyzing today’s civil-military divide, the issue is not one of subordination to or followership of the nation’s civilian leadership. The issue is the increasing lack of basic familiarity with the military by both the American people and their civilian leaders. This lack of familiarity affects recruiting, employment of the military, development, and ultimately the ability of the nation to effectively meet its strategic needs. There are no immediate remedies to these problems, but through deliberate communication, engagement, and a realignment that reconnects the people, the politicians, and the military under one comprehensive national strategy, the civil-military divide can decrease.

Foremost to this effort is developing a national grand strategy, understood by the people and enabled through policy. Ideally, this strategy is developed akin to President Eisenhower’s Project Solarium, and then complemented with an information and public affairs campaign.<sup>104</sup> The executive branch of government first develops the comprehensive strategy utilizing a whole-of-nation approach engaging all national power instruments. This grand strategy then enables a more precise communication of the military’s purpose and complements other instruments to reach national objectives. A grand strategy breaks the current paradigm of the two decades-old GWOT and the corresponding overreliance on the military instrument of power, bringing the people, the civil leaders, and the military together in a common understanding.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Raymond Millen, “Eisenhower and US Grand Strategy,” *Parameters* 44, no. 2 (2014): 35–47, accessed August 24, 2020. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3200/WAFS.171.4.73-83>.

<sup>105</sup> Schadlow, “Public Opinion and the Making of Wartime Strategies,” 181.

Second to strategy comes military recruiting and representation. Although the military is broadly representative of the American people, it is not equally representative of the nation, demonstrating a clear service bias away from America's urban areas. As the veteran population continues to decline (both pre and post-AVF veterans) and the propensity to serve remains largely tied to familial exposure to the military, the pool for recruiting and manning becomes more insulated from broader American society – further perpetuating the current environment. When Huntington and Janowitz wrote their key works, the nation maintained a conscript force, and the population contained a substantial number of veterans from World War II and Korea. The people were much more civically minded and aware of military service and its intricacies. Janowitz' focus on the education of the officer corps in the political realm was appropriate at that time, as the military officer was the weaker side of the relationship.<sup>106</sup> However, at present, there is ignorance on both the civil and military sides related to the civic duties and the complexities and complications of America. H.R. McMaster recommends a liberal education campaign to better educate the polity on civics, history, and lessons learned over the nation's history.<sup>107</sup>

Efforts must be made to engage across the entirety of the nation to break this pattern of increasing insularity and reconnect the military at a personal level to increase both the propensity to serve and broaden the availability of recruits. Engagement in schools and public institutions must go beyond simple military appreciation events and recruiter engagements. Average Americans need to connect with average service members to realize that they too can serve their nation and emerge better for their service – breaking the false hero-victim dichotomy. Reinvigorated hometown recruiting campaigns complemented by an education curriculum emphasizing civics and government could comprehensively deliver the desired effect.

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<sup>106</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 426.

<sup>107</sup> McMaster, *Battlegrounds*, 439–444.

In the effort to reach more mature and technically capable members able to navigate a technically complicated future, the military should relook its recruiting and retention standards and better tailor requirements by occupational specialty and individually specific wartime requirements. As specialized cognitive demands increase within military service, recruiting and retention standards focused on a ground soldier's physical demands must expand to allow recruiters and influences to reach a much wider pool of talented individuals. In addition to adjusting standards, invigorate cross-exposure in technical fields through exchanges. Colford and Sugarman recommend educational exchanges, increasing civilian instruction in professional military education, and expanding fellowships for military members as just a few ways to increase exposure and expand knowledge of the military.<sup>108</sup> If these efforts all remain nested within the broader grand strategy, the military engagement campaign can distance itself from partisan politics while navigating within the political spectrum.

As missteps occur and military leaders incidentally participate in partisan actions, they must address their missteps quickly and candidly to the American people and the military personnel they lead. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley modeled just such a response after inadvertently participating in a political event with President Trump in June of 2020. General Milley publicly apologized for creating the perception that he participated in a partisan political event. Subsequently, he and the service chiefs published a memorandum for the joint force and the nation regarding the attack on the nation's capital building and Congress on January 6, 2021. In this memorandum, the service chiefs and chairman denounced the violent actions of the radicals, reaffirm their commitment to earn and retain the trust of the American people, and reinforce the need for focus on the military mission – not partisan actions.<sup>109</sup> These

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<sup>108</sup> Colford and Sugarman, "Young Person's Game: Connecting with Millennials," 252–262.

<sup>109</sup> Mark A. Milley et al., "Message to the Joint Force" (Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, January 12, 2021).

actions illustrate ways to open dialogue with Americans regarding their military's focus and nonpartisan nature.

Additionally, retired strategic military leaders must refrain from participating in political endorsements and partisan behavior. Their actions confuse the nation and inhibit nonpartisan political engagement of current strategic and senior military leaders. Although there remains no published code of ethics advising such behavior, in line with Colonel Simontis' 2019 monograph recommendations, "a useful starting point [within the profession] would be the adoption of a professional code of ethics that addresses topics such as partisan political activities by retirees."<sup>110</sup> The Department of Defense should publish a code of ethics and complement it with its own education campaign across all professional officer education echelons.

Through deliberate steps, the nation and the military can survive this divide and emerge strengthened and unified. However, this action requires candid acknowledgment of the problems present in domestic America. The military must find its voice and engage the polity and its civilian leaders, and those leaders must reciprocate on this engagement. If both sides take action, the divide "need not become a chasm."<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Simontis, "From the E Ring to the Convention Floor," 41.

<sup>111</sup> Ike Skelton, "The Civil-Military Gap Need Not Become a Chasm," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 64 (First Quarter 2012): 60–66, accessed August, 15, 2020. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/929763158/citation/D59F6843763D4039PQ/10>.

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