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AMERICAN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

Samuel P. Huntington and the Political Dimensions of Military Professionalism

Dayne E. Nix, PhD

Samuel P. Huntington died in December 2008, but this Harvard academic continues to have a significant impact on the conduct and state of American civil-military relations. Mackubin Owens's recent *US Civil-Military Relations after 9/11: Renegotiating the Civil-Military Bargain* and Suzanne Nielsen and Don M. Snider's 2009 edited work *American Civil-Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era* both challenge and contextualize Huntington's work for contemporary theorists and practitioners of civil-military relations. This is indeed a worthwhile effort, as America's civil-military relations have received much "airtime" over the past few years. General Stanley McChrystal's seeming challenge to the political leadership over proposed Afghanistan troop levels, Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Milburn's *Joint Force Quarterly* article challenging traditional conceptions of civilian control, and Bob Woodward's revelations in *Obama's War* regarding the 2009 tensions between the Pentagon and the administration over Afghanistan strategy highlight the relationship between the military and our civilian leaders while raising the issue of the military's participation in political discourse.¹ Do these instances point to "the troubled quality of American civil-military relations," or do they serve as continuing proofs of the vitality inherent

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in the American constitutional system as created by the founders?²

In this article, I will discuss Huntington's view that the American constitutional system inevitably draws our military leaders into the political process and therefore requires astute and well-developed political expertise on their part in order to maintain the

uniquely American civil-military relationship. In doing so, I will address Huntington's theory of civil-military relations, some historical examples of the military's involvement in the political process, the contemporary security missions and roles that require political insight on the part of military leaders, and barriers to acquiring and utilizing that insight. In pursuing this discussion I argue in no way that the unique system of civil-military relations in the United States should be overturned but rather that our leadership's failure to recognize and train for the political roles and requirements inherent in today's global security environment threatens the effectiveness of U.S. grand strategy and accomplishment of national security goals.

THE CLASH OF THEORY WITH REALITY: HUNTINGTON'S OBJECTIVE-SUBJECTIVE THEORY

In January 2011, Fareed Zakaria, a former student of Huntington's, published a reflection on his mentor that offers particular insight regarding Huntington's approach to political theory. "Sam would often say to me, 'You have to find a big independent variable and a big dependent variable' [;] . . . you've got to start with something big to explain. . . . 'Your job is to distill it, simplify it, and give them a sense of what is the single, or what are the couple, of powerful causes that explain this powerful phenomenon.'"³ In Huntington's own words,

A good theory is precise, austere, elegant, and highlights the relations among a few conceptual variables. Inevitably, no theory can explain fully a single event or group of events. An explanation, in contrast, is inevitably complex, dense, messy, and intellectually unsatisfying. It succeeds not by being austere but by being comprehensive. A good history describes chronologically and analyzes convincingly a sequence of events and shows why one event led to another.⁴

The Soldier and the State follows the approach outlined above and is the Huntington treatment of civil-military relations that has become the standard in professional and academic discourse. Huntington suggests a theory of civil-military relations caught between the variables of military professionalism and the military's participation in the political process.⁵ The author outlines the historical development of military professionalism in Europe and the United States, with some emphasis on the constitutional intentions of America's Founding Fathers. *The Soldier and the State* also provides a somewhat limited, even "messy and intellectually unsatisfying," explanation of the development of military professionalism and civilian control of the military in the U.S. constitutional system.

Huntington's theory suggests two types of civil-military relations, *subjective* control and *objective* control of the military by political leaders. In the subjective-control model, the military is closely integrated with and participates in the political and social system. Officers and enlisted personnel are drawn from civil

society to form a militia when danger threatens; once the danger is past, they return to society and serve in multiple capacities, including political ones. In this system, Huntington suggests, military professionalism is minimal. His objective-control model describes a very different type of military and political system, one that is both differentiated and professional. Here military professionals and political leaders focus their efforts in distinct arenas of expertise. The military remains separate from the political system and focuses on developing expertise in the profession of arms, that body of knowledge embodying the “management of violence.”⁶ In this model, military professionalism is maximized.⁷ Huntington’s objective model adopts a purely Clausewitzian approach whereby “war is the continuation of policy by other means,” with senior military professionals providing security for the state while serving as military advisers to the politicians, who practice their own expertise in the realm of politics and national strategy.⁸ Professionalism in one area precludes competence in the other.⁹

Huntington clearly prefers the objective model;¹⁰ his preference has served as a source of discussion and controversy since *The Soldier and the State* was first published. In spite of his preference, however, Huntington clearly demonstrates that U.S. civil-military relations do not actually correspond to his objective model. Instead, our military and our civilian government operate somewhere on the continuum between his subjective and objective poles—to the detriment of military professionalism, at least in Huntington’s view.¹¹

Huntington’s “Civilian Control and the Constitution,” published a year before *The Soldier and the State*, examines the civil-military dilemma from the founders’ perspective and provides us with additional insight into the professor’s thinking. It suggests that the subjective approach was the more familiar of the two in the political and cultural context of the early United States and that it influenced the founders’ treatment of the civil-military problem in writing the Constitution. Military professionalism, in Huntington’s view, did not exist in late-eighteenth-century America; instead, the military art was part and parcel of every gentleman’s knowledge base.¹² The founders placed great confidence in the citizen-soldiers of the militia as guarantors of the country’s security and defense and had great distrust for standing armies. Yet they also recognized the potential for a crisis that would require a national military organization and so provided Congress the authority to raise and fund an army and a navy. Concerned as they were for the defense of the young nation from outside forces, the founders were also wary of concentrating too much power in any one arm of the government and thus divided control over the military between Congress and the executive.¹³ The president serves as the commander in chief, while Congress declares war, raises the military establishment, and pays for its operations.

Thus developed that particularly American approach to civil-military relations, the division of authority over the military between Congress and the executive.¹⁴ Huntington suggests that as a result of this constitutional arrangement, his objective form of civil-military control is literally impossible in the United States. Military leaders, obligated to provide military advice to both the president and Congress, are constantly drawn into political controversy. In fact, Huntington states that the unintended consequence of the founders' constitutional construction is that "the separation of powers is a perpetual invitation, if not an irresistible force, drawing military leaders into political conflicts."¹⁵

Since World War II, the military in the United States has developed significant political power, generally exercised by senior military leaders during budget and strategy debates in the rarefied atmosphere of the nation's capital. The exercise of this political muscle has been most evident during budget battles on Capitol Hill; when political leaders have attempted to modify popular military institutions (as when President Harry Truman attempted to eliminate the U.S. Marine Corps and ran into a political buzz saw); and, especially, during attempts at defense reorganization (e.g., the political infighting that preceded passage of the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act).¹⁶ Most recently, Bob Woodward reported in *Obama's War* that the Barack Obama administration perceived the military's efforts to publicize its views on Afghanistan strategy as a deliberate campaign to influence and limit the president's options regarding troop levels there.¹⁷ The political tactics utilized by the military in such cases are familiar to those acquainted with interest-group politics: press releases, interviews by senior military officials, back-channel discussions with congressional leaders, public speeches discussing military and political strategies, publication of studies supporting military or service views, congressional testimony, and, most recently, expert opinion offered on national news programs by recently retired officers.

The political power of the military has developed and matured since Huntington published *The Soldier and the State* in 1957. During the post-World War II and Korean War periods, interservice rivalry was so intense that military leaders often exhausted their political energy in turf and budget battles with each other, resulting in enhanced civilian control.¹⁸ Huntington sounded a cautionary note as he regarded this contentious environment, suggesting that should the services unite their efforts, "inter-service peace would probably have certain costs in decreased civil-military harmony."¹⁹ In fact, an unintended consequence of the Goldwater-Nichols Act, which strengthened the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and forced jointness on an unwilling military, has been a strengthening of the military's political power. The military has become a political constituency that must be addressed in the Washington power equation.²⁰ Richard Kohn, a well-known commentator on contemporary civil-military relations, observes,

“The professional military, with its allies and communities, has developed into a potent political force in American government. Knowledgeable people, particularly those who, in each administration, are charged with the direction of national security affairs, recognize this, even if they cannot, for political reasons, admit it openly.”²¹

These considerations regarding the military’s participation in the political process relate specifically to the development of military policy within our government—an inherently political, competitive, and often contentious process. That process pits the needs of foreign policy against those of domestic policy, and the military, commanding a significant portion of our national resources, is a key player in that process.²² In order to operate effectively in that arena, our military leaders must develop and practice sophisticated political acumen, a capability not traditionally associated with military professionalism. Yet it is one they ignore at their peril as they are inevitably drawn into the political process by America’s unique constitutional system. It is also a capability required in today’s international security environment, one that draws our military leaders into missions that require a similar application of political expertise.

THE CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT DRAWS THE MILITARY INTO POLITICAL ISSUES

The contemporary security environment requires a transformation of skill sets for our military. Even before the terror attacks on 9/11, the military was coming to grips with the fact that the post–Cold War world had changed.

In the past twenty years . . . the quest for “security” has replaced war aims, and the result has been a more nuanced approach to international power. National security is now seen as a complex arrangement of political, economic, social, and military factors. American military power is hegemonic but it is recognized that even overwhelming military power can accomplish only limited security objectives. . . . The frame of reference is less about “victory” and more about “prevailing” in a globalized competitive environment.²³

During the William Clinton administration, the military was used extensively for “military operations other than war,” in Haiti, Somalia, and other distant hot spots. These operations facilitated security for a global economic engine that demands a stable environment—the reality being that the “hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist.”²⁴ The U.S. military is universally understood to provide and facilitate that security. Many in the American military have resisted this role, arguing that our armed forces were not structured for “nation building” or stability operations. The issue even made it into the 2000 election, when George W. Bush campaigned on a platform deriding the Clinton

administration's nation-building missions, which, he contended, had overextended the U.S. military.

The issues became more focused after 9/11, with the realization that the United States was now engaged in a new kind of war, a "global war on terror," in which the overriding concern became security against religiously inspired radicals who threatened the world with weapons of mass destruction. American citizens were reminded daily of their new insecurity, as airport scanners became ever more intrusive and suicide bombings dominated the nightly news. This new war included a number of "small war" missions familiar from our nation's past, as well as some new ones, but all required the transformation of a military that had been created in the Cold War for battles in Europe against the massed armored divisions of the Soviet Union. In this new environment, our military's firepower "would become an instrument of last rather than first resort."²⁵ "Asymmetric warfare," "counterterrorism," "counterinsurgency," "limited war," "fourth-generation war," "stability operations," and "complex irregular war" all began to compete for pride of terminological place and led to the creation of a new acronym, ROMO—the range of military operations.

All of the missions within the ROMO share a common denominator: success requires the application of extensive and well developed political skill by our nation's armed forces. This is true because of the characteristics of limited war in the contemporary world. Clausewitz's dictum cited above certainly applies in major theater war, but it has special application in today's conflict environments where unity of effort, legitimacy, and perseverance are essential to success and involve our operational forces and their leaders in extensive political interaction.

Today's security environment is a coalition environment. Every war the United States has fought in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been waged with allies. As Churchill so famously quipped, "The only thing worse than fighting a war with allies is fighting one without them."²⁶ The requirement to conduct operations with United Nations (UN) forces, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and "coalitions of the willing" indicates that this reality will not change in the near future. It forces our military to forge a unity of effort with coalition partners rather than the unity of command preferred by all military leaders. However, the maintenance of coalitions is difficult. Differing military and social cultures, languages, and home constituencies involve military leaders in often difficult interactions with their international counterparts to maintain strategic, operational, and tactical direction. These efforts are fundamentally political, and local misunderstandings can endanger mission accomplishment as well as the relationship between partner nations. These realities were highlighted during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM at Basra, where the U.S. command dictated direct confrontation against local enemy forces, while the British preferred a

more “indirect” approach, that of negotiating with the opposition.²⁷ A similar situation was reported in Afghanistan, where the Italian contingent was reported to have paid bribes to the local Taliban in exchange for a reduction in attacks on its forces.²⁸ These differences of approach, as well as inherent cultural differences, doctrinal mismatches, and domestic political realities (e.g., European sensitivity to troop casualties and opposition to Iraq and Afghanistan deployments), make the sustainment of coalition unity of effort a delicate political matter.

The requirement for legitimacy in today’s security operations involves our military forces in political issues on a number of levels—in the tactical (local) area, internationally, and back home. In the tactical area, our forces are required to pay attention to “hearts and minds.” This is not a new reality. Colonel C. E. Callwell, in his classic work on Britain’s small wars, held that the goodwill of the local population was never assumed.²⁹ This is certainly true in today’s threat environments. Whether engaged in a humanitarian relief operation, a noncombatant evacuation operation, or counterinsurgency, America’s military must earn the goodwill of local populations and their leaders, as well as the support of political leaders and supporters at home. The concept of the “strategic corporal” is well known—that the acts of every member of the military have direct impact on hearts and minds on the local scene. Those actions can also have potentially strategic impact, either positive or negative, due to the ubiquitous media environment. A single misstep by any member of coalition forces can receive immediate exposure on 24/7 news programs, with the potential for significant impact on public opinion.

As the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan passes the ten-year mark, the requirement for perseverance takes on new meaning for our nation and its military. The recent Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) suggests that the United States must plan and prepare to fight the kinds of wars it is engaged in now, which is a significant shift from previous QDRs, which were more future oriented.³⁰ The counterinsurgency, peace-building, and stability operations we face today require long-term perseverance and commitment. Yet perseverance in such operations inevitably draws the military into political discussion, for it is dependent on the will of Congress, the president, and the American people, as well as their counterparts in coalition and partner nations. The United States could be in Afghanistan another ten years, in spite of the scheduled drawdown of U.S. forces there. Indeed, sensitive to the charge that the United States abandoned Afghanistan after the Soviet defeat there in the 1980s, one American leader is reported to have said, “We’re never leaving.”³¹ Our continued military presence is a necessary guarantor of security and stability for the region. In light of this requirement, the strategy of the Taliban has been to focus its efforts on the coalition center of gravity, the political will undergirding that presence.³² American military leaders understand

this essential point and wisely engage the media, Congress, the president, and the international community in order to sustain that will. It is no surprise that General David Petraeus (formerly commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan and currently director of the Central Intelligence Agency) is known as one of the most politically astute of America's military leaders since Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Eliot Cohen emphasizes the political realities that the U.S. military must successfully negotiate in counterinsurgency, indeed, across the entire range of military operations our nation faces today:

While all the elements of national power have a role in successful counterinsurgency, political objectives must retain primacy. All actions, kinetic or nonkinetic, must be planned and executed with consideration of their contribution toward strengthening the host government's legitimacy and achieving the U.S. Government's political goals. The political and military aspects of an insurgency are usually so bound together as to be inseparable, and most insurgents recognize this fact. In counterinsurgencies, military actions conducted without proper analysis of their political effects will at best be ineffective and at worst aid the enemy.³³

If American forces are to be successful in the diverse environments of the ROMO, they must consider the political implications of every action and mission, a reality requiring significant political expertise and practice on the part of military commanders and the personnel they lead. However, the very characteristics of what Huntington termed "the military mind" may limit their effectiveness.

ADAPTING THE MILITARY MIND TO THE CONTEMPORARY SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

The evidence is clear: the U.S. military is inevitably drawn into political issues both at home and abroad. There is, however, a paradox regarding the political power that the military possesses. The effective use of political power requires nuance and skillful political calculation, traits not usually associated with the military personality. In exercising its power in political situations, the military often comes off as a "bull in a political china closet." General McChrystal's firing is a case in point. Viewpoints differ as to whether the general's public comments during President Obama's Afghanistan strategy review were calculated or innocent, but his interactions with the press and those of his staff do not attest to great political skill. This seeming lack was also evident during General Colin Powell's tenure as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He adapted the "Weinberger Doctrine" to then-current military strategy, advising that the military should be used only when victory was certain and pursuant to a clear political strategy. He often argued against committing the military to far-flung contingency operations. "Powell seemed to ignore the need to bend operational capabilities to political imperatives, as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright somewhat testily

acknowledged when she responded, ‘What’s the point of having this superb military you’re always talking about if we can’t use it?’³⁴

Huntington might comment that these events prove important points of his theory—that there exists a “military mind” and that true military professionals must necessarily be “incompetent” in political affairs.³⁵ Yet the contemporary security environment requires that they operate competently both in the charged atmosphere of the U.S. capital and across the global commons. To do so, the military must address a number of tendencies inherent in the “military personality.”

The first of these tendencies involves the practical application of the principle that the military is and should remain apolitical. Military members are appropriately taught, whether in “boot camp,” Officer Candidate School, or other entry-level training, that military personnel should limit their participation in the political process to voting and are prohibited from participation in political events in uniform. As a result, military members generally view politics with distaste, if not downright hostility. Many view themselves as separate from and morally superior to politicians, whom they see engaged in political turf wars and nasty electoral campaigns. Indeed, Professor Huntington defines the military professional as separate from politics, giving as an example General George C. Marshall, who refrained from voting in order to preserve his political neutrality and professionalism.³⁶ Eisenhower also kept his political views private, to such an extent that President Truman offered him an opportunity to run on the Democratic presidential ticket—an offer that was refused due to what turned out to be “Ike’s” Republican leanings.³⁷ However extreme and unrealistic these examples sound in a communications culture where retired admirals and generals serve as commentators on the nightly news, Admiral Mullen’s 2011 guidance reminds the military of the necessity to remain “apolitical.”³⁸ The danger is that political partisanship is mistaken for political competence by military leaders and personnel. The effort to remain apolitical may lead military members to avoid the necessary political education and awareness they require to operate in today’s complex environments. The unintended consequence is ignorance and downright incompetence when the mission requires awareness of political sensitivities and repercussions.³⁹

A second dynamic that mitigates military effectiveness in the contemporary security environment is a failure to appreciate fully the application of the Clausewitzian view of war as the continuation of politics. Clausewitz is taught in every military school, a key element in the Joint Professional Military Education curriculum of service colleges and at the military academies. Yet the realities of the modern battlefield bring political requirements into conflict with the ingrained instincts of the military mind, a conflict of which the result is a tendency to ignore the political implications of Clausewitz in favor of victory—“to view military victory as an end in itself, ignoring war’s function as an instrument of

policy.”⁴⁰ Military leaders who believe that their role is to “break things and kill people” are often insensitive to and frustrated by the political requirements of contemporary missions.

Korea was perhaps the first war in which the U.S. military had to face the challenges of a limited war in which political requirements contradicted its intuitive drive for battlefield victory.⁴¹ General Douglas “No Substitute for Victory” MacArthur, especially, chafed under the political guidelines laid down by President Truman. In an aptly titled chapter—“Frustration in Korea”—of his memoirs, MacArthur reports feeling that President Truman’s will to win had been “chipped away by the constant pounding whispers of timidity and cynicism.”⁴² His eventual relief “confirmed civilian control over the military services and revealed the General as a heroic figure, single-mindedly committed to victory on the battlefield, but seemingly without any real appreciation of the larger political implications of the war he was fighting.”⁴³ MacArthur was not the only Korean War military leader uneasy with the political limitations set by politicians unwilling to engage in a larger war with China and, possibly, the Soviet Union. The majority of Korean War generals, with the World War II experience of unconditional surrender just a few years behind them, were focused on battlefield success at the expense of political realities. These generals experienced, Huntington writes, “a feeling of unease because victory was denied, a sense of frustration and a conviction that political considerations had overruled the military. . . . General [Mark] Clark reported that all the commanders in the Far East with whom he discussed the issue hoped that the government would remove the political restrictions which denied them victory.”⁴⁴

This frustration with the limitations imposed by political restrictions on military operations has not disappeared over time. As recently as the Kosovo campaign of 1999, General Wesley Clark, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, concluded, “Using military force effectively requires departing from the political dynamic and following the so-called ‘principles of war.’”⁴⁵ An even more recent example of this frustration is the storm of criticism, from both military and civilian quarters, that arose in response to the restricted rules of engagement established by General McChrystal (later confirmed by General Petraeus) in pursuit of the “hearts and minds” strategy in Afghanistan, an obviously political move by military leaders who “wrote the book” on counterinsurgency.

Additional traits of the military mind that might limit the military’s effectiveness in the ROMO are those that facilitate operational mission accomplishment but potentially violate political considerations.

- The military is adept at independent worldwide operations and minimizes the need for outside assistance. Officers are taught that, should a leadership

vacuum arise, they must exercise initiative, exert leadership, and bring order out of chaos. Where military members consider this “gung ho” approach an operational necessity, other U.S. agencies and coalition partners often consider them pushy and overaggressive.

- Huntington suggests that the military mind is realist in perspective, seeing the world in terms of competition for power. Numerous observers report (and my personal experience bears out) that military personnel generally see the world as a realm of conflictual, zero-sum competition for power. Often, if military people do not have an external enemy, they create one—even from within their own ranks or from “the interagency.” This tendency leads to competition within the ranks as well as conflict with partner organizations. Unity of effort is difficult to establish in this type of environment.
- Senior commanders require regular, sometimes daily, briefings on the accomplishments of units in the field. Subordinate commanders are generally in the area of operations for limited tours, ranging from four to fifteen months, during which they are subject to, and must produce for their own subordinates, regular personnel evaluations. The result is an emphasis on “metrics” and on short-term gains easily transferrable to the next day’s briefing graphics (and perhaps upcoming fitness reports). This “results orientation” may create impatience with interagency or nongovernmental-organization efforts that produce transparent or long-term effects, such as relationships with and influence on local leaders. It is difficult to quantify human relationships and interaction, and State Department civilians in the field frequently chafe at their military partners’ emphasis on “bricks and mortar” projects that look good on briefing slides.
- A final dynamic that undercuts the political expertise of U.S. military leaders is the “American way of war,” as characterized by a number of writers. This dynamic involves the complete Clausewitzian triad: our military leaders, our civilian political leaders, and the people of the United States. There is a historical preference on the part of these constituencies for wars of limited duration, with clearly defined “bad guys,” clear paths to victory through overwhelming “high tech” force, and a rapid return of forces to America’s shores after conflict termination. Fundamental to this approach is an idealism that seeks to spread democracy to those denied the benefits of the American political system. In short, “War [should be] clean, independent of politics, and fought with big battalions.”⁴⁶

This last characteristic deserves added attention, as it arises from within the military culture and self-image as well as from our national approach to war,

growing out of our shared history and cultural context. It is also a result of the pressures placed on the military by its loyal supporters, friends, families, and the media. Our nation's "short attention span" does not contribute to the political will necessary to support complex and long-term contingencies across the world in pursuit of global security needs. One needs only remember the image of President Bush on board the USS *Abraham Lincoln* with the words "Mission Accomplished" emblazoned in the background. It is a fundamental strategic error to conceive that the defeat of the enemy's military and the achievement of political aims are synonymous. Unfortunately, this mistake is all too common, as the American experience in Iraq illustrates.

The military traits discussed here often work effectively to accomplish military ends but conflict with successful political outcomes. The direct, confrontational manner of the American military may seem offensive and brash to many within the interagency realm, more used to diplomatic approaches. The competitive orientation and need for an enemy may result in an inability to "play well with others"; the zero-sum and realist perspective may neglect the possibility of compromise or nuanced approaches to problems and relationships. The upshot of these traits—admittedly generalized here—is to make the military generally ineffective in the political realm. These aspects of the military mind and personality do not make the military incapable of political mission accomplishment. But they do reveal the limitations inherent in utilizing the military for stability, reconstruction, nation building, and other tasks requiring a nuanced, political approach.

In the military's defense, of course, there are senior officers who thrive in the political environment. Generally, they have served in geographic combatant commands, where they are required to exhibit international political expertise and engage coalition partners effectively. They have also learned how best to combat their enemies on their home turf. As one commentator put it, "'Political' generals do better in counter-insurgency than 'gung-ho' warriors," an insight that applies to many dimensions of the contemporary security environment.⁴⁷ But military leaders with highly developed political acumen, such as an Eisenhower or a Petraeus, are the exception rather than the rule. American military culture values, and is more likely to produce, a George S. Patton, Jr.

A REDEFINITION OF VICTORY?

The contemporary military finds itself actively participating in the political process, both at home and abroad. At home, this involvement is a result of the constitutional process established by the founders, a process that requires the military to advise both the president and Congress and to participate in the crafting of the nation's military policy. Overseas, the missions the military has been called on to

perform involve it in political issues at every level, from the general serving as a combatant commander to the corporal assigned to a provincial reconstruction team. The following recommendations are offered to assist both military and civilian leaders in accomplishing the goals of the nation's national security strategy.

First, the military needs to redefine its concept of professionalism to embrace all the missions that it has been assigned, including stability, peace-building, and reconstruction operations. The Defense Department has designated "stability operations" as a core mission;⁴⁸ accordingly, the military must incorporate the requirements and capabilities (including appropriate political training) of stability operations and other, associated missions into its training regimens. This will require abandonment of debates as to whether we "do" nation building or whether a force designed for a major theater war can adapt to such missions. American military forces are amazingly flexible and will accomplish whatever mission is assigned to them. The reality of today's security environment requires their leadership to come up with the means to address the thorny issues that will arise and to adapt training and deployment cycles accordingly.⁴⁹

Second, the military needs to recognize that the political and governance expertise required for many of the missions on the "lower end" of the ROMO resides within other agencies of government, especially the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Overcoming institutional barriers and forging working relationships with interagency personnel is a requirement of the contemporary battlefield, and meeting it will greatly facilitate mission accomplishment. Karl Eikenberry, former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan (as well as a retired lieutenant general and former commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan), advised 2010 graduates of the Army Command and Staff College "to see our civilian counterparts as empowered partners who complement your work. And welcome them as part of your engagement team. Take them with you and provide the security they need to do their jobs."⁵⁰ His comments also hint at the need for civilian members of the interagency to develop the skills and understanding necessary to work effectively with the military. After a decade of improvisation, "State" and USAID are themselves developing in-house expertise on stability operations, emphasizing training and lessons learned. One Senior Foreign Service officer with political-military experience in both Iraq and Afghanistan notes,

State is not the modern equivalent of the British Colonial Office, and the governance and development work Foreign Service Officers find themselves doing on Provincial Reconstruction Teams was not a core State competence a decade ago. But just as the Army and Marines have had to accept the centrality of Stability Ops, so State has recognized we're in the grass-roots stability business for the long haul.⁵¹

Third, civil affairs units and their expertise (where military political experience does exist) must be incorporated at every level of the military. Currently, the majority of Army civil affairs units reside in the reserves. Their numbers have been increased in recent years, and they are currently seeing extensive duty in Afghanistan. The Marine Corps and Navy have also expanded their civil affairs capabilities, establishing responsibilities for that function within artillery battalions, on each coast, and in teams throughout the Department of the Navy. These capabilities must be expanded and given the additional role of training all members of the military in the political requirements of their missions. As we have seen in current conflicts, each military member, regardless of rank, can have a potentially strategic impact, if only through an unfortunate act that flies in the face of political sensibilities.

A further need is for military leaders to adapt to the contemporary reality of “fourth generation warfare: . . . [a] political and not a military struggle.”⁵² In fact, everything about contemporary warfare has a political component, and military leaders must apply themselves to understand and plan for the political dimensions of conflict and security. These dimensions require advanced specialized training and assignments to billets where military members can gain experience in political settings and the opportunity to practice political skills. This might include personnel exchanges with interagency partners. Such contact would make it easier for military officers to take orders from civilian executives, whose department may be the “lead government agent” in particular contingencies. In a similar vein, as Eliot Cohen points out, civilian leaders should take the initiative in “prodding” military leaders with probing questions to discern the advisability of their operations.⁵³ Finally, the military must address its definition and its vision of victory. The political requirements of a conflict may dictate that success be a matter of negotiation, treaty, or UN resolution rather than the defeat of a military force or the surrender of opposing commanders.

Finally, the political realities of the contemporary security environment require that civilian leaders establish political expectations and end states. “The military man has the right to expect political guidance from the statesman. Civilian control exists when there is this proper subordination of an autonomous profession to the ends of policy.”⁵⁴ But in order for this appropriate subordination to take place, civilian leaders must clearly state what the “ends of policy” are. They do not always do so, for a number of reasons. Policies may shift over time as a result of victory on the battlefield or shifts in political will at home. Political leaders may hesitate to communicate clear expectations, aware that they will be held accountable by their constituencies. Coalition considerations may hinder the development and communication of clear political guidance. Whatever the cause, lack of guidance from political leaders results in confusion on the battlefield and

the squandering of resources. Sir Basil Henry Liddell Hart reminds us of a precious truth: “The object in war is to attain a better peace—even if only from your own point of view. Hence it is essential to conduct war with constant regard to the peace you desire.”⁵⁵

In the end, General MacArthur’s words, written after he had been relieved of his Korean command, are instructive: “The supremacy of the civil over the military is fundamental to the American system of government, and is wholeheartedly accepted by every officer and soldier in the military establishment.”⁵⁶ Whether our military is drawn into political engagement through the constitutional form of government or as a result of the missions it must undertake in pursuit of global security, and whatever the decisions of the nation’s civilian leaders, the American military is committed to that constitutional form of government and the supremacy of the civilian over the military. As Huntington so forcefully stated, in the U.S. system the rightness or wrongness of civilian policy “does not concern the military man. He must assume that policy is ‘the representative of all the interests of the whole community’ and obey it as such.”⁵⁷

The opening paragraph of this article cited continuing questions regarding the nature of civil-military relations in the United States and the constitutional system created through the wisdom of the founders. This discussion and the ongoing dialogue between our civilian and military leaders regarding the nature of that relationship are indeed evidence of the vitality of our constitutional system and of the theory that Samuel P. Huntington so thoughtfully formulated.

NOTES

1. Andrew R. Milburn, “Commentary: Breaking Ranks—Dissent and the Military Professional,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 59 (4th Quarter 2010), pp. 101–107; Mackubin Thomas Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations after 9/11: Renegotiating the Civil-Military Bargain* (New York: Continuum, 2011). The other works mentioned are cited below.
2. Quote from Barry McCaffrey, foreword to *American Civil-Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era*, ed. Suzanne Nielsen and Don M. Snider (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2009), p. xiii.
3. Fareed Zakaria, “Remembering Samuel Huntington,” *Foreign Policy.com*, 5 January 2011.
4. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century* (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. xiii.
5. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Boston: Belknap of Harvard Univ. Press, 1957) [hereafter SPH, *Soldier and State*], p. 2.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
9. Samuel P. Huntington, “Civilian Control and the Constitution,” *American Political Science Review*, no. 3 (1956) [hereafter SPH, “Civilian Control”], pp. 676–99.
10. SPH, *Soldier and State*.
11. SPH, “Civilian Control,” p. 690.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 679.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 681.

14. The militia clauses further divide control of the military between the national government and the state governments.
15. SPH, *Soldier and State*, p. 177.
16. These battles are dutifully recorded in James R. Locher III, *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon* (College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press Consortium, 2004).
17. Bob Woodward, *Obama's War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010). "McChrystal's comments marked a seminal moment for the White House staff. What better proof that the military was on a search-and-destroy mission aimed at the president? . . . On top of that, the military was out campaigning, closing off his choices, and the White House was losing control of the public narrative" (pp. 194–95).
18. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Common Defense* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1961) [hereafter SPH, *Common Defense*], p. 378.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 417.
20. Woodward, *Obama's War*, p. 338. Woodward's book serves as a history of civil-military relations in the first two years of the Obama administration.
21. Richard H. Kohn, "Building Trust: Civil Military Behaviors for Effective National Security," in *American Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Nielsen and Snider, p. 274.
22. SPH, *Common Defense*, p. 2.
23. Pauletta Otis, "Religion and War in the Twenty-First Century," in *Religion and Security: The New Nexus in International Relations*, ed. Robert A. Seiple and Dennis R. Hoover (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), p. 14.
24. Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999), p. 464.
25. Jeffrey Record, "Why the Strong Lose," *Parameters* (Winter 2005), p. 29.
26. Mark Perry, *Partners in Command* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), p. 285.
27. John F. Burns, "U.K. Documents Show Friction with U.S. on Iraq," *New York Times*, 24 November 2009.
28. John Ingham, "Italians Paid Taliban Not to Attack Them," *Express*, 17 October 2009.
29. C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars, Their Principles and Practice*, 3rd ed. (London: Harrison and Sons, 1906), p. 49.
30. U.S. Defense Dept., *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2010), pp. 42–43.
31. Woodward, *Obama's War*, p. 354.
32. Thomas Hammes, "Rethinking the Principles of War," in *Rethinking the Principles of War*, ed. Anthony D. McIvor (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2005), pp. 273–77.
33. Eliot Cohen et al., "Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (March–April 2006), p. 50. See also U.S. Joint Staff, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, Joint Publication 3-24 (Washington, D.C.: 5 October 2009), p. III-13, available at www.dtic.mil/.
34. Hew Strachen, "Strategy or Alibi? Obama, McChrystal and the Operational Level of War," *Survival* 52, no. 5 (29 September 2010), pp. 157–82.
35. Quotes from, respectively, SPH, *Soldier and State*, p. 79, and "Civilian Control," p. 678.
36. Forest Pogue, *Education of a General* (New York: Viking, 1963), p. 280.
37. Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), p. 208.
38. "Respect for [the American people]—and for our oath—demands that we continue to remain an apolitical instrument of the state. That means being apolitical in our acts and in our words, whether outside the wardroom, on the flightline, within the barracks, or in the halls of the Pentagon. Over nine years of close quarter combat has changed many aspects of what we do. It must not change who or what we are as a professional, disciplined force"; M. G. Mullen, *CJCS Guidance for 2011* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Staff), p. 7, available at www.jcs.mil/.
39. Strachen, "Strategy or Alibi?," pp. 164–65.
40. Record, "Why the Strong Lose," p. 24.
41. SPH, *Soldier and State*, pp. 387–90.
42. Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 363.
43. Roy K. Flint, "The Truman-MacArthur Conflict: Dilemmas of Civil-Military Relations

- in the Nuclear Age,” in *The United States Military under the Constitution of the United States, 1789–1989*, ed. Richard Kohn (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1985), p. 225.
44. SPH, *Soldier and State*, pp. 387–90.
45. Strachen, “Strategy or Alibi?,” p. 165.
46. John T. Fishel, “Little Wars, Small Wars, LIC, OOTW, the GAP, and Things That Go Bump in the Night,” *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement Journal* 46, nos. 3/4 (Winter 1995), pp. 372–98.
47. Strachen, “Strategy or Alibi?,” p. 167.
48. “Stability Operations,” Department of Defense Instruction 3000.05, 16 September 2009, available at www.dtic.mil/.
49. Nadia Schadlow and Richard Lacquement, “Winning Wars, Not Just Battles: Expanding the Military Profession to Incorporate Stability Operations,” in *American Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Nielsen and Snider, p. 131.
50. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, speech (Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kans., 11 June 2010).
51. Philip Kosnett, Political Military Counselor, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, 2009–10. Interviews by author, 2011.
52. Hammes, “Rethinking the Principles of War,” pp. 273–77.
53. Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), p. 8.
54. SPH, *Soldier and State*, p. 72.
55. B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd rev. ed. (1967; repr. Middlesex, U.K.: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 338.
56. MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, p. 393.
57. SPH, *Soldier and State*, pp. 56–58.