Inescapable: Polarization, Prestige, and the US Military in Politics

by

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how varying levels of polarization and military prestige impact the US military's political involvement. Chapter 1 first develops and exposits three central principles that guide the conduct of the civilian and military actors who practice civil-military relations. These include the principles of civilian control of the military, non-partisanship of the military institution, and non-interference of the military into certain realms of the state.

Chapter 2 presents a theory which contends that the levels of political polarization and military prestige alter the degree to which civilian and military actors adhere to these central principles of civil-military relations. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 evaluate the theory empirically by analyzing original observational data. Chapter 3 examines the publication of opinion commentary (op-eds) written by retired military officers, and Chapter 4 examines the use of military symbols, images, and actors during presidential campaign television commercials. Chapters 5 and 6 then explore the theory through different eras in US history, including the post-US Civil War period and the post-9/11 era.

The main scholarly contribution of this dissertation is the articulation of why political behaviors involving the military occur in mature democracies such as the United States, and the development of a framework to identify, measure, and assess these behaviors. This dissertation also sheds new light on the ways in which civilian actors in particular politicize the military. The main conclusion of this dissertation is that civilian and military actors adhere to the central principles of civil-military relations when polarization and military prestige exist at a moderate level. However, when both variables operate at significantly high levels, it is unlikely that civilian and military actors will obey and adhere to these central principles. The dissertation strongly suggests that a nation's military will inevitably encounter the intense social forces of polarization as a society becomes increasingly polarized.

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Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Suffice it to say, God gave me and my family the help and provision that we needed, at exactly the right time. That's what God does. He saves us. And He takes pleasure in doing it.

Contents

Chapter 1 - Framework 1
The Field of Civil-Military Relations . . . 3
Huntington and The Soldier and the State . . . 4
Critiques of Huntington . . . 8
Three Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations . . . 12
Central Principle 1: Civilian Control of the Military . . . 12
Central Principle 2: Non-Partisanship of the Military Institution . . . 15
Central Principle 3: The "Non-Interference" of the Military . . . 17
Summary of Three Central Principles of US Civil-Military Relations . . . 22
The Gap in the Scholarly Literature . . . 23
How This Dissertation Fills This Scholarly Gap . . . 28
Methodology and Overall Plan of the Dissertation . . . 29
Chapter 2 - Theory . . . 29
Chapter 3 - Retired Military Officer Opinion Commentary . . . 30
Chapter 4 - The Civilian Use of the Military in Presidential Campaign Advertisements . . . 30
Qualitative Case Studies . . . 31
Chapter 5 - Civilian and Military Leaders after the US Civil War (1865-1880) 33
Chapter 6 -Civilian and Military Leaders in the Post-9/11 Era (2001-2021) . 33
Chapter 7 - Implications and Conclusion . . . 34

Chapter 2 - Theory 35
Components of the Theory . . . 36
The DV: Political Behaviors Involving the Military . . . 36
Political Behavior by Military Actors . . . 38
Political Behavior Undertaken by Civilians . . . 45
Identifying, Operationalizing, and Evaluating Political Behaviors Involving the Military . . . 50
IV1 - Political Polarization . . . 52
Perspectives on Polarization's Causes and It's Implications . . . 53
Polarization in the US Over Time . . . 55

Why Does Polarization Matter? 58
IV2 - The Military's Prestige 59
The Centrality of the Military Institution 62
The Military's Growing Exclusivity Within American Society 65
How Polarization and Prestige Impact the Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations 71
Polarization - A "Motive" to Challenge the Principles of Civil-Military Relations 72
The Military and Race in Contemporary America 76
Prestige - An "Opportunity" to Challenge the Principles of Civil-Military Relations 82
Examples of Use of the Military to Sway Public Opinion 84
Polarization and Prestige Generate Four Types of Domestic Structures . . . 88
Low Polarization, Low Military Prestige 89
High Polarization, Low Military Prestige 90
Low Polarization, High Military Prestige 90
High Polarization, High Military Prestige 91
Hypotheses to be Tested 91
Endogeneity and Alternate Explanations 92
Endogeneity Concerns 93
Do Political Behaviors by the Military Drive Polarization? 94
Do Political Behaviors by the Military Drive Military Prestige? 95
Alternate Explanations 98
Conflict and the Threat Environment 98
Norm Change 100
Summary and Way Forward 102

Chapter 3 - When the Pen Becomes A Sword **104**
A Brief Review of the Theory 107
Methodology 109
Opinion Commentary Authored by Retired Military Officers 111
The Data 114
Analysis 116
Summary Statistics 117

What Are Retired Military Officers Writing About? 123
Is Retired Military Officer Opinion Commentary Violating the Principles of Civil-Military Relations? 128
Explaining A More Assertive Retired Military Officer Corps 135
The Substantive Importance of Polarization 142
Testing Violations of Each Central Principle Separately 143
The Interaction of Polarization and Prestige 147
Predicted Probability 149
Alternate Explanations 152
Conclusion 156
Summary 156

Chapter 4 - The Military in Campaign Ads **158**
A Brief Review of the Theory 160
Methodology 162
Veterans in the Population - A Proxy for the Variable of Military Prestige . 164
Is 'Percentage Veteran Population' A Sound Proxy for Military Prestige? . . 165
Civilian Use of Military Imagery and Actors in Campaign Ads 169
The Data 173
Analysis 174
Summary Statistics and Descriptive Data 177
Defense-Themed Ads and the Use of Military Imagery in Campaign Ads . . 177
Military Imagery in Presidential Advertisements by Type 182
The Use of Military Imagery in Primary and General Presidential Campaign Seasons 183
Are Campaign Ads Increasingly Challenging Principles of Civil-Military Relations? 185
Prominent Military Figures Appearances by Political Party 187
Violations of Civil-Military Principles by Type 189
Do Political Ads Containing Military Imagery Target Veterans? 189
Summary of Descriptive Statistics 194
Explaining Campaign Ads that Feature Explicitly Partisan Behavior by Military Figures 194
Logistic Regression 196

OLS Regression 200
Similarities and Differences Between Alternate Regression Specifications . . . 204
Predicted Probability 205
Alternate Explanations 206
Conclusion 208
Summary 208

Chapter 5 - The Military and a Reunited Republic, 1865-1880 211
Normative Political Principles and the Military in the Late 19th Century 213
Theoretical Predictions for the Post-US Civil War Era, 1865-1881 218
High Polarization and High Military Prestige 219
High Polarization and Low(er) Military Prestige 221
Part 1 - Johnson, Grant, Congress, and the Army, 1865-1868 222
High Level of Polarization, 1865-1868 223
Extremely High Level of Military Prestige, 1865-1868 226
Political Behaviors Involving the Military, 1865-1868 229
The Military as Sales Reps and Public Appeals 230
Showcasing the Troops and Electoral Swaggering 233
Brass in the Cabinet and Explicit Insubordination 235
Partisan Stacking and Selective Compliance 237
More Public Appeals 241
Summary of the 1865-1868 Period 243
Part 2 - The Army, Domestic Disturbance, and Failed Reform Efforts, 1877-1880 . 243
High Level of Polarization, 1877-1880 245
Declining Military Prestige, 1868-1877 246
Political Behaviors Involving the Military, 1877-1880 249
Opportunities Not Seized to Make Public Appeals 250
Shoulder Tapping and Limited Public Appeals 253
Civilian Political Behavior, 1877 - 1880 256
Summary of the 1877-1880 Period 259
Alternate Explanations 260
Conclusion 263

Chapter 6 - The Military After 9/11 **265**
Theoretical Predictions for the Post-9/11 Era, 2001-2021 267
Low Polarization and High Military Prestige 267
High Polarization and High Military Prestige 269
Substantiation of Environmental Characteristics, 2001 - 2021 271
Part 1 - The War in Iraq and The Revolt of the Generals, 2006 273
Political Behaviors Undertaken, 2006 274
Public Appeals 275
Grandstanding 276
Impact of Undertaken Behaviors 277
How Levels of Polarization and Prestige Shaped the Revolt of the Generals 278
The Revolt and the Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations 281
Summary of the “Revolt of the Generals” 283
Part 2 - Domestic Unrest and the US Withdrawal from Afghanistan, 2020-2021 . . 284
Increasing Polarization Between 2006 - 2021 284
Rising Polarization and the Military 287
Political Behaviors Undertaken, 2020-2021 288
Civil Unrest in May-June 2020 289
Public Appeals, 2020 291
The US Withdrawal from Afghanistan, 2021 292
A Form of Selective Obedience/Compliance, 2020-21 294
Calls for Resignation (Grandstanding) 295
Impact of Undertaken Behaviors 297
How Levels of Polarization and Prestige Shaped Political Behaviors after Domestic Civil Unrest in 2020 and the US Withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 300
Political Behaviors in 2020 and 2021 and the Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations 303
Summary of Political Behavior Involving the Military Undertaken in 2020-2021 305
Comparison and Contrast of “The Revolt” and Political Activity Undertaken in 2020-2021 307
Comprehensive Politicization 307
Extreme Political Activity 309

Significant Potential for Civil-Military Conflict . . . 310
Impact on Foreign Policy . . . 311
Comparison of Case Studies . . . 312
Conclusion . . . 313

Chapter 7 - Conclusion **315**
Integrating the Argument . . . 315
Findings and Results . . . 317
The Roles of Polarization and Military Prestige . . . 317
The Presence of Unique Domestic Environments that Shape Civil-Military Relations . . . 319
Limitations of this Study . . . 320
Methodological Approach . . . 320
Theoretical Approach . . . 322
Generalizability . . . 323
Implications of this Study . . . 326
The Domestic Environment Matters . . . 326
The Principles of Civil-Military Relations Require a Healthy Environment to Flourish . . . 329
Avenues of Future Research . . . 332
Conclusion . . . 335

Appendix to Chapter 3 **336**
Word and Data-Base Searches to Obtain Data . . . 336
Observations Violating Principles of Civil-Military Relations . . . 337
Main Regression Results Using Strict Levels of Polarization. . . . 340
Robustness Tests . . . 345
Robustness to the Trump Presidency Years . . . 345
Robustness Checks to Interaction of Polarization and Military Prestige . . . 347
Endogeneity Checks . . . 349
Acknowlegements . . . 351

Appendix to Chapter 4 **352**

Note on the Campaign Media Analysis Group and its Role in the Data 352

Descriptive Statistics Overview Table 352

Additional Regression Tables 353

Logistic Regression, without Election Cycle - Campaign Season Fixed Effects 354

OLS Regression Results, without Election Cycle - Campaign Season Fixed Effects 354

Data Acknowledgement and Disclaimers 357

2000 357

2004 357

2008 357

2012 358

2016 358

Other Acknowledgements 358

References **359**

List of Tables

1 Central Principles of US Civil-Military Relations . . . 23

2 Political Behaviors Undertaken by Military Actors . . . 43

3 Political Behaviors Undertaken by Civilian Actors . . . 49

4 Types of Domestic Environments for Civil-Military Relations and Their Impact on Political Behaviors and the Conduct of Civil-Military Relations . . . 89

5 Descriptive Statistics for Author Rank and Yearly Number of Publications Breakdown of Observations by Author Sex and Service Affiliation . . . 117

6 Breakdown of Observations by Author Sex . . . 118

7 Breakdown of Observations by Author Service Affiliation . . . 119

8 Categorical Values of the Topic of Retired Military Officer Public Commentary 124

9 Publication Breakdown by Subject . . . 125

10 Regression Results Using Smoothed Values of Polarization, Chapter 3 . . . 141

11 Regression Results: Log Odds of Breaking Individual Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations . . . 144

12 Regression Results: Log Odds of Retired Military Officer Commentary Violating the Principle of Non-Partisanship without Controlling for Election Year 146

13 Interacting the Levels of Prestige and Polarization . . . 148

14 Existing Variables from WiscAd and WMP . . . 176

15 Additional Variables / Anticipated Coding Scheme . . . 178

16 Percentage of Media Market Population that is a Veteran . . . 189

17 Top 5/Bottom 5 Media Markets By Percentage of Veterans in the Population (2018 Estimate) . . . 191

18 Logistic Regression Results, Chapter 4 . . . 197

19 OLS Regression Results, Chapter 4 . . . 201

20 Types of Domestic Environments for Civil-Military Relations and Their Impact on Political Behaviors . . . 221

21 Political Behaviors Involving the Military, 1865-1868 . . . 244

22 Presidential Candidates, Post Civil-War Era . . . 257

23 Political Behaviors Involving the Military, 1877-1881 . . . 260

24 Types of Domestic Environments for Civil-Military Relations and their Impact on Political Behaviors and the Conduct of Civil-Military Relations . . . 268

25 Political Behaviors During the Revolt of the Generals, 2006 . . . 283

26 Political Behaviors Involving the Military, 2020-2021 306

27 Op-Eds authored by Retired Military Officers that Strongly Criticized Civilian Leaders, Expressed Partisan Positions, or Addressed Topics Outside of Military Expertise, 1979-2020 337

28 Main Regression Results (Non-Smoothed Levels of Polarization), Chapter 3 . 341

29 Regression Results: Log Odds of Breaking Individual Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations 342

30 Regression Results: Log Odds of Retired Military Officer Commentary Violating the Principle of Non-Partisanship without Controlling for Election Year 344

31 Regression Results: Robustness Checks (Data Cutoff Thru Years Near and During Trump Administration) 346

32 Checking for Impacts of Interacting Prestige with Polarization 348

33 Regression Results: Endogeneity Checks (Regress Military Prestige on Polarization and an Instance of Retired Military Actor Opinion Commentary Breaking Any Central Principle / Non-Partisanship in Particular) 350

34 Summary Statistics, The Military in Presidential Campaign Advertisements, 2000-2016 353

35 Logistic Regression Results, Chapter 4 Appendix, Without Election Cycle - Campaign Season Fixed Effects 355

36 OLS Regression Results, Chapter 4 Appendix, Without Election Cycle - Campaign Season Fixed Effects 356

List of Figures

1 Distinction Between Civil and Military Spheres According to Huntington (Left), Critics of Huntington (Middle), and an Unrestrained Military (Right) 19

2 The Impact of Polarization and Military Prestige on Political Behaviors Involving the Military . . . 37

3 Liberal-Conservative Partisan Polarization by Chamber, 1880-Present 55

4 Affective Polarization and various 'Feeling Thermometer' Scores in the US, 1978-2020 . . . 57

5 Budgets for US Departments of Defense and State, 1962-2016 66

6 Public Trust in American Institutions Over Time . . . 71

7 Endogeneity Concerns Regarding the Relationship between Military Prestige and Behaviors that Violate the Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations 96

8 Public Trust (L) and Polarization (R), 1979-2020 . . . 110

9 Opinion Pieces authored by Retired Military Officers Broken Down by Author Rank, 1979-2020 . . . 120

10 Opinion Pieces Authored by Retired Military Officers Broken Down by Newspaper Source, 1979-2020 . . . 121

11 Annual Number of Op-Eds and/or Letters to the Editor Authored by Retired Military Officers and Published in Major US Newspapers (WSJ, NYT, WaPo, USA Today, LA Times), 1979-2020 . . . 122

12 Proportion of Opinion Publications authored by Retired Military Officers by Topic Area, 1979-2020 . . . 126

13 Instances of Retired Military Officer Commentary that Violate the Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations, 1979-2020 . . . 131

14 Proportion of Annual Retired Military Officer Commentary that Violates the Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations, 1979-2020 . . . 132

15 Proportion of Op-Eds Authored by Retired Military Officers That Violate Any Principles of Civil-Military Relations, 1979-2020 . . . 134

16 Polarization Estimates and Smoothed Trends, 1978-2020 . . . 136

17 Predicted Probability of House Polarization Levels on Retired Military Officer Opinion Publications Violating Principles of Civil-Military Relations 149

18 Predicted Probability of Affective Polarization Levels on Retired Military Officer Opinion Publications Violating Principles of Civil-Military Relations . . 150

19 Public Trust (L) and Polarization (R), 2000-2016 . . . 164

20 Savell and McMahon (2020), Per Capita Troops Serving in Post-9/11 Wars, By State . . . 167

21 Veteran Percentage of the Population, by US County 170

22 Portion of Defense-Themed Ad Airings, Airings with Military Imagery, and Airings that Show Military Imagery in Non-Defense-Themed Ads Across Presidential TV Campaign Ads, 2000-2016 179

23 Proportion of Presidential Campaign Ad Airings Displaying Military Imagery, by Type of Imagery 182

24 Proportion of Presidential Campaign Ad Airings Displaying Military Imagery, by Election Type (Primary and General) 184

25 Proportion of Campaign Ad Airings Featuring a Prominent Military Figure Appearance 187

26 Proportion of Campaign Ad Airings Featuring Attacks, Endorsements, and Addressing Outside Topics by Military Figures 190

27 Veteran Percentage of the Population, by Media Market 192

28 Prominence of Military Imagery, Military Actors, and Behaviors in Presidential Campaign TV Advertising by Percentage of Veterans in the Population, by Media Market, 2000-2016 193

29 Predicted Probability of Parties/Candidates Airing Political Advertisements that Feature A Military Figure Endorsing Candidates 206

30 Public Trust (L) and Polarization (R), 2001-2021 272

Chapter 1 - Framework

> *"No soldier gets mixed up in civilian matters, for his aim is to please his commanding officer."* — 2 Timothy 2:4 (Greek Inter-linear Translation, est. AD 64/65)

Scholars, civilians, diplomats, and military leaders regularly discuss why and how militaries intervene in politics. These discussions, moreover, often include the theoretical question of whether military actors *should* intervene in politics, to what degree, and why.

Though it would be impossible to list all of the contemporary instances in which the US military has become entangled in politics, several stand out. From former President Trump's appointment of several retired military officers to key postings within his administration (Rosa Brooks 2016b), the removal of Navy Captain Brent Crozier for leaking a letter to the press in which he castigated the chain of command's response to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Press 2020), and the remarkable panoply of senior retired military officers excoriating former President Trump after threatening to use active duty forces to quiet protests and riots in cities across America during the summer of 2020 (Risa Brooks and Robinson 2020b), there is no shortage of events that illustrate the many challenges of dealing with the military in polarizing times.

In this dissertation, I theorize about the causes of political behavior involving the military, and I measure these behaviors. The central argument made throughout this dissertation is that the patterns of political behavior and the actors who engage in them are largely influenced by key features of the domestic environment in which these actors operate. In particular, I argue that the degree of *political polarization* prevalent in society, and the degree to which the military is *prestigious*, shape the ways in which military and civilian actors behave politically.

In making this argument, I build upon a general "motives" and "opportunities" framework first advanced by Finer (1962) and later by Taylor (2003) to describe military

intervention in politics (Finer 1962; Taylor 2003). I claim that the relative levels of polarization and prestige serve similar functions in that each influences the degree to which both sets of actors adhere to what I define as the the central principles of civil-military relations, which are derived and explained later in this chapter. By conducting a systematic exploration of the impacts of polarization and military prestige on civil-military relations, across time and within several domestic contexts, this dissertation sheds light on what is, I argue, a recognized yet under-specified reality: civilian and military leaders are shaped by particular changes in the domestic environment. These changes, in turn, shape the conduct of civil-military relations.

Examining the impacts of polarization and military prestige on political behaviors that involve the military is an important undertaking from both normative and empirical perspectives. From a normative perspective, this study helps those who study and practice civil-military relations better understand why the interplay between civilian and military leaders varies over time. While scholars often (rightfully) examine the particular leaders who are involved in crises such as wars, as well as the contexts in which crises such as wars take place, this dissertation contends that we need to examine how and why broader political factors fundamentally impact the conduct of civil-military relations.[1]

If, for a moment, the conduct of civil-military relations can be viewed analogously to a sporting event, then the players who take the field are the civilian and military actors who engage in the conduct of civil-military relations. A significant part of this dissertation examines the stadium and the playing field – *the context* – in which the players perform. Just as different weather conditions (for example, snow or rain during a football game) influence how athletes perform, so too do changing domestic conditions influence how civilian and military actors behave.

Yet there is much at stake empirically as well. It is one thing to suspect that high polarization and high military prestige make the conduct of civil-military relations more

[1]For just two scholarly examples of civil-military relations narratives that are set within the context of war, see McMaster (1997) on the Vietnam War, and Kaiser (2014) on World War Two.

challenging, but another to demonstrate how much more challenging, and in what ways these challenges emerge.

This introductory chapter proceeds in three main parts. First, it introduces the general field of civil-military relations. In doing so, this chapter identifies and exposits what I argue are three central principles of American civil-military relations that have been in place throughout the post-World War Two era. These principles are that of civilian control of the military, the non-partisanship of the military institution, and what I define as the principle of non-interference of the military into certain realms of state policy making. The second part of this introductory chapter describes how this dissertation fits within the scholarly literature and the gaps it intends to fill. The third and final part of this chapter then describes the general plan of the overall dissertation and its methodological approach.

The Field of Civil-Military Relations

Truly one of the interdisciplinary topics of scholarly research, the study of civil-military relations spans many academic sub-fields, including political science, history, sociology, and ethics. The study of civil-military relations also covers an incredibly rich and immense set of questions, including the relationship between militaries and governments; the interaction between militaries and societies; the ingredients of strategic and military effectiveness; and the occurrence of coups, to name just a few. Within the field of political science in particular, one of the areas of civil-military relations that is most studied is the relationship between prominent state officials and military leaders. Indeed, the relationship between these actors is what one scholar has termed, “leadership at the state’s apex” (Brooks, Risa 2019, 380), as it is here that numerous and weighty decisions that impact a state’s security are made, including whether to go to war, how to form and implement effective strategy, how to prepare for the next conflict, and how large the military and its budget should be.

In the most basic sense, the study of civil-military relations wrestles with a question

that Peter Feaver has called a "paradox": how a state ensures that its military is strong enough to defeat threats without posing a threat to the state itself (P. Feaver 1996, 150). The challenge of implementing civil-military relations is simple yet profound, for as Feaver notes, "just as the military must protect the polity from enemies, so must it conduct its own affairs so as to not destroy or prey on the society it is intended to protect" (P. Feaver 1999, 214). As a result of these twin facts – that a state needs a military to defeat external threats, and that a military must possess some degree of coercive force in order to do so – the practice of civil-military relations is always filled with some degree of tension.

A number of scholars have offered various solutions for reducing this inherent tension, but none has been more lasting or consequential than the late Samuel Huntington, whose 1957 work, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, often serves as a starting point in the study of civil-military relations. Although Huntington's theory has endured important and substantive critiques over the years (for example, see Janowitz 1960; Finer 1962; Cohen 2003; P. Feaver 2003; Risa Brooks 2020), it is essential to briefly exposit Huntington's ideas for achieving effective civil-military relations.

In the section to follow, I briefly summarize Huntington's argument and logic, as well as several prominent critiques of his work. The purpose of summarizing both Huntington *and* his critics is to argue that in spite of the important differences between them, Huntington and his critics share much common ground. In particular, Huntington and his critics share a regard for three central principles – standards – to help foster healthy and effective civil-military relations. Furthermore, these aspirational principles hold normative implications for how civilian and military actors conduct themselves in the political arena.

Huntington and The Soldier and the State

Though it is not always framed as such, *The Soldier and the State* is a book that lies at the very intersection of domestic politics and international relations. Indeed, the

fundamental problem that Huntington sets out to solve is how liberal democracies such as the United States can balance the simultaneous demands of maintaining military security and its domestic liberal political character. Writing in the wake of the Korean War, when the danger posed to the United States by the Cold War was quite tangible, Huntington argued that American security requirements constituted a "functional imperative" in that they required the US to maintain a military that is sufficiently strong and capable of defeating external threats (Huntington 1957, 1–3).

At the same time, Huntington argued that the liberal character of American society generated a "societal imperative" such that the pursuit of American security requirements could never cause the US to deviate from its liberal political ideology in fundamental ways, including abandonment of the principle of civilian control of the military (Huntington 1957, 1–3). In this way, the puzzle Huntington sets out to solve is essentially an earlier framing of the "problematique" pointed out by Feaver decades later: Huntington aims to solve the tension of rendering the military strong enough to protect the United States from the enormous threat posed by the Cold War, yet simultaneously subservient and obedient to civilian power (P. Feaver 1996). Huntington forcefully argued that achieving the simultaneous demands of maintaining the state's security and it's liberal political character was made more difficult by the fact that the American military officer corps was different from the rest of American society in several important ways – a claim that is not without controversy. In particular, Huntington asserted that the military officer corps held to a distinct "mind" and "ethic" that viewed conflict as part of a "universal pattern throughout nature," and thus, that "the military view of man is…decidedly pessimistic" (Huntington 1957, 62–63). This mindset, argued Huntington, clashed with the generally liberal views cherished by American society, views which emphasized the "natural relation" of mankind as one of peace rather than war (Huntington 1957, 90). In short, Huntington acknowledged that a gulf existed between America's liberal political character and the general ethic held by its military officer corps, a gulf that Huntington believed accounted for the strong

suspicion and skepticism Americans have held for standing military forces since its founding (Huntington 1957, 143–51).

Huntington argued that these two requirements – securing the United States during the Cold War and maintaining America's liberal political character – posed a fundamentally unique problem for the conduct of American civil-military relations. From the perspective of national security, the United States required sizable standing military forces. At the same time, the United States public would never agree to discard or abandon its liberal political essence.

Huntington's solution for solving these twin dilemmas involved the adoption of a scheme he called "objective civilian control" of the military (Huntington 1957, 83). Objective civilian control required civilian political leaders to grant the military a high degree of professional autonomy, which, according to Huntington, would facilitate the military's professional expertise and skills as well as its eschewal of partisan politics. This claim, it should be noted, is not without controversy, and is discussed later in this chapter.

In practice, instituting "objective civilian control" of the military requires recognition by both military and civilian actors that each operates within a distinct sphere of figurative territory (Huntington 1957, 83–85). Civilian leaders are not to encroach into areas that are the military's purview, which would damage the military's professional autonomy, and conversely, military leaders should not enter the world of partisan politics, as doing so subverts civilian control and the apolitical nature of the military.

A key aspect of Huntingtonian logic that undergirds the concept of objective civilian control centers on the US military officer corps as a professional body. According to Huntington, the nation's corps of military officers constitute a profession in that they, like the members of other professions such as law, medicine, and the clergy, possess several unique attributes, including that of "expertise, responsibility, and corporateness" (Huntington 1957, 8–10). By expertise, Huntington had in mind the idea that military professionals possess unique "knowledge and skills" in the arena of warfare (Huntington

1957, 8–10) and, using Harold Lasswell's terms, are experts in the "management of violence" (Lasswell quoted in Huntington 1957, 11). Regarding the attribute of responsibility, Huntington argued that the military officer corps is to employ such expertise only in the service and "at the direction" of the state (Nielsen 2012, 370). And with respect to the attribute of corporateness, Huntington viewed the military officer corps as a group that certifies its own leaders and polices itself, or in the words of Nielsen, "as a distinct, bureaucratized body, with a common identity fostered through shared educational, training, and service experiences" (Nielsen 2012, 370).

Among the many reasons why the concept of a profession matters is the fundamental idea that professions must be nurtured and sustained. They do not automatically flourish. In other words, insofar as the military is in fact a profession rather than merely another type of job, the military as a profession is better suited to develop and sustain itself when it has the latitude to exist as such.[2] The concept of objective civilian control, argued Huntington, would provide such an environment.

Importantly, Huntington also argued that civilians would welcome the concept of objective civilian control, as it would render a military that was exceedingly skilled and capable yet also one that obeyed orders and stayed out of politics.[3] Over the long term, a posture rooted in objective control of the military, so claimed Huntington, would lead to military excellence without tainting the liberal political character of the country, all while

[2]Many scholars of civil-military relations still emphasize this point, particularly at times when the military downsizes or faces significant economic constraints. For one scholar's warning regarding this dynamic, see D. M. Snider (2012).

[3]Huntington asserts that the development of the US military as a profession largely occurred after the US Civil War, and was largely the function of the geographical and social isolation experienced by the military officer corps. Several military historians reject this claim, however, and instead argue that the US military exhibited real signs of professionalization well before the post-US Civil War Era. For instance, Skelton (1992) argues that the US military made substantive strides towards professionalization beginning after the War of 1812 (Skelton 1992; see also Heiss 2012). Grandstaff (1998) as well as Connelly (2005) take a more nuanced view, arguing that the process of military professionalization occurred in two distinct waves during the 19th Century, one before and one after the Civil War (Grandstaff 1998; Connelly 2005). In Chapter 5 of this dissertation, which involves the post-US Civil War military and its leaders, I substantiate that even in the process of professionalizing, military leaders and officers in particular both understood and assented to the importance of basic principles of civil-military relations, including that of civilian control and an avoidance of engaging in overtly partisan politics. For one military historian's analysis of Huntington, see Coffman (1991).

maintaining the principle of civilian control of the military (Huntington 1957, 83–85).

Critiques of Huntington

Critics have assailed Huntington's concept of *objective civilian control* for years, and it would be difficult to list all of those critiques here. However, perhaps their key theme centers around the stark separation between military and political spheres (autonomy) that Huntington favored. In levying this critique, Huntington's critics often point to and assert Clausewitz's famous dictum that war can be thought of as the "mere continuation of policy by other means" (Clausewitz 1976, 69, 605). Because the military is an inherently political institution that cannot exist and operate absent from political influence, so contend the critics of Huntington, the concept of objective civilian control, which relies on a rather significant degree of separation between civilian and military spheres, is flawed from the beginning. In other words, the inherent interconnectedness between politics and war, these critics of Huntington claim, renders the idea of a military exercising professional autonomy free from politicians not only unwise, but practically impossible.

Critics of Huntingtonian theory also argue that in democracies, because of the principle of civilian control of the military, civilian leaders are legally and authoritatively superior to military leaders. Thus, civilians – not military leaders – hold ultimate responsibility for what militaries do and fail to do. Eliot Cohen forcefully illustrates, with examples ranging from Lincoln to Churchill, that the world's greatest heads of state have never abdicated responsibility during wartime, and at exceptional moments, have even reached far into the details of operations to ensure that militaries understood and implemented their directives (Cohen 2003). Peter Feaver has parsimoniously captured the essence of this critique of Huntington by noting that the principle of civilian supremacy over the military means that "civilians have the right to be wrong" (P. Feaver 2011, 117; 2003).

Other critics of Huntington have arrived at a similar conclusion, although by focusing

on the practical shortfalls of Huntington's theory. For instance, those such as Brooks (2020) warns that the pursuit of Huntingtonian theory leads some military officers to develop "blind spots" such that these officers engage in detrimental political actions by rationalizing that because they are "professional" officers, their actions are and always will be apolitical by default (Risa Brooks 2020, 17). Others warn that the facilitation of a strict separation between military and civilian spheres in practice, and especially during wartime, fails to recognize the degree to which military and civilian spheres must overlap in order to develop, implement, and achieve the goals of national security policy (Rapp 2015).

Despite these insightful and important concerns and critiques of Huntington, Huntington continues to retain an outsized influence in the study and practice of civil-military relations. As Nielsen has argued, any reputable course taught on civil-military relations likely includes Huntington's *The Soldier and the State*, not only because of the "boldness and ambition" of Huntington's work, but also because Huntington was truly the first serious scholar who sought to develop a comprehensive theory to help steer the conduct of civil-military relations (Nielsen 2012, 369). Moreover, many of the issues and discussions within US civil-military relations today – how to maintain civilian control of the military, how separate should the military be from society, how much overlap between civilian and military spheres should there be – are all topics that Huntington, albeit perhaps inconclusively, addressed in some way.

Yet in my view, there is also much that Huntington and his critics agree upon. In particular, Huntington and his critics agree on the centrality of three central principles that should govern civil-military relations, even if these critics disagree with Huntington concerning how these principles are best achieved and maintained. These three central principles are the principle of civilian control, the principle of non-partisanship, and the principle of "non-interference" of the military into certain areas or realms of state policy making.

The most obvious principle upon which Huntington and his critics both agree is that

of civilian control of the military. To see this, consider that one of the two chief purposes of Huntington's formulation of the concept of *objective control* in the first place is to ensure civilian control of the military (the other being the ability of the military to defeat external threats). At the same time, critics of Huntington assail his argument precisely on the grounds that the concept he offers fails to ensure civilian control of the military. For example, Eliot Cohen's descriptive theory of civil-military relations, which he terms "the unequal dialogue" (Cohen 2003, 208–24), and Feaver's contention that "civilians have a right to be wrong" (P. Feaver 2011, 117; 2003), both clearly identify the principle of civilian control as the most essential characteristic of healthy civil-military relations.[4]

A second principle that both Huntington and his critics affirm is the non-partisan character of the military. Huntington's critics explicitly acknowledge this. Nielsen, for instance, points out that "Huntington's principle of objective control has both merits and shortcomings. On the positive side, it preserves democratic control, speaks to the importance of an apolitical military and protects military professionalism" (Nielsen 2012, 375). And Cohen cautions against an outright dismissal of Huntingtonian thought, warning that "to reject Huntington's ideas of sequestering issues of policy from those of military administration or operations is to open the way to a military that is politicized and, by virtue of its size and discipline, a potentially dominant actor in the conduct of foreign and internal affairs" (Cohen 2003, 264). And in article appropriately titled, "Military Officers: Political without Partisanship," Mackubin Thomas Owens echoes a similar point made by both Brooks (2020) and Rapp (2015), namely, that military officers need to engage with and understand the political process, but "without becoming swept up in partisan politics" (Owens 2015, 97). To be sure, Huntington and his critics disagree on exactly how stark the separation between figurative military and political spheres should be, yet both share the

[4]Cohen argues strongly that the most successful wartime civil-military relations have been those that have involved "an unequal dialogue – a dialogue, in that both sides expressed their views bluntly, indeed, sometimes offensively, and not once but repeatedly – and unequal, in that the final authority of the civilian leader was unambiguous and unquestioned. . . "(Cohen 2003, 209). Cohen, as is the case with other scholars of civil-military relations who have critiqued Huntington, is concerned that Huntington's concept of objective control prevents civilian leaders from exercising appropriate oversight of the military.

normative belief that the military avoid inappropriate partisan political entanglement.

Finally, there is a third principle that both Huntington and his critics affirm. However, this principle – that of the *non-interference* of the military – is one that is implied rather than explicitly stated. The principle of *non-interference* of the military centers on the notion that the military should not interfere or seek to influence all realms of state policy making. Even though Huntington's critics take issue with the rather stark separation of civil and military spheres Huntington advocated for, I would argue that both Huntington and his critics agree that the military should not take on the role of the statesman or stateswoman. Directionality and authority are concepts that lay at the heart of the principle of non-interference. Civilian leaders may, at times, become involved in the details of military operations, and it is their right and purview to do so. Huntington and his critics agree, however, that the same is not true of military leaders: military actors may not, of their own accord, involve themselves in issues or topic areas that are not part of the military domain. Huntington and his critics alike would be against the idea of a military dictatorship, for example, in which the military runs all of government. For instance, Cohen warns that dismissing Huntington's theory, especially "in states with less-established democratic traditions *(than the United States)*. . . would open the path to direct military intervention in politics" (Cohen 2003, 264, italics mine).

In summary, there is much that Samuel Huntington and his critics disagree about concerning civil-military relations. Huntington advocated for a practical separation of political and military spheres to the fullest degree possible, on the basis that the military – as a profession – will be interested in furthering its own autonomy. His critics, on the other hand, point out that there are limits to how separate military affairs and politics can theoretically reside, and therefore, that the military profession can never exist absent the political context. In spite of these critiques, Huntington and his critics share a concern for at least three overarching principles of civil-military relations. The first is the principle of civilian control of the military. The second is the principle of non-partisanship, which

states that the military, even if it is a political actor, should avoid partisan influence and entanglement as much as possible. The third principle is the principle of non-interference, which speaks to the idea of the military not interfering in realms of state policy making that are entirely unrelated or indirectly related to the conduct of military affairs.

Three Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations

In this section, I define and exposit in greater detail each of these three central principles of civil-military relations. I argue that these three principles constitute a *baseline* set of standards that inform, guide, and facilitate the conduct of healthy and harmonious civil-military relations. Furthermore, both actor types, military and civilian, have a role in adhering to these principles. When when one or more of these central principles is disregarded or violated by either set of actors, a state's civil-military relationship is likely to be discordant in some way.

Though it is not a central aspect of the argument that I make in this dissertation, these "principles of civil-military relations" are the exception - rather than the norm - in US history. They emerge from the theoretical and practical expectations of a professional military operating in the post-World War Two era (hence their derivation from Huntington, his critics, and military officers who lived in the mid-late 20th Century).

Central Principle 1: Civilian Control of the Military

The first central principle of civil-military relationships is that of civilian control of the military. It is listed first deliberately, as it is the central component by which the health of civil-military relationships, particularly in democracies, is maintained. Without strong adherence to the principle of civilian control of the military, it is doubtful that a democratic state's civil-military relationship can be healthy or successful in the long run. So, what is civilian control of the military, and how does one know if military and civilian actors within a state are adhering to it as a principle of civil-military relations?

On the surface, the principle of civilian control is fairly straightforward: civilians should be in charge of the military. Yet a significant scholarship has pointed out that focusing on coups or other extreme forms of insubordinate military behavior fails to recognize the myriad other ways in which militaries often challenge the principle of civilian control (Croissant et al. 2010; see also Cohen 2003, 242; Beliakova 2021). Finer, for instance, warns that militaries can and will violate the principle of civilian control through "acts of commission, but also by acts of omission" (Finer 1962, 20). For this reason, Feaver argues that observers interested in the health of the principle of civilian control should examine the "patterns" of civilian control, rather than merely looking for whether the principle exists within a state (P. Feaver 1996, 167). While civilian control may initially appear to be a straightforward concept, it is actually quite subtle. Scholars share the idea that civilian control more accurately refers to the "relative political power" that exists between a nation's armed forces and its civilian leaders (Bruneau and Croissant 2019, 7; see also Risa Brooks 2008). Brooks, Golby, and Urben argue more precisely that civilian control refers to "the extent to which political leaders can realize the goals the American people elected them to accomplish" (Risa Brooks, Golby, and Urben 2021, 65).

Thus, in my view, the degree to which the military adheres to the principle of civilian control involves both *outcomes* (does the military do what it is told?) and *process* (what is the spirit of the military as it does what it is told?). The focus on process is important and often overlooked. Military leaders may ultimately obey the orders of their bosses, but along the way engage in a range of behaviors that thwart, stymie, and/or frustrate the will of elected civilian leaders.

The behaviors or actions that challenge the principle of civilian control range from the very subtle to the very obvious. For example, as Brooks, Golby, and Urben argue, military officers may choose to share little information with civilians about an issue, or they may comply with a civilian directive at a leisurely pace rather than with spirited initiative (Risa Brooks, Golby, and Urben 2021). In these types of cases, it is possible that civilian leaders

and the public will never know that the military is willfully challenging the principle of civilian control! Other types of behaviors, as discussed more in Chapter 2, are far more obvious. For example, an Army general who writes an opinion piece strongly criticizing the President's foreign policy views challenges the principle of civilian control in that such a behavior likely undermines popular support for the President, and imposes some sort of political cost that the President has to contend with, particularly if the military officer who authored the piece is well known and highly regarded.

Can civilian leaders also violate the principle of civilian control? I contend that they can, but that when this occurs, it is typically the long term result of failing to ensure an overall climate of civilian control, rather than the result of a single act or behavior. This is consistent with recent scholarship by Beliakova (2021), who argues that one pathway through which the "erosion" of civilian control occurs is "deference," that is, by civilians delegating too much power to the military (Beliakova 2021). Deference to the military resulting in harm could arise for a number of reasons. Perhaps civilian fail to assert themselves sufficiently during the course of a major military operation such as a war, or over the course of a lengthier time horizon. In the contemporary United States, for example, several critics have expressed concern that the principle of civilian control has been threatened for the past several years as a result of an extremely slow and politically charged confirmation process for senior civilian Department of Defense appointees, resulting in a shift in the overall balance of power within the Pentagon toward the uniformed military (Seligman and Lippman 2020).

Finally, it should be pointed out that in the United States, the principle of civilian control is embedded within the US Constitution, which effectively establishes that the principle of civilian control involves the military obeying two civilian bosses. The first is the President, who is endowed as the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces (*US Constitution* 1787, Article 2, Section 2), and the second is Congress, to which the Constitution grants powers of oversight (*US Constitution* 1787, Article 1, Section 8). From

the US military's perspective, appeasing two different bosses, who at times are at odds with each other, is a prospect that can undoubtedly be difficult.

Central Principle 2: Non-Partisanship of the Military Institution

The second central principle of democratic civil-military relations, particularly in the US context, is the principle of non-partisanship of the military institution. In general terms, the principle of non-partisanship of the military stipulates that the military not align itself – nor that it be made to align by civilians – with a particular political party or its platform. The principle of non-partisanship means in part that the military fully obeys the lawful orders of whichever political party is in office, yet it also means that the military cannot and will not identify itself, nor be made to identify by civilian leaders, as a partisan actor. Thus, both sets of actors, civilian and military, have a responsibility to maintain and adhere to the principle of non-partisanship of the military.

However, determining the degree to which civilian or military actors uphold the principle of non-partisanship in practice is a difficult undertaking, largely because it is difficult to both identify and measure what forms of behavior constitute a violation of this principle. After all, if militaries are, in fact, as Clausewitz and the critics of Huntington have contended, inherently political creatures who "serve at the pleasure" of their civilian bosses, then it stands to reason that the military will, at some point, enact the partisan policies, wishes, desires, and goals of their elected civilian leaders, who belong to a political party (Mullen 2011).

For this reason, scholars of civil-military relations have often separated the various meanings and implications of certain forms of behavior and their impact on politics. While there is no clear delineation of which forms of behavior and which contexts violate the principle of non-partisanship of the military, recent scholarship has attempted to create figurative space to allow greater acceptance – even encouragement – of military officers engaging in *some* forms of non-partisan political behavior. For instance, scholars have

argued that military officers and civilians should expect military leaders to increasingly contribute to debates about security policy on the grounds that doing so will lead to the better formulation of strategy and thus, to better national security outcomes (R. A. Brooks 2013; Owens 2015; Rapp 2015). In other words, scholars and senior military officers recognize that the military needs to be part of and embrace its role within the national security policy-making process.

Simultaneously, scholars and military officers alike recognize that other forms of behavior, such as retired military officers speaking at political conventions on behalf of political candidates, comprise blatant violations of the military's non-partisan ethic (M. Dempsey 2016). Thus, there is agreement that while there may be room for the military to engage in some political behaviors, there is a point at which other behaviors cross a figurative line such that they are not merely political, but primarily partisan in nature. It is at this juncture that such behavior becomes problematic.

Similar logic holds for civilian leaders with respect to the principle of non-partisanship of the military. In short, civilian leaders, according to the principle of non-partisanship, should not use the military in partisan ways. Admittedly, there is far less clarity for civilian actors concerning when such usage of the military becomes inappropriate, precisely because civilian leaders are elected to fulfill partisan campaign promises.

Several examples, nonetheless, are instructive. Many scholars and former military officers blasted the decision of President Trump to deploy US Troops to the US southern border in 2018, citing the move primarily as a political stunt ahead of the 2018 midterm elections (Adams, Wilkerson, and Wilson III 2018). Other critics alleged that President Trump's threat to use active duty forces to dispel protesters and rioters in the summer of 2020 likewise violated the military's non-partisan ethic (V. Brooks 2020). Finally, consider the case of President George W. Bush and his administration employing a number of senior retired military officers to boost popular support during a period of the Iraq War when both his policies and he personally were relatively unpopular. A fascinating yet somewhat

disturbing picture emerges from Barstow (2008) as he describes efforts by the Bush Administration to court retired military officers for a major public opinion campaign. In particular, Barstow alleges that the Bush Administration politicized the latent popularity of dozens of retired military officials by first, warming up to them, and second, by prodding them to speak favorably to the media over several controversial issues, including the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay and the broader "surge" strategy to Iraq (Barstow 2008).

The degree to which each of these examples constitute mainly civilian violations of the military's non-partisan ethic, or were simply indicative of politics as usual, is the subject of considerable civil-military relations debate.[5] What is clear, however, is that both sets of actors – military and civilian – have a responsibility to uphold the principle of non-partisanship, each by not aligning the military with overtly partisan goals and aspirations. However, where the line between appropriate political involvement and inappropriate partisan involvement of the military should be drawn is not always clear. This is especially true when examining the behavior of civilian leaders, because they by their very nature are partisan entities. Still, the principle of non-partisanship, at least in general terms, applies: citizens should not be able to look at the military and easily detect what their partisan preferences are.

Central Principle 3: The "Non-Interference" of the Military

The third central principle of American civil-military relations which I argue both Huntington and his critics affirm is what I am terming the *non-interference* of the military into certain realms or areas of policy. This principle, I argue, is strongly implied in both Huntington's argument and critiques of his work. In short, the principle of non-interference simply means that there are policy arenas which are and should remain off limits for US

[5] In Chapter 2, I emphasize that while some behaviors are clearly partisan, others are not as clear. For example, military officers speaking at political nominating conventions are clearly partisan acts. The behavior of retired military officers authoring op-eds, on the other hand, is not inherently partisan, but of course, this depends on the content of the op-ed.

military actors. By off limits, I mean that the military should not seek to influence some areas of government policy.

The origins of the principle of non-interference can be directly traced to Huntington's conception of military expertise. Recall that for Huntington, the concept of military expertise and military professionalism are inextricably linked, and involve the unique knowledge, skills, experiences, and behaviors of the military officer corps (Huntington 1957, 7–18). Huntington later devotes an entire chapter to the development of the notion of a unique and distinct "military mind," which to him consists of the "values, attitudes, and perspectives which inhere in the performance of the professional military function and which are deducible from the nature of that function" (Huntington 1957, 61). In short, Huntington is arguing that the uniqueness and distinction of the military – in terms of its mindset, corporate ethic, and values – stems from the fact that the military's fundamental purpose is to defend the nation from external threats. The implication here is simple but profound: a professional military is one that is used only to fill roles that are directly related to national defense and/or the security of the nation.

US history, certainly in the 20th Century, proves that this has indeed been the case. The US military has been primarily used to fight external rather than internal threats; thus, there has been little if any need for the US military officer corps to assume any type of political role in managing the state's domestic problems. To be clear, the American military has been used for a variety of non-traditional types of operations in the nation's history: in desegregating schools, responding to natural disasters, and most recently, assisting Federal authorities in responding to the Coronavirus pandemic. However, these types of missions, while frequent, comprise only a small portion of the bulk of the US military's efforts.

Figure 1 is a graphical depiction of the placement of figurative civilian and military spheres. As I have noted above, Huntington largely imagined two distinct spheres, one political and one military, as shown on the left side of Figure 1. His critics, on the other

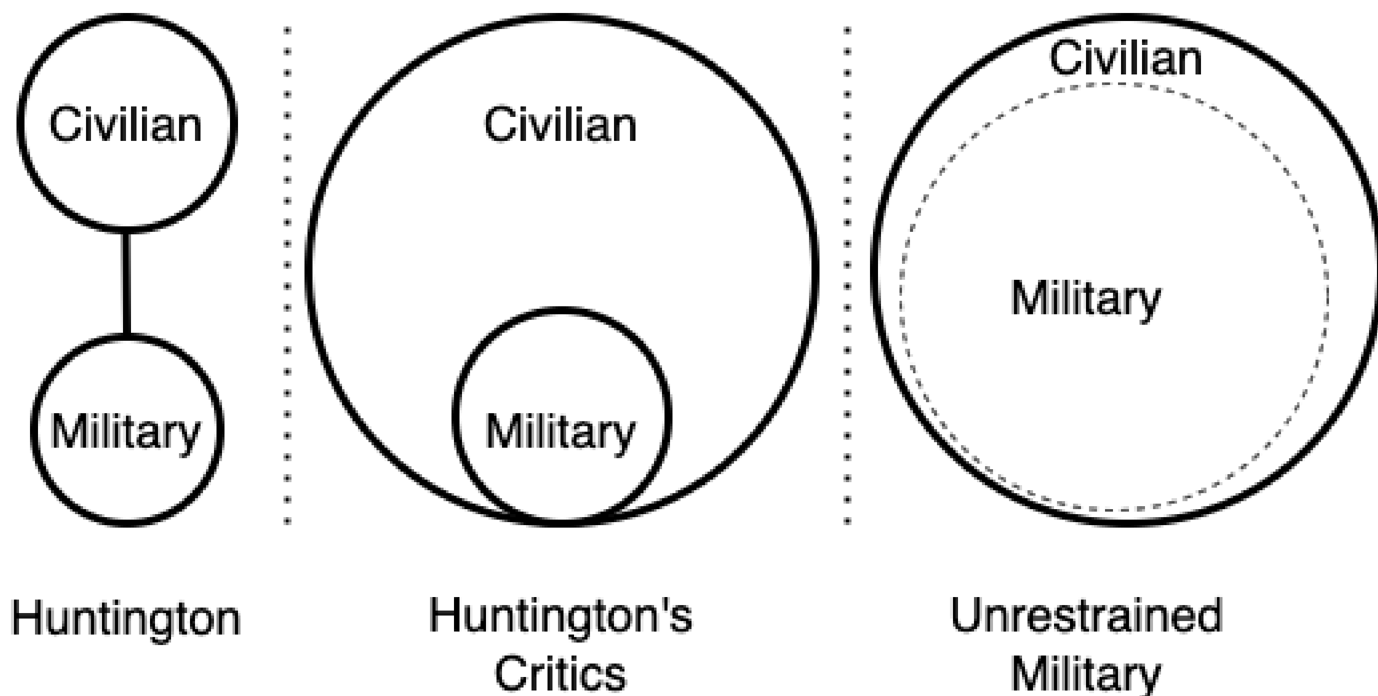


Figure 1: Distinction Between Civil and Military Spheres According to Huntington (Left), Critics of Huntington (Middle), and an Unrestrained Military (Right)

hand, instead argue that for both theoretical and practical reasons, the domain of the military is, while perhaps unique, nonetheless still part of the civilian leader's ultimate domain, as shown in the middle of Figure 1.

Yet even these two different conceptions of civilian and military spheres have important similarities. Huntington and his critics would both also be against a military that is free to influence any purview or domain of civilian government that it wishes, as shown on the right side of Figure 1. Even as those who strongly critique Huntington argue that the military is part of the political domain, nowhere do they argue that the inverse is true, i.e., that the entirety of the political domain is and should be open to the military. Said differently, the principle of non-interference affirms that conceptually, there is a rightful military domain that is necessarily limited. This is extremely important when it comes to the authority and influence of military leaders, and over what issues, problem sets, or topics these may be exercised.

Literature in comparative civil-military relations very much describes the principle of

non-interference, even if in a descriptive way denoting that in many countries, such a principle does not exist! Indeed, militaries in many parts of the world influence and sometimes direct policy areas of the state to such an extent that doing so in the US context would be unthinkable. For instance, Stepan's concept of "the new professionalism of internal security and national development" traces the development of the Brazilian military's role expansion into domestic affairs as a result of having to primarily confront internal rather than external threats (Stepan 1973).

However, particularly in democratic countries, a principle of "non-interference" of the military seems to be firmly established. This is true even as the exact boundaries of separation regarding which policy areas are off limits for military influence are not static over time nor across countries.[6]

In his excellent work on Israeli civil-military relations, Yehuda Ben-Meir (1995) separates the affairs of the state into four broad areas, including political affairs, domestic affairs, national security, and the armed forces (Ben-Meir 1995). He argues that civilians should and do influence all four of these areas of politics, whereas the military should influence the three areas of domestic affairs, national security, and the armed forces (Ben-Meir 1995).[7] Ben-Meir is addressing the Israeli context; thus, his paradigm may not map squarely onto the US context. This is not problematic, however. What is important for the purposes of my argument here is to highlight and to acknowledge, as Ben-Meir has, that the relative scope and specific areas of state policy that are influenced by military leaders is not the same as that of civilians.

[6]Even recently, civil-military relations scholars have started to much more earnestly explore how the tasks, missions, and roles of militaries change, and why this change matters with respect to the conduct of civil-military relations. In a special issue of *The European Journal of International Security* released in February 2022, several authors explore how the concepts of military "operational experiences" and "role conceptions" - concepts that describe how military experiences (deployments in support of particular types of operations, for example) and the aspirational purposes for which militaries believe they primarily exist - shape civil-military relations. For example, see Harig, Jenne, and Ruffa (2022) and Wilén and Strömbom (2022).

[7]In terms of the activities which constitute political affairs, Ben-Meir includes items such as "taking control of the government (coups), influencing political appointments, or interfering in the decision making process. See Ben-Meir (1995), 4-5 for an excellent description and diagram.

Finally, it is important to briefly address what the principle of non-interference of the military implies for the conduct of the US military. The principle of non-interference implies that the military will not seek to perform, and that civilians will not assign the military to perform, roles or missions for which military forces are not suitably designed, nor those which are tangentially or indirectly related to national defense, except in cases of great crisis or need.

In a well known address given to the cadets at West Point in May of 1962, MacArthur captures well the spirit of the principle of "non-interference" by encouraging the soon-to-be officers to focus their careers on winning in combat, and leaving other issues for politicians to solve:

> **Yours is the profession of arms, the will to win, the sure knowledge that in war there is no substitute for victory, that if you lose, the Nation will be destroyed, that the very obsession of your public service must be Duty, Honor, Country. Others will debate the controversial issues, national and international, which divide men's minds. But serene, calm, aloof, you stand as the Nation's war guardians, as its lifeguards from the raging tides of international conflict, as its gladiators in the arena of battle. For a century and a half you have defended, guarded and protected its hallowed traditions of liberty and freedom, of right and justice. Let civilian voices argue the merits or demerits of our processes of government. Whether our strength is being sapped by deficit financing indulged in too long, by federal paternalism grown too mighty, by power groups grown too arrogant, by politics grown too corrupt, by crime grown too rampant, by morals grown too low, by taxes grown too high, by extremists grown too violent; whether our personal liberties are as firm and complete as they should be. These great national problems are not for your professional participation or military solution. Your guidepost stands out like a tenfold beacon in the night: Duty, Honor, Country** (*Duty, Honor, Country Speech to the Corps of Cadets* 1962).

A few other examples further illustrate the principle of non-interference. Hypothetically, most Americans, as well as the military, would probably not want a President to place the Pentagon in charge of designing a plan to overhaul social security, nor would they want the Chief of Naval Operations advocating that the Navy solve this

problem for the nation. Non-hypothetical examples also abound. When the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, foresaw no role for the military in the 2020 Presidential Election, he was implicitly invoking the principle of “non-interference” of the military, implying that it was not appropriate for the military to become involved in settling electoral disputes (Silva 2020). Furthermore, across the world, the role of militaries in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic has raised numerous normative concerns over whether the military should occupy the roles that they have, including in the provision of healthcare and logistics, to include the distribution and contracting of vaccines (Erickson, Kljajić, and Shelef 2022).[8]

Summary of Three Central Principles of US Civil-Military Relations

In summary, Samuel Huntington and his critics both agree on the primacy and the importance of three central principles of civil-military relations. These principles are that of civilian control of the military, the non-partisanship of the military institution, and the “non-interference” of the military into certain arenas of state policy. When adhered to, followed, and respected, these principles generally constrain the behavior of both civilian and military actors in important ways, and help facilitate relatively harmonious civil-military relations.

Table 1 captures these three principles, a concise definition of each principle, the actor that can violate each principle, and a few pertinent examples of behaviors that violate each principle.

[8] At one point in late 2020, an active duty four star general apologized to the nation for a mix-up in information regarding the distribution of COVID vaccine, leading some critics to express concern that the military was making inherently political decisions that, from a normative perspective, posed some problems. See Passy (2020) for more details.

Table 1: Central Principles of US Civil-Military Relations

Central Principle	Description	Military Example of Violation	Civilian Example of Violation
Civilian Control	Civilian Political Goals are Actualized and Implemented; Mechanisms of Civilian Oversight Function; No Overt Military Insubordination	Resigning in protest of policy; slow-rolling policy implementation; authoring an op-ed that criticizes a President's policy preferences	Failing to establish mechanisms and processes of oversight; delegating too much power to the military
Non-Partisanship	The Military Institution Exists and Operates outside of Partisan Politics; Military Actors Fully Obey Political Leaders, and Do Not Advocate for Partisan Policies, People, or Platforms	Advocating for the platform of a political party or denouncing that of another; Declaring candidacy for partisan political office while in uniform	Urging several military generals and admirals to speak at a party political convention
Non-Interference	There are Areas or Realms of State Policy making into which the Military does not Enter or Seek to Influence	Advocating that the President place the military in charge of overhauling social security	Appointing a serving unformed military officer as the Secretary of Labor or Education

The Gap in the Scholarly Literature

Having established the the baseline principles of civil-military relations as that of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference, as well as the central role these principles play with respect to the facilitation of healthy democratic civil-military relations, I will briefly trace arguments made by scholars who seek to explain the military's role in politics. The goal of doing so is two-fold: first, to orient the reader to the value of this scholarship, and second, to explain the gap that currently exists within this scholarship.

Explaining why and how militaries intervene in politics is a massive topic within civil-military relations (for a sampling of this scholarship, see Finer 1962; Taylor 2003; Croissant et al. 2010; Bove, Rivera, and Ruffa 2020; Beliakova 2021). Some works focus on specific types or forms of military intervention in politics, such as coups (Horowitz 1980; De Bruin 2019), while others focus on explaining a range of intervention outcomes that can occur within a particular country or region of the world (for instance, see Stepan 1973; Fitch 1998). I first summarize the contributions of six scholars whose works, in my view,

are highly relevant to the topic this dissertation addresses. These are Samuel Finer's *The Man on Horseback* (1957); Donald Horowitz's *Coup Theories and Officer Motives: Sri Lanka in Comparative Perspective* (1980); J. Samuel Fitch's *The Armed Forces and Democracy in Latin America* (1989); Bove, Rivera, and Ruffa's article,"Beyond Coups: Terrorism and Military Involvement in Politics" (2020); Jeremy Teigen's *Why Veterans Run* (2018); and Brian Taylor's *Politics and the Russian Army* (2003). Then, I briefly describe several works that address political activities in mature democracies.

Finer (1962) is among the first of scholars to provide a comprehensive theory for why militaries intervene in politics. His central argument is that militaries intervene as a broad result of having the "motives and opportunities" to do so (Finer 1962, 20–76), a framework that is adopted in this dissertation and further explained in Chapter 2. Finer delineates several classes of motives, arguing that these motives may include a desire for the military to protect or enhance its own bureaucratic interests, as well as the belief or worldview that the military should serve as the "custodian" of the "national interest," particularly in times of national crisis (Finer 1962, 30–31). Finer is also among the first of scholars to point out, in what is an insightful critique of Huntington that others have advanced in similar ways (for instance, see Risa Brooks 2020), that a strictly Huntingtonian concept of military professionalism might actually compel, rather than prevent, the military from intervening in politics (Finer 1962, 22–23).[9] Finer's major contribution, in my view, is theoretical, as he is the first to posit the significance of an underlying motives-and-opportunities framework to explain military intervention in politics.

The main shortcoming of Finer's work is that his dependent variable of military

[9]Finer and Brooks argue that the concept of professionalism spurs military intervention into politics through different mechanisms. Finer argues that the desire to remain professional may lead military officers to refuse to obey a particular civilian leader because he or she can claim that in doing so, he or she is actually serving the broader concept of the state's interest, rather than obeying a particular civilian regime. In the US context, however, this is indeed the case, as the US military officer's oath is to support and defend *the Constitution of the United States*, rather than to support or advance the agenda of a particular President. On the other hand, Brooks seems to warn about military officers who may, because of the belief that they are professionals, adopt a mindset such that the officer's actions will automatically carry little or any political ramifications. Both scholars are emphasizing that the concept of professionalism can be abused by military officers in such a way that elicits the very conduct that Huntington seeks to circumscribe.

intervention is somewhat imprecise. Indeed, the dependent variables Finer uses are the "levels of intervention" undertaken by the military, which range from asserting "influence" to engaging in "supplantment" (Finer 1962, 77–116). However, these outcomes, and the range between them, include a significant amount of variation. While this range of outcomes is insightful, it does not facilitate granular examination of the dependent variable.

Horowitz (1980) advances an understanding of Finer's motives-and-opportunities framework by examining the factors that produced an attempted military coup in Sri Lanka in 1962. Using qualitative interview data from nearly two dozen military officers who participated in the coup attempt, Horowitz analyzes the motives of the participating officers. He concludes, convincingly in my view, that identifying a specific motive – in the specific instance examined but also likely in any other attempted coup – is a complex undertaking, and that multiple different officer motives, including organizational interests, societal cleavages, or bureaucratic politics, likely exist simultaneously (Horowitz 1980, 3–30, 179–221). His main contribution is theoretical and empirical in that he highlights the dynamic and complex nature of officer motives, and, in a way, warns against adopting a uniform explanation for the occurrence of coups. The main drawback to Horowitz's work again involves the dependent variable, as he is focused squarely on the explanation of coups.

A third scholar whose work touches on this dissertation is Fitch. Fitch seeks to explain how and why officers adopt unique beliefs regarding their normative roles in politics and within the government. Using rich interview data from the officers of several Latin American militaries in the 1980s, Fitch's develops the dependent variable of "military role beliefs," and argues that officers adopt a particular belief as the result of their military's organizational culture and lessons learned from previous political interventions by the military (Fitch 1998, 61–105). Fitch's dependent variable is different from that explored by either Finer or Horowitz, mainly in that it emphasizes the linkages between the beliefs adopted by an officer and the general behaviors these officers engage in (see especially Fitch 1998, 65–100). This is an important contribution, in my view, because it explains how and

why officers arrive at conclusions regarding how they should behave relative to civilians within government, and with respect to the principle of civilian control more broadly.

A fourth scholarly work is Bove, Rivera, and Ruffa's (2020) article, "Beyond Coups: Terrorism and Military Involvement in Politics." This work is important because it is among the first that explores the role of each type of actor, civilian and military, in spurring military involvement in politics. Using instances of terrorism as a theoretical starting point, the authors assert that military actors, by virtue of the information advantages they hold over civilians, "push" themselves into politics out of a desire to secure the state, while civilian leaders, who demand that the military employ its expertise by responding to terrorism quickly and successfully, "pull" the military into politics (Bove, Rivera, and Ruffa 2020, 268). However, the dependent variable used in this study is a composite measure of the military's involvement in politics based on the International Country Risk Guide (IRCG). This measurement is fine for the intended use that the authors have in mind, but it is not a measurement of specific forms or types of political behaviors that occur.

The fifth scholarly book that is highly related to my dissertation is Jeremy Teigen's (2018) *Why Veteran Run: Military Service in American Presidential Elections, 1789-2016*. In the book, Teigen develops a comprehensive taxonomy to explain variation in the high percentage of final Presidential candidates with military service in different eras of US history. He points to a variety of different variables to explain this variation, including the type of military service of the candidate and the changing relationship between the state and its armed forces in US history (Teigen 2018). Teigen's work is all-encompassing and rich, and the puzzle he seeks to describe is not only relevant, but truly interesting. And while the political behavior that he examines is important, the book's focus is on one type of political behavior (running for the office of President).

Finally, Taylor (2003) provides another important contribution by applying Finer's motives-and-opportunities framework to the case of Russia (Taylor 2003, 2). His impressive book, *Politics and the Russian Army*, explores 19 incidents in which the Russian military

intervenes (or might have intervened) in state "sovereign power" issues (Taylor 2003, 3). Taylor's contribution is important because his application of a motives-and-opportunities framework to a particular context is precise and sound. Moreover, his analysis covers an impressive period of time — more than three centuries!

While the works of these scholars are incredibly rich and valuable, there are two broad shortcomings that this dissertation seeks to address. The first is an issue related to the dependent variable examined. In several of the studies described above, the dependent variables and concepts of military intervention (in the case of Fitch, role beliefs, which is different yet similar) are generally wider and more extreme than the instances of political behavior that occur within mature democracies. In Teigen's book, which does examine a political behavior that occurs in the United States, the main shortcoming is that he mainly examines candidates who earn their respective party's nomination. He has to do this in order to explain the entirety of US history in his work, which he does, but this necessarily means that there are finer tuned aspects of particular campaigns that he cannot explore further in depth. In short, I can (and do) seek to employ many of the theoretical starting points, including a general motives-and-opportunities framework, but in a way that seeks to explain meaningful variation in specific forms of political behaviors that occur within mature democracies.

The second issue with the works described above is that they tend to overlook the important role of civilian leaders in eliciting military intervention in politics. This is not the case for Bove, Rivera, and Ruffa (2020), as they accurately identify the notion that civilian leaders seek to "pull" the military into politics at the same time that military leaders "push" themselves to do the same (Bove, Rivera, and Ruffa 2020). The other works described above, however, tend to focus primarily if not exclusively on the behavior or an outcome focused on military actors. This dissertation follows Bove, Rivera, and Ruffa (2020) in examining the simultaneous interplay that occurs between both sets of actors, civilian and military, but builds on their analysis by examining the role of domestic

variables in explaining military intervention in politics rather than in a type of threat (terrorism).

How This Dissertation Fills This Scholarly Gap

Thus, there is a gap in the civil-military relations literature regarding the causes and measurements of specific political activities involving the military within mature political democracies. To be clear, a number of other scholars have raised alarms about the impacts of rising political polarization on the conduct of US civil-military relations (for example, see Robinson, Michael 2018; Burbach 2019; P. Feaver and Golby 2020; P. Feaver 2016; Barno and Bensahel 2016; Golby, Jim 2020; T. Burke and Reid 2020), and others have examined several political behaviors by the US military over time, to include the endorsement of political candidates by retired military officers and social media habits by members of the military (Griffiths and Simon 2019; J. K. Dempsey 2010; H. Urben 2013; H. A. Urben 2014). However, these works, while valuable, have not attempted to develop either an encompassing theoretical justification to explain, or a detailed measurement scheme to assess, variation in particular behaviors over time.

This dissertation differs from previous works and advances civil-military relations scholarship in several respects. First, it seeks to develop a theory regarding the causes as well as a measurement strategy for political behaviors involving the military in democracies. In doing so, I conceptualize the three central principles of civil-military relations described earlier in this chapter as a necessary point of departure on the grounds that political behaviors are problematic insofar as the degree to which they violate one or more of these central principles. Second, this work harmonizes considerations that involve both types of actors, civilian and military, who can politicize the military. A perspective that considers simultaneous military and civilian efforts to politically engage with the military in various ways is consistent with previous research (Bove, Rivera, and Ruffa 2020), yet it also builds on recent efforts which have focused on one type of actor (for recent scholarship describing

civilian politicization of the military, see Karlin and Golby 2020; Jim Golby 2021).

The main argument of this dissertation is that the confluence of two factors – political polarization and military prestige – greatly impacts the willingness of civilian and military actors to adhere to the central principles of civil-military relations in important ways. Furthermore, when said actors are less constrained to adhere to the principles of civil-military relations, each actor will behave in ways that violate these principles.

If this argument is true, there are several immediate repercussions worth briefly touching upon. The first is that, to a significant extent, the political behaviors that occur involving the military are the product not primarily of mere circumstances and personalities, but rather circumstances and personalities that operate within a context marked by the broad political factors of polarization and military prestige. A second and related repercussion is that those who practice and observe civil-military relations might better understand the occurrence of – even if they do not (and I believe that they should not!) excuse the practice of – political behaviors that involve the military. An Army Chief of Staff or a Marine Corps Commandant has a difficult and demanding job during any point in time, but could the job be more difficult when polarization is high? Similarly, a President or a Secretary of State's duties and responsibilities are always difficult, but how are these made different and more difficult when the military is exceedingly prestigious? Unpacking, exploring, and understanding these dynamics is the goal of this dissertation.

Methodology and Overall Plan of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 - Theory

In Chapter 2, I develop a theory regarding the causes of political behavior involving the military in democracies. The theory posits two variables in particular – the levels of political polarization and military prestige – shape the degree to which military and civilian actors are constrained by the central principles of civil-military relations. The theory also contends that the three central principles of civil-military relations presented in

depth in this initial chapter provide a solid foundation through which to look when identifying and measuring problematic political behaviors that involve professional militaries in democracies, particularly in the post-World War two era. This chapter concludes with the formulation of distinct hypotheses subsequently tested throughout the remainder of the dissertation.

Chapter 3 - Retired Military Officer Opinion Commentary

Chapters 3 and 4 are quantitative, large-N studies of specific types of political behaviors undertaken by military (Chapter 3) and civilian (Chapter 4) actors. Chapter 3 investigates retired military officer opinion commentary in depth by analyzing opinion commentary authored by retired US military officers over the past roughly four decades (1979-2020). This original analysis reveals that retired military officers are criticizing civilian officials at a greater frequency, adopting expressly partisan positions, and weighing in on topics that fall outside of traditional military expertise more frequently than in past years, and argues that these results are largely driven by increases in the level of political polarization.

Chapter 4 - The Civilian Use of the Military in Presidential Campaign Advertisements

Chapter 4 then examines a political behavior conducted by civilian actors — the airing and the content of Presidential campaign advertisements. Using data assembled from the Wisconsin Advertising Project and the Wesleyan Media Project, Chapter 4 analyzes all television airings of presidential campaign advertisements occurring over the five elections from 2000 - 2016, inclusively. This original analysis explores the degree to which military symbols and images appear in the advertisements, as well as the frequency with which various military figures appear in advertisements and engage in explicitly partisan behaviors, such as endorsing or attack political candidates. Furthermore, this

chapter measures military prestige through a proxy by examining the veteran percentage of the population in the geographic area, or media market, in which an advertisement is aired. The statistical analysis reveals that in areas of the United States with higher veteran densities, civilian candidates and political parties are increasingly likely to air campaign ads that show military images and that include military figures who violate the principles of civil-military relations.

Chapters 3 and 4 are important because each chapter empirically demonstrates a link between a type of actor (military or civilian) and a particular form of political behavior (writing an op-ed or featuring a campaign advertisement in which a military figure engages in an explicitly partisan act). From a methodological standpoint, the quantitative analysis performed in each of these chapters is vital in that it helps to disentangle the variables of polarization and military prestige, which often vary in the same direction.

Qualitative Case Studies

After these large-N quantitative chapters, the dissertation then explores two case studies using the qualitative method of process tracing. These case studies are designed to examine not one instance of a political behavior, but rather the type and severity of multiple political behaviors that occur in a given era.

A case study, in the words of Brady and Collier (2010), "may be understood as a temporally and spatially bounded instance of a specified phenomenon" (Brady and Collier 2010, 208). These same authors define process-tracing as involving "the examination of 'diagnostic' pieces of evidence within a case that contribute to supporting or overturning alternative explanatory hypotheses" (Brady and Collier 2010, 208). Brady and Collier also argue that the use of process tracing within a case study is valuable for at least two main reasons.

The first advantage of process tracing is that it can inform whether the independent variables influence the dependent variable through the pathways, mechanisms, and

sequences claimed to be at work in a given theory (Brady and Collier 2010, 208–9). In the context of this particular dissertation, this means that the use of case studies can help clarify the nature and the extent to which the level of political polarization serves as a "motive" for military actors to violate the central principles of civil-military relations, and the level of military prestige provides an "opportunity" for both civilian and military actors to do the same. By extension, this means that case studies can also help identify whether endogeneity is a problem within a given theory. The case studies should clearly illustrate that military and civilian actors alter the political behaviors they engage in that involve the military *as a result* of changing levels of military's prestige or polarization, rather than the other way around.[10]

A second advantage of process tracing is that its use enables the evaluation of alternate explanations that may also be thought to influence the dependent variable (Brady and Collier 2010, 208). In this dissertation, this means that process tracing can help inform the degree to which including changes in either norms or the prevailing threat environment, rather than changes in the level of polarization or military prestige, impact the ways in which civilian and military actors engage in behaviors that violate the principles of civil-military relations.

Ideally, both case studies in this dissertation would include one variable clearly changing while the other remains relatively constant, or at least changes relatively less than the other. Such a pattern will enable clearer discernment of the relative influences of each independent variables on the dependent variable. These insights suggest that each case study should consist of a finite period of time such that the number of other changes

[10]In Chapter 2, I argue that in United States context in particular, the most likely issue with endogeneity involves the relationship between military prestige and political behaviors. In other words, it is likely that the US military is deemed trustworthy by society in part because it does not engage in political behaviors that routinely violate principles such as civilian control or non-partisanship, or to say it differently, perhaps the level of military prestige declines if and when the military engages in acts that violate the principle of civilian control or non-partisanship. However, endogeneity is less of a concern with respect to polarization, at least in the US context. This is mainly because I have defined polarization to be the contestation of worldviews, values, and moral judgments, and how these battle for primacy in the political sphere. These are likely formed prior to, rather than as the result of, the military's behavior.

occurring over the same period are minimized. In short, the case studies explored in this dissertation should examine a short and focused time period in which one independent variable primarily changes.

Chapter 5 - Civilian and Military Leaders after the US Civil War (1865-1880)

In Chapter 5, I compare the types and characteristics of the political behaviors undertaken by civilian and military actors in the period immediately leading to the impeachment of Andrew Johnson with those undertaken 12-15 years later. Over this time period, the level of political polarization in the United States remained relatively high, but the level of overall military prestige decreased dramatically, driven sharply by a decline in the centrality or importance of the military to the nation at a period when the nation faced few significant external threats.

It is an important period of history to analyze. The central principles of civil-military relations exposited in this chapter did not yet fully exist during this period! Yet I claim in the case study that even so, it is clear that extreme levels of polarization and military prestige, particularly at the outset of the period, influenced the degree to which civilian and military actors adhered to historical standard of civil-military conduct. I conclude that the decline in the level of military prestige, which occurred during the Reconstruction years due to multiple factors, ultimately resulted in civilian and military actors engaging in relatively less extreme political behaviors than those that had occurred immediately at the end of the Civil War.

Chapter 6 -Civilian and Military Leaders in the Post-9/11 Era (2001-2021)

Chapter 6, the second case study, examines civilian and military actor political behavior in the era after the attacks of September 11, 2001. During this period, the level of military prestige remained relatively high and constant, but the level of polarization rose

sharply. Polarization, in other words, is the main variable that changes within this case.

This chapter explores, compares, and contrasts two episodes. The first is the 2006 so-called "Revolt of the Generals," and the second case involves several instances of political behavior involving the military undertaken in 2020 and again after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. This chapter argues that although both episodes involved military and civilian actors undertaking substantial violations of the principles of civil-military relations, those undertaken in 2020 and in 2021 were reflective of a far more insidious domestic environment than the so-called "Revolt of the Generals."

Chapter 7 - Implications and Conclusion

Chapter 7 serves as this dissertation's conclusion. Here, main findings are summarized, critical implications are discussed, and recommendations for future research are given. This chapter also points out the relative strengths and limitations of the dissertation as a whole. The central conclusion reached in this dissertation is that sustaining the three central principles of civil-military relations derived in this chapter is an extremely difficult task during eras of high and prolonged political polarization.

Chapter 2 - Theory

This chapter develops a comprehensive theory explaining how and why civilian and military actors become more or less constrained by the central principles of civil-military relations. These principles include that of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference of the military into certain sectors of state policy, as explained in detail in the previous chapter.

The core argument developed in this chapter (and tested throughout the remainder of this dissertation) is that the levels of domestic polarization and the prestige of the military impact the *constraining influence* of the central principles of civil-military relations. When the constraining influence of these principles is high, civilian and military actors are less likely to engage in behaviors that violate the central principles of civil-military relations. Conversely, when their constraining influence is low, civilian and military actors are more likely to undertake political behaviors that violate these principles.

This chapter proceeds in four parts. First, I define the relevant terms that are used throughout this study. I begin by defining and tracing the developments of the dependent variable – the *political behaviors* which involve the military institution – as well as the independent variables examined in this study – *political polarization* and *military prestige*.

In the second and main part of this chapter, I explain how the levels of polarization and military prestige impact the overall constraining influence of the central principles of civil-military relations, and in turn how the constraining influence of these principles impacts the propensity of military and civilian actors to engage in various political behaviors involving the military. In what is a central theme of the overall theory offered in this chapter, I argue that the levels of polarization and military prestige serve as the respective "motives and opportunities" that induce the military's intervention in politics in mature democracies (Finer 1962). I also argue, importantly, that the levels of polarization and military prestige induce the different major actors involved in civil-military relations (civilian and military leaders) to engage in different types of political behaviors, and in

different ways. I ultimately argue that the levels of polarization and military prestige can combine to form a total of four possible domestic political environments, each of which is likely to produce certain patterns of political behavior committed by civilian and military actors. I conclude this section with the presentation of hypotheses to be tested, analyzed, and explored throughout the remainder of the dissertation.

In the third section of this chapter, I examine alternative explanations and address concerns regarding endogeneity within the theory. In the fourth section of the chapter, I summarize the theory and discuss the logic behind the empirical methodology employed in the remainder of this dissertation.

Components of the Theory

A visual representation of the overall theory explained in this chapter and throughout the dissertation is shown in Figure 2. From left to right, the core argument is that the two independent variables of political polarization and military prestige influence an intervening variable, the constraining influence of the central principles of civil-military relations, which in turn impacts the dependent variable, the political behaviors that military and civilian actors engage in that involve the military.

The DV: Political Behaviors Involving the Military

The dependent variable examined in this dissertation is the types and patterns of political behavior involving the military. In the most general form, a political behavior involving the military is any action that invokes or harnesses the military for a *solely* political purpose. As the paragraphs below describe, however, distinct definitions of political behaviors involving the military are in order, depending on which actor type is committing the behavior. Nonetheless, the word *solely* is important, as it is intended to draw the reader's immediate attention to the fact that, and as critics of Samuel Huntington discussed in the previous chapter have alleged, the realms of politics and the military are

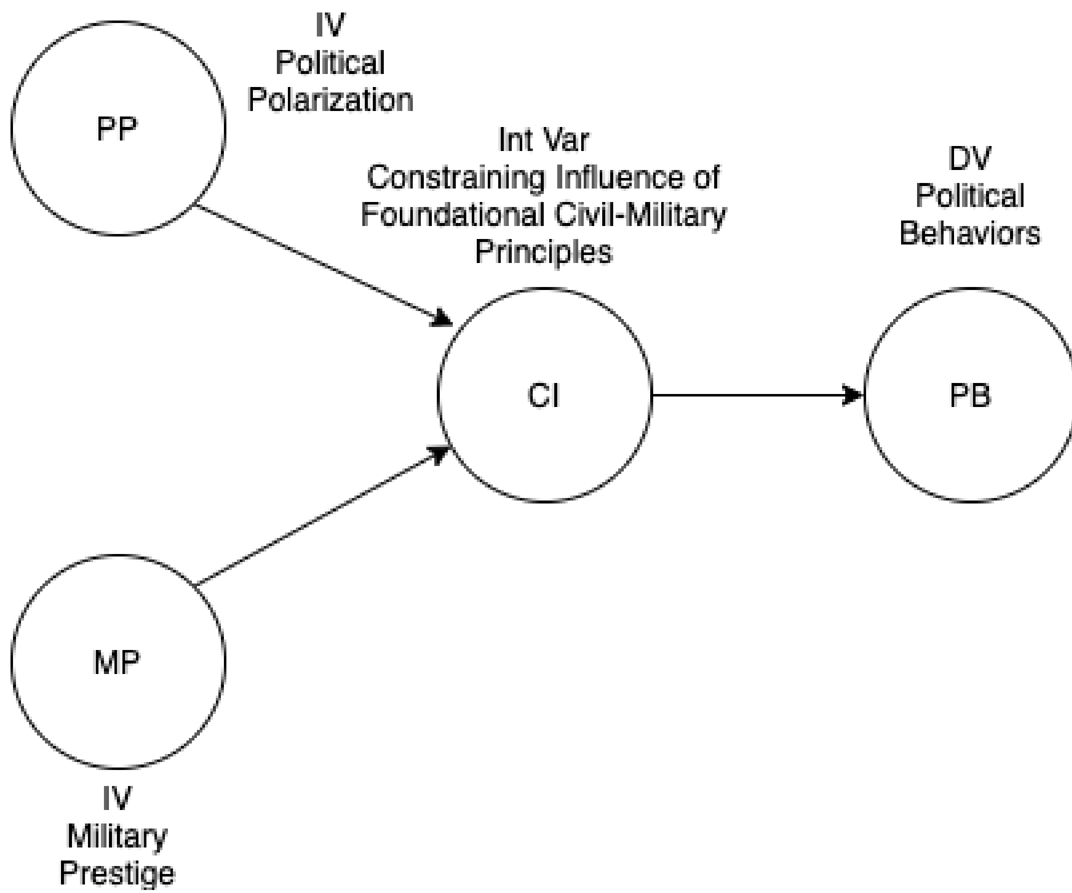


Figure 2: The Impact of Polarization and Military Prestige on Political Behaviors Involving the Military

not so easily disentangled (Risa Brooks 2020; Owens 2011; see also Clausewitz 1976).

In this section, I describe the kinds of political behaviors military and civilian actors can undertake, why such actions can be inappropriately political, and how these behaviors can undermine healthy civil-military relations. There are three critical takeaways from this section of the chapter. The first is to illumine the reader to the fact that each actor type may engage in a wide variety of political behaviors involving the military institution, and that both sets of actors have engaged in these types of behaviors throughout US history. A second takeaway is that each of these behaviors threatens civil-military relations in different ways and to different extents, largely depending on the details and context of their occurrence. Some behaviors are not necessarily inappropriate, depending on what the behavior entails or how it is engaged in, whereas other forms of behavior almost automatically violate one or more of the central principles of civil-military relations. A third takeaway is recognition that because civil-military relations are a dynamic interaction between civilian and military actors, these actors simultaneously engage in political behaviors that involve the military. That is, at the same time that military actors may engage in various forms of potentially harmful political behaviors that undermine civil-military relations, so too may civilian leaders, although likely via different means or types of behavior. Thus, the overall level of inappropriate political activity with respect to the military occurring at any point in time requires examining political behavior undertaken by both military *and* civilian actors.

Political Behavior by Military Actors

We may define a political behavior undertaken by a military actor as one that is intended to influence a policy outcome, or one that generates political costs that a civilian leader must contend with (Risa Brooks 2009, 213). This is consistent with the general definition of a political behavior offered above, i.e., any action that invokes or harnesses the military *solely* for a political purpose.

Two things immediately become clear from this definition, however. First, it implies something about the military actor's purpose insofar as the behavior is intended to influence some policy outcome. Second, this definition implies that because a particular behavior generates a cost for a civilian to bear, observers or analysts can identify or at least become aware of such a cost. As will become clearer later on, identification of a military actor's motives as well as the costs generated by the behavior of a military actor are not always easy to identify or measure. Among the reasons for this are the fact that motives are subjectively discerned and that political costs may take time, either to fully form, or become known, or both.

These concerns also underscore the importance of understanding the context in which a particular political behavior occurs as much as the specific act itself. Context helps to shed light on both the intent of the military actor and the associated costs levied by the behavior upon his or her civilian superior. In a hypothetical example, suppose that a senior military officer provides his or her honest opinion about the use of military force to the President over a particular use-of-force scenario, perhaps a possible invasion of a foreign country. If this is all that observers are told, we might rightfully conclude that such behavior – advising the President in a forthright manner – was not political at all, but rather fully in alignment with the officer's duties and responsibilities. After all, an officer who candidly provides opinions to the President, on the surface, possesses no ulterior motive, nor has the officer levied any political cost on the President.

However, now suppose that observers learn a couple of additional contextual details about the officer's behavior in advising the President – particularly that, prior to the military officer providing his or her opinion, the President had already decided upon a course of action that ran counter to the senior military officer's advice. Further suppose that we learn the President had already informed the cabinet, including the military officer, of his or her decision. Finally, suppose we also learn that the senior military officer then gave his or her candid advice to the President while seated in a conference room along with

other members of the cabinet, and in front of members of the White House press corps. These additional contextual details – that the military officer had offered advice in public and after the President had committed to a course of action – would lead most observers to evaluate the officer's behavior as both political and highly inappropriate. Indeed, it is reasonable to conclude that the officer's behavior was intended to steer the President away from a particular policy outcome (perhaps to avoid either invading or not invading a foreign country), and that the officer's behavior likely generated significant political costs for the President, especially if the press became aware of the President's previous commitment to a course of action that ran counter to the military officer's advice. This hypothetical example is only intended to illustrate the point that investigating political behaviors involving the military requires not only an awareness of a particular action engaged in, but also the context in which that act occurs and how it is performed.

It would be difficult – perhaps impossible – to render an exhaustive list of the political behaviors or actions that military officers have at their disposal to influence policy outcomes and/or generate political costs for civilians, and even more difficult to attempt to parse out the numerous possible types of contexts in which these behaviors may undermine the central principles of civil-military relations. If we conceive of the types of political behaviors military officers may engage in as a spectrum however, at one end would be those which are highly visible to observers, such as acts of explicit insubordination by the military. At the other end of the spectrum would be behaviors that are far more subtle, such as the military selectively providing advice or information to civilians, or partially complying with civilian directives.[11]

Somewhere between the ends of this spectrum falls a range of other political behaviors. However, the degree to which they constitute *inappropriate* political behaviors in that they *violate* one or more of the principles of civil-military relations depends on the

[11]See Risa Brooks (2020) for a recent example of the military providing selective advice, particularly with respect to how senior US military leaders shaped their advice to civilian leaders regarding the surge to Afghanistan in the early stages of the Obama Administration.

manner in which these behaviors are conducted.

The behavior of military figures running for office is one such example. The behavior of a military actor running for office is an inherently political act. But in my view, it is political act which need not necessarily violate any of the principles of civil-military relations. Instead, we have to examine *how* military actors run for office. Violations of the central principles of civil-military relations occur when one's political ambitions and record of military service are not cleanly separated, or to state it differently, when political aspirations and one's record of military service are deliberately combined.

For example, one important factor is *when* a military actor declares his or her candidacy for political office. Is this done after the military actor's term of military service is finished or before? In the case of the latter, the military actor running for office has effectively violated the principle of non-partisanship because a sitting military actor is now clearly associated with a partisan entity. Other factors also matter. For example, a military officer who actively campaigns while wearing a military uniform, as one US House Candidate did in 2021, is a clear violation of the principle of non-partisanship (Beynon 2021a). Perhaps not as clear, but still suggestive of a violation of the principle of non-partisanship, is the case of Lindsey Graham, a Republican Senator who, after retiring as a Colonel in the US Air Force, appeared in his military uniform during a campaign commercial (Troyan 2015). Observers may certainly argue about how severe these particular violations are. In any case, they are different from the example of a military actor who undertakes a separate political career after a clear break from military service.

The political behavior of military actors writing opinion commentary – what Risa Brooks has deemed making "public appeals" – also illustrates this point (Risa Brooks 2009). The act of writing an op-ed by itself may not influence policy outcomes or generate significant political costs for civilians. It certainly could, however, depending on a number of factors, including what topic the op-ed addresses as well as the content, timing, and tone of the op-ed. For example, when General Colin Powell wrote a series of op-eds in the early

1990s while serving as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in which he articulated his views regarding the use of force, his behavior generated political costs for the candidate – and later President – Bill Clinton (Powell 1992b, 1992a). Moreover, engagement in this behavior by a highly respected and prestigious figure likely influenced public opinion and thus constrained the options available to Clinton as a number of crises erupted across the world in the Balkans, Somalia, Haiti, and Rwanda. Similar levels of triggering political costs and impacting policy outcomes are not as likely generated when admirals and generals write op-eds about the importance of remembering our nation's fallen on Memorial Day.

Table 2 lists and describes several types of political behaviors that military actors may engage in. Several of these were first theorized by Risa Brooks (2009), but I have taken the liberty of adding several additional types of behaviors (Risa Brooks 2009, 219).[12]

Near the top of Table 2 are those types of political behaviors that are highly visible and which are most prone to constituting inappropriate political acts. Explicit acts of insubordination and acts of politicking fall into this category. For example, when General Douglas MacArthur routinely defied President Truman's guidance by pushing for an expansion of the Korean War, MacArthur most certainly intended to sway the President, and his defiance clearly exacted political costs on Truman, at least in the short term (Brands 2016). For an example of politicking, consider the behavior of retired officer endorsement of political candidates. Regardless of whether the military actor's endorsement of a political candidate is effective and actually persuades the public to change its vote choice (see James Golby, Dropp, and Feaver 2012), it is effectually impossible for a military officer to make a nonpartisan endorsement of a political candidate. Indeed, a political endorsement is intended to shape a policy outcome (an election), and a political endorsement enacts a political cost for the candidate(s) who are not endorsed.

[12]Brooks also notes that military actors who deliberately commit these types of political activities do so while facing four unique risks, all of which ultimately undermine the principle of civilian control. See Risa Brooks (2009), 234-235 for more details. See also Risa Brooks and Erickson (2021) for how the military expressed dissent during the post-Cold War period in the early 1990s, during the so-called "War on Drugs" in the 1980s, and during debate about the Afghanistan Surge in 2009-2010.

Table 2: Political Behaviors Undertaken by Military Actors

Tactic	Nature of Activity	Audience	Examples
Explicit Insubordination	Refusal to Carry Out or Publicly Denouncing Policy	Mass Public, Congress, Fellow Military Officers	General Ulysses S. Grant refusing to be sent to Mexico by President Andrew Johnson; General Douglas MacArthur openly defying Truman's policy on Korea
Grandstanding	Threat or actual resignation in protest of policy	Mass public, Congress, executive branch	Hypothetical; if Eric Shinseki had resigned in 2003
Politicking	Retired officer endorsements; organizing vote drives	Mass public	Crowe's endorsement of Clinton in 1992; Frank's endorsement of Bush in 2004
Public Appeal	Public, value-laden commentary	Mass public	Colin Powell's 1992 statements on intervention in Bosnia
Alliance Building	Military leaders form ties with civilian interest groups	Congress	Air Force and Lockheed Martin over procurement of F-22 raptor
Shoulder Tapping	Military leaders setting an agenda by bringing issues to attention of politicians and engaging in lobbying-like activities on behalf of those issues	Congress	Military Mobilization of key members of Congress over gays in the military in early 1990s
Running for Office	Prominent Veterans run for office	Mass Public	Ulysses S. Grant, Winfield Scott Hancock, Dwight Eisenhower, and Wesley Clark (POTUS); William Westmoreland (Governor); James Stockdale (Vice President)
Selective Obedience/Compliance	The military obeys parts of orders and regulations, but delays or ignores others	Mass public, Congress, Fellow Military Officers	Pentagon slow-rolling investigation into the use of funds in Afghanistan

[a] Much of the above is reproduced from Brooks, Risa (2009), 'Political Activities of the Military' in American Civil-Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era, Eds. Suzanne Nielsen and Don Snider.

Near the bottom of Table 2 are those forms of behavior that may constitute inappropriately political acts, but which tend to be less visible to the public or simply hard to detect in the first place. These forms of behavior can be hard to prove. For example, it is possible that the military really is slow-rolling an investigation ordered by Congress, and that they are engaging in such behavior on purpose – charges which, if true, would constitute an inappropriate political behavior. But the military, especially during high periods of operational tempo such as during a war, may simply be overwhelmed to complete investigations at the speed Congress would like. In such a case, it is hard to tell whether the military is behaving inappropriately, or whether they are having to make decisions about which and whose priorities matter most.

Near the middle of Table 2 are other forms of behavior, such as resignation in protest, that are hotly debated among scholars as to whether they are inherently political acts. Most scholars view the act of resignation in protest by a military officer as a political act of defiance (see, for example M. Shields 2017; Jim Golby 2015). Other scholars – many of whom are retired military officers – take a different view, arguing that a military officer's moral agency should at least allow for the possibility that in extreme circumstances, resignation is not only appropriate, but a justified and even necessary outcome, particularly in response to an immoral order which violates the officer's moral conscience (Dubik 2014; D. Snider 2014; see also Milburn 2010).

In the summer of 2021, when the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, faced enormous pressure from Congressional Republicans over the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, several lawmakers asked Milley why he did not resign. Though the questions were largely rhetorical, Milley at one point offered an insightful response, indicating that he at least views the act of resignation in the same way as do most contemporary scholars. Indeed, Milley told one Senator that, "…resigning is a really serious thing – it's a political act – if I'm resigning in protest…It would be an incredible act of political defiance for a commissioned officer to just resign because my advice is not

taken. . . this country does not want generals figuring out what orders we are going to accept and do or not. That's not our job" (Mark Milley quoted in Singman 2021).

In summary, military actors have a wide arsenal of behaviors they can engage in to influence policy outcomes, raise the political costs borne by civilian leaders, or both. Some types of behaviors, such as explicit insubordination, are almost surely intended to alter policy outcomes or generate political costs for civilian leaders. Other types of behaviors, such as making public appeals and running for office, may not always occur out of a desire to alter policy or generate political costs. The most well-known collisions that have occurred between the President and various wartime Commanders throughout American history – Lincoln and McClellan, Truman and MacArthur, Obama and McChrystal – perhaps threaten civil-military relations in the most recognizable and public ways; but there are other subtle and nuanced means available to military actors that can influence policy outcomes and/or generate political costs that civilian leaders must contend with.

Political Behavior Undertaken by Civilians

Like military actors, civilians can also engage in behaviors that harness the military *solely* for a political purpose. A good definition of political behaviors engaged in by civilians that adversely "politicize" the military comes from Jim Golby's (2021) concept of "civilian activation," which he defines as efforts "by civilian political elites to court or co-opt the military for personal, partisan, or electoral gain" (Jim Golby 2021, 153).

Scholars of comparative relations have long noted the behaviors civilian leaders may engage in, particularly for the purposes of consolidating their hold on power. For instance, Quinlivan (1999) articulates a series of "coup proofing" behaviors civilians may undertake in order to prevent military forces from launching a coup, such as establishing "parallel" militaries who hold a "special loyalty" to the regime in power (Quinlivan 1999). Similar civilian efforts are described and articulated by De Bruin as "counterbalancing" behaviors (De Bruin 2019). Though these somewhat drastic types of behaviors are typically thought

to occur primarily in autocracies or weak democracies, there are nonetheless a host of political behaviors that civilian leaders of mature democracies can undertake involving the military which seek to further that leader's political and/or partisan advantages.

However, just as identifying and assessing the political behaviors undertaken by military actors requires awareness of the contextual circumstances in which these behaviors occur, so too does the context surrounding a particular action matter a great deal. In fact, identifying and evaluating political behaviors involving the military by civilians may be an even *more* difficult exercise than it is for military actors because, as Golby notes, "elected political leaders often provide alternative explanations to legitimize or excuse their behavior," and observers cannot readily or easily observe the "intent" of the civilian actors who engage in such behaviors (Jim Golby 2021, 152).

A somewhat recent, real-world example illustrates this dynamic very well. Consider the case of former President Trump making a surprise visit to Iraq around Christmas in 2018. Presidents have long visited military bases to meet and interact with Troops, make major policy announcements, and in the case of visiting service academies, to preside over officer commissioning ceremonies (Obama and Obama 2011). During US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Presidents made several surprise visits overseas. President Trump's visit in 2018 generated a moderate level of controversy, however, because as some critics alleged, the President's visit had more the look and feel of a partisan campaign stop than that of a Commander in Chief visiting the Troops. Indeed, some of the Troops reportedly adorned hats and other "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) gear during the President's visit, which the President happily signed (Fritze 2018).

In this example, the President's visit to Iraq itself was not problematic. What was problematic, however, was the way in which some Troops appeared to endorse the President in clearly partisan tones. It is unclear whether the President or members of his staff encouraged Troops to wear the gear, or whether the Troops spontaneously adorned the gear on their own. In the case of the former, we could rightly classify the action as a

civilian political behavior. In the case of the latter, we would instead lean towards classifying the incident as a political behavior by military actors. In reality, this incident was probably a combination of both.

If we again conceive of the possible political behaviors that civilian actors can undertake within mature democracies as a spectrum, we can envision one end consisting of behaviors that are unquestionably committed exclusively for partisan or political advantage. These would include acts such as appointing military actors to positions on the basis of shared partisan or ideological alignment, or engaging in a truly diversionary use of force, either at home or abroad.[13] Near this end of the spectrum would also include the civilian behavior of featuring military actors to speak at major partisan political conventions or gatherings, or to explicitly endorse or attack political candidates during political campaigns.

On the other end of this spectrum are behaviors that involve the military for partisan advantage, but in a far more subtle form. Suppose, for instance, that a Presidential candidate seeks to garner support for his or her healthcare plan. The candidate asks an elderly military veteran to travel with him or her in order to publicly affirm the candidate's plan. Perhaps this involves the veteran standing up during town halls, or being asked to briefly affirm during debates that the candidate's healthcare plan indeed takes care of the nation's veterans. Such a behavior attempts to leverage the military for partisan gain, but in a far more subtle way than using a military actor to speak at a political convention.

Somewhere between the ends of this spectrum lie a number of other behaviors, each depending on the specific details of *how* the behavior is undertaken. Some examples might include civilian political candidates featuring generic military images and symbols in their campaign ads. Featuring general images of US Troops in uniform while patriotic music plays in the background of an advertisement is likely not a problematic political behavior. However, if an advertisement instead features images which contain the faces of

[13]The act of civilians appointing officers on the basis of shared partisan convictions is one manifestation of what Huntington called "subjective civilian control." See Huntington (1957), 80-81 for more details.

recognizable senior military leaders in uniform, while the narrator also states, "Candidate X is trusted by the military to defend the nation," then that advertisement more directly conveys a partisan connection between the candidate seeking office and the military officers shown in the ad. In the latter instance, assuming the military officers whose faces were featured in the advertisement were not given a chance to refuse appearing in the ad, the civilian actor (either the candidate or the candidate's campaign team) has committed an inappropriate political behavior.[14]

Table 3 lists and describes several types of political behaviors that civilian actors may choose to undertake.

As the preceding examples have made clear, determining the degree to which the behaviors described in Table 3 are problematic can be a difficult endeavor. It is not always clear why a civilian actor behaves in a certain way, making assessment of intent somewhat complicated. Those who observe political behaviors may simply disagree on whether a certain instance is truly inappropriate. For example, while some observers alleged that President George W. Bush's use of General David Petraeus in garnering Congressional support for the "surge" strategy in Iraq in 2007-2008 politicized the military in unhealthy ways, one might disagree on the grounds that Petraeus, having both the knowledge and experience from having served previously in Iraq, was precisely the right individual to speak to Congress about the new strategy (Coll 2008).

Another example also illustrates this point. During Donald Trump's tenure in office, the former President deployed several thousand troops to the US border with Mexico in the fall of 2018 in response to an impending caravan of migrants from South America. Some observers saw the move as a type of political move ahead of that year's midterm elections, including several retired Army Colonels who penned an op-ed titled, "Trump's Border Stunt Is a Profound Betrayal of Our Military" (Adams, Wilkerson, and Wilson III

[14]If the officers did agree to appear in the campaign ad, the behavior would still be inappropriate, but the responsibility would be shared between the civilian candidate and the military actors.

Table 3: Political Behaviors Undertaken by Civilian Actors

Tactic	Nature of Activity	Audience	Examples
Diversionary Deployment	The use of military force - at home or abroad - for the purposes of diverting public attention away from a civilian leader's domestic troubles	Mass Public	Allegations that Bill Clinton launched missiles against targets in Africa in 1998 as domestic controversy brewed surrounding his inappropriate behavior with a White House intern; Allegations that Donald Trump deployed Troops to the US border with Mexico ahead of the 2018 midterm elections
Partisan Stacking	Assigning/removing military officers to/from positions on the basis of shared partisan or ideological convictions	Mass Public, the Military	Andrew Johnson replaces Generals Sheridan, Sickles, and Pope as 5th, 3rd, and 2nd Military District Commanders during Reconstruction
Electoral Swaggering	Featuring military officers (active or retired) to speak at political conventions, or to endorse/attack political candidates	Mass public	Generals Flynn (Republican) and Allen (Democrat) speaking during 2016 party conventions on behalf of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton
The Military as Sales Reps	Sending military actors to garner support for civilian leader policies	Mass public, Congress	Generals Grant and Custer, along with Admiral David Farragut, accompany President Johnson on 'The Swing Around the Circle' Tour ahead of the 1866 midterm elections; the Bush Administration's use of retired military elites to publicly support multiple controversial policies during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan
Brass in the Cabinet	Appointing military actors (active and retired) to key positions within the cabinet	Mass public	President George H.W. Bush appoints LTG Colin Powell as National Security Advisor in 1987; President Trump appoints several military officers (active and retired) to key postings in the cabinet, including James Mattis as Secretary of Defense and John Kelly as head of the Department of Homeland Security (later White House Chief of Staff)
Showcasing the Troops	Use of military symbols and imagery in commercials or printed material; speaking at/visiting military bases	Mass public, the Military	George W. Bush declares 'Mission Accomplished' on an Aircraft Carrier in 2003; Donald Trump visits Iraq in 2018

2018). At the same time, others, especially those on the political right, saw the move not as a politically motivated use of the military, but rather as a drastic yet shrewd response to a legitimate crisis that had developed on the US southern border (Wright 2018). Aside from the obvious fact that opposing partisans are likely to view the former President's behavior very differently, the fact that troops remain deployed at the border – under a subsequent Presidential administration of a different political party – at the very least suggests that the use of Troops for the purposes of assisting border and customs agents is helping to alleviate what is in fact a genuine problem (Beynon 2021b).

In summary, civilian leaders can engage in political behaviors that challenge civil-military relations, much in the way that military actors can. Much like the behaviors that military actors engage in, the political behaviors that civilians undertake vary significantly. Some tend to be obviously committed for partisan reasons, such as a civilian leader assigning military officers on the basis of shared partisan or ideological convictions, or selecting military actors to speak at major political events. Other civilian behaviors involve more subtlety, and thus are not entirely inappropriate, such as visiting military bases, or using military symbols and images to show general support for the Troops. Thus, identifying and evaluating the political behaviors undertaken by civilian actors, much like those engaged in by military actors, requires awareness of the details and context in which these behaviors occur.

Identifying, Operationalizing, and Evaluating Political Behaviors Involving the Military

Because the intent of an actor is not always visible, and because civilian leaders in particular are prone to offer alternative explanations for behaving in a certain way (Jim Golby 2021, 152), scholars of civil-military relations need a more consistent and objective way to identify and assess political behaviors involving the military. For this reason, I propose that the three central principles of civil-military relations offer a broad yet

valuable baseline with which to identify and evaluate political behaviors that involve the military. In short, scholars should examine a civilian or military actor's behavior and ask whether and to what degree such an action violates the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference of the military.

Answering these questions requires operationalizing violations to each of the three central principles in a particular way based on a specific type of behavior. Indeed, I take up precisely this task for two specific forms of behaviors in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation – that of military actors authoring opinion commentary, and civilian actors featuring military leaders in campaign advertisements. While the observer of civil-military relations will still wrestle with determining whether and how much a particular act violates one or more of the central principles of civil-military relations, using the three central principles as a lens through which to identify problematic political behaviors is more advantageous than trying to ascertain the true intent of an actor, wade through a litany of potential alternative explanations for committing an act, or gauge the political cost borne by civilians in response to the behavior of military actors.

There are at least two major advantages to developing and employing a framework that measures political behavior by adherence to the three central principles of civil-military relations. The first distinct advantage involves the sense of unity surrounding the primacy of these principles. As the last chapter argued, scholars such as Samuel Huntington as well as his critics share the aspirational ideal of military and civilian actors adhering to the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference of the military.

A second advantage to identifying and measuring political behaviors through the lens of adherence to the central principles of civil-military relations emerges. As I seek to demonstrate later in this dissertation, doing so allows the researcher to examine political behaviors over time. Scholars to date have not examined changes in political behaviors over time in part because an objective, consistent measurement strategy does not exist. I

am not arguing here that historical contexts are not important; indeed, they most certainly are. However, scholars of civil-military relations need to better understand what generates variation in political behavior. The framework offered here is one such starting point.

The rest of this chapter explores why civilian and military actors become more or less committed to upholding the central principles of civil-military relations. I argue that the levels of two domestic variables — the levels of political polarization and military prestige in a society — alter the extent to which these actors adhere to the central principles of civil-military relations. Furthermore, I argue that higher levels of polarization and military prestige alter the overall constraining influence of the central principles of civil-military relations such that when one or more of these variables exist at relatively high levels, civilian and/or military actors are willing to behave in ways that violate the principles of civil-military relations. In the next section of the paper, I define each of these independent variables and trace their respective levels in contemporary America.

IV1 - Political Polarization

The first independent variable of study in this dissertation is political polarization. Polarization is a concept that is difficult to define precisely. In American politics, polarization generally refers to the movement of thoughts and attitudes within a political community away from the political center and toward more ideological extremes (Hare and Poole 2014; Abramowitz 2018). Within international relations, polarization is often defined the same way, but scholars of international relations are interested in different applications of polarization, such as how polarization contributes to a state's ability to recognize common threats, learn and derive lessons from foreign policy failure, and agree on what role a nation should play on the world stage (Schultz 2017; Myrick 2021). From the perspective of political theory, political polarization describes the degree to which a society shares fundamental values, is capable of incorporating divergent worldviews, and the overall degree to which these values unite versus divide a nation (Marsden 2014; Deneen

2018). In this dissertation, I rely on a conception of polarization both as the divergence of political attitudes away from an ideological center and toward the extreme, as well as a conception of the term that recognizes the difficulties which arise when a society increasingly disagrees about the fundamental values and worldviews that should govern it.

Perspectives on Polarization's Causes and It's Implications

Perspectives regarding the *causes* of political polarization in the United States vary. Scholars have pointed to a variety of causes of polarization, including differences of opinion over issues pertaining to race and religion (Abramowitz 2018), the size and role of government (Stonecash 2015), normative conceptions of personal and national identity (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018), and other specific policy matters (Mann and Ornstein 2012). Other scholars, mainly political theorists and cultural historians, have argued that the current polarized environment in the United States is the result of a slow yet steady political shift that began in the 1950s – a shift that reflects both the incompatibility of American pluralism to reconcile and "embrace a wide range of both religious and nonreligious viewpoints" (Marsden 2014, 171) and the inability of liberalism as a political philosophy to deliver on its intended promises of securing individual rights in a manner that is equitable and fair (Deneen 2018). What is common to most explanations of polarization in the United States is the notion that American society is increasingly divided today because of the loss of support for the collective values and purposes that should guide and unite it, and that the various worldviews that seek to influence society today are "utterly distinct in their presuppositions, values, and outcomes" (S. D. Allen 2020, 128).

The worldview from which one operates is important. As Sire has posited, a worldview "is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart. . . about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being" (Sire 2020, 6). Simply put, one's worldview will influence, at some point, one's behavior.[15]

[15] Sire further defines one's worldview as how one answers eight fundamental questions, including "what is a human being?" "what is prime reality – the really real?" and "how do we know what is right and wrong?"

Thus, the contestation of worldviews that reflects today's highly polarized climate in the United States well captures the idea and the feeling of American society being pulled in drastically different – indeed opposing – directions.

Scholars note the presence of three characteristics or features that further describe the current polarized political landscape in the US. The first feature of polarization in the contemporary United States is that it goes far beyond political differences between political elites (Mann and Ornstein 2012). In other words, today's polarized landscape extends beyond the halls of Congress in Washington, D.C. While one can argue that ordinary citizens may not feel as strongly as elected politicians about every political issue at stake today, the fact is that the level of disdain held by regular Americans for both political parties, as well as those who identify as being on the opposite side of the political spectrum, has risen sharply over the past several decades. This phenomenon is known in the American politics literature as "affective polarization" (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar et al. 2019) or "negative partisanship" (Abramowitz 2018).

A second feature of contemporary polarized politics in the United States is the increasing scope and number of issues that have become included as part of the partisan battleground. Politicians and citizens do not disagree and wage political war over a handful of important issues, but rather – at least seemingly – over everything! Scholars of American politics describe this dynamic of increasing political warfare as "conflict extension" (Layman and Carsey 2002). As one might expect, the dynamic of "conflict extension," in which every political issue seems to constitute a hefty partisan political battle, has dampened prospects for meaningful cooperation across partisan aisles and other demonstrations of bipartisanship (Layman et al. 2010).

A third and increasingly contentious feature of contemporary political polarization in the United States is that issues of personal and collective identity are progressively associated with partisanship - to the point that partisan identity itself is an important

See Sire (2020), 8-9 for an introduction to worldview thinking.

component of how people view themselves and others (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018; Robinson, Michael 2018). This feature of polarized politics is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the rise and influence of American "identity politics" in which the normative roles of race, gender, religion, and immigration invoke very strong commitments from individuals on both sides of the partisan aisle (J. K. White 2002; Mann and Ornstein 2012; Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018). The prominence of these identity-related issues in politics affirms that these concerns are not merely peripheral interests, but rather principles held by citizens who care deeply about and consider them to be of fundamental concern.

Polarization in the US Over Time

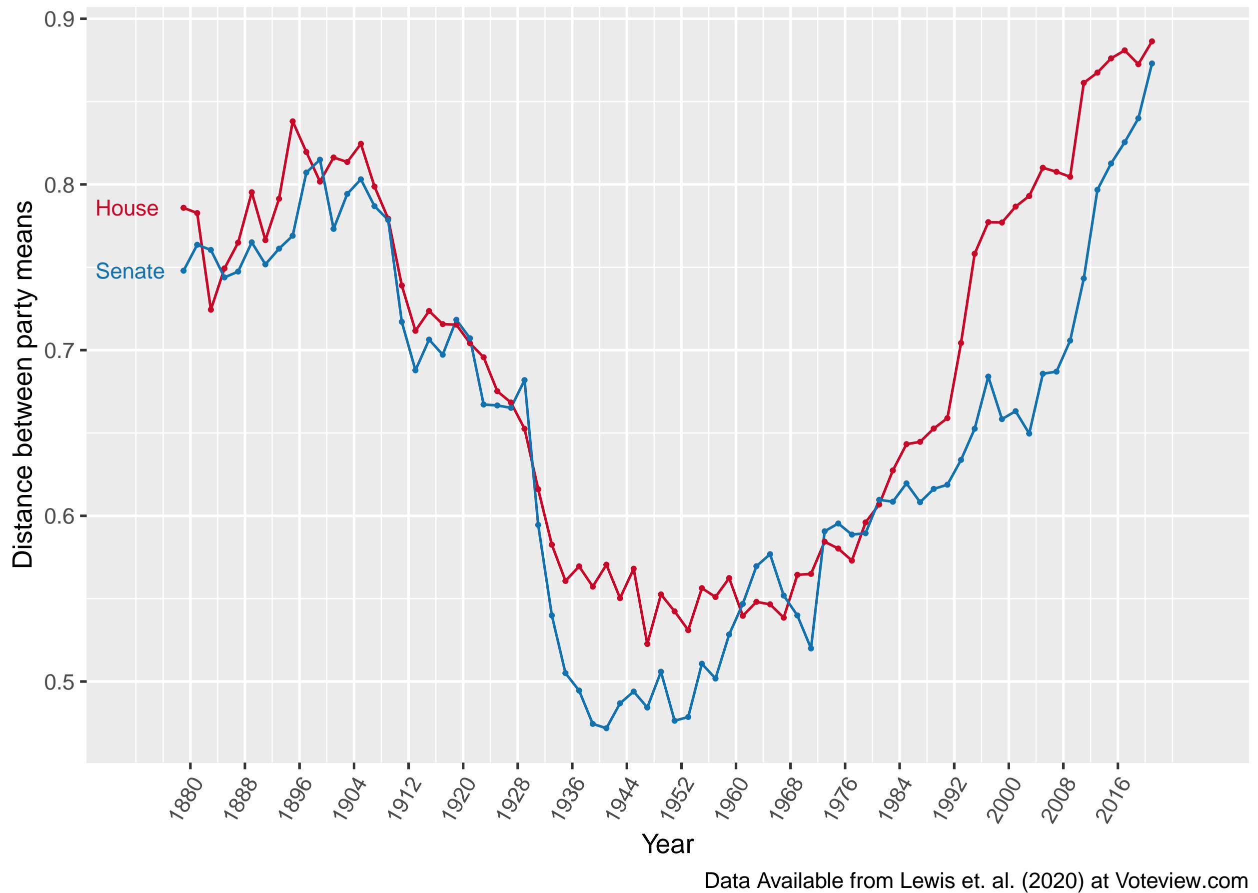


Figure 3: Liberal-Conservative Partisan Polarization by Chamber, 1880-Present

In political science, one of the benchmark measurements of polarization in the United

States has been that of dynamically-weighted, three-step estimation scores (DW-NOMINATE), which are derived from examining roll call voting patterns among members of Congress (Jeffrey B Lewis et al. 2020). Figure 3 shows polarization levels present in the US House and Senate since the latter portions of the 19th Century (Hare and Poole 2014; Jeffrey B Lewis et al. 2020). As Figure 3 demonstrates, polarization levels in the United States were high around 1880, and remained high before gradually decreasing early in the 20th century. The figure further shows that polarization reached its nadir in the years before World War Two, then remained at relatively low levels until approximately the mid-1970s. Since that time, however, polarization in both chambers of the US Congress has increased dramatically, to the point that contemporary levels now exceed those previously recorded.

Polarization has been measured in a second way in the American politics literature. First derived by Iyengar et al. (2012), measurements of “affective polarization” or “negative partisanship” have been derived by using data from the American National Elections Studies (ANES) (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012). Beginning in the late 1970s, the ANES has asked a series of “feeling thermometer” questions, in which respondents are asked to provide, on a scale ranging from 0-100, how they feel about a range of topics, including their feelings about political parties. Figure 4 graphs the results of how partisans feel about members of their own party, members who affiliate with the opposite party, the difference between these two answers, and a total level of affective polarization, which is the sum of the difference for each of the two main parties in the United States.

As Figure 4 shows, measurements for how favorable each party is have remained more or less constant over the past several decades. However, partisans have increasingly rated those on the opposite side of the political spectrum as increasingly less favorable over the same time period. In other words, data shows that partisans do not necessarily like the party with whom they affiliate more, but rather that they disdain those on the other side of the aisle at greater levels.

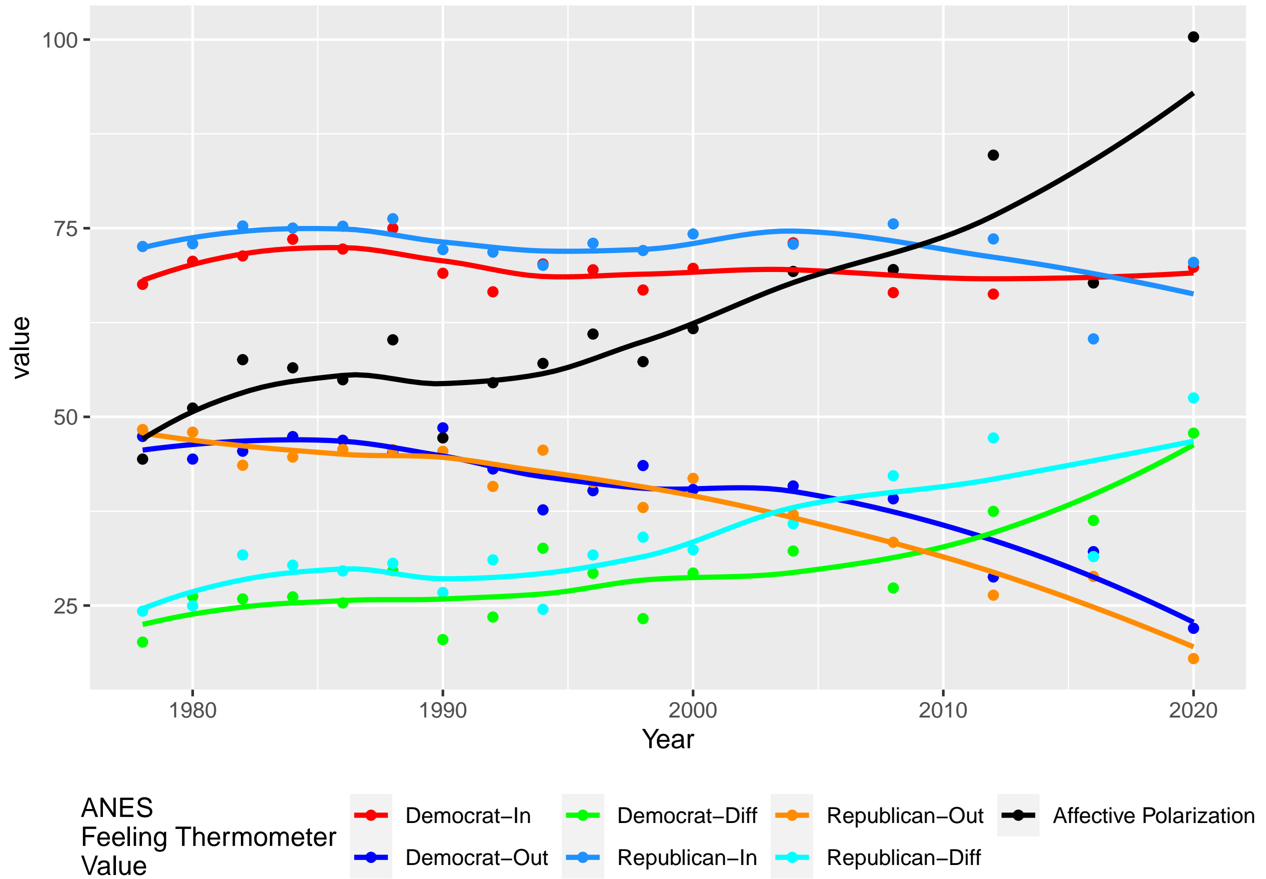


Figure 4: Affective Polarization and various 'Feeling Thermometer' Scores in the US, 1978-2020

Why Does Polarization Matter?

One does not have to look far today in the American political culture to grasp the fact that current levels of polarization are high. Indeed, it is little wonder that both candidates running for President of the United States in 2020 claimed that the very “soul of the nation” was at stake (Dias 2020). The questions with which the United States is wrestling about itself reflect not only political differences among America’s elected leaders, but significant gaps between the worldviews of the nation’s citizens and the fundamental core values that should be adopted, implemented, and practiced.

A cursory examination of just a handful of these polarizing questions confirms that they are not easy questions, nor likely to be solved without eliciting a strong response from individuals, depending on which worldview(s) one holds, or which political party or political ideology one supports. To be clear, my aim in listing these questions below is two-fold: first, to demonstrate that there are a host of consequential and important questions in the US today with significant political and policy ramifications; and second, to convince the reader that those who hold to a particular set of answers to each of these and other questions likely feels very strongly about what the right and correct answers are to these questions. There are many other questions than those listed here, but these are intended to serve as an example of the many contentious issues that are impacted by the worldview and ideology one holds.

- What does it mean to be an American? Is there a slate of common “American Values?” What are they?
- Should America be proud of its history, and to what degree?
- Is the United States an “inherently racist” country? Are our schools and universities “inherently racist?” Why or why not?
- To what degree should the United States be proud of its Constitution, and of those American founders who wrote it?
- To what degree should the United States have and enforce its national borders?
- Is abortion a human “right?”
- Is the construct of gender important anymore, and to what degree? Are there any meaningful differences between men and women, and if there are, should these

differences be acknowledged and celebrated or completely downplayed?

These questions, and many more, illustrate how different worldviews reflect drastically different ideas of how the United States should look moving forward. These questions are qualitatively different from policy questions such as what percentage of national GDP should be spent on the military, whether charter schools should be supported or opposed, and whether the debt ceiling should be raised in times of fiscal crisis and uncertainty. While these types of questions also often lead to significant and intense political divisions, and sometimes to important policy ramifications, they do not reflect the same degree of intensity as those listed above that weigh importantly on an individual's deeply held beliefs, values, and overall worldview (J. K. White 2002; Mann and Ornstein 2012; Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018). How the nation handles these questions will likely set a tone that will have lasting impacts on the nation's values, now and into the future.

In this dissertation, I argue that members of the US military are not immune from holding strong views and opinions on central questions such as those listed above, or on any issues in the political sphere that involve worldview commitments or ramifications. I argue that the views held on these types of central questions and issues by various military actors stem from their personal worldviews, and thus involve the moral values that they hold dear and cherish. Therefore, I argue that when these types of central and consequential issues and concerns are at stake, members of the military will increasingly behave in a way that advances the values and worldview that they believe in, even if doing so runs counter to the foundational principles of civil-military relations: maintaining civilian control, the military's non-partisan ethic, and the military not interfering in certain areas of state policy.

IV2 - The Military's Prestige

The second independent variable examined in this study is the military's level of prestige. In defining prestige, I follow the sociological literature regarding the stratification

of professional occupations and professions to denote two related yet distinct components that comprise the variable of prestige (Davis 1942; Jaco 1970). Both of these components have relevance for the variable of military prestige.

The first component deals with how important an occupation or profession is in terms of its positional role in society, or what Davis (1942) calls, "the invidious value attached to any given status or office" (Davis 1942, 312). This first component of military prestige has in mind the relative *importance* or *centrality* of the military with respect to the function it serves, and the roles or tasks that the military as an institution carries out. We might anticipate that the importance or centrality of the military varies as a result of factors such as the threat environment. For example, a society that lives under the constant threat of attack by another nation, and whose military is constantly working to ensure that these threats are defeated, may view its military as more central to the state than another society that rarely faces significant threats.

The second component of prestige examines society's evaluation of the *performance* or *excellence* of an occupation or profession, or the manner in which its members "[carry] out the requirements of [their] position" (Linton, 1936 as cited in Davis 1942, 312). Applying this to the prestige of the military, this second component of prestige thus deals with the degree to which society deems the military is skilled, or the degree to which the military is meeting society's expectations. We might expect this component of military prestige to vary according to different factors than those that impact the *centrality* of the military. For example, war outcomes (victory or defeat), or the presence of internal scandals, might impact a societal evaluation of the skill of the military, or the degree to which the military is meeting society's expectations.

The distinction of these two related yet different components of the variable of military prestige matters insofar as theoretically, these two components may operate at different levels. It is possible, for instance, for a military to be viewed as highly central or important, but nonetheless not very skilled, or for a military to be seen as skilled, but relatively

unimportant to a society. The first case study of this dissertation, which examines the military during the late 19th Century, in fact argues that during the late 1870s and early 1880s, society viewed the military as less central to the nation than relative to how it had been viewed 15 years earlier. Even so, society simultaneously venerated the military service of individual military leaders, many of whom were considered heroes of the Civil War.

Furthermore, it follows that changes to the overall level of military prestige may be driven by one or both components of military prestige. For example, the US military victory during the Gulf War likely did not primarily alter the centrality of the military in terms of the function it fulfilled to the United States. The military had, well before the Gulf War, occupied a central role - defending the nation - throughout the Cold War period. Rather, the victory achieved by US forces in the Gulf War did change how Americans perceived the military's skills and professional excellence. When President George H.W. Bush proclaimed, in 1991, that "It's a proud day for America. And, by God, we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all," his comments primarily pointed to the fact that the US military had shed any lingering perceptions or doubts regarding its abilities, dating back to the end of the Vietnam War (G. Bush 1991). Senior military leaders who participated in the Gulf War likewise viewed that victory as the signature expression of an Army that had, in the two decades after Vietnam, rebuilt itself (Kitfield 1997).

In the following section, I summarize the contemporary US military's high level of prestige through each of the two components described above. I will describe the military's centrality to the nation by briefly tracing how, for a majority of the post-World War Two era, the US military has played a central role in foreign policy. Then, to examine society's perception of the military's professional excellence, I will describe how society's level of public trust in the military has changed over the past several decades. Today, the modern, all-volunteer military is somewhat exclusive and distant from many segments of American society, and fewer Americans can relate to the military writ large. This has rendered the

military institution increasingly popular, but also somewhat mysterious.[16]

The Centrality of the Military Institution

Over the past seventy-five years, the United States has instituted a series of significant bureaucratic reforms that have significantly expanded the military's scope and influence within the government. As a result, the military is, for better or for worse, a massive organization that influences a wide range of foreign policy and national security outcomes.

This has especially been the case since the end of World War Two. In the aftermath of this victory, which thrust the US onto the international stage, President Truman signed The National Security Act of 1947, which sought to unify the defense and intelligence establishments. Despite achieving victory in World War Two, the military services, and the leaders in charge of them, had squabbled a fair bit throughout the war (Kaiser 2014). The National Security Act created new institutions, including the National Security Council (NSC), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and the US Air Force (*National Security Act of 1947* 1947), and more formally, merged the Departments of War and Navy into the "National Military Establishment," which was essentially the precursor to what became the Department of Defense in 1949 (Locher 2001).

These reforms wrought by the National Security Act were not only reflective of the central role that the nation's military would play in international affairs, but they also proved to be quite successful. So influential was the National Security Act that fifty years after its signing, President Bill Clinton stated that as a result of the institutions created by the National Security Act and the people who had served in them, a generation had "helped to secure the peace and prosperity that America enjoys. . . the success of their

[16]It is important to point out that even as I write this dissertation, it is possible that several events that have unfolded over the past few months may in fact reduce the military's level of prestige. For instance, the full impacts of the chaotic withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan in August 2021 on the military's level of prestige may not be tangible or fully show up in American public opinion for some time. There are early signs of strain, however, as 2021 Gallup polling revealed that the percentage of Americans who highly trust the military is roughly on par with percentages that existed prior to September 11, 2001. See "Confidence in Institutions. Gallup Public Opinion Polling" (2020) for more details.

efforts and of the historic legislation enacted half a century ago is reflected in an outstanding record of achievement: nuclear war averted, the Cold War won, and the nations of the world turning to democracy and free markets" (Clinton 1997).

A second set of major institutional defense reforms was undertaken in the mid-1980s. Known as the Goldwater-Nichols Act after Senator Barry Goldwater and Congressman William "Bill" Nichols, several incidents that occurred in the early part of that decade exposed deficiencies in aspects of US military operations, including that it lacked the ability to operate in *joint* environments, or those which required military personnel and equipment from across the individual military services (Kitfield 1997).[17] The ultimate goal of the Goldwater-Nichols Act was to ensure that in an age in which military technologies and equipment were becoming increasingly sophisticated, American national defense interests would be identified and prioritized over and above the parochial organizational interests of the separate military services (Locher 2001).

Among the most significant of the changes wrought by the Goldwater-Nichols Act was codification of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the President's principal military adviser, a change which meant that all advice from the respective individual service chiefs of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps would flow through the new Chairman as the single point of contact (Locher 2001; Wills 2016). Furthermore, the Goldwater-Nichols Act created several regional combatant commanders, each of which would report directly to the Secretary of Defense (Locher 2001; Wills 2016). In essence, the Goldwater-Nichols act institutionalized both the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Combatant Commanders as powerful military voices.

A final source of the contemporary military's importance to the nation can be understood through the widening scope of responsibility it has assumed, especially in the post-9/11 era. Although the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq each involved a sizable civilian component for at least a portion of the war, the military nonetheless assumed control for a

[17]This included the the failed Iranian hostage rescue mission in 1980. For an excellent account of how this tragic event spurred the evolution of joint military organizations and doctrine, see Kitfield (1997).

significant portion of the day-to-day decision making of these conflicts, even over issues that once were, or ostensibly should be, civilian endeavors.[18]

In summary, today's military has become remarkably prestigious in part because of the institutional reforms enacted over the past several decades, which have reflected the importance of the military to the nation. The National Security Act of 1947 and the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 institutionalized certain military officer roles, to include the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Combatant Commanders, as powerful and influential voices within the government. Additionally, the military's experiences of prolonged and repeated deployments in the post-9/11 era have served to strengthen the military relative to other US institutions. Indeed, one scholar has claimed that the legislative changes wrought over the previous decades, combined with the past two decades of overseas experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, have had the practical effect of the Pentagon replacing the State Department as the government's "organizational center of gravity for U.S. national security and foreign policy" (Schmidt 2019). So great has the US military's institutional influence become, claims another scholar, that "Pentagon 'help' is like being hugged by an eight-hundred-pound gorilla: it can squeeze the life right out of civilian efforts" (Rosa Brooks 2016a, 91).

Measuring the centrality or importance of the military is somewhat tricky. A good starting point is to examine the budget of the Department of Defense and of the individual military services, but here too, there are some important considerations. After all, even during the Cold War Era, the defense budget varied, and at times, significantly. The centrality and importance of the US military is best observed and understood from a point of view that examines major changes, or in some cases, lengthy periods of time. For example, while defense spending varied during the Cold War, at no point during the Cold

[18]To be clear, it is doubtful that the military and other governmental organizations applaud these developments. The topic of the interaction (or lack thereof) of military and civilian efforts during the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts has become a burgeoning literature that includes a mixture of official government reports, autobiographical memoirs, and works that offer other theoretical and historical insights. For a sample of this literature, see *The Iraq Study Group Report* (2006); Ricks (2006); Chandrasekaran (2007); Hodge (2011); Chandrasekaran (2013); Gallagher (2019).

War did defense spending decrease to a level that was on par with defense spending during the 1920s and 1930s (Vandenbroucke 2020). Through this lens, the US military played a far more central role to the United States after World War Two and during the Cold War than during the 1920s and 1930s.

As an indicator of the relative disparity between the Department of Defense and perhaps its closest institutional partner, the Department of State, Figure 5 displays each department's total budget in 2016 real dollars over the period from 1962-2016. One can clearly detect from the Figure that though the size of the Defense budget has dwarfed that of State for a number of decades, the relative degree to which the Defense budget is larger than the State Department's has grown sharply in the post-9/11 era.[19]

The Military's Growing Exclusivity Within American Society

A second factor of the military's overall high level of prestige involves society's perceptions of the military's skill and excellence. It is difficult to measure this directly, but perhaps the closest measurement involves the degree of public trust that Americans have placed in the military. By many measurements, the military is regarded today as the public's most trusted institution ("Confidence in Institutions. Gallup Public Opinion Polling" 2020).

While there is nothing inherently wrong with a military that is highly regarded by the public, contemporary scholars have expressed concern about the military being regarded *too highly*. Within the civil-military relations literature, the topic of the military's relational distance between the military and society is often referred to as the civil-military "gap" (P. D. Feaver and Kohn 2001). For the past twenty years or so, numerous scholars have addressed the gap's origins, scope, and implications, and have raised numerous

[19]In the statistical portions of this dissertation, the predominant measures of military prestige used involve measurements of public trust and confidence in the military, as reported through various public opinion polling. The relative size of the DoD versus State Department Budget could also be used, but these budgetary differences likely also reflect institutional developments, such as the advent of the All-Volunteer Force, which is very expensive to maintain. Therefore, in my view, public opinion measurements of trust and confidence in the military are better (though still imperfect) measures of the military's overall level of prestige.

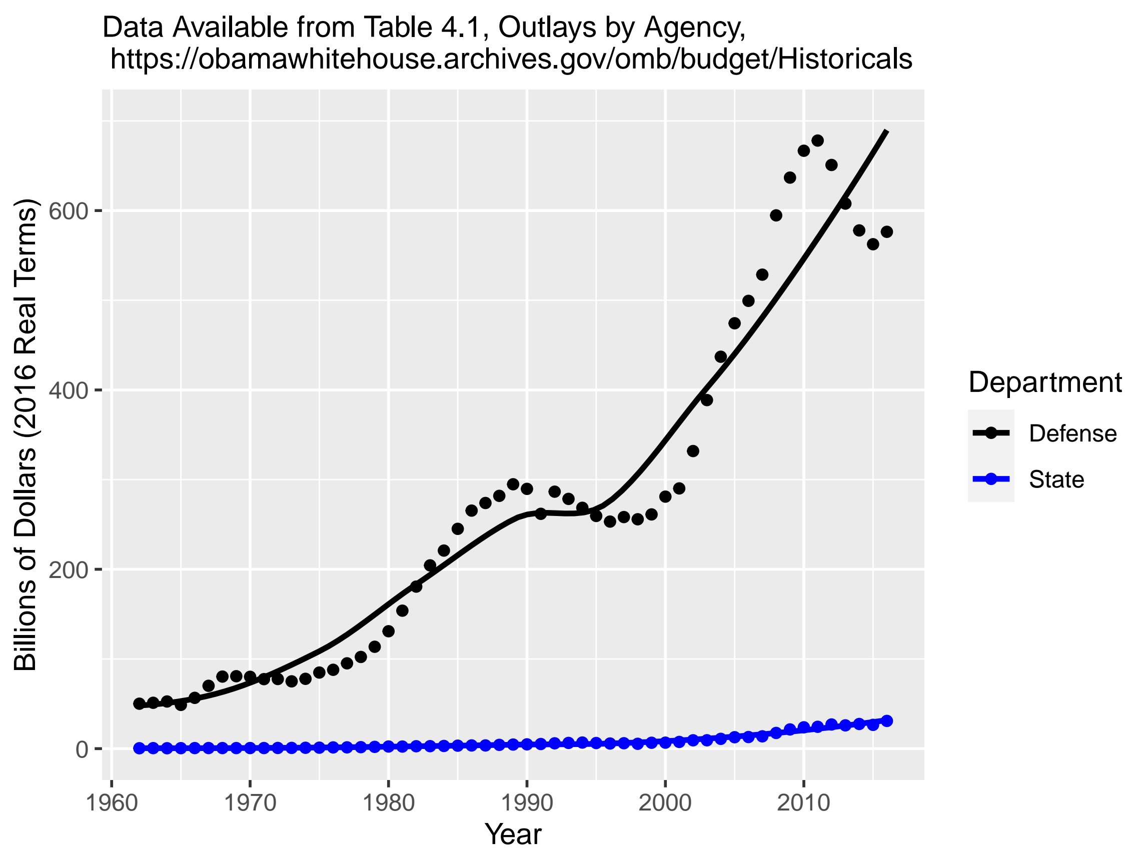


Figure 5: Budgets for US Departments of Defense and State, 1962-2016

solutions for shrinking the gap (P. D. Feaver and Kohn 2001; Schake and Mattis 2016). Scholars further assert that in the years since the Vietnam War, at least three separate gaps have formed between the military and American society: a geographical gap (Liebert and Golby 2017), a partisan gap (Jim Golby 2011; Liebert and Golby 2017), and a generational gap (Colford and Sugarman 2016).

Before summarizing each of these three separate gaps, it is important to assert a couple of observations about the concept of a gap in general between society and the military. At first glance, one may think that a gap between society and the military might diminish, rather than enhance, the military's overall level of prestige. After all, a nation that is entirely separated from its military, in the sense that it is unable to observe, relate to, and know anything about the military or those that serve in it, is unlikely to foster appreciation and respect for the military as an institution. However, as I summarize in following paragraphs, most scholars have expressed the opposite concern: too large a gap between society and the military leads to society placing too much trust in – or at least too much blind trust in – the military.

In the United States, the gap between society and the military has changed over time. In the American context, Americans have generally been suspicious of large numbers of standing military forces since the founding of the United States. In fact, the American founders held significant differences of opinion over how large the nation's military forces should be, and whether these forces should be comprised of volunteers (favored by Thomas Jefferson) or a standing military (favored by Alexander Hamilton) (Weigley 2001). In the end, the founders established a hybrid concept, forming a moderately sized standing Army that could be augmented as required by state militias comprised of "citizen soldiers" (Weigley 2001).

Furthermore, for most of its history the United States has relied on a citizen-soldier concept when fielding military forces, especially for war. It was largely not until the 20th century that the government faced wartime demands requiring the institution of mandatory

military service, particularly during World War Two, and later, Vietnam (Rostker 2006). The Vietnam War proved to be tremendously unpopular with domestic American audiences as the length of the war increased, especially after the North Vietnamese initiated their "Tet Offensive" in 1968 (Crane 2002; Summers 1982; Petraeus 1987). Moreover, in the latter years of the war, Americans came to view the existing draft system as inequitable from racial and economic perspectives (Rostker 2006). The growing population of the United States, combined with severe disciplinary issues that plagued many of the military services at the end of the war (Romjue 1984), led many Americans to believe that instituting an All-Volunteer Force (AVF) was at least a viable alternative to maintaining the draft (Rostker 2006). The watershed moment arrived in 1973, when the United States formally abandoned the draft and created the All-Volunteer Force (AVF), the result of recommendations made by the Gates Commission, established previously by President Richard Nixon (Rostker 2006). Since that time, only volunteers have served in the military.

The first gap that scholars write about is a geographical gap between parts of the United States and the military. Golby and Liebert, for instance, note that a disproportionate number of those serving in the military hail from rural and southern states, and that a large proportion of military recruitment stations, Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs, and military installations are located in the southern United States (Liebert and Golby 2017). The presence of this particular gap raises concerns that the military is disproportionately attached to particular regions of the country.

A second gap that scholars have identified is a partisan gap between the military and portions of American society. This gap is a little more complicated to fully understand. Although the military officer corps does in fact disproportionately identify with the Republican Party versus the Democratic Party (Jim Golby 2011; Liebert and Golby 2017), studies have also shown that differences between the military and civilians become smaller if not altogether diminished after conditioning on partisan affiliation (Jim Golby 2011). In other words, the data shows that the military officer corps does identify with the

Republican Party more so than with the Democratic Party, but not that military and civilian values or goals are altogether drastically different from each other.

Finally, and perhaps most problematically in terms of looking ahead into the future, studies have shown that a third gap exists between the military and younger Americans – a gap that has grown as fewer Americans have a firsthand connection to someone either serving or who has served in the military (Colford and Sugarman 2016). Such a gap is even reflected in recent surveys, which actually show the lowest rates of trust in the military are among those under "30 years of age" (McIntyre 2021).

To the extent that these particular three gaps should, and actually do, matter is the subject of considerable debate. Several scholars argue that as the gap between society and the military has grown, it has simply become too easy to send the military to war, as there is little if any corresponding burden society must bear in doing so (Bacevich 2014; Fallows 2014). Furthermore, these critics argue that as society's corresponding burden in going to war is reduced, the public decreasingly holds elected leaders accountable for going to war (Bacevich 2014; Fallows 2014). The result is that the nation ultimately fights irresponsible wars of choice, which yield indecisive outcomes and an altogether feckless foreign policy (Bacevich 2014).

As proof of their argument, these critics point to the military's post-9/11 involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan (Bacevich 2014). For instance, the historian Andrew Bacevich, himself a retired Army Colonel, points out that as the American military was invading and stabilizing Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003 respectively, President George W. Bush lowered taxes and encouraged Americans to travel (Bacevich 2014). Bacevich further asserts that the net result of the military enduring repeated deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, and achieving outcomes in these places that fall far short of strategic victory, is that "the state now owns war, with the country consigned to observer status" (Bacevich 2014, 44). Furthermore, this sentiment has likewise been captured by the journalist James Fallows, who, in an influential article, alleges that Americans in the post-9/11 era have

developed a "reverent but disengaged attitude toward the military – we love the Troops, but we'd rather not think about them" (Fallows 2014).

In addition to its impacts on American foreign policy, other scholars worry that an excessive gap between society and the military harms the quality of civil-military dialogue by constraining civilian input into the policy process, which in turn can likewise threaten a range of foreign policy outcomes. When interacting with civilian leaders in the context of a sizable gap between the military and society, certain military actors may adopt an attitude such that they believe their military service entitles them to be heard in a deferential manner (James Golby and Urben 2020). A similar dynamic can occur if civilian leaders fail to sufficiently assert themselves into the policy process when interacting with military actors who are incredibly popular. Karlin and Friend, for instance, note the dynamic of "military worship" in which military service is somehow viewed as better, more relevant, or more appropriate than other types of civilian service, which ultimately harms civilian control of the military and other democratic norms (Friend and Karlin 2018). As a result, military actors may insist on solving problems in the manner that they want the job done, and not in a way that aligns with the desire of civilian leaders.

While recent polls show that trust in the military may in fact be slipping (McIntyre 2021), the fact is that relative to other institutions, Americans greatly respect their military. According to recent Gallup public opinion polls, 72 percent of Americans indicate that they trust the military a "great deal" or "quite a lot" – the most of any institution, to include Congress (13%), the Presidency (39%), the police (48%), the Supreme Court (40%), and the church/organized religion (42%) ("Confidence in Institutions. Gallup Public Opinion Polling" 2020). Moreover, trends in trust of various American institutions over time reveal that, whereas trust in the military has generally increased over the past 45 years, trust in the other institutions has generally declined or remained the same. These trends are displayed in Figure 6.

In this dissertation, I argue that a high level of military prestige provides civilian and

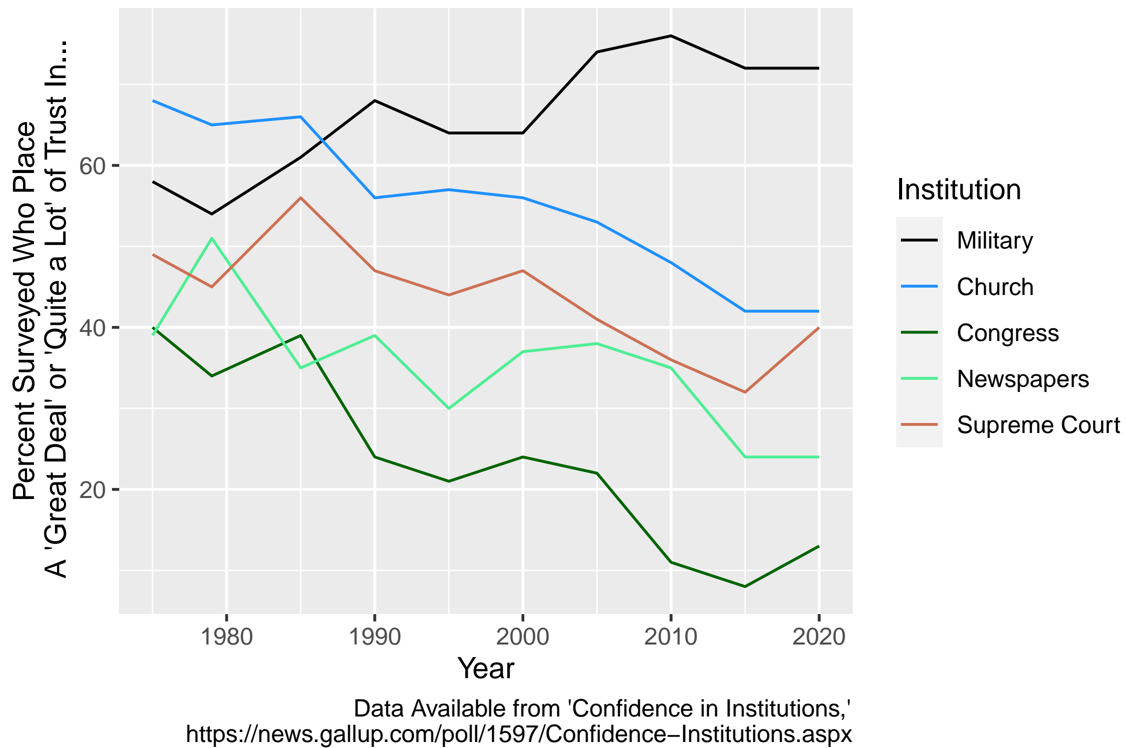


Figure 6: Public Trust in American Institutions Over Time

military actors with an opportunity to leverage public opinion, and thus, with an opportunity to behave in such a way that disregards the principles of civil-military relations. The next section of this chapter describes how the respective levels of polarization and military prestige combine to form unique domestic political environments that impact the constraining influence of the central principles of civil-military relations on the civilian and military actors who practice them.

How Polarization and Prestige Impact the Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations

Having defined both the dependent and independent variables in this chapter, and having defined the central principles of civil-military relations in the previous chapter, I now blend these elements to form a cohesive theory. In broad terms, I argue that high levels of political polarization provide a *motive* for military leaders to engage in political

behaviors that challenge the central principles of civil-military relations, while a high level of military prestige provides both military and civilian leaders with an *opportunity* to do the same (Finer 1962).

This section proceeds in three parts. First, I argue how high levels of polarization provide a *motive* for military actors to engage in political behaviors that violate the principles of civil-military relations. I then argue how high levels of military prestige provide an *opportunity* for civilian and military actors to do the same. Finally, I argue that the combination of relative levels of polarization and military prestige lead to the formulation of four distinct domestic political environments in which civil-military relations occur. In this section, I describe how each environment corresponds to unique differences in the ways in which civilian and military actors adhere to the central principles of civil-military relations, and the specific forms of political behaviors we can expect each actor type to engage in. The central implication of this theory is that certain aspects of the domestic political environment – namely, the level of polarization and the level of military prestige – significantly shape the degree to which militaries become involved in politics, either by their own will, or through that of civilian leaders who seek the military's involvement in politics.

Polarization - A "Motive" to Challenge the Principles of Civil-Military Relations

Increasing polarization serves as a *motive* for military actors to behave in ways that violate the central principles of civil-military relations. This occurs because highly polarized political climates signify not merely political differences within a community, but increasing division and incompatibility regarding the underlying moral values, worldviews, and fundamental aims and purposes that should influence and govern the state and society. Thus, as polarization rises, military actors increasingly encounter situations in which they must make judgments about whether to abide by the fundamental principles of

civil-military relations, or to engage in acts of behavior that, while violating the central governing principles of civil-military relations, nonetheless advance a particular belief system, set of values, or ideology that a particular military leader supports. In the paragraphs which follow, I deliberately use the term military officer rather than military actor to denote that as commissioned leaders, officers are the particular type of military actor who are most likely to encounter the friction that I describe. This is not intended to denigrate enlisted personnel, or veterans, or other types of military actors, but rather to illustrate that military officers are the most likely to serve in a position of military authority while having to respond to growing friction captured by rising polarization.

If American military officers could exist in a figurative and theoretical vacuum, polarization may not have the impact I claim it does. But the fact is that military officers are part of the American society that they serve. Before they join the military, military officers are young men and women who grow up somewhere. Like the rest of American society as a whole, military actors collectively become polarized as different worldviews and ideologies compete for supremacy in the political square.[20] Furthermore, after joining the military, each military officer further develops his or her own worldview, and relies on certain moral values to help guide his or her behavior. When worldviews are increasingly at odds with each other, military officers will encounter greater friction as they execute their routine duties. Such friction can manifest in a number of ways.

One might immediately counter at this point, claiming that military officers have always experienced tension when facing situations in which they must choose between maintaining their professional responsibilities or following the dictates of their personal conscience. Indeed, scholars and military officers have long recognized such a dynamic as an inherently tricky yet crucial aspect of the military profession and of military officership in particular (Cohn, Margulies, and Robinson 2019; Robinson, Cohn, and Margulies

[20] I am not stating that every military officer will become polarized in the sense that every officer will hold extreme views. My point here is that in a collective sense, as society becomes polarized, so does the officer corps, generally speaking.

2020).[21] Indeed, military officers sometimes encounter situations in which choosing to be loyal to one entity – whether it be a civilian leader, the American people, the Constitution, one's fellow soldiers, or himself/herself – comes at the direct actual or perceived exclusion of another (Cohn, Margulies, and Robinson 2019; Robinson, Cohn, and Margulies 2020). How to operate in an environment in such an environment is never easy, and scholars and practitioners take differing views on the matter. Some scholars and officers assert that civilians should and must always be followed (Kohn 2010), while others argue that military officers, as moral agents, should never follow an order which they believe is inherently wrong (Milburn 2010, 2019).

Rising political polarization accentuates these dynamics in two significant ways, however. First, highly polarized environments increase the frequency with which military officers encounter situations in which they have to choose between supporting and obeying their civilian leaders or following the dictates of their own moral conscience. In other words, rising polarization ultimately leads to a problem of authority, and specifically, who or what is the highest authority that military officers will obey. Second, highly polarized environments increase the magnitude of the disparity that exists in these choices because the difference in outcomes (e.g., obeying and supporting a civilian leader or following one's conscience) is more likely to involve not merely a minor difference in political opinions, but a difference in worldviews, moral values, and the fundamental aims and purposes that should govern American society.

As military officers more frequently encounter situations in which the disparity between compliance and following one's conscience grows, we can expect them to increasingly behave in ways that support the worldview and moral values they hold dear, and likely resulting in failure to adhere to the central principles of civil-military relations. While it is not possible to predict all of the issue areas or situations which could provide a *motive* for military actors to challenge the governing principles of civil-military relations, it

[21] For a context of dealing with this tension in war, see Dubik (2016).

is possible to trace how and why the characteristics of today's highly polarized environment in the United States might compel some military officers to challenge the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference of the military.

As polarization rises, some military officers will be willing to violate the principle of civilian control when they deem that the preferred policies held and promulgated by a particular civilian leader or administration are not simply politically unwise, but wrong in a moral sense. If rising polarization reflects differences about what moral values and worldviews are to govern the nation and society, then the definition of which orders or policies are immoral will increasingly depend on the worldview and moral values held by a particular military officer relative to those espoused and promulgated by a civilian leader. Furthermore, military doctrine regarding officership and ethics has long noted the immense role of morality in guiding the behavior and conduct of military officers (Army 2019). For example, Army Doctrinal Publication 6-22, entitled, *Leadership and the Profession*, states that, "The Army ethic has its origins in the philosophical heritage, theological and cultural traditions, and the historical legacy that frame our nation" (Army 2019, 1–7). But the problem is that during periods of heightened polarization, these moral-ethical origins are no longer agreed upon and/or cherished by a majority of people, or are being redefined, or are jettisoned and being replaced by other worldviews and values that may, at least to some officers, run counter to those that they espouse.

In a similar vein, some military officers may be willing to violate the principle of non-partisanship if they believe that one of the major political parties possesses an agenda that is not simply wiser from a political perspective than the other party, but rather one which aligns to the moral views of the officer on a particular issue or set of issues. Finally, some military officers might be motivated to violate a standard of "non-interference" of the military into certain areas of state policy if they believe that the military as an institution should play a greater role in advancing the underlying ideology or values associated with a particular issue or set of issues.

In summary, periods of heightened political polarization can create a *motive* for the military to engage in behaviors that violate the central principles of civil-military relations because a high level of political polarization represents a battle over which worldviews will prevail, or which will lose sway. Military officers may be trained to uphold the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference, but they are also part of American society, both before and after joining the military, thus developing their opinions and stances on the same political issues as do ordinary Americans. When the political topics of the day reflect differing moral worldviews, military officers are unlikely to stay silent. From an early rank, American officers are taught to rely on their moral reasoning to help guide their conduct, as doing so enables military officers to lead and act in periods of great stress, such as combat (Army 2019).

Thus, during periods of heightened polarization, an increasing number of military officers will behave in ways that violate the principles of civil-military relations. These behaviors are deliberate actions, in my view. The military officer who engages in behavior that violates the principles of civil-military relations on the basis of moral principle is fully aware of the impacts of his or her behavior, even if the officer is reluctant to engage in the particular behavior. At some point, as polarization rises, a military officer will prioritize the worldview and underlying ideology to which he or she subscribes over and above adherence to the central principles of civil-military relations.

The Military and Race in Contemporary America

Among the clearest contemporary examples of polarization providing a "motive" for military actors to engage in political behaviors which violate the principles of civil-military relations is the issue of race in America. For any observer or participant of American politics over the past several years, it comes as no surprise that the issue of race has become one of the most polarizing political issues in the United States.[22] The military,

[22] In many ways, and as the first case study describes, this is not an entirely new issue. The military has played a central role within issues that pertain to race, including desegregation of the Armed Forces.

along with many other institutions, such as primary education, corporate America and business, and religious establishments such as the church, has been thrust into discussions involving race in America and what to do about it.

At the risk of summarizing what is a topic that deserves a much fuller and lengthier treatment than can be given here, I will attempt to capture why the military and the issue of race have collided so drastically over the past few years, and to show how they have done so. In articulating this example, my aim is to demonstrate how the issue of race has served as a *motive* for some military officers to engage in behaviors that violate, or at least challenge, the principles of civil-military relations. Furthermore, the key to understanding why this has been the case is in understanding that the events and discussions that have made race in America such a visible issue over the past several years have ignited different worldviews, values, and ideologies among military officers (like the nation itself) on the topic of race.

Recent Pew Research public opinion data (2021) reveals just how split Americans are over the issue of race and what to do about it. Of Americans surveyed in July of 2021, 49% said that “a little” (34%) or “nothing at all” (15%) needs to be done “to ensure equal rights for all Americans regardless of their racial or ethnic background” (Center 2021). In the same survey, however, 50% of those said that “a lot” needs to be done to advance the same (Center 2021). Moreover, among the 50% who believe that “a lot” needs to be done to ensure equal rights for all, respondents were split with respect to whether current systems could accommodate the changes that needed to be made, or whether “most US laws/institutions need to be completely rebuilt” (Center 2021).

It is difficult to find any place, organization, or work space today that is not somehow impacted by discussions revolving around race. The military is no exception, and strong opinions abound whether these developments and the approaches that have been implemented to achieve racial harmony actually harm or help. What cannot be denied is that beliefs and convictions on the issue of race increasingly compel behavior that aligns

with one's view on this topic (and other polarizing topics). For instance, in the wake of the death of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer on May 25, 2020, multiple high ranking military officers penned opinion pieces that, while directly addressing President Trump's handling of protests across the United States, also more broadly revealed their own perspectives on race in the United States (Risa Brooks and Robinson 2020a). For example, Retired Admiral Mike Mullen, a former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, penned an article in *The Atlantic* shortly after these events occurred entitled, "I Cannot Remain Silent," in which he blasted President Trump's reported use of the National Guard to clear a path through Lafayette Square in order for the President to walk to nearby St. John's Church for a photo.[23] In the article, however, Mullen further stated, "We must, as citizens, address head-on the issue of police brutality and sustained injustices against the African American community" (Mullen 2020).

This last sentence is clear evidence of Mullen's worldview, and it explains, at least in part, why he was willing to write an opinion piece that strongly and directly criticized a sitting President. The title itself, "I Cannot Remain Silent," describes how Mullen prioritized his worldview and his personal values over adhering to the principle of civilian control of the military, which likely would have resulted in either not writing the piece to begin with, or at least couching the piece in softer language that did not directly criticize the former President. To be clear, my aim here is neither to claim that Mullen was wrong for writing the piece, nor that he was right to do so, but rather to suggest that at a minimum, Mullen's personal decision to write the piece and to criticize the former President in the process flowed directly from his personal worldview regarding race in the United States and what should be done about it.

The topic of race in America is likely to remain a motive for military officers to behave in ways that violate principles of civil-military relations for some time. More than a year

[23]In June of 2021, interestingly, the Inspector General of the US Department of the Interior issued a report in which he did not and could not corroborate any finding suggesting that Trump had given the order to use US Capitol Police to clear the park, and that the plan to clear the park had been in place for hours before Trump's walk from the Rose Garden to the church. See Montanaro (2021) for more details.

after the death of George Floyd and the aftermath that followed, race in America remains a visibly hot topic, even in the military. Indeed, more than a year after Mullen's publication, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, appeared before Congress to answer questions regarding the military and its supposed stance on *Critical Race Theory* (CRT). Critical Race Theory is something that most Americans had never heard of before 2020, but in recent months, debates about what Critical Race Theory is, and whether and how it should be implemented and applied in American institutions, have been extensive.[24] During the hearing, General Milley greatly angered Republican Members of Congress when he essentially stated that the military does not teach CRT, but that it remains a topic that should be learned and read about so as to better educate American military officers (Kurtzleben 2021b).

The bottom line is that the issue of race in America may serve as a motive for some military actors to engage in behaviors that challenge the governing standards of civil-military relations, depending on where a particular military officer stands with respect to the issue of race in America. Those who strongly believe that the lack of relative proportional minority representation among senior general and flag officers and among key occupations such as fighter pilots constitutes proof of a pernicious form of racism that still exists are more likely to behave in ways that affirm such a view. Other military actors who believe that the presence of these dynamics are the result of other underlying factors, such as selection of certain types of military roles that are correlated with race and socioeconomic background, are more likely to behave in ways that affirm these viewpoints (see, for instance, Dinick 2021).

[24]I do not have the space to unpack CRT, or *Critical Theory* in general, in this dissertation, nor is that my goal. What is interesting, however, is the extent to which multiple institutions of nearly every flavor are debating, criticizing, or commenting on CRT. For example, evangelical churches are sharply divided over whether Critical Theory is even compatible with their religious doctrines. See, for instance, S. D. Allen (2020) and Baucham (2021) and two evangelical leaders who offer strong warnings against the church adopting views on social justice that are compatible with *Critical Theory.* See also Belkin (2021) for an example of the role of CRT in school board battles ahead of the Virginia Gubernatorial Election, an election that many contemporary political observers interpreted as a resounding defeat of progressive education policies that aggressively implemented CRT. See also D. Saunders (2021) for a confirmatory view, but also Saletan (2021) for a more nuanced view.

Debates over these differing ideologies, worldviews, and things like CRT are not likely to remain merely philosophical or ethereal debates for members of the military. Indeed, differences over these particular issues impact how the military functions and operates. Consider the military's promotion system, and how different worldviews and ideologies lead different people to institute various policies. In June of 2020, Trump's Secretary of Defense, Mark Esper, announced that the Department of Defense would remove all photographs of personnel as they are considered for promotion, in order "to ensure promotion boards and selection processes enable equal opportunity for all service members, promote diversity in our ranks, and are free from bias on race, ethnicity, gender, or national origin" (Mark Esper quoted in Schogol 2020). Such a policy is likely to please those who disagree with the assertions and goals of CRT, and who would affirm a *colorblind* approach to combat racism. At the same time, such a policy is inherently against the assertions of proponents and advocates of CRT. Just a year later, some leaders in the Navy and Marine Corps announced that removing the photographs from promotion boards has hindered the Navy from achieving its goals with respect to diversity, and therefore, that the photos should be reinstated. For instance, Vice Admiral John Newell remarked at a panel on the topic of diversity in 2021, "I think we should consider reinstating photos in selection boards. . . we can show you where, as you look at diversity, it went down with photos removed" (Newell quoted in Toropin 2021).

This example serves as just one timely and relevant example of how different ideologies can impact, and have impacted, the behavior of various military actors as their personal worldviews and moral values are thrust into the political spotlight.[25] The example of Admiral Mullen as a retired senior military officer blatantly criticizing a sitting US President shows how polarizing environments can lead to military officers behaving in ways

[25]There are many examples of how different views regarding race have generated friction within the US military. One example involves a letter penned to the leaders of the United States Military Academy by several recent graduates alleging the systemic racism of West Point; see Askew, Bindon, and Blom (2020) for the original letter and more details. How one interprets this letter is largely a function of one's belief about the issue of race in the United States. See Dreher (2020) for a right-of-center analysis of this letter and its implications.

that support the worldview, ideology, and moral values that they hold to, even as such behavior also violates one or more of the principles of civil-military relations.

Does increasing polarization mean that civilian actors will also increasingly violate the central principles of civil-military relations? In my view, no, it does not. The main reason for this is that rising polarization by itself does not automatically denote that civilians will seek to employ the military in necessarily controversial ways, or in the pursuit of partisan ends related to highly polarizing issues. To be clear, there are numerous historical instances in which the military finds itself at or near the center of polarizing and controversial political issues. For example, the military played a major role during Reconstruction at the end of the Civil War, and the military has played a sizable role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in modern times, which has certainly been a bitter and polarizing issue across the United States. These are both examples of the military finding itself at or near highly polarizing issues, in which case, I think it is reasonable to suspect that civilian actors might increasingly violate central principles of civil-military relations. But the military is not at the center of every polarizing topic.

Pew Research Center polling conducted in 2020, for instance, found that among the most polarizing topics in the US today are climate change, gun control, the environment, and immigration (Center 2020). Other public opinion research has found that issues such as abortion are now more polarizing in the US than they have been in several decades (Blazina, Lipka, and Gramlich 2021). The theory I have offered thus far affirms that members of the military, like the public, are strongly divided over all of these listed issue areas. But it is not necessarily the case that civilian leaders will use the military, directly or indirectly, to achieve their desired policy goals in each of these areas. For example, of those described above, only immigration and to a lesser degree, climate change, have directly intersected with the military. This is not to say that future gun control and environmental policies do not and will not impact the military, but rather that to date,

these issues have not induced significant military action or involvement.[26] Thus, rising polarization weakens the constraining influence of the central principles of civil-military relations for military actors, but not necessarily for civilian actors.

Prestige - An "Opportunity" to Challenge the Principles of Civil-Military Relations

Rising military prestige, on the other hand, offers an *opportunity* for both civilian and military actors to engage in behaviors that violate the central principles of civil-military relations. This stems from the connection between rising prestige and its perceived influence on the *potential* to impact public opinion. Note that for purposes of this theory, rising military prestige need only increase the *potential* of the military to impact public opinion, not necessarily the *efficacy* to actually do so.[27]

A significant amount of scholarship in the subject area of political communication describes how, why, and the extent to which elites can influence public opinion (for a sampling of this scholarship, see E. N. Saunders 2017; Guisinger and Saunders 2017; Baum and Potter 2008; and Kertzer and Zeitzoff 2017). Scholars differ on the degree to which elites actually impact public opinion; nonetheless, the literature shows that in general, the public looks to elites who are "knowledgeable" and "trustworthy" when thinking about which public voices to listen to (Lupia and McCubbins 1998, 69–76). Scholars also claim that the more elites are perceived by the public to hold the attribute of credibility (broadly speaking), the greater capacity these elites have to "cue" public opinion (Zaller 1992, 47).

Viewed through the lens of varying levels of military prestige, we can now project this scholarship onto the ability of trusted military elites (and perhaps the military institution

[26]Furthermore, one does not have to imagine scenarios that are too far flung to ascertain that significant civil-military strife could follow if the military were to be used in a greater way over any number of polarizing issues. Hypothetically, if a future President were to order active-duty forces to secure abortion clinics within the United States, there would likely be significant tension, if not between the President and military leaders, then at least among political parties and press outlets.

[27]Scholarship has examined whether using the military, or specific military actors, actually can sway the public. The results are not conclusive. See James Golby, Dropp, and Feaver (2012) and Jim Golby, Dropp, and Feaver (2013) for two such studies.

in general) to impact public opinion. It is reasonable to consider that the more prestigious a military becomes, the more that military leaders will be considered to be "knowledgeable and trustworthy" (Lupia and McCubbins 1998, 69–76). This is especially true if we conceptualize military prestige as the degree of trust placed in it by the public, which I have argued, earlier in this chapter, is a good proxy for military prestige. Thus, during periods in which military prestige is high, both civilian and military actors have an *opportunity* to use the military to attempt to influence public opinion. What is described largely mirrors what Risa Brooks (2009) describes as the "latent political influence" of the military (Risa Brooks 2009, 231). Periods of high military prestige, therefore, result in the potential for civilian and military actors to behave in ways that attempt to leverage the military's high standing to alter public opinion.

We may certainly expect that civilian actors will be responsive to rising levels of military prestige. After all, a primary motivation of political actors is to remain in office (Strom 1990). Furthermore, previous scholarship extensively shows that leader credibility, in any number of domestic and international contexts, is important (E. N. Saunders 2017). Thus, if and when civilian actors believe that engaging in behaviors that harness a prestigious military will improve their electoral chances, these civilians are more likely to engage in these behaviors, even if they violate one or more of the principles of civil-military relations in the process.

But there is ample reason to suspect that military actors are also responsive to rising levels of military prestige. If military actors know that they are increasingly valued, trusted, and esteemed by society, they are more likely to behave in ways that violate one or more of the principles of civil-military relations. This could be because highly esteemed military actors believe that the public who values them will overlook or forgive such behavior, or that as a highly trusted and respected voice in the nation, they have an increasing duty to act as the saviors or guardians of the country (Finer 1962; Fitch 1998, 129). Regardless of the reasons for which it occurs, higher military prestige results in a

greater likelihood that military actors will behave in ways that challenge the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference of the military. At first glance, the fact that civilians are responsive to high levels of military prestige seems to fit several instances in US history. Indeed, popular military figures have influenced public opinion in significant ways and in a variety of different periods. Generals Ulysses S. Grant and Dwight D. Eisenhower, for instance, were both wartime commanders who, largely as a result of the popularity they commanded with the public for an extended period of time in uniform, ultimately ascended to the Presidency (Teigen 2018).

In summary, high levels of military prestige present an *opportunity* for civilian and military actors to use the military as an instrument to impact public opinion. This can result in both civilian and military actors engaging in behaviors that violate the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference of the military institution. These behaviors, as the examples listed below illustrate, can take a variety of forms.

Examples of Use of the Military to Sway Public Opinion

Instances of civilian and military actors using the military during periods of high military prestige in United States history to sway public opinion abound. In the paragraphs below, I give two examples. The first involves the well-known instance of General Colin Powell who, as the sitting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in late 1992 - early 1993, wrote several opinion pieces as Bill Clinton assumed the presidency. These opinion pieces essentially argued that the military should not drastically intervene in the Balkans and other similar post-Cold War crises — an effort to influence US national security policy. The second involves the use of retired military officers to speak at the 2016 Democratic and Republic political conventions, respectively.

The first example illustrates an instance in which a high degree of personal prestige surrounding a single military actor facilitated that actor behaving in a way that violated the principle of civilian control. The second example illustrates an instance in which

broader institutional military prestige facilitated behavior engaged in by both civilian actors (the political candidates and their campaign teams who sought military actors to speak on their behalf at each party's convention) and military actors (the retired military officers who agreed to speak), and which violated the principle of military non-partisanship. Both examples together are intended to illustrate how a high degree of military prestige – either at the personal or institutional level – provides an *opportunity* for both military and civilian actors to engage in political behaviors that violate the central principles of civil-military relations.

General Colin Powell, while still on active duty, wrote two major opinion commentary pieces in 1992 and 1993 that challenged Bill Clinton's views regarding the use of military force in the Balkans (Powell 1992b, 1992a). The timing of these pieces is important. Powell's editorial in the *New York Times* was written just weeks before Election Day in 1992, and his *Foreign Affairs* piece was published later that winter, right as Bill Clinton assumed the presidency. Perhaps Powell cleared the content of both pieces with the Bush Administration, which was still in charge when these opinion pieces were likely submitted for consideration. But what is important from the perspective of the three central principles of civil-military relations is that even if Powell did allow the Bush administration to review the content of his articles, Powell at a very minimum knew that airing his views in a public manner would generate political costs for Clinton, if elected.

This is because the content of Powell's opinion pieces contradicted many foreign policy views held by Clinton and members of his cabinet. For instance, Powell's *New York Times* editorial entitled, "Why Generals Get Nervous," explicitly stated that, "In Bosnia, there are no clear military goals," (Powell 1992b) and his piece in *Foreign Affairs* stated that a potential mission of sending US military forces lacked "clear and unambiguous objectives" (Powell 1992a, 38). On the other hand, Madeline Albright, Clinton's Ambassador to the United Nations and later, Secretary of State, felt more optimistic about the goals that American military forces could achieve in the Balkans and other trouble spots around the

world. In a 2006 interview, Albright recalled the way in which Powell would frame military choices in rather stark terms for Clinton's foreign policy team. Albright recalls that, "On a regular basis Colin would come in and do a presentation…he'd go through this and say, 'We can take that hill and we can do that and we can do this. You know we have the best military in the world, but it's going to take 500,000 men and $500 billion and 50 years.' So he'd lead you up the hill of possibilities and then drop you off the other side, and you'd end up with no options" ("William j. Clinton Presidential History Project Interview with Madeleine k. Albright" 2006).

By the mid-1990s, Powell was no longer Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but by appealing to the American public through opinion commentary as Clinton came into office and by framing military options in excessively black and white terms for the new administration, Powell not only steered public opinion against the possibility of American military intervention in Bosnia, at least initially, but he also likely made the option increasingly unappealing to policymakers behind closed doors. Perhaps Powell's advice was wise and even accurate, at least in some respects. Yet his actions, I contend, also violated the fundamental principle of civilian control of the military in that it did not allow the Commander in Chief to genuinely consider and weigh a full range of possible policy options with which to respond to multiple developing crises in the world after the end of the Cold War.

There is no "smoking gun" that explains Powell's behavior other than the fact that he felt strongly that the commitment of a large contingent of US military forces to Bosnia was a mistake. That said, for the purposes of the theory offered here, it is reasonable to conclude that Powell's actions were facilitated by the enormous degree of personal clout and prestige he carried. Powell was a charismatic, well spoken, educated, and likable figure who had become increasingly well known in the wake of the US victory over Iraq in the Gulf War. Powell likely believed that by engaging in the public behaviors that he did, a significant portion of the public would not only agree with his stance on military

intervention in Bosnia, but be willing to either overlook or forgive any perceived breach of protocol insofar as military figures eschewing the political spotlight. In this way, Powell's high personal prestige afforded him an *opportunity* to behave in the way that he did.

A second and different example involves Army Lieutenant General Mike Flynn and Marine Corps General John Allen, each of whom, as retired officers, spoke at the respective Republican and Democratic Conventions in 2016. Regardless of what they said at the convention (Flynn is known for leading chants of "lock her up," referring to the Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton), the act of speaking at an event that is inherently partisan violated the principle of non-partisanship of the military. In the aftermath of these conventions, Retired Army General Martin Dempsey, who had recently served as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, published an opinion-editorial piece in *The Washington Post* in which he criticized both the retired officers and the candidates who had asked them to speak. Dempsey argued in his op-ed, "As generals, they have an obligation to uphold our apolitical traditions. They have just made the task of their successors — who continue to serve in uniform and are accountable for our security – more complicated. It was a mistake for them to participate as they did. *It was a mistake for our presidential candidates to ask them to do so*" (M. Dempsey 2016, emphasis mine; see also Exum 2017).

In this example, the military institution's relatively high prestige likely provided an *opportunity* for Flynn, Allen, and the civilian leaders who asked each of these generals to speak to violate the principle of military non-partisanship. Neither Flynn nor Allen were household names at the time, and it is doubtful that most Americans could identify either general's photograph today. It is more likely the case that each of the political candidates and their campaign organizers sought a military general's public endorsement because each believed that having a high ranking military voice would prove politically advantageous. Furthermore, both officers who agreed to speak also likely did so, at least in part, because each officer believed that he could influence public opinion and ultimately advance the political prospects of each candidate proceeding to the presidency. I am not suggesting

that the high level of polarization that prevailed in 2016 was also not a factor in the officer agreeing to speak; indeed, the theory I have offered would instead affirm that high polarization played a large role in shaping and contributing to each officer's behavior. Rather, I am pointing out that first, it is highly unlikely that either general would have been asked to speak in the first place at either of these conventions had the military as an institution not commanded relatively high prestige at the time of the party conventions in 2016; and second, that each officer likely agreed to speak *at least in part* because he believed he could impact public opinion, at least to some degree, because the institution with which each officer was primarily affiliated – the military – was highly prestigious.

In summary, high military prestige reflects how important the military is to the nation and how esteemed it is by the public. The institution itself can be highly prestigious, but so can individuals, particularly among those who lead the institution. As military prestige rises, the *potential* for the military to influence or sway public opinion rises. Therefore, civilian and military actors will increasingly engage in political behaviors in order to influence public opinion when the level of military prestige is high, even if doing so violates one or more of the central principles of civil-military relations. For emphasis, the theory advanced here is not concerned with whether high military prestige *actually* translates into increased efficacy for the military or military actors to sway public opinion. Rather, I am simply arguing that when military prestige is high, civilian and military actors are more likely to believe the military can sway public opinion, and will therefore behave in ways that seek to do so. Viewed through this lens, rising military prestige thus provides an *opportunity* for civilian and military actors to use the military to intervene in politics.

Polarization and Prestige Generate Four Types of Domestic Structures

If high levels of polarization signify that military leaders have a *motive* to intervene in politics, and if high levels of military prestige afford both civilian and military leaders an *opportunity* to use the military to engage in political behaviors, it follows that a total of

Table 4: Types of Domestic Environments for Civil-Military Relations and Their Impact on Political Behaviors and the Conduct of Civil-Military Relations

Environment	Low Polarization	High Polarization
Low Prestige	No politicization; low levels of political activity; low potential for civil-military conflict	Military (induced) politicization; moderate levels of political activity; moderate potential for civil-military conflict
High Prestige	Military and Civilian (induced) politicization; moderate levels of political activity; high potential for civil-military conflict	Comprehensive politicization; extreme levels of political activity; significant potential for civil-military conflict

four broad types of domestic structures emerge. These four structures are displayed in Table 4. Given the presence or absence of *motives* and *opportunities* in each environment, we can expect variation in each quadrant along two primary axes: the predominant type of actor committing political behaviors, and the overall severity or level of the political activities that occur.

Low Polarization, Low Military Prestige

In this environment, military actors lack an ideological *motive* to intervene in politics, and both civilian and military actors lack an *opportunity* to harness the military in ways that seek to leverage public opinion. This leads to the theoretical expectation that while there might certainly be conflict between military and civilian leaders in this type of domestic environment, there will likely be neither widespread nor highly visible instances of political behavior committed by either military or civilian actors that challenge or violate the standards or principles of civil-military relations. The political behaviors that occur in this environment are relatively tame in that they do not generate significant civil-military tension. Historical examples in the United States of this domestic structure include the post-Vietnam (roughly 1973-1990) and immediate pre-World War Two (roughly 1936-1944) eras.

High Polarization, Low Military Prestige

When polarization is high but military prestige is low, military actors genuinely possess a *motive* to engage in political behaviors that threaten or violate the central principles of civil-military relations. However, as a result of the low level of military prestige that exists in this type of domestic structure, civilian and military actors lack the *opportunity* to use the military in ways that leverage public opinion. This leads to the theoretical expectation that in this environment, military actors in particular will engage in political behaviors. Civilian actors in this environment are unlikely to induce political behavior involving the military. Furthermore, the overall level of political activity that occurs in such an environment accords with moderate risk for civil-military conflict. A historical example of this era includes the years between the end of American Reconstruction and the start of the Spanish American War (roughly 1877 - 1898).

Low Polarization, High Military Prestige

In a domestic structure where polarization is low, but military prestige is high, military actors lack an ideological *motive* to intervene politically. However, because military prestige is high, both civilian and military actors possess an *opportunity* to use the military to leverage public opinion. This leads to the theoretical expectation that under these conditions, both actor types are likely to engage in visible political behaviors involving the military institution. Furthermore, because both sets of actors might seek to employ the military to influence public opinion, the potential for civil-military conflict in this domestic structure is high.

Broad examples of this period include portions of the post-World War Two era until the end of the Vietnam War (roughly 1945-1973) and the post-Gulf War period (roughly 1991-2009). Several historical civil-military relations crises occurred under these conditions, including a major dispute between between President Truman and General Douglas MacArthur in 1951, another between General Matthew Ridgeway and President

Eisenhower over the role of nuclear weapons and American's "New Look" policy, and yet another between President Bill Clinton and General Colin Powell in the early 1990s.

High Polarization, High Military Prestige

When polarization and military prestige are both high, military actors possess a *motive* to intervene politically, and both military and civilian actors possess an *opportunity* to involve the military in ways that are intended to leverage public opinion. Under these conditions, military actors are increasingly willing to behave in ways that violate the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference. Furthermore, both military and civilian actors have an *opportunity* to use the military to appeal to the public. This leads to the theoretical expectation that both actor types, military and civilian, will engage in highly visible political behaviors that challenge the principles of civil-military relations. Accordingly, there is significant potential for civil-military conflict in this domestic structure.

Examples of this period include the immediate post-US Civil War period during the start of American Reconstruction (roughly 1865-1868) as well as in the modern era (roughly 2010-2021). These conditions are also associated with a number of recent and historical civil-military relations disputes, including between President Andrew Johnson, General Ulysses S. Grant, and Congress for control of the military as an institution in the early years of American Reconstruction, and recent tension between the military under the leadership of President's Trump and Biden in the present day.

Based on the theoretical predictions that follow from Table 4, it is possible to derive the following five hypotheses:

Hypotheses to be Tested

H1: Military actors increasingly violate the central principles of civil-military relations when polarization is high relative to periods of low polarization.

H2: Military actors increasingly violate the central principles of civil-military relations in public and visible ways when military prestige is high relative to periods of low military prestige.

H3: Civilian actors increasingly violate the central principles of civil-military relations when military prestige is high relative to periods of low military prestige.

H4: Military and civilian actors engage in relatively more visible and public forms of political behavior that involve the military institution when military prestige is high relative to periods of low military prestige.

H5: The most extreme levels of overall political activity occur in environments that are characterized by simultaneously high levels of political polarization and military prestige.

Endogeneity and Alternate Explanations

This section highlights the extent to which endogeneity poses a concern for the theory offered thus far. Additionally, this section addresses several alternate explanations. In doing so, I explore what other factors – instead of polarization and military prestige – could be responsible for driving variation in the willingness of actors to adhere to the central principles of civil-military relations, and thus, variation in instances of political behaviors that threaten these principles.

First, I address endogeneity. In doing so, I examine the degree to which the theory that I have thus far argued works the other way. That is, I ask if instead of polarization and military prestige driving variation in civilian and military political behaviors that threaten the principles of civil-military relations, is it possible that the behaviors themselves drive the levels of political polarization and military prestige? Second, I raise and discuss several factors that could serve as alternate explanations responsible for the level of political activity that violates the principles of civil-military relations. Ultimately, I conclude that concerns over endogeneity are present, but to a mild degree, and that such concerns greatly diminish (though they do not disappear) when the independent and

dependent variables are strictly operationalized and defined. With respect to potential alternate explanations, I conclude that there are several other plausible factors, the greatest of which is norm change. Nonetheless, as I argue below, this (and other) potential alternate explanations do not significantly cast suspicion on the theory offered thus far.

Endogeneity Concerns

As King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) note, endogeneity is a "common and serious problem" in the social sciences, especially in non-experimental settings (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994). As this dissertation relies entirely on observational and historical methods, rather than experimental methods, endogeneity poses a genuine concern that must be both acknowledged and dealt with. Endogeneity essentially involves the "direction" of causality, or how the variables that comprise a theory work in a sequence (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994). While there are many different types of endogeneity, all forms generate concerns that the relationship between a particular set of independent variables and a dependent variable is not, in reality, what the researcher concludes it is (see Chapter 11 of Gerring 2012 for a description of different types of trouble that endogeneity poses).

Applying concerns about endogeneity to the theory that has been offered thus far in this chapter involves asking whether it is possible that instead of the levels of polarization and military prestige driving the political behaviors committed by civilian and military actors that challenge the principles of civil-military relations, which I have argued, is it possible that the behaviors committed by civilian or military actors which involve the military actually drive levels of polarization and military prestige in the society, and if so, to what degree? I address the potential relationship between political behaviors that involve the military and the levels of polarization and military prestige each in turn. Ultimately, I make two conclusions with respect to concerns over endogeneity. The first is that the degree of concern regarding endogeneity in the theory offered thus far exists at

mild and manageable levels. The second is that the greater concern involves the potential impact of political behaviors involving the military on military prestige, rather than the impact on polarization. I briefly trace the logic in arriving at these conclusions in the paragraphs to follow.

Do Political Behaviors by the Military Drive Polarization?

I do not strongly suspect that specific acts of political behavior committed by either civilian or military actors that involve the military institution are likely to impact levels of polarization. This may seem surprising at first. After all, one can conceive of a situation in which the military acts in a highly controversial way, such as undertaking a coup, which elicits a strong response from a divided domestic public (for example, some parts of society might favor the coup, while others are opposed to it), and further contributes to the society becoming more divided politically and thus, more polarized.

However, a clear definition of what polarization is (and is not), and a clear operationalization of the concept, shows that such a relationship is unlikely. As I have argued in this chapter with emphasis, polarization is not merely a divided public, although it can certainly manifest itself as such. The heart of the concept of polarization, in my view, focuses instead on the societal division that stems from differences over which worldview(s) and moral values should guide the political community and prevail within the state. Viewed through this lens, at least in the US context, it is highly unlikely that political acts involving the military institution actually cause or generate the division between worldviews or moral values that are prevalent. Rather, it is more likely that the division regarding which worldviews and moral ideologies that various citizens subscribe to and adopt already exists, as these arise from much deeper sources than how a military behaves politically, such as an individual's beliefs about the fundamental purposes of life and the nature of the world. To be clear, I do not contest the notion that instances of political behavior – by a military, or a government, or other institutions for that matter –

likely serve as a catalyst of sorts for bringing ideological tension within a society to the surface. Indeed, this not only seems plausible, but is almost certainly the case.

In short, I contend that concerns about endogeneity, at least with respect to the relationship between polarization and political behavior involving the military, can be greatly reduced if these variables are narrowly defined and operationalized. In all instances throughout this dissertation, rising polarization is broadly conceived of escalating tension between the worldviews and moral values that influence, govern, and prevail in society. Instances of the dependent variable, political behaviors that involve the military institution, are also very narrowly and precisely operationalized in the chapters that follow. In the quantitative empirical chapters in particular, instances of the dependent variable are systematically analyzed over time, allowing the researcher to more clearly identify variation and the causes behind it. In this way, endogeneity concerns between polarization and instances of political behavior involving the military are significantly reduced.

Do Political Behaviors by the Military Drive Military Prestige?

The relationship between military prestige and instances of political behaviors involving the military requires careful examination. The theory presented in this chapter argued that rising military prestige provides civilian and military leaders with an *opportunity* to engage in political behaviors that violate the principles of civil-military relations. With respect to endogeneity, then, we then must ask to what degree these types of political behaviors influence the prestige of the military.

Admittedly, it is theoretically plausible – indeed, it is likely – that certain political behaviors involving the military impact the prestige of the military. To begin with, the relatively high degree of military prestige is in no small way an ostensible consequence of the fact that the US military *does not* regularly intervene in politics in significant ways. For example, we can rightly suspect that if the US military were to stage a coup and topple the duly elected government, the military's prestige would rapidly fall. In broad terms,

then, there appears to be at least a theoretical possibility and likelihood that the relationship between military prestige and instances of political behavior might operate in both directions, as shown in Figure 7.

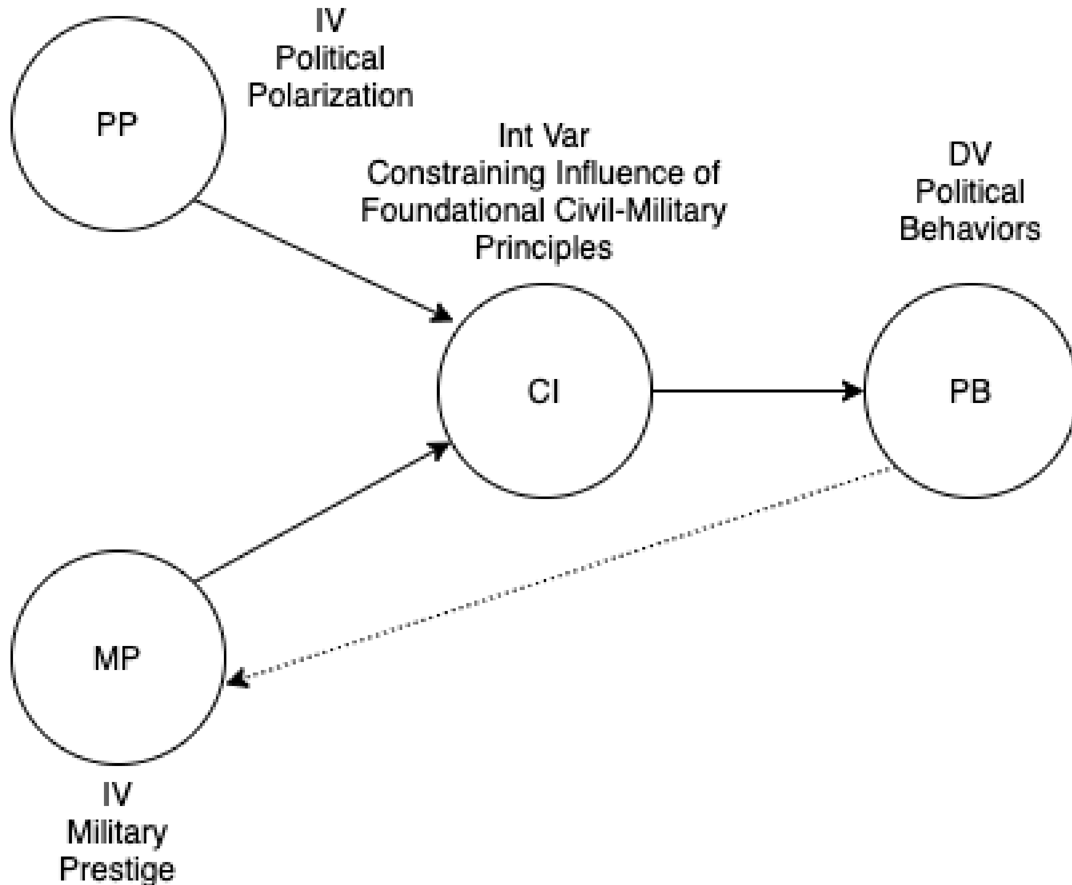


Figure 7: Endogeneity Concerns Regarding the Relationship between Military Prestige and Behaviors that Violate the Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations

Importantly, however, this is likely not the case for every instance of a political behavior which involves the military institution. As this and the previous chapter made clear, the principle of civilian control of the military can be violated through a number of behaviors that vary in terms of severity and impact (see Croissant et al. 2010; Risa Brooks 2020; Risa Brooks, Golby, and Urben 2021; Beliakova 2021). As this dissertation focuses squarely on the case of the United States, it examines challenges to the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference that occur via visible but subtle behaviors. For instance, in terms of impact to the principle of civilian control, the behavior

of a military officer writing an op-ed is not the same as undertaking a coup. Similarly, it is unlikely that every instance of a military officer giving an interview to the press impacts the broad level of military prestige in the country, unless, of course, a significant number or portion of these interviews violates the principles of civil-military relations that military and civilian leaders are expected to uphold. Careful operationalization of the dependent variable is critical to minimizing concerns about endogeneity. This is upheld throughout the dissertation, I argue, and especially so in the two quantitative empirical chapters. The case studies (Chapters 5 and 6) also help clarify the sequence and order of the overall system of variables that are at play within the theory.

In addition to specifically defining and operationalizing the dependent variable to the fullest extent possible, the intervening variable in the theory offered thus far significantly aids our understanding of the sequence in which the component parts of the theory work together. The previous chapter and this chapter argued that the levels of polarization and military prestige impact the political behavior undertaken by military and civilian actors by impacting an intervening variable — the constraining influence of the central principles of civil-military relations. When the constraining influence of the central principles is high, both military and civilian actors generally behave in ways that adhere to the principles, but when the constraining influence is low, these actors behave in ways that violate these principles. With respect to concerns for endogeneity, what is important is that changes in the constraining influence drive actor behavior, and not the other way around, at least at the *individual/micro* level. In other words, my argument is that actors behave in such a way that violates one or more of the principles of civil-military relations because they are less constrained by these principles, as a result of the motives and opportunities afforded by changing levels of polarization and military prestige.

At the *group/macro* level, I fully acknowledge, and indeed would expect – at least to some degree – that the converse could be true: one actor's behavior may influence another actor's willingness to abide by the principles of civil-military relations. For example, if a

military officer views a superior officer behaving in such a way that violates one or more of the principles of civil-military relations, it is possible that the observing military officer of a lower rank may think that it is appropriate to behave in a similar way, and thus, he or she will feel less constrained to adhere to the foundational principles. But what is being described here, at least in my view, is not so much a concern about endogeneity in the theory, but rather an alternate explanation involving *norm change*. I tackle this very real concern in the section on alternate explanations, below.

In summary, endogeneity poses a very real concern in this dissertation, especially because this study heavily relies on analyzing observational data, rather than manipulable experimental methods. However, by carefully and clearly defining the independent, intervening, and dependent variables in this study, and by testing for endogeneity in the empirical chapters, concerns regarding endogeneity can be managed.

Alternate Explanations

In addition to polarization and military prestige, what other factors could impact the degree to which civilian and military actors commit behaviors that involve the military, and which violate the principles of civil-military relations? Furthermore, how can we test these competing claims? In the paragraphs below, I first identify two alternate explanations. These include the presence of conflict and/or type of threat environment, and norm change. Both of these alternate explanations are plausible in my view, and each offers various ways of testing these alternate claims.

Conflict and the Threat Environment

One alternate explanation for civilian and military leaders committing behaviors that challenge the principles of civil-military relations involves the presence of conflict or the overall threat environment. I link the presence of conflict and the threat environment together because of the relationship between these concepts, even though each likely

functions differently in terms of impacting the political behavior of military and civilian leadership. It is plausible to think that when there is an ongoing conflict, such as a major war, military leaders are naturally less constrained to adhere to the fundamental principles of civil-military relations. While, to this author's knowledge, there is no formal theory explicating such a concept, one can reasonably see how when the lives of soldiers and troops are at stake, military leaders might be more willing to violate principles of civil-military relations. Indeed, one can argue that this was precisely the case when Colin Powell wrote the opinion pieces that he did in late 1992 and early 1993, just as Bill Clinton won the Presidency and assumed office (see Powell 1992b, 1992a). According to this alternate explanation, Powell's behavior stemmed not from partisan ideological differences, but rather differences about the use of force and the subsequent consequences of intervention in a certain way.

Other scholars have argued that the threat environment directly shapes civil-military relations. For instance, Michael Desch (1999) argues that changes in the international security environment impact the relationship between civilian and military leaders (Desch 2001). Desch argues when a nation faces a high external threat and when that country's internal threat is low, such an environment serves as the best possible posture for both sets of actors to maintain the principle of civilian of the control of the military (Desch 2001, 14). There is some similarity between the variable of polarization and Desch's variable of internal threat level, but the variables are not exactly the same. Polarization, as I have conceptualized it, speaks much more to the degree of ideological difference that exists in a country, whereas internal threat level speaks more to how the military is postured for domestic use, and importantly, how such a posture impacts its ability to operate abroad (Desch 2001).

One might also contend here that victory or defeat in war would impact the degree to which military actors in particular shun the principles of civil-military relations. In particular, one can reasonably foresee scenarios in which defeated military officers engage

in any number of political behaviors against a political administration that was perceived to have been against the military in some way, similar to some popular narratives regarding the Vietnam War (McMaster 1997; see also Summers 1982). One can also foresee an instance in which victorious military officers, fresh from success on the battlefield, engage in any number of political behaviors that challenge the principles of civil-military relations. These are real concerns. However, I conceive the variable of military prestige as having already captured the effects of defeat and/or victory on the battlefield. In other words, I think it is important to allow for the possibility that either victory or defeat (and many levels in between) can improve or lessen the military's overall prestige. Thus, I do not foresee including defeat or victory in war as an important control variable.

Given the theoretical expectation that the presence of conflict and/or threat environment can shape the willingness with which the military in particular adheres to the principles of civil-military relations, it is important to control for whether the US is involved in an external conflict where possible throughout the dissertation. This raises additional concerns, however, mainly involving the fact that much of the quantitative data examined in this dissertation is recent, and covers the post-September 11, 2001 era. This could be problematic in that to a certain extent, this era is one in which the US military was continuously deployed, particularly in Iraq and, until recently, Afghanistan. Still, there are various ways to control for the presence of conflict, which I do when appropriate throughout the dissertation.

Norm Change

A second type of alternate explanation is one of norm change. This alternate explanation starts from the viewpoint that the principles of civil-military relations themselves – civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference – are all behavioral norms that have been constructed by the civilian and military actors over time. This alternate viewpoint, moreover, would explain any sharp change in the political behaviors

that defy these norms as a routine process of changing the accepted norms of behavior. Such a viewpoint would emphasize that whereas the accepted norms of behavior used to include binding prohibitions against obvious incursions that violate the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference, these principles are no longer held or deemed as inviolable by the civilian and military actors who practice civil-military relations. Norm change as an alternate explanation is consistent with a rich set of literature within international relations that builds out of the constructivist tradition, and which views various actors such as states (Wendt 1992) and organizations (Finnimore and Sikkink 1998) who create norms that shape their behavior.

Norm change stands as a plausible alternate explanation, but it possesses one major flaw that, in my view, renders the likelihood of norm change explaining changing levels in political activity that violate the standards of civil-military relations exceedingly small in the United States. This is particularly true from the perspective of military actors, and less so from that of civilian leaders.

This flaw is found in the fact that virtually every single official document that aspirationally guides the behavior of military today emphatically states or implies the principles that have been derived thus far in this dissertation. Army Doctrinal Publication 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, for instance, notes in its first few pages that the Army profession is “a trusted vocation of Soldiers and Army civilians whose collective expertise is the ethical design, generation, support, and application of landpower; serving under Civilian authority; and entrusted to defend the Constitution and the rights and interests of the American people” (Army 2019, ix). Similar language emphasizing the principle of civilian control is found in several other places throughout the document (see for instance Army 2019, 1–6, 1–9). Other documents, such as Department of Defense Directive 1344.10, dated February 19, 2008, prohibit service members from committing certain types of activities that violate the military’s non-partisan ethic (D. of Defense 2008). It is clear that the military as an organization, then, has not reduced its

commitment to upholding the central principles of civil-military relations.[28]

And yet, I do not deny that perhaps the organization's members no longer feel as bound as they perhaps once were to uphold these central principles. Indeed, a significant aspect of my dissertation is acknowledgement of and explanation for this being the case. Perhaps some military (and civilian) actors commit behaviors simply because they see others engaging in similar behaviors more often. In this way, norm change as an alternate explanation is still plausible. However, because the organization itself is still rather committed to upholding the central principles of civil-military relations, norm change is not likely the major driver of any recent change in levels of political activity.

Summary and Way Forward

This chapter developed a theory which argued that the two independent variables of political polarization and military prestige combine to impact the dependent variable — specific instances, types, and patterns of political behavior involving the military by civilian and military actors. The theory also posited that the independent variables impact the dependent variable through an intervening variable, which is the constraining influence of the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference of the military.

The theory argued in this chapter holds that high levels of polarization provide a motive for military actors to behave in ways that challenge or violate the standards of civil-military relations (Finer 1962). This occurs, as argued herein, because increasing political polarization reflects disagreement in the populace not only about specific policy matters, but about the moral values and worldviews that should govern society, to what extent, and why. When polarization is high, military actors are increasingly willing to challenge civilian leaders, adopt positions that align with partisan entities and

[28] I also make this argument in the historical case studies, particularly in Chapter 5 regarding the post-US Civil War period. To be clear, norms against political involvement by military actors were not as strongly developed in the 1870s as they are today. I address this issue in Chapter 5. Directly comparing military behavior from the 1870s against that in the 1980s might not be a great comparison, but I do argue that the ways in which the independent variables impact the dependent variable operate the same in both periods. For this reason, the historical case studies are not only appropriate, but can greatly round out this study.

organizations, and advocate for the military to weigh in on or solve problems that are indirectly related to national security and defense. Military actors are increasingly willing to engage in these sorts of behaviors because doing so advances the worldview or moral values held by these actors.

In addition, it is herein argued that high levels of military prestige provide both military and civilian actors with an opportunity to use the military to influence public opinion (Finer 1962). High levels of military prestige reflect a military that is trusted and respected by the public, and both civilian and military actors are cognizant of this reality. For this reason, holding all else equal, a highly prestigious military has a greater potential of committing or being asked to commit (by civilian leaders) behaviors that violate one or more of the principles of civil-military relations.

Finally, the theory contends that both polarization and prestige need to be considered in tandem to determine the relative level of political activity that will occur in domestic political environments marked by the presence or absence of high polarization and prestige. When both the motive and opportunity to commit behaviors that violate one or more of the principles of civil-military relations exist, the resulting environment with respect to the conduct of civil-military relations promises to be tense. When neither motive nor opportunity are present, the environment for the conduct of civil-military relations is not perfect but is likely more tranquil. When either a motive or opportunity exist, but not the other, distinctions with respect to the level of overall political activity and which actor commits these activities is less clear. The next four chapters of the dissertation test the predictive power of the theory with intent to sharpen our understanding of each of these four potential domestic environments.

We now pivot to the first empirical chapter, which examines retired military officer opinion commentary in depth.

Chapter 3 - When the Pen Becomes A Sword

In May of 1959, retired General of the Army Omar Bradley gave an address on the occasion of Armed Forces Day in New Canaan, Connecticut, in which he stated, “I am convinced that the best service a retired general can perform is to turn in his tongue along with his suit and mothball his opinions” (Omar Bradley in Times 1959). Bradley’s comments came just days after a British colleague, retired British Field Marshall Viscount Bernard Montgomery, publicly criticized the leadership of President Dwight Eisenhower (Times 1959). In admonishing Montgomery, Bradley acknowledged the potential consequences of a popular military figure weighing in on contemporary issues. Later, Bradley shared his views on the matter a bit more, stating, “It is not my purpose to contest the right of anyone – even a retired officer – to speak what he chooses. But when he presumes to speak with an authority which derives from his retired rank, he should exercise a sensible degree of circumspection and be discreet in the choice of causes to which he lends his name” (Bradley in Times 1959).

Sixty-one years later, in the Summer of 2020, a remarkable turn of domestic events in the United States sparked a flurry of retired military officer commentary that encouraged fresh examination of Bradley’s advice. Following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, and after several days of protests, which in some cases devolved into instances of rioting and looting, the military found itself at the center of attention that it likely wished to avoid altogether (P. Feaver and Golby 2020). For starters, both the Secretary of Defense, Mark Esper, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, had accompanied President Donald Trump to a controversial photo shoot at St. John’s Church in Washington after security forces had displaced throngs of protesters in neighboring Lafayette Square. Within days, Esper publicly disagreed with President Trump’s threat of invoking the Insurrection Act of 1807 to use active-duty military forces to quell subsequent domestic riots (Esper 2020), and Milley also apologized, telling senior military officers graduating from the National Defense University that he “should not have

been there," as accompanying the President to St. John's had "created a perception of the military involved in domestic politics" (*Official Website of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* 2020).

Moreover, several senior retired military officers addressed these events in a series of public opinion pieces and interviews, leading some civil-military relations scholars to conclude that the events of the Summer of 2020 marked "the most intense division between a president and retired officers in a generation" (Risa Brooks and Robinson 2020a).[29] However, there was also discernible variation in the tone and tenor of the remarks made by these officers. Although each expressed deep concern about the prospect of active-duty forces confronting peaceful protesters, thus violating protections held by the First Amendment of the US Constitution (V. Brooks 2020; "Former Joint Chiefs Chairman Condemns Trump's Threat to Use Military at Protests" 2020), some officers went much further in their criticisms, leveling direct insults at the President, including his fitness to lead (Goldberg 2020), his administration's broader policies on race in America (J. Allen 2020), and his general leadership abilities (Mullen 2020).

In the weeks and months to follow, several other retired and even active-duty military officers publicly wrote commentaries, manifestos, open letters, and other opinion pieces on a host of issues that challenged, if not directly violated, the military's non-partisan and politically neutral ethic. For instance, a group of junior Army officers, all of whom were recent graduates of West Point who finished at or near the top of their respective classes, wrote a lengthy treatise calling for West Point to acknowledge its culture of "whiteness" and to adopt a host of "anti-racist" measures, including that the leaders of the military academy explicitly state that "Black Lives Matter" (Askew, Bindon, and Blom 2020). Later, a pair of retired Army lieutenant colonels known in defense circles for playing a prominent role in devising the military's revised counter-insurgency doctrine ahead of the respective troop surges in Iraq and Afghanistan more than a decade ago penned an open letter to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in which they called on the Chairman to

[29] These officers included several retired four-star generals and admirals.

prepare to remove the President from office after the election "by force" if necessary (Nagl and Yingling 2020). The authors of this letter framed the choice for the Chairman in rather stark terms: "In the Constitutional crisis described above (the President not leaving office at the end of his term), your duty is to give unambiguous orders directing US military forces to support the Constitutional transfer of power. Should you remain silent, you will be complicit in a coup d'etat" (Nagl and Yingling 2020, parentheses mine). Throughout the Summer of 2020 and well into the fall ahead of the 2020 presidential election, much of the public commentary authored by retired and currently serving members of the military – on a variety of topics – pushed against the limits of what is normatively considered appropriate political behavior by members of the military.

This chapter systematically explores the degree to which public commentary authored by retired military officers has adhered to the central principles of civil-military relations over time. These principals include that of civilian control of the military, the non-partisanship of the military institution, and the non-interference of the military into certain realms of state policy that have little or nothing to do with the military.

This chapter proceeds in four parts. First, this chapter briefly summarizes the theory posited in the previous chapter of the dissertation. This includes introducing several predictions that stem from the theory previously offered. In the second part of the chapter, I explain the methodology and the data used in this chapter. This data consists of an original dataset containing nearly four hundred commentary/opinion pieces authored by retired military officers from 1979-2020 and published in major US newspapers. So far as I know, this data constitutes the entirety of opinion commentary published in these newspaper sources over the time period examined. The third section of the chapter explores and analyzes the data, particularly the degree to which military actors have adhered to the principles of civil-military relations through the content of the opinion pieces they have published. This chapter argues that over the time period examined, there has been an increase in the overall frequency and level of opinion commentary that violates

the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference. Furthermore, this chapter carries strong support for the notion that rising polarization is associated with higher levels of opinion commentary that violate the central principles of civil-military relations, and thus, for the idea that rising polarization serves as a *motive* for military actors to engage in politics. The fourth section of this chapter concludes by framing these empirical results within the broader overall theory presented in this dissertation.

A Brief Review of the Theory

This section briefly reviews the theoretical expectations with respect to the political activity undertaken by military officers. Chapter 1 of this dissertation established that many scholars who study and many practitioners of civil-military relations are united on the importance of adhering to three central principles of civil-military relations. Using Samuel Huntington's *The Soldier and the State* and critiques of his work in the decades since, chapter one identified these principles as that of civilian control of the military, the non-partisanship of the military, and that of the non-interference of the military into certain realms of state politics.

Chapter 2 then posited that the levels of polarization and military prestige shape, in different ways, the degree to which military and civilian actors adhere to these central principles. In particular, Chapter 2 argued that changes in both the levels of polarization and prestige impact the degree to which military actors adhere to the principles of civil-military relations.

First, increasing levels of polarization denote an increase in the ideological division within and among military actors. This is because military actors become polarized as society becomes increasingly polarized. Importantly, the previous chapter argued that because increasing polarization is associated with a heightened division of not only political preferences, but also significant differences over issues that fundamentally pertain to one's moral worldview (Marsden 2014; Mohler Jr. 2020; Deneen 2018), highly polarized

environments lead to military actors increasingly encountering situations in which they must choose between adhering to the principles of civil-military relations or following one's conscience. This expectation directly led to the formulation of H1, which stated that military actors increasingly violate the central principles of civil-military relations when polarization is high relative to periods of low polarization.

Second, the previous chapter argued that rising military prestige may also impact the degree to which military actors adhere to the principles of civil-military relations, as increasing levels of military prestige are associated with military and civilian actors becoming more aware that the military has the potential to shape public opinion. This expectation arose from the political communication literature, and in particular the idea that the public listens to those who are deemed to be "knowledgeable" and "trustworthy" (Lupia and McCubbins 1998, 69–76; see also Zaller 1992).

The previous chapter then posited that while civilian actors are increasingly likely to use the military in ways that violate the principles of civil-military relations when military prestige is high relative to when it is low, so too are military actors increasingly likely to do the same. Civilian leaders may, for example, showcase a popular military figure – even if doing so violates the principle of military non-partisanship – out of a belief that doing so will help the civilian leader win votes. A prestigious military actor, on the other hand, may violate the principle of civilian control by publicly criticizing a stated policy of the President regarding foreign policy on the basis that he or she believes that the public will overlook such an infraction, or take his or her word over and above that of the President. These theoretical expectations thus led to the formulation of H2, which stated that military actors increasingly violate the principles of civil-military relations in public and visible ways when military prestige is high relative to periods of low prestige.

Methodology

This chapter systematically investigates one distinct type of political behavior that is committed by one type of actor (military). Accordingly, this chapter will evaluate H1 and H2 by attempting to disentangle the relative influence, if any, of the levels of polarization and military prestige on one type of political behavior engaged in by military actors. This chapter will also inform, but not evaluate, both H4 and H5. H4 stated that military and civilian actors engage in relatively more visible and public forms of political behavior that involve the military institution when military prestige is high relative to periods of low military prestige, and H5 stated that the most extreme levels of overall political activity occur in environments that are characterized by simultaneously high levels of political polarization and military prestige.

The time range of the data spans from 1979-2020. Over this period of time, the level of military prestige changes from one that was relatively low to high. Consider that in 1979, only 54% of Americans surveyed expressed either a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of trust in the nation's military, and in 2020, 72% of those surveyed expressed the same notion ("Confidence in Institutions. Gallup Public Opinion Polling" 2020).

Public opinion data on this question dates as far back as 1975, just a couple of years after the end of the Vietnam War. The lowest and highest percentage of the American population expressing these levels of confidence in the nation's military across the data are 50% (1981) and 85% (February of 1991)("Confidence in Institutions. Gallup Public Opinion Polling" 2020).[30]

Polarization in the US House of Representatives, which is routinely measured by examining roll-call voting patterns of members of Congress and then organized by the two major US political parties, also rose over the same period. In 1979, the scaled value (using DW-NOMINATE scores) of polarization in the US House of Representatives was roughly

[30] 1991 is the only year in which two data points are given. The level of confidence dropped to 69% by October of the same year, suggesting that the February data point captured an effect related to the Gulf War, which ended in early 1991.

59.6, whereas in 2020, the same value was roughly 87.3, the highest on record in our nation's history (Jeffrey B Lewis et al. 2020).

The levels of trust in the military and polarization in the US House of Representatives from 1979 - 2020 are displayed in Figure 8.

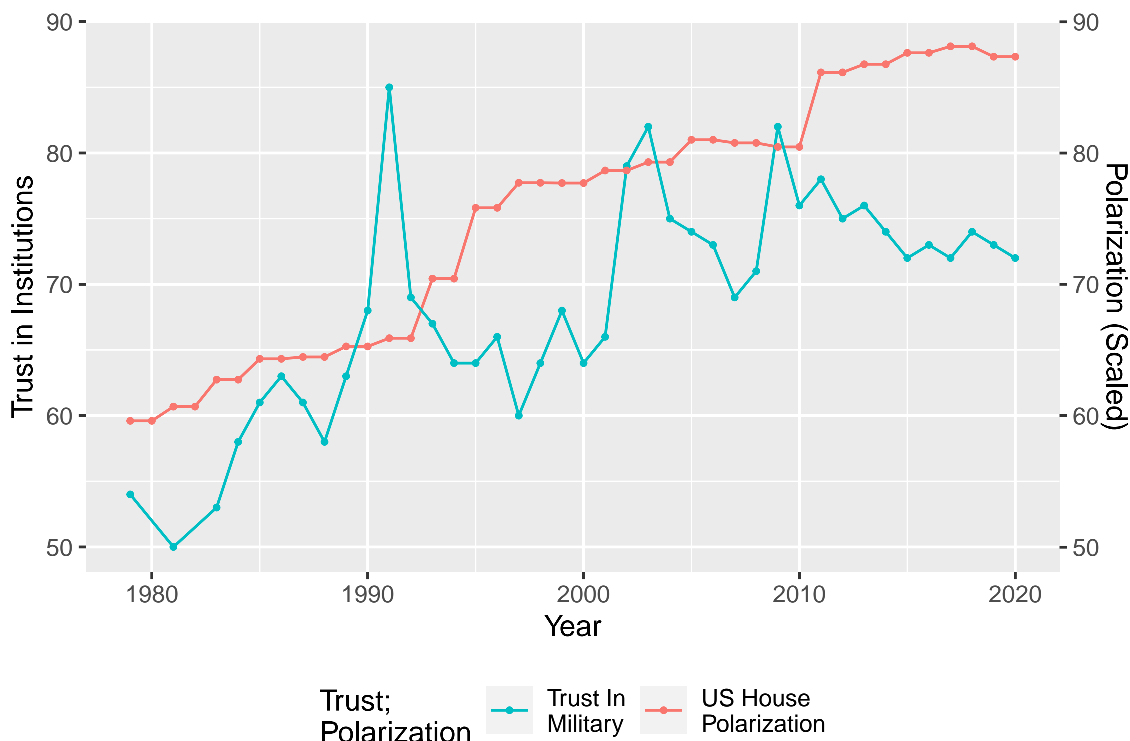


Figure 8: Public Trust (L) and Polarization (R), 1979-2020

Because both of the independent variables change during the time period examined in this chapter (and in the same direction!), and because the theory offered in the previous chapter predicts that military actors will increasingly violate the central principles of civil-military relations as both variables increase, a systematic investigation of the data will help disentangle the relative impacts of both the levels of polarization and military prestige on opinion commentary written by military actors.

In general terms, the theory offered in the previous chapter predicts that because polarization and military prestige both increase over the time period examined in this chapter, there should be an increasing frequency with which military actors violate one or more of the central principles of civil-military relations through the opinion commentary

they publish. The data examined in this chapter, however, will be of less value in informing the underlying mechanisms that surround these relationships. This is primarily because the examined data – written opinion commentary pieces – rarely reveal the underlying intent of the actor. We can examine several aspects of the actor's message, to include its content and, as I describe below, whether the content of the message adheres to the principles of civil-military relations. However, we are rarely if ever explicitly informed as to *why* the actor crafts a particular message and in a particular manner.

Opinion Commentary Authored by Retired Military Officers

Examining written opinion commentary by retired military officers is of value to this research project for several important reasons which are worth briefly elucidating. To begin with, and as Chapter 2 argued, opinion commentary by military actors need not necessarily violate the principles of civil-military relations. In other words, the political behavior of writing opinion commentary is unlike other types of political behaviors that military actors engage in — such as endorsing political candidates at political conventions, which constitute by their very nature a violation of one or more of the central principles of civil-military relations (that of non-partisanship in the case of endorsing a political candidate at a political convention).

It is at least possible that retired military officers could write opinion commentary that does not violate the principle of civilian control of the military, non-partisanship of the military institution, or non-interference of the military. Whether and the extent to which the written published words of retired military officers violate the central principles of civil-military relations depends on the content, tone, and overall message of each publication, as I argue later in this chapter.

I focus on commentary written by retired military officers instead of that written by active-duty military officers for several reasons. The first is because retired military officers are far more likely to publish opinion commentary to begin with than active-duty military

officers. While some active-duty military officers do write and publish op-eds, the prohibitions and guidelines that govern the range of activities that active officers can engage in are more clearly spelled out in official Department of Defense guidelines and regulations than they are for retired military officers. For example, Department of Defense Directive 1344.10 (February 2008) indicates that while active duty members of the Armed Forces may "write a letter to the editor of a newspaper expressing the member's personal views on public issues or political candidates" so long as "the letter clearly states the views expressed are those of the individual only and not those of the Department of Defense," the same directive also expressly prohibits active service members from "allowing or causing to be published partisan political articles, letters, or endorsements signed or written by the member that solicits votes for or against a partisan political party, candidate, or cause" (D. of Defense 2008).

Retired military officers do not face these same prohibitions. Thus, there is likely far greater variance in the content and tone of the opinion commentary that retired military actors seek to publish. However, this should not be taken to mean that retired military officers face no prohibitions whatsoever on what they publish or what they say. In fact, the conventional wisdom is that retired military officers – especially retired generals and admirals – speak for the institution, or are certainly perceived to do so, even in retirement.

Indeed, the historian Richard Kohn once remarked that "retired general and flag officers are analogous to the cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church" (Richard Kohn as cited in Owens 2006, 70). Kohn has in mind two particularly important considerations regarding high-ranking retired military officers. The first is that the general public likely cannot and does not distinguish, at least in any meaningful sense, between the remarks of an active duty versus a retired high ranking officer; and the second is the concern that public criticism by retired military officers of a high rank will encourage those officers on active duty to engage in similar forms of behavior (Owens 2006). Thus, examining the remarks of retired rather than active-duty military officers enables the researcher to gain

clarity with respect to how the retired military officer corps as a body is functioning politically: is it adhering to the central principles of civil-military relations, or not?[31]

I examine written opinion commentary rather than other forms of commentary, such as television or radio interviews given by retired officers, or commentary these officers post on social media, as doing so provides two significant advantages. The first advantage is that written opinion pieces, especially those intended for publication in a major newspaper, are deliberately intended for consumption by a wide public audience. While social media postings and television or radio interviews may certainly end up in the public eye and perhaps even reach a wider audience than newspaper articles, there is in my view a qualitative difference between commentary published in a major newspaper versus on other outlets, in that the author must more carefully craft an intentional message that addresses a particular topic or issue in order to be published in a newspaper than on social media. Unlike personal social media accounts, publishing an op-ed in a major newspaper is a very competitive process. Indeed, it is not uncommon to see opinion pieces in the most prominent of major US newspapers published by heads of state, members of Congress, and leaders of industry and academia.

The second advantage of examining written opinion editorials versus other types of opinion commentary is that the author's intent is more discernible than other forms of commentary. While television and radio interviews certainly offer glimpses into the personalities of whomever is speaking, and while social media posts likely do the same, television interviews and social media posts are also avenues that may increase the chance

[31] Strong opinions abound regarding what role retired military officers have, or should have, on civil-military relations in the United States. When several retired military generals and admirals publicly criticized and called for the removal of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in response to what they perceived to be Rumsfeld's poor leadership over the war in Iraq in 2006, an episode that came to be known as the "Revolt of the Generals," some scholars lamented that retired senior military officers publicly aired their views. See Cook (2008), 7 for more details. Others, however, applauded the honesty and forthrightness shown by these retired officers, and claimed that concerns about a dip in the professionalism among military officers was overblown. Frederick Kagan (2006), for instance, claimed that "there is no danger to the republic in a handful of retired generals speaking their minds. There is great danger in making vital decisions about an on-going armed struggle without hearing the views of all available experts." See Kagan (2006) for more information. Chapter 6 of this dissertation also explores the "Revolt of the Generals" in more detail.

that a retired officer either misspeaks, or is later misquoted out of context.[32] A written op-ed or letter to the editor, on the other hand, must be carefully crafted, from start to finish, to convey an argument that is intended to persuade the reader. For these reasons, a reader is likely to conclude, regardless of whether he or she agrees with the author, that the author intended what the author wrote.

The Data

The data explored in this chapter consist of 391 observations authored from 1979-2020 and published in a total of five major US newspapers: *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ), *The New York Times* (NYT), *The Washington Post* (WaPo), *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The USA Today*. With the exception of *The USA Today*, all of the newspapers have long and established histories (the *USA Today* began in 1982 ("About USA Today. About USA Today" n.d.)). Furthermore, three of the five newspapers in particular – the *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ), *The New York Times* (NYT), and *The Washington Post* (WaPo) – are likely the most circulated among the defense and national security communities, as they are located in New York City and Washington D.C., respectively, where a significant number of prominent think tanks, international organizations, and the Pentagon, are based.

In the statistical analysis, I also rely on data covering polarization, military prestige, and military casualties. Data on polarization comes primarily from DW-NOMINATE (dynamic-weight, nominal three step estimation) scores, which use roll-call voting data to assign members of Congress a score on the liberal-conservative dimension, ranging from -1 (extremely liberal) to 1 (extremely conservative) (Jeffrey B Lewis et al. 2020). I also include a measurement of affective polarization, which relies mainly on "feeling-thermometer" scores as measured during the American National Election Study

[32]For this reason, I do not include examining published interviews with retired military officers, nor short forms of analysis, such as the "Monkey Cage" featured in *The Washington Post* (retired and active military officers are featured in or author "Monkey Cage" analysis somewhat regularly. Instead, I focus on editorials and letters to the editor, which in my view, provide a clearer window into the motive of the military actor than a published interview that a newspaper decides to run.

(ANES). This measure gauges how partisans who identify with one political party generally feel about the other political party (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018; Iyengar et al. 2019).

I rely on public opinion data measuring trust in the US military as a proxy for military prestige. This measure comes from Gallup public opinion data that captures the level of trust that the public places in various institutions in America, such as the Presidency, Congress, Church, and the Police ("Confidence in Institutions. Gallup Public Opinion Polling" 2020). Finally, I rely on data regarding the level of casualties sustained by the US military in a given calendar year, which comes from a variety of Department of Defense sources.[33]

To obtain the observations, I use a series of key-word searches in several different online databases, including Factiva, Lexus-Uni, and ProQuest Historical Newspapers. These searches generally look for words that would appear in the article byline that describe the author of the piece, such as "retired military officer," "former General," "former Admiral," etc.[34] In some instances, especially where the same retired military officer authored or co-authored multiple publications, the officer did not always refer to himself or herself as a retired military officer. This occurred especially in instances where the officer was, ostensibly, writing from the perspective of someone other than a retired military officer, such as that of a political appointee to a high level governmental position (after retirement from the military, Army General Barry McCaffrey, for instance, served as President Clinton's Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy). Nonetheless, because these officers had previously identified themselves as retired military officers in earlier opinion publications, and thus, because members of the public might reasonably recognize the author as a prominent retired military figure, I include these subsequent publications in the data, and simply control for whether the author self-identifies as a

[33]See D. of Defense (2011); D. of Defense (2021b); D. of Defense (2021c); D. of Defense (2021a); D. of Defense (2021e); D. of Defense (2021d); D. of Defense (2021f); D. of Defense (2021g) for more details.

[34]Please see this chapter's Appendix for the exact search parameters used to collect the data.

retired military officer in the publication.[35]

After gathering the data, the methodology proceeds along two subsequent steps. The first is to analyze the general topics which retired military officers are addressing in their publications. In other words, I first answer the question, "what are retired military officers writing about?" The second step of the analysis is to determine whether and why any variation exists in the frequency with which particular opinion pieces violate one or more of the central principles of civil-military relations.

Analysis

The data set includes a total of 391 observations. These observations were written by a total of 217 distinctly different authors or author teams. Eight of these observations were written by anonymous authors. Included in the data also are cases in which at least one retired military officer co-authored a piece with one or more civilian authors.[36]

There are also several authors who penned multiple observations. The most prolific of these officers include Retired Army Lieutenant General William Odom (22 publications in total), Retired Air Force General Michael Hayden (20 publications in total), and Retired Marine Lieutenant Colonel Robert McFarlane, who later served as President Reagan's National Security Adviser (18 publications).

[35] Overall, there were two main challenges in collecting the data. The first was that not all retired military officers clearly identify themselves as such. For instance, some op-eds introduced authors not by their rank, but by the organizational position that the author formerly held, such as "Former Commander of US Central Command." In many cases, this required further investigation of a biographical nature to conclusively determine whether the author was in fact a retired military officer. The second challenge was that each of the databases used to collect the data organizes and classifies historical newspaper articles somewhat differently. Some databases include editorials as a stand-alone source type to search for, making the acquisition of data easier. Other databases did not, which resulted in completing a more exhaustive search of a much larger set of potential articles to sift through. Of note, I include in the data both opinion articles and letters to the editor regardless of whether these were published in print or online, but count identical articles published in both mediums only once, even if the online and print versions contain somewhat different titles (sometimes they do).

[36] There are several co-authored pieces. For example, where General (Retired) David Petraeus wrote one publication and another one was written by General (Retired) David Petraeus and Michael O'Hanlon, I counted these as two different authors for coding purposes.

Summary Statistics

In addition to recording the date and source of each publication, I record several pieces of biographical information about each author. This includes the branch of military service of the author, the rank achieved by the author during his or her time in service, and the sex of the author.

Summary statistics for the variables of author rank and the annual count of publications are displayed in Table 5. The variable for author rank is coded equivalently to the officer's military pay grade.[37] The ranks of retired military officers in the data set range from an O-4 (Major or Lieutenant Commander) to O-10 (four star general or admiral), and the range of annual number of publications ranges from 0 to 27 (In 1980 only, there were 0 publications).

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Author Rank and Yearly Number of Publications Breakdown of Observations by Author Sex and Service Affiliation

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD	N
Author Rank	4	10	8.36	1.95	391
Number of Yearly Publications	0	27	9.31	6.93	391

Table 6 and Table 7 show the breakdown of observations by author sex and service affiliation, respectively. Mixed Authorship in Table 6 refers to publications that were authored by a mixture of male and female authors, whereas Mixed Service authorship in Table 7 denotes publications that were authored by a team that had served in multiple service branches (for example, a retired Colonel who had served in the Air Force and a

[37]For example, a rank of "10" means the officer achieved the pay grade of O-10, or four star general or admiral, the highest rank that an officer can achieve in the contemporary military. A rank value of "7" denotes a one star general or admiral. A rank of "4" corresponds to a pay grade of O-4, which in the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps, refers to the rank of Major. In the Navy and Coast Guard, a pay grade of O-4 refers to the rank of Lieutenant Commander. A rank of 5 in the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps refers to a Lieutenant Colonel, whereas in the Navy and Coast Guard, a rank of "5" denotes a Commander. A rank of "6" in the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps refers to a Colonel, whereas in the Navy and Coast Guard, a rank of 6 corresponds to the rank of Captain.

retired Admiral who had served in the Navy write an op-ed together).

Table 6: Breakdown of Observations by Author Sex

Breakdown	Observations	Percentage
Male Authors	375	95.9
Female Authors	3	0.8
Mixed Authorship	5	1.3
Sex Unknown	8	2.0

In terms of the sex of the author, male authors comprise the bulk of the sample (95.9%). Because the sample includes publications dating back to 1979-2020, a probable reason for this is the difference in sex and gender at the highest ranks of service — a feature that will likely change in the coming years, perhaps decades, as the restrictions on women serving in combat occupational specialties have been removed, and as women increasingly advance to senior ranks and positions.

Additionally, retired military officers who served in the Army comprise the largest segment (52.7%) of authors in the sample, as Table 7 shows. Authors who served in the Navy and Air Force comprised 14.3% and 16.1% of the sample, respectively. Representation from authors who served in the Marine Corps (12%) and Coast Guard (.8%) round out the sample. There is little theoretical importance of including the service breakdown except to initially observe whether any obvious disparities appear.[38]

These statistics somewhat correspond to the relative size of each service in comprising the active duty military. In 2018, for instance, the Army comprised 35% of the active duty force; the Navy, 24%; the Air Force, 24%, the Marine Corps, 14%, and the Coast Guard, 3% ("Demographics of the US Military. Council on Foreign Relations" 2020). But it is difficult to state with certainty that Army authors are overrepresented in the sample, and

[38]If such a disparity were to exist, such as 90% of the authors are Air Force veterans, we would have to examine whether there is something unique about service in the Air Force that drives veterans of that particular service to write op-eds in major newspapers.

that Coast Guard officers are underrepresented, mainly because the relative sizes of the military services change over time. Particularly when large land wars are fought, such as during Vietnam and the Gulf War, the Army tends to grow.

Table 7: Breakdown of Observations by Author Service Affiliation

Breakdown	Observations	Percentage
Army	206	52.7
Navy	56	14.3
Marine Corps	47	12.0
Air Force	63	16.1
Coast Guard	3	0.8
Mixed Service Authorship	16	4.1

Figure 9 displays the distribution of publications by author rank. This plot shows that publications tend to be authored by those of a higher rank — 185 of the 391 publications (47.3%) were authored by retired four star generals or admirals. Additionally, 277 of the total 391 publications (70.8%) were authored by generals or admirals (one-, two-, three-, or four-star flag officers). The fact that high ranking officers tend to publish in the newspapers examined is unsurprising and confirms the competitive nature of publishing an opinion piece in one of the premier newspapers in the nation. At the same time, there are enough authors who are not retired generals or admirals (29.2%) to show that those who do not attain the highest ranks still have a respectable opportunity to publish their views in the examined sources.

The distribution of the data according to newspaper source is displayed in Figure 10. The data shows that the overwhelming number (380, or 97.2%) of opinion publications were authored by retired military officers in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, or *Wall Street Journal.* Only 11 of the 391 publications (2.8%) were authored in either the

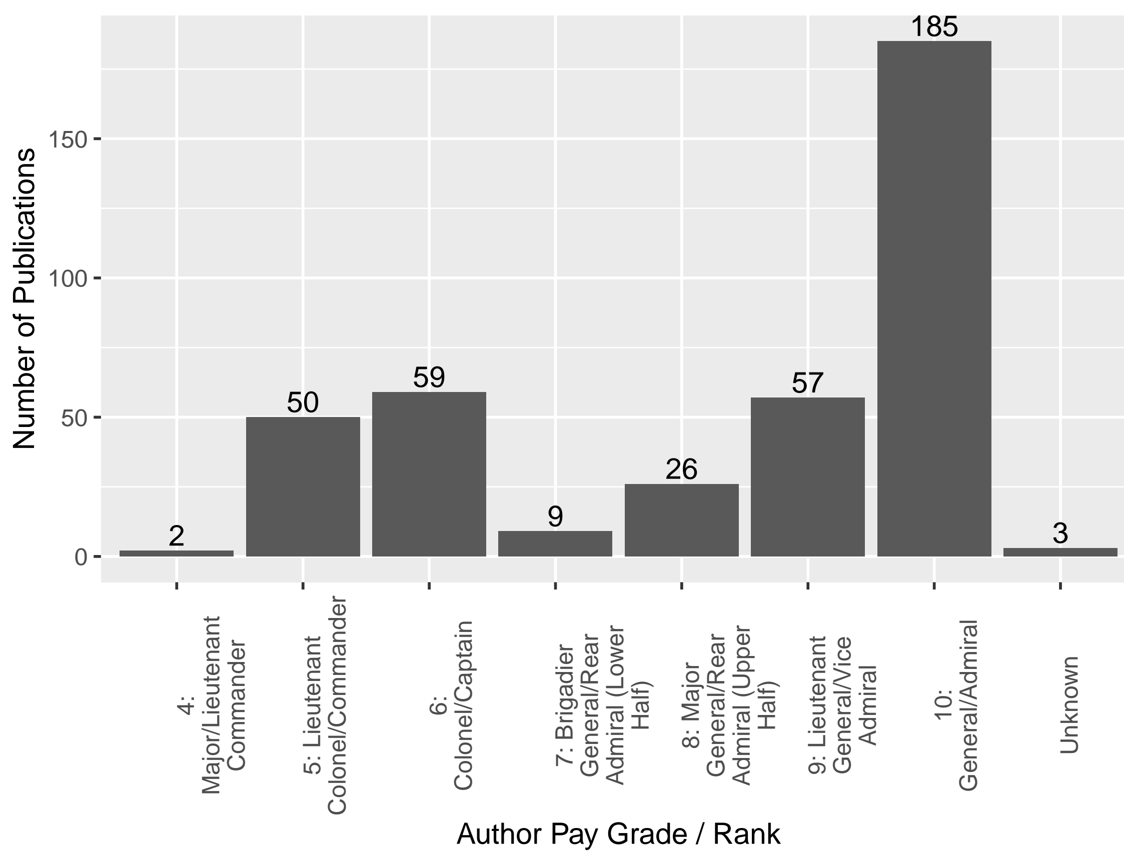


Figure 9: Opinion Pieces authored by Retired Military Officers Broken Down by Author Rank, 1979-2020

USA Today or the *Los Angeles Times*. This is not surprising. Not only are these three newspapers among the most prestigious and most circulated across the world, but they are based in the nation's capital and New York City, where think tanks, international organizations, and government offices are highly concentrated.

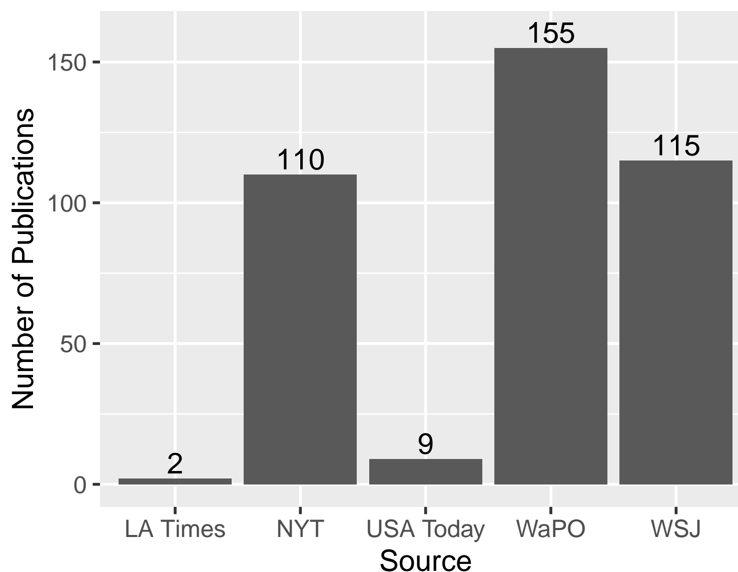


Figure 10: Opinion Pieces Authored by Retired Military Officers Broken Down by Newspaper Source, 1979-2020

Finally, Figure 11 displays the annual count of publications authored by retired military officers across the dataset. The smoothed trend line indicates that the average yearly count of publications rose steadily from 1979 until the early 2000s, at which time, a decline occurred until approximately 2008. From 2008 until the present day, the average yearly count of opinion publications rose heavily during the early years of the Obama Presidency before sharply falling. Retired military officers then resumed a high rate of opinion commentary publication during the Trump Administration.

Before proceeding, it is worth noting from a macro perspective the breadth of the events that have occurred during the past four decades that have impacted the military and the nation. In terms of external threats and wars, this period includes the final years of the Cold War against the Soviet Union (through 1991), the Gulf War in Iraq (1990-1991), operations in the Balkans (primarily 1993-1995), and the post-9/11 wars in

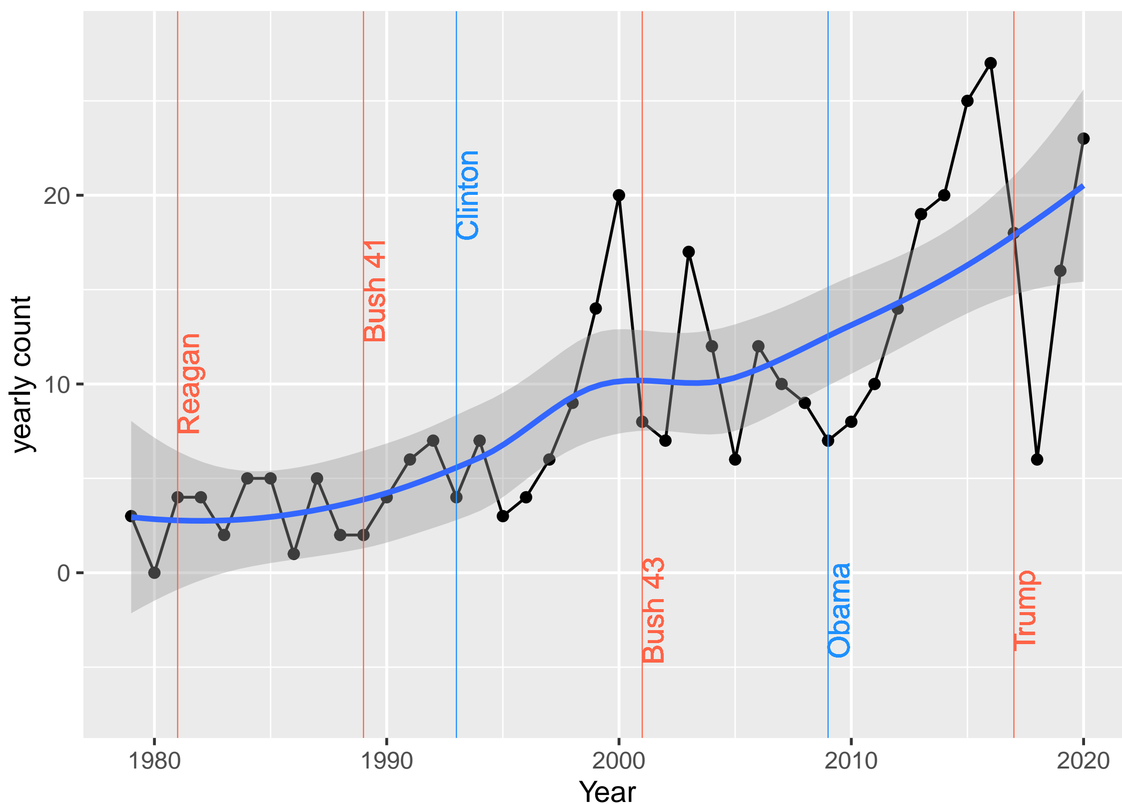


Figure 11: Annual Number of Op-Eds and/or Letters to the Editor Authored by Retired Military Officers and Published in Major US Newspapers (WSJ, NYT, WaPo, USA Today, LA Times), 1979-2020

Iraq (2003-present day) and Afghanistan (2001-2021), as well as a host of smaller but important military operations in Grenada (1983), Panama (1989), Somalia (1992-1993), and Haiti (1994-1995).

The military has also undergone significant social and institutional changes in the time period examined. For example, the late 1970s came just years after the US Government ended the draft (1973). The debates over the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policies, instituted in 1994 before being repealed in 2011, are also captured in the data set, along with numerous other social debates that have involved the military, including opening up combat arms branches to women (2014-2015) and debates over the inclusion of transgender troops. In short, the period from 1979-2020 has provided plentiful opportunities for retired military officers to share their thoughts with the public through written opinion commentary.

What Are Retired Military Officers Writing About?

The first critical step of the analysis involves determining what topics retired military officers have addressed. This requires classifying each of the observations into one of several possible types of broad topic areas. Gaining this understanding will show what types of issues have been the most prevalent when this particular type of military actor addresses the public through major newspapers.

Because historical and contextual circumstances change over time, the possible range of topics should be broad enough to classify every observation yet narrow enough to generate meaningful comparison across both topics and time. I therefore develop a categorical variable for topic that can take one of eight possible values as shown in Table 8.[39]

Table 9 displays the breakdown of observations by topic category. The topics of *Warfighting and Operations* and *Foreign policy* account for a total of 230 of the 391

[39] Classifying each observation into one of the eight possible topics requires some judgement on the part of the researcher. Some observations address multiple topics. To assist in determining the primary topic addressed in each publication, I identified what I thought was the opinion piece's thesis statement, which helped answer the fundamental question, "what topic does the central argument address in this editorial?"

Table 8: Categorical Values of the Topic of Retired Military Officer Public Commentary

Topic	Description	Examples
Foreign Policy	If the publication primarily addresses American Foreign Policy or overarching National Security Policy	A Disaster Puts Putin in a Bind, by William Odom; The Test Ban Solution, by John Shalikashvili
Warfighting and Operations	If the publication primarily addresses an ongoing conflict or a central aspect related to the ability of the military to fight and win on the battlefield	A Month in Macedonia Will Not Be Enough, by Wesley Clark; A Plan to Save Iraq from ISIS and Iran, by Jack Keane
Social Policy	If the publication primarily addresses questions or issues related to who should serve, and/or why	Banning Transgender Troops Only Hurts Us, by Mike Mullen; US Military Readiness Requires the Draft, by William Westmoreland
Domestic Policy	If the publication primarily addresses issues that do not have an immediate and direct impact on the military, or that describe the general operating atmosphere and political conditions in Washington D.C.	The Travel Ban Hurts American Spies - and America, by Michael Hayden; Our Republic is Under Attack from the President, by William McRaven
Budget/Weapons/Troops	If the publication primarily addresses issues such as defense budgets, a particular weapons system, or troop benefits/pay	Washington Tightwads are Creating a Hollow Military, by Gordon Sullivan; We Need More Troops, by Barry McCaffrey
Support	If the publication primarily makes general or specific calls of support for the military or for particular military or defense figures	In Defense of Donald Rumsfeld, by John Crosby and Thomas McInerney; From Forward Operating Base to Boardroom, by Stanley McChrystal
Civil-Military Relations	If the publication primarily addresses how military and civilians can better interact and relate to each other, or discusses how organizations and departments can be best structured to offer advice to civilian leaders, issues of strategy, etc.	Who Decides When We Go to War, by David Barno; Military Leaders Do Not Belong at Political Conventions, by Martin Dempsey
Service Culture	If the publication primarily addresses an ongoing issue - positive or negative - that is occurring within the military itself and that bears on the internal culture of the military	Yet Another Insult to Women, by Wayne Johnson; The Navys Blues, by David Evans

Table 9: Publication Breakdown by Subject

Topic	**n**
Budget, Weapons, Troops	37
Civil-Military Relations	19
Domestic Policy	39
Foreign Policy	111
Service Culture	13
Social Policy	9
Support	44
Warfighting/Operations	119

observations (58.8% of the total sample). The categories of *Support*, *Domestic Policy*, and *Budget/Weapons/Troops* account for a total of 120 observations, or 30.7% of the sample. Finally, the topics of *Social Policy*, *Civil-military Relations*, and *Service Culture* combined account for the remaining 41 observations, or 10.5% of the sample.

This breakdown of observations by topic type is not necessarily surprising. Based on the experiences and expertise of retired military officers, we would reasonably expect that this type of military actor would address matters that relate to *Warfighting and Operations* and *Foreign Policy* often. After all, many retired military officers are veterans of wars, and have served in significant positions of responsibility within government. However, a rather interesting picture emerges when I trace the proportion of each topic area addressed over time using smoothed trend lines. This is displayed in Figure 12.

Figure 12 shows that since 1979, the proportion of three of the eight topic areas addressed by retired military officer commentary has varied significantly. First, the proportion of retired military officer commentary that addressed topics related to foreign policy was relatively high during the late 1980s and early 1990s, but then dropped continually until approximately 2011, when it began to rise again. Second, the proportion of commentary addressing warfighting topics increased throughout the 1990s, but began to decline around 2008, and has since declined even more drastically. Finally, note that the proportion of topics addressing domestic policy has risen sharply since about 2010. For the 31 years prior to that, the proportion of commentary addressing domestic policy never climbed above 10 percent; at the end of the data range, in 2020, this proportion is instead

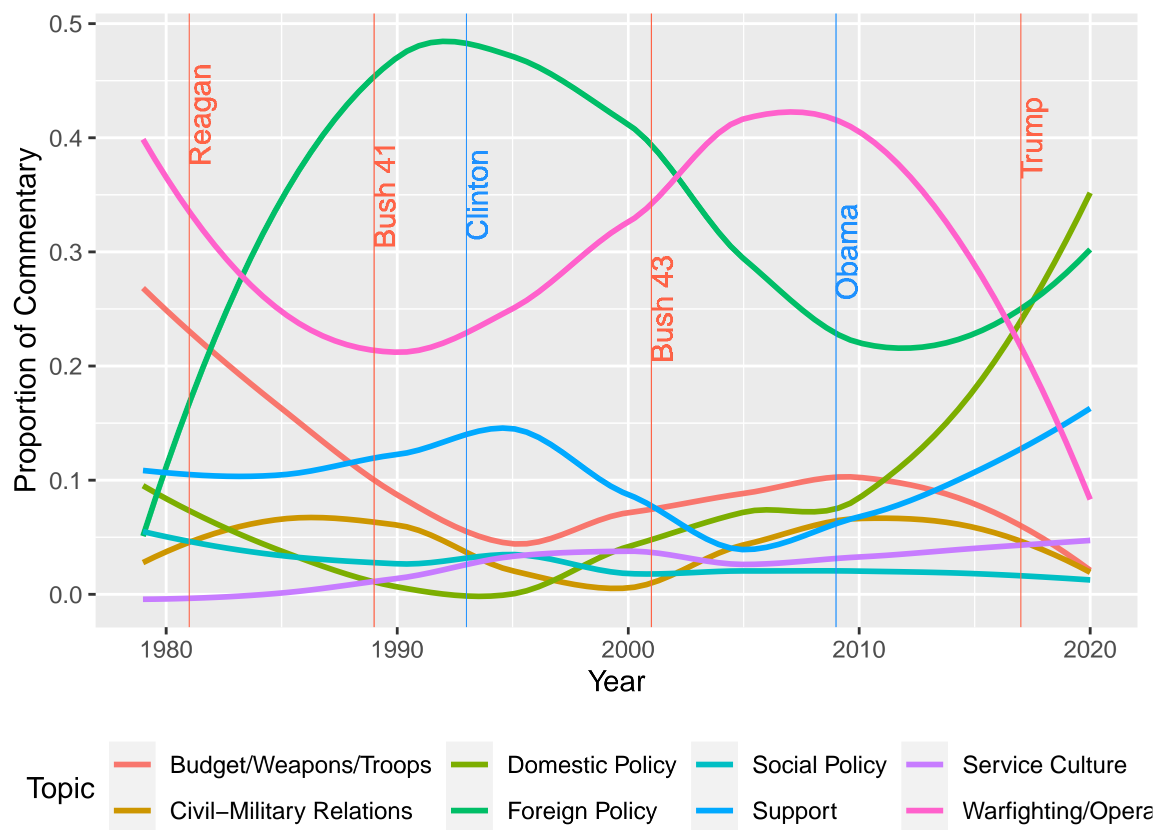


Figure 12: Proportion of Opinion Publications authored by Retired Military Officers by Topic Area, 1979-2020

near 35%.

We should certainly expect some variance in the topics retired military officers address. For example, the nation is not always engaged in a war, and when they do occur, they range in terms of their intensity, the number of casualties that are inflicted, and a number of other factors. We might reasonably expect a relative spike in topics that address warfighting/operations or foreign policy, for example, when a war or a major foreign policy crisis is unfolding. Indeed, we partly see this unfold in Figure 12. For example, the proportion of commentary addressing topics related to warfighting and operations peaked around 2007, coinciding with the surge to Iraq, and topics addressing matters of foreign policy peaked in the early 1990s, coinciding with multiple crises that developed in the Balkans, Haiti, and Somalia after the end of the Cold War.

But the variance we see occur in Figure 12 after 2010 seems to suggest that something deeper than a cycle of war and peace are at play. For instance, Figure 12 shows that prior to Donald Trump assuming the Presidency in 2017, the highest relative proportion of commentary authored by retired military officers in a given year addressed topics related to warfighting/operations and foreign policy, even as the proportion of commentary addressing topics related to domestic policy was rising. Throughout the Trump Presidency, however, the topic that retired military officers have addressed most has been domestic policy. In other words, retired military officers have become first and foremost domestic commentators, rather than experts who address topics regarding foreign policy and warfighting.

This clear shift in the proportion of different topics addressed by retired military officers is evidence that is consistent with the theory offered in the previous chapter. As polarization has reached very high values in recent years, and as the nation grapples with primarily domestic political topics that include significant moral undertones – such as race, gender, and their implications – it seems that retired military officers are increasingly weighing in on these types of topics more so than on topics which they have historically

aligned themselves with, such as warfighting and foreign policy. To be clear, this variance in topics addressed over time does not indicate the degree to which retired military officer commentary has violated the central principles of civil-military relations. This task is taken up in the following section of this chapter.

Is Retired Military Officer Opinion Commentary Violating the Principles of Civil-Military Relations?

To measure variation in adherence to the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference of the military institution into certain realms of state policy, I develop three dichotomous indicator variables that capture a potential violation of each principle. I operationalize violations of the principle of civilian control by coding instances in which a retired military officer blatantly criticizes or excoriates a civilian leader. Because the observations are all opinion pieces, and thus somewhat argumentative in nature, my goal is not to simply identify publications which point out shortcomings of policy, or make recommendations for civilian leaders to implement. We would expect most published opinion commentary pieces to do these things.

Instead, I look for strong, blatant, and direct criticism of a civilian official, and particularly, the Commander in Chief or members of his cabinet. Blatant criticism of the sitting Commander in Chief or members of the President's cabinet by a retired military officer may undermine the principle of civilian control because engaging in this behavior may generate political costs that a civilian leader then has to contend with. These political costs may be small or large, but their presence alone likely makes it more difficult for the President or members of the cabinet to enact their intended policy goals (Risa Brooks, Golby, and Urben 2021).

A second operationalization involves violations to the principle of non-partisanship. Here, I code instances of opinion commentary that explicitly endorse or rebuke a party platform, including the endorsement or rebuke of candidates running for office.

Commentary that undertakes these sorts of partisan pronouncements violates the principle of non-partisanship because the author's position conveys his or her partisan affiliation, allegiance, or alignment.

Finally, I operationalize violations of the principle of non-interference of the military into certain realms of state policy by looking for commentary in which retired military actors address topics that are indirectly, tangentially, or altogether unrelated to the military or to defense policy. The key question I answer when looking for violations to the principle of non-interference is whether the author's expertise as a retired military officer serves as reasonable credentialing for the author to inform the topic he or she is addressing. Two points of clarification about this particular indicator are worth underscoring, however.

The first is that the roles, responsibilities, and missions undertaken by the military have significantly expanded over the past several decades, both overseas and domestically (Rosa Brooks 2016a). The US military now plays a prominent role not only in preparing to fight conventional wars, but also in implementing other aspects of America's expansive foreign policy. The US military also routinely provides support to civilian authorities domestically in responding to various types of natural disasters and civil unrest.[40]

A second point of clarification is that it is theoretically possible to connect many political issues to the nation's "security." Problems such as racism, extremism, climate change, polarization, immigration, the lack of civil discourse in America, and others constitute problems that, broadly defined and to varying degrees, pose a potential danger to the world in which we live. But this does not mean that retired military officers should necessarily address all of these topics. For example, the nation has scientists who know far

[40]The military's role during the COVID-19 Pandemic has only magnified these tendencies. For example, Operation Warp Speed, the logistics operation designed by the Trump Administration to help manufacture, produce, and deliver a vaccine for COVID-19, has heavily thrust the military into conversation and relationships with the healthcare community, private corporations, and transportation companies. Operation Warp Speed is run, moreover, by a four-star Army General, Gustave Perna. Some civil-military relations scholars have expressed concerns, shared by this author, that placing the military in charge of this operation has had, at times, the unintended consequences of the military being placed in a position to make decisions (related to the distribution of the vaccine) that from a normative perspective should have been made by civilian leaders, not military officers.

more about climate change than an average retired military officer. Thus, a normative question begins to emerge: "Should the military be actors who address this issue?"[41] Therefore, in looking for violations to the principle of non-interference, I try to keep in mind that even as the military has become increasingly involved in a great number of issues and events, military actors are not necessarily subject matter experts on every noteworthy topic.

Two further methodological points of caution are worth highlighting. The first is that some retired military officers do in fact go on to serve as appointees in political administrations, or run for office and serve as politicians themselves. For this reason, I control for whether a retired military officer wrote a publication while serving or having previously served in a political role that would legitimately correspond to that officer no longer having to adhere to the principles of civil-military relations in the same way that most retired military officers would. For example, we can and should hold former Senator John McCain, who retired from the Navy at the rank of Captain (O-6), to a different standard than other retired Navy Captains who do not go on to serve as US Senators. Senators, as elected officials, make partisan statements all of the time. Therefore, I do not include violations by retired military officers who later serve as elected or appointed partisan positions for the remainder of the statistical analysis.[42]

The second point of caution is that, unlike the categorical topic variable which can only take on one unique value, I allow for the possibility that a single observation can violate more than one principle of civil-military relations. In other words, I allow for the possibility that an opinion piece can blatantly criticize the President, while making a partisan endorsement and speaking out on a topic that is at best tangentially related to the military. Such a case would constitute violating all three principles of civil-military

[41] Ultimately, this is an opinion question that is open for debate, but I attempt to be both charitable and reasonable: I only code issues or topics that strike me as considerably outside or tangential to relevant military expertise in the US setting.

[42] This applies to 14 of the 391 observations (3.6%), eight of which violate one or more of the principles of civil-military relations.

relations.

Figure 13 plots the number of challenges to each of the three central principles of civil-military relations as well as the total number of violations to these principles by year. Early on in the data, from 1979-1988, there were relatively few instances of retired military officer commentary expressly challenging the principles of civil-military relations. From 1989 throughout the 1990s, the frequency and number of instances in which retired military officer commentary challenged the central principles of civil-military relations slowly increased. From 2007-2012, retired officer commentary adhered to the central principles of civil-military relations. Since then, however, retired officer opinion commentary has consistently violated at least one of the central principles of civil-military relations each year.

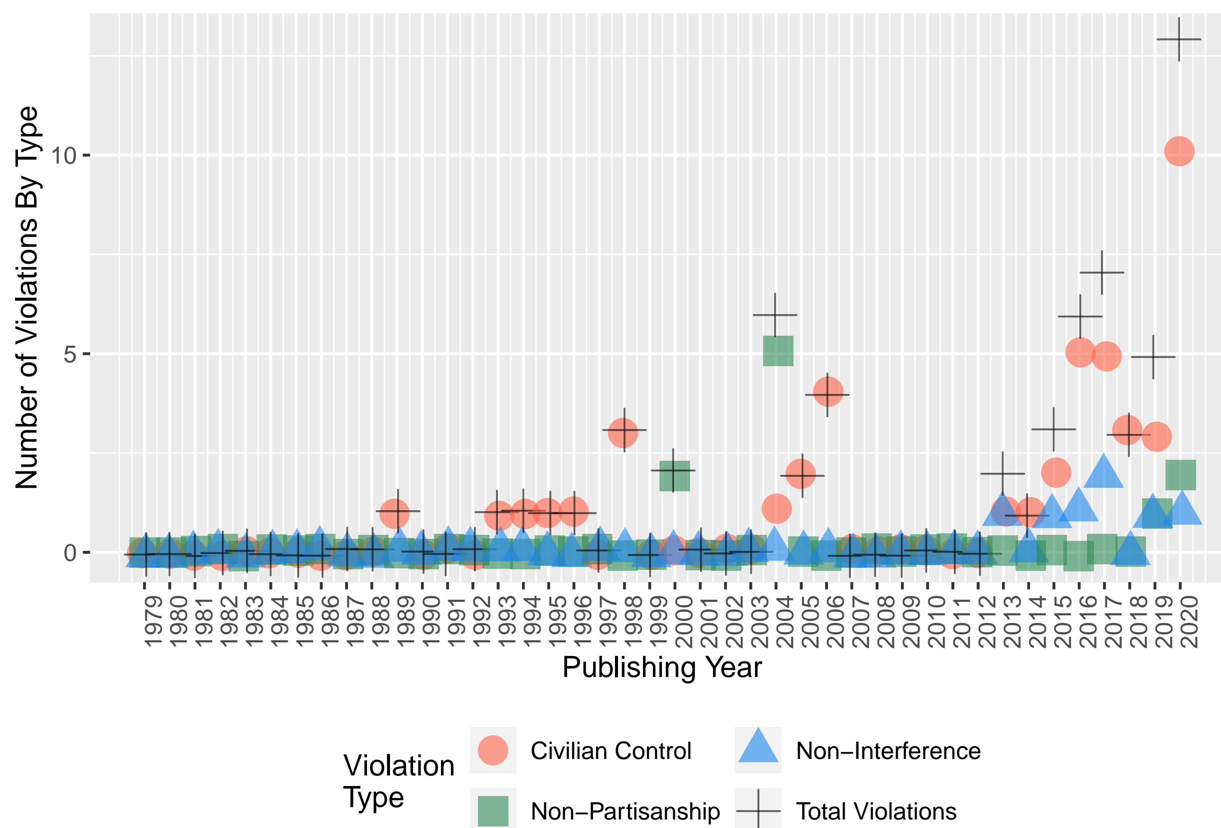


Figure 13: Instances of Retired Military Officer Commentary that Violate the Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations, 1979-2020

To account for the fact that the volume of commentary written by retired military

officers has also increased over time, I express these violations of the principles of civil-military relations as a proportion of annual commentary written by retired military officers. This is shown in Figure 14.

When the proportion of commentary that violates the central principles is expressed, we can more clearly see that there have been problematic episodes before, most notably in the early-mid 1990s and the early 2000s. Indeed, there is a cluster of years between 1993-1998 when a noticeable proportion of retired officer commentary violated the principle of civilian control when a number of retired military officers strongly criticized former President Clinton for, in the view of the authors, failing to take proper actions in Somalia, Bosnia, Chechnya, and Iraq (related to the enforcement of no-fly zones).

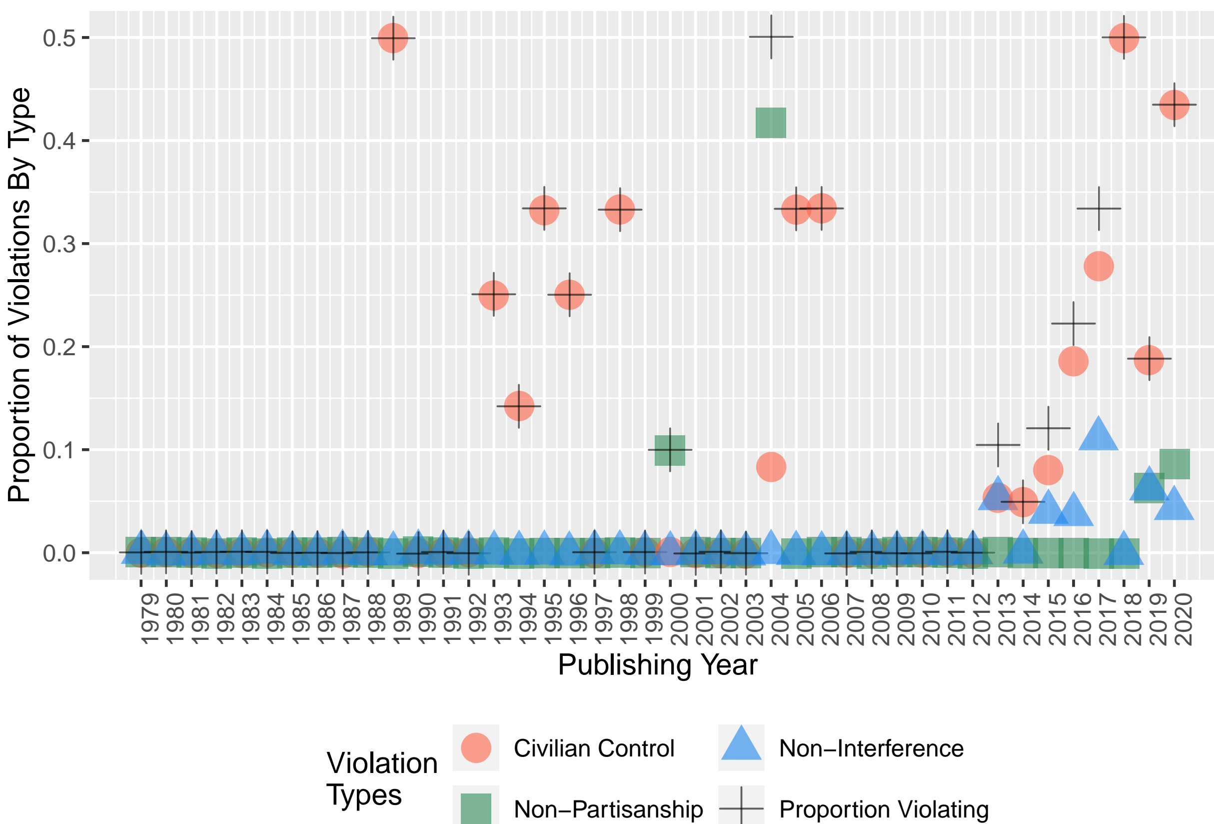


Figure 14: Proportion of Annual Retired Military Officer Commentary that Violates the Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations, 1979-2020

A second cluster appears in the early 2000s, when several retired military officers endorsed the two Presidential Candidates running for President in 2004, the incumbent,

George W. Bush, and Senator John Kerry, Bush's opponent. There were also several years (2005 and 2006) when a number of commentary pieces violated the principle of civilian control by strongly criticizing then President George W. Bush's Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, and his leadership of the Iraq War.[43]

The final cluster begins in 2013, though the proportion of commentary violating the central principles from 2013-2015 was still relatively low. Within this span of years, the year 2018 saw the highest proportion of retired officer commentary violate one or more of the central principles of civil-military relations (50%). It is also noteworthy that violations to the principle of non-interference are a somewhat recent occurrence; the first instance of a violation to this principle of civil-military relations came in 2013.

Figure 15 depicts the proportion of annual commentary published by retired military officers that violates at least one of the central principles of civil-military relations. This graph largely reflects the trends enunciated by the previous figures: retired military officers strongly adhered to the principles of civil-military relations throughout the 1980s before deviating from these standards throughout the 1990s. After violating the central principles of civil-military relations in the early 2000s, retired military officer commentary returned to adhering to the standards of civil-military relations, until 2012. Since 2013, however, there has been a sharp increase in the proportion of retired military officer commentary that violates the either the principle of civilian control, non-partisanship, or non-interference of the military.

Collectively, Figure 12, Figure 13, Figure 14, and Figure 15 demonstrate that through the opinion commentary that they publish, retired military officers are addressing domestic political topics relative to other types of topics and challenging the central principles of civil-military relations at a greater rate than they did in previous decades. Having established that these trends exist, the next task is to determine what variables, if any, are driving this variation. According to the theory posited in the previous chapter, the

[43]The 2006 episode, the so-called "Revolt of the Generals," is further discussed in depth in Chapter 6.

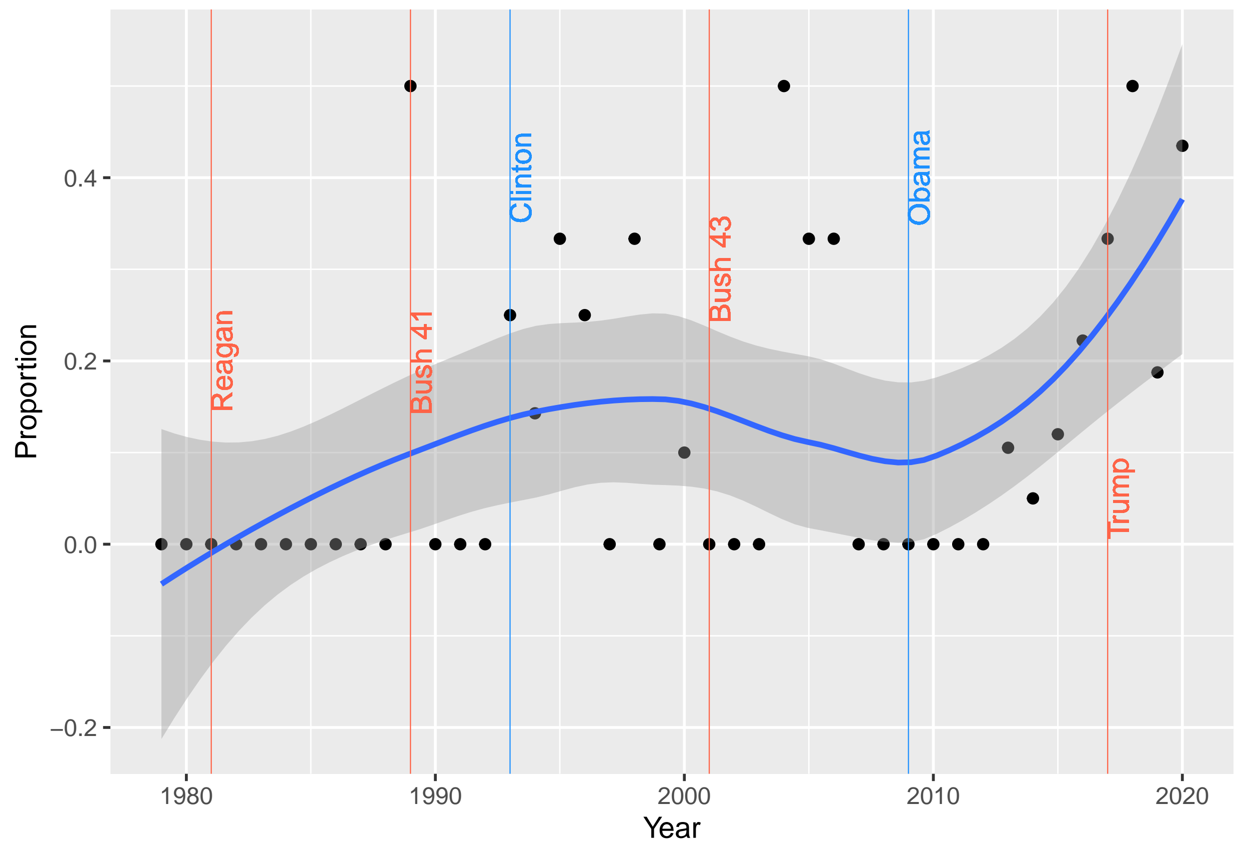


Figure 15: Proportion of Op-Eds Authored by Retired Military Officers That Violate Any Principles of Civil-Military Relations, 1979-2020

variables of political polarization and military prestige – both of which rise during the period examined – should strongly be considered.

Explaining A More Assertive Retired Military Officer Corps

This section explains the results of a detailed regression analysis. I regress a number of different outcomes, including the proportion of annual retired officer commentary that violates at least one of the central principles of civil-military relations (models 1-3) and the log of the odds that an op-ed authored by a retired military officer violates at least one of these central principles (models 4-9).

In terms of control variables, I first include multiple measurements of polarization. These include scaled estimates of polarization in the US House and US Senate, which rely on DW-NOMINATE (dynamic-weight, nominal three step estimation) scores that use roll-call voting data to assign members of Congress a score on the liberal-conservative dimension, ranging from -1 (extremely liberal) to 1 (extremely conservative) (Jeffrey B Lewis et al. 2020). I include separate measures for both the House and the Senate, not only because data on polarization in both bodies is readily available, but also because there might be a difference between the effect of polarization in each body. For instance, the US House of Representatives is a larger body of elected officials where each state is assigned proportional representation, and is sometimes viewed as less congenial than the "upper house" of the Senate (Andrews and Collins 2021; Noel 2018).

I also include a measure of affective polarization, which relies on a series of "feeling thermometer" indices from the American National Election Study (ANES). Following previous literature, I use a measure of affective polarization comprising the sum of the gap between how partisans "feel" about partisans who identify with the other major party (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018; Iyengar et al. 2019). One issue arises concerning how best to assign measures of polarization, and in particular, measures of affective polarization, to the data. This issue arises because although standard

measures of polarization are calculated at periodic intervals, these intervals are somewhat lengthy. Congressional polarization is measured every two years as a new session of Congress begins. Measures of affective polarization are somewhat different, however. For years prior to 2004, affective polarization levels are available every two years, but for years after 2004, measures of affective polarization are available only every four years. Figure 16 plots both the point estimates as well as the smoothed trend lines for both types of Congressional and well as affective polarization from 1978 - 2020.

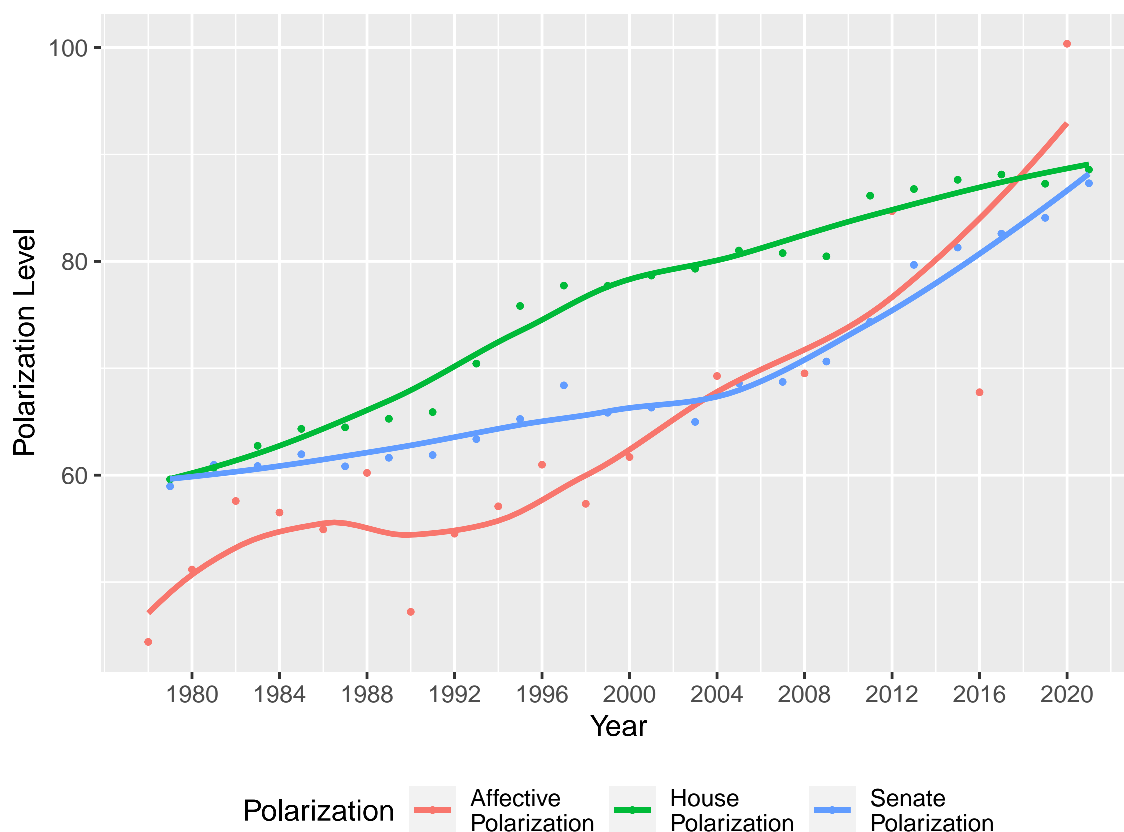


Figure 16: Polarization Estimates and Smoothed Trends, 1978-2020

Figure 16 shows a single outlying point in red for the measure of affective polarization taken in 2016. This point shows a decline in the level of affective polarization relative to 2012, a decline that likely has its roots in some of the unique characteristics of Donald Trump, the Republican candidate, and later president, running for office at the time.

Methodologically, one option is to assign all observations in the data set a

corresponding measure of polarization based on its last known value. This would mean, for instance, assigning all of the 63 op-eds written between the 2016 and 2020 elections a value for affective polarization taken from 2016, and similarly, every op-ed a value for Congressional polarization corresponding to the level of polarization in the House or Senate that was in session at the time the op-ed was written. The primary advantage of this option is that it requires the researcher to make few no assumptions regarding how levels of polarization might change within the intervals in which they are formally measured.

Another option is to assume that levels of polarization actually change during the intervals in which they are formally measured. This is a reasonable assumption if we assume that polarization is a latent variable; that is, that there is always some level of political discord in society that is changing, even if we are only able to formally measure this level periodically. Practically, this requires assuming, for instance, that an op-ed written in the fall of 2019 should take on a value of affective polarization that is somewhere in between the level measured at the 2016 election, but closer to the level that is measured at the 2020 election. Using locally weighted regression techniques, I obtain and use point estimates for each year for each type of polarization, corresponding to the smoothed trend lines shown in Figure 16.[44]

I also control for the level of military prestige by including a measure of public trust in the military. This measure comes from Gallup public opinion data that captures the level

[44]In this chapter's appendix, I conduct a regression analysis (See Table 28) using non-smoothed estimates of polarization. There are two main differences in results obtained using this "stricter" codification of polarization (non-smoothed estimates of polarization) versus the "smoothed" estimates for polarization that are presented in the remainder of this chapter. First, a strict, non-smoothed coding of polarization results in the coefficient for affective polarization not obtaining statistical significance. This is likely driven by the relatively low value of affective polarization obtained at the time of the 2016 election. A second and equally interesting result is that when polarization is coded strictly (non-smoothed), the coefficient for election year is also positive and statistically significant in several (logistic regression) models, whereas the analysis undertaken in the rest of this chapter does not reflect the importance of an election year. The reason for this difference is likely the fact that when polarization is coded strictly, election years occur right before a new – and almost always, higher – measure of polarization is obtained. These results, however, are actually in total alignment: we would expect the presence of an election year to be statistically significant when polarization is strictly coded (non-smoothed) because the level of polarization in this data set almost always rises immediately after an election year (when a new Congress begins). Similarly, when we use smoothed estimates for polarization, we would expect, as the results show, that the election year itself takes on less importance because we are assuming polarization changes within intervals.

of trust that the public places in various institutions in America, such as the Presidency, Congress, Church, and the Police ("Confidence in Institutions. Gallup Public Opinion Polling" 2020).

I include several other control variables. The first is a binary indicator for whether the opinion piece was published during a calendar year in which there was a presidential election. The theoretical basis for including such a control is that in an election year, the commentary published by retired military officers might be more likely to address the candidates or issues at stake in an upcoming election, and thus, the commentary might increasingly violate the principles of civil-military relations.

Another control variable I include is a lagged level of casualties sustained by the US military in a given calendar year.[45] The theoretical basis for including a measurement of casualties is that the presence of casualties impacts the tone and tenor of opinion commentary published by retired military officers. However, it is less clear how and in what direction the presence of casualties would impact retired officer opinion commentary. One can imagine that on one hand, a high rate of casualties could lead to retired military actors increasingly criticizing the President or other civilian officials, or the strategy undertaken in a particular war or military operation, and thus, would result in a higher level of commentary that violates one or more of the principles of civil-military relations.

On the other hand, one can also imagine that higher casualty rates would induce retired military actors to become more focused on the unfolding military effort such as an operation or war, and that part of such focus would include a deliberate effort by retired military officers to not distract those military forces engaged in such an effort by publishing commentary that strains a nation's civil-military relationship. Through this second logical

[45]This variable is constructed from a number of sources, and consists of the number of hostile US casualties sustained in a given calendar year per 100,000 active-duty military forces. I include in this measurement those casualties that are the result of what the Department of Defense classifies as either "hostile action" or a "terrorist attack." Annual data is provided from the Department of Defense from 1980-2010. I then used data from the Department of Defense regarding the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to construct a measurement for years outside of this time range. See D. of Defense (2011); D. of Defense (2021b); D. of Defense (2021c); D. of Defense (2021a); D. of Defense (2021e); D. of Defense (2021d); D. of Defense (2021f); D. of Defense (2021g) for more details.

avenue, the presence of higher casualties might actually result in fewer instances of retired military actor commentary that violates one or more of the central principles of civil-military relations. I lag the level of casualties by one year for logical as well as data reasons. Theoretically, it is at least possible that the level of casualties sustained in a given year will shape the commentary written by retired military officers in the future. Ideally, I would use real-time or only slightly lagged casualty data, i.e., by days, weeks, or at most, months. However, this is not possible with the available data on US casualties. Monthly data for US military casualties does not exist over the entire date range of the data set. By lagging casualty rates by one year across the entire data set, I am at least able to determine if and how the presence of prior casualties drives the tenor of retired officer opinion commentary.

Models 1-3 rely on OLS regression, as the dependent variable is a measure of the proportion of annual commentary published by retired military officers that violates any of the three central principles of civil-military relations. Models 4-9 rely on logistic regression, where the dependent variable is the log of the odds that a commentary publication authored by a retired military officer violates any of the three central principles of civil-military relations. In these models, because the unit of analysis is the individual piece of authored commentary, I include several other author and source characteristics, including the author's rank and the published source of the commentary piece. Controlling for the published source allows for the possibility that over time, particular newspaper outlets are more likely to publish commentary that violates the principles of civil-military relations than other newspaper sources.[46] Due to perfect separation, I drop observations published in the *USA Today* and *The Los Angeles Times* from the data set for these models (11 observations dropped). Models 4-6 cluster errors at the author level, while models 7-9 are mixed models that include author random effects. Both of these model designs enable the researcher to better investigate the possibility that changes in the

[46] For one informative view of where media outlets exist along a conservative-liberal spectrum, see "AllSides Media Bias Ratings. AllSides" (n.d.)

dependent variable are driven by particular authors or types of authors.

These results are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10 reveals several noteworthy results. The first and main result to note is the consistently positive and statistically significant coefficient for polarization, regardless of polarization type. In models 4-6 and 8-9, the respective coefficient for polarization is statistically significant at the 1% level. Additionally, because models 7-9 are mixed models that include author random effects, the fact that all three coefficients for polarization are positive and statistically significant provides moderate evidence that polarization impacts all authors in the data set rather than a small number or a subset of specific authors. In other words, the results are not driven by the commentary of a few authors. Rather, the level of polarization seems to have a much stronger effect on all retired military officers who take up the pen. The consistency of the positive and statistically significant coefficients for polarization suggests that increasing levels of polarization are, by far, the strongest and clearest indicator of whether retired military officer commentary will violate at least one of the principles of civil-military relations.

A second interesting result involves the coefficient for trust in the military. The coefficient for trust in the military is negative and highly statistically significant in models 7-9, but in models 1-3 and 5-6, the coefficient is not statistically significant. The lack of consistent statistical significance for the coefficient for trust in the military ultimately suggests that the prestige of the military is not a primary factor shaping retired military officers to pen opinion pieces that violate one or more of the principles of civil-military relations. However, it should be acknowledged that the negative direction of the coefficient for trust in the military in all but two models (2-3) is nonetheless in the opposite direction of what the theory predicts (the theory predicts that as the level of military prestige rises, military actors are increasingly likely to violate the principles of civil-military relations).

Finally, it is worth highlighting that Table 10 indicates that relatively few, if any, other variables (of those investigated) influence whether retired military officer

Table 10: Regression Results Using Smoothed Values of Polarization, Chapter 3

	Dependent variable:								
	Proportion Violating			Log Odds of Violating Any Civ-Mil Principles					
	OLS			*logistic*			*generalized linear mixed-effects*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Trust in Military	−0.002	0.0004	0.001	−0.064*	−0.030	−0.037	−0.187**	−0.054***	−0.112***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.037)	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.094)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Election Year	0.021	0.020	0.023	0.398	0.408	0.399	−0.061	0.378***	−0.426***
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.324)	(0.330)	(0.326)	(0.546)	(0.001)	(0.002)
House Polarization	0.009**			0.122***			0.156*		
	(0.004)			(0.043)			(0.087)		
Senate Polarization		0.008*			0.084***			0.142***	
		(0.004)			(0.028)			(0.001)	
Aff. Polarization			0.005*			0.058***			0.106***
			(0.003)			(0.019)			(0.002)
Casualty Rate (lagged)	−0.001	−0.001	−0.001	−0.006	0.001	−0.002	−0.015	−0.013***	−0.021***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.022)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Author Rank				0.089	0.082	0.080	−0.179	0.098***	0.614***
				(0.098)	(0.098)	(0.098)	(0.289)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Washington Post				−0.412	−0.344	−0.352	−0.617	−0.596***	−0.901***
				(0.365)	(0.366)	(0.366)	(0.607)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Wall Street Journal				−0.324	−0.301	−0.299	−1.167	−0.977***	−1.115***
				(0.433)	(0.435)	(0.434)	(0.796)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Constant	−0.417*	−0.485*	−0.252	−7.823***	−6.479***	−4.068**	−5.250	−15.517***	−10.847***
	(0.231)	(0.248)	(0.210)	(2.560)	(2.176)	(1.914)	(5.903)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Observations	42	42	42	366	366	366	366	366	366
R^2	0.157	0.155	0.148						
Adjusted R^2	0.065	0.064	0.055						
Log Likelihood				-142.030	-142.169	-141.781	-126.259	-124.275	-131.747
Akaike Inf. Crit.				300.060	300.339	299.562	270.519	266.550	281.494
Bayesian Inf. Crit.							305.642	301.674	316.618

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

commentary adheres to principles of civil-military relations. For example, the rank of an author appears to play little meaningful role in shaping whether an opinion piece adheres to standards of civil-military relations, as the coefficient for author rank is statistically insignificant in all but two models. The same is true for the rate of hostile casualties and source published. In short, the level of polarization – regardless of polarization type – seems to matter a great deal in shaping the content of retired officer commentary and in particular, the degree to which such commentary adheres to normative principles.

The Substantive Importance of Polarization

Given these main results, how important is the level of polarization in shaping the content of retired military officer commentary? Substantively, the coefficient for polarization in the US House of Representatives of .009 (model 1) indicates that a one unit increase in the mean ideological distance between political parties is associated with a .9% increase in the proportion of annual commentary that violates civil-military relations. This may not seem substantively large, but this depends on how greatly polarization varies over time. For instance, within the House of Representatives in the 112th Congress, which began in January 2011, polarization levels were nearly six points higher than the level that existed in the immediate session of Congress. This would suggest that in the span of just two years – one session of Congress – the proportion of annual opinion commentary authored by retired military officers that violates civil-military relations principles increased by 5.4%.

The coefficients of .122, .084, and .058 for each respective polarization type in models 4-6 correspond to a 12.9, 8.7, and 6.0 percent increase in the the odds that a commentary publication authored by a retired military officer challenges or violates one of the central principles of civil-military relations for every one unit increase in the level of House, Senate, and affective polarization. Again, these levels often change by several units over time, and we will be better able to interpret the significance of these results when we examine predicted probability later in this chapter. In short, the results show that as

polarization rises, the casual reader of the op-ed section of a major newspaper is increasingly more likely to come across commentary authored by retired military officers that either sharply criticizes civilian leaders, adopts a partisan position, or addresses a topic that is indirectly related to defense issues.

Testing Violations of Each Central Principle Separately

Now, I regress the log of the odds that an opinion piece violates *each* principle of civil-military relations separately to determine if we can establish a relationship between the level of polarization and the violation of a specific principle of civil-military relations. In models 1-3, the dependent variable is the log of the odds that an opinion piece authored by a retired military officer violates the principle of civilian control; in models 4-6, the dependent variable is the log of the odds that an opinion publication violates the principle of non-partisanship; and in models 7-9, the dependent variable is the log of the odds that a publication authored by a retired military officer violates the principle of non-interference. These results are displayed in Table 11.

Table 11 contains a couple of important results. The first is that the coefficient for each type of polarization is positive and highly statistically significant in models 1-3, when the dependent variable corresponds to a violation of the principle of civilian control. This suggests that changes to any level of polarization are strongly associated with an increased likelihood that a retired military officer commentary piece violates the principle of civilian control, which in this chapter, was denoted by sharp criticism of a civilian political leader.

A final result to highlight is that in models 4-6 of Table 11, when the dependent variable corresponds to a violation of the principle of non-partisanship, it is the coefficient for election year that is positive and highly statistically significant, whereas the coefficients for each type of polarization actually switch signs and, in two of the three cases, do not hold statistical significance. Note also that the coefficient for election year in every model *except* for in models 4-6 is negative and statistically insignificant. What does this mean,

Table 11: Regression Results: Log Odds of Breaking Individual Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations

	Dependent variable:								
	Violates Civilian Control			Violates Non-Partisanship			Violates Non-Interference		
	logistic			*logistic*			*logistic*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Trust in Military	-0.102^{*}	-0.076^{*}	-0.076^{*}	0.131	0.139	0.125	-0.072	-0.010	-0.021
	(0.054)	(0.043)	(0.042)	(0.092)	(0.089)	(0.091)	(0.299)	(0.199)	(0.188)
Election Year	0.002	-0.063	-0.058	3.724^{***}	4.047^{***}	3.761^{***}	-0.697	-0.742	-0.747
	(0.346)	(0.354)	(0.354)	(1.270)	(1.369)	(1.280)	(0.903)	(0.915)	(0.915)
House Polarization	0.160^{***}			-0.101			0.511		
	(0.047)			(0.073)			(0.398)		
Senate Polarization		0.127^{***}			-0.113^{*}			0.201^{*}	
		(0.031)			(0.058)			(0.111)	
Aff. Polarization			0.082^{***}			-0.057			0.133^{*}
			(0.020)			(0.038)			(0.072)
Hostile Casualty Rate (lagged)	-0.003	0.009	0.003	-0.012	-0.024	-0.017	-0.002	-0.005	-0.011
	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.024)	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.068)	(0.059)	(0.055)
Rank	-0.022	-0.035	-0.034	1.259^{*}	1.371^{*}	1.294^{*}	1.013	1.043	1.043
	(0.084)	(0.085)	(0.085)	(0.743)	(0.777)	(0.761)	(0.784)	(0.799)	(0.799)
Constant	-7.668^{***}	-5.882^{**}	-2.479	-19.014^{**}	-20.805^{**}	-22.951^{**}	-51.829	-28.593^{*}	-22.744
	(2.718)	(2.336)	(2.353)	(8.144)	(8.745)	(9.015)	(41.478)	(17.317)	(16.005)
Observations	377	377	377	377	377	377	377	377	377
Log Likelihood	-127.802	-125.226	-125.646	-32.698	-31.536	-32.422	-25.899	-26.251	-26.321
Akaike Inf. Crit.	267.605	262.451	263.293	77.397	75.073	76.843	63.798	64.502	64.642

Note: $^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

and how should we interpret this?

This result is not at odds with the overall narrative that rising polarization is strongly associated with an increase in the likelihood that retired officer commentary violates the principles of civil-military relations. It does mean, however, that retired officer commentary authored in an election year is the clearest predictor of whether such commentary violates the principle of non-partisanship. This is a reasonable expectation, as opinion commentary authored during an election year is intuitively likely to address topics relevant to the candidates who are running for office ahead of an election.

We can further investigate how an election year and polarization impact the likelihood that a retired military officer opinion publication violates the principle of non-partisanship specifically. I run models 4-6 again, but drop the control for election year, on the basis that perhaps the control for election year is capturing some of the work that polarization might be doing. The results are displayed in Table 12.

Table 12 shows that when the controls for election year are removed, the coefficients for polarization remain statistically insignificant, but that the coefficient for author rank is positive and statistically significant. These results suggest that we cannot conclusively state that increasing polarization directly leads to an increase in the likelihood that retired military officer commentary violates the principle of non-partisanship specifically. The positive and statistically significant coefficient for rank of the author matters when the dependent variable is the violation of the principle of non-partisanship.

If we conceive of violations of the principle of non-partisanship as op-eds that endorse or attack political candidates running for office during an election year, the coefficient for the rank of an author is not intuitively surprising. Indeed, we might expect that military retirees who held higher ranks during their time in service are those that will engage in this type of specific behavior, presumably because the public is more inclined to listen to higher ranking officers. In a way, this result is consistent with the notion that military prestige – as measured by an author's rank – shapes one particular type of op-ed that is written by

Table 12: Regression Results: Log Odds of Retired Military Officer Commentary Violating the Principle of Non-Partisanship without Controlling for Election Year

	Dependent variable:		
	Violation of the Principle of Non-Partisanship		
	logistic		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Trust in Military	0.004	0.021	0.014
	(0.067)	(0.051)	(0.056)
House Polarization	0.004		
	(0.062)		
Senate Polarization		−0.032	
		(0.047)	
Aff. Polarization			−0.008
			(0.032)
Hostile Casualty Rate	0.0001	−0.003	−0.001
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Rank	1.074*	1.174*	1.116*
	(0.634)	(0.684)	(0.658)
Constant	−14.435**	−13.864**	−14.548**
	(6.882)	(7.053)	(6.916)
Observations	377	377	377
Log Likelihood	-41.484	-41.248	-41.453
Akaike Inf. Crit.	92.968	92.495	92.907
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

retired military actors.

Integrating the main regression results with the results of regressing each principle separately leads us to conclude that increasing polarization leads to an increase in the likelihood that retired military officer commentary violates *at least one* of the principles of civil-military relations, and the principle of civilian control in particular. The data do not allow us to conclusively state that increasing polarization leads to an increase in the likelihood that retired officer commentary will violate each principle separately, however.

The Interaction of Polarization and Prestige

I now seek to determine if the data indicate any meaningful relationship between the interaction of polarization and military prestige. This stems from the broader theoretical point made in Chapter 2 that when both polarization and military prestige are high, we are more likely to witness civil-military tension. I therefore include interaction terms for each type of polarization and military prestige. The dependent variable is the proportion of annual commentary (models 1-3) and the log of the odds (models 4-6) that a particular opinion piece violates at least one central principle of civil-military relations. These results are displayed in Table 13.

Table 13 shows that the interaction between the levels of polarization and the prestige of the military do not appear to matter significantly. To see this, note that in every instance in which an interaction term appears to be statistically significant (models 2, 5, and 6), the corresponding coefficient in the same model for polarization is also positive and statistically significant. Overall, these results strongly suggest that it is not the interaction of prestige and polarization that seems to matter, but rather the raw level of polarization that strongly shapes the degree to which retired military officer commentary adheres to normative standards.

Table 13: Interacting the Levels of Prestige and Polarization

	Dependent variable:					
	Proportion Violating			Log Odds Any Violation		
	OLS			*logistic*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Trust in Military	0.031	0.101*	0.042	0.631	1.493**	0.562*
	(0.028)	(0.053)	(0.029)	(0.491)	(0.624)	(0.303)
Election Year	0.018	0.008	0.013	0.406	0.323	0.343
	(0.058)	(0.057)	(0.058)	(0.311)	(0.316)	(0.316)
House Polarization	0.042			0.727		
	(0.028)			(0.451)		
Senate Polarization		0.125**			1.745**	
		(0.061)			(0.680)	
Aff. Polarization			0.059			0.748**
			(0.037)			(0.352)
Hostile Casualty Rate (lagged)	−0.001	−0.001	−0.001	−0.005	0.002	−0.002
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Author Rank				0.093	0.090	0.087
				(0.082)	(0.082)	(0.082)
Prestige*Polarization (House)	−0.0005			−0.009		
	(0.0004)			(0.006)		
Prestige*Polarization(Senate)		−0.002*			−0.023**	
		(0.001)			(0.009)	
Prestige*Polarization(Aff.)			−0.001			−0.010**
			(0.001)			(0.005)
Constant	−2.656	−7.761**	−3.238	−55.212	−115.522**	−46.516**
	(1.904)	(3.811)	(2.060)	(34.895)	(44.947)	(21.688)
Observations	42	42	42	377	377	377
R^2	0.188	0.233	0.195			
Adjusted R^2	0.076	0.127	0.083			
Log Likelihood				-146.721	-144.222	-145.478
Akaike Inf. Crit.				307.443	302.444	304.956
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

Predicted Probability

We now shift gears to better understand and interpret the substantive impact of rising polarization on the likelihood that retired military officer commentary violates one or more of the central principles of civil-military relations. To do this, I transform the results of logistic regression models 4 and 6 in Table 10. I fix the year in which a piece is published as an election year, the source in which a piece is published as *The Wall Street Journal*, and hold all other values, such as author rank and level of military prestige, at their respective means, and vary the level of polarization in the US House of Representatives. This result is displayed in Figure 17.

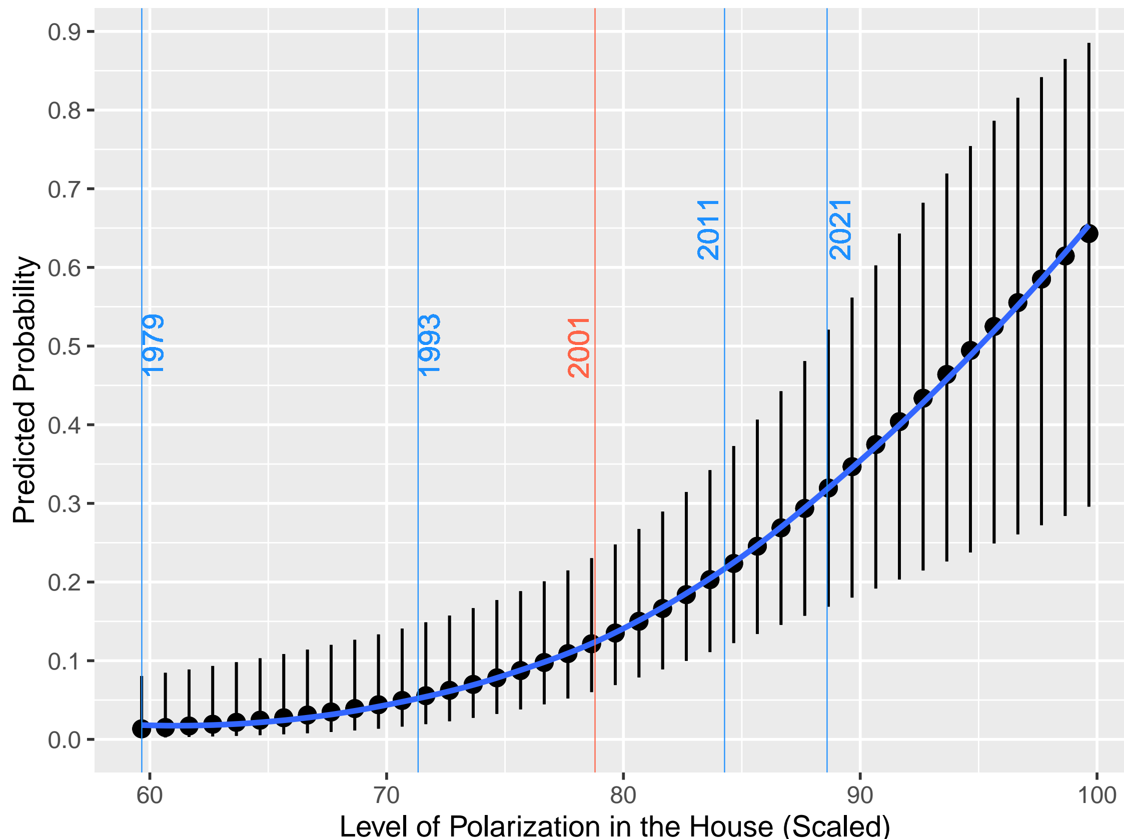


Figure 17: Predicted Probability of House Polarization Levels on Retired Military Officer Opinion Publications Violating Principles of Civil-Military Relations

The vertical colored lines cross the x-axis at the scaled level of smoothed polarization in a particular year, and the color of the line indicates the party of the President at the

time Congress was seated in a particular year, or, in the case of an inaugural year, the party of the president-elect.

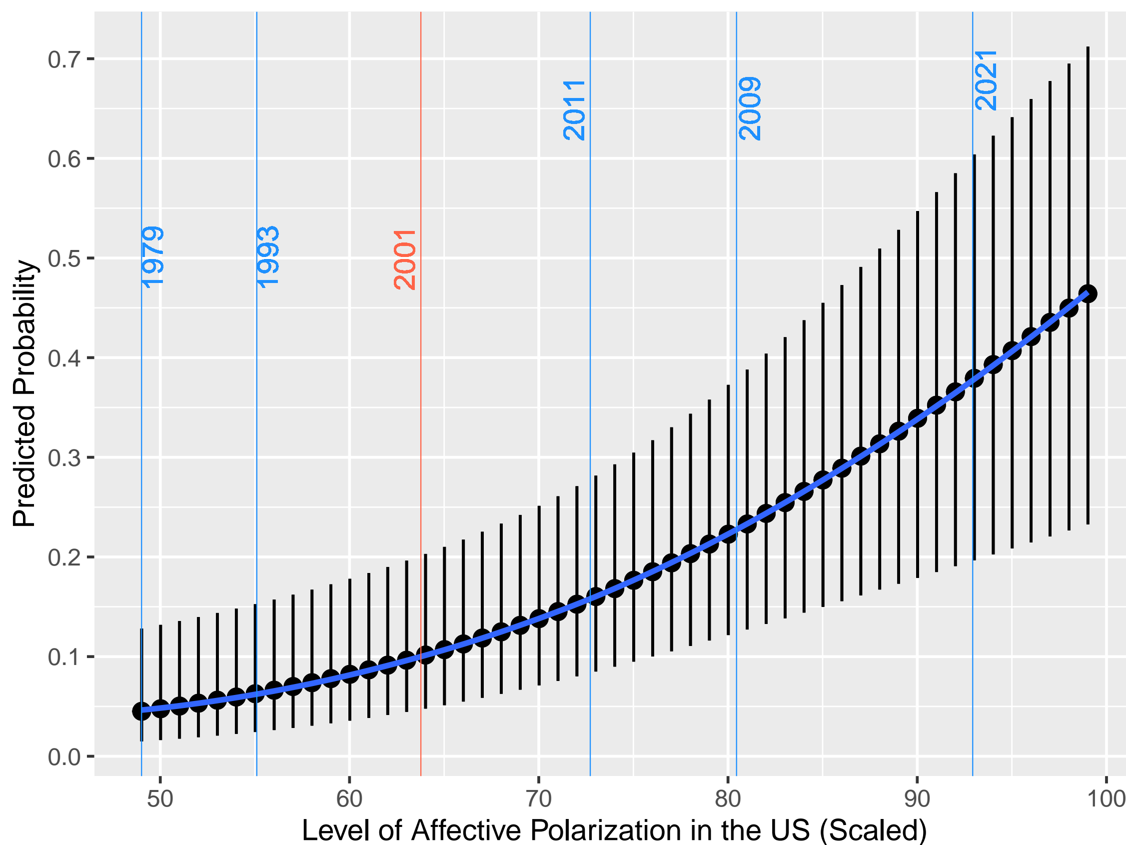


Figure 18: Predicted Probability of Affective Polarization Levels on Retired Military Officer Opinion Publications Violating Principles of Civil-Military Relations

If we use levels of affective polarization instead, we see a similar picture emerge, as shown in Figure 18. The overall trajectories of the curve are similar in both figures, but there are a couple of distinct points of comparison to make.[47]

First, the confidence intervals in each graph tell a slightly different but in some ways similar story. Note that in both graphs, the upper bound of the confidence interval that corresponds to the level of House and affective polarization in 1979 is less than the lower bound of the confidence interval for either level of polarization in 2021. In other words, in 1979, the probability that a publication authored by a retired military officer violated one

[47]The shape of the graph using the level of polarization in the Senate is very nearly the same as when using polarization in the House; therefore, I only include one graph.

of the principles of civil-military relations was *at most* 8% (using the level of polarization in the House, as shown in Figure 17) or 13% (using the level of affective polarization, as shown in Figure 18). In 2021, the probability that an opinion publication authored by a retired military officer violates one of the central principles of civil-military relations was *at least* 17% (using the level of polarization in the House, as shown in 17) or 20% (using the level of affective polarization, as shown in Figure 18). This means that what would have been statistically improbable is more or less guaranteed today: roughly one out of every five pieces of opinion commentary authored by a retired military officer will violate one or more of the central principles of civil-military relations.

The broader point is that the United States is no longer characterized by the relatively tame polarization levels that existed even just a few decades ago. American society has become increasingly marked by intense polarization, reflecting a deep division among citizens over the worldviews, moral values, and common sense of purpose that should guide the state. When we examine the predicted probabilities as shown in Figure 17 and Figure 18, it becomes clear that, assuming polarization continues to rise, the degree to which retired military officers will adhere to the principles of civil-military relations in the future is highly volatile. The range of the confidence intervals grows as polarization takes on higher values.

If we take these larger confidence intervals at face value, they thus predict that in any given year of relatively high polarization (higher than current levels in 2021), retired military officers may very well publish a lot of commentary that violates the principles of civil-military relations, or they may publish relatively very few that do. This statistical volatility underscores the point that as polarization deepens, retired military officers may end up adhering to the central principles of civil-military relations – or they may not – in any particular year or period of time. The broader question that this, in turn, raises, is whether such volatility is acceptable, either to the American public, or to any number of other civilian and military actors. Does the nation wish its cadre of retired military officers

to speak publicly, and to adhere to the broad principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference when they do? To the degree that one wishes the answers to these questions to be yes, the statistical models predict a somewhat grim future.

Alternate Explanations

In this section of the chapter, I address alternate explanations. If polarization is *not* responsible for the variation in the degree to which retired military officer commentary violates one or more of the central principles of civil-military relations, what else could be responsible? In the previous chapter, I identified changes in the conflict and/or threat environment and the possibility of norm change as potential alternate explanations of altering the constraining influence of the the principles of civil-military relations, which in turn could impact the level of political behavior committed by civilian and military actors that violate the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference of the military. I discuss each of these in turn.

There are several suitable reasons for suspecting that the threat or conflict environment may drive variation in the tone and tenor of retired officer opinion commentary. As was briefly discussed earlier, perhaps military actors are inclined to author opinion commentary that is more quickly primed to criticize civilian leaders when the military is engaged in fighting overseas, or when casualties are incurred. Perhaps the opposite is true, and retired military officers actually wish to be less of a distraction to forces engaged in fighting, and thus speak less on topics that could strain the country's civil-military relationship when troops are deployed overseas participating in the conduct of war.

Even if we are not sure in which direction or how the threat environment would cause military actors to publish opinion commentary differently, this logic is somewhat compelling. Yet the statistical analysis demonstrated that in all but a few places, the hostile casualty rate was statistically insignificant. Furthermore, in the few times the

lagged hostile casualty rate did appear statistically significant, it was always in the negative direction, indicating that rising casualties are associated with fewer opinion commentary pieces authored by retired military officers and less likelihood of an opinion piece violating one or more of the principles of civil-military relations. Thus, there is no support to suggest that rising hostile casualties are responsible for spurring retired military officers to increasingly publish opinion commentary that violates the principles of civil-military relations.

The other point to consider regarding the threat environment is that this is a distinctively complicated variable in the first place, especially in today's environment. The ebb and flow of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and America's military involvement overseas since the attacks of September 11, 2001 underscore this point. It would likely be wrong to categorize any point during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars as being similar to the threat America faced at the height of, for example, World War Two; yet it would also be wrong to classify any part of the post 9/11 world as years of peace for the United States and its military. The US military is clearly engaged globally today, which means that it is a couple of steps away from a crisis somewhere in the world. The combination of the statistically insignificant and negative sign of the hostile casualty rate variable in the statistical analysis, and the complexity of the operating environment faced by US military forces over the past two decades, suggests that the threat environment itself is not a sufficiently compelling explanation for the variation in retired officer commentary present in the data.

A more difficult alternate explanation to discard, in my view, is that of norm change with respect to the role that retired military officers play in American society. It is more difficult to reason through because there is, in the empirical record, a somewhat linear progression over time of the level of retired military officer commentary that violates the principles of civil-military relations (see Figure 15). One might conclude that successive generations of military officers, or at least cohorts of retired military officers, are adopting

a viewpoint that is different than their predecessors with respect to the normative rightness or wrongness of authoring commentary that criticizes civilian leaders, adopts partisan stances, or addresses a topic that is tangential or outside of relevant military expertise.

At the same time, however, one point works strongly against norm change as an alternate explanation. This involves what is in my view obvious dissonance between what several recent top active military leaders have said regarding military officers staying out of politics, and their subsequent actions immediately or shortly after retirement from active duty. Any explanation, furthermore, has to be able to explain this dissonance.

This is clearly evident when observing Admiral Mike Mullen, as an example. Mullen penned a rare open letter to the force while serving as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in which he stated, "What I am suggesting - indeed, what the Nation expects - is that military personnel will, in the execution of the mission assigned to them, put aside their partisan leanings. *Political opinions have no place in cockpit or camp or conference room. We do not wear our politics on our sleeve*" (Mullen 2008, italics mine). To be clear, Mullen was addressing active officers in his remarks, and not retired military officers directly. But it is unlikely that at the time he penned the open letter, he simultaneously encouraged retired officers to engage in politics, or felt indifferent about it. As the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, he almost certainly understood that there is a relationship between the active-duty officer corps, especially its senior leaders, and its retired officer corps.

Yet in the years after leaving active duty, Mullen has, intentionally or not, been anything but a quiet, apolitical flag officer. By my count, Mullen has written six opinion pieces that have been published in major newspapers since leaving active duty, three of which challenge, if not violate, the principles of civilian control and non-partisanship. I do not wish to critique the content of Mullen's opinion pieces, but the titles are instructive: "Bannon Has No Place on the NSC," "The Refugees We Need," and "Banning Transgender Troops Only Hurts Us." While I do not doubt the sincerity of Mullen's opinions, nor the fact that the political positions expressed in these op-eds may be reasonable, I doubt

whether an independent observer of these titles would conclude that Mullen does not have an ideological leaning that favors one political party over the other.[48]

The question then follows: why or how could Mullen, when on active duty, plead with the active force to stay out of politics, but then, as a retired officer, behave in such a way that indicates a willingness to engage?[49] I do not doubt that the distinction between those who serve on active duty and those who are retired is in some ways significant; but it is insufficient, in my view, to say that the norms have changed for retired military officers because the formal and informal prohibitions on their conduct have not changed at all. There has been a distinction between active and retired officers for a long time, at least for the several decades covered in this data set. It is thus far more likely the case, then, that to the extent norms are changing concerning the political conduct of retired military officers, these norms are changing because the retired officers themselves are engaging in conduct that is itself changing the norms. Of course, we must then ask why these officers are changing the norms themselves, or what would be compelling them to do so.

Future research is certainly required on this point, but it is reasonable to conclude in part that if retired officers are changing the rules of the game, so to speak, that they are doing so because of the impact of polarization on both themselves and on the country. In other words, polarization seems to be inducing retired military officers to enter the political fray more often and in ways that challenge the very principles these officers plead with others to maintain while on active duty.

The theory that I have laid out earlier in this dissertation accords with such an explanation. Retired military officers are increasingly failing to adhere to what are widely known and relatively unchanging aspirational guidelines, standards, and principles. It would seem that increasing polarization, which reflects contestation in the worldviews that

[48]Others may disagree with me on this point, and I respect that. But the point I am making here is that Mullen did not just write one op-ed, nor several op-eds that had no reference to any partisan idea or entity. These are three op-eds that clearly align, intentionally or not, with either a partisan entity or its platform.

[49]Mullen also wrote a lengthy piece in *The Atlantic* following protests in the summer of 2020 entitled, "I Cannot Remain Silent." Chapter 6 discusses the behavior of retired military officers in 2020 in more detail.

shape, influence, and govern society, is profoundly impacting what retired military officers say in public, and how willing they are to violate the central principles of civil-military relations when they speak.

Conclusion

Summary

Overall, the statistical results in the main table provide moderate support for H1, which stated that military actors increasingly violate the central principles of civil-military relations when polarization is high relative to periods of low polarization. The strongest evidence offered in support of this claim stems from the regression results presented in this chapter. The positive and statistically significant coefficients for all types of polarization – congressional and affective – presented in Table 10 indicated that as polarization rises, we can expect both the proportion of annual commentary and the likelihood that a specific editorial authored by a retired military officer violates at least one of the principles of civil-military relations to rise.

These results were not uniformly robust, however, to regression models where the dependent variable was a violation of each of the three individual principles of civil-military relations. The results suggest that rising polarization levels, regardless of how polarization is measured, increase the likelihood that a piece of opinion commentary authored by a retired military officer will violate the principles of civilian control. However, these results cannot be extended to predict violations of the principle of non-partisanship or non-interference. In total, the results suggest that as polarization rises, there is a clear and increasing likelihood that retired military officer commentary will violate at least one principle of civil-military relations, and the principle of civilian control in particular. As polarization rises, we can and should expect that retired military officers will more frequently criticize civilian leaders through the commentaries they publish.

This chapter found no support for H2, however, which stated that military actors

increasingly violate the central principles of civil-military relations in public and visible ways when military prestige is high relative to periods of low military prestige. In fact, across multiple model specifications, the coefficient for military prestige lacked consistency, both in terms of direction and statistical significance. The only exception to this was the fact that high ranking officers in particular were found to be more likely to violate the principle of non-partisanship in particular when controls for election year are removed, as shown in Table 12.

Although the majority of opinion commentary authored by retired military officers upholds the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference of the military, the empirical record clearly demonstrates a recent worrisome trend. The opinion commentary authored by retired military officers and published in major US newspapers has increasingly violated one or more of the central principles of civilian control of the military, non-partisanship of the military institution, and a norm of "non-interference" of the military into certain realms of state policy. It remains to be seen whether and the extent to which the retired military officer community as a whole can reverse or at least slow these trends. If polarization continues to deepen, based on the empirical story uncovered in this chapter, the outlook is not bright, at least with respect to written commentary published by retired military officers adhering to the central principles of civil-military relations.

Having completed a chapter that looks at one form of political behavior by a military actor, the next chapter changes gears and examines a behavior primarily engaged in by civilians: the use of military imagery and actors in campaign advertisements.

Chapter 4 - The Military in Campaign Ads

On October 10, 2020, then Presidential candidate Joe Biden's campaign team aired an advertisement narrated by a man identified as Jim, an "Iraq War Veteran." Jim, who is pictured in the ad, then describes the role and efforts of the former Senator and later, Vice President, in delivering Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles to Iraq and Afghanistan. These vehicles were known for their heavy armor, which undoubtedly saved the lives and limbs of servicemen and women who were deployed at the time to the Middle East.

The advertisement was later adjusted by the Biden Campaign after a retired Army Lieutenant General, Sean MacFarland, objected to the advertisement on the grounds that the ad used images of him without his consent (Moore 2020). The images in question showed then Lieutenant General MacFarland – in uniform – shaking hands with Biden as the former Vice President arrived in Iraq (Moore 2020). In objecting to the ad, MacFarland noted that he had not granted permission to the Biden Campaign to use images which featured the general in such a recognizable manner. Furthermore, MacFarland expressed concern that voters would assume that his appearance in the ad constituted an endorsement of Biden, and noted that, "A number of people have understandably inferred that my appearance constitutes an endorsement of the former Vice President. It does not. To be clear, I have not endorsed President Trump, either. I object to the use of ANY military personnel in uniform in political ads – full stop" (MacFarland quoted in Moore 2020).[50]

This incident illustrates one of the many ways in which political candidates use the military, especially during elections.[51] While civilians have long appealed to the public by harnessing the popularity of the military and of individual military figures in a variety of

[50]The adjusted advertisement, without MacFarland's image, is available for viewing. See Joe Biden (2020).

[51]President Trump's campaign likewise used military symbols and imagery in many advertisements. For a salient example in which the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff appeared in one of Trump's advertisements, see Seligman (2020).

ways, the practice of doing so during a closely contested election season underscores how a non-partisan institution can find itself – willingly, or in the case of MacFarland, unwillingly – thrust into the political spotlight.

This chapter examines variation in the use of the military during presidential campaign television advertisements. The content of campaign advertisements is primarily the purview of civilian rather than military actors, and thus, examining this particular form of behavior in depth facilitates a comparison between political behaviors undertaken by military actors (the focus of last chapter) versus civilian actors (the focus of this chapter). Of interest is whether any discernible variation can be detected in the degree to which civilian actors have used the military in ways that violate the principles of civil-military relations, and to account for this variation.

This chapter proceeds in four parts. The first part briefly revisits the theory posited previously in this dissertation. In the second part of the chapter, I present the methodology and the data used in this chapter, which include more than 4.5 million airings of nearly 3,500 presidential campaign television advertisements aired during the five elections occurring inclusively from 2000-2016. In this section, I also argue that as a proxy measurement for the variable of military prestige, we can use the veteran percentage of the population in each media market — the locale in which an advertisement is aired. In fact, the veteran percentage of the population in different parts of the nation is an important part of the overall story told in this chapter.

The third and main part of the chapter explores and analyzes the data in detail. Here, I first present the descriptive statistics and the data from six different angles. I then present the results of a detailed regression analysis that seeks to explain the variation in how civilian candidates and parties employ military imagery and actors in campaign ads. The results reveal not only that there is variation in how civilians have featured the military in presidential campaign advertisements over time, but also that there is variation at the same time across areas of the country with different levels of veterans in the

population. These results ultimately provide mild support for the notion that the level of military prestige shapes the civilian choice to use the military in ways that challenge the central principles of civil-military relations. In the fourth and final part of the chapter, I conclude by integrating the results of this chapter with the empirical results obtained in the previous chapter. So far as I know, this dissertation chapter comprises the only scholarly effort undertaken with this particular data to determine variation in campaign ads that involve the military in some way.

A Brief Review of the Theory

The level of military prestige, I argued in Chapter 2, is one of two independent variables that shape the constraining influence of the three central principles of civil-military relations on the behavior of civilian and military actors. These three central principles include the principle of civilian control of the military, the principle of non-partisanship of the military institution, and the principle of non-interference of the military into certain realms of state politics. The other independent variable that impacts the political behavior of civilian or military actors is the level of political polarization, and was explored in depth in the previous chapter.

The level of military prestige is important because higher levels of military prestige increase the *potential* that the military be used, either by civilian or military actors, to impact public opinion. This central claim arose mainly from the political communication literature, which argues that the public often looks to elites who are considered or believed by the public to be "knowledgeable" and "trustworthy" (Lupia and McCubbins 1998, 69–76) when forming decisions or opinions (Zaller 1992). Chapter 2 noted that although this and other literature on elite communication (E. N. Saunders 2017; Guisinger and Saunders 2017; Baum and Potter 2008) is not specifically written from the perspective of military leaders, applying this literature to the military, both as an institution and to individual military elites, is plausible.

This is because, as the sociological literature regarding the stratification of professions instructs us, the variable of military prestige captures both the degree to which a profession is considered central or important as well as skilled or excellent at what it does (Davis 1942; Jaco 1970). When we apply this reasoning to the military, it is reasonable to conclude that the threat environment, for example, might shape the first component of military prestige; that is, a society that is constantly under threat or widely engaged in the world is likely to view its military as central to the state. On the other hand, war outcomes, such as defeat or victory in war, might also shape the prestige of the military, but through altering society's assessment of how skilled or competent the military is.

Chapter 2 argued that when the public views its military as highly prestigious, the public is increasingly likely to view the military and its leaders as possessing the traits of knowledge and trustworthiness. Thus, as the prestige of the military rises, it is increasingly likely that the public may also listen to or become persuaded by the military and its leaders. This expectation directly led to the formulation of H2 and H3, which stated that military (H2) and civilian (H3) leaders increasingly violate the central principles of civil-military relations in public and visible ways when military prestige is high relative to periods of low military prestige.

As noted in the theory, an important question then becomes what outcome or outcomes civilian and military actors are seeking to influence. While the answer to this question depends on contexts, we can expect that civilian leaders, whose goal is to stay in political power or to achieve their desired policy choices, become increasingly willing to violate one or more of the principles of civil-military relations, and therefore to engage in a political behavior or activity that does so.

In summary, Chapter 2 argued that rising military prestige presents an *opportunity* for civilian and military actors to use the military to sway the public. Depending on what policy outcomes or issues civilian and military actors seek to influence – whether it is an election, or a use of force decision – this can result in civilian and military leaders engaging

in political behaviors that challenge the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference of the military institution. When civilian and military leaders believe that the military is highly prestigious and therefore capable of swaying the public, both actor types, on the whole, are less likely to adhere to and thus, be constrained by, the central principles of civil-military relations.

Methodology

Like Chapter 3, this chapter systematically investigates one distinct type of political behavior that is committed by one type of actor. The focus here is on the use of military imagery and actors in campaign advertisements by civilian political candidates. Accordingly, this chapter will evaluate H3 directly, and help inform H4 and H5. H4 stated that military and civilian actors engage in relatively more visible and public forms of political behavior that involve the military institution when military prestige is high relative to periods of low military prestige; H5 stated that the most extreme levels of overall political activity occur in environments that are characterized by simultaneously high levels of political polarization and military prestige.

Theoretically, the civilian use of military imagery and actors in campaign advertisements closely resembles three types of behaviors discussed in Chapter 2 and noted in Table 3. The first and the closest is that of *Electoral Swaggering*, which I described as the use of military officers to attack or endorse political candidates running for office. The second behavior that the civilian use of military imagery and actors resembles is that of *The Military as Sales Reps*, which I defined as the use of military actors to garner support for civilian policies. The third type of behavior the civilian use of military imagery and actors in campaign advertisements most closely resembles is that of *Showcasing the Troops*, which I defined in Chapter 2 as the use of military symbols and images in commercials or printed material.

In order to analyze this behavior, I examine all airings of presidential campaign

advertisements on local television media markets (non-cable channels) in the five elections that occurred between 2000 and 2016, inclusively. This amounts to nearly 3,500 unique campaign ads aired more than 4.5 million times on more than 200 media markets in the United States. Media markets are essentially a grouping of geographic localities and are used, among other reasons, to help track where particular advertisements are run. From 2000-2016, the level of public trust in the military (from Gallup polling and defined as the percentage surveyed that has a "great deal or quite a lot" of trust in the military) ranges from 64 (in 2000) to 82 (in 2003 and 2009) ("Confidence in Institutions. Gallup Public Opinion Polling" 2020). In the calendar years in which the general election campaigns occur, the lowest value is 64 (2000) and the highest is 75 (2004 and 2012), however.

When we also factor in the credibility ratings of other predominant political institutions over the same period, a greater shift in what we might call "relative military prestige" becomes slightly more evident. For example, the gap between the percentage of Americans surveyed who expressed a "great deal or quite a lot" in the military compared to Congress was 40% (in favor of the military) in 2000 and 64% (also in favor of the military) in 2016. At the very least, the period from 2000 to 2016 generally saw relative increases in the prestige of the military. These increases are small when we consider trust in the military in its raw form, but larger when viewed in relative terms compared to Congress.

Polarization over the same period also generally increased, except for measurements of affective polarization which show a dip in 2016 (Jeffrey B Lewis et al. 2020; "The American National Election Studies" n.d.; Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012). In short, the time period examined in this chapter, 2000-2016, broadly reflects movement between a domestic environment characterized by moderate polarization and moderate military prestige to one marked by higher polarization and higher military prestige. Because both of the independent variables change over the time period, the statistical analysis will attempt to disentangle the relative impacts of these (and other) variables.

The level of trust Americans placed in Congress and the military, the level of relative

prestige of the military, and the level of congressional polarization between 2000 and 2016 is displayed in Figure 19.

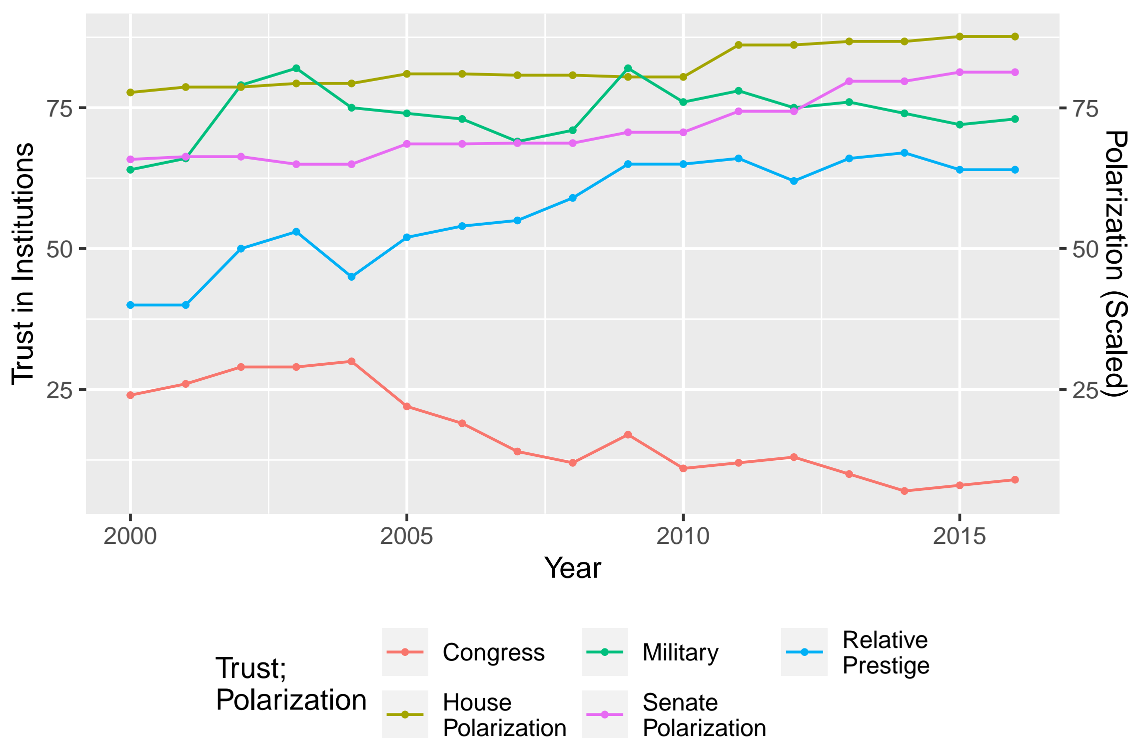


Figure 19: Public Trust (L) and Polarization (R), 2000-2016

Veterans in the Population - A Proxy for the Variable of Military Prestige

However, some methodological challenges are presented in this chapter by the lack of significant variation in the raw level of military prestige, and by the fact that only five election cycles are examined in this chapter. I tackle these challenges in depth in a subsequent section of the chapter, but the greatest challenge should be addressed here and now. The greatest of methodological challenges, at least insofar as this dissertation's theory is concerned, is that the measure of military prestige used in the previous chapter, that of public trust in the military, is only measured on an annual basis. As there are five election cycles examined in this chapter, this means that across the data, there are only five different levels of public trust in the military, each corresponding to the year in which one

of the elections takes place. This lack of variation makes it difficult to truly identify the role of changes in the level of military prestige generating potential variation in the data.

One way to handle this limitation, however, is to generate more variation by using a plausible proxy for military prestige, if such a strategy is possible. Fortunately, the data contain information regarding which media market, or geographic part of the country, an individual ad is aired in; with a little bit of work, it is possible to generate a measure of each media market's veteran population as a percentage of that market's total population. This measure provides an important methodological benefit in that it varies along the same dimension (media market) as the aired advertisements in the data.

I generate this measure using population data from the US Census Bureau for each county, veteran population data by county from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and an unclassified mapping of media markets by county in the United States (Bureau 2010, 2020; Veterans Affairs 2019; "2018-2019 TV DMA Region Map" 2019). I first calculate the percentage of each county that is a veteran, and then aggregate the county-level data to obtain the proportion of each media market's population that is a veteran of the Armed Forces. To be clear, this measurement is not perfect, and it does have some limitations. The most obvious of these is that the measure does not vary over time.[52] Despite this limitation, this measurement is significant because it enables the researcher to investigate whether political candidates and parties target veteran-rich geographic areas of the country in any discernible ways.

Is 'Percentage Veteran Population' A Sound Proxy for Military Prestige?

In order to consider the veteran percentage of a media market's population as a proxy measurement for the variable of military prestige, we have to carefully think how a measure associated with where veterans live corresponds to military prestige, if at all. At the

[52] For each county, I divide the raw number of veterans living in that county in 2018 as reported by the Veterans Affairs Administration by the Census Bureau's estimate of the county's total population in 2016.

outset, my claim in this chapter is not that I have answered why veterans choose to live where they do, nor that the possible answer I propose in the paragraphs to follow is the only answer, or even an empirically accurate claim. Rather, I offer here only a plausible and theoretically sound reason why veterans *may* choose to live where they do, and to show how this plausible reason is connected to the variable of military prestige.

It is first worth pointing out how other scholars have explored geographic variance in various military outcomes. Previous scholarship has tended to identify, rather than explain, the reasons for such variation. Savell and McMahon (2020), for instance, found that in per capita terms, troops serving during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2019 were not equally distributed across the 50 individual states of the US (Savell and McMahon 2020). As Figure 20 shows, Savell and McMahon specifically found that the states of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Alaska, and Hawaii produced the highest proportion of their respective state's population of soldiers troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2019, while states such as Utah, Minnesota, Iowa, North and South Dakota, New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and Delaware produced the lowest (Savell and McMahon 2020). Though they are unable to determine *why* populations from certain states seem to produce relatively more (and less) military recruits, their finding at least testifies to the fact that military service varies geographically.

Still, we can and should think through why veterans might choose to live where they do after their time in service, even if that is not the main purpose of this chapter. It could be that veterans simply move back to their homes, or the place from which they joined the military. Yet even if this is the case, Savell and McMahon's work (2020), as shown in Figure 20, shows that military enlistment is not geographically evenly distributed. There are numerous possible reasons, including economic opportunities, partisanship, or even military culture that might shape why certain states tend to produce more soldiers, as a portion of that state's population, than other states.

It could also be that veterans seek to reside in areas of the country that offer distinct

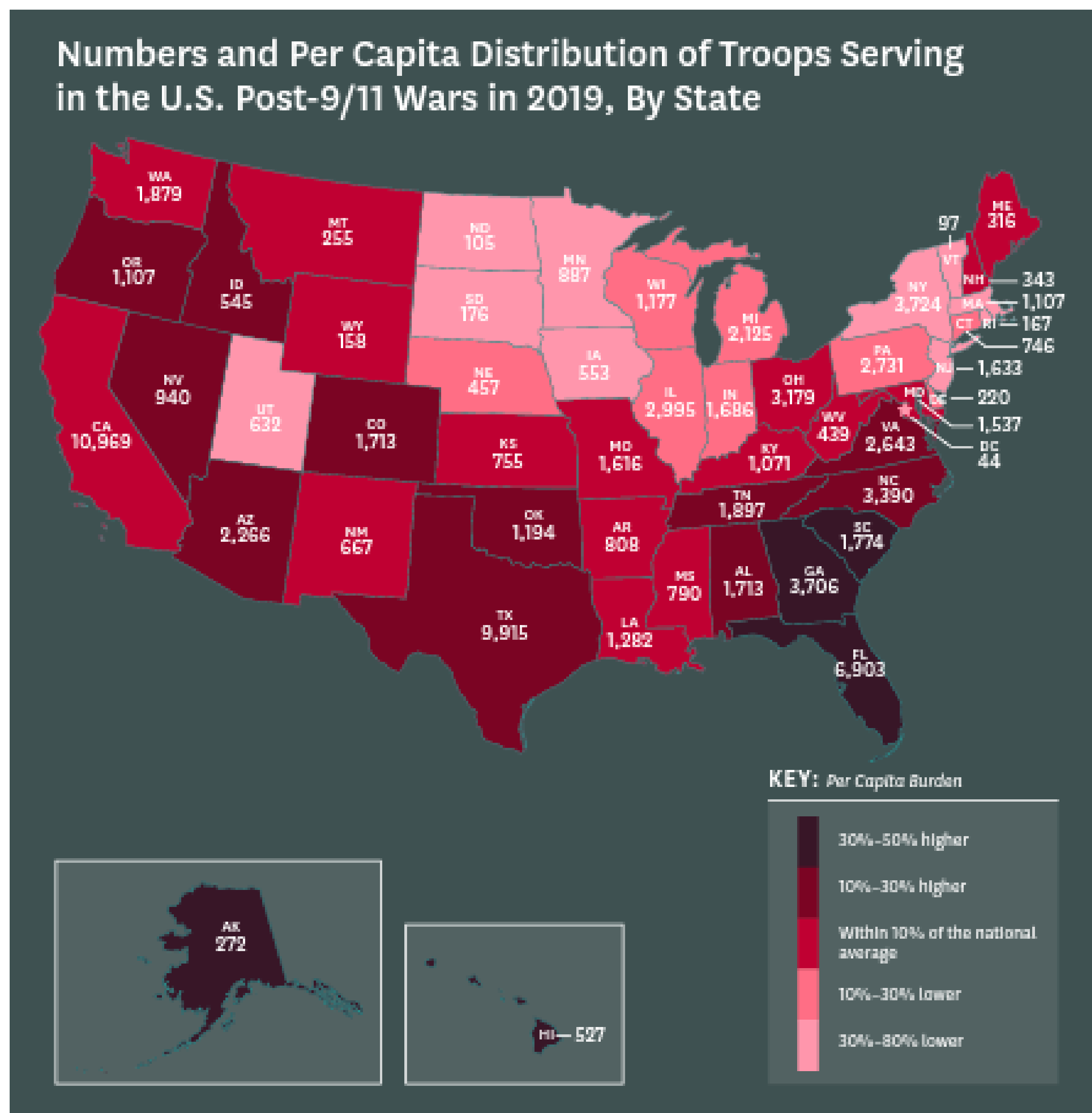


Figure 20: Savell and McMahon (2020), Per Capita Troops Serving in Post-9/11 Wars, By State

economic opportunities and benefits. Through this vein, it is important to consider, for example, that some states tax military retirement pay and others do not. For example, as of 2022, 26 of 50 states in the US do not tax military retirement income (Absher 2022). A number of other states provide other tangible economic benefits for vets, including reduced college tuition and property tax benefits.

It is also possible that some areas of the country offer veterans better opportunities to implement the skills learned during their time in service. For example, communities in and around large military installations might offer a number of potential job opportunities for veterans. Major military installations, such as large Army bases and naval shipyards, may offer veterans of these services a greater opportunity to hold jobs related to defense-related industries than other parts of the country. In addition, the communities in and around these major military installations may also attract veterans because they allow veterans to take advantage of several service-related benefits, such as the use of medical and other types of facilities, located on or near these installations.

Viewed especially through the lens of economic benefits and opportunities, it is at least plausible that certain parts of the country attract veterans more so than other parts of the nation. If such a dynamic exists, it would not be an overstatement to suggest that the military is, in a very real sense, more prestigious in areas that attract veterans to live and work than in areas that do not.

To see this linkage between veterans in the population and military prestige, recall that Chapter 2 of this dissertation pointed out that the concept of prestige consists of two related components, the first involving the *centrality* or *importance* of an occupation or profession, and the second involving the perceived *skill* or *excellence* of the members of a particular occupation or profession (Davis 1942; Jaco 1970). Especially through the lens of the first component of prestige relating to the *centrality* or *importance* of an occupation or profession, the military likely is seen and considered as more *central* and *important* by the local population compared to areas that have relatively little exposure to the military. And

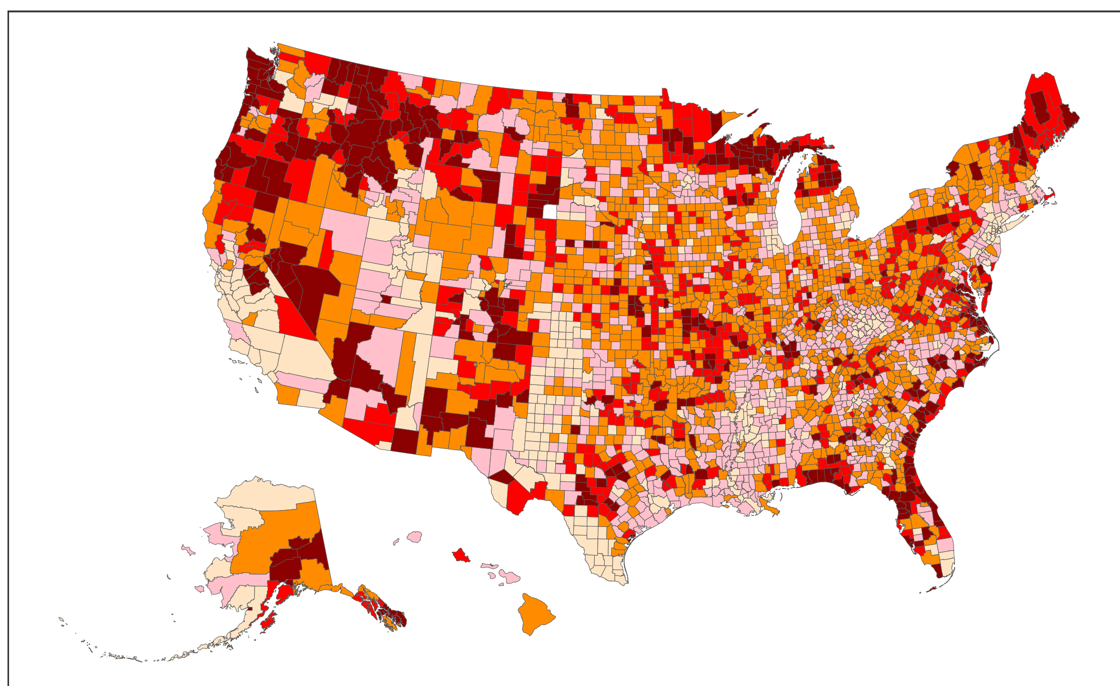
if these same areas happen to be markedly more attractive for veterans to live and work, it follows that a local area's portion of the population that is a veteran of the US Armed Forces is in fact a sound proxy for the variable of military prestige.

Said differently, it is reasonable to speculate that the military is in fact more central – and thus more prestigious – in the areas surrounding Norfolk, VA than it is to those surrounding San Francisco, CA. I am aware of no available public opinion data that can prove this. However, if we consider that the military institution comprises a central part of the former area's economic base, so much so that one military online base guide says that in the state of Virginia, the area of "Hampton Roads - made up of the cities of Newport News, Hampton, Norfolk, Virginia Beach, and Chesapeake – is the east coast epicenter of military activity," then using a measure of veterans in the population as a proxy for prestige seems plausible at the very least ("Hampton Roads Military Bases. Military.com" n.d.).

Figure 21 displays the density of veterans in the population by county in the United States. The national average for veterans as a percentage of county population in the United States is 7.3%. The main takeaway from Figure 21 is that there is intrastate variation in the density of veterans as a percentage of the population. This suggests, at the very least, that there are complex factors beyond those that vary at only the state level in shaping where veterans reside.

Civilian Use of Military Imagery and Actors in Campaign Ads

Examining how civilians have featured the military in the content of campaign advertisements provides several advantages from a research perspective that are worth briefly articulating. The first is that there is no *a priori* expectation that featuring a military image or a military actor in a presidential campaign advertisement must violate the principles of civil-military relations. More broadly, there is no expectation that civilian candidates would choose to feature the military in campaign advertisements over and above any other institution or entity. Civilian political candidates and their campaign



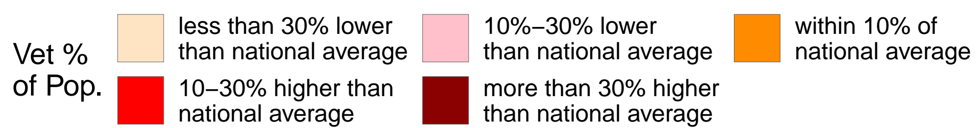


Figure 21: Veteran Percentage of the Population, by US County

teams have what appears to be a limitless array of options when producing campaign ads.

A second significant advantage afforded by examining campaign advertisements is that they comprise an integral part of the democratic process. Like other democracies, the United States holds elections at fixed intervals; thus, we can expect campaign advertisements to regularly occur leading up to an election. We can and should also expect that the content of campaign ads will likely change over time, and for a variety of factors. The issues that are important to voters are not static, and the broad political atmosphere changes continuously. Of course, we would expect civilian political candidates and their campaign teams to construct advertisements around those issues and topics they think will be most effective in persuading the public to secure their electoral victory. At times, perhaps when wars are fought, for example, we might expect advertisements to feature the military in some noticeable way. While we cannot predict what specific issues will be on the docket four or eight years from now, we may suspect, if the theory offered earlier in this dissertation is accurate, that changes in the relative level of military prestige could impact the degree to which civilian candidates feature or showcase the military in the content of campaign advertisements.

How might civilian actors fail to adhere to the central principles of civil-military relations through the content of campaign advertisements? It is unlikely that the content of a campaign advertisement would violate the principle of civilian control. This is because, as has been stated earlier in this dissertation, civilians have a responsibility to maintain and enforce the principle of civilian control, but they usually do not expressly violate the principle through acts of commission. Rather, such behavior tends to "erode" the principle of civilian control when civilians excessively defer to the military such that they can no longer adequately oversee the policy making process (Beliakova 2021). Thus, a campaign advertisement that violates the principle of civilian control would have to take on a rather extreme form, such as one that featured a retired military actor urging others to mount a coup, or to stage some other act of obvious insubordination.

While such advertisements are possible, it is far more likely that featuring the military in television campaign advertisements would break the other two central principles of civil-military relations — the principles of non-partisanship and non-interference of the military. A violation of the principle of non-partisanship of the military vis-a-vis campaign advertisements would occur if an advertisement clearly intimated that the military favored or endorsed a particular candidate, or the policies or political stances of a candidate, or a particular political party over another. Such a message could and likely would communicate to the American public that the military (or certain military leaders, or a faction within the military) may favor a particular political entity over another. Examples of such behavior abound in almost every election, as this chapter will show.

A violation of the principle of "non-interference" of the military into certain realms of state policy might occur if a campaign advertisement featured a military actor weighing in on policy arenas that are largely disconnected from national security, defense, and other essential roles the military is expected to fill in American society (Ben-Meir 1995). Hypothetically, this could occur if a retired general appeared in a campaign advertisement and spoke predominantly about a candidate's plan to reform social security or to reduce the national debt, and why that candidate's plans to tackle these topics are better than another candidate's. In such an example, it would be reasonable to conclude that the advertisement violated the principle of non-interference because the retired military officer is likely not an expert on the topics of social security reform and the national debt. At issue then is the choice by the civilian candidate or campaign team to use a military figure to convince the American public of the candidate's merits on these particular topics. It is doubtful that retired generals, admirals, colonels, or captains are the most qualified experts to publicly evaluate the merits of various positions on issues that are largely disconnected from the topics these military officers are most familiar with, such as those related to veterans' issues and national security policies. Such an act would therefore violate the

principle of non-interference.[53]

The Data

The data consist of 4,531,041 airings of 3,414 presidential campaign television advertisements featured during the five presidential elections held from 2000-2016, inclusively. The data are made available from the Wisconsin Advertising Project (WiscAD) and Wesleyan Media Project (WMP). For the 2000, 2004, and 2008 elections, the data come from the WiscAd, and consist of individual PDF documents that contain a full transcript and several still images of the advertisement (K. Goldstein, Franz, and Ridout 2002; K. Goldstein and Rivlin 2007; K. Goldstein et al. 2011). For 2012 and 2016 elections, the data comes from the WMP, and consists of full motion video, to include sound (Fowler, Franz, and Ridout 2017; Fowler et al. 2020).[54]

In the statistical analysis portion of this chapter, I also rely on data covering polarization, military prestige, and military casualties. For polarization data, I primarily rely on DW-Nominate (dynamic-weight, three step estimation) scores, which are constructed using roll-call voting data from the US House of Representatives and the US Senate (Lewis et al., n.d.). In some places, I also include affective polarization measurements, which are generally constructed using a series of "feeling thermometer" scores from the American National Election Study (ANES) (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018; Iyengar et al. 2019).

As a proxy for military prestige, I rely on Gallup public opinion data that captures the level of trust Americans have placed in the military and a variety of other institutions over the past several decades ("Confidence in Institutions. Gallup Public Opinion Polling" 2020). I also use a variety of data sources from the Department of Defense to measure

[53] I do not question whether intelligent retired military officers can understand the topics of social security reform and reigning in the national debt. The issue at hand, however, is whether these actors, who are experts in other areas or sets of issues related to national defense, weigh in on topics that are far outside of the domain of their professional expertise.

[54] See the Appendix for further details regarding how the data was cleaned and merged to enable a comparison over time.

levels of hostile casualties sustained by US military forces over the past several decades.[55] Finally, using data from the Census Bureau and the Department of Veterans Affairs, I calculate the percentage of the population that is a veteran in each media market (Bureau 2010, 2020; Veterans Affairs 2019).

After gathering the data, I implement an empirical strategy that at its root looks to answer two major questions. The first queries how prevalent in each election were ads that featured military imagery. The second question seeks to answer how prevalent in each election were advertisements that violate the central principles of civil-military relations, and why these violations occurred.

Analysis

In this portion of the chapter, I analyze the data and present the results. I first present a series of summary and descriptive statistics in order to provide a broad overview of the frequency and type of military imagery and partisan behaviors conducted by military actors that appear within the data. I then present the results of a detailed regression analysis to provide an explanation for the variation evident in the frequency of the use of military imagery and the conduct of partisan behaviors by military actors in campaign advertisements.

The raw data include a total of more than 4.7 million airings of presidential campaign advertisements from 2000-2016. Of these, there are matches of airings of advertisements to specific media markets for more than 4.5 million airings (96%), which include a total of 3,414 unique advertisements. After cleaning and merging the data across the five data sets, I capture several variables for each advertisement already coded by WiscAd and WMP that

[55] This variable is constructed from a number of sources, and consists of the number of hostile US casualties sustained in a given calendar year per 100,000 Active Duty military forces. I include in this measurement those casualties that are the result of what the Department of Defense classifies as either "hostile action" or a "terrorist attack." Annual data is provided from the Department of Defense from 1980-2010. I then used data from the Department of Defense regarding the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to construct a measurement for years outside of this time range. The sources include D. of Defense (2011); D. of Defense (2021b); D. of Defense (2021c); D. of Defense (2021a); D. of Defense (2021e); D. of Defense (2021d); D. of Defense (2021f); D. of Defense (2021g).

may prove useful for the statistical analysis conducted later in this chapter. These variables and a short description of each are displayed in Table 14.

Before viewing the advertisements, I develop several dichotomous variables that capture the types of military images and symbols used in these advertisements. The goal is to develop a taxonomy that is simple yet sufficiently wide so as to capture meaningful variation in the type of military symbols and images used in presidential campaign advertisements. Through a pilot coding of roughly ten percent of the total number of advertisements in the sample, I develop dichotomous indicators for the use of four types of military imagery and/or symbols: imagery of active-duty US soldiers or troops, imagery of veterans, imagery or scenes of combat, and imagery or scenes of US military hardware.

The first kind of military imagery, that of US soldiers or troops, include images of US servicemen and women who are in uniform. This type of military imagery might include a lone soldier in uniform saluting, or images of thousands of US servicemen and women training, or marching in formation. The key thing I look for are images of US military uniforms, military medals, or military insignia that clearly denote US troops.

The second type of military imagery involves veterans. This indicator variable looks for any image of a veteran, which could include gatherings, such as an American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars group, imagery of a wounded veteran recovering in a hospital, or a wounded veteran in a wheelchair later in life with his or her family. Several advertisements aired by candidates who themselves are veterans feature such images, ostensibly to bolster these candidates' credentials with respect to veteran-related issues.

A third type of military imagery involves images of combat. This variable looks for images such as an explosion related to a military conflict, a soldier driving a tank in combat, or any scene that is clearly intended to portray US soldiers fighting in conflict.[56] The fourth indicator variable for type of military imagery accounts for images of US military hardware. This variable captures advertisements that contain images or scenes of

[56]This category does not include images of fighting that clearly involve non-US soldiers, such as those of a foreign military or members of a terrorist group.

Table 14: Existing Variables from WiscAd and WMP

Variable Name	Question	Possible Values
Air Date	When was this advertisement aired?	varies by airing
Creative	What is the title of the ad?	varies by each ad
Media Market	On what media market was this advertisement aired?	varies by each ad
Length	How long is the ad (in seconds)	0-120
Party	What is the Party of the favored candidate?	Republican; Democrat; Other
Sponsor	Who sponsored the advertisement?	1 - Candidate; 2 - Party; 3 - Coordinated Between a Candidate and Party; 4 - Interest Group/Other
f_mention	Is the favored candidate mentioned in the ad?	1 - Yes; 0 - No
f_picture	Is the favored candidate pictured in the ad?	1 - Yes; 0 - No
f_narrate	Does the favored candidate narrate the ad?	1 - Yes; 0- No
o_mention	Is/are the opposition candidate/s mentioned in the ad?	1 - Yes; 0 - No
o_picture	Is/are the opposition candidate/s pictured in the ad?	1 - Yes; 0 - No
ad_tone	In your judgement, is the primary purpose of the ad to promote a specific candidate, attack a candidate, contrast the candidate, or other?	1 - contrast; 2- promote; 3 - attack; 4 - other
prty_mn	Does the ad mention the party label of the favored candidate or the opponent?	0 - No, 1 - Yes, favored candidate's party; 2 - Yes, opposition candidate's party; 3 - Yes, both candidate's parties; 4 - yes, favored candidate's party but only in the paid for by line

any major military hardware item, such as a naval vessel, a fighter jet, an aircraft carrier, or military radar system. The key item of interest associated with this variable is something other than a veteran, an active-duty soldier, or a scene from combat that is nonetheless clearly related to the US military. I do allow for the possibility that an advertisement portrays or includes more than one type of military imagery.

In addition to these four variables pertaining to types of military imagery, I develop four additional variables that measure several other items of interest — including the overall purpose of the advertisement, whether the candidate is a veteran, whether the advertisement explicitly mentions or portrays that the featured candidate is a veteran, and whether the advertisement itself is entirely focused on military, defense, veteran, and/or or national security issues. These variables, the question they intend to answer, and the potential values these variables can take, are displayed in Table 15.

Summary Statistics and Descriptive Data

This section presents the data in order to help the reader better understand patterns of variation contained herein. A total of six different angles are explored, each of which is intended to not only present the data in an interesting way, but also to identify plausible factors that might contribute to the patterns of variation shown in this section.

Defense-Themed Ads and the Use of Military Imagery in Campaign Ads

The first angle from which to observe the data involves the overall arc of US foreign policy over the period 2000-2016. Figure 22 plots the proportion of each election cycle's advertisement airings that involve a clear defense or national security theme, that feature military imagery of any type, and feature military imagery in ads that do *not* involve a clear defense or national security related theme.

While each of the three lines shown in Figure 22 speaks to a slightly different factor, all three are indicative of how prevalent national defense and military issues are in

Table 15: Additional Variables / Anticipated Coding Scheme

Variable Name	Question	Possible Values
Act_Duty_Imagery	Does the advertisement feature imagery of US troops in uniform?	1 - Yes; 0 - No
Vet_Imagery	Does the advertisement feature imagery of Veterans (VFW, veteran gatherings, etc.)?	1 - Yes; 0 - No
US_Mil_Hardware_Imagery	Does the advertisement feature imagery of US military hardware (planes, tanks, helicopters, ships)?	1 - Yes; 0 - No
Combat_Imagery	Does the advertisement feature images of past or present combat involving US military forces (prior wars, scenes of combat)?	1 - Yes, 0 - No
Def_Vet_Ad_Theme	Is the ad itself focused entirely on military, defense, veteran, or national security issues?	1 - Yes, military/defense/veteran issues only; 0 - other topics
Ad_Purpose	What is the overall purpose of the ad	1-promote or disparage candidates; 2 - promote/disparage a specific issue on the ballot, 3 - to discuss a general theme that does not do 1 or 2; 4 - other
Can_Vet	Is the candidate a Veteran?	1 - Yes; 0 - No
Can_Vet_Mention	Does the ad explicitly state or portray the candidate as a Veteran?	1 - Yes, 0 - No
Vet_Fam	Does the ad feature a Retired Military Elite, Veteran, or Veteran's family speaking?	3 - Veteran and Family; 2 - Veteran's Family; 1 - Veteran; 0 - No
Vet_Fam_Endorse	Does the Military Figure explicitly endorse the candidate for office?	1 - Yes; 0 - No; 99-N/A
Vet_Fam_Attack	Does the Military Figure explicitly attack or disparage other candidates running for office?	1 - Yes; 0 - No; 99 - N/A
Vet_Fam_Out_Issues	Does the Military Figure address topics other than the candidate's personal characteristics or defense/veteran issues?	1 - Yes, the military figure addresses topics outside of the candidate's characteristics and/or veterans/defense issues; 0 - No; 99 - N/A

campaign advertisements. Figure 22 also depicts the red and green lines, which track the portion of defense themed ads aired and the portion of airings that feature military imagery of any kind, as following a very similar trajectory.

One likely reason for the variation in the proportion of airings featuring ads that contain a national security theme and the portion of airings containing military imagery involves the prominence of issues pertaining to national security and the military over time. For example, the relatively low portion of defense themed ad airings and airings featuring military imagery in the 2000 Election relative to 2004 and 2008 is not surprising. The September 11, 2001 attacks ushered in a distinct role for the military as the US conducted lengthy military operations, first in Afghanistan in 2001 and later in Iraq in 2003.

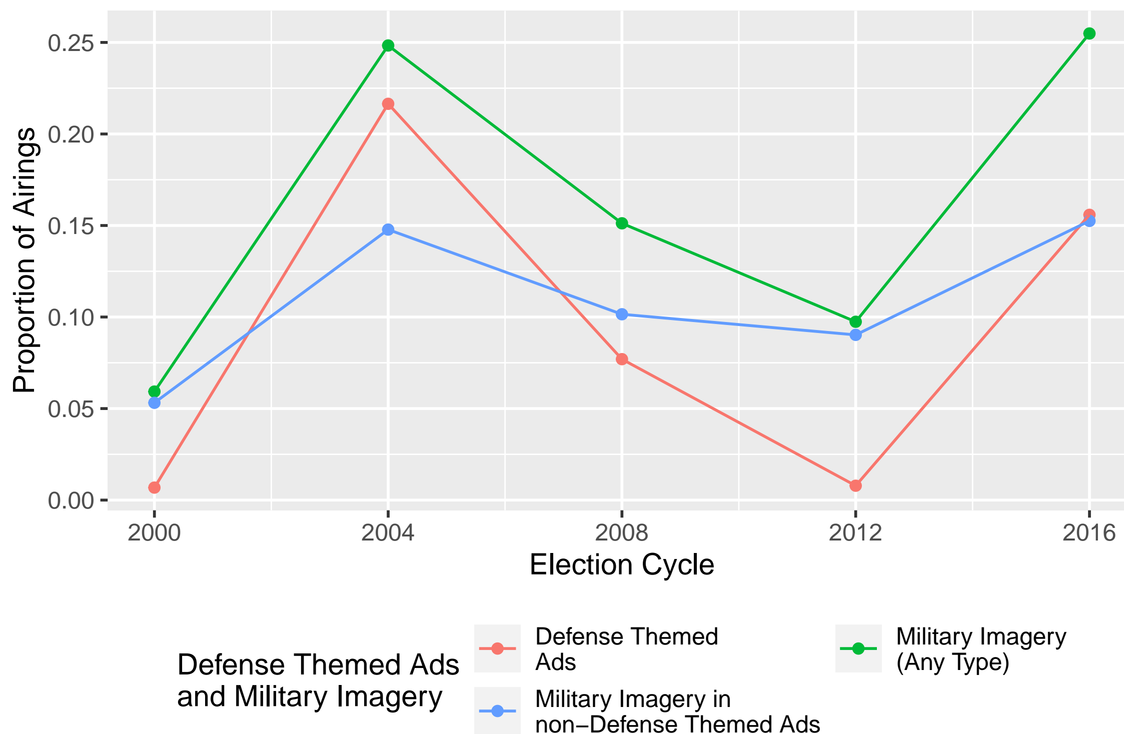


Figure 22: Portion of Defense-Themed Ad Airings, Airings with Military Imagery, and Airings that Show Military Imagery in Non-Defense-Themed Ads Across Presidential TV Campaign Ads, 2000-2016

It is also mostly unsurprising that that the relative portions of election cycle airings featuring military imagery in 2004 (24.8%) and 2008 (15.1%) remained somewhat high relative both to 2000 and 2012. The war in Iraq was indeed a major theme in the 2004

election, when the incumbent, George W. Bush, ran against the Democratic challenger, John Kerry — a decorated combat veteran of the Vietnam War. Yet by the 2008 election, the surge of US military forces to Iraq, which had begun in 2007, had shown signs that it was at least helping to alleviate the high levels of sectarian violence in many parts of that country. Moreover, US casualties, after peaking in 2007, had also been declining steadily throughout 2008 (U. D. of Defense 2021b). The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were not over by 2008, though they appear to have taken on less prominence as a campaign issue in 2008 — a development that may also coincide with the fact that President George W. Bush was ending his second term in office.

However, the arc of US foreign policy becomes a bit more convoluted from 2008 to 2016. First, from 2008 to 2012, the U.S.' involvement in Iraq formally ended (for a time), but its involvement in Afghanistan increased. In 2009, then President Obama ordered a surge of US forces to Afghanistan. Though the surge to Afghanistan did not result in significant progress, there were nonetheless important victories along the way – perhaps none so critical as the 2011 killing of Osama bin Laden, the architect of the 9/11 attacks. Additionally, the number of US casualties in Afghanistan peaked in the summer of 2011, and declined afterwards, especially in the months leading up to the 2012 election (U. D. of Defense 2021a). Thus, at the time of the presidential election in November 2012, few observers could point to Afghanistan and say that the surge of forces there had been a complete failure; yet at the same time, there was little if any public appetite to do anything substantially greater there involving US combat forces. The relatively low portion of airings that featured defense-themed advertisements and military imagery during the 2012 Election Cycle is therefore unsurprising.

However, in the 2016 election, the percentage of defense-themed ads and airings featuring military imagery rose sharply. Defense policy appears to have taken on greater prominence as an election issue in 2016 than in 2012 — perhaps because by 2016, the passage of time had facilitated an opportunity for Americans to view the trajectory of US

foreign and national security policy in critical terms and thus evaluate US involvement in a series of messy situations and crises that had unfolded in the Middle East and Eastern Europe since the 2012 election. These included conflicts in Libya and an increasingly deteriorating civil war in Syria. In particular, President Obama's handling of events in Syria in 2013, which included making but failing to enforce a now infamous "red line" in the event that the Syrian Assad regime used chemical weapons (which Assad did), troubled many Americans (Rhodes 2018).

In many respects, Hillary Clinton, the Democratic candidate for president in 2016, was largely seen as an extension of Barack Obama, particularly in the realm of foreign policy. Clinton had served as Obama's Secretary of State, and she was portrayed extremely negatively after a US Ambassador and three other Americans were killed on September 12, 2012, when terrorists attacked the US consulate in Benghazi, Libya (Bixby 2016). Donald Trump, an outside candidate who ultimately won as a Republican, ran instead on a platform of putting "America First," which included promises to cease fighting endless wars and significantly rebuild the US military. The combination of perceived foreign policy missteps between 2012 and 2016 and the promise of fortifying the U.S.' strategic position likely led to the relative increase in the proportion of ad airings that featured defense, veteran, or security-themed ads.

At any rate, Figure 22 clearly shows that the prominence of national security-themed advertisements and those featuring military imagery in recent presidential elections waxes and wanes. It is also important to briefly comment on what the blue line in Figure 22 conveys. This line plots the portion of airings in each election cycle showing military imagery in advertisements that are not of a defense or national security theme. In practice, these are ads which show some type of military image or picture – whether a soldier or sailor, veteran, image of combat, or piece of military hardware, in an advertisement that is *not* of a defense-related theme. This line matters because it conveys one sense of the degree to which candidates want viewers to know they care about the military by showing military

imagery in ads that are not exclusively focused on the military or defense related issues. It is noteworthy that there are ebbs and flows in this blue line shown in Figure 22, but less variation than is reflected in the red and green lines. This may suggest that parties and candidates in recent presidential elections have at least some baseline level of conveying their support for the military to the public.

Military Imagery in Presidential Advertisements by Type

A second angle from which to observe the data is the type of military imagery featured in campaign advertisements over time. Figure 23 depicts the type of military imagery featured in election advertisements as the proportion of total advertisement airings from 2000-2016. Similar to the previous figure, variation is evident, and the largest spikes in the data occur in 2004 and in 2016.

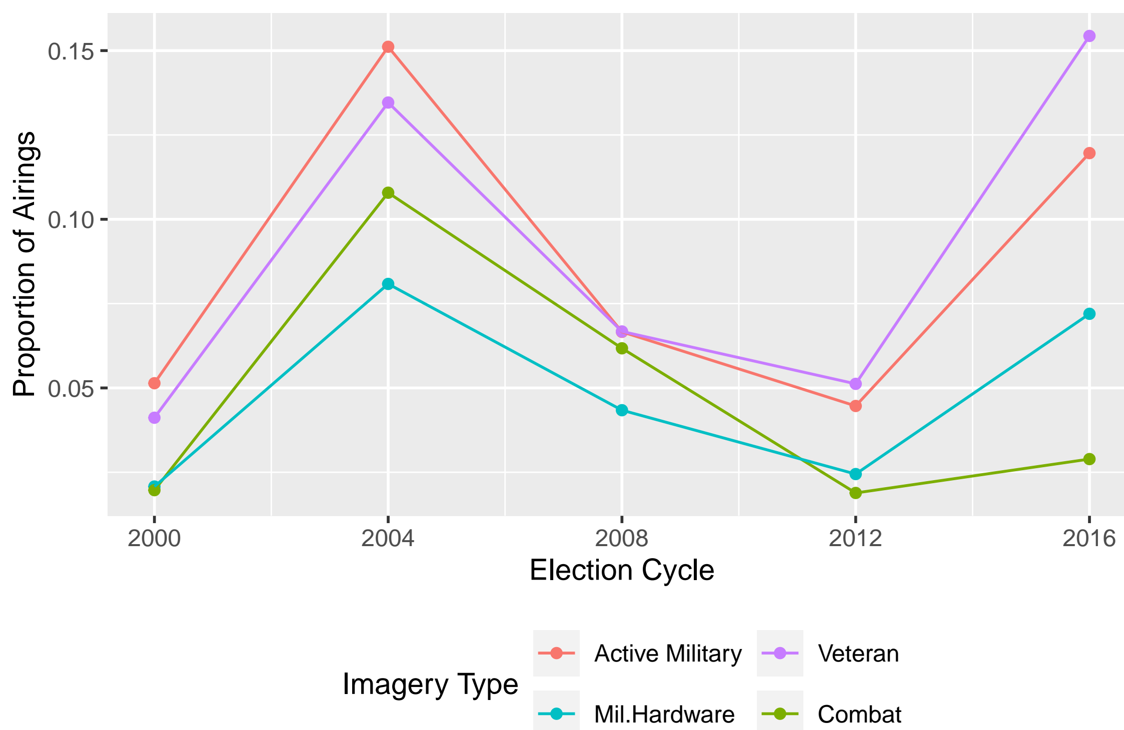


Figure 23: Proportion of Presidential Campaign Ad Airings Displaying Military Imagery, by Type of Imagery

In 2000, 2004, and 2008, active-duty troop imagery was the most commonly aired type

of military imagery; but in 2012 and 2016, this pattern changed. In these election cycles, veteran imagery was the most common type of military imagery portrayed to the American public in presidential election campaigns. This could reflect a relative increase in the growing number of veterans in the population, especially as the duration of the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns increased. Additionally, combat imagery went from the second least likely to the least likely form of military imagery to be shown in 2012, a pattern that also held in 2016. This may also reflect the fact that the active combat occurring in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan had become less pronounced relative to other issues, domestic and international, during the later election cycles examined in the data.

The Use of Military Imagery in Primary and General Presidential Campaign Seasons

A third angle from which to view the data involves the prominence of military imagery during the primary versus the general campaign portions of each election cycle. Figure 24 depicts the proportion of advertisement airings in each election cycle, split by primary versus general campaigns, that contain military imagery of any kind. Note that in all election cycles except for 2016, the portion of advertisement airings featuring military imagery during the primary campaigns was greater than that shown during the general campaign. Moreover, the gulf between the primary and general proportion of airings featuring military imagery was widest in 2000, 2004, and 2016, while in 2008 and 2012, this relative gulf between the proportion of such ad airings was smaller.

It is difficult to conclusively state why the primary campaign might generate different portions of advertisement airings containing military imagery than the general campaign afterward. More candidates are competing for each party's nomination during the primary campaign, and perhaps many of these initial candidates lack international experience. It is likely that either to draw attention to other candidates' lack of international experience or to tout their own, candidates who do have international politics experience might attempt

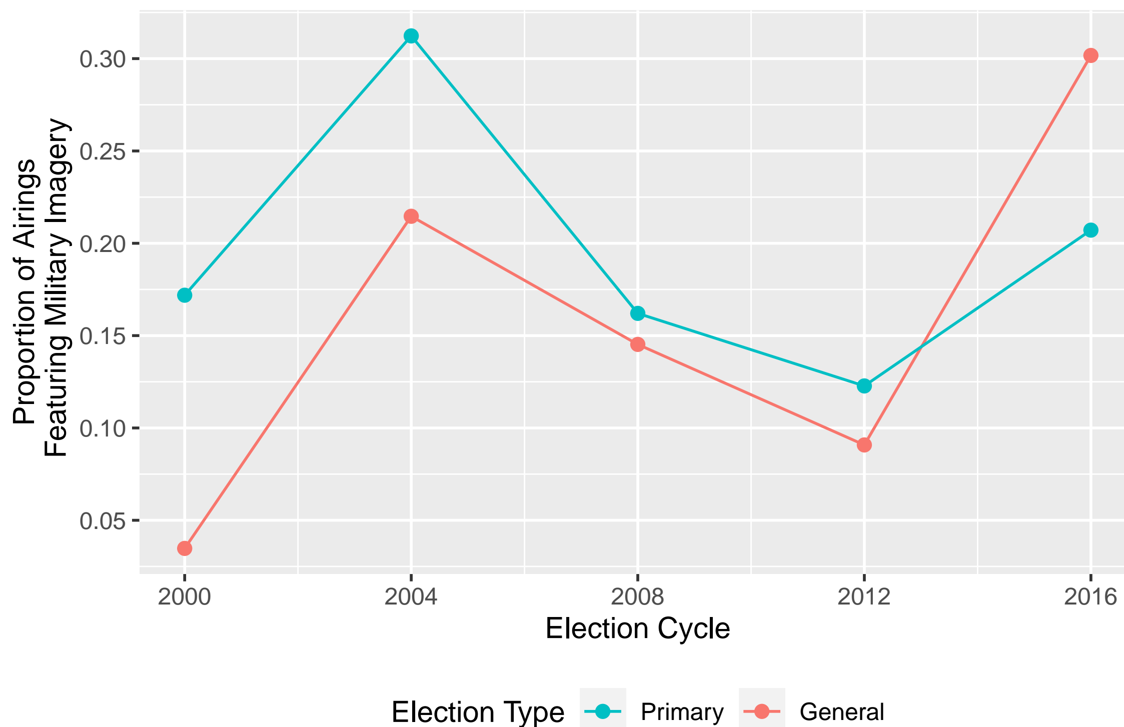


Figure 24: Proportion of Presidential Campaign Ad Airings Displaying Military Imagery, by Election Type (Primary and General)

to leverage this imbalance to their advantage in the primary campaign by discussing issues with which they are more familiar. It follows, then, that advertisements aired during the primary campaign would also reflect such a dynamic.

The underlying reasons might be much simpler, however. It could be, for instance, that within four of the five election cycles examined in this chapter, the primary campaign season simply overlapped with more significant international political dynamics than during the general campaigns. For example, the primary campaign season during the 2004 election started the previous year, in 2003, when the Iraq War began. Perhaps the candidates running in the 2004 Democratic primary campaign simply had to talk more about the Iraq War – and air more ads featuring military imagery – because as an issue, the Iraq War held more significant prominence than a year later, in the fall of 2004. These possibilities deserve further exploration; however, it is interesting that, at the very minimum, four of the five election cycles saw primary campaigns featuring relatively more

military imagery than the corresponding general campaign.

Are Campaign Ads Increasingly Challenging Principles of Civil-Military Relations?

The fourth, fifth, and sixth angles through which to examine the data involve a slight pivot, and instead examine whether and to what degree presidential campaign advertisements more clearly violate one or more of the principles of civil-military relations. Here the focus becomes not solely the presence of military images and symbols in advertisements, but also the appearance and behaviors of military actors who appear prominently in campaign advertisements. By this, I refer to instances that describe a number of potential circumstances; but the thrust of the idea involves someone who is related to the military in some way – a military figure – that appears in a distinguishable, identifiable, and deliberate manner in an advertisement.

This includes, for instance, a retired military officer appearing by name to endorse a particular candidate for office, or it might include the presentation of a photograph and name of a military actor on the screen, informing the viewer that the particular military actor has endorsed a candidate running for office. It may also include a veteran narrating an advertisement and identifying himself or herself as such. Other scenarios might include the family member(s) of a soldier killed or wounded in action being identified as such and appearing in an advertisement.

We must also examine what behaviors, if any, military figures who appear prominently in campaign ads exhibit, as their actions and behaviors are more discernible expressions that may violate the principles of civil-military relations than the use of military imagery in campaign ads alone. It is much clearer, for example, for a researcher to determine if a prominent military figure has verbally endorsed or attacked a political candidate during an advertisement, rather than attempting to determine if the presence of an image of a tank or aircraft carrier violates one or more of the principles of civil-military relations.

Therefore, I create three dichotomous indicator variables that each capture a behavior denoting a violation of the principles of civil-military relations. First, I capture violations of the military's non-partisanship principle by cataloging instances of a military figure explicitly endorsing a political candidate for office. This type of violation is fairly straightforward. I watch or read the transcript of the ads (in the cases of 2000, 2004, and 2008) and catalog explicit endorsements of candidates made by military figures. Second, I capture instances of military figures attacking a political candidate during the course of a campaign advertisement. This behavior is also a violation of the principle of non-partisanship, as an attack on a candidate portrays the military figure making the attack as being no longer neutral toward all candidates during an election.

The final indicator variable captures instances in which a military figure addresses issues that fall outside of the figure's relevant military expertise. Such an act denotes a violation of the principle of military non-interference. This type of violation is not as straightforward as the first two, as it requires determining whether the military figure possesses relevant knowledge or expertise regarding a certain topic, or might reasonably serve as a spokesperson for that issue area. For example, if a veteran who appears in an advertisement discusses why a particular candidate's plan for improving social security is better than another candidate's, I count this as a violation of the principle of non-interference. On the other hand, if a deceased veteran's mother or father makes a comment about a candidate's plan for taking care of the nation's veterans, I do not code this as a violation of the principle of non-interference.[57] I also allow for the possibility that an advertisement may feature a military figure who engages in all three behaviors (endorse, attack, and address an outside topic).

[57]Similar to identifying violations to this principle in the previous chapter, I try to be both reasonable and charitable. I code for instances in which there is a gross mismatch between the military figure and whatever topic he or she is addressing.

Prominent Military Figures Appearances by Political Party

The fourth descriptive statistic is shown in Figure 25. It plots the proportion of each major political party's advertisement airings by election cycle in which a prominent military figure appears with any of the three violations described above.

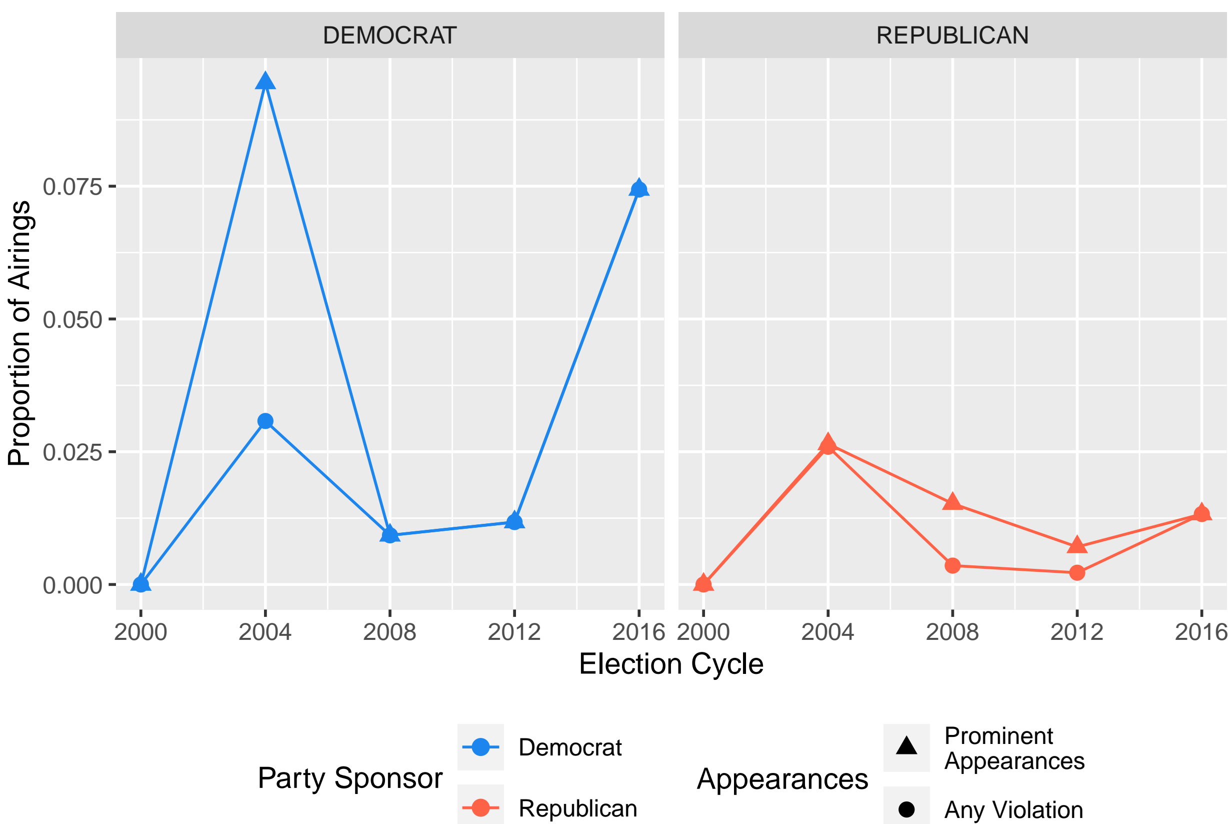


Figure 25: Proportion of Campaign Ad Airings Featuring a Prominent Military Figure Appearance

Two points are noteworthy. First, it is clear that, especially among 2004 ad airings sponsored by Democrats, there is a discernible difference between the portion of ads featuring a prominent appearance by a military figure and the portion featuring these figures engaging in one or more violations of the principles of civil-military relations. This simply means that in 2004 (and to a lesser degree in 2008 and among Republicans in 2012), there were military figures who appeared prominently in campaign ads but did not violate the principles of civil-military relations.

In 2016 (for both parties) and during 2008 and 2012 (for Democrats), there was no difference between prominent appearances and violations of the principles of civil-military relations by military figures in campaign ads. That is, during these election cycles, prominent appearances of military figures *always* correspond to the same figures violating the principles of civil-military relations.

The second noteworthy item of interest from Figure 25 is the obvious and giant spike in the data during the 2004 election cycle, when the Democratic and Republican Parties aired a relatively high portion of advertisements that featured military actors who appeared prominently. This dynamic deserves some explanation about the 2004 election itself.

During the 2004 presidential campaign, a number of veterans, family members of veterans, and retired officers coalesced to attack the war record of the Democratic candidate, Senator John Kerry. The group, which became an official political action committee known as the "Swift Boat Veterans for Truth," claimed that Kerry had exaggerated his war record and was undeserving of many of the heroic medals he had received (Ullman 2008). The group even published a book that turned out to be a *New York Times* bestseller, whose title embodied the group's main charge against Kerry: "Unfit for Command" (Buckaloo n.d.).

Although it is hard to state conclusively, the attacks levied by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth against Kerry were almost certainly effective and likely damaged his chances of winning the presidency. One scholar argues that the attack ads levied by the Swift Boat Veterans were effective because they featured real veterans as opposed to paid actors, thus lending a plausible semblance of veracity to their claims, and because the group perfectly timed the release of their ads to coincide with the "doldrums period between conventions," thus facilitating the ads garnering significant media exposure (Devlin 2005, 292).[58]

[58]It is not my central purpose to render a normative judgement on the actions or the intent of the Swift Boat Veterans. One can reasonably conclude that their behavior was inherently partisan, for the actions of the group apparently contributed, at least in part, to the prevention of Kerry ascending to the presidency. From this perspective, the actions of the Swift Boat Veterans must be viewed as wrong in that they violated the military's non-partisan ethic. On the other hand, one may take a different view of the actions of the Swift Boat Veterans. This alternate view emphasizes the fact that the Swift Boat Veterans began as an

Violations of Civil-Military Principles by Type

A fifth angle from which to view the data is plotted in Figure 26, which displays the proportion of ads aired in each election cycle that feature a specific type of violation to the principles of civil-military relations. The figure clearly shows the uniqueness of the 2004 election, but also the distinctiveness of the 2016 election. In 2016, for instance, which occurred amid a highly polarized political environment, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump competed for the presidency. Moreover, violations of the central principles of civil-military relations in the 2016 election by military figures who appeared prominently in campaign advertisements appears to have been driven by attacks of the presidential candidates. It is also clear, however, that the 2016 election generated an increase in the portion of ad airings in which military figures both endorsed candidates running for office and addressed topics outside of their own military expertise.

Do Political Ads Containing Military Imagery Target Veterans?

The final angle from which to view the data involves the veteran population of each media market. Earlier in this dissertation, I defended the use of this indicator as at least a theoretically plausible proxy for the variable of military prestige.

Table 16 displays the summary statistics for the percentage of the veteran population across the 211 distinct media markets represented in the data.

Table 16: Percentage of Media Market Population that is a Veteran

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD	N
Percent Veteran Population	2.08	13.4	7.2	1.7	211

organic veterans group, and thus was not the brainchild or the creation of a political party. The group's founder, retired Admiral Roy Hoffman, insists that his actions were sparked only upon reading Douglas Brinkley's biography of Kerry, *Tour of Duty*, and gaining the impression that the book had significantly embellished Kerry's war record by making claims that were not true. Ultimately, many of Kerry's fellow veterans supported and backed Kerry, while others did not. See Rosin (2004) for a narrative of the beginning of the Swift Boat Veterans organization and Devlin (2005) for a description of the group's activities.

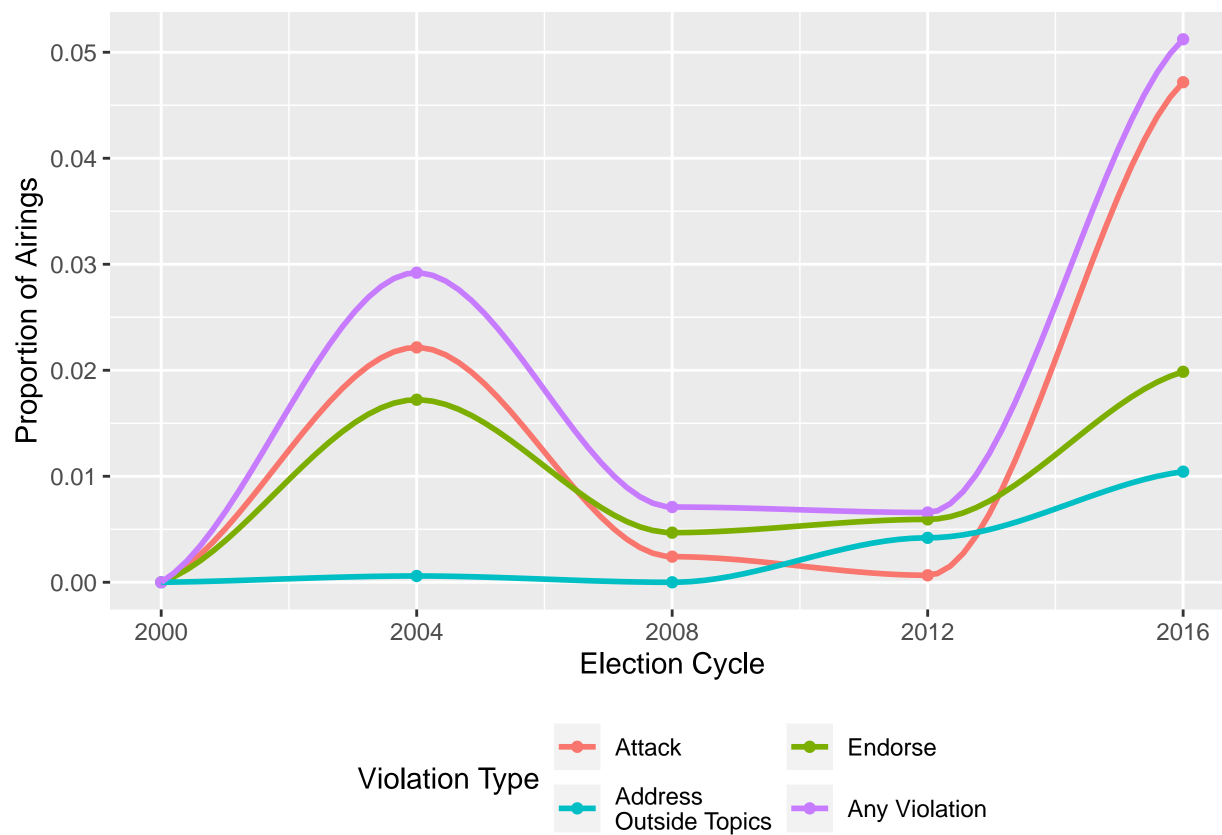


Figure 26: Proportion of Campaign Ad Airings Featuring Attacks, Endorsements, and Addressing Outside Topics by Military Figures

Furthermore, Table 17 shows the top and bottom five ranked ranked media markets by veteran percentage of the population in the data. The far right column also shows how many total presidential campaign ads aired in each of these media markets.

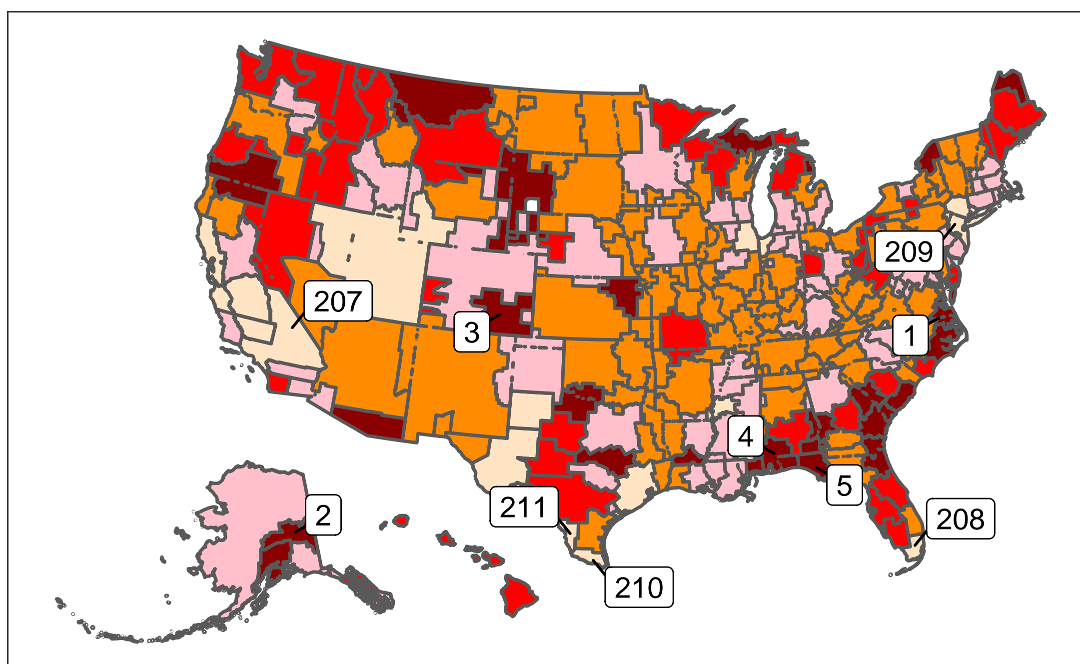
Table 17: Top 5/Bottom 5 Media Markets By Percentage of Veterans in the Population (2018 Estimate)

Market	Ranking	PercentVeteran	AdsAired
Norfolk VA - NC	1	13.40	61754
Fairbanks AK	2	13.30	301
Colorado Springs-Pueblo CO	3	12.50	57752
Mobile AL	4	11.20	31207
Panama City FL	5	11.20	12806
Los Angeles CA	207	3.50	10826
Miami-Fort Lauderdale FL	208	3.10	80299
New York NY-CT-NJ-PA	209	3.10	6129
Harlingen-Brownsville TX	210	2.90	3809
Laredo TX	211	2.08	33

Additionally, Figure 27 displays the density of veterans as a percentage of each media market in the US. The top and bottom five media markets are labeled, and correspond to the ten markets shown in Table 17.

Moreover, of the 211 different media markets that appear in the data, there are 64 that appear in all five election cycles. For these 64 markets only, Figure 28 depicts a series of plots where the x-axis is the percentage of veterans in the population of these markets. The y-axis in each of these plots is the portion of that market's total airings of presidential advertisements that feature military imagery, contain military figure appearances, or show military figures engaging in explicit acts that violate the principles of civil-military relations. For each plot shown, a simple line of best fit, in blue, is also shown.

At first glance, there appears to be at least a positive relationship between a media market's veteran density and several important indicators, including the proportion of political advertisements aired that display several types of military imagery. The relationship also appears to be positive for military figure prominent appearances and



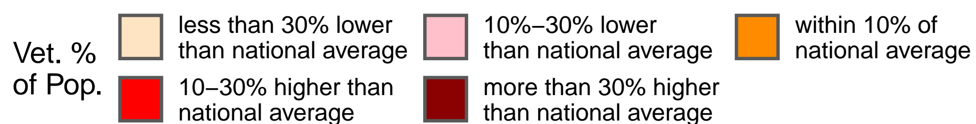


Figure 27: Veteran Percentage of the Population, by Media Market

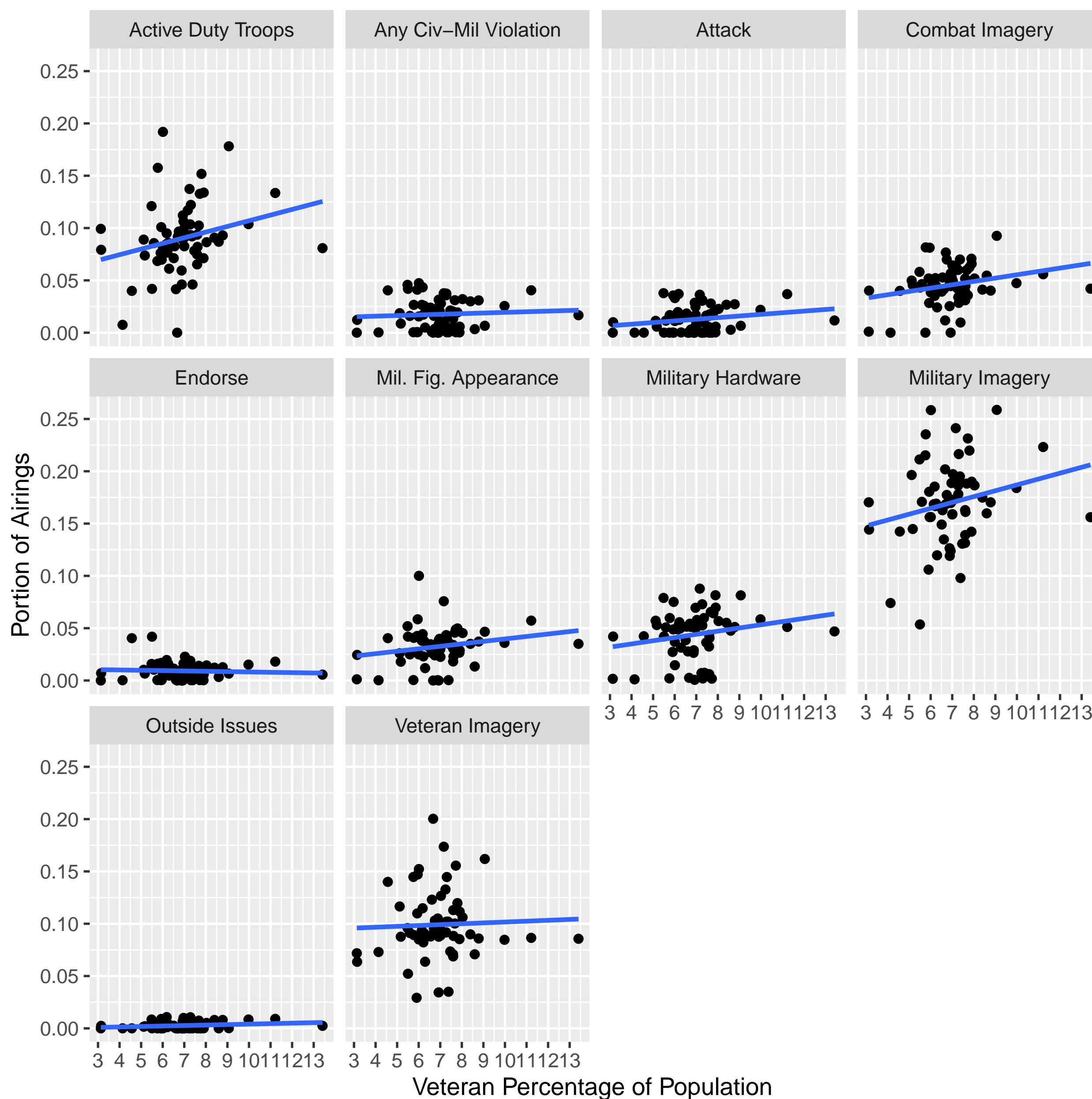


Figure 28: Prominence of Military Imagery, Military Actors, and Behaviors in Presidential Campaign TV Advertising by Percentage of Veterans in the Population, by Media Market, 2000-2016

military figure attacks. The relationship appears to be less obvious for military figure endorsements and military figures addressing outside issues. In any case, Figure 28 suggests that the veteran population in each media market may in fact play a role in determining whether and how frequently military themed imagery or military actors are shown in campaign ads.

Summary of Descriptive Statistics

The presentation of descriptive data suggests that several factors might contribute to the variation we see in how political parties and candidates use military imagery and military actors in political advertisements. These factors include the general rise and fall of defense and national security issues and matters pertaining to foreign policy relative to domestic political issues, potential differences in the role of primary versus general election campaign seasons, partisanship, and the veteran percentage of the population in the geographic locales where advertisements are aired. The next section of the chapter presents the results of a regression analysis that seeks to explain variation in the ways that political parties and candidates harness the military, and military actors in particular, in campaign advertisements.

Explaining Campaign Ads that Feature Explicitly Partisan Behavior by Military Figures

Before presenting the results, it is important to discuss one major methodological challenge the data examined in this chapter present. I alluded to this challenge earlier, but discuss it here in greater detail.

This challenge stems from the fact that the data come from only five election cycles. Furthermore, the elections themselves occur precisely at four year intervals. This is a challenge insofar as several of the independent variables I am interested in are measured in such a way that perfectly corresponds to the year in which an election is held. In other

words, many independent variables, such as polarization and the level of hostile casualties endured by US forces, perfectly covary with time. In addition to employing a cross-sectional proxy measure for military prestige, I tackle this very real challenge by including fixed effects that correspond to the election cycle and campaign season (primary versus general campaign). This approach has both its advantages and disadvantages.

Positively, the advantage of including election cycle-campaign season fixed effects instead of the variables that covary perfectly over time is that these fixed effects control for any other omitted variables that might be missing. This enables the researcher to isolate the variable of interest, which in this case is the percentage of veterans in the population of each media market — the proxy measure for military prestige. The main disadvantage of including election cycle-campaign season fixed effects is the loss of the ability to truly identify and measure the influence of these other variables that do in fact vary perfectly over time. In other words, I cannot include election cycle-campaign season fixed effects *and* variables such as polarization, casualty rate, and trust in the military in the same regression models.

In the main body of this chapter, I include only the regression results that include election cycle-campaign season fixed effects. Where appropriate, I refer the reader to this chapter's appendix, where I include regression tables that discard fixed effects, and instead include the independent variables that vary perfectly over time together. I discuss any pertinent differences between these results and their implications here in the main text of the chapter.

I conduct two different types of regression analyses. The first incorporates logistic (Logit) regression, and the second uses ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. To focus solely on the behavior of civilian actors, I drop all observations in the data aired by interest groups. This leaves only airings sponsored by political candidates, parties, or some combination of candidates and parties. The main difference between the logistic and OLS regression analyses is that the former allows for the inclusion of additional variables,

whereas the latter does not. In both regression analyses presented, the baseline level of election cycle-campaign season fixed effects is the 2008 general election campaign.

I describe and present the results of each type of regression analysis in turn.

Logistic Regression

The unit of analysis in this section is the individual airing of an advertisement. After dropping airings of advertisements sponsored by interest groups, the remaining number of observations in the data is 3,530,061. In addition to including election cycle-campaign season fixed effects, I control for the percentage of veterans in the population of the media market in which the ad is aired. I also include a categorical control for the party of the candidate supported in the aired advertisement, and a dichotomous indicator for whether any of the candidates featured in the aired advertisement is a veteran.

I control for the party sponsor of each advertisement to capture any potential inclination a political party has toward featuring military imagery and/or military figures in campaign ads. Consistent with the "issue ownership" literature in American politics, it could be that Democratic candidates may be more inclined to employ certain types of military imagery, or to feature military figures in overtly partisan ways, on the grounds that doing so may make the Democratic candidate appear to be strong on national security issues. Through the lens of "issue ownership," Republicans have generally been perceived by the public as stronger than Democrats on defense and national security issues, and thus Democrats appear to be more inclined (and Republicans less so) to engage in efforts that shore up their defense credentials (Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003; Sides 2007). I control for a candidate's veteran status because perhaps civilian candidates who themselves are veterans are more inclined to tout their own security credentials, and to use military figures to do so in ways that violate the principles of civil-military relations.

The logistic regression results are displayed in Table 18.

Table 18: Logistic Regression Results, Chapter 4

	Mil. Img	Act. Dty. Img	Vet Img.	Combat Img	Prom. Appearance	Any Viol.	Endorse	Attack	Outside Issues
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Per. Vet. Pop.	0.032***	0.042***	0.023***	0.048***	0.025***	−0.003	0.021***	0.003	0.052***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Libertarian	−11.797	−11.178	−10.981	−0.107	−17.462	−17.450	−16.727	−20.469	−20.356
	(8.262)	(8.261)	(8.264)	(274.153)	(273.650)	(273.680)	(273.664)	(1,226.513)	(2,021.357)
Other Party	0.585***	0.458***	−0.216	2.680***	−14.496	−13.215	−13.215	−12.442	−16.142
	(0.094)	(0.107)	(0.166)	(0.133)	(191.724)	(206.669)	(207.087)	(913.609)	(1,473.071)
GOP	0.033***	0.056***	−0.178***	−0.449***	−3.530***	−2.946***	−2.701***	−5.133***	−18.101
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.023)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.105)	(61.282)
Vet.Candidate	1.511***	1.165***	1.789***	1.997***	3.167***	1.477***	1.418***	3.913*	8.751
	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.024)	(0.040)	(0.039)	(2.302)	(87.998)
2000-Pri	0.298***	0.820***	1.316***	0.643***	−10.875	−11.164	−11.180	1.074	1.237
	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.016)	(44.977)	(47.149)	(47.606)	(203.794)	(327.754)
2000-Gen	−1.669***	−0.776***	−1.266***	−17.328	−11.934	−11.881	−11.882	−0.093	−0.086
	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.017)	(23.860)	(22.042)	(22.455)	(22.589)	(112.330)	(183.666)
2004-Pri	1.511***	1.743***	1.923***	1.317***	5.662***	2.296***	2.304***	−0.252	−0.257
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.054)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(112.775)	(184.574)
2004-Gen	0.221***	0.342***	0.364***	−0.243***	3.993***	3.566***	3.537***	17.776	16.027
	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.054)	(0.055)	(0.055)	(54.445)	(88.930)
2008-Pri	1.214***	0.793***	1.666***	0.502***	5.398***	4.141***	4.106***	2.553	3.405
	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.058)	(0.063)	(0.063)	(91.047)	(138.909)
2012-Pri	1.406***	1.828***	1.324***	1.870***	5.658***	3.561***	3.495***	3.594	8.471
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.014)	(0.012)	(0.064)	(0.073)	(0.073)	(130.377)	(231.727)
2012-Gen	0.810***	0.124***	1.490***	−0.230***	5.562***	3.998***	3.947***	3.286	26.677
	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.060)	(0.065)	(0.065)	(75.176)	(125.091)
2016-Pri	1.830***	0.916***	2.654***	0.657***	4.042***	2.461***	2.427***	17.442	8.071
	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.069)	(0.073)	(0.073)	(54.493)	(178.318)
2016-Gen	2.304***	2.238***	2.766***	−15.440	7.649***	6.089***	5.319***	23.217	27.887
	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(17.901)	(0.059)	(0.064)	(0.064)	(54.493)	(125.091)
Constant	−3.321***	−3.945***	−4.530***	−4.390***	−9.945***	−8.180***	−8.318***	−25.335	−31.500
	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.061)	(0.067)	(0.067)	(54.493)	(125.091)
Observations	3,530,061	3,530,061	3,530,061	3,530,061	3,530,061	3,530,061	3,530,061	3,530,061	3,530,061

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The most important result in Table 18 is the positive and statistically significant coefficient for percentage of veterans in the population in models 1-5, 7, and 9. This provides moderate evidence consistent with H3, which stated that civilian leaders increasingly violate the central principles of civil-military relations in public and visible ways when military prestige is high relative to low military prestige (H3).

The positive and statistically significant coefficient for percentage of veterans in the population in models 5, 7, and 9 is of particular importance with respect to adherence to principles of civil-military relations. It denotes that as the percentage of veterans in the population of a geographic area rises, civilian candidates and parties are increasingly likely to air advertisements in that geographic area that feature a military figure making a prominent appearance (model 5), endorsing political candidates (model 7), and addressing topics that are tangential to their military expertise (model 9).

In terms of substantive importance, the coefficient for percentage of veterans in the population of .021 (model 7) indicates that for every one percent increase in a media market's veteran share of the population, the odds of a political candidate airing an advertisement that features a military figure endorsing a political candidate increase by 2.1 percent. This is not in itself a large increase. However, the difference in values of veterans in the population may in fact vary by several percentage points between media markets. The odds of a party airing an advertisement featuring a military actor endorsing a political candidate is 16.2 percent greater, for instance, in a media market whose veteran density is eight percentage points higher than that of another (for example, in a media market where veterans are 11 percent of the population relative to another where veterans make up only three percent of the population).

It is also worth pointing out the coefficient for GOP. The negative and statistically significant coefficient in models 5-8 suggests that over the time period examined, Republican Party candidates are less likely than Democratic candidates to air advertisements that feature military actors who appear prominently (model 5), commit any

violation (model 6), endorse (model 7), or attack political candidates (model 8). This result is consistent with expectations from the "issue ownership" literature (Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003).

Furthermore, a candidate's veteran status likewise seems to be important. The coefficient for candidate-veteran is positive and statistically significant in all but one model specification (model 9), indicating that candidates who themselves are veterans are highly more inclined than non-veteran candidates to show military imagery of any type, or to include military actors who appear prominently and engage in overtly partisan behaviors in campaign ads. A candidate's veteran status is in itself *not* a measure of military prestige per se, but the fact that veteran candidates are willing to showcase themselves as veterans attests to a general sense in which the military has some general sense of prestige during elections. In other words, veteran candidates would likely not tout their laurels as military veterans if in fact their status as veterans did not amount to any advantage, actual or perceived, over their opponents.

Due to space constraints, it is not necessary nor prudent to address each of the election cycle-campaign season fixed effects shown in Table 18. It is sufficient to point out that some are statistically significant and the same direction across several model specifications, and to state that this is consistent with the broad notion that the timing of an airing of a political advertisement matters. As noted in the presentation of descriptive statistics, there are a host of possible reasons why military imagery and military actors are more likely to appear at certain times than at other times. One such reason that is difficult to analyze is the general arc of American foreign policy and the presence of wars or other crises that are strongly associated with military forces. These seem to take on more prominence during some times rather than at other times.

The most vital takeaway from Table 18 is that even after controlling for the possibility that every election cycle and the campaign season within each election cycle possesses its own attributes (by including fixed effects) – and results suggest that they do – there is a

positive and statistically significant coefficient for percentage of veterans in the population in seven of nine models. This strongly suggests that political parties and candidates target veteran-rich geographic areas differently than other areas of the nation. Furthermore, when the measure of percentage of veterans in the population is viewed as a proxy for the measure for military prestige, the results are consistent with the expectation that as military prestige rises, civilian leaders are increasingly inclined to feature military actors in ways that violate the central principles of civil-military relations in specific ways (making endorsements of political candidates and addressing outside issues).

OLS Regression

In the OLS regression analysis, the dependent variable is the proportion of ads aired in each election cycle-campaign season that feature various types of military imagery, prominent appearances by military actors, and any violation engaged in by these military actors. The unit of analysis here is the election cycle-campaign season-media market (n=1,239). In other words, the unit of analysis is the proportion of ads featuring military imagery, actors, and actor behavior aired in and during, for example, the 2004 primary campaign in the Chicago, IL Media Market, or the 2016 general campaign in the Columbus, OH Media Market.

Because the unit of analysis has changed, the OLS regression analysis will not support including the variables of party and a candidate's veteran status. The only variable I include, in addition to the election cycle-campaign season fixed effects, is the percentage of veterans in the population of each media market represented in the data. The results are displayed in Table 19.

The most significant difference shown in Table 19 is that the coefficient for percentage of veterans in the population remains positive and statistically significant when the dependent variable denotes the presentation of types of military imagery (models 1-4), but not when the dependent variable denotes a prominent military figure appearance or a

Table 19: OLS Regression Results, Chapter 4

	Mil. Img	Act. Dty. Img	Vet Img.	Combat Img	Prom. Appearance	Any Viol.	Endorse	Attack	Outside Issues
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Per. Vet. Pop.	0.006**	0.005***	0.005***	0.004***	0.001	0.0001	0.0002	0.0004	0.00001
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.0004)	(0.0004)
2000-Pri	0.033	0.083***	0.108***	0.011	0.001	−0.0002	−0.0001	0.0003	0.00001
	(0.027)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.004)
2000-Gen	−0.097***	−0.005	−0.008	−0.092***	0.001	−0.0002	−0.0002	0.0002	0.00000
	(0.023)	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.004)
2004-Pri	0.313***	0.276***	0.285***	0.174***	0.176***	0.011*	0.011*	0.0001	0.00000
	(0.022)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.003)
2004-Gen	0.086***	0.080***	0.107***	−0.016	0.067***	0.040***	0.039***	0.015***	0.001
	(0.022)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.003)
2008-Pri	0.077***	0.054***	0.070***	−0.068***	0.011*	0.011**	0.011**	0.00003	0.00000
	(0.017)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.002)	(0.003)
2012-Pri	0.005	0.081***	0.010	0.004	0.002	0.001	0.001	−0.0001	−0.00000
	(0.019)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)
2012-Gen	−0.034*	0.011	0.016	−0.086***	0.022***	0.022***	0.022***	−0.00000	0.022***
	(0.021)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)
2016-Pri	0.078***	0.016	0.128***	−0.084***	0.0004	0.0003	0.0003	0.00004	0.00000
	(0.017)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.003)
2016-Gen	0.118***	0.049***	0.066***	−0.094***	0.049***	0.049***	0.021***	0.049***	0.019***
	(0.017)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Constant	0.078***	−0.004	−0.014	0.063***	−0.010	−0.001	−0.001	−0.003	−0.0001
	(0.023)	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Observations	1,239	1,239	1,239	1,239	1,239	1,239	1,239	1,239	1,239
Adjusted R^2	0.219	0.245	0.301	0.318	0.368	0.135	0.063	0.378	0.095

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

military figure engaging in a specific violation of the principles of civil-military relations (models 5-9).

There are a couple of reasons why the results between the logistic regression and OLS regression analyses may be different. First, in the OLS regression analysis, all election cycle-campaign season media markets – the unit of analysis – carry the same statistical weight. This is different from the logistic regression analysis, which, because the unit of analysis is the individual advertisement, accounts for media markets airing more ads altogether than others.[59]

A second reason why the OLS analysis may reflect somewhat different results than the logit regression previously displayed is that the OLS analysis does not include a couple of airing-specific variables, such as party and veteran status of the candidate. Because the unit of analysis in the logistic regression is the individual advertisement, these variables were able to be controlled for, whereas the OLS regression simply cannot facilitate the inclusion of these variables.

Though it would be ideal if the logistic and OLS regression results displayed exactly the same results, that they are different should not be viewed as a significant issue. If anything, the logistic regression results presented here should be viewed as the more compelling of the two sets of results presented. There are two reasons for this assertion, each of which corresponds to the reasons just offered to describe why the logistic and OLS regression results may be different.

First, we know that media markets do in fact generate varying levels of campaign advertisements, as shown in Table 17. Second, each aired advertisement facilitates the observation of ad-level variables that can only be controlled for in the logistic regression. In

[59]The story is further complicated, however, because some media markets are located at times in very competitive political districts, whereas others fall in what might be considered safe areas for one particular political party or candidate. This matters because it drives how many airings political parties and candidates decide to run in a particular media market. Controlling for the political competitiveness of a media market, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter, mainly because media markets do not square, geographically, onto clean units of electoral analysis, especially at higher echelons, such as races for US House, Senate, or Governor.

other words, when an ad is observed, it is automatically possible to ascertain control variables such as the veteran status and the political party of a featured candidate or group of candidate(s). For these reasons, while we certainly should not discount the OLS regression results, we can perhaps pay more attention to the logistic regression results, and to what they point to.

To be clear, the results obtained in this chapter do not enable drawing the firm and sharp conclusion that variation in military prestige – as measured by the per capita veteran population in each media market – drives the degree to which political candidates employ military figures in campaign ads in ways that violate the principles of civil-military relations. We cannot draw this conclusion firmly because there may be other factors that are correlated with the per capita veteran population, such as partisanship, that may prove to play a stronger role in influencing the degree to which military figures appear in advertisements, and the subsequent behavior these figures undertake. It could also be that veterans in each media market simply constitute a potential voting block that political candidates are cognizant of and subsequently target through advertising. Through this lens, there is no linkage between military prestige and the per capita veteran population of a media market.

Although this is a very real possibility, we cannot ignore that contemporary scholars have shown evidence that suggests military enlistment is not random to geographic location, even if scholars have not concluded the underlying reasons why this is the case (Savell and McMahon 2020). Therefore, we can conclude that the results presented here are at the very least consistent with the notion that to the degree that per capita veteran population is a plausible proxy for military prestige, variation in military prestige impacts the degree to which military figures appear in presidential campaign ads, endorse political candidates explicitly, and address outside issues.

Future research should attempt to further explore the potential connection between military prestige – as viewed as the centrality or importance of the military – and the per

capita veteran population of a geographic locale, including the media market. This could be done by including other controls that vary at the media market (rather than at the state, or at the congressional district) level. As this analysis has demonstrated, county-level data is a solid starting point for future scholars to explore this topic.[60]

Similarities and Differences Between Alternate Regression Specifications

In the appendix, I show regression tables (logit and OLS) where election cycle-campaign season fixed effects are removed. These are displayed in Table 35 and Table 36.

In these alternate regression constructs, which are far less restrictive than those which have been featured here, the results very much reflect those that have been shown here in the main body of the chapter. In particular, the logit regression indicates that an increase in the percentage of veterans in the population strongly increases the likelihood that candidates and/or parties air ads that either feature military imagery, or include military actors who engage in acts that violate civil-military relations. Similar to the OLS regression analysis presented here in the main body of the chapter, the OLS regression analysis displayed in the appendix indicates that an increase in the percentage of veterans is associated with increasing portions of ad airings that show military imagery, but not military actors engaging in acts that violate civil-military relations.

The main difference between the regression analyses presented here in the main body of the chapter and in the appendix is that the results shown in the appendix indicate that other variables are also statistically significant (and quite often). However, these variables include those that vary precisely by year (level of polarization hostile casualty rate), and which justified the use of campaign season-election cycle fixed effects to begin with. Statistically, this suggests that the use of these fixed effects have served their purpose insofar as facilitating the evaluation of this chapter's main independent variable of interest,

[60]Some examples of this data might include the percentage of county voters registered by party affiliation. Such a measure might serve as a reasonable measure of partisanship.

military prestige (as measured by per capita veteran population).

Predicted Probability

I now transform one of the logistic regression results shown in Table 18 into a predicted probability in order to graphically show the substantive importance of a media market's density of veterans in the population on the probability that a political candidate or party airs an ad featuring a military figure violating civil-military relations. Using the coefficient from model 7 (endorse) in Table 18, Figure 29 shows the probability that a single advertisement aired features a military figure who prominently appears in a campaign ad and endorses a political candidate running for office. The three vertical lines denote the percentage of veterans in the media markets associated with the New York City media market, which comprises portions of New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and New Jersey; the national average; and the most concentrated area in the country for veterans, the Norfolk, VA media market.

Note that there is some baseline level of probability (.0010) that a single ad aired will violate the principle of non-partisanship by featuring a military actor who endorses a candidate running for office. The shape of the fitted line shown in Figure 29 is also generally linear. The most important takeaway from Figure 29 is that the probability of a single ad violating the principle of non-partisanship by featuring a military actor engaging in an act of endorsement rises more as we move farther along the x-axis.

If we focus solely on the point estimates shown in 29, the resounding message is that the most discernible differences are evident when one moves from examining an area that has a relatively sparse concentration of veterans in the population, such as the New York City media market, to a locale where a greater percentage of veterans constitute the overall population. Based off of point estimates, for example, there is a 24% greater chance that a single advertisement aired in the Norfolk, VA media market features a military figure who endorses another candidate compared to a single advertisement aired in the New York City

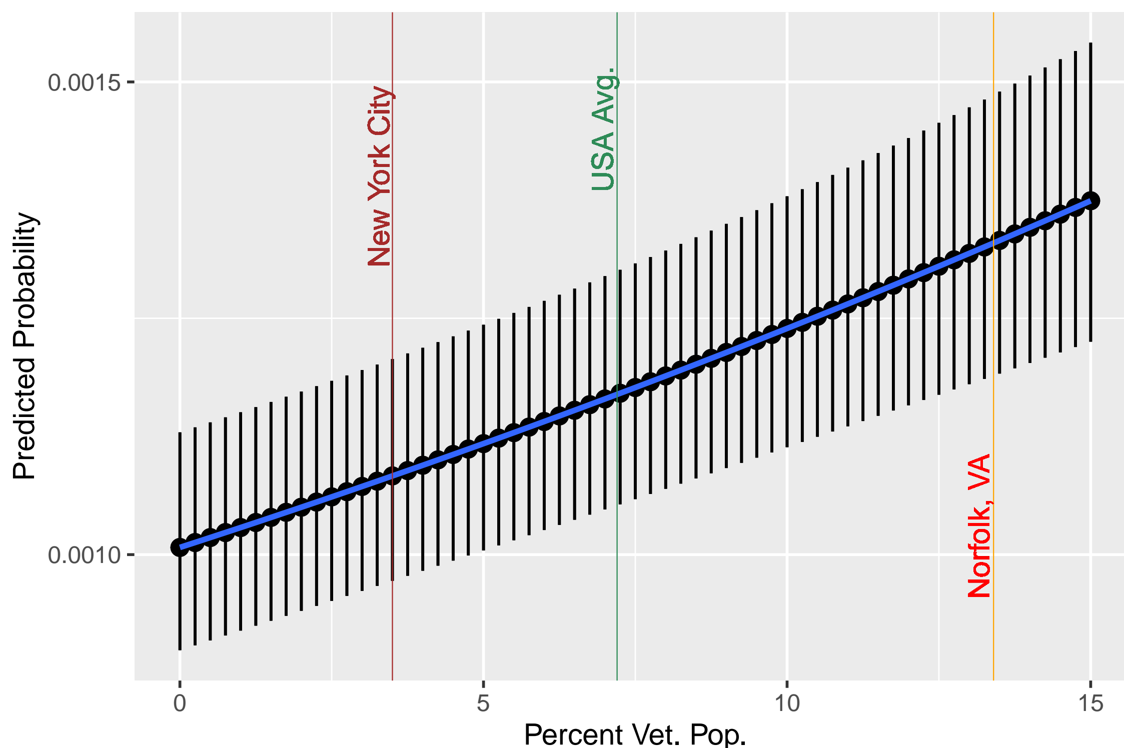


Figure 29: Predicted Probability of Parties/Candidates Airing Political Advertisements that Feature A Military Figure Endorsing Candidates

media market.

However, this plot also suggests that we exercise some caution in discerning how critical the role that veterans as a portion of the population plays. For instance, note that the very upper end of the confidence interval where the x axis equates to the veteran per capita population of the New York media market crosses the very lower end of the confidence interval where the x axis equates to the veteran per capita population in the Norfolk, VA media market. Given the size of the standard errors that comprise the confidence interval, there may not be any discernible difference at all in veteran rich versus veteran sparse areas, except when the per capita veteran population takes extreme values.

Alternate Explanations

In this section of the chapter, I address alternate explanations. Aside from the percentage of veterans living in a particular media market, what other factor(s) account for

the variation uncovered in this chapter? Here, we have to think carefully about what else besides the veteran density of the population may be causing cross-sectional variation across media markets with respect to ads that show military imagery, or military actors who appear prominently in ads, and the behaviors these actors commit. We need to also think about what factors might impact where veterans choose to live and that are also correlated with the use of military imagery or military figures in campaign ads.

Earlier, this chapter noted that veterans might simply return home after their military service. If this is the case, then we also have to think about why certain states, as demonstrated by Savell and McMahon (2020), produce more military recruits per capita than others. Though researchers have not convincingly answered this question, this chapter noted that individual economic prospects, military culture, and partisanship may play a role in driving an individual to join the military.

Even if there are other reasons that impact where veterans decide to live other than they simply return to their home of origin, the factors listed above may also be correlated with each other and with the use of military imagery and/or military figures in campaign advertisements. This further complicates identification of the real reason(s) behind why certain parts of the country seem to air a greater portion of campaign ads with military imagery and military actors than others.

Still, we can think through how these alternate explanations might be at work. Suppose, for example, that tax benefits for veterans are enacted predominantly by one political party over another, or in one region of the country over another, we could not conclude that the veteran density level in fact is the underlying factor driving the patterns of variation examined in this chapter. We would instead have to conclude that partisanship is actually driving where veterans reside, and that this in turn shapes the veteran percentage of the population, which drives the types of advertisements candidates and parties decide to air in a certain geographic area. Perhaps there is a simpler link between partisanship and where veterans choose to live. Perhaps veterans simply choose to live in

states where one political party tends to hold sway, if for no other reason, than because perhaps veterans tend to identify with one party more so than with the other.

Examining other factors such as partisanship will require obtaining data and then aggregating this data at the same geographic level of analysis as the data examined in this chapter (media market). This presents some unique challenges, as media markets frequently cross state boundaries (nearly one third of the time). To get around this very real challenge, future research should examine as finely grained political data available, ideally at the country level, before aggregating counties into media markets. This too, however, will introduce its own challenges, since at some level, media markets are units of analysis primarily for political advertising rather than formal politics.

In spite of these challenges, this analysis has at least made it possible to rule out other alternate explanations. For example, civil-military principles themselves do not vary across the country. The reason that we can be convinced of this is because the military is a national institution. This has been true since at least the end of the Civil War, and has especially been the case during the period examined in this chapter, from 2000-2016. And yet, one of the fundamental empirical contributions of this chapter has been to show that *adherence* to these central principles, however, *does* vary within country. While I have argued that one compelling reason this is the case stems from changes in the level of military prestige within country, conclusively addressing this subject requires future research.

Conclusion

Summary

For methodological reasons, this chapter employed a proxy measure for the variable of military prestige consisting of the percentage of veterans in the population of the 211 distinct media markets represented across the data. The argument presented in support of the use of this proxy measure is not that it is a perfect measure of military prestige, but

that it is a plausible alternate measure of military prestige.

Furthermore, the empirical results featured in this chapter have shown mild evidence for H3, which stated that civilian actors are increasingly likely to employ the military in ways that violate the principles of civil-military relations when military prestige is high relative to when military prestige is low. To be more accurate in this chapter specifically, we might amend this hypothesis to state that civilian actors are increasingly likely to employ the military in ways that violate the principles of civil-military relations *where* military prestige is high relative to *where* military prestige is low.

The strongest evidence in support of this claim was found through the logistic regression analysis, the results of which are displayed in Table 18. The logistic regression results in this chapter included election cycle-campaign season fixed effects, essentially controlling for any other omitted variables. The OLS regression results did not reflect the same consistency as the logit regression results, but these should not be viewed as contradicting each other. Instead, the logit regression analysis should be seen as accommodating more control variables and adjusting to the fact that not all media markets are equal in terms of the volume of political ads aired.

The main shortcoming of this chapter is the fact that media markets almost certainly vary in more ways than just the percentage of veterans who reside there. Polarization, partisanship, and patriotism (loosely defined) are all axes along which this may be true. Future research should incorporate these possibilities and determine the degree to which veteran density remains a compelling factor that drives the content of political advertising in certain areas of the country. This will likely require compiling data at the county level, and then aggregating these into media markets, as this chapter has.

The results shown in this chapter are nonetheless important. Similar to the previous chapter, this one has uncovered a connection between one type of civil-military actor, a particular behavior that violates the principles of civil-military relations, and a compelling reason why variation in this behavior may occur. The previous chapter established that

military actors increasingly write opinion editorials that violate the principles of civil-military relations due to rising levels of polarization; this chapter found support consistent with the expectation that civilian actors air political advertisements that increasingly violate the principles of civil-military relations as the level of military prestige (as measured by the proxy of veteran density in the population) rises.

In the next chapter, the first of the two case studies switches gears. Instead of focusing on one type of actor and one type of behavior, the focus in each of the next two chapters includes the tenor, tone, and characteristics of the many political behaviors that occur in a particular era. Using process tracing, the goal of each of the next two chapters is to show that changes in predominantly one of the independent variables resulted in discernible variation in the tenor, tone, and characteristics of political behaviors undertaken by civilian and military actors.

While large-N statistical analyses (of the type undertaken in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation) and qualitative case studies may in fact, as Gerring (2011) describes, "explore the world in different ways," the two methods should not be viewed as "rival genres," but rather as complimentary methods that ultimately help "synthesize" each other (Gerring 2011). With this in mind, we now turn to the first case study, an examination of political behaviors involving the military during the fifteen years after the American Civil War.

Chapter 5 - The Military and a Reunited Republic, 1865-1880

On August 19, 1867, *The New York Times* published a letter sent to Ulysses S. Grant from General John Pope, who at the time commanded one of five military districts that had recently been established by Congressional action in spite of a veto by President Johnson. In the letter, Pope respectfully but clearly warned Grant of the significant consequences the nation would suffer if the military failed to see the task of Reconstruction through. Pope wrote in part, "Now is the time and this is the opportunity to complete the work so that it will stand. Every dictate of wisdom and patriotism demands this work at our hands. If hastily or partially done, Reconstruction will drag with it a train of evils to this country which can never be remedied"(Pope 1867).

That Pope's letter was published (likely leaked by either Grant or Pope, or one of their staff members) in the *New York Times*, and that its contents expressed an urgent plea that ran counter to the President's views, is reflective both of the military's central role throughout the Reconstruction era and the strong opinions held by senior military leaders during what were among the nation's most polarizing political days. Indeed, the military and its leaders were not merely observers, but rather firsthand participants in the events leading to and culminating in the President's impeachment in 1868. After Pope's letter was published, Johnson removed Pope and several other commanders of military districts and replaced them with military officers who shared his outlook regarding Reconstruction. After being impeached early in 1868, Johnson would remain in office, holding on to the Presidency by a single vote. In the fall of that year, the nation elected the Republican candidate, General Ulysses S. Grant, to the first of two presidential terms.

A little more than a decade after Grant ascended to the Presidency, the military no longer occupied as central a role in the life of the nation. By the late 1870s, the combination of the end of Reconstruction, divisive domestic politics, and a lack of clarity regarding the role of military forces at a time when few if any clear international threats

existed had rendered the military, and especially the Army, less critical to the country than it had been during the Civil War and in the immediate years that followed. The military and its senior leaders could no longer influence public opinion to the same degree that they could at the height of their prestige. Thus, civilian and military leaders themselves behaved politically in ways that were less extreme than immediately after the end of the Civil War.

This chapter identifies, compares, and contrasts the patterns of political behavior engaged in by military and civilian actors from the end of the American Civil War in 1865 to roughly 15 years later, in 1880. The central argument made in this chapter is that during the post-US Civil War era, the character and severity of the political behaviors involving the military undertaken by civilian and military actors changed significantly. Early in this period, military and civilian actors both undertook highly visible and severe forms of political behavior that sought to leverage the military's political clout. Toward the end of the period, however, civilian and military leaders reacted to the military's diminishing prestige and its potential to sway public opinion by engaging in fewer and less severe forms of political behavior involving the military.

The chapter proceeds in five parts. First, I describe how we should think about the post-Civil War era in terms of the central principles of civil-military relations. In Chapter 1, I derived the three central principles of civil-military relations, and in doing so, noted that the emergence and adoption of these principles occurred predominantly in the post-World War Two era. However, I will argue in this chapter that even in the mid-late 19th Century, these principles existed, albeit in a nascent and under-developed form compared to the mid-late 20th Century. More importantly, I argue in this chapter that high levels of polarization and military prestige nonetheless clearly contributed to civilian and military actors violating known standards of civil-military conduct, and for reasons that clearly accord with the theory laid out in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

The second part of the chapter lays out predictions regarding the patterns of political behavior in moving from a period of high polarization and high military prestige to one

marked by high polarization and low military prestige. The third and fourth parts of this chapter comprise the heart of this case study. The third part explores the political behaviors engaged in by civilian and military actors during the earlier portion of the case study, from approximately 1865-1868. The fourth does the same for the latter portion of the case, from approximately 1877-1880.

The fifth and final part of this chapter evaluates and compares the differences in the patterns of political behaviors that occurred during these two periods. Empirically, using mainly qualitative evidence, this case study contributes to firming up our understanding of the role of military prestige in shaping political behavior involving the military. Combined with the quantitative results obtained in the previous chapter, this chapter's results demonstrate that military prestige plays an important role in shaping how civilian and military leaders harness the military to influence public opinion.

Normative Political Principles and the Military in the Late 19th Century

The three central principles of civil-military relations, which were defined in Chapter 1 as the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship of the military, and the non-interference of the military institution, did not exist qua firmly entrenched principles in the post-Civil War era, or for that matter, in any period before the post-World War Two era. These central principles, I noted in Chapter 1, derive mainly from post-World War Two scholars like Huntington and his critics, as well as military officers and statesmen, all of whom theorize about how a state's coercive and politically influential armed forces can secure the United States throughout the Cold War era while simultaneously obeying its civilian masters. During the late 19th Century and for a good portion of the early 20th Century, the United States was not a global superpower. This matters insofar as the military's latent political influence was not always as high as it has been throughout the post-World War Two era. Indeed, as this chapter shows, civilian leaders have not always

had to contend with a military that possesses significant political capital.

However, it would be wrong to conclude or assume that there were no normative expectations regarding military and civilian leader interaction before World War Two, or during the mid-late 19th Century in particular. It would be far more accurate instead to state that the three central principles existed, but in nascent form. In particular, obeying civilian authority was considered a cardinal virtue for military officers, and not politicizing the military in overt ways was considered the same for civilian leaders well before the start of the Civil War. Both sets of actors also, at least in general terms, recognized that the other actor had a predominant sphere that, while perhaps not sacrosanct, was to be off limits except for the rarest of circumstances. In this way, the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and non-interference of the military each operated by the mid-late 19th Century.

To substantiate these claims, I will rely on a mixture of academic expertise and several firsthand accounts from military actors who are the subject of this chapter. William Skelton, a prominent US military historian, notes that by the middle decades of the 1800s and well before the outbreak of the Civil War, "professional [military] ideology rejected partisanship and discouraged taking sides on purely civilian matters. The professed ideal was an apolitical officer corps and a rigid separation between the civilian and military spheres" (Skelton 1992, 283). As early as the 1830s, and largely the result of the War of 1812, Skelton notes that, "though seldom expressed as a formal theory, officers developed a conception of the army as an apolitical instrument of public policy. As servants of the nation, they should stand aloof from party and sectional strife and avoid taking sides on civilian political issues" (Skelton 1992, 283). Skelton's observations provide strong evidence for the existence of the principles of non-partisanship and non-interference in early form.

For their part, civilian leaders expected that the military and its officers would obey orders and not obstruct their lawful authority. Nineteenth and early twentieth century presidents well understood that they were endowed by the Constitution as the Commander

in Chief of the Armed Forces, even as the presidency as an institution was not as powerful as it is in the contemporary era (L. White 1958, 20–44). The conviction among military and civilian actors in the principle of civilian control of the military, even by the middle of the 19th Century, shines through in an elegant passage written by one of General Grant's staff officers, Adam Badeau, in 1887. In the larger passage, which cannot be fully quoted here, Badeau contrasts the differences in personalities between his immediate supervisor, General Ulysses Grant, and Grant's direct civilian boss, the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, both of whom are major characters in the earlier portion of this case study. Badeau reflects on their obvious personality differences, namely the fact that while Grant tended to be tender and sympathetic to others, Stanton was cold, hard, and direct. However, Badeau also notes that in spite of these differences, the two were united with respect to the principle of civilian control of the military. Badeau notes in particular that in the very few episodes in which Stanton did not allow Grant to proceed as the General wished, it was because Stanton "believed that he was asserting an important principle — the superiority of the civil over the military arm, the doctrine that even a victorious General-in-Chief is, under our institutions, the subordinate of the executive branch of our government" (Badeau 1887, 82). Clearly, civilian and military leaders at the time held the conviction that the principle of civilian control was to be respected.

If the central principles of civil-military relations existed in nascent form, an important question then becomes whether the boundaries for acceptable versus inappropriate behaviors at the time were drawn in the same place as they are today. For example, was it acceptable for military or civilian actors to leak information, or for military officers in the 19th Century to write public opinion articles that blasted their civilian bosses? Similarly, was it acceptable for civilians to engage in behaviors that, like those explored in the previous chapter, used the military to bolster their chances at winning office? Answering this question for every type of political behavior explored in Chapter 2 of this dissertation and listed in Tables 2 and 3 would require significantly more space and is

also, I would argue, not necessary. It is sufficient, rather, to state that the boundaries separating acceptable versus inappropriate types and forms of conduct were drawn in much the same place as they are today, with a few prominent exceptions, and to discuss a few of these in greater detail.

Military leaders expected a degree of professional autonomy free from civilian meddling and resented being dragged into partisan politics. This sentiment shines through very clearly, for instance, in a private letter written by General Ulysses S. Grant to General William Sherman in which Grant explains his opinion on having his views publicized and aired in the press. Grant writes Sherman that, "military men had no objection to the publication of their views as expressed upon official matters properly brought before them, but that they did not like expressions of theirs which are calculated to array them on one or other side of antagonistic political parties to be brought before the public. That such a course would make or was calculated to make a whole party array itself in opposition to the officer and would weaken his influence for good" (Grant, 1866 quoted in Badeau 1887, 40–41). Grant's comments clearly indicate that it was not the act itself of having his views made public that bothered him, but rather the manner in which his views were publicized, and the ultimate effect this had, that was potentially problematic. More than 150 years ago, military leaders understood that the context in which political behaviors occurred often mattered more than some behaviors themselves, a point made in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Civilian leaders likewise expected that military leaders would obey their orders and not act in insubordinate ways. For example, when President Andrew Johnson relieved General Philip Sheridan as the Commander of the 5th Military District in August of 1867, the President grew increasingly frustrated with Grant for what the President deemed to be insubordinate behavior. Grant had written the President a private letter in which he objected to the removal of Sheridan, but Grant's letter also stated that the general "should be consulted" as to the details of future Presidential orders (Grant, 1867 as cited in

Sioussat 1913, 113). The day after receiving the letter, Johnson summoned Grant, and the President told the General that his letter had “amounted to a sort of political essay,” and that “if every order he gave was to provoke a political essay from the General, it would be impossible for the Executive and the head of the War Department to work together” (Johnson, 1867 as quoted in Sioussat 1913, 113). The President then told Grant that in the event the President leaked Grant’s letter to the press, the President thought that the public would side against Grant, on the grounds that the general’s behavior clearly bucked well understood norms of obedience at the time (Sioussat 1913, 113). Grant then asked to formally withdraw the letter, and Johnson agreed. This episode reveals not only that civilian leaders expected military leaders to fully obey and implement orders, but also that both sets of actors were sensitive to public opinion.

These two episodes together strongly suggest that behaviors such as leaking information, giving interviews, writing op-eds, and otherwise making public appeals that openly disparaged either civilians or military actors by the other side was not considered an appropriate or acceptable behavior, as both sides sought to sustain their reputation with the public in an era when printed newspapers and other written outlets carried the headlines to America. Furthermore, military officers acting explicitly insubordinate, or selectively complying with orders issued by their civilian bosses, was understood to be normatively wrong. Civilians politicizing the military by thrusting the military into the political spotlight for expressly partisan purposes was likewise understood to be normatively inappropriate.

The one behavior that deserves a bit of further discussion is that of military officers running for office, and in particular, running for president. Norms regarding this type of behavior in the 19th Century were simply not as developed as they are in the contemporary era. For instance, General Winfield Scott, a hero of the Mexican War, actively campaigned for president ahead of the 1852 election while in uniform, an action that modern day Americans would find reprehensible (Skelton 1992, 286–87). The contemporary and late

20th century American generals and admirals who have run for office – Dwight Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur, and Wesley Clark – at least waited until their military service was completed before formally announcing their candidacy for office, even if their political ambitions were suspected sooner. In summary, the three central principles of civilian control, the non-partisanship of the military institution, and the non-interference of the military were not as firmly developed in the mid-late 19th Century as they would come to be 100 years later and afterward. In this way, we should acknowledge that the individuals examined in this chapter were not guilty of violating established principles that had been well worn for many decades by both civilian and military actors. Yet even in their nascent form, both sets of actors clearly understood and believed in the underlying spirit behind each of the three central principles, with few exceptions.

Therefore, in the same way undertaken in the previous two empirical chapters, this case study examines not only what types of political behaviors occurred, but what practical effect they had in terms of challenging the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and the principle of non-interference of the military. The reader should not interpret the rest of this chapter as an attempt to cloak 19th Century political behavior in a 20th Century framework, but rather as an evaluation of political behaviors that violated normative standards at the time. As in the previous chapters, it is exceedingly clear that high levels of polarization and military prestige impacted how and why both sets of actors, military and civilian, behaved politically.

Theoretical Predictions for the Post-US Civil War Era, 1865-1881

This section of the chapter summarizes the predictions that stem from the theory laid out in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. I begin by describing the political behaviors predicted to occur in a domestic environment characterized by high polarization and high prestige, and then describe those predicted to occur in a setting marked by high polarization and

lower military prestige.

High Polarization and High Military Prestige

According to the theory laid out in this dissertation, significant ideological divisions will exist among military actors when polarization is high, further predicting that high levels of polarization will provide a *motive* for military officers to intervene in politics. This stems from the idea that high levels of polarization point to ideological divisions not just about politics, but about the underlying moral issues and values that are at stake in the political sphere.

The theory also predicts that as military actors encounter growing polarized environments, they increasingly encounter circumstances in which they must choose either to adhere to the principles of civil-military relations or to behave in ways that violate these principles but are aligned with the moral values and philosophies with which they identify. As polarization worsens, a greater number of military actors will choose moral principle over civil-military principle; thus, rising polarization leads to military actors increasingly engaging in behaviors that violate one or more of the principles of civil-military relations. This case study will show that even after the Civil War, and even among officers who had fought together to preserve the Union, high polarization contributed to these officers adopting very different views on, and thus engaging in, different behaviors related to Reconstruction policies. Simply put, high polarization erodes the political basis for unity among military actors because the underlying moral foundation or source of that unity is no longer sure. Said differently, in periods of high polarization, not all military actors act from the conviction that the highest principles are the civil-military principles of civilian control, non-partisanship, and the non-interference of the military.

When the level of military prestige is also high, however, the theory predicts that civilian and military actors act from the conviction that military actors can potentially influence public opinion. Chapter 2 rooted this expectation in the political communication

literature, a portion of which argues that the public looks to voices considered to be "knowledgeable" and "trustworthy" before making decisions (Lupia and McCubbins 1998, 69–76; see also Zaller 1992, 47). It is therefore reasonable to assume that as the level of military prestige rises, the public will view the military and its leaders as increasingly knowledgeable and trustworthy.

The sociological literature of professions and occupations states that two components, centrality and skill, shape the overall level of prestige commanded by the members of a profession (Davis 1942; Jaco 1970). The two preceding chapters examined empirical behaviors in the post-Cold War era, when the centrality of the military to the United States is relatively high and constant. Variation in military prestige in the two previous chapters stemmed largely from variation in society's evaluation of the military's skill and performance. In this chapter, the source of the variation in military prestige involves mainly the other component of prestige involving how central or important the military is viewed by the nation of which it is a part.

Regardless of which component drives the variation, when prestige is high the theory predicts that both civilian and military actors will engage in behaviors that are intended to sway or influence public opinion, even when these behaviors violate accepted norms of principles of civil-military relations. Furthermore, the theory predicts that during periods of high military prestige, the behaviors that civilian and military actors commit will be relatively more visible – in order to influence public opinion – than in periods of low military prestige.

When we integrate simultaneously high polarization and military prestige, the theory predicts that civilian and military actors will engage in what can be considered a comprehensive form of military politicization. This means that civilian and military actors will undertake a rather extreme level of political activity when polarization and military prestige exist at high levels.

Table 20: Types of Domestic Environments for Civil-Military Relations and Their Impact on Political Behaviors

Environment	Low Polarization	High Polarization
Low Prestige	No politicization; low levels of political activity; low potential for civil-military conflict	Military (induced) politicization; moderate levels of political activity; moderate potential for civil-military conflict
High Prestige	Military and Civilian (induced) politicization; moderate levels of political activity; high potential for civil-military conflict	Comprehensive politicization; extreme levels of political activity; significant potential for civil-military conflict

High Polarization and Low(er) Military Prestige

If the level of polarization remains high but the level of military prestige declines, the most significant theoretical prediction stemming from this dissertation's theory is that the *opportunity* for civilian and military actors to involve the military in politics diminishes. Declining military prestige is associated with a reduction in the perceived potential of the military to influence public opinion; therefore, the theory predicts that civilian and military actors will become less likely to undertake behaviors that involve the military in politics in highly public ways when military prestige is low relative to when it is high.

Nonetheless, when polarization remains high, the theory predicts that military actors maintain a *motive* to intervene in politics. In a domestic environment categorized by "motive" without "opportunity," the theory predicts that military actors will be the primary type of actor inducing political activity, and that they will engage in less severe forms of political behavior than when military prestige is high. Moreover, in an environment marked by high polarization and low military prestige, the theory predicts that civilian actors will engage in far fewer (and far less overt) political behaviors involving the military.

Having laid out these theoretical predictions, this chapter now turns to examining the political behaviors undertaken by civilian and military actors in the years immediately following the end of the Civil War.

Part 1 - Johnson, Grant, Congress, and the Army, 1865-1868

On numerous occasions from 1865-1868, civilian actors sought to leverage the military's prestige for their own partisan gain. President Andrew Johnson as well as his opponents attempted to pull Grant and other highly prestigious military actors into their respective political camps, and to portray to the American public that certain military leaders were indeed their political allies. Simultaneously, military leaders – including Grant himself – engaged in several instances of political behavior that, even by historical standards challenged, if not violated, the normative standards of civil-military conduct that existed at the time. These military leaders did so, I argue, because of deep moral convictions related to significant political issues that arose during the period of Reconstruction. Senior military leaders, many of whom were considered by the public as heroes of the Civil War, were also keenly aware of the enormous influence they commanded with the public at the time.

In this front section of the case study, I first set the scene by establishing that the levels of polarization and military prestige were both extremely high at end of the US Civil War in 1865. I then describe the political behaviors undertaken by civilian and military actors in the events leading to Johnson's impeachment and Grant's nomination to the presidency.

Before proceeding, it is important to point out that the impeachment of Andrew Johnson, and the Army's closeness to the events leading up to it, was undoubtedly (and thankfully) atypical. Yet this period also demonstrates, in my view like none other in American history to date, how high levels of polarization and military prestige can combine to generate a toxic political atmosphere with respect to civil-military conduct. It is also important to point out that in the historiography of this early period, clear biases are present. Some historians, such as Sioussat (1913) and Milton (1930), are sympathetic to President Johnson, and thus very critical of Grant and others who opposed the President. Others, such as Badeau (1887), White (2016) and Chernow (2017) are extremely critical

toward Johnson and are thus ebullient in their praise of Grant. Others, in my view, including Hesseltine (1935) and Simpson (1988) seem to fall somewhere in the middle. Throughout this section of the chapter, I seek to remain as neutral as possible while simply presenting the events that occurred and how high levels of polarization and military prestige contributed to these events taking place.

High Level of Polarization, 1865-1868

It is difficult to state the precise level of polarization that prevailed at the end of the Civil War, but there is no doubt that the level was significantly high. The fact that a Civil War – the only one in US history – had just occurred, primarily over the issue of slavery, provides an immediate basis for this assertion. Standard measurements of polarization in Congress, however, usually begin with the 45th Congress, which met from 1877-1879 (Jeffrey B Lewis et al. 2020). This is again because of the Civil War and its aftermath. From December 1860, when South Carolina became the first state to secede from the Union, until the Compromise of 1877 effectively ended Reconstruction, several southern states either lacked Congressional representation altogether or had been prevented from electing members of Congress on their own, absent of federal interference.[61] Still, the lack of a precise measure of polarization until the late 1870s need not leave the reader wondering whether polarization was high at the end of the Civil War in 1865.

Polarization was high at the end of the Civil War as the country sought to "bind up the nation's wounds" (Lincoln 1865). To begin with, the nation had to face and answer questions concerning how best to bestow new political freedoms, including the right to vote and own land, to more than four million former slaves (Green 2010, 186–93).[62]

[61]The Compromise of 1877 was essentially about the 1876 Presidential Election. Democrats more or less agreed to a compromise such that the Republican candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes, would become the President, while Republicans in Congress agreed that the last of federal troops would depart Louisiana and South Carolina, effectively ending Reconstruction. See Hoogenboom (1995), 274-294 for an account of this compromise by one of Hayes' biographers.

[62]For just a brief sampling of the rich literature that describes the enormous political questions facing the nation at the end of the Civil War, see McKitrick (1988); Green (2010); Smith (2014); Smith (2017); Smith (2019).

The US government also faced other significant legal and moral questions pertaining to how to handle and relate to the states that had seceded. Indeed, McKitrick (1988) argues that Reconstruction, at its heart, boiled down to two central questions: "what had the war done to the rebellious states?" and "What was the new relation of those states – or districts – to the federal government?" (McKitrick 1988, 96). While this chapter cannot unpack all of the differing views on these questions, it is worth summarizing a few of the opinions held by prominent civilian leaders at the time to illustrate how widely ideas varied on these topics.

Some politicians, such as Thaddeus Stevens, a Pennsylvania Congressman who bitterly opposed President Johnson and was known as a Radical Republican, believed that the southern states should be administered as "conquered provinces," much in the same way a victor in war might exercise rule over a formerly hostile foreign power and its inhabitants (McKitrick 1988, 99–101). Stevens and others who held to this view believed that the former Confederate states had forfeited any of the legal rights they had once possessed under the Constitution, that the entire way of life in the South would have to be forcefully remade, and perhaps most controversially, that private property belonging to southerners should be seized, confiscated, and redistributed (McKitrick 1988, 99–101).

On the other end of the spectrum of views regarding reconstruction is what McKitrick (1988) calls the "Southern theory" of Reconstruction (McKitrick 1988, 97–98). This view advocated for a relatively quick restoration of full rights to the former Confederate states on the basis that these states had tried to secede but had failed, and thus should be welcomed back into the Union with little or no hindrance (McKitrick 1988, 97–98). Now that the war was over, advocates of this view argued that there was little need for punitive action.[63]

[63]McKitrick (1988) points out that it was not only those from the South who held this view. Among the most ardent supporters of this "Southern theory" of Reconstruction was none other than General William T. Sherman, who, after Lee's surrender at Appomattox, infamously offered generous peace terms to Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston. These terms of peace included a general pronouncement of amnesty for former Confederate officers. But Sherman quickly encountered political turmoil after offering these terms. When General Grant, as Sherman's superior, learned what had happened, he intervened and revoked the terms. Grant understood that Sherman, by brokering terms of political restoration, had not only crossed into a realm that only statesmen should occupy, but had offered terms that were politically unpalatable at

In short, each of the different views regarding how the South should be reconstructed involved a host of significant moral and practical beliefs about what actions the federal government should take with respect to the Southern States and its inhabitants, including both former Confederates and former slaves. Should former Confederate officers and soldiers be granted amnesty for their past actions in taking up arms against the Union? Should such persons be allowed to hold political office, and if so, would they have to denounce their past behavior or declare loyalty to the federal government? How much help should the federal government provide, and how quickly should they provide it to ensure the implementation of new freedoms to former slaves?[64]

Adding to the weight of these significant questions was another crucial issue, which was *who* was ultimately responsible for overseeing and implementing the nation's reunification. Was the President ultimately responsible, or should Congress set the terms for welcoming the recalcitrant Southern States back into the Union after four years of Civil War (McKitrick 1988, 103–9)? Although President Lincoln had claimed significant executive powers, some of which rested on perhaps questionable invocations of wartime necessity, Republicans in Congress were not willing to grant Lincoln's successor the same benefit of the doubt, especially in the wake of Lincoln's assassination and because the war, at least in terms of open battles fought, had formally ended (McKitrick 1988, 106–7; Hearn 2000, 29–32).

The Army and its senior leaders came to adopt strong opinions about these and related issues as the Army became a main actor involved with Reconstruction. Indeed, the Army came to embark on what should be considered nothing short of an occupation of the American South that would last more than a decade. For much of this unprecedented period, Army forces in the south and their commanders took on incredible responsibilities for overseeing civilian government, administering martial law, and exercising authorities similar to those that exist in wartime (Downs 2015; Lang 2017).

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the time. See McKitrick (1988), 98; and Simpson (1988), 95-100; for more details.

[64] See McKitrick (1988), 120-152 and Green (2010), 186-194 for a concise treatment of these issues.

Like the public, however, military leaders were divided about how Reconstruction should proceed, and what specific policies Reconstruction should entail. Some leaders, including Generals Ulysses S. Grant and Phil Sheridan, came to adopt views that were consistent with Republicans in Congress, favoring strong involvement by the Army and the federal government. Other military figures, including Generals William Sherman and Winfield Scott Hancock, held views that were similar to the President, and favored states' rights, and thus a more limited role for the Army in the South (Welles 1911; Milton 1930; Hesseltine 1935; Jordan 1988; Simpson 1991; Marszalek 2007; R. C. White 2016; Chernow 2017).

That differing views regarding Reconstruction split the Army's officer corps is perhaps best illustrated by the relationship between and subsequent political futures of General Ulysses S. Grant and Major General Winfield Scott Hancock, two generals who appear in this case study. The former became President, serving as a Republican for two terms from 1868-1876. The latter nearly obtained the Democratic presidential nomination in 1868 and obtained it outright in 1880. Though he never won the presidency, Hancock years later noted that it was his behavior during his brief tenure in New Orleans as the commander of the 5th Military District – an appointment Grant had worked hard to prevent – that propelled him to instant acclaim among Democrats. "Of the war men available," Hancock noted, he had, unlike Grant and other generals who opposed the President, exhibited "deference to civil law and the Constitution" (Hancock, as quoted in Jordan 1988, 218).

Extremely High Level of Military Prestige, 1865-1868

The level of military prestige was also high at the end of the Civil War, and for one central reason: the Army had achieved victory in preventing the dissolution of the nation. This was especially true of many generals and admirals who had achieved nationwide fame as a result of their martial exploits.

While it is not possible to list all of the individuals who achieved heroic stature as a

result of their martial exploits during the Civil War, it is worth pointing out several who, in the years after the war, remained in the Army. Among these were General Philip Sheridan, the famed cavalry officer; General William Sherman, known for his ruthless march through Georgia near the close of the war; General Winfield Scott Hancock, who repelled the Confederate charge at Cemetery Ridge at the battle of Gettysburg; and many, many others.[65] However, while these officers were well known and popular figures, the prestige that accompanied General Ulysses S. Grant, who became the Army's commanding general at the close of the war, was second to none.

Grant was the last of Lincoln's commanding generals of the U.S. Army and the military leader who ultimately brought about the defeat of Lee's Army. A West Point graduate and veteran of the Mexican War, Grant had resigned his officer commission in 1854 as a Captain. However, after several years in failed private business ventures, Grant was recommissioned as a Colonel in the Illinois Militia when the Civil War broke out in 1861, and he quickly established himself as an able fighter and commander (R. C. White 2016).

So popular and so recognized by the American public was Grant at the end of the Civil War that Hesseltine (1935) argues Grant "was rapidly on his way to becoming a saint" (Hesseltine 1935, 47). Furthermore, multiple biographers of Grant recount that the general spent several weeks during the late summer of 1865 on a traveling tour of the northern states, where he was fervently met at every stop, and often regaled with large and lavish receptions, parties, and other gifts (Hesseltine 1935, 57–62; Chernow 2017, 558–60). A significant portion of the northern press was also infatuated with Grant. For example, a *New York Daily Tribune* article written on April 20, 1865, said the following of the general: "Three captains created the art of war as it exists today in Europe — Marlborough, Frederick, and Napoleon. Grant's last campaign entitles him to rank with either of the two former, and in several important elements of military greatness places him on a level even

[65]These include figures such as John M. Schofield, who would play a significant role in the Army's reform efforts late in the 19th century.

with the great French Captain" ("Grant's Victory" 1865). Adam Badeau, one of Grant's subordinate staff officers who spent many years observing him as an eyewitness to the events written about in this chapter, would write in 1887, "It is impossible to understand either Johnson's forbearance or Grant's authority all through this epoch without bearing constantly in mind that Grant was the most popular man in America" (Badeau 1887, 68–69).

Grant's popularity translated into political capital, and civilians understood this reality. Horace White, the editor for the *Chicago Tribune*, wrote to Republican Congressman Elihu Washburn at the end of 1865 that, "I am persuaded that Grant is to be the next President if he gives us half a chance to nominate him" (White quoted in Hesseltine 1935, 63). Chernow (2017) goes so far as saying that in the years after the Civil War, Grant "became the supreme prize in American politics, sought by all parties" (Chernow 2017, 597). With his headquarters in Washington D.C., Ulysses S. Grant found himself squarely in the middle of high stakes political debates about how Reconstruction should proceed and what policies Reconstruction should entail. Later in this chapter, it will become clear that the same was also true of many of Grant's subordinate officers, several of whom were also highly prestigious and popular figures.

For the first several weeks, and perhaps months, the relationship between Grant and President Johnson was relatively free of friction, even as a "political cauldron" was boiling all around (Hesseltine 1935, 54). Over time, however, Grant and several of his subordinate commanders would no longer desire or even be able to remain outside of politics.

In the next section, I narrate and describe the political behaviors engaged in by civilian and military leaders from roughly May 1865-May 1868, behaviors that even by historical standards violated the principles of civil-military conduct. The levels of polarization and military prestige were both extremely high and combined in such a way so as to generate extreme and frequent political behavior by both civilian and military leaders. I describe these behaviors generally in chronological order in the following section.

Political Behaviors Involving the Military, 1865-1868

As divisions over reconstruction became evident in 1865 between President Johnson and his opponents in Congress, both entities sought to bring the military into their respective camps. Johnson and members of his administration, as well as members of Congress, sought General Grant's approval on the specific measures that Reconstruction should entail. Indeed, in the months that followed, as the divisions between Johnson and Congress became increasingly irreconcilable, both Johnson and his opponents in Congress would increasingly wonder, as White (2016) notes, "where did Grant stand?" (R. C. White 2016, 429). Badeau observed that as early as 1865, "both parties to the contest wanted to use the prestige of his (Grant's) name; both laid their arguments before him and sought to secure his support" (Badeau 1887, 35, parentheses mine).

That civilian leaders of both political parties maneuvered and jockeyed for Grant fully aligns with the predictions made by the theory advanced in this dissertation. Civilian leaders acted from the belief that General Grant, as the nation's most prestigious figure, commanded not merely the Army, but the potential to shape and influence public opinion in a way that was politically advantageous. Adam Badeau's observations of the President's early overtures towards Grant clearly signify the link between Grant and his utility to civilian leaders to shape public perception. Reflecting back on the first few months of Grant's professional relationship with the President, Badeau notes that "the great popularity of Grant at this period made it important to win him over to the support of the enterprise…It was, however, not so much Grant's real concurrence as the appearance of it before the world that Johnson probably sought" (Badeau 1887, 32, 39). Grant personally understood that political parties saw him as politically powerful and useful. He wrote his friend, General William Sherman, in 1867 that, "…there is little difference between parties. No matter how close I keep my tongue each tries to interpret from the little I let drop that I am with them" (Ulysses Grant, 1867, cited in Badeau 1887, 73)".

The Military as Sales Reps and Public Appeals

One of the first political behaviors the President engaged in was sending Grant on a tour of the South in late 1865. The purpose of sending Grant to the South was to refute a previous report made by Carl Schurz, a journalist and former general whom Johnson had previously sent to assess the general political atmosphere of the Southern States. Schurz's report was politically problematic for Johnson, however, because it portrayed southern attitudes as "angry and defiant," and indicated that former slaves who had been freed were "languishing in wretched conditions of poverty, reinforced by Black Codes that trapped them in a new subservience" (Chernow 2017, 563). In short, Schurz's report did not portray a South that was remorseful and prepared to rapidly reunify with the nation, but rather one that required a lengthier and more robust federal presence (Chernow 2017, 563).

Johnson hoped that Grant, after touring the South, would write a report that instead described the political conditions there as conducive to a relatively quick restoration, in line with Johnson's views on Reconstruction (Hesseltine 1935, 60; see also Chernow 2017, 563–64). Such a report, written by a highly influential military figure like Grant, would arm the President with a political weapon to employ against his opponents in Congress. After Grant returned from his visit, Johnson summoned Grant to a cabinet meeting where the General "expressed his conviction that every consideration called for the early reestablishment of the Union (Hesseltine 1935, 61). Grant's comments were immediately sent off to the Senate, and used by Johnson's administration to defend against attacks made by Radical Republicans (Hesseltine 1935, 61; Chernow 2017, 565–66).[66]

The President's behavior is synonymous with both employing the military as a sales representative, and harnessing the military to make a public appeal, both of which were discussed in Chapter 2. The main audience Johnson sought to influence was not the South,

[66]Chernow (2017) argues that Grant's visit was superficial in that it was rushed and largely featured sham interactions with southern whites who praised Grant. Chernow also notes that Grant regretted his report soon after furnishing it. See Chernow (2017), 565-566 for more details. Furthermore, both Hesseltine (1935) and Milton (1930) argue that in the wake of Grant furnishing his report, Radical Republicans fervently tried to get Grant to denounce it. See Hesseltine (1935), 65; Milton (1930), 290 for more details.

but rather his opponents in Congress. Furthermore, in sending Grant to the southern states for the purposes of having Grant make a politically advantageous and public report, the President challenged at least two of the normative principles of civil-military conduct that existed at the time.

First, Johnson's behavior violated the principle of non-partisanship because there was effectively no possible way that Grant could generate a report that did not anger either Johnson's supporters or his opponents in Congress. Furthermore, Johnson's chief purpose in sending Grant was to provide both the American public and Congress the impression that Grant's views on Reconstruction favored his own. Johnson knew that validation of his views by Grant would disadvantage his opponents in Congress, if even for a short period of time.

Second, Johnson's dispatching of Grant to the south for the purposes of Grant writing a subsequent public report also violated the principle of non-interference because, in effect, Johnson made a sitting military commander investigate, evaluate, and publicize prevailing political conditions in ways that were more comparable to what a reporter or journalist, rather than a military officer, would do. To be clear, there is nothing inappropriate for a president to send a military officer to learn more about a situation, or to report back with intelligence on a number of possible scenarios. But that is not what happened here. Grant did not possess any superior reporting or communication skills than the author of the initial report, Carl Schurz. In fact, it is almost certain that Grant's popularity prevented him from accessing people during the trip who would likely have conveyed to Grant far less rosy of a situation (Hesseltine 1935, 60).

Schurz was a career journalist who had volunteered to serve in the Union Army and would become the editor of the *Detroit Post* in 1866. This matters because Schurz's initial report was written from the standpoint of a professional reporter or journalist (Simpson 1991, 116–88). Johnson could have dispatched others to refute Schurz's report, including perhaps other press correspondents who likened to his views. Instead, in sending Grant,

Johnson sought to harness Grant's enormous prestige, knowing that the public would be interested in, and that Congressional Republicans would have to contend with, Grant's evaluation. Still, In asking Grant to fill a role that was better suited for a press correspondent or journalist, President Johnson compelled the nation's top Army officer to assume a role that was tangential, if not altogether unrelated, to his role as the general-in-chief of the Army.

After Grant's report became public knowledge, the final months of 1865 and early months of 1866 evinced even greater divisions between Johnson and his Republican opponents in Congress. As time passed, it became increasingly clear that Johnson's conception of Reconstruction clearly favored southern whites with ties to the former Confederacy, and at the same time, disadvantaged both former slaves and whites who had supported the Union. For instance, newly freed blacks frequently faced increasing danger as southern state and local governments enacted a series of "black codes" that authorized a variety of discriminatory measures against blacks and former slaves (see for example, McKitrick 1988, 204–5; Chernow 2017, 571). Though the 13th Amendment (which formally abolished slavery in the United States) went into effect in December of 1865, Johnson continually vetoed legislation that sought to expand the rights and political freedoms of the former slaves. These included bills which sought to extend the life of the Freedmen's Bureau, an organization created in 1865 to "provide food, shelter, clothing, medical services, and land to displaced southerners, including newly freed African Americans" ("U.s. Senate: Freedmen's Bureau Acts of 1865 and 1866" n.d.), and later, a civil rights bill which, while "silent on voting rights," nonetheless sought to make the federal government the "guarantor of basic liberties" (Chernow 2017, 570). Both of these pieces of legislation would eventually end up passing, as Congress voted to override vetoes by Johnson.

Showcasing the Troops and Electoral Swaggering

With legislative battles between Congress and the President unfolding, Johnson continued to harness General Grant's prestige and that of other military leaders for partisan reasons in the months leading up to the 1866 midterm elections. These actions occurred in relatively smaller and larger forms. On several occasions, civilian actors deliberately orchestrated their public appearances in such a way so as to physically appear alongside popular military figures in order to give the impression that these military leaders approved of their policies and views on Reconstruction. This type of behavior constitutes showcasing the troops and engaging in electoral swaggering, both of which were discussed in Chapter 2. Furthermore, this type of behavior is congruent with the civilian act of featuring military actors to appear in presidential campaign ads, which was examined in the previous chapter.

On August 18, 1866, President Johnson hosted "a delegation from the National Union Convention in Philadelphia" at the White House (Chernow 2017, 576). In spite of the clearly partisan nature of the gathering, Grant reluctantly accepted Johnson's invitation to attend, as he "felt duty-bound" to do so (Chernow 2017, 576). Before addressing his supporters in the East Room of the White House, the President summoned Grant, where the two stood next to each other during all of the President's remarks (Chernow 2017, 577). After the event, Grant returned to his headquarters, where he was "full of indignation" at having been manipulated by the President (Badeau, 1887, as cited in Chernow 2017, 577). Ultimately, Grant's physical proximity to the President on that particular August evening insinuated, at least to one reporter present at the event, that Grant fervently endorsed Johnson's policies (McFeely, 2002, as cited in Chernow 2017, 577). That particular evening, the President had showcased the nation's most highly regarded soldier.

An even greater instance of Johnson harnessing Grant's prestige and that of other military leaders occurred at the end of the summer of 1866, however, when Johnson insisted that Grant and several other military figures accompany him on a two-week-long

public relations tour of several Northern States and populous cities that came to be known as the "Swing Around the Circle." Traveling by train and designed to drum up support ahead of the midterms, the President brought with him several of his cabinet members, but also several military figures, including General Grant, Admiral David Farragut, General George Meade, and others.

Johnson's touring with prestigious military figures intended to convey to the public that prominent military figures approved of Johnson's policies, which included at the time a strong denunciation of the 14th Amendment, which had been passed by the Senate in June (Hesseltine 1935, 74–76; Chernow 2017, 577–81).[67] The President traveling and appearing with several military figures on a speaking tour of the country ahead of the elections was synonymous with using military figures to appear not only in campaign ads, but perhaps in even more obvious political forums, such as attending or speaking at a partisan political convention.

Most historical accounts of the President's trip note that the tour was a public relations disaster. Johnson argued with the crowds at almost every stop, and many of those who turned out asked instead to hear from Grant and Farragut rather than from the President (Hesseltine 1935, 75; Chernow 2017, 577). Importantly, Milton (1930, pp. 362-369), Hesseltine (1935, pp. 74-75), Simpson (1991, p. 148), and Welles (1911, 591-596) all argue that Johnson's political opponents – those allied with the Radical Republicans in Congress – went to great lengths to orchestrate the local crowds at several stops along the tour to cheer loudly for Grant and Farragut, and to heckle the President. Intended to ultimately "prevent the President from speaking or to embarrass him in his remarks," these attempts by Johnson's opponents to use the prestige of Grant and other military leaders against the President clearly had a partisan tone (Welles 1911, 2:593). Furthermore, that both Johnson and his opponents sought to pit Grant against each other

[67]The 14th Amendment granted citizenship to all persons born in the United States, including former slaves. Except for Tennessee, the Southern States rejected the 14th Amendment initially, but the Military Restoration Acts of 1867 later required ratification of both the 13th and 14th Amendments for states to be restored to the Union.

is in full alignment with the predictions made by this dissertation's theory.

Brass in the Cabinet and Explicit Insubordination

The nation's political climate continued to worsen in 1866 after race riots, first in Memphis and then in New Orleans, had killed dozens of freed blacks and sympathetic whites (McKitrick 1988, 422–27; Hyman 1960, 90). Events such as these further cemented existing partisan battle lines, even among Army leaders. Along with Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, Generals Grant, Sheridan, Pope, and Meigs came to associate themselves with a theory of Reconstruction congruent with most Republicans in Congress, while Generals Sherman and Hancock favored Johnson's (Hyman 1960, 93). As the political climate worsened, the severity of the political behaviors that occurred with respect to the military continued to escalate.

Johnson first tried to bypass the combined team of Grant and Stanton, who by late 1866 had both come to believe that Congressional Republicans, rather than the President, possessed a view of Reconstruction that was best for the nation and for the Army (Hyman 1960). Too prestigious to dismiss outright, Johnson instead sought to send Grant to Mexico as part of a diplomatic mission, which would at least temporarily remove the General from Washington, and to replace Stanton with General Sherman.

The high prestige of Generals Grant and Sherman played an important role in both the President's decision and also Grant's subsequent reaction to the ordeal. To begin with, as Colonel W.G. Moore, Johnson's private secretary, notes, Johnson chose to send Grant to Mexico "in order that prestige might be given to his mission" (Moore, 1866 quoted in Sioussat 1913, 99). Furthermore, the President considered implementing this scheme in conjunction with leaking a letter he had received from Sherman in which the General had expressed support for the President's policies (Hesseltine 1935, 78). In short, if replacing Stanton and removing Grant temporarily had even a remote chance of working, the President would have to do two things. First, the President would have to make the public

think that sending Grant to Mexico was a vital mission and worthy of directing someone of Grant's stature to go; and second, the President would have to replace Stanton with someone who was highly regarded by the public, such as General Sherman.

However, Grant refused Johnson's directive to go to Mexico several times, the last of which occurred in a rather public and dramatic manner. In front of his assembled cabinet, the President asked the Attorney General whether his orders to send Grant to Mexico were illegal, ostensibly in order to publicly shame Grant, who was present for the meeting, into compliance. Hesseltine (1935) depicts Grant as then standing up before the Attorney General could respond, stating, "I can answer that question Mr. President, without referring to the Attorney General. I am an officer of the army, and bound to obey your military orders. But this is a civil office, a purely diplomatic duty that you offer me, and I cannot be compelled to undertake it. . . no power on earth can compel me to it" (Badeau, 1887 as cited in Hesseltine 1935, 79). Importantly, Moore (cited in Sioussat, 1913, pp. 101-102) also notes that Grant was very much aware of just how beloved Sherman was by the country, and that this likely played a factor in Grant's refusal to obey the President's order. In fact, Moore notes that the President read Grant the private letter Sherman had sent, and that the President told Grant that "he (the President) thought of publishing it — a suggestion which. . . the General did not appear to relish" (Moore, 1866 quoted in Sioussat 1913, 101). This means that Grant's refusal to obey the President's order – unwise, crafty, manipulative, yet still legal – and thus to engage in an act of explicit disobedience, resulted at least partially from Grant's awareness that if Sherman were to replace Stanton, Sherman's high personal prestige in the cabinet could lead to the very outcomes with respect to Reconstruction that Grant and Stanton were trying so very hard to avoid.

This entire episode of Johnson's attempt to send Grant to Mexico and replace Stanton with Sherman is interwoven with the variables of high levels of polarization and military prestige. The high level of polarization prevalent at the time explains why Johnson tried to

rid himself of Grant and Stanton in the first place, and Grant's very real concern that harm could arise if he left Washington. The high level of military prestige explains both how and why the scheme unfolded in the manner that it did. First, the President's scheme could only be successful if he chose to replace Stanton with Sherman, whom Hyman (1960) argues was the "nation's third most popular man" at the time (Hyman 1960, 94). Second, Grant knew that Sherman was sufficiently prestigious such that the President's scheme could actually work, and he feared the consequences of its implementation. Finally, Grant also knew that he was himself prestigious, and that he could refuse the President's directive and not be opposed in doing so. This incident clearly shows that not only did civilian leaders attempt to harness the prestige of military leaders, but that in this instance, Grant's high prestige actually prevented the President from exercising his lawful, albeit unwise and manipulative, authority.

Partisan Stacking and Selective Compliance

The battle between Congress and the President continued to escalate, and on March 2nd, 1867, Congress passed (again, over a Presidential veto) the first of several Military Reconstruction Acts. Among other impacts, this legislation split the south into five military districts, each of which would be overseen by an army general. The legislation intended for these military commanders to hold enormous sway over the daily conduct of state and local governments, which were to be regarded by the commanders as "provisional" in nature pending their "full" restoration to the Union (Grant, 1867 as cited in Chernow 2017, 587). Importantly, the legislation also stated that all orders to the Army from the President had to be routed through Grant (Chernow 2017, 587).[68]

At the same time, Congress also enacted the Tenure of Office Act, which sought to preserve Stanton's place in Johnson's cabinet, and thus his link to Republicans in Congress

[68]The Military Reconstruction Acts also empowered Grant to appoint these five generals himself. But even Grant had reservations about this, believing that the President, as the Commander in Chief, should have a strong voice in who these generals were. See Hesseltine (1935), 83 and Chernow (2017), 585 for more details.

(Hearn 2000, 110–19; Chernow 2017, 586–87). This legislation specifically declared that the president could not remove cabinet officials that he had not appointed himself without the Senate's approval (Chernow 2017, 586). Indeed, Johnson had inherited Stanton, who had also served as Lincoln's Secretary of War. Together, the Military Reconstruction and the Tenure of Office Acts effectively cut off the President from exercising meaningful control of the Army in the South. Multiple scholars shed light on this central point from different angles. Downs (2015) makes the compelling point that in many ways, American Reconstruction was a fight over who – the President or Congress – has the power to end a special type of (Civil) war (Downs 2015, 7–8). Hyman (1960) is perhaps even more stark. He argues that in essence, two armies existed when the Civil War ended; one was controlled by the President and had duties on the American frontier and along the US border with Mexico. The other army that existed was the one that implemented Reconstruction in the South. This army, Hyman argues, is the one that Congress would never allow President Johnson to control. The stakes in Reconstruction were simply too high (Hyman 1960, 86–87).

As the political situation escalated, so too did the political behaviors undertaken by civil and military actors. The President first tried to replace several military commanders who implemented Reconstruction policies that ran counter to the President's views. Of course, this in turn made the tension faced by Grant even more severe. On one hand, he strongly disagreed with the President about Reconstruction; but on the other hand, he strongly believed that the President should act and function as the Commander of the nation's Armed Forces.[69] Before explaining these events in greater detail, it is worth pointing out that this dynamic – of a President cut off from exercising his constitutional powers – speaks to the power of high polarization in shaping the nation's civil-military dynamic. At this point in US history, in 1867, there was little if any difference between the

[69]Chernow (2017, p. 586) notes that Grant personally felt the Tenure of Office Act was "ridiculous" in that it essentially rendered the President powerless, but that he nonetheless sought to obey the law that had been passed.

nation's political and military policy. In other words, extremely high polarization had generated a political atmosphere such that civilian and military spheres very closely, if not entirely, overlapped. Grant was living in a world that might be shown by the right side of Figure 1, which appears in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

Today, it is difficult to generate a contemporary hypothetical scenario that corresponds to what occurred in 1867, but one such possibility might be if a future president, following several shootings at multiple abortion clinics across the country, ordered military forces to secure abortion clinics nationwide. Imagine, then, that the president under such conditions began to appoint and fire four-star generals and admirals solely on the basis of these officers' convictions about abortion rights. Though hypothetical, I suspect that were such a scenario to unfold, some percentage of military officers – probably those who hold to a "pro-life" view regarding abortion – would not carry out the president's orders and would instead either resign or disobey. Though entirely speculative, the more crucial point to make is that under such polarizing conditions, the president's choice of commanders would no longer be on the basis of how well a particular officer can train recruits, resupply military forces, or synchronize an attack of an enemy urban stronghold. Instead, the real question the president in this hypothetical scenario would want to know is, "will this officer fulfill my wishes on this issue?" In non-polarizing political times, this is a perfectly reasonable question for a president to ask. In extremely polarizing times such as in 1867, the question may still be appropriate, but the issue over which such a question is asked is less likely to result in compliance.

This highly polarizing dynamic existed in the United States in 1867, and the President began to engage in behavior that amounted to partisan stacking, which was explained in Chapter 2. Purely partisan convictions, rather than military skill or excellence, became the basis of selecting and assigning military leaders. In August, Johnson informed Stanton that he was suspended (not "removed," so as to avoid being instantly in violation of the Tenure of Office Act) and proceeded to appoint Grant as the Secretary of War *ad interim* until a

permanent replacement might be named (Hyman 1960, 98). The President then removed General Philip Sheridan, who commanded the 5th Military District (Louisiana and Texas), after Sheridan removed the governors of both Louisiana and Texas (R. C. White 2016, 448–49; Hyman 1960, 98–99). Sheridan, a favored subordinate of Grant's who advocated an aggressive Republican policy towards Reconstruction, had helped register thousands of blacks to vote in the district, earning widespread condemnation from Johnson and Southern whites. Johnson also later removed the commanders of the 2nd and 3rd Military Districts, Generals Daniel Sickles and John Pope, for similar reasons.[70]

Before removing Sheridan, however, the President first asked Grant's opinion on the matter. Grant responded to the President in a private letter that it was "unmistakably the expressed wish of the country that General Sheridan not be removed. . . this is a Republic where the will of the people is the law of the land. I beg that their voice may be heard" (Grant, 1867 as cited in Milton 1930, 458). Johnson then had his Attorney General, Henry Stanbery, produce an opinion strongly denouncing Sheridan's actions, and ordered Grant to distribute Stanbery's opinion to his commanders (Hesseltine 1935, 85; Chernow 2017, 589). Grant complied, but not entirely, with Johnson's order. He distributed Stanbery's opinion, but simultaneously let his commanders know that "they could freely interpret" Stanbery's opinion as they saw fit (Chernow 2017, 589).

Grant's behavior in this instance constitutes a form of selective compliance. Though Grant perhaps thought Sheridan's methods were a bit too strong, he did not fault the underlying premise of Sheridan's behavior: the Governor of Louisiana and other civilian officials whom Sheridan had previously removed had been responsible for preventing blacks from registering to vote, facilitating violence during race riots in New Orleans the previous year, and generally thwarting the implementation of key Reconstruction policies (Dawson and Louisiana State University Press 1994, 46–50). Those who closely observed this episode noted that, "the President, of course, observed [Grant's] tacit disobedience, but he

[70]Johnson's replacement commanders were all known to be sympathetic to Johnson's views on Reconstruction, especially General Winfield Scott Hancock, who replaced Sheridan in the 5th Military District.

was powerless to control or punish his subordinates. He had disregarded the will of Congress, and in return the officers of the Army disregarded his. The situation was approaching mutiny on one side, or else treason on the other" (Badeau 1887, 71).

More Public Appeals

After publication of Stanbery's opinion, Sheridan then wrote Grant a letter in which Sheridan chastised the President (Hesseltine 1935, 85–86). The letter was leaked and published, though it is not clear who was responsible for the leak. The President ultimately decided not to punish Sheridan for the letter on the grounds that it had been written, at least plausibly from Sheridan's perspective, as a private rather than public letter (Hesseltine 1935, 85–86). However, Republicans in Congress were greatly happy with Sheridan's criticism of the President and used it as grounds to make further overtures towards Grant (Hesseltine 1935, 85–86). Grant also furnished the contents of a previously private letter he had sent to the President – about the possibility of removing Sheridan – to several press outlets, including the *Army and Navy Journal*, which was popular with military audiences (Chernow 2017, 596). Grant's behaviors – directing his subordinates not to reinstate any politicians Sheridan had removed, and then leaking a letter to the press – challenged both the principles of civilian control and non-partisanship.

In early January of 1868, the situation involving Johnson, Grant, and the Army finally moved toward a climax. The Senate first released a report refusing to concur with Stanton's suspension, which in turn raised immediate questions as to whether Grant's serving as the *ad interim* War Secretary was legal or not (McKitrick 1988, 501–5). Grant did not wish to find out the answer, and thus he attempted to vacate the office, which Johnson would not let him easily do (McKitrick 1988, 501–2).

Exactly what transpired next is not so easy to discern, even for contemporary historians (Chernow 2017, 602). The critical question is what sort of mutual understanding, if any, Grant and Johnson had regarding Grant's continued service as the

ad interim War Secretary, and when such an understanding was reached. Those who are sympathetic toward Johnson allege that the two men agreed that Grant would either keep the office, even if the Senate or the Supreme Court would hold proceedings to decide the legality of Stanton's removal or that of the Tenure of Office Act altogether, or that Grant would vacate the office sufficiently ahead of time so as to enable Johnson to name a replacement and thus, to not be found in violation of the law (Milton 1930, 481–85).

Other historians who are charitable toward Grant take a different view, arguing that Grant made it clear to the President that if Stanton were to be reinstated by the Senate, Grant would comply by returning the office to Stanton immediately (Chernow 2017, 602–7). Regardless of which view is historically accurate, it is clear that after a tense and heated cabinet meeting in January of 1868, Johnson's administration engaged in multiple efforts to discredit Grant in the press and to portray him as willfully acting in a "duplicitous" manner (Chernow 2017, 605; Milton 1930, 483–85; McKitrick 1988, 503; Hesseltine 1935, 106–7). For several weeks, the nation hung on press reports fueled by leaked letters, interviews, and other details provided by the Johnson Administration.

The civilian acts of leaking information and giving interviews to the press in this instance violated the principles of civilian control and non-partisanship. They violated the principle of civilian control because they reflected the fact that by this point, the Administration was no longer attempting to exercise oversight of the military through any established mechanisms. Indeed, to be fair to Johnson and also historically accurate, many of these regular mechanisms had been removed by Congress through the Military Reconstruction Acts, which effectually made the Commander in Chief an observer of, rather than a participant in, the state's civil-military relationship. Leaking and giving interviews to the press to discredit Grant also violated the principle of non-partisanship, however. While it was well known that Grant differed with the Commander in Chief over Reconstruction policies by this point, the public nature of the leaks and interviews given by the Johnson Administration only served to publicize these differences.

Summary of the 1865-1868 Period

In summary, civilian and military actors engaged in several extreme forms of political behavior from 1865-1868. These behaviors ranged considerably, from Johnson sending Grant to refute Carl Schurz's initial observations of the south in 1865, to Johnson's harnessing of several military actors on his "Swing Around the Circle Tour" ahead of the 1866 midterm elections, to Grant's refusal to be sent to Mexico in front of an assembled cabinet. These were extreme forms of behavior, especially considering that many were undertaken by the nation's top civilian and military actor.

Table 21 summarizes the political behaviors undertaken by civilian and military actors from 1865-1868.

Several of these behaviors, especially partisan stacking and explicit insubordination, constitute extreme forms of political behavior in the sense that they occurred at the very highest levels of civilian government and the military. That the president and the nation's top Army general engaged in these behaviors underscores both the high level of political polarization and military prestige that existed at the time.

Part 2 - The Army, Domestic Disturbance, and Failed Reform Efforts, 1877-1880

This chapter now turns to examining the political behaviors undertaken by civilian and military actors beginning roughly a decade later, from approximately 1877-1880. Similar to the first part of the case study, I set the scene by arguing that although the level of polarization remained high from 1865-1880, the relative prestige of the military as an institution declined from 1868-1877. Furthermore, this decline in military prestige corresponds mainly with a reduction in the component of military prestige associated with the centrality or importance of the military, rather than with the component of prestige associated with the perceived skill or excellence of the military (Davis 1942; Jaco 1970).

Table 21: Political Behaviors Involving the Military, 1865-1868

Actor	Tactic of Political Behavior	Date	Instance	Normative Standard Violated
President Andrew Johnson	Military as Sales Reps	1865	Johnson dispatches Grant to refute a previous report made by Carl Schurz regarding political conditions in the south	Non-partisanship; Non-interference
President Andrew Johnson	Electoral Swaggering	1866	Andrew Johnson directs Generals Grant and Meade, along with Admiral Farragut, to accompany him on a tour of the nation ahead of the 1866 midterm elections	Non-partisanship
President Andrew Johnson	Brass in the Cabinet	1866	Johnson seeks to replace Secretary of War Stanton with General Sherman	Non-partisanship
General Grant	Explicit Insubordination	1866	Grant refuses to be sent to Mexico by Johnson	Civilian control
President Andrew Johnson	Partisan Stacking	1867	Andrew Johnson replaces Generals Sheridan, Sickles, and Pope as Military District Commanders	Non-partisanship
General Grant	Selective Obedience/Compliance	1867	Grant publishes Attorney General Stanbery's legal opinion of the Military Reconstruction Acts in conjunction with President Johnson's wishes, but also instructs his commanders to make their own interpretations	Civilian control
General Sheridan	Public Appeal (perhaps inadvertent)	1867	Sheridan writes a letter to Grant in which he upbraids the President's views on Reconstruction	Civilian control; non-partisanship
General Grant	Public Appeal	1867	After Johnson removes Sheridan, Grant leaks a private letter he had sent to Johnson in which he protested the move	Civilian control; non-partisanship
President Andrew Johnson	Public Appeal	1868	Johnson leaks the content of a heated cabinet meeting held in 1868 for the purposes of discrediting Grant	Civilian control; Non-partisanship

I then narrate several significant events that involved the Army from 1877-1880, including the use of the Army in several domestic labor disputes and bureaucratic efforts concerning Army reform. I argue that the general qualities of the political behaviors engaged in by civilian and military actors from 1877-1880 were noticeably different from those which both types of actors had engaged in from 1865-1868. In particular, civilians did not exhibit the same level of intensity to harness the prestige of the military because the military no longer afforded as significant a political advantage as it had immediately at the end of the Civil War. Furthermore, senior military leaders in the late 1870s themselves were fully cognizant that they now represented an institution that carried less political clout than it once did. This is not to say that military leaders were utterly powerless or lacked the ability to influence civilian leaders or the public altogether, but simply that in relative terms, the Army of 1877 was not as politically influential as the Army of 1867.

High Level of Polarization, 1877-1880

The level of polarization remained quite high as Reconstruction ended. When we view Figure 3, we can see that after a few very small drops in the level of polarization in the US House, polarization only climbed beginning in the mid-1880s continuously until after the start of the 20th Century. Polarization in the Senate reflects a very similar trajectory.

Scholars have noted that polarization in the 21st century shares more than just a couple of passing similarities with that which prevailed in the late 19th century. These scholars make the point that in the late 19th century, issues related to "race, morality, immigration, and themes related to populism" contributed to American polarization (Azari and Hetherington 2016, 93). These themes remained salient as the United States emerged from Reconstruction and embarked on a process of significant industrialization throughout the decades of the late 19th century (Skowronek 1982). In short, the level of polarization remained relatively high well into the start of the 20th century.

Declining Military Prestige, 1868-1877

However, the relative level of military prestige declined during the period 1868-1877. The decline in the level of military prestige, furthermore, was not the result of one factor, but rather the confluence of at least three broad factors that emerged throughout the Reconstruction period. These interrelated factors are, first, the significant downsizing of the Army after the Civil War; second, a lack of clarity concerning the Army's *raison d'etre* in an era in which the US faced no clear international threats; and third, a general sense of apathy toward the Army as a result of its involvement in the inherent political tasks associated with Reconstruction.

The first two of these factors primarily weakened the prevailing sense of the Army's centrality to the life of the nation. The third factor, the perception held by society of the Army's role in Reconstruction, is more closely associated with the component of prestige that relates to society's evaluation of the military's skill or professional excellence. Together, all three factors combined to render the military less prestigious than it had been at the conclusion of the Civil War. I explain each of these factors below in greater detail, and defend the claim of the military possessing less relative prestige in 1877 than in 1865 by presenting the viewpoints held by several military officers who served in the late 1870s.

The first factor that contributed to the Army's diminishing prestige was the significant reduction in manpower the service endured during the decade following the end of the Civil War. Within six months of Lee's surrender at Appomattox, "800,000 of the 1 million men in the Union's Grand Army of the Republic were mustered out of federal service" (Laurie and Cole 1997, 21). Four years later, by 1869, the Army's authorized end strength stood at 37,313 (Utley, 1974 and Cooper, 1986 as cited in Clark 2017, 99). By the end of 1875, the Army was capped at 25,000 men, including officers and enlisted men (Laurie and Cole 1997, 21).[71]

[71] Laurie and Cole (1997, p. 22) also note that only 2,105 officers remained in the Army after 1871 — a figure that did not change by more than 100 men until the close of the century.

Reductions in manpower involved issues beyond mere end strength, however. Woven into the question of how large the Army should be was the question of *how* the Army should be sourced, and what kind of an Army was necessary. Did the nation need a standing Army, or were volunteer forces sufficient? Many Americans and Congressional leaders felt that the Army of the Civil War, which was comprised of a conglomerate of regular, volunteer, and militia forces, had served the nation well, and thus that a large, professional, standing Army simply was not necessary.[72]

A second factor that contributed to the Army's diminished importance to the nation, and thus its diminished level of prestige, involved the lack of clarity regarding the primary purpose for which regular Army forces existed in an era of relative peace. Until the Spanish-American War, and with the exception of engaging in several specific conflicts with American Indians in Western territories of the United States, there were few significant threats the Army faced. The Army had also become increasingly scattered in a geographical sense. Laurie and Cole (1997, p.22) note, for instance, that upon the end of Reconstruction, "all of the cavalry forces and three fourths of the infantry" had moved to geographical outposts "west of the Mississippi Rive to battle hostile Indians and otherwise police the frontier." In the absence of a compelling international threat, Army leaders in the 1870s and 1880s were challenged to convince Congress that any meaningful reforms to the Army were necessary.[73]

The third factor that contributed to the decline in the Army's prestige in the decade after the Civil War was its involvement in the inherently political tasks of Reconstruction. Though it is difficult to precisely gauge the impact of Reconstruction on the military's relationship with American society, we can reasonably discern that the Army came to be especially disliked and distrusted by Southern White Democrats (Byler 2006, 6–11). After

[72] Clark (2017) tells the full story of the Army's efforts to reform after the Civil War in his book, *Preparing for War: The Emergence of the Modern U.S. Army, 1815-1917*. See especially his fourth chapter on this point, "The Civil War's Legacy."

[73] Grandstaff (1998) and Clark (2017) conclude that the late 1890s and early 1900s, after the Spanish-American War, is the period in which the Army became more successful at gaining support for their intended reforms. See Grandstaff (1998), 537 and Clark (2017) for more details.

all, Southern White Democrats had favored President Johnson's views on Reconstruction and had also cheered the behavior of military figures such as General Winfield Scott Hancock who, unlike Generals Grant and Sheridan, sought a limited role for military forces in the Southern States.

The antagonism of Southern White Democrats only increased as Reconstruction continued for more than a decade. Byler (2006) notes that of particular angst to southerners was the way that federal forces had been used at voting locations during elections throughout the Reconstruction era, and particularly after 1870, when the military districts created by the Military Reconstruction Acts of 1867 ceased to formally function (Byler 2006, 8). So eager were Southern Democrats to rid their states from what they perceived to be heavy-handed involvement by federal troops that in the aftermath of the contested presidential election of 1876, they essentially agreed to award the Presidency to the Republican Candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes, in exchange for a guarantee from President Grant that federal troops would depart the Southern States (C. V. Woodward 1991, 6–8; Marszalek 2007, 428; Wooster 2021, 242).

These three factors – the significant downsizing of the Army and whether a professional Army was even required, the lack of any clear international threat, and significant partisan resentment over how the Army had been used during Reconstruction – combined to render the military less central and vital to the nation than it had been at the conclusion of the Civil War and in the immediate years which followed. Whereas General Grant, the victorious military commander of a brutal and lengthy Civil War, was highly sought after by all parties from 1865-1868, military leaders in the late 1870s and early 1880s, many of whom were certainly popular and well known figures, no longer afforded civilian leaders as significant a political advantage. Even as the level of polarization remained high, the context had changed insofar as the military was no longer as vital to the nation as it had been.

To see this, consider that Army leaders themselves by the 1870s were cognizant that

the institution of which they were a part occupied a less prominent role in the nation's life. For instance, Major General John Pope, whose 1867 letter to General Grant was likely leaked and published in *The New York Times* and was referenced in this chapter's introductory paragraph, told a gathering of Civil War veterans in 1873 that he was concerned that the Army might "properly and naturally become an object of suspicion and dislike" in the years to come (Cozzens, 2000 as cited in Byler 2006, 1). In one private letter written in 1877, General William Sherman, the commanding general of the Army from 1869-1883 and himself a major hero of the Civil War, wrote, "Our enemy is not now the Indians but Congress" (Sherman, 1877 as cited in Marszalek 2007, 432). Finally, Francis V. Greene, who graduated from West Point in 1870 and would fight in the Spanish-American War, would reflect in 1919 on the general atmosphere that prevailed in the late 1870s and early 1880s as follows: "in the midst of such pressing problems as the building of railroads, the resumption of specie payments, the silver question, and the tariff, there was no time to think about the needs of the Army. There was no 'military situation in the United States' worth thinking about" (Greene, 1919 as cited in Fitzpatrick 2017, 223). These are just three snapshots of three different officers, but each one clearly points to an Army that did not occupy a place of prominence in the hearts and minds of its citizens.

Political Behaviors Involving the Military, 1877-1880

In this section, I narrate two related episodes that occurred in the period from 1877-1878 and describe the political behaviors that military and civilian actors either undertook or did *not* undertake as these episodes unfolded. The first was the use of regular Army forces to quell what would end up being several domestic disturbances in the late 1870s-1890s.[74] The first of these domestic disturbances, known as *The Great Railway Strike of 1877*, began in Maryland in July of that year before spreading to West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and later, Chicago. The second episode came on the heels of this strike, and

[74]See Cooper (1980) and Laurie and Cole (1997) for excellent and in-depth accounts of these events.

involved a congressional effort that tried (and ultimately failed) to reform the Army the following year in 1878. The political behaviors that occurred throughout these episodes were characteristically different in several important ways, which I describe below, than those that had occurred in the earlier portion of this case study, from 1865-1868.

Opportunities Not Seized to Make Public Appeals

The Great Railway Strike of 1877 and other strikes which followed occurred as workers, particularly in the rail and coal industries, protested what they perceived were unfair and inequitable working conditions, including the enaction of several wage cuts by their employers after the economic downturn of 1873 (Cooper 1980, 43–45). At first, state and local officials tried to respond to these strikes with local law enforcement entities and state National Guard units, but these proved insufficient to handle the strikers, who had not only ceased all train traffic, but in some cases, had engaged in acts of violence (Cooper 1980, 43–45; Laurie and Cole 1997, 30–32). Despite concerns about involving the Army in what might be perceived as an economic "class war," President Hayes dispatched the Regular Army in the summer of 1877 to maintain law and order (Laurie and Cole 1997, 32).

The timing of this strike is also notable. Congress had failed to pass an appropriations bill funding the Army past July 1 of 1877, resulting in an Army that was essentially serving without pay. Moreover, the failed appropriations bill was the result of bitter fighting between Southern Democrats in Congress who were angry with an Army that had taken on significant political roles during Reconstruction, and Congressional Republicans who had directed the use of the Army for precisely these controversial tasks. After Congressional Republicans failed to commit to any firm restrictions on the Army's domestic use after the controversial 1876 presidential election, democrats "blocked the 1877 appropriations bill" (Clark 2017, 115).

The Army was generally successful in quelling the *Great Strike of 1877*, and many citizens, popular press outlets, and Army leaders perceived the Army as having performed

admirably (Cooper 1980, 60–61; Laurie and Cole 1997, 52–55; Skowronek 1982, 100–101). And yet, Army leaders did not make significant public appeals commending or lauding the performance of the troops in the aftermath of these events. The lack of public appeals made by military leaders after the *Great Strike of 1877* is even more noteworthy considering that the Army's tactical response to the disturbance had been commanded by General Winfield Scott Hancock, who had risen to national prominence – especially among Democrats – after replacing General Phil Sheridan as the 5th Military District Commander in New Orleans in 1867.

Hancock was no stranger to making public appeals. In fact, it was precisely the publication of his *General Orders Number 40* upon assuming command in New Orleans in 1867 that had "stirred a storm throughout the nation," soured Hancock's relationship with General Grant, and brought Hancock "prominently to the attention of the Democratic Party" (Jordan 1988, 204). Moreover, Hancock would go on to obtain the Democratic presidential nomination in 1880, obviously thus sufficiently well known in 1877. And yet, Hancock did not publish an op-ed after the Army's response to the strikes. Given the lack of funding for the Army, the significant reductions in size it had endured, and other concerns about the Army's role in an era of peace, it at least seems reasonable that Hancock had an opportunity to write a public appeal in which he might have called for increased funding, troop strength, or simply gathered public attention for the Army's recent accomplishments.

Furthermore, the historical evidence shows that Hancock was in fact very proud of how the troops had performed, and particularly the restraint they had shown in bringing the domestic disturbance to an end. In a private letter written to another fellow general, John Schofield, Hancock stated, "the troops have lost the government no prestige…it was the moral force of the United States government that was displayed — not its physical force" (Hancock, 1877 as cited in Cooper 1980, 61). Yet Hancock seems not to have made such sentiments to the public in a form of an appeal.

At a minimum, such an outcome is consistent with the expectation that despite the Army's success in responding to the labor strikes, the broader political environment still remained one of general indifference or apathy towards the Army. In other words, the success of the Army in quelling this labor strike did not significantly change the perceived centrality or sense of importance of the Army. The labor disputes were certainly not minor incidents, but they were not major wars resulting in tens of thousands of casualties or the nation assuming a war footing. If anything, and as the second episode illustrates, the domestic use of the Army in any capacity, especially in the immediate wake of Reconstruction, remained an extremely sensitive topic that, unlike a decade prior, Army leaders were more or less content to let civilian politicians argue over.

The army appropriations bill that eventually passed Congress in 1878 contained two critical provisions. First, at the behest of Congressional Democrats, the bill instituted the *posse comitatus* law. In response to what they perceived to be the inappropriate use of the Army throughout the Reconstruction period, Democrats "forbade the use of the Army as a posse to aid local officials in dealing with domestic turmoil without the express order of the President, and only then for very specific purposes" (Cooper 1980, 83). Second, the bill established a bipartisan committee known as the *Burnside Commission* to examine a number of military reorganization and reform topics, including the Army's size as well as systems involving manning, promotion, retirement, and staffing (Clark 2017, 116).[75]

Historians note that Army leaders remained relatively "quiet" about the passage of the important *posse comitatus* provision (Connelly 2006, 238). Similar to General Hancock *not* writing a public appeal after the Army's success in quelling the *Great Strike of 1877*, the silence of Army leaders on this important and critical topic strongly hints at how Army leaders viewed their potential to persuade the public at this particular juncture. Furthermore, this historical record again indicates that at least in private, Army leaders predominantly did not approve of providing open-ended support to civilian authorities, and

[75]Connelly (2006), Fitzpatrick (2017),and Clark (2017) are among the contemporary historians who write about these particular reforms extensively.

thus favored the majority of the restrictions on the use of the regular Army contained in the *posse comitatus* provision (Laurie and Cole 1997; Connelly 2006, 238–39).

The fact that senior Army leaders remained silent on this very important and consequential aspect of the appropriations bill, and that the majority of these Army leaders had served the previous decade and had either engaged in making public appeals themselves or been exposed to others who did, strongly suggests that the context had changed, and that in particular, military leaders could not as easily influence public opinion. This is consistent with the evidence showing that in terms of centrality or importance to the nation, the military's position had diminished relative to what it had been immediately at the end of the Civil War. The evidence is also consistent with the theoretical expectation that as military prestige diminishes, there is less of an opportunity to influence public opinion, and that as a result, military and civilian leaders are less likely to engage in public behaviors that violate civil-military relations.

Shoulder Tapping and Limited Public Appeals

It is not as if the Army and its leaders engaged in no political behaviors whatsoever in this latter portion of the case study. Army leaders in fact did engage in political behaviors, but these were far less severe and rarely violated the principles of civil-military relations. This is most clearly seen in the political behaviors engaged in by Army leaders to proposed military reforms resulting from the *Burnside Commission*, which was established by the 1878 appropriations bill. Chaired by Senator Ambrose Burnside, a former Union general, the commission ultimately recommended a number of Army reforms that were essentially a series of compromises: to placate Republicans, the legislation proposed that the overall size of the Army remain the same; to placate Democrats who largely wished to reduce the Army, the legislation proposed a reduction in the number of Army officers, including the number of generals, as well as a reduction in several types of Army units (Fitzpatrick 2017; Clark 2017, 118–21; Skowronek 1982, 103).

The Army did not receive and react to the proposed legislation uniformly. Some leaders, including Generals Sherman and Schofield, cautiously and perhaps somewhat reluctantly approved of the legislation on the grounds that it likely served as the Army's best chance at obtaining any meaningful reforms in the foreseeable future, while others, such as Generals Sheridan and Hancock, did not support the legislation at all (Clark 2017, 118–21; Jordan 1988, 254).[76] But the curtailment of the Army's centrality to the nation impacted how military and civilian leaders advocated in support of or against the proposed legislation. Military actors rarely addressed or appealed to the general public about the proposed reforms; rather, they either addressed fellow military actors or select politicians directly. Additionally, the Army's senior leaders remained remarkably quiet about the legislation and did not engage in significant efforts either in support of or against the bill's passage. This is a significant difference from, for example, General Pope's 1867 letter published in *The New York Times* and referenced in the introduction of this chapter, which blatantly argued against President Johnson's stated policies on Reconstruction.

For starters, a number of military officers wrote letters in response to the *Burnside Commission* asking for their opinions on the proposed changes. However, these letters should not be construed as inappropriate, as they were written in response to official inquiries made by the commission. Some officers, however, engaged in more overt forms of behavior. For instance, Fitzpatrick (2006) notes that several staff bureau officers, who in particular feared that the legislation would reduce their ability to influence Congress, produced and distributed informational pamphlets to members of Congress (Fitzpatrick 2017, 221).

Military officers handing out informational pamphlets in order to persuade members of congress to denounce the legislation in question amounts to acts of "shoulder tapping" and "alliance building," behaviors which were outlined in Chapter 2 of this dissertation (Risa

[76]Clark (2017) notes that while Sheridan approved of many aspects of the legislation, including proposed changes to the delegated authorities exercised by the commanding general, Sheridan took issue with the legislation's plans to trim the Army's Cavalry formations.

Brooks 2009). Making and distributing pamphlets – unlike writing a response to an inquiry made by Congress – violated the principles of civilian control in that they caused the *Burnside Commission* to contend with a set of military officers who were functioning as a disparate interest group. Burnside himself was frustrated that he had to contend with the staff officers' advocacy efforts and noted, "I must say that some of these staff officers have gone beyond the line of duty, particularly. . . in Washington" (Burnside, 1878 as cited in Fitzpatrick 2017, 221).

In addition to these acts of "shoulder tapping," military actors also made a number of semi-public appeals regarding the proposed reforms. However, these appeals differed in two important ways from the leaks and appeals made by Army leaders in 1865-1868. First, rather than publishing op-eds in major US newspapers such as *The New York Times*, military leaders aired their views in military periodicals such as the *Army and Navy Journal*, a periodical primarily read and consumed by military actors including soldiers, sailors, and veterans. And second, the content of what came to be published did not firmly support or denounce the proposed legislation, but rather commented on various aspects of the legislation. General Sherman, for instance, provided letters to the *Army and Navy Journal* written by several leaders, including Generals Schofield, Sheridan, Pope, and Lieutenant Colonel Emory Upton (Connelly 2006, 243). Some of these officers supported and some opposed the recommended reforms. This suggests that in providing these letters to the *Army and Navy Journal*, Sherman was not leaking information to score partisan political points, but rather to inform military audiences of the content of the legislation. This seems the most convincing explanation given Sherman's ambivalent disposition regarding the Burnside Commission's proposals and marks a noticeable difference in behavior from the leaking and threat of leaking information between President Johnson and Grant that had marked the President's final days in office in 1868.[77]

[77] Marszalek (2007, p. 435) quotes Sherman as having stated, "I shall not advocate the Bill or oppose it, but shall conform my action, official and personal, to the conclusion of the Law Making Powers of Our Government."

Civilian Political Behavior, 1877 - 1880

It is also important to examine the behavior of civilian actors during this latter portion of the case study. If in fact the prestige of the military had diminished relative to the level of military prestige that had existed at the end of the Civil War, the theory predicts that civilian leaders especially would have been less inclined to use the military to influence public opinion relative to their attempts to harness military figures for political advantage from 1865-1868. Does this central prediction fit the historical events that occurred from 1877-1880?

In one sense, the theoretical prediction holds; but in another sense, it does not, at least not at first glance. The theoretical prediction holds in that civilian leaders did not seek to leverage the military for their own partisan gain in ways that were as obvious as they did from 1865-1868, nor did these behaviors take on as severe a form of behavior as was evident in the prior period explored in this case study.

The historical record contains no indication that any sort of parallel behavior to Johnson's "Swing Around the Circle Tour," in which the President had several currently serving senior military leaders accompany him to several American cities for the sole purpose of bolstering his party's chances in the 1866 midterm elections, occurred under President Hayes. The memoirs of Sherman and other military leaders who occupied senior positions in the late 1870s do not show evidence that politicians shaped their public appearances so as to literally stand next to military leaders in public forums for the purposes of harnessing the popularity held by these military figures, as President Johnson did vis-a-vis General Grant at the White House in 1866, as discussed previously in this chapter.

This is not to say that civilian actors never engaged in political behaviors with respect to the military from 1877-1880. They always do. The question is what kind of character did these political behaviors take on or assume. For instance, Representative James Garfield, who later became President and who had served as a Union general during the

Table 22: Presidential Candidates, Post Civil-War Era

Election Year	Candidate	Party	Veteran Type
1868	Ulysses S. Grant	Republican	Career General
1872	Ulysses S. Grant	Republican	Career General
1876	Rutherford Hayes	Republican	Battlefield General
1880	Winfield Scott Hancock (and James Garfield)	Democrat (Republican)	Career General (Battlefield General)
1888	Benjamin Harrison	Republican	Battlefield General
1892	Benjamin Harrison	Republican	Battlefield General

[a] Reproduced from Table 5.1 in Jeremy Teigen's (2018) book, Why Veterans Run (p. 105).

Civil War, wrote a two-part series in *The North American Review* in early 1878 in which he advocated that Congress take seriously the topic of Army reform. In these publications, Garfield included a portion of, or in some cases, the entirety of, a number of letters written by senior Army leaders addressing the size of the peacetime Army, the role of the staff vis-a-vis the commanding general and the secretary of war, and other pertinent items.

Garfield's articles, however, do not read as a blatantly partisan documents. His articles rather function as a sort of alarm bell for the nation, urging the American people (and Congress in particular) to treat the Army seriously in spite of the very real transition from war to peace that had occurred since the end of the Civil War (Garfield 1878a, 1878b). Thus, the theory holds in that civilian policymakers from 1877-1880 for the most part engaged in political behaviors that were consistent with the routine duties of political actors and in ways that did not violate normative principles of civil-military conduct.

The theory holds less well with respect to the specific political behavior of military figures running for office, and in particular, the presidency. To see this, consider that during the seven presidential elections held from 1868 to 1892, only the election between Grover Cleveland and James Blaine in 1884 featured two non-veteran candidates (Teigen 2018, 104–6). All other elections featured at least one veteran as one of the party's major final candidates. These candidates running for president in elections held between 1868 and 1892 (except for 1884) are displayed in Table 22.

This then begs the question of how a military figure could become the final candidate of a major political party if military prestige truly declined in the decade after the Civil

War. Specifically, we must ask the question: if military prestige truly declined after the Civil War, how did General Winfield Scott Hancock still manage to obtain the Democratic nomination in 1880? Does this historical fact cast doubt on what has been argued here – that military prestige truly did decline relative to 1865 by 1880 - and if it does, what are the implications for this dissertation?

One plausible way of reconciling what appears at first glance to be a contradiction involves a theoretical relationship between individual and institutional dimensions of prestige. The theory that I offered in Chapter 2 of this dissertation hinted at these distinctions by drawing on the two separate but related components of prestige involving first, the centrality or the importance of a profession or occupation and second, the skill or excellence of the members who serve in the profession or occupation. These separate but related components were first theorized in the sociological literature regarding the stratification of occupations (Davis 1942; Jaco 1970).

In this vein, it as at least plausible to interpret Hancock's obtaining the Democratic Party nomination in 1880 as evidence that under certain conditions, individuals can retain a high level of personal prestige even when the profession of which they are a part operates at a relatively lower level of prestige. Applying this dynamic to the two dimensions of prestige would suggest that some military leaders who served in the late 1870s were considered by society to have held a high level of skill or excellence, which is the second component of prestige. This certainly fits conceptually with the understanding that many of these military leaders serving in the late 1870s had achieved heroic status as a result of their martial exploits during the Civil War. At the same time, though, these senior military leaders were in fact serving in a profession that, when viewed through the lens of centrality – the first component of prestige – was no longer as central to the life of the nation compared to a decade prior.

While future research is required to further examine the institutional versus the personal dimensions of military prestige as a variable, such a dynamic is at least consistent

with a very plausible explanation for the selection of Hancock as the Democratic Party nominee in 1880. Hancock, Sherman, Sheridan, Schofield, and other generals were in fact, by the late 1870s, serving in an Army that was more than a decade removed from the conclusion of the Civil War. The nation was no longer on a martial footing in 1877-1880 in the way that it had been during the Civil War and in the early period of Reconstruction. While this change in contexts certainly seems to have produced less extreme political behaviors involving the military, there were still signs that for some occasions, civilian actors were not dissuaded from harnessing every element of military prestige available.

Summary of the 1877-1880 Period

In the decade after the Civil War, multiple factors combined to render the Army less prestigious than it had been at the close of the Civil War. The political nature of Reconstruction had been unpopular with many Americans, particularly with Southerners. As the nation reunified, the Army became a perennial target by Democrats who sought to trim the Army's size and proscribe the terms of its domestic involvement. In the absence of a clear international threat to prepare against, the Army was largely at the mercy of a divided Congress that was not convinced to take up a number of reforms in the late 1870s.

The Army's reduced centrality to the nation in 1877-1880 greatly impacted the character of the political behaviors military and civilian leaders undertook compared to those undertaken immediately after the Civil War ended. Unlike the political behaviors exhibited by General Grant and President Johnson, which included acts of explicit insubordination (Grant), partisan stacking (Johnson), and the routine threat of leaking information (both actors), the political behaviors undertaken between 1877-1880 by military and civilian actors were far less extreme.

The political behaviors that did occur involving the military from 1877 - 1880 included relatively normal acts such as shoulder tapping (some military actors) and public appeals that were by and large not explicitly partisan in tone (military and civilian). Furthermore,

Table 23: Political Behaviors Involving the Military, 1877-1881

Actor	Tactic of Political Behavior	Date	Instance	Normative Standard Violated
Military Staff Officers	Shoulder Tapping	1878	Staff officers distribute informational pamphlets to members of Congress arguing against adopting a number of provisions proposed by the Burnside Commission	Civilian Control
General William Sherman	Public Appeals	1878	General Sherman sent letters written by fellow military commanders to be published by The Army and Navy Journal regarding various reforms under consideration by the Burnside Commission	No principles violated; the public appeal was geared to the military community and conducted for the purposes of informing rather than influencing
Representative James Garfield (Civilian)	Public Appeal	1878	Garfield publishes two articles in The North American Review on the topic of Army reform in early 1878	No principles violated; the articles were written in general terms and did not seek to leverage the Army for personal political or partisan gain
General Winfield Scott Hancock	Running for Office	1880	General Hancock runs for political candidacy even as he is an active member of the Army in 1880	Non-partisanship

military leaders, including those who had made public appeals previously in their careers from 1865-1868, did not make public appeals and instead to stay silent after several important events, especially following the Army's tactical success in quelling the first of many domestic labor disputes in the late 19th Century, *The Great Railway Strike of 1877*.

The political behaviors engaged in by civilian and military actors from 1877-1880 are displayed in Table 23.

Alternate Explanations

Besides the relative decline in the importance of the Army to the nation in the years following the Civil War, a number of other factors might explain the changes in how military and civilian leaders engaged in political activity involving the military. One suggestion centers on individual personality differences between senior army leaders

between 1865 and 1877. There may be some merit to this explanation. Grant was no lover of politics as a General, but it is also well known among historians that Sherman and Grant approached politics rather differently. Marszalek (2007) for instance notes that, "... politics was anathema to Sherman. He viewed politicians as venal adversaries he was forced to tolerate but refused to work with" (Marszalek 2007, 425).

In my view, however, personality differences alone are not sufficient to explain why Sherman behaved so differently in the late 1870s than Grant did in the late 1860s. Even if Sherman was naturally inclined against engaging in openly political behaviors, the historical literature clearly indicates that Sherman strongly lamented the fact that he was presiding over the Army in an era in which the Army was no longer considered vital to the country.

Another potential alternate explanation involves the change in the conflict or threat environment that occurred between the period of 1865-1868 and 1877-1880. In my view, there is merit to this explanation, but we have to carefully think *how* the change in the threat environment impacted the variables that are part of this dissertation's theory.

It is factually incorrect to simply state that Lee's surrender in 1865 ushered in an era of instant peace, and that the change in political behaviors that occurred by the late 1870s simply reflects this change from war to peace. The reason such a view is incorrect is, as this case study has shown, the Reconstruction period involved a significant military undertaking – an occupation – of the Southern States and involved military forces and their commanders exercising a number of incredible wartime authorities (Downs 2015). Additionally, over the nearly twelve year period of Reconstruction, the nation's political circumstances also changed as the nation reunited, but the tasks associated with Reconstruction had rendered the Army less popular, especially in the southern states.

It would be far more accurate to conclude that a combination of factors, including the significant reduction in the size of the Army, the lack of any clear international threat for the Army to prepare against, and a decline in the perception of the Army as a result of the

types of tasks it carried out during Reconstruction itself rendered the Army less central to the life of the nation in 1880 than it had been in 1865. In other words, I acknowledge that the change in the threat environment that occurred over the course of 1865-1880 was a factor that impacted the political behavior civilian and military leaders undertook by the end of the same period, but I contend that this change in the threat environment nonetheless operated through the wider variable of military prestige. In this way, I see no contradiction between claiming that a reduction in military prestige *and* a change in the threat environment contributed to the change in political behaviors undertaken by civilian and military actors between 1865-1868 and 1877-1880.

A final alternate explanation propounds that what changed in this case study was not the level of military prestige, but rather the presence of a political crisis. In this vein, the years 1865-1868 constituted a political crisis that compelled Grant to act the way that he did. Furthermore, through such a lens, the level of military prestige did not significantly diminish between 1868 and 1877. What really happened is that the political crisis of the early years of Reconstruction were eventually replaced by a more normal type of 19th Century politics.

Admittedly, there is much about this view that I find accurate and true. The years from 1865-1868 were indeed atypical years, and they certainly resulted in more than one crisis, including one of the few impeachments of a sitting US President that has occurred in US history. The challenge associated with this alternate view arises from the difficulty in disentangling these years of political crisis from the high level of polarization that existed at the same time. The empirical record shows that political polarization was high throughout the late 19th century, which leads us to infer that polarization did not change over the period examined here. At the very best, then, we should ask how or why a political crisis emerged during the years 1865-1868 to begin with.

As I have attempted to argue here, these years were unique in the nation's history, as they coincided with the end of the Civil War and the immediate task of restoring the former

Confederate States to the Union. Military leaders were extraordinarily popular and well known in those years, and ultimately were given the task of occupying the South as part of Congress's plan for Reconstruction, a plan that ran counter to that of the President's. In this vein, the crisis years of 1865-1868 were made more acute than they would have been if the military and its leaders would not have held the degree of prestige that they did.

Conclusion

This chapter finds moderate support for H4, which stated that military and civilian actors engage in relatively more visible and public forms of political behavior that involve the military institution when military prestige is high relative to periods of low military prestige. It also finds strong support for H5, which stated that the most extreme levels of overall political activity occur in environments that are characterized by simultaneously high levels of political polarization and military prestige.

The strongest evidence for these claims arises from the severity of political behaviors that occurred in the United States between 1865-1868 and the actors who committed them. At times during these years of crisis, President Johnson and General Grant, the nation's chief executive and the nation's top military officer, openly and blatantly challenged what even by historical standards constituted the most basic and fundamental norms of civil-military conduct. Both actors did so because of the interplay of exceedingly high levels of political polarization and military prestige. The nation was in the early process of recovering from a bitter and destructive Civil War, making consequential and weighty decisions related to Reconstruction that touched on a host of significant moral and ethical factors. At the same time, the level of prestige afforded to senior military leaders, and to General Grant in particular, was incredibly high, especially in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War.

By the late 1870s, even as polarization remained high, the character of the political behaviors undertaken by civilian and military actors lost their extreme flavor, rarely

violating standards of civil-military conduct. Senior military leaders serving at the time, including Generals Hancock and Pope, both of whom had had engaged in obvious forms of political behavior in the years from 1865-1868, were cognizant that they now served in an Army that was no longer viewed as vital to the life of the nation. The Army had downsized significantly, largely because of the fact that few if any international threats existed. Accordingly, the military and its leaders were not often the target of obvious schemes to influence public opinion. Simply put, the military and its leaders from 1877-1880 did not offer as strong a political advantage to civilian actors as they had in the period from 1865-1868.

This dissertation now moves to a second case study that examines an era in which the level of polarization predominantly changes. In order to do this, we now jump forward roughly 140 years and examine political behaviors conducted by civilian and military actors during the Iraq War.

Chapter 6 - The Military After 9/11

On September 11, 2001, terrorists hijacked several commercial airplanes and crashed them into three sites, including the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington D.C., and a field in western Pennsylvania.[78] That same evening, members of Congress gathered on the steps of the US capitol to collectively express solidarity and resolve. After a moment of silence and short remarks by then speaker of the House Dennis Hastert (R-IL), those who were gathered sang the song, "God Bless America" (*Members of Congress Sing "God Bless America" on Sept. 11, 2001 | c-SPAN.org* 2001).

Seventeen months later, in February 2003, the Senate Armed Services Committee held a hearing on war plans for an imminent invasion of Iraq, which began the following month. One exchange was particularly noteworthy. General Eric Shinseki, the Army Chief of Staff, told the committee that he thought "something on the order of several hundred thousand…" troops were likely required to stabilize Iraq after the invasion (Shinseki, 2003 quoted in Fallows 2008). Shinseki's comments ran counter to the views held by the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, and his second in command, Paul Wolfowitz, both of whom believed that a smaller, lighter military footprint was more than adequate for invading and stabilizing Iraq. In the days after the hearing, both Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld publicly criticized Shinseki's remarks. Wolfowitz, in fact, dismissed Shinseki's estimate as "wildly off the mark" (Schmitt 2003). General Shinseki, for his part, remained mostly silent, and retired from the Army shortly afterward.

Eighteen and a half years later, the United States withdrew from Afghanistan after the resurgent Taliban rapidly displaced the Afghan National Government in the summer of 2021. During a Congressional hearing held on 28 September 2021 about the withdrawal, Tom Cotton, a veteran and the junior Republican Senator from Arkansas, asked the

[78] Heroic Americans prevented this plane from reaching its intended target, the US Capitol or the White House in Washington, D.C. See Kean et al. (2004), 14 for more details.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, "why haven't you resigned?" (Singman 2021).

The Senator's question alluded to the fact that Milley, weeks before the collapse of the Afghan Government, had recommended to President Biden that he maintain approximately 2,500 US Troops in Afghanistan, a recommendation the President did not heed. In response to Cotton's question, Milley stated, "It would be an incredible act of political defiance for a commissioned officer to just resign because my advice is not taken. . . this country doesn't want generals figuring out what orders we are going to accept and do or not. That's not our job (Singman 2021)."

In the same hearing, however, before ever discussing the issue of Afghanistan, General Milley addressed allegations that he had inappropriately conversed with both a Chinese general and with the Speaker of the House, Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), during the transition between Presidents Trump and Biden (Baldor and Burns 2021). These allegations, which are described in detail later in this chapter, provoked strong reactions from several Republican lawmakers in the days leading up to the hearing.

This chapter identifies, compares, and contrasts the patterns of political behavior engaged in by military and civilian actors in the post-9/11 era. Similar to the previous chapter, one of the independent variables primarily varies more so than the other over the period of time examined. From approximately 2001-2021, the level of military prestige remained relatively high, but the level of political polarization rose sharply.

The chapter proceeds in five parts. First, it describes the predictions concerning the patterns of political behavior involving the military as a democracy moves from a domestic environment marked by low polarization and high military prestige to one marked by high polarization and high military prestige. In this section, I substantiate the claim that this change occurred in the United States from 2001-2021. Second, this chapter describes a major episode that occurred during the first portion of this twenty-year period. This first episode examined is the 2006 so-called "Revolt of the Generals," which involved several

retired senior military officers publicly castigating the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld.

The third part of the chapter then explores an episode that occurred during the second half of the period. This latter episode involves the political behaviors undertaken by military actors coinciding with a period of domestic civil unrest in June 2020 and political behaviors undertaken by military and civilian actors in the wake of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. The fourth part of this chapter evaluates, compares, and contrasts the political behaviors involving the military undertaken in these two episodes (2006 compared to 2020-2021). The fifth and final part of the chapter briefly compares and contrasts portions of this case study to portions of the case study undertaken in the previous chapter.

Similar to the previous chapter, the central focus in this case study is on the tone, tenor, and characteristics of the political behaviors involving the military that occur during each of the episodes examined. The chief argument made in this chapter is that, in accordance with this dissertation's theoretical predictions, the rise in the level of political polarization from 2001-2021 contributed to several discernible changes in *how* civilian and military actors politicized the military.

Theoretical Predictions for the Post-9/11 Era, 2001-2021

Low Polarization and High Military Prestige

The theory presented in chapter two argued that a state's domestic environment strongly shapes the patterns of political behavior that occur involving the military. When the level of military prestige is high, both civilian and military actors are more likely to behave in ways that harness or leverage the prestige of the military, even if doing so violates one or more of the principles of civil-military relations. This theoretical expectation is rooted in the political communication literature, which argues that the public listens to voices who it believes are "knowledgeable" and "trustworthy" (Lupia and McCubbins 1998,

Table 24: Types of Domestic Environments for Civil-Military Relations and their Impact on Political Behaviors and the Conduct of Civil-Military Relations

Environment	Low Polarization	High Polarization
Low Prestige	No politicization; low levels of political activity; low potential for civil-military conflict	Military (induced) politicization; moderate levels of political activity; moderate potential for civil-military conflict
High Prestige	Military and Civilian (induced) politicization; moderate levels of political activity; high potential for civil-military conflict	Comprehensive politicization; extreme levels of political activity; significant potential for civil-military conflict

69–76; see also Zaller 1992, 47). The theory argued that as the level of military prestige rises, the public increasingly considers the military and its members to possess these traits.

But the theory presented in chapter two also argued that the level of polarization shapes how civilian and military actors behave with respect to the military. When the level of polarization is low, the theory argued that there is relatively little basis for ideological division between and among military actors. This is because periods of relatively low political polarization indicate that few if any differences in the political space involve issues that are related to the moral values and/or worldviews that military actors hold to. This is not to say that military actors are entirely unified, or that there is little chance of conflict between military actors when polarization is low. Rather, the theory predicts that absent high levels of polarization, there is little if any ideological basis, or *motive*, for military actors to behave in ways that violate the central principles of civil-military relations.

In environments marked by the presence of low polarization and high military prestige, the theory ultimately predicts that either military or civilian actors (or both) may induce politicization of the military by engaging in behaviors that violate the principles of civil-military relations in an effort to shape public opinion. The theory even noted that such an environment is far from tranquil, and that there is a high potential for civil-military conflict altogether, as shown in the bottom left quadrant of Table 24.

Historically, there have been several significant civil-military relations disputes that have occurred under the domestic conditions of low polarization and high military prestige

in the United States. For example, disputes between General Douglas MacArthur and President Harry Truman over Korea, General Matthew Ridgeway and President Dwight Eisenhower over Ike's New Deal policies in the early 1950s, and Colin Powell and President Bill Clinton over several developing post-Cold War crises in the early 1990s, all occurred in domestic environments marked by relatively low polarization and high military prestige. In short, the historical record indicates that a state's civil-military relationship will be far from free of discord when polarization is low and when military prestige is high.

High Polarization and High Military Prestige

The theory does predict, however, that as polarization rises, the potential for civil-military conflict rises even further. This prediction stems from the relationship between rising political polarization and growing ideological division that occurs among military actors. The theory argued that military actors, like the rest of society, become more polarized as the level of polarization grows. Therefore, holding all else equal, as the level of polarization rises, military actors are more likely to engage in political behaviors for ideological reasons that violate the principles of civil-military relations.

This occurs because of the implications of rising levels of polarization. In chapter two, the theory argued that polarization, at its root, attests to a loss of consensus or agreement concerning the moral values and ideals that hold sway in society (Marsden 2014; Mann and Ornstein 2012; S. D. Allen 2020). In highly polarizing times, such as the contemporary age in the United States, the theory argued that many emergent political conflicts are not simply political. That is, many contemporary polarizing conflicts do not simply involve questions concerning whether society should enact policy "X" or policy "Y," but rather involve conflicts over the worldviews, moral values, and philosophical foundations that underlie policy "X" and policy "Y."

In making this claim, chapter two highlighted several polarizing issues in the contemporary United States. These include the question of what it means to be an

American, whether America should be proud of its history, whether abortion is a “right,” and whether the construct of gender is important anymore, and to what degree. What these and other polarizing issues have in common is that they cannot be solved, let alone reasonably and intelligently discussed in most cases, without an individual explicitly or implicitly referencing or alluding to some sort of moral worldview commitment.

The theory further argued that polarization impacts the conduct of civil-military relations because a military actor’s commitment to the worldviews or values underlying any number of polarizing issues may in fact be stronger than that same actor’s level of commitment to the central principles of civil-military relations. Stated differently, rising levels of polarization eventually introduce situations that challenge ultimate conceptions of authority, especially for military actors. An officer in the military likely feels some level of commitment to the principles of civilian control, non-partisanship of the military institution, and non-interference. But the same officer likely also has a worldview that relies on moral values or commitments of some kind, even if that officer cannot articulate what that worldview is (Sire 2020).

In highly polarizing environments, military actors more frequently encounter situations in which they have to choose between adhering to the principles of civil-military relations or advancing the values and principles that underlie any number of polarizing issues that are at stake in the political sphere. When confronted with such a decision, especially when the consequences are great and much is at stake, military actors will increasingly act in accordance with the values that are associated with the worldview to which they hold dear, and thus, increasingly behave in ways that violate the principles of civil-military relations.

As Table 24 notes, simultaneously high levels of polarization and military prestige lead to a domestic environment in which there is comprehensive politicization, extreme levels of political activity involving the military, and significant potential for civil-military conflict. While it is difficult to determine exactly what form these characteristics might take in practice, or how they might manifest themselves into distinct political behaviors, these

characteristics suggest that there is greater potential for a state's civil-military relationship to be riddled with tension when the levels of polarization and military prestige are both high compared to when military prestige is high but polarization is low.

Substantiation of Environmental Characteristics, 2001 - 2021

To substantiate the claim that the level of polarization increased while the level of military prestige generally remained constant (but relatively high) over the period of 2001-2021, I rely on measurable quantitative data. This is different from the previous chapter, which relied on mainly qualitative data to substantiate the claim that the level of military prestige declined throughout the Reconstruction Era. Figure 30 plots the level of polarization in both the US House and the US Senate, as well as the level of trust and confidence in the US military from 2001-2021. The data for polarization comes from DW-NOMINATE scores, which use roll-call voting for members of Congress to measure polarization over time (Jeffrey B Lewis et al. 2020). The data for trust in the military comes from public opinion measures of trust and confidence in the military over time ("Confidence in Institutions. Gallup Public Opinion Polling" 2020).

Figure 30 shows that polarization and military prestige have changed over the period from 2001-2021, but in different ways. The polarization levels in both the US House and Senate have generally consistently increased. When polarization has dropped (2007, 2009, and 2019 in the House; 2003 in the Senate), these drops have been somewhat small and, more importantly, outpaced by the numerous increases that have occurred over the twenty-year period.

The level of public trust in the military, on the other hand, has exhibited greater variation between years. For example, a relative spike in public trust in the military occurred in 2003, perhaps reflecting a boost in patriotic fervor as the war in Iraq began the same year. Similarly, noticeable declines in public trust in the military occurred in 2007, perhaps reflecting impatience over mounting US casualties in Iraq, and again in 2021,

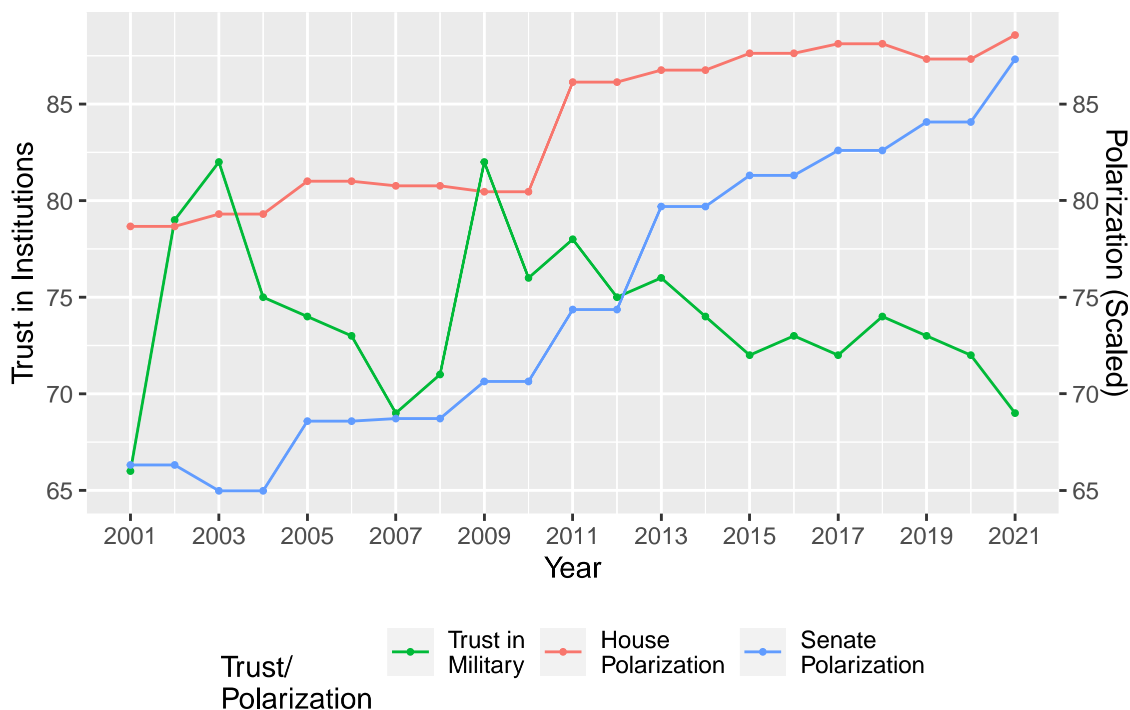

Figure 30: Public Trust (L) and Polarization (R), 2001-2021

perhaps reflecting public frustration over the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. Yet even in the presence of this variability, the level of military prestige that has endured for the past twenty years is relatively high, and certainly higher than the level that existed in the late 1970s and early 1980s after the Vietnam War. Since data has been kept, for example, the lowest recorded level of trust in the military occurred in 1981, when only 50% of surveyed Americans said they trusted the military a "great deal or quite a lot" ("Confidence in Institutions. Gallup Public Opinion Polling" 2020). In short, the period 2001-2021 broadly reflects a domestic environment in which the level of military prestige remained relatively constant (and high in historical terms), but in which the level of polarization increased.

Further note that Figure 30 does not, and indeed cannot definitively conclude when the shift from a relatively moderate to relatively high level of polarization occurred. However, the figure does show a fairly obvious spike in the level of polarization in the US House (red line) beginning in 2011, accompanied by a smaller yet still detectable spike in polarization in the US Senate (blue line) in the same year. From a methodological

standpoint, then, the analysis which follows takes the year 2011 as a sort of natural breaking point separating relatively lower and higher levels of polarization. This chapter will therefore describe two episodes that each occur well before and after the year 2011. I first describe and analyze the 2006 "Revolt of the Generals" through the lens of the three central principles of civil-military relations. I then do the same with respect to a number of political behaviors undertaken by military and civilian actors involving the military in 2020 and 2021.

Part 1 - The War in Iraq and The Revolt of the Generals, 2006

The 2006 "Revolt of the Generals" narrowly refers to the behavior of several recently retired senior military officers who, in the Spring of 2006, publicly criticized the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, and specifically, the way in which Rumsfeld had managed the war in Iraq up until that point. By 2006, the war in Iraq was three years old, and it had become abundantly clear by then that the war would not be quick or easy.

In a broad sense, the "Revolt of the Generals" can be viewed as the military's backlash to their perception of not being heard, listened to, or valued by their civilian chain of command within the Department of Defense (D. Snider 2014; Binkley 2020). In this sense, the "Revolt" was reminiscent of similar critiques of civilian leadership by military actors, such as H.R. McMaster's *Dereliction of Duty*, which charged the top military brass during Vietnam with failing to adequately push back against the wartime policies of President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara (McMaster 1997).

The "Revolt of the Generals" also served as the means by which several military actors responded to what they perceived to be the disparaging of General Shinseki by his civilian superiors, which was referenced in this chapter's introduction. After telling Congress that he thought far more troops were required to stabilize Iraq than his civilian superiors thought were necessary, Shinseki's last months in uniform had proven somewhat turbulent.

Rumsfeld, for instance, did not even attend Shinseki's retirement ceremony, a significant break in protocol that rankled some senior military officers (Thom Shanker 2003).

The timing of the "Revolt of the Generals" also matters a great deal. Not only was the war in Iraq three years old in the Spring of 2006, but in that same year, Congressional midterm elections were held. The behaviors conducted as part of the "Revolt of the Generals" ultimately elevated the status of the war in Iraq as an issue, and in all likelihood contributed to the eventual dismissal of Secretary Rumsfeld by President George W. Bush after the midterm elections.

Political Behaviors Undertaken, 2006

The immediate slate of military actors who participated in the "Revolt of the Generals" consisted of six retired military officers, including Army Major General Paul Eaton, Marine Lieutenant General Greg Newbold, Army Major General John Batiste, Marine Lieutenant General Paul Van Riper, Army Major General John Riggs, and Army Major General Charles Swannack. In chapter three of this dissertation, which examined public opinion commentary authored by retired military actors, I discussed the behavior of retired military officers in broad detail, and so I will not readdress those considerations here. But it is important to point out that the six retired generals who participated in the "Revolt of the Generals" were unique in several ways.

Of importance is that these officers had only very recently retired, and from fairly high profile positions in the military. In other words, they had directly participated in the war in Iraq, either on the ground or during deliberations involving the war. Eaton, for example, had been responsible for training the Iraqi military from 2003-2004, and both Swannack and Batiste had served as Army Division Commanders early during the war (Cloud and Schmitt 2006). The broader implication from the recent retirements of the officers participating in the "Revolt" is that they had deliberately chosen to retire and speak out *rather than* remain in uniform.

Furthermore, the actions of these six retired officers spurred other military actors to likewise engage in political behaviors that addressed similar topics. The considerable press coverage generated by the "Revolt of the Generals" led to a number of civilian actors commenting on the allegations levied against Rumsfeld, and on the broader war effort underway in Iraq. By considering the behaviors undertaken both as part of the "Revolt" *and* those undertaken directly in response to it, the reader is better positioned to understand the full impacts of this episode.

Public Appeals

The main political behaviors undertaken by the six military actors who participated in the "Revolt of the Generals" were numerous public appeals. These took various forms, including publishing opinion articles and giving interviews to the press. For example, in March and April of 2006, Generals Eaton, Batiste, and Newbold penned articles that appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *Time* magazine, respectively. The articles levied multiple criticisms of Rumsfeld, including that he had micromanaged the war effort and failed to heed the advice of senior military leaders during the planning and execution of the war (Eaton 2006; Batiste 2006; Newbold 2006). In conjunction with the publication of these articles, Generals Van Riper, Riggs, and Swannack then gave interviews in which they "concurred with the criticisms levied by Eaton, Newbold, and Batiste" (Binkley 2020, 23).

In response, some military actors then defended Rumsfeld. And while Rumsfeld's defenders did not necessarily constitute a large number of military actors, they too made public appeals. For instance, four retired generals – Vallely, McInerney, Crosby, and Moore – penned an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal* in April of 2006 entitled, "In Defense of Donald Rumsfeld" (Crosby, Vallely, and McInerney 2006).

Grandstanding

While public appeals were the most obvious type of political behavior involved in the "Revolt of the Generals," the episode also indirectly touched on the behavior of grandstanding. In chapter two, I noted that Risa Brooks defined grandstanding as the "threat or actual resignation in protest of policy" (Risa Brooks 2009, 219).

To my knowledge, no military officer publicly resigned or threatened to resign as part of the "Revolt of the Generals." But there were strong indications that several of the participating generals had chosen to retire from active military service rather than continue to serve, ostensibly in order to publicly criticize the Secretary of Defense. For example, strong rumors circulated that Marine Lieutenant General Newbold had chosen to retire despite being considered a strong candidate for the position of Marine Corps Commandant (Kaplan 2006). Similarly, Generals Swannack and Batiste, who had most recently served as Army Division Commanders in combat, retired from positions which are not normally positions from which officers enter retirement.

The entire episode therefore sparked somewhat of a debate among civil-military relations scholars as well as among military officers regarding the behavior of military officer resignation, the conditions under which resignation can and should be considered, and whether it is ever an appropriate act. Chapter two discussed the behavior of resignation in greater detail, and noted that even among scholars, there is a lack of consensus about if and when resignation should be considered a viable option by military officers.[79] Furthermore, this ensuing debate over resignation occurring in the wake of the "Revolt of the Generals" pointed back to the example involving General Shinseki and his testimony before Congress regarding troop levels in Iraq. Those who participated in or supported the "Revolt of the Generals" argued that General Shinseki would have been justified to have resigned in protest in 2003 ahead of the Iraq War, rather than acquiesce

[79]For example, see J. Burke (2009); Dubik (2014); D. Snider (2014); and Milburn (2010) for general arguments in favor of military officers exercising dissent and even possibly resigning under strict conditions. See also, however, M. Shields (2017) and Jim Golby (2015) for scholars who present alternate views.

begrudgingly to a strategic plan that he believed was bound for failure.

Finally, it should be noted that the "Revolt of the Generals" was unique from other civil-military disputes in US history in that it essentially involved a coordinated effort by multiple retired generals to oust the Secretary of Defense. We usually think of the behavior of resignation from the standpoint of military officers resigning, but during the "Revolt," it was military actors insisting that Rumsfeld resign. After naming Rumsfeld explicitly in his public appeal, Batiste, for instance, argued that, "To move forward, we need a leader with the character and skills necessary to lead" (Batiste 2006). Newbold, for his part, stated, "We need fresh ideas and fresh faces. That means, as a first step, replacing Rumsfeld and many others unwilling to fundamentally change their approach" (Newbold 2006). Eaton also stated, more bluntly, that "Rumsfeld must go" (Eaton 2006). Though Rumsfeld did not heed such requests, the fact that numerous military actors explicitly called on their former civilian boss to depart marked the episode as unique from previous civil-military relations disputes in American history.

Impact of Undertaken Behaviors

The appeals undertaken as part of the "Revolt of the Generals" were highly visible to the American public. Especially in a midterm election year, the behaviors undertaken as part of this episode likely contributed to shaping the views of Americans on the war in Iraq, though it is not possible to accurately assess just how important the "Revolt" was in shaping these views.

Donald Rumsfeld went on to remain at his post in 2006 until one week after the mid-term elections. During these elections, Republicans incurred heavy losses. Republicans lost more than twenty seats in the House and more than five seats in the Senate, resulting in the Democratic Party gaining control of the House of Representatives for the first time since 1994 (Hulse 2006). In his memoirs, President George W. Bush briefly commented on the "Revolt of the Generals." Bush wrote, "there was no way I was going to let a group of

retired officers bully me into pushing out the Secretary of Defense. It would have looked like a military coup and would have set a disastrous precedent" (G. W. Bush 2010, 93).

Thus, we should not conclude that the "Revolt of the Generals" served as the immediate cause of Rumsfeld's dismissal. At the same time, it's clear that the behavior of the revolting generals almost certainly contributed to politicians, lawmakers, and the public subsequently assessing the personal leadership of Rumsfeld and the broader war effort in Iraq. In partisan terms, Republicans mostly responded to the "Revolt of the Generals" by backing Rumsfeld, but taking the time to evaluate the broader strategy of the war in Iraq (Rutenberg 2006). A few Democrats, on the other hand, explicitly signaled their support for the generals who revolted and called on Rumsfeld to step down (Rutenberg 2006).

How Levels of Polarization and Prestige Shaped the Revolt of the Generals

Previous analyses of the "Revolt of the Generals" have examined the episode from the perspective of military dissent, the conditions under which dissent may be appropriate, and the behavioral forms that military dissent should and should not take (Cook 2008; D. Snider 2014; Binkley 2020). Each of these are very important questions in their own right, and I do not revisit these questions here. However, the previous analyses of the "Revolt" have not fully explored the role of polarization and military prestige in enabling the "Revolt" to occur in the first place *and* to unfold in the manner in which it did. The following paragraphs take on this important task.

As previously noted, the level of polarization in 2006 was relatively low, at least compared with the levels of polarization that would emerge in the years afterward. Furthermore, the root issue addressed during the "Revolt of the Generals" was the war in Iraq, even as the episode certainly addressed this issue through the lens of Rumsfeld's leadership abilities and qualities. This is an important note, as it signifies that the "Revolt" ultimately dealt with topics related to military strategy, the planning and

execution of wars, and the proper role or "voice" of military officers in formulating national security policy (Rapp 2015).

All of these topics are squarely related to the professional knowledge and expertise of senior military officers. This is not to suggest that issues such as the planning and execution of wars are issues that cannot become polarized; indeed, these issues most certainly can and do. But it is worth emphasizing that most of the criticisms of the retired generals who participated in the "Revolt" took issue with the *manner* in which these officers expressed dissent, and not with the *substance* of their criticism. The planning and execution of wars and military operations are perhaps the most appropriate topic for military actors to address, even if such actors need to exercise great discretion in *how* they weigh in on these topics. The "Revolt" occurred under conditions of relatively low polarization and high military prestige. This aligns with one of the results found in Chapter 3 — that since 1979, retired military officers have most frequently addressed topics related to warfighting and military operations or foreign policy when authoring opinion commentary (see Figure 12), a dynamic that began to change in the late 2010's.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the 2003 Iraq War began on what should be considered a relatively bipartisan footing. The Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution, for instance, passed the House by a vote of 296 to 133, and passed the Senate by a vote of 77-23, in October of 2002 (Hastert 2002). And while the connection between the September 11, 2001 attacks and Iraq proved to be weak, public support at the war's outset was nonetheless relatively high (72%) (Center 2008). Even after public opinion on the war began to sour, support for those fighting the war – US Troops – remained somewhat high, a key difference between the war in Iraq and the Vietnam War (Saad 2006).

The relatively low level of polarization that prevailed at the time of the "Revolt" can also be seen in the fact that none of the participating officers made explicitly partisan statements that supported or denounced either of the major political parties by name. The criticisms levied by these generals were instead directed towards Rumsfeld and at his

perceived lack of leadership. For all of these reasons – that the root issue of the “Revolt” involved the war in Iraq, that the war in Iraq had begun on bipartisan footing, and that the criticisms levied by the participating generals did not invoke explicitly partisan sentiments – it is correct to interpret the “Revolt of the Generals” as perhaps contributing to or worsening the moderate level of political polarization that existed at the time, but not as occurring because of the level of political polarization.

Yet the level of military prestige was also relatively high in 2006. This helps explain the fact that the participating officers undertook behaviors that were highly visible, such as the authoring of public appeals in popular newspapers and magazines, as opposed to engaging in less visible forms of political behavior. It also explains why the press was interested in interviewing and subsequently publicizing the remarks of officers who did not write public appeals themselves, as in the case of Generals Riggs, Swannack, and Van Riper. Furthermore, the high level of military prestige explains the fact that politicians noted and reacted to the dissenting officers and their behavior. Even President Bush’s short acknowledgement in his memoirs suggests that he felt some modicum of pressure to respond.

We cannot know for sure how the “Revolt of the Generals” might have looked had the dissenting officers been part of a military institution that was considerably less prestigious than it was at the time, but we can think about it. The theory offered in chapter two suggests that such officers might have engaged in less visible forms of behavior. Perhaps the military officers would have pushed back harder against their civilian superiors but in private rather than public venues and settings. Perhaps some of the military officers, instead of leaving active duty, would have remained active, desiring to influence policy from the inside rather than from the retired officer ranks.

The Revolt and the Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations

The "Revolt of the Generals" clearly violated the principle of civilian control of the military. Furthermore, the episode also violated the principle of non-partisanship, but only indirectly, as I explain below. The episode did not violate the principle of non-interference of the military, however.

The "Revolt of the Generals" most clearly violated the principle of civilian control. By levying blatant and public criticism against Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and explicitly calling on him to step down, the officers undertaking the revolt applied friction to the Bush Administration to seriously reconsider its policy approach to the war in Iraq. This was, after all, the stated purpose of the "Revolt." Underneath the allegations of Rumsfeld's acerbic personality was a strategy favored by Rumsfeld and other civilian leaders at the Pentagon that was committed to the use of relatively few US Troops in Iraq.

Thus, those who applauded the "revolting" generals pointed out that even as the participating military actors engaged in behavior that breached a significant principle of civil-military relations, their behavior contributed to the achievement of a greater good, namely, the evaluation and alteration of a failing strategic policy. One commentator who views the "Revolt of the Generals" as a positive episode, Frederick Kagan, notes that while the generals may have breached protocol, their actions nonetheless helped "ensure that the people of a democracy [were] sufficiently well informed to make sound decisions about their leaders in a time of war" (Kagan 2006, 15).

The "Revolt of the Generals" also indirectly violated the principle of non-partisanship, however. Here, it is important to consider that on one hand, the participating generals did not levy any explicitly partisan remarks, while on the other, their actions likely nonetheless contributed to clear partisan consequences. The closest thing to a partisan statement came from Eaton, who stated in his op-ed that, "Perhaps a proven Democrat like Senator Joe Lieberman could repair fissures that have arisen between both parties and between uniformed men and the Pentagon big shots" (Eaton 2006). Eaton's statement is not a

ringing endorsement of either political party, however.

Yet Secretary Rumsfeld was not an apolitical figure, nor his position simply the equivalent to the CEO of a major company. Rumsfeld was the appointed and confirmed Secretary of Defense serving in the second administration of the Republican President, George W. Bush. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, the “Revolt” occurred ahead of the 2006 midterm elections, and at a time when the American people were in the process of evaluating the war in Iraq. In the wake of the “Revolt” and ahead of the 2006 midterms, congressional candidates took time to reevaluate their positions on Rumsfeld and a number of other broader topics related to the war in Iraq, potential war with Iran, and broader efforts against terrorism (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 238–42). In early 2007, for instance, just weeks after Rumsfeld’s dismissal, the Bush Administration announced a new strategy for Iraq involving a substantial surge of military forces. Senator Lindsey Graham, a Republican, noted at the time that, “we never had enough troops to begin with. . . a month or two ago, we found out the Army is broken, and they [the American people] agreed that Shinseki was right” (Graham, 2007, quoted in Thomas Shanker 2007).

Perhaps it is impossible to accurately measure the influence of the “Revolt of the Generals” on the outcome of the 2006 midterm elections, or on the Bush decision to institute a surge the following year in 2007. But at the very least, the “Revolt” likely impacted both of these (and other) events. Therefore, we should conclude that the “Revolt” indirectly violated the principle of military non-partisanship because it facilitated partisan consequences.

The “Revolt” did not violate the principle of non-interference, however. The military officers who participated in the revolt addressed topics that were in accord with reasonable expectations of military expertise, as noted in the previous section. In other words, the dissenting officers did not address topic areas or issues that are far outside of the relevant professional expertise of military officers.

Table 25: Political Behaviors During the Revolt of the Generals, 2006

Actor	Tactic of Political Behavior	Date	Instance	Central Principle Violated
Retired Generals Eaton, Swannack, Batiste, Van Riper, Newbold, and Riggs	Public Appeals	2006	These retired officers wrote a number of op-eds and gave interviews that criticized Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's handling of the Iraq War	Civilian Control; Non-Partisanship (Indirectly)
Retired Generals Eaton, Swannack, Batiste, Van Riper, Newbold, and Riggs	Grandstanding	2006	The revolting officers explicitly called on Rumsfeld to resign or step down	Civilian control; Non-partisanship (Indirectly)

Summary of the "Revolt of the Generals"

The 2006 "Revolt of the Generals" was a significant episode in US civil-military relations. Among the high profile civil-military conflicts that have occurred in US history, the "Revolt" was unique in that several recently retired military generals, all of whom had recently served either in Iraq or been directly involved in its planning, called on the Secretary of Defense to step down. The episode also sparked renewed interest in the topic of military officer resignation and the conditions under which resignation is ever appropriate, a topic that remains hotly contested to this day (M. Shields 2017). Table 25 summarizes the political behaviors undertaken by military actors as part of the "Revolt of the Generals" in 2006.

The "Revolt of the Generals" violated the principles of civilian control, and to a lesser degree, the principle of non-partisanship. However, the episode did not violate the principle of non-interference. Critics of the "revolting" generals generally take issue not with the substance of the critiques levied by the outspoken officers, but with the manner of behavior undertaken by these officers (Cook 2008; Binkley 2020). Those who support the "revolting" generals acknowledge the severity of the behaviors employed by the military actors but argue that the national good was ultimately better served as a result of the episode having occurred (Kagan 2006). That the episode involved military actors undertaking visible political behaviors over an issue that is highly aligned with the professional expertise of

military officers yet without engaging in or provoking a highly partisan narrative reflects the relative levels of military prestige (high) and polarization (low) that existed in 2006.

Part 2 - Domestic Unrest and the US Withdrawal from Afghanistan, 2020-2021

Approximately 14 and 15 years after the "Revolt of the Generals," a notable flurry of political activity involving the military again occurred, this time centering on several tumultuous political events in 2020 and 2021. These events included a period of domestic civil unrest in 2020, the 2020 presidential election and its aftermath, and the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.

Before describing the political activities involving the military that occurred as part of these events, it is first necessary to trace a few major political developments that occurred in the 15 years between the "Revolt of the Generals" and 2020-2021. For obvious reasons, it is difficult to fully unpack and describe 15 years of US history in a brief space. The next several paragraphs therefore describe several developments that show how the level of polarization rose, and over what types of issues, from 2006-2021. These paragraphs should not be considered the definitive guide to polarization in the United States over this period. Scholars continue (and likely will) to unfold the dynamics that led to the election, and the stunning presidency, of Donald Trump (for instance, see Skocpol and Tervo 2020). This is in itself a major story that cannot be analyzed in this dissertation. Still, the following paragraphs argue that from 2006-2021, many of the topics that generated substantial political discord in the United States did so because they revealed that policy preferences over these topics invoke significantly different morals, values, and worldviews.

Increasing Polarization Between 2006 - 2021

Occurring two and a half years after the "Revolt of the Generals," the election of President Obama in the fall of 2008 was significant for many reasons. During his first term

in office, the Democratic President sought and ultimately succeeded at instituting a number of major policy reforms. One of the earliest and most consequential of these policy initiatives was "Obamacare," formally known as the *Affordable Care Act*, which significantly overhauled the nation's healthcare system. President Obama also sought to provide generous economic assistance by overseeing passage of the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* in order to revitalize the national economy after a severe financial crisis in 2008 (Conlan and Posner 2016).

Both of these initiatives were highly controversial, as both touched on questions about the size and scope of the federal government, individual versus government responsibility, and in the case of Obamacare, whether individuals could be coerced to obtain medical insurance or pay a penalty — the so-called "individual mandate" (Rovner 2017). Largely in response to these Obama administration policy initiatives, the Republican Party shifted further to the political right (Mann and Ornstein 2012). A number of conservative Republicans formed the Tea Party, an ultraconservative caucus within the GOP; and in 2010, Republicans went on to make major gains in the midterm elections, both in Congress as well as in a number of statehouses and gubernatorial races (Mann and Ornstein 2012).

These Republican gains across a number of individual states were important, Conlan and Posner (2016) note, insofar as they resulted in the implementation of many of Obama's policies on very different terms, depending on whether a state was "red" or "blue" (Conlan and Posner 2016). Conlan and Posner argue that this development, which they term "variable speed federalism," led to increasing polarization as some states (led by Republicans) strongly resisted Obama's policies, while others (led by Democrats) happily enacted them to the fullest extent possible (Conlan and Posner 2016, 283). Legislative battles in Congress likewise reflected the escalating division between Republicans and Democrats. Mann and Ornstein (2012), for example, point to the debt ceiling crisis of 2011 as constituting a major political moment when Republicans significantly escalated the hostility of their political tactics, engaging in what they call "hostage taking" —

obstinately refusing to negotiate — in order to obtain their desired outcome (Mann and Ornstein 2012, 3–30).

Simultaneously, the Obama Presidency, like other presidencies, coincided with a number of significant socio-cultural flashpoints. These were important in that while they offered Americans an opportunity to reconsider a number of their convictions, they also had the tendency to exacerbate many of the underlying tensions and divisions that were already present in the political fabric of the nation. Combined with legislative battles between Republicans and Democrats over significant policy initiatives, these cultural flashpoints further contributed to making the political environment highly charged.

Several of these flashpoints in particular stand out. The 2012 death of Trayvon Martin, a 17 year old black teenager, and the subsequent acquittal of the defendant, George Zimmerman, birthed the *Black Lives Matter* (BLM) organization. BLM argues that "Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise," and the organization would become more prominent in 2014 after a police officer killed Michael Brown, a black man in Ferguson, MO ("Herstory. Black Lives Matter" n.d.). BLM gained even greater national prominence in the Summer of 2020 after the killing of George Floyd, as chapter two of this dissertation noted. These events, and the BLM movement more broadly, have caused many Americans to at least consider questions such as whether systemic racism exists, to what degree, and what, if anything, should be done about it. These are important questions, and the views they generate are often highly controversial, at least as of this dissertation's writing in 2022.

Other flashpoints occurred on the cultural fronts of sexuality, gender, and identity. For instance, in 2015, the Supreme Court ruled in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that the 14th Amendment of the Constitution guarantees the right of two persons of the same sex to marry (Gilkis 2018). The following year, the Obama administration ended the prohibition on transgender troops serving in the US military, a prohibition that Trump would later reinstate, and that President Biden would once again end in 2021 (Lopez 2016; Jackson

and Kube 2019; Feldscher and Seligman 2021).

In 2021 and into 2022, many debates involve this same set of issues – race, sexuality, and gender – even as the application of these issues involve different contexts. One recent example is a bill passed in Florida in March of 2022 related to what topics school instructors in kindergarten through grade three may (and may not) discuss with their students with respect to the concepts of sexuality and gender identity. Dana Goldstein of *The New York Times* (2022) fascinatingly captures the moral division over this bill. She notes that supporters of this highly controversial legislation refer to the bill as the "Parental Rights in Education" bill, whereas opponents call it the "Don't Say Gay" bill (D. Goldstein 2022).

A second contemporary example involves the rights of transgender individuals, and for example, whether athletes who identify as female but who were born as biological males should be allowed to compete in organized women's sports.[80] One of the foundational debates over this issue and larger debates over transgender and LGBTQ rights more broadly seems to involve the concept of equality and in particular, how the concepts of equality and respect for women should be applied in specific situations. Does a high view of equality and respect for women mean that there should be a protected space for women's athletics, and thus that biological males should be excluded from women's sports, or do these concepts instead mean disposing of the constructs of gender and biological sex altogether (Kurtzleben 2021a)?

Rising Polarization and the Military

The connection between these developments and the US military may at first seem foggy. Do military actors really care about a bill passed in Florida that governs what topics teachers may address with first graders, or who competes in collegiate swimming events?

The theory offered in chapter two answers both of these questions with a resounding

[80] In March 2022, a University of Pennsylvania swimmer, Lia Thomas, has most recently awakened this discussion at the national level. See Henderson (2022) for more information.

yes. This is because these topics ultimately are associated with a deeper set of values, morals, worldviews, and philosophical commitments that military actors cannot simply discard or ignore. Even if the military is not directly involved in the specific manifestations of these issues, rising levels of polarization imply that it is only a matter of time before the military eventually encounters a situation that is related to these issues.[81]

If in fact "the public square is nothing more than a battleground of gods, each vying to push the levers of power in its favor," then a highly polarized society signifies that the gods competing against each other stand for a set of values that are highly opposed to each other (Leeman 2016, 82). With this understanding in mind, military actors care a great deal about these types of topics, even if they do not care about each of them to the same degree. As polarization rises, then, military actors will increasingly encounter situations in which they have to choose between adhering to the principles of civil-military relations or obeying the moral values and philosophical commitments that they hold dear. As polarization rises, more military actors will obey the values and morals with which they identify, and in the process, violate the central principles of civil-military relations.

Political Behaviors Undertaken, 2020-2021

From June 2020-September 21, I trace two distinct sets of political behavior, each of which occurred at the front and back of this roughly 16-month-long period. The first set includes the reaction of several high-profile military officers, including retirees as well as active-duty officers, to racially fueled civil unrest in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, an unarmed black man at the end of May 2020. The second set of behaviors involves the response of civilian and military actors to the US withdrawal from Afghanistan

[81]One clear example of this is the new Army physical fitness test (the Army Combat Fitness Test, or ACFT). The latest version of the test was just released in April 2022. After several years of trying to implement a gender-free scoring rubric, the Army has reversed course and, for the time being, decided to implement standards for the test that vary by gender and age. This was done presumably because a significant body of evidence gathered over the past several years pointed to the fact that certain groups, including women, were failing the gender-free standards at a higher rate than men. See Hardison et al. (2022) for more details, especially pp. 19-30. My point here is simple: the Army's adoption of a test that has different standards by gender and age is not a morally neutral statement in today's polarizing age.

and simultaneous revelations that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had engaged in several questionable phone calls before and after January 6, 2021 related to the 2020 Presidential Election and the ensuing presidential transition.

This date – January 6, 2021 – matters significantly, especially in terms of understanding the political behaviors involving the military discussed in this section of the chapter occurring later in 2021. On that day, several thousand supporters of President Donald Trump rallied in Washington D.C. to decry the pending certification of the 2020 presidential election results occurring the same day. Coinciding with a protest led by President Trump, somewhere between 2,000 and 2,500 attendees entered the US Capitol, some wielding rudimentary weapons, causing members of Congress to flee from their respective chambers and to shelter in place (Lucas 2022). January 6, 2021 will long be remembered in US history. However, in this dissertation, I do not take up the task of addressing the actions of the military (or lack thereof) on this date itself, mainly because the military's role on that day remains somewhat unclear (for now) (Goodman and Hendrix 2021).

Through the lens of the theory offered earlier in this dissertation, the political activities involving the military undertaken in June of 2020 and in September 2021 are not merely two aberrations from a domestic political environment that was otherwise marked by relatively stable adherence to the central principles of civil-military relations. Instead, these two episodes clearly illustrate the tension and instability in civil-military relations that arise as a result of extremely high levels of polarization when the level of military prestige is also relatively high.

Civil Unrest in May-June 2020

On May 25, 2020, Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on the neck of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, resulting in Floyd's death. Video footage of the incident understandably outraged many Americans. Within days, the incident ignited a

national level conversation about racism in the US, and quickly led to a number of riots, protests, and a general period of civil unrest across many American cities. By June 8, 2020, at least 19 Americans had been killed in violence directly related to this unrest (McEvoy 2020).

Passions were further aroused after June 1, 2020, when the President, Donald Trump, physically walked from the White House, through adjacent Lafayette Park, to St. John's Episcopal Church. For a period of several minutes, the President posed for cameras while holding a Bible. Reports immediately surfaced that the President had personally ordered that protesters be dispersed from Lafayette Park in order to facilitate the photo opportunity.

Some viewed the President's supposed actions as in violation of the right to peacefully protest, a direct affront to the first Amendment of the Constitution. According to public opinion polling conducted in June 2020, most Americans (82%) believed that peaceful protests were an appropriate response to the killing of an unarmed man by police, and most Americans (79%) agreed that the violence that accompanied some of the protests ultimately "undermined" the purpose of the protests ("Reuters/Ipsos Poll: Civil Unrest in the Wake of George Floyd's Killing. Ipsos" 2020). But in other ways, public opinion over the protests was clearly split by party affiliation. For example, 62 percent of Democrats "strongly supported" the protests conducted in the aftermath of Floyd's death, compared to just 22 percent of Republicans ("Reuters/Ipsos Poll: Civil Unrest in the Wake of George Floyd's Killing. Ipsos" 2020). American opinion was also split on just how pressing racism as an issue was, and what actions, if any, should be taken to address it. For example, one poll found that "Democrats, liberals, and Americans younger than 50" were "far more likely than Republicans, conservatives, and Americans older than 50. . . to think that blacks are treated less fairly than whites by the police" ("Poll: Americans' Views of Systemic Racism Divided by Race" 2020). At the extreme ends, cries of "defund the police" were pitted against cries for "law and order" (Noonan 2021).

A year later, an independent investigator determined that Trump had *not* ordered that protesters be dispersed from Lafayette Park to facilitate the photo opportunity (Montanaro 2021). But it was true that the President *had* strongly considered the use of active-duty military forces to quell the unrest, a potential move that many leaders, including Secretary of Defense Mark Esper and General Mark Milley, strongly disagreed with (Seligman and Mcgraw 2020). Chapters two and three briefly mentioned that military actors made a number of public appeals in the wake of Floyd's death and the domestic unrest that followed. These particular public appeals are collectively described below.

Public Appeals, 2020

The military actors who made public appeals in June 2020 addressed a number of topics. These included the issues of race and racism, but also the topic of what role, if any, active-duty military forces should have in responding to unfolding domestic unrest across the country. In total, at least 19 different retired generals and admirals addressed these topics through a variety of mediums, ranging from high profile interviews with the media, written op-eds, and messages posted on personal twitter accounts (Maurer 2020). In addition to these retired officers making public appeals, all of the active-duty military service chiefs, as well as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, made public comments that clearly reminded members of the military – and signaled to the broader American public – that the military follows and obeys the Constitution first, rather than any individual president (England et al. 2020; *Official Website of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* 2020).

The public appeals undertaken by many of the military actors, particularly several of the retired generals, explicitly mentioned or strongly alluded to Donald Trump personally, and in so doing, violated the central principle of civilian control of the military. The public statements made by the active-duty service chiefs carefully steered clear of doing so, and thus did not violate the principle of civilian control (in my view). Previous scholarship has

pointed out that observers of these public appeals can make reasonable arguments both in support of and in opposition to the behavior undertaken by the retired officers (Risa Brooks and Robinson 2020a).

The US Withdrawal from Afghanistan, 2021

Just over a year later, in August 2021, the Taliban in Afghanistan handily and quickly overtook the remnants of the central Afghan government, as the US withdrew all military forces from Afghanistan. This withdrawal of military forces from Afghanistan was both unsurprising and very much a surprise, depending on how one viewed the context in which this development took place.

The collapse of the Afghan government was unsurprising in the sense that the central government of Afghanistan had been losing territory to a resurgent Taliban for several years (Bloch 2021). On the other hand, the speed at which the Afghan Army and other institutions collapsed in the weeks leading up to the final withdrawal of US forces shocked the world. Images of desperate Afghans clinging to the side of American planes and falling to their deaths as US forces departed Afghanistan were difficult to view (Gannon 2021). The last of US forces withdrew from Afghanistan on August 31, 2021, just days after a suicide attack outside of the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul killed dozens of Afghans and 13 US Troops (Shivaram and Pruitt-Young 2021). In the weeks to follow, members of Congress undertook a series of interviews to understand how the United States could have withdrawn from Afghanistan in what was by all accounts a chaotic and embarrassing manner.

Polarizing domestic politics significantly heightened an already tense political moment in September 2021, however, when a book entitled *Peril*, authored by Bob Woodward and Robert Costa, revealed that General Mark Milley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had engaged in a series of questionable telephone calls. The first series of calls occurred with Chinese General Li Zuocheng, the chief of the Joint Staff of the People's

Liberation Army, in October 2020 and again in January 2021; and the second involved one call with the US Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, on January 8, 2021 (B. Woodward and Costa 2021, xiii-xxviii). These allegations were explosive both because of the content of these phone calls, but in a much broader sense, because of what these phone calls intimated. In other words, these phone calls had taken place in the context of a very highly polarized political environment.

In his calls with Li, Milley essentially sought to reassure China that the US was not considering attacking them as a means of boosting Trump's political capital and ultimately, propelling Trump to the White House (B. Woodward and Costa 2021). Milley confirmed this was in fact the intent of these calls. Milley told a Congressional Committee in September 2021 that he had told the Chinese General, in effect, "Hell, I'll call you. But we're not going to attack you. Trust me, we're not going to attack you" (Milley, 2021 quoted in Moore 2021). Milley's call with Pelosi, which was initiated by Pelosi, involved more direct questions concerning the protocols and procedures of launching a military attack in the direct aftermath of the events of January 6, 2021.

Together, the phone calls described by Woodward and Costa in *Peril* suggest that Milley was genuinely concerned about Trump's state of mind after January 6th, 2021. Woodward and Costa go so far as to state that Milley "believed it was his job as the senior military officer to think the unthinkable," and to "take any and all necessary precautions" to ensure that Trump could not launch a military strike before January 20, the date of the inauguration of Joe Biden (B. Woodward and Costa 2021, xxv). The revelation of these phone calls, together, raised immediate questions concerning whether Milley had violated the principle of civilian control of the military or worse, either by sharing information with China, a stated competitor of the United States, and/or by discussing protocols and procedures related to the Commander in Chief with someone other than the Commander in Chief. As I detail in the paragraphs below, numerous civilian and military actors joined together to suggest that Milley had.

A total of three different sets of actors engaged in political behaviors involving the military during this episode. The first was General Milley himself, whose actions are difficult to classify. In my view, the political behavior listed in Table 2 that most closely aligns with Milley's actions is that of a form of selective obedience/compliance. The second and third sets of actors to engage in political behavior involving the military were civilian actors and retired military officers, respectively. Both sets of actors assailed Milley and the Defense Department, and forcefully called on him to resign, some in response to the withdrawal from Afghanistan, and others because of the phone calls Milley had engaged in, and still others as some combination of the two. Several of these calls for Milley to resign (though perhaps not all) violated the principle of civilian control and non-partisanship.

A Form of Selective Obedience/Compliance, 2020-21

While General Milley was never strictly forbidden from speaking with either the Chinese General or Speaker Pelosi, and in this sense, his actions were *not* a form of selective obedience/compliance with an explicitly issued order, his actions can be viewed from another perspective. This perspective involves considering what Milley's civilian supervisors thought about his actions. On this point, the evidence, at least in retrospect, is clear. The acting Secretary of Defense, Christopher Miller, did *not* approve of Milley engaging in conversations with General Li, and neither did the President. Upon learning about these developments, Miller stated that he "did not and would not ever authorize" General Milley to engage in the types of phone calls that he participated in with China (Elkind and Caralle 2021).

Thus, observers of civil-military relations are left with an interesting question: if military actors engage in behavior that they are certain violates the intent of their civilian bosses, does such behavior constitute violating the principle of civilian control? To phrase the question perhaps a little more directly, are military officers violating the principle of civilian control if they engage in conduct that they believe their bosses might disapprove

of, even if their civilian bosses have not explicitly forbidden such conduct? If we truly conceive of the principle of civilian control of the military as consisting of the full enablement of civilian leaders to fulfill their policy goals, as Chapter 1 of this dissertation argued, then General Milley's conduct came *very* close to violating, and possibly did violate, the principle of civilian control.

Woodward and Costa use different words to describe the gravity of Milley's behavior. They allege that Milley believed in his heart that given the events of January 6th, 2021, he had to "pull a Schlesinger" (B. Woodward and Costa 2021, xxv). Schlesinger refers to former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger who, in the waning days of the Nixon Administration, issued order to senior military officers *not* "to follow orders that came directly from President Nixon without first checking with Schlesinger" and General George Brown, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (B. Woodward and Costa 2021, xxv-xxvi). If Milley did the same thing as Schlesinger, it's hard to view his actions in any other way than that he deliberately inserted himself for the purposes of providing additional personal oversight to activities and events for a select period of time. Even to the veteran Washington insider, Bob Woodward, and his junior co-author, Robert Costa, the fact that Milley had engaged with a Chinese General and with Speaker Pelosi to discuss what was discussed intimated that in some respects, Milley had chosen to curtail the principle of civilian control, at least for the tumultuous two-week period of time between January 6 and January 20, 2021.

The critical question was whether such conduct deserved to be praised or denounced. Yet with few exceptions, answering this question depended on what side of the political aisle the observer sat.

Calls for Resignation (Grandstanding)

In the wake of these revelations, civilian actors and retired military officers accused General Milley and the Defense Department of three separate offenses. First, these actors

charged General Milley and Secretary Austin with strategic ineptitude resulting in the humiliating withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan. Second, these actors charged Milley in particular of treasonous behavior by revealing the intent of the United States to Chinese forces. Third, military and civilian actors accused Milley of violating the chain of command by speaking with Pelosi about the Commander in Chief's state of mind. Subsets of both groups of actors, civilian and military, explicitly called on General Milley and in some cases, Secretary Austin, to resign.

In bruising Congressional testimony held on September 28 and 29, 2021, multiple GOP lawmakers assailed Milley. Senator Tom Cotton, as mentioned in this chapter's introduction, implied that Milley should have resigned if the General believed that the President's decision *not* to leave 2,500 Troops in Afghanistan would result in strategic mission failure (Singman 2021). Others blasted Milley for conversing with a Chinese General. Representative Vicky Hartzler, for instance, told Milley that, "I think you articulating that, that you would tell him, you would give him a call, I think is worthy of your resignation" (Hartzler 2021). Senator Marco Rubio, as another example, wrote a letter to President Biden, insisting that Milley's actions "threatened to tear apart our nation's longstanding principle of civilian control of the military" (Rubio 2021). Several other GOP lawmakers called on Milley to at least be thoroughly investigated, including Congressmen Jim Banks of Indiana, Doug Lamborn of Colorado, Rob Wittman of Virginia, Mike Gallagher of Wisconsin, and Senator Joni Ernst of Iowa (Zempel 2021).

Several military actors echoed these calls. Retired General Don Bolduc, for example, stated, "I believe his (Milley's) actions are irresponsible and they fall somewhere between treason and dereliction of duty" (Staff 2021). And more than 180 retired flag officers (generals and admirals) known as the *Flag Officers 4 America* signed an open letter calling on both General Milley and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin to resign (America 2021). This group previously penned an open letter suggesting that the 2020 election had been stolen from Donald Trump, further attesting to the high level of polarization that prevailed

during 2020 and into 2021 (Bender 2021).

Impact of Undertaken Behaviors

It is important to note that, at least in some ways, the full impact of the public appeals undertaken by military actors in June 2020, the form of selective compliance exercised by General Milley, and the calls by civilian and military actors for General Milley and Secretary of Defense Austin to resign in September 2021 cannot be fully assessed (yet). This is because these behaviors, and the events which precipitated them, will likely still reverberate in the months and years to come in ways that are not yet fully known.

However, this does not mean that we cannot and should not think through possible impacts of these behaviors. One potential impact to consider is whether the public appeals written by retired military officers in June of 2020 swayed the 2020 presidential election, or any of the other elections (congressional, gubernatorial, etc.) that occurred in 2020. While researchers may never know the definitive answer to this question with statistical precision, the possibility alone is worth thinking through. In part, this is because such a question then raises a subsequent normative question: do citizens *want* the voice of retired military officers to potentially sway the results of elections, and to influence public opinion more generally?

This has always been an important question, and previous civil-military relations scholars, as this dissertation has noted, have offered both the advantages and disadvantages of military actor public speech (Robinson, Cohn, and Margulies 2020; Risa Brooks and Robinson 2020a). But it is worth thinking through the possibility that these advantages and disadvantages of military actor political behavior depend on the level of polarization that is present in society. If the retired military officer commentary published in June of 2020 hypothetically had even a small influence in turning votes away from Donald Trump and toward Joe Biden, can society also live with the possibility that the same behavior – by a different set of military actors – may have had the opposite effect, and turned votes

from Biden toward Trump? If the answer to this corollary hypothetical question is "no," then I suggest that for all of the potential positive repercussions of military actor political behavior, Risa Brooks still has the right view when she suggests that we should "require officers to refrain from political activity and that we do so across the board" (Risa Brooks 2009, 237). Said differently, if we applaud some political behaviors that violate normative standards and not other behaviors, then the principles of civil-military relations will either no longer remain principles, or they will be replaced by other principles that have yet to be fully derived.

Another potential impact that is worth considering about the political behaviors undertaken in 2020 and in 2021 involves what lessons, if any, younger military actors have learned – and will continue to learn – as a result of these episodes. Here, General Milley's behavior is especially worth pondering. As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Milley undoubtedly found himself in a difficult position in the final months of the Trump administration, and particularly so after the events of January 6, 2021. Whether one thinks Milley's actions were heroic or treasonous is a discussion that this dissertation, due to high levels of polarization, cannot conclusively solve. Nonetheless, it is vital to point out that many younger military officers are likely to absorb the following lesson from Milley's behavior: obey the principle of civilian control until a situation arises that one cannot do so in good conscience, and at that point in time, follow one's conscience carefully, and be prepared to pay the consequences.

In many ways, this is an excellent lesson to learn. But this excellent lesson also contains an implicit warning. This warning is simply that it is not possible to fully predict what situation may spark an officer to consider deviating from the principle of civilian control, or from any central principle of civil-military relations for that matter. This is in fact the very warning offered by Finer (1962) when he commented on a statement made by General Douglas MacArthur in 1952. A year after being relieved by Truman, MacArthur stated, "I find in existence a new and heretofore unknown and dangerous concept that the

members of our armed forces owe primary allegiance or loyalty to those who temporarily exercise the authority of the Executive Branch of Government rather than to the country and its constitution which they are sworn to defend. No proposition could be more dangerous" (MacArthur, 1952 quoted in Finer 1962, 22–23).

In its context, MacArthur's statement suggests that he believed he had acted in accordance with both the Constitution and the nation's best interest when sparring with Truman over Korean policy. But Finer makes this warning regarding MacArthur's comments: "The moment the military draw this distinction between nation and the government in power, they begin to invent their own private notion of the national interest, and from this, it is only a skip to the constrained substitution of this view for that of the civilian government" (Finer 1962, 23).

The implications of Finer's warning are both profound and highly relevant to today's political environment in the US. If military leaders such as General Milley find themselves in a position where they have to overlook what an elected leader says in order to choose what they personally think is best for democracy or in accord with the Constitution, that is a likely sign that the democracy and the country itself are in a seriously grave condition. There is no guarantee that a military leader in such circumstances will choose the necessarily *better* outcome, or even be able to determine what that outcome should be. For this reason, the *Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius perhaps sums up Milley's behavior rather well as a "paradox: the nation benefited from the actions he took, but they also threaten to set a dangerous precedent... edging close to violating the sacrosanct principle of civilian control of the military" (Ignatius 2021).

It is also worth pointing out that as significant as the Truman-MacArthur episode was in the 1950s, the political environment then was much less polarized than it is today. In highly polarized environments, the theory offered in this dissertation suggests that military leaders who decide to act contrary to the wishes of their commander in chief will instead obey in accordance with his or her highest moral commitments, whatever these might be.

Thus, if future military leaders learn that following Milley's example is proper, Americans have no other recourse than to hope that the military leader who finds himself or herself in such a position will have the individual fortitude to make wise decisions, as Milley perhaps did, and as General Grant did more than 150 years ago. But determining what is wise in the first place in a polarized environment is likely to prove far from easy. That Americans should find their military leaders ever in a position to have to make these types of decisions is neither desirable nor sustainable for an extended period of time.

How Levels of Polarization and Prestige Shaped Political Behaviors after Domestic Civil Unrest in 2020 and the US Withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021

It is vital to underscore how a high level of polarization contributed to military and civilian actors undertaking the political activities they engaged in during the events examined in 2020-2021. Through this lens, the death of George Floyd was a flashpoint resulting in national conversations about and reflections upon racism in the United States. Many of the military actors who made public appeals were willing to push the limits of, and in some cases violate, the principles of civil-military relations because they felt very strongly that in considering the use of active-duty military forces to suppress domestic unrest, President Trump was considering a course of action that would have suppressed the right of citizens to peacefully protest, in violation of the Constitution.

Like the "Revolt of the Generals," the political behaviors undertaken in the aftermath of unfolding domestic civil unrest in 2020 and the US withdrawal of Afghanistan were highly visible to the public. The retired officers who commented on the President's handling of domestic unrest did so, in many cases, by engaging high profile newspapers, magazines, and other forums where the public was likely to be interested in what these prestigious retired officers had to say. While it can never be known for sure, some baseline level of military prestige likely facilitated the choice of retired military officers not only to

engage in public appeals in the first place, but also to seek the publication or airing of their views through relatively popular mediums and to be successful (their views were published or aired) in doing so.

Unlike the 2006 “Revolt of the Generals,” however, the public appeals made in the midst of unfolding domestic unrest occurred in an extremely polarized political atmosphere. For this reason, it is not necessarily surprising that the public appeals undertaken in June 2020 did not address traditional matters of military strategy, external conflict, and military operations – as the “Revolt of the Generals” did – but rather the highly controversial question of whether the military could and should be used in the non-traditional task of suppressing domestic unrest, and under what conditions.

June 2020 occurred roughly three and a half years into the Presidency of an extremely divisive and polarizing president, Donald Trump. Importantly, it is also factually wrong to conclude that all of the retired military figures who undertook public appeals in June of 2020 did so for the first time after staying quiet throughout the Trump Presidency. In fact, the data collected and referenced in Chapter 3 of this dissertation proves that this is not the case. Admiral Mike Mullen, General Michael Hayden, and General John Allen had engaged in *multiple* public appeals before undertaking public appeals in June of 2020. These authors had previously criticized a number of Trump’s policies, including his ban of transgender Troops (Mullen), stance on immigration (Mullen and Hayden), and view on climate change (Allen). With this in mind, it is far more accurate to conclude that the events of May and June 2020 proved to be an exclamation point of sorts during a presidency that had already laid bare a significant degree of polarization in the country.

The political behaviors undertaken by civilian and military actors in 2021 likewise point to the high degree of polarization that prevailed in the country, even after Joe Biden assumed the Presidency. Genuine questions concerning the chaotic military withdrawal from Afghanistan were largely impacted, if not overshadowed entirely, by the simultaneous revelations of General Milley’s previous phone calls with a Chinese General and the

Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, near or in the wake of the events of January 6, 2021.

It is likewise important to note that General Milley never denied or refuted the allegations revealed by Bob Woodward's and Robert Costa's book, *Peril.* Rather, Milley sought to articulate the reasons *why* he tried to decrease tensions with China, and why he had reassured Speaker Pelosi concerning the procedures and protocols regarding the use of nuclear weapons. At the root of the reasons offered by Milley to justify his conduct, however, lay issues that are inexorably polarizing. To staunch Democrats, President Trump's mind was in an altered if not degraded state, especially after January 6, 2021. Some Republicans, on the other hand, may not condone the events of January 6, 2021 entirely, but they nonetheless strongly support many of the policies Trump stood for. In short, how one views the former President – and the policies former President Trump stood for – is likely a strong indicator of how one views the political behaviors undertaken in the summer of 2020 and again in 2021 after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Recent public opinion polling indicates just how divided Americans were over some of the events that occurred in 2020 and 2021. This further attests to the powerful role of polarization in contributing to the political behaviors undertaken during these years. What is especially important to note is how trust and confidence in the military declined by party affiliation after each of the episodes described in 2020 and 2021. For example, trust in the military declined among Democrats after the protests in June 2020, likely in part because the use of the military "for protest control" is strongly opposed by Democrats (79%) compared to Republicans (17%) (YouGov 2020). Similarly, after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, confidence in the military dropped the most among Republicans, ostensibly because it had occurred under the watch of a Democrat president (Hadley 2021).

Political Behaviors in 2020 and 2021 and the Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations

The public appeals undertaken in June of 2020 directly violated the principle of civilian control, and indirectly violated the principle of non-partisanship. The political activities undertaken in 2020 and 2021 directly violated both the principles of civilian control *and* non-partisanship.

Collectively, the public appeals levied by military actors amid domestic civil unrest in June 2020 clearly violated the principle of civilian control. By strongly condemning President Trump's consideration of using active-duty military forces to quell domestic unrest, the retired military officers undertaking these public appeals likely impacted public opinion against the President, with the practical effect of making the option of using active military forces less viable for the President. Indeed, the military actors who engaged in these public appeals desired to have precisely this impact.

However, controversial decisions regarding the use of military force are, at the end of the day, ultimately to be made by the civilian chain of command, and not by retired or active military officers. As Americans, we can (and should) all agree that violating the First Amendment rights of protesters is squarely against the Constitution. But it is not at all easy to agree under what circumstances and situations a particular protest is no longer peaceful, and at what point coercive force – even military force – deserves to be used to protect life and property. As the last chapter described, this has been done before, both during the Reconstruction Era and in several significant labor disputes that occurred later in the 19th century. Many Americans were understandably and rightly impacted by the death of George Floyd and viewed the resulting protests differently. Still, there is a process by which civilian and military leaders deliberate and consider policy response options. In June of 2020, for better or for worse, this process was augmented by a flurry of public appeals authored by retired military officers.

General Milley's behavior in 2021 also violated the principle of civilian control. The

main evidence of this assertion stems from the content of General Milley's October 8, 2020 and January 8, 2021 phone calls with Chinese General Li Zuocheng. In my view, the most troubling aspect of this phone call is not what Milley said or did not say, but rather the fact that the civilian chain of command at the time has publicly stated that they did not and would not have approved of what Milley told the Chinese (Elkind and Caralle 2021). Even if it is in the regular duties and responsibilities of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to regularly converse with the heads of other militaries, as Milley has reasonably claimed, one must also reasonably conclude that informing foreign militaries of the intent of the US military is not solely the purview of military leaders (Ignatius 2021). In other words, if making military plans and implementing these plans is subject to civilian authorities, it also stands to reason that communicating these plans – especially to an adversary – should have some degree of civilian input at the very least. General Milley's behavior, by his own account, ensured that this was not the case.

However, some of the civilian and military actor calls for Milley's resignation also violated the principles of civil-military relations, including the principles of non-partisanship and civilian control. That "some" of the calls for Milley's resignation violated any principles is important because it implies that other calls for his resignation did not. Here, the distinction lies between genuine calls for Milley's resignation versus those that were made for partisan showmanship rather than out of a deep normative conviction that Milley should resign.

Of course, the trouble lies in observing this distinction. This ultimately prevents us from classifying these calls for Milley's resignation into these categories. Yet the tone used by some who called on Milley to resign, or intimated that he or Austin should resign, indicates that such calls were done, at least in substantial part, to obtain a partisan advantage rather than to genuinely determine what happened in the final days of America's involvement in Afghanistan. Congressman Matt Gaetz, for instance, told General Milley directly during the Committee hearing held on 29 September 2021, that

"you seem to be very happy failing up over there (the Pentagon). But if we didn't have a President that was so addled, you all would be fired. Because that is what you deserve…you're far more interested in what your perception is, and what people think about you, and insider Washington books, than you care about winning…" (Ending the US military mission in afghanistan 2021).

In actuality, Gaetz may have genuinely been disappointed by the outcome of Afghanistan, and perhaps had real questions about Milley's role leading to the withdrawal of US Troops from Afghanistan. But Gaetz's remarks seem to have been largely geared towards firing up his political base rather than investigating the proximate causes that led to the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan. If in fact this was Mr. Gaetz's intent – to use the military solely for his own partisan advantage – his remarks violated the principle of military non-partisanship.

These types of remarks, in a very real sense, also violated the principle of civilian control. This is the case because by primarily attempting to obtain a partisan advantage, the ability of the nation to genuinely study and learn from foreign policy failure – in this case, the US mission in Afghanistan – was likely degraded (Schultz 2017). Congress has a duty to perform oversight of the military. But exercising and implementing this oversight, a key component of the principle of civilian control, cannot and will not occur if the primary lens through which civilian actors look is one of attempting to obtain a perpetual partisan advantage.

Summary of Political Behavior Involving the Military Undertaken in 2020-2021

The 15-month period from June 2020-September 2021 included several significant periods of political activity involving the military. This period included weeks of tumultuous domestic unrest in 2020 and the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. The latter episode occurred alongside revelations that the senior military officer in the US, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had engaged in phone calls with a Chinese General

Table 26: Political Behaviors Involving the Military, 2020-2021

Actor	Tactic of Political Behavior	Date	Instance	Central Principle Violated
Multiple Retired Generals	Public Appeals	2020	Multiple retired Generals and Admirals publicly address former President Trump's consideration of using military forces to quell protests and riots in multiple American cities	Civilian Control; non-partisanship (indirectly)
General Mark Milley	Selective Obedience/Compliance (form of)	2020-2021	General Milley engages in at least two phone calls with a Chinese General in which he seeks to de-escalate tensions with China; the acting Secretary of Defense later says he would not have approved these calls.	Civilian control
Several Republican Lawmakers	Grandstanding	2021	Multiple Republican Lawmakers demand that General Milley resign in the wake of allegations that he had spoken with both a Chinese General and the Speaker of the House before and after the 2020 Presidential Election. Some of these calls for Milley to resign seem to have been motivated by a desire to fire up the political base of the lawmakers.	Non-Partisanship; civilian control
Multiple Retired Generals and Admirals, including the group the Flag Officers 4 America	Grandstanding	2021	Several dozen Retired General and Admirals call on General Milley and Secretary of Defense Austin to resign in the wake of the withdrawal from Afghanistan. The group Flag Officers 4 America also publishes a letter suggesting that the 2020 Election had been stolen from Donald Trump.	Non-partisanship

and the Speaker of the House. In both 2020 and in 2021, the US military found itself front and center in much of the political conversation occurring in the United States. Some were proud of how the military handled itself, and others, as this section of the chapter has noted, were highly alarmed with the actions of senior military leaders.

Table 26 summarizes the political behaviors undertaken by civilian and military actors from 2020-2021.

Comparison and Contrast of "The Revolt" and Political Activity Undertaken in 2020-2021

Both the "Revolt of the Generals" and the political activities involving the military undertaken during the Summer of 2020 and after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 were significant. In both episodes, military and civilian actors engaged in visible political behaviors that violated the principles of civil-military relations. Yet the "Revolt of the Generals" and the political activities involving the military undertaken in 2020-2021 differ in important ways as well.

The main difference between the political environment that prevailed in each episode is that during the "Revolt of the Generals," the prevailing level of polarization was relatively lower than that which existed during the Summer of 2020 and after the withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. According to Table 24, the political activities undertaken amid a higher level of polarization should be marked by a more comprehensive type of politicization, more extreme levels of political activity, and significant potential for civil-military conflict than those undertaken when the level of polarization is lower, even as the level of military prestige remains relatively high.

Comprehensive Politicization

In my view, a comparison of the "Revolt of the Generals" in 2006 and the political activities undertaken in 2020 and 2021 reveals that the latter episode was in fact marked by comprehensive politicization, a more extreme level of political activity, and significant (rather than high) potential for civil-military conflict. First, the politicization of the military undertaken in 2020 and 2021 was more comprehensive than the "Revolt of the Generals." This is most clearly seen, perhaps, in the fact that the political activities comprising the "Revolt of the Generals" were voluntary acts committed by primarily one type of actor (military), whereas the latter episode of 2020-2021 involved behaviors that were somewhat inescapable and committed by both types of actors.

By use of the term inescapable, I have in mind the fact that the political behaviors undertaken in 2020-2021 flowed out of a far more polarized domestic setting, whereas the "Revolt of the Generals" did not. To see this, a counterfactual thought experiment might help. We might consider, for instance, what may have resulted if the actors in each of the episodes described in this chapter had chosen to *not* speak out, act, or otherwise engage in the political activity they undertook?

Had the revolting generals never written the public appeals they actually authored, would any civilian or military actors have accused them of failing to fulfill their duties, or violating their oath of office? We cannot know for sure, but given the relatively mild level of polarization prevalent in 2006, it is reasonable to conclude that such criticism would have been either non-existent or relatively mild. Indeed, many critics of the revolting officers believe that these officers actually should have kept their mouths shut. Through this lens, the "Revolt" truly was a deliberate, intentional, and voluntary episode initiated by the revolting officers themselves.

On the other hand, had Milley *not* de-escalated with the Chinese General, or had refused to speak with the Speaker of the House after January 6, 2021, would civilian and military actors accused him of failing to fulfill his responsibilities, or of violating his oath of office? Though it is conjecture only, the theory offered and evidence examined thus far in this dissertation suggest that Milley indeed would have been criticized, but from the opposite political direction than the criticism he endured for actually engaging in these calls. Indeed, just as several Republicans tore into Milley for actually participating in the phone calls, it is likely that several Democrats would have strongly criticized Milley for *not* engaging in the same phone calls, or for *not* expressing dissent in some way amid a very turbulent period of time in 2020 or in 2021. For instance, had General Milley not offered an apology for walking with President Trump through Lafayette Square in 2020, it is highly likely he would have encountered significant criticism from Democrats.

Unlike the revolting generals in 2006, General Milley in 2020 and in 2021 was, to a

certain extent, in a foreordained lose-lose situation: by engaging in the actions that he did, he was largely venerated by one political side and castigated by the other. This intense level of partisanship points to the comprehensiveness of the politicization that can occur in highly polarized settings and when the military institution is relatively prestigious.

Extreme Political Activity

Second, the political behavior undertaken in 2020 and in 2021 involving the military yielded political activity that was more extreme than that undertaken in 2006 during the "Revolt of the Generals." The lens of partisanship provides the clearest evidence for this assertion, rather than the types of behaviors committed.

As noted earlier in this case study, recall that the criticisms levied by the revolting officers in 2006 mainly addressed the personal leadership deficits of Secretary Rumsfeld rather than explicit partisan concerns. These officers called on Rumsfeld to step down or to resign, but their remarks never explicitly criticized, for instance, President George W. Bush's handling of the war in Iraq, even though Secretary Rumsfeld ultimately worked in the Bush Cabinet.

During the political activities undertaken by military and civilian actors in 2020 and in 2021, the role of partisanship was far more evident. To begin with, the calls for resignation went the other way — from civilian actors to a military actor, General Milley. However, these civilian actors calling for Milley's resignation came primarily from one political party. Furthermore, in calling for Milley to resign, some voices *harshly* criticized the President, Joe Biden. This is notable insofar as at the time of the withdrawal from Afghanistan, President Biden had been in office for less than eight months and had inherited a war that was nearly 20 years old and overseen by presidents of both political parties. Congressman Matt Gaetz's remarks, referenced earlier in this chapter (he labeled President Biden, "addled"), clearly indicate a partisan motive (Ending the US military mission in afghanistan 2021). Others calling for or intimating that Milley resign, such as

Senator Tom Cotton, were among those who, the previous year, had taken public positions regarding the use of military force to suppress domestic civil unrest that were aligned with those favored by President Donald Trump.[82]

Significant Potential for Civil-Military Conflict

Finally, the political activity undertaken as part of the "Revolt of the Generals" differs from that undertaken in 2020 and in 2021 in that during the latter, the potential for civil-military conflict was greater. The clearest evidence for this assertion stems from the fact that the latter episode occurred amid the background of what can be considered approaching a constitutional crisis. The "Revolt of the Generals," on the other hand, while serious, did not rise to the level of a constitutional crisis.

The months leading up to January 6, 2021, and the period of time immediately afterward, constitute at least approaching a domestic crisis. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when this period began and ended, but a reasonable consideration is that it began sometime around the domestic unrest that began in May of 2020 and ended after President Biden's formal inauguration on January 20, 2021. The "Revolt of the Generals," on the other hand, was certainly not insignificant, but it ultimately involved a handful of retired generals. There are no indications that a significant portion of military officers serving at the time shared in the convictions of these dissenting officers, or that a significant number of active-duty military officers were on the verge of resigning as a result of Secretary Rumsfeld's leadership or engaging in activity that would have threatened the day-to-day operations of the military.

On the other hand, during 2020 and 2021, the political environment was (and remains) much more highly charged. While there is no data to suggest a significant portion

[82]Cotton, for instance, had published an op-ed in the *New York Times* entitled "Send in the Troops," in which he had stated, "This venerable law (*The Insurrection Act*), nearly as old as our republic itself, doesn't amount to 'martial law' or the end of democracy, as some excitable critics... have comically suggested. In fact, the federal government has a constitutional duty to the states to 'protect each of them from domestic violence.'" See Cotton (2020) for more details. Cotton's views on the domestic use of force thus became the object of scorn by those retired military officers who spoke out against the use of domestic military force.

of military officers or troops were on the verge of resigning, there is some evidence to suggest that the military was, like the country itself, split on many of the unfolding events and issues that occurred during these couple of years. The strongest evidence for this is perhaps General Milley's announcement at the National Defense University, where he apologized for walking to St. John's Church with President Trump in June 2020 (*Official Website of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* 2020). In addition to apologizing, a deeper reading of Milley's remarks also draws out the fact that he is addressing issues of diversity, racial harmony, and the numerous backgrounds of all who wear the uniform. The point is that Milley seems to be addressing not just the country at large, but the military itself, with the implicit understanding that the events that had transpired in the previous weeks, after the death of George Floyd, had deeply impacted many who serve.

Impact on Foreign Policy

One final important way in which the two episodes differ is in their impact on the respective foreign policy problems at the time. The 2006 "Revolt of the Generals" contributed to an important discussion and ultimately, a re-evaluation of the US strategy in Iraq. Though the precise impact of the "Revolt" on policy adjustments cannot be fully measured, this chapter noted that following the 2006 midterm elections, President George W. Bush replaced Donald Rumsfeld with Robert Gates. In 2007, a lighter military footprint, which had been designed and advocated for by Rumsfeld, was augmented by a substantial increase of US military forces. The "Revolt of the Generals" had, in essence, contributed to an important reevaluation and subsequent adjustment of a major US foreign policy, the war in Iraq.

The political activity conducted in 2020 and in 2021, on the other hand, did little to advance, sharpen, or improve the status of a tangible American foreign policy issue. To begin with, the political activity undertaken by military actors in 2020 concerned the domestic rather than foreign or external use of the military. Yet even in 2021, when the

catalyst for much of the political activity undertaken *was* a major foreign policy event (the sudden collapse of Afghanistan), the simultaneous revelation of General Milley's phone calls resulted in a refocusing on polarizing domestic politics, at least in the short term. As a result, much of the national conversation in September 2021 steered toward domestic politics, rather than truly ascertaining the reasons for America's 20-year-long mission to Afghanistan ending the way that it did.

Comparison of Case Studies

This section of the chapter compares and contrasts the case study undertaken in this chapter with that which was explored in the previous chapter. Because the level of military prestige was the main independent variable that changed in the previous chapter, and because polarization was the main independent variable that changed in this chapter, there should be portions of each case study that are similar to the other.

In this chapter, both episodes involved civilian and/or military actors undertaking fairly public and visible forms of political behavior, to include writing public appeals. This was also true of the first episode explored in the previous case study, when several military officers, including Generals Grant, Sheridan, and Pope undertook several instances of engaging in public appeals (mainly leaked letters) to advocate against the views of President Johnson concerning Reconstruction policy.

Simultaneous conditions of high polarization and high military prestige marked the American domestic political landscape both in the first episode explored in the previous case study (1865-1868), as well as the latter episode explored in this chapter (2020-2021). From 1865-1868, several senior military officers, including the generals named above, opposed a deeply unpopular president, Andrew Johnson, primarily because he held a view of Reconstruction that, in the view of these officers, would squander the very purposes for which the Civil War had been fought (Hyman 1960). Furthermore, these military officers engaged in a number of visible political activities that violated normative standards of

civil-military conduct, even by historical standards. Eventually, they allied with Republicans in Congress while advocating that the Army become *more* involved in the undertaking of several non-traditional domestic political tasks in the southern states. These tasks were essential, these military leaders believed, in order to facilitate the civil rights of African Americans after the Civil War and to prevent another rebellion similar to the Civil War.

In 2020 and in 2021, many military actors (retired officers especially) similarly opposed a deeply unpopular president, Donald Trump. In 2020, however, it was the President who considered using military force in a non-traditional manner by contemplating whether the military should be used to suppress civil unrest unfolding in multiple American cities in May and June, 2020. For their part, the retired military officers who engaged in a number of public appeals denouncing the domestic use of military force were advocating for a *lesser* domestic role for military forces.

A further similarity to the domestic environments in 1867-1868 and in 2020-2021 is evident in the fact that high polarization had contributed to constitutional crises (or closely approaching one) occurring in each era. During the earlier period, the previous chapter noted that Congress eventually passed the *The Tenure of Office Act*, the design of which was to explicitly curtail Johnson's authority as President. Johnson was ultimately impeached in 1868 for violating this act. In 2020-2021, the results of the 2020 presidential election were questioned, the US Capitol subsequently attacked, and President Trump impeached. In both instances, highly polarized environments strongly shaped the views and the behaviors of civilian and military actors.

Conclusion

This chapter did not seek to test outright any of the five hypotheses presented previously in this dissertation. Yet the exploration of the two episodes explored in this chapter, both of which occurred in the post-9/11 environment, has helped further confirm

both H4 and H5. H4 states that military and civilian actors engage in relatively more visible and public forms of political behavior when military prestige is high relative to periods of low military prestige. H5 states that the most extreme levels of political activity occur in environments characterized by simultaneously high levels of political polarization and military prestige.

A high level of military prestige prevailed during both of the episodes explored in this chapter. The level of polarization, on the other hand, increased substantially during the twenty-year period from 2001-2021. Both the "Revolt of the Generals" and the political activity involving the military undertaken in 2020-2021 constituted serious breaches of several of the central principles of civil-military relations. The main difference between the "Revolt of the Generals" and the political behavior involving the military undertaken in the wake of American civil unrest in 2020 and the US withdrawal from Afghanistan is that during the latter episodes, partisan undertones were far more evident. These partisan undertones, furthermore, were not reflective of simple policy disagreements, but instead of deep division involving a number of policies associated with the Trump Presidency that touched on issues involving one's moral commitments and philosophical bents.

A comparison of the two episodes examined in this case study show that increasing toxicity in a state's political environment further heightens civil-military tension and the potential for civil-military conflict. This case study suggests that policymakers, practitioners, and scholars should, at a minimum, take seriously the notion that while civil-military disputes such as the "Revolt of the Generals" can erupt when the military is relatively popular, the level of polarization is also an important and perhaps a vital indicator of just how significant civil-military tension can become.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

This concluding chapter seeks to bring the preceding six chapters of this dissertation together. The goals herein are four-fold: first, to summarize what this dissertation has shown; second, to identify what the dissertation has not yet shown; third, to help the reader understand what this study means and why it matters, especially with respect to contemporary civil-military relationships in the United States; and fourth, to recommend avenues of future research.

This chapter proceeds in four main parts, each of which aligns with its goals. The first part integrates the overall argument and the findings presented over the previous six chapters. The second part of this chapter identifies important limitations of this study and discusses important aspects of the argument that are not yet known. The third portion presents the main implications of this dissertation. Emphasis is placed on why scholars, military officers, and the American public should care about what has been presented in this dissertation. The final part of the chapter recommends several strands of future research.

Integrating the Argument

At its core, this dissertation ultimately sought to explain why political behaviors involving the military occur in mature democracies, and in the United States in particular. In so doing, the dissertation first provided a framework by which to assess and measure political behaviors involving the military. The framework presented centered on the adherence by civilian and military actors to three central principles of civil-military relations. In Chapter 1, these were exposited and identified as the principles of civilian control of the military, non-partisanship of the military institution, and non-interference of the military into certain realms of the state. Chapter 1 argued that these principles have their roots in scholarship such as that of Samuel Huntington and his critics, and military

normative practices that have been fostered since at least the end of World War Two.

Chapter 2 then presented a theory arguing that the respective levels of military prestige and political polarization shape the degree to which civilian and military actors adhere to these central principles. The theory argued that military actors increasingly violate the central principles of civil-military relations as the levels of both political polarization and military prestige rise. Civilian actors increasingly violate the principles of civil-military relations as the level of military prestige rises. The theory also argued that because these variables always exist at some level, the two variables combine such that four distinct domestic structures are ultimately plausible, each of which denotes paired relative (high or low) values of the levels of polarization and military prestige. These domestic structures, furthermore, broadly describe which actor type induces polarization, what level of political activity occurs, and what degree of potential for civil-military conflict exists in each structure. These domestic structures can be seen in Table 24.

Chapters 3-6 tested this theory. Chapters 3 and 4 performed rigorous and original quantitative analyses of observational data of one political behavior undertaken by each type of actor. Chapter 3 explored public appeals written by retired military officers (a type of military actor) from 1979-2020, and Chapter 4 explored the use of military imagery and military actors in presidential campaign advertisements from 2000 - 2016, a behavior undertaken by predominantly civilian actors.

The methodological approach employed in Chapters 3 and 4 was similar. I first operationalized how each type of behavior might violate each central principle of civil-military relations in practice. I then identified these violations across the data, controlled for other variables that might also be responsible for spurring the violations, and analyzed the data over time. In Chapter 4, this analysis included a geographic dimension (media markets in the United States).

Chapters 5 and 6, on the other hand, investigated the theory through qualitative analysis. These chapters, too, employed a similar methodological approach. Each chapter

examined a different historical era in which one of the two independent variables (military prestige and polarization) mostly changed, while the other variable remained relatively constant. Chapter 5 went back to the 19th century and examined the roughly 15-year period beginning at the end of the US Civil War, from 1865 until 1880. During this period, the level of polarization remained high, but the level of military prestige declined. Chapter 6 examined the contemporary post-9/11 era. During the twenty years from 2001-2021, the level of military prestige remained relatively high and constant, but the level of polarization in the United States rose sharply.

The methodological approach employed in both Chapters 5 and 6 was different than that undertaken in Chapters 3 and 4. Instead of examining one political behavior undertaken by one type of actor, Chapters 5 and 6 sought to examine multiple political behaviors undertaken by both types of actors, and to characterize the tone, tenor, and broader characteristics of the political activity involving the military undertaken in each era. In order to do this, each chapter examined major episodes or events that occurred within the periods of time examined. For instance, Chapter 5 compared and contrasted political behavior involving the military undertaken in 1865-1868 with that undertaken in 1877-1880. Chapter 6, on the other hand, compared and contrasted the "Revolt of the Generals," which was undertaken in 2006, with political activity involving the military undertaken amid unfolding domestic unrest in 2020 and immediately after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.

Findings and Results

The Roles of Polarization and Military Prestige

This dissertation clearly found that rising levels of polarization impact the degree to which military actors adhere to the three central principles of civil-military relations. Chapter 3 found moderate statistical evidence for this assertion (see in particular Tables 10 and 11). The first period examined in Chapter 5 (1865-1868) as well as the second portion

of Chapter 6 (2020-2021) also found qualitative evidence highly consistent with this claim. As the level of polarization rises, the results consistently suggest that military actors are increasingly willing to violate the principles of civil-military relations.

Chapters 5 and 6 found qualitative evidence consistent with the underlying reason for the relationship between increasing polarization and a weakening adherence to the central principles of civil-military relations by military actors. The theory argued that high polarization indicates significant divergence in the political community concerning the underlying moral values and worldviews that hold sway in the state. During the post-US Civil War period, the fundamental opposition in moral values and worldviews centered on issues related to American Reconstruction policy. Among these issues, Chapter 5 noted, were questions related to the rights and political freedoms of former slaves, what actions the federal government should take to secure these freedoms, and what punitive measures, if any, should be levied against the former Confederate States and those who had taken up arms against the Union. In Chapter 6, the divergence in moral values and worldviews underlying high levels of polarization levels stemmed from disagreement concerning multiple policies of the former President, Donald Trump, and what values these policies stood for.

The evidence uncovered in this dissertation for the level of military prestige shaping the political behavior of military and civilian actors is not quite as strong. Chapter 4 found evidence that civilian actors are in fact sensitive to the level of military prestige in employing or harnessing military figures to appear and to behave in certain ways that violate the central principles of civil-military relations during presidential campaign television advertisements. However, Chapter 4 employed a proxy measurement for the level of military prestige (the percentage of the overall population that is a veteran in each media market). By itself, the use of a proxy measurement in Chapter 4 is not necessarily problematic, but as noted in the chapter, there are other possible variables that might also be correlated with the percentage of the veteran population in a particular locale. These

other variables, such as partisanship or military culture, prevent drawing the firm conclusion that military prestige (as measured by the proxy of the percentage of veterans in the population) is in fact driving civilian actors to employ military figures in campaign ads in ways that violate the central principles of civil-military relations.

Still, the evidence for the role of military prestige in shaping civilian and military actor adherence to the central principles of civil-military relations was more than merely anecdotal. In particular, the case study undertaken in Chapter 5 suggested that even when high polarization levels abound – as they did throughout the bulk of the late 19th Century in the US – a relatively less prestigious military does not hold as much potential to influence public opinion and, as a result, military and civilian actors are less likely to behave in ways that violate the principles of civil-military relations when the level of military prestige is relatively low compared to when it is high. The strongest evidence for this assertion is the historical evidence detailed in Chapter 5 that showed that multiple military actors, to include Generals Sherman and Pope, were highly cognizant that they represented an institution that was far less important to the country in the 1870s than during the previous decade, and that these and civilian actors altered their behavior as a result.

The Presence of Unique Domestic Environments that Shape Civil-Military Relations

Holistically, there is mild evidence to support the notion that there are distinct domestic environments that exist and which depend on the relative levels of political polarization and military prestige. At a minimum, this stands out as a contribution that will help future scholars and practitioners of civil-military relations appreciate and articulate the similarities and differences of the conduct of civil-military relations over time. However, this dissertation did not examine all four of the potential environments. The case studies and the quantitative work collectively covered three of the four possible

domestic structures. Of the four theoretical domestic environments that are shown in Table 24, the one that was not explored in depth is that which is possible when both polarization and military prestige operate at relatively low levels. Additionally, this dissertation explored the presence of these environments in strictly relative terms. This enabled clearer theoretical distinctions to be drawn between environments. For now, this is the best way to think about and employ this framework, rather than to insist that a certain era falls into a distinct quadrant in an absolute sense.

Limitations of this Study

While I have attempted to undertake a systematic and careful investigation of the role of polarization and military prestige in shaping the political activity of civilian and military actors involving the military, there are nonetheless several shortcomings of this dissertation that deserve highlighting.

Methodological Approach

One of the main limitations of this study involves the methodological approach undertaken, particularly in Chapters 3 and 4, the main quantitative empirical chapters of the dissertation. As with most studies that rely on observational data, there are always concerns about omitted variables and endogeneity. This study is no exception. Though some of these concerns were addressed back in Chapter 2, it is worth making a couple of additional statements now that this research project is nearing an end.

In each of the empirical chapters (3 and 4), the respective regression analyses included controls for variables that theoretically could also have driven variation in the dependent variables examined. Though this is standard practice for regression analyses with observational data, omitted variable bias always presents some level of concern, as the preceding discussion of the proxy measurement of military prestige used in Chapter 4 made clear.

Both endogeneity and omitted variable bias remain less of a concern with respect to the variable of polarization and its impact on political behavior than the variable of military prestige. Chapter 2 mentioned this was the case in part because of the way in which the variable of polarization has been conceived and defined throughout this dissertation. Indeed, polarization in this study denotes the contestation of worldviews and moral judgments that vie for supremacy in the political sphere. Through this lens, the behavior of military and civilian actors *with respect to the military* is more likely to be a product of polarization rather than the source of it.

Endogeneity and omitted variables bias are greater with respect to the variable of military prestige. Chapter 4 acknowledged these concerns when using the the veteran percentage of the population of each media market as a proxy to measure military prestige. Furthermore, while the two historical case studies added a level of richness that provided scholarly benefit, doing so introduced a whole host of potential omitted variables. Indeed, much has changed in American society besides the levels of polarization and military prestige in the 156 years between 1865 and 2021, the beginning of the first case study and the end of the second.

For these reasons, it is best to view this dissertation as having established a general relationship between the independent variables of polarization and military prestige and the dependent variable of political acts that violate principles of civil-military relations rather than a causal relationship. In other words, this dissertation does not allow us to conclude that polarization or military prestige necessarily *cause* military and civilian actors to behave in certain ways. But we can conclude that these variables are *associated* with these actors adhering to the principles of civil-military relations to differing degrees and in somewhat predictable ways. In the end, this is still an important and original finding.

Theoretical Approach

Another limitation of this study involves the theory advanced in this dissertation, which deliberately incorporated *both* military and civilian actors. Doing so, Chapters 1 and 2 argued, is both a better reflection of the two-sided nature of civil-military relations and the reality that both types of actors play significant roles in sustaining a state's overall civil-military relationship.

While this is an overall positive theoretical undertaking, the one actor that did not receive more articulation in the theory is the public itself. The role of the public in the theory advanced here was implicit; that is, this theory noted how the variables of polarization and military prestige impact various aspects of the public. For example, this dissertation noted that rising polarization is associated with the public being more divided over issues of the day, and that the level of military prestige impacts public opinion regarding the military in certain ways.

Future theoretical refinements to the theory advanced herein might more explicitly separate the public as an altogether separate actor, however, from the civilian and military elites who regularly engage in the conduct of civil-military relations. Doing so may enable even more finely grained examinations of the variables of polarization and military prestige, and in particular, *how* these variables impact the public, and in what ways.

On a related note, this dissertation viewed the variables of military prestige and polarization as conceptually independent from each other. For the specific empirical data and the case studies examined in this dissertation, this theoretical distinction between the variables of military prestige and polarization was, for the most part, logical and sound. At the same time, the case studies in particular brought out the fact that the partisan identification of the public impacts how certain segments of the public view the military, especially during periods of high polarization. For example, the case study undertaken in Chapter 6 pointed out that Republicans in particular were those who called on General Milley to resign in 2021 following the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and amid

revelations of him engaging in phone calls with a Chinese General and with the Speaker of the House. Additionally, Chapter 5 pointed out that it was Southern Democrats who especially viewed the military in a negative light as a result of the military's involvement during American Reconstruction in the late 1860s and 1870s.

There is thus mild evidence that in fact, the variables of polarization and military prestige are not entirely independent from each other, at least under some range of extreme values of polarization *and* depending on how the public is defined. One way of dealing with this issue in future research involves undertaking studies which separate the public by party affiliation. Indeed, contemporary surveys of public opinion involving various facets of the military seem to be doing just this (Hadley 2021). Scholars can and should think through other ways to do this such that the variables of polarization and military prestige retain their theoretical distinction, but in a way that acknowledges and responds to the fact that the public itself is not a unitary actor.

Generalizability

Another significant limitation of this study involves the issue of generalizability. Here, there are two distinct challenges. The first involves the degree to which this dissertation's findings export to settings beyond the United States, and the second involves the degree to which some of the findings export within the United States.

This dissertation clearly centered on the United States. Yet all of the variables contained in the theory operate and exist in settings beyond the United States. Thus, an important question is whether the findings uncovered in this dissertation might also apply, and to what degree, in other mature democracies, such as in Canada, Western Europe, and Israel. The short answer is that we cannot be entirely sure. Future research can and should incorporate cross-national investigations of elements of the theory presented in this dissertation. Nonetheless, a couple of considerations are important.

One important consideration related to the generalizability of the theory advanced

here involves the definition and the underpinnings that are associated with the independent variables. In particular, the variable of polarization may contain several US-specific considerations. This dissertation, for instance, conceptualized polarization to indicate the degree of divergence in the moral values that hold sway in society. And while the definition of polarization may be the same in other contexts beyond the US, it is not clear, at least to me, that polarization necessarily reflects the same dynamic of divergence in moral values and/or worldviews that are competing for primacy in the public square in other countries.

This matters because by using US-specific measures of polarization, such as the DW-NOMINATE scores used in Chapters 3 and 4 and shown in multiple places throughout this dissertation, the United States has only had extreme levels of polarization twice in its history. Scholars of comparative politics and country-specific experts will perhaps be in a better position to determine whether polarization is a relatively unique phenomenon in a particular country or region of interest. Intuitively, my initial guess is that in countries where polarization is or has been far more common than in the United States, changes in the level of polarization would result in far less significant change in the dependent variable than have been uncovered here. But again, this is only a conjecture that future research must settle conclusively.

Another important consideration with respect to generalizing the findings of this dissertation to other mature democracies involves the dependent variable of political activity that violates the principles of civil-military relations. The three central principles of civil-military relations that were derived in Chapter 1 of this dissertation likely apply in other mature democracies. But a difficulty arises when we try to define the scope and boundaries of these three central principles in settings beyond the US. Doing so will likely require some alteration on the part of country-specific and regional experts.

For example, I noted in Chapters 2, 3, and 6 that in the United States, a figurative line separates the normative conduct of active-duty from retired military officers. I argued that this line, however, is not drawn in such a drastically different place that the two

groups have been considered entirely distinct entities (although this dissertation argued that this line is being increasingly drawn in different places as a result of increasing polarization). However, it is not clear to me that such a line either exists or that it must necessarily exist in other countries, including in mature democracies. Retired military officers in France, for example, may act very differently from the collective body of retired military officers in the United States. Thus, analyzing retired French military officer opinion commentary, as undertaken here in Chapter 3 for American retired officers, may not serve as the best way of measuring how military actors in France have violated or will violate the principles of civil-military relations.

It is therefore important to at least allow room for the possibility that while all mature democracies broadly share the three central principles of civil-military relations, how these principles have historically regulated specific types of political behavior may require country-specific application and interpretation. For example, violation of the principle of non-partisanship in the two party system of the United States is a somewhat clear violation to identify, in my view. I am not as certain about how the principle of non-partisanship would look in practice in parliamentary systems of government, where multiple parties exist.

A second issue that pertains to the general question of generalizability involves the US context. One line of criticism of this dissertation might be that there are other political behaviors involving the military beyond the authorship of opinion commentary (Chapter 3) and the use of military symbols, images, and actors in campaign advertisements (Chapter 4) that can and should be explored empirically before concluding that changes in the levels of polarization and military prestige have the same impact on these other types of behaviors.

My response to this particular thread of criticism is one of agreement: indeed, we cannot state that the levels of polarization and military prestige will assuredly be associated with increasing violations of the principles of civil-military relations through

every and all other types of political behaviors undertaken by military and civilian actors, respectively. Nonetheless, this research project has undertaken, to my knowledge, the first rigorous and original analysis of these two specific behaviors that future scholarship can and should build on.

Implications of this Study

This section presents the main implications of this dissertation. Here, I have in mind what I think are the most important takeaways for policymakers, especially civilian and military elites, with respect to the conduct of civil-military relations in the contemporary United States.

The Domestic Environment Matters

The first implication stemming from this dissertation is that the state's domestic environment profoundly shapes civil-military relations. This is true because the domestic environment shapes the behavior of civilian and military actors. At a minimum, civilian and military actors can and should recognize how each type of actor responds to changes in the levels of military prestige and polarization, and how these changes have unfolded in different eras in US history. Such recognition likely will not make the conduct of civil-military relations for either type of actor necessarily easier, but it will enable each type of actor to better understand the inherent pull to which they are being subjected in the political arena.

This dissertation suggests that civilian actors will inherently be pulled by the desire to win and remain in political office, a finding that is consistent with the most basic of political instincts. A highly prestigious military that has the potential to influence and shape public opinion is thus a ripe target for civilian actor efforts to harness the military for their own advantage. This dissertation did not empirically test whether military actors too are sensitive to changes in the level of military prestige, but the theory presented here

suggests that they are, as does the qualitative evidence presented in Chapter 5. In short, both civilian and military actors are increasingly likely to use the military when it is relatively prestigious in ways that violate the principles of civil-military relations. Military and civilian actors may not be particularly surprised by this implication, but both actor types should at least acknowledge the reality of this tendency.

This dissertation also found that military actors are particularly sensitive to changes in the level of political polarization in the state. In particular, rising levels of polarization indicate that military actors will increasingly behave in ways that violate the central principles of civil-military relations. The major takeaway from this finding, in my view, differs for civilian and military leaders, respectively.

Civilian leaders who govern during times of high polarization should recognize that the military is not insulated from the pernicious effects of polarization. Especially as the issues that comprise a state's polarized political landscape involve matters that address those that involve moral values or undertones, the military and its members are increasingly likely to be divided in an ideological sense. While I do not think that civilian leaders should necessarily lower their expectations in terms of expecting professional conduct from the military in polarizing times, civilian leaders should recognize these forces that underlie the dynamics of polarization as very serious.

Military leaders should also understand that they face unique challenges in polarizing times, much in the way that Generals Grant (in Chapter 5) and Milley (in Chapter 6) seem to have understood and felt. These challenges are especially pronounced when both polarization and military prestige exist simultaneously at high levels.

The challenge military leaders face in eras of high polarization and relatively high military prestige is twofold. The first involves the challenge that senior military leaders face in dealing with their civilian actor counterparts and superiors in polarizing times — times that are inherently associated with controversial policies that by definition, are hated by some and beloved by others. This naturally places military leaders, especially those who

operate at the highest levels, in a tough place with little room to maneuver, politically speaking. Even military leaders who initially eschew partisan identification at all costs, it seems, eventually encounter a situation in which they either reluctantly ally with a partisan group, or are labeled an ally of a partisan group. In Chapter 5, this occurred when General Grant eventually allied with Republicans in Congress as a means of preventing President Johnson from doing what Grant and the Republicans thought would be irreparable damage to the Republic as Reconstruction proceeded, and in Chapter 6, when several Republicans accused Milley of being a traitor for engaging in phone calls with a Chinese General around the 2020 presidential election.

The second challenge that military leaders face in highly polarizing environments involves their ability to lead, manage, and harness their own internal military organizations and members. These organizations and members include primarily those who serve on active duty, but it also extends to those military retirees, veterans, and other veteran-affiliated groups that can also be considered military actors. As this dissertation has noted several times, members of the military are likely to be polarized when the nation is polarized. Military leaders cannot be blind or deaf to this reality. Thus, the second challenge of leading in such times presents somewhat of a tightrope for military leaders to walk in practice. If military leaders ignore the reality and the strength of polarization, their lack of action might be interpreted by their own populations and members as favoring one political or partisan side or the other over any number of polarizing issues. On the other hand, if military leaders do not insist on professional conduct – even in the midst of ongoing tensions that reflect polarization – they risk the military and its members also being seen as favoring or allying with one side over the other. The sense of unity within the military community, to the degree that it does exist in less polarizing times, decreases as the level of polarization rises.

The Principles of Civil-Military Relations Require a Healthy Environment to Flourish

A second implication stemming from this dissertation involves the conditions that lead to the nurturing and sustainment of the central principles of civil-military relations in the United States. Simply put, this dissertation's findings suggest that the central principles of civil-military relations flourish better under certain domestic conditions rather than others.

To state this another way, the United States seems to have developed the central principles of civil-military relations because certain domestic conditions enabled their formulation, adoption, and inculcation. This at least fits with the fact that Samuel Huntington wrote *The Soldier and the State* in 1957, a period during which the level of polarization in the United States was more or less in the middle of a 40-year-long relative low that spanned from the mid-1930s until the mid-1970s, as shown in Figure 3. That Huntington did not write about polarization is not necessarily oversight on his part. He did not need to account for polarization because it was not a major concern at the time. We, however, simply live in different times.

Huntington does not explicitly talk about the variable of military prestige, but this variable is implicit in much of Huntington's work. Indeed, he is writing at a time when the US military is fairly prestigious, as it plays a crucially important role in the Cold War with the Soviet Union after World War Two. American history is full of examples of civil-military disputes that occurred when polarization was relatively low and when military prestige was relatively high. These include disputes that occurred between President Truman and General Douglas MacArthur over Korea in 1951, President Eisenhower and General Matthew Ridgeway over Ike's New Deal policies in the early 1950s, and even the "Revolt of the Generals" between Secretary Rumsfeld and several retired generals in 2006 (discussed in Chapter 6 of this dissertation). All of these were substantial disputes that constituted genuine crises in American civil-military relations.

But other civil-military relations crises have occurred against a far more serious

backdrop. Those that have occurred under simultaneously high conditions of military prestige and polarization, such as between Grant and Johnson in 1867-1868, and between some retired generals and President Trump in 2020 as well as some members of Congress and General Milley in 2021, are even more severe. In these types of crises, when polarization is at an extreme level, a popular military may find itself involved in disputes that involve the political fabric of the state. Against such a backdrop, Presidents are impeached, as they were in 1868, 2019, and 2021. Election results are disputed, as they were in 1876 and in 2020. The Constitution itself is questioned.

This dissertation thus ultimately points to the conclusion that when the democracy itself is threatened internally as a result of polarization, the state's military cannot avoid this reality. I will allow the political theorists to intelligently debate about the conditions that most endanger democracy, but even a cursory examination of this dissertation suggests that these conditions exist when the definition of what is morally right in society is no longer shared. How this manifests itself in a particular period of time will undoubtedly be different, depending on any number of specific polarizing issues and other factors.

Allen Guelzo, a prominent historian, tells the story of how Abraham Lincoln debated Stephen Douglas in 1854 on passage of the pending Kansas-Nebraska Act, which allowed settlers to exercise what Douglas called the democratic right of "popular sovereignty" to decide whether slavery should be extended into these territories (Guelzo 2010, 187). Lincoln, Guelzo notes, was certainly not an abolitionist, but began to be deeply convicted that the spread of slavery and the democratic ideal of popular sovereignty were utterly incompatible. Lincoln would strongly condemn Douglas and his support of the doctrine of popular sovereignty on the grounds that, "it assumes that there can be MORAL RIGHT in the enslaving of one man by another" (Lincoln, 1854 quoted in Guelzo 2010, 187). To Lincoln, black people were *not* "property…in the same sense that hogs and horses are," as advocates of the doctrine of popular sovereignty claimed (Lincoln, 1854 quoted in Guelzo 2010, 190). We certainly do not live in the same times. But a number of other issues

addressed throughout this dissertation, ranging from what it means to be an American, what our “American Values” are, whether national borders should be enforced, whether parents should have a say in what their children are taught in school, and many other issues, similarly invoke or point to what Lincoln called a “philosophical basis” (Lincoln quoted in Guelzo 2010, 19).

Military prestige and polarization thus each pose unique challenges for civilian and military actors. Neither one should be ignored or brushed aside. But of the two, polarization seems to be the more severe because of what it signifies, and by extension, its obstinacy and potential staying power. Changes in the level of military prestige certainly do not change overnight. It took the military nearly two decades to rebuild after Vietnam (Kitfield 1997). Even so, there have been spikes in the level of military prestige that occurred over much shorter periods of time, perhaps none so prominent as that following the Gulf War in 1991 (see Figure 8). Militaries win or lose wars, or perform well or poorly during crises, or endure scandals, all of which can impact the level of military prestige. These could last weeks, months, or even several years.

Polarization, on the other hand, at least in the United States, almost certainly seems to stay around for a prolonged period of time — for generations, in fact. As shown in Figure 3 and discussed in Chapter 5 of this dissertation,the only other period of time in US history marked by very high levels of polarization involved the late-19th century until the early 20th century (around 1904). Although formal measurements of polarization are available beginning in the 1880s, we can reasonably assume that this period of high polarization started sometime well before the Civil War. If we mark this period of high polarization very conservatively as beginning at 1860 (and it almost certainly began before then), this means that the nation was highly polarized for more than four decades. We cannot predict the future with certainty, but a solemn appreciation for the dynamic of polarization suggests that current levels of polarization in the US are not likely to easily or suddenly abate.

Military and civilian leaders should study American civil-military relations in the post-US Civil War period, if for no other reason than to gain an appreciation of the tremendous difficulties and challenges that leaders such as General Ulysses Grant encountered. No historical period is the same as another, but there is still much that can be learned from this period and applied to today. Grant is perhaps best known for his martial exploits during the Civil War, but at this particular moment in US history, one can make the argument that it is his experiences after the Civil War, particularly in dealing with Congress, the President, and a divided Republic that are especially applicable to the challenges that military leaders face while operating during polarizing times.

Avenues of Future Research

There are several strands of future research this dissertation can and should spur. The first involves the degree to which the theory advanced herein applies to democracies beyond the United States. Scholars should conduct cross-national or country-specific investigations using the framework and the theory that have been advanced here, even if doing so requires slight modification. These alterations need not necessarily modify the theory to such a point where it is no longer recognizable. However, country-specific experts can and should identify what form of political behaviors involving the military constitute violations to each of the central principles of civil-military relations, and develop similar strategies as employed in this dissertation to measure these behaviors.

Future scholarship should also undertake further examinations of the role of military prestige in shaping adherence to the principles of civil-military relations, especially in the US context. This proved to be somewhat tricky in this dissertation, largely because of the limitations of the data explored in Chapter 4 (as discussed above). One way to approach this shortfall might involve undertaking cross-national examinations in contexts that have witnessed far-greater variation in military prestige than the United States.

Another way to investigate this question could involve in-depth examinations in the

US context, but for different cases than were examined in this dissertation. One case in particular that seems ripe for investigation is the political behavior involving the military immediately after (and perhaps even during the end of) the Vietnam War, in the early-mid 1970s. This dissertation suggests that if the prestige of the military dropped as the Vietnam War continued – as most popular accounts suggest – then civilian and military actors alike would have engaged in less frequent political behaviors involving the military that violate the principles of civil-military relations. In particular, the theory suggests that there would have been fewer instances of civilian and military actors acting in ways to harness the prestige of the military in order to shape or influence public opinion by using or leveraging the military. While I do not doubt these predictions in a broad sense, I am not aware of any empirical work that has specifically looked at this case.

Future scholarship should also more closely investigate the role of norm change and its potential influence in shaping civilian and military actor adherence to the principles of civil-military relations. This dissertation generally took a view that the dynamic of norm change was not strongly at work, and that polarization and military prestige were the primary variables that shaped civilian and military actor adherence to the principles of civil-military relations. But this dissertation did not thoroughly explore the possibility that polarization and military prestige are variables that first shape the norms that civilian and military actors adopt and which subsequently impact adherence to the principles of civil-military relations. Future work might incorporate alternate methodological approaches than those undertaken here, including the use of interviews with current and former civilian and military elites, to further explore this possibility.

Future research on this question would offer policymakers the opportunity to better evaluate how patterns of civil-military relations unfold in mature democracies over lengthy periods of time, and in particular, how one type of domestic environment impacts the behaviors undertaken by actors in another. For example, senior military officers who serve today in 2022, assuming they have served for 30-40 years, began their careers sometime

between 1982 and 1992. These officers undoubtedly learned lessons and adopted habits of behavior as lieutenants and captains in the late 1980s-1990s.

This period happens to overlap with a period of time in which the prestige of the military increased after the Gulf War. As young officers, today's senior military leaders witnessed others such as Colin Powell write op-eds and make public appeals about potential military involvement in the Balkans and other post-Cold War era crises. They observed the behavior of the Swift Boat Veterans during the 2004 election and witnessed the "Revolt of the Generals" in 2006 while serving as mid-grade officers. The question then becomes if and how the lessons these officers adopted – when they were younger – then impacted the behaviors these officers have undertaken as the levels of polarization have increased throughout their careers. Through this line of investigation, what becomes important is not just variation in the level of polarization and/or military prestige, but rather the succession and the order of the types of domestic environments in which civilian and military actors operate. In other words, it may matter that officers and civilian policymakers who learn a lesson in one type of environment later serve in another.

Finally, a major strand of future research should continue to unpack the relationship between political polarization and foreign policy, broadly speaking, and the military's role in this relationship. Scholars are certainly aware of and are investigating how polarization impacts a variety of foreign policy outcomes (Schultz 2017; Myrick 2021). But the role of the military, an actor that sits at the very intersection of foreign and domestic policy, remains one that is substantially underdeveloped. Along this strand of research, there are multiple important questions that scholars of civil-military relations can and should pursue. How does the act of providing military advice change in a highly polarized environment? How does the ability of Congress to provide oversight of the military change when polarization is high? Recent cases, to include the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the current war between Russia and the Ukraine (and the role of the US military), stand out as cases that might assist scholars analyze this important line of research.

Conclusion

The civilian and military actors who practice civil-military relations always do against the backdrop of a context. These contexts change as a result of multiple domestic and international factors. This dissertation sought to explain variation in civilian and military actor behavior involving the military, and in particular, why these actors behave in ways that deviate from the central principles of civil-military relations.

This dissertation argued that the levels of polarization and military prestige shape the degree to which civilian and military actors adhere to the principles of civil-military relations. Scholars and practitioners now have at least a starting point from which to identify, measure, and assess civilian and military actor adherence to the principles of civil-military relations in mature democracies such as the United States. While the future remains uncertain, the sustainment of the principles of civil-military relations requires an environment in which these principles can flourish. When the levels of military prestige and polarization are both high, as was the case at the end of the Civil War and in the contemporary United States, the civilian and military actors who practice civil-military relations face significant obstacles.

Appendix to Chapter 3

This chapter Appendix roughly aligns with the chronological order of the chapter.

Word and Data-Base Searches to Obtain Data

I conducted two different sets of searches to obtain the data used in this study using data bases made available through the University of Wisconsin online library. Data collection occurred over the period from April 2020 - March 2021. This first set of search terms was applied to the Factiva and Nexus-Uni data bases.

In the Factiva Database, I had to select the "type of article" or "subject" (Factiva Database) that I was searching for, and I included options such as "commentaries/opinions," "editorials," and "letters."

The specific terms of search included were as follows:

"retired Army General" or "former Army General" or "retired Navy Admiral" or "former Navy Admiral" or "retired Marine Corps General" or "former Marine Corps General" or "former Air Force General" or "retired Air Force General" or "retired Coast Guard Admiral" or "former Coast Guard Admiral" or "retired from the Marine Corps" or "retired from the Army" or "retired from the Navy" or "retired from the Air Force" or "retired from the Coast Guard" or "supreme commander of" or "commander of" or "Chairman of the Joint Chiefs" or "chairman of the joint chiefs" or "Supreme Commander of" or "Chief of Staff" or "Chief of Naval Operations" or "retired Army" or "retired Navy" or "retired Air Force" or "retired Marine Corps" or "retired Coast Guard" or "retired military" or "commandant of" or "director of" or "retired from the military"

The second set of search terms was applied to a data base known as Pro Quest Historical Newspapers, which the University of Wisconsin also had access to for both the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times.* Factiva included articles from the Wall Street Journal only back to the middle of 1994, so I relied heavily on Pro Quest to search

through the Wall Street Journal from 1979-1994. Unlike the search terms used for Factiva and Nexus-Uni, however, I came to quickly realize that the opinion pieces I sought were not categorized as opinion-editorials or letters to the editor, but rather as "articles." This required significantly more time searching for the desired data, as more articles had to be searched through and sifted. The specific terms of search included:

(retired OR former OR "chief of staff") AND ("Army General" OR Gen. OR general OR "Navy Admiral" OR Adm. OR admiral OR "Marine Corps General" OR "Coast Guard Admiral" OR "Air Force General" OR "Chairman of the Joint Chiefs" OR "colonel" OR "captain" OR "commander" OR "chief of naval operations" OR "commandant" OR "director of")

Observations Violating Principles of Civil-Military Relations

Table 27 contains those observations that violate one or more of the principles of civil-military relations. The table contains the name of the author, the title of the opinion piece, the year in which the opinion piece was authored, the topic addressed by the opinion piece, and a binary indicator of which principle(s) the piece violates.

Table 27: Op-Eds authored by Retired Military Officers that Strongly Criticized Civilian Leaders, Expressed Partisan Positions, or Addressed Topics Outside of Military Expertise, 1979-2020

Author	Title	Source	PubYr	Topic	CivViol	IntViol	NonIntViol
Yancey, William	General Bashing, Then and Now	WSJ	1989	CivMilBalance	1	0	0
Beckwith, Charlie	Somalia's Needless Deaths	WSJ	1993	Warfighting	1	0	0
Odom, William	Invade, Don't Bomb	WSJ	1994	Warfighting	1	0	0
Odom, William	One Year? In Bosnia?	NYT	1995	Warfighting	1	0	0
Odom, William	Chechnya, Freedom, and the Voice of Yeltsin Past	WaPO	1996	ForeignPolicy	1	0	0
Mcdonough, James	Clinton's Contempt for U.S. Soldiers	WSJ	1998	Warfighting	1	0	0
Peters, Ralph	It's Wonks vs. Warlords, and Guess Who Wins Again?	WSJ	1998	Warfighting	1	0	0
Peters, Ralph	A Question of Leadership	WSJ	1998	Warfighting	1	0	0
Krulak, Charles	Don't Politicize the Joint Chiefs	WSJ	2000	CivMilBalance	0	1	0

Odom, William	Buchanan Has it Backwards on Globalization	WSJ	2000	ForeignPolicy	0	1	0
Shalikashvili, John	Kerry Proceeds With Caution	USA Today	2004	BdgtWpnsTrps	0	1	0
Clark, Wesley	Medals of Honor	NYT	2004	DomesticPolicy	0	1	0
Whitlow, William	The Price of Giving Bad Advice	WaPO	2004	Warfighting	1	0	0
Shalikashvili, John	Old Soldiers Don't Have to Fade Away	WSJ	2004	DomesticPolicy	0	1	0
Franks, Tommy	War of Words	NYT	2004	Warfighting	0	1	0
Franks, Tommy	Right Leader, Right Time	WSJ	2004	DomesticPolicy	0	1	0
Clark, Wesley	Before It's Too Late in Iraq	WaPO	2005	Warfighting	1	0	0
Clark, Wesley	The Next Iraq Offensive	NYT	2005	Warfighting	1	0	0
Eaton, Paul	A Top-Down Review for the Pentagon	NYT	2006	CivMilBalance	1	0	0
Crosby, John and McInerney, Thomas and Moore, Burton and Vallely, Paul	In Defense of Donald Rumsfeld	WSJ	2006	Support	1	0	0
Batiste, John	A Case for Accountability	WaPO	2006	Warfighting	1	0	0
Eaton, Paul	An Army of One Less	NYT	2006	Warfighting	1	0	0
Petraeus, David and O'Hanlon, Michael	America's Opportunity	WaPO	2013	DomesticPolicy	0	0	1
Scales, Robert	A War the Pentagon Doesn't Want	WaPO	2013	Warfighting	1	0	0
Hayden, Michael and Mukasey, Michael	NSA Reform that Only ISIS Could Love	WSJ	2014	Warfighting	1	0	0
Petraeus, David and O'Hanlon, Michael	The Next American Century	WaPO	2015	DomesticPolicy	0	0	1
Petraeus, David and O'Hanlon, Michael	Afghanistan After Obama	WaPO	2015	Warfighting	1	0	0
Scales, Robert	Our Army is Breaking	WaPO	2015	BdgtWpnsTrps	1	0	0
McChrystal, Stanley	Home Should Not Be a War Zone	NYT	2016	DomesticPolicy	0	0	1
Hayden, Michael	Classified Briefings and Candidates	NYT	2016	CivMilBalance	1	0	0
Davis, Morris	Stop Meddling in the Bergdahl Case	NYT	2016	CivMilBalance	1	0	0
Hayden, Michael	Russia's Useful Fool	WaPO	2016	DomesticPolicy	1	0	0
Hayden, Michael	Trump's Most Important New Partner	WaPO	2016	Warfighting	1	0	0
Hayden, Michael	A Damaging Disregard for Intel	WaPO	2016	Warfighting	1	0	0
Mullen, Mike	Bannon Has No Place on the NSC	NYT	2017	DomesticPolicy	1	0	0
Hayden, Michael	The Travel Ban Hurts American Spies - and America	WaPO	2017	DomesticPolicy	1	0	0

Hayden, Michael	Donald Trump is Undermining Intelligence Gathering	NYT	2017	Warfighting	1	0	0
McChrystal, Stanley	Save PBS. It Makes Us Safer.	NYT	2017	DomesticPolicy	0	0	1
Hayden, Michael	Trump Proves He's Russia's Useful Fool	WaPO	2017	DomesticPolicy	1	0	0
Mullen, Mike	The Refugees We Need	NYT	2017	DomesticPolicy	1	0	1
Hayden, Michael	The End of Intelligence	NYT	2018	DomesticPolicy	1	0	0
McRaven, William	Take My Security Clearance, too, Mr. President	WaPO	2018	DomesticPolicy	1	0	0
Wilkerson, Lawrence and Wilson III, Isaiah and Adams, Gordon	Trump's Border Stunt is a Profound Betrayal of Our Military	NYT	2018	Warfighting	1	0	0
Nagl, John	Retired Generals Warned Us About Rumsfeld. Now They're Warning Us About Trump	WaPO	2019	DomesticPolicy	1	0	0
Allen, John and Victor, David	Despite What Trump Says, Climate Change Threatens Our National Security	NYT	2019	DomesticPolicy	1	0	1
McRaven, William	Our Republic is Under Attack From the President	NYT	2019	DomesticPolicy	1	1	0
McRaven, William	If Good Men Can't Speak the Truth, We Should Be Deeply Afraid	WaPO	2020	DomesticPolicy	1	0	0
Hayden, Michael et. Al	A Dangerous Purge	WaPO	2020	Warfighting	1	0	0
89 Former Defense Officials	The Military Must Never Be Used to Violate Constitutional Rights	WaPO	2020	Warfighting	1	0	0
VanLandingham, Rachel and Corn, Geoffrey	Military Brass Finally Speaks Up on Trump	USA Today	2020	DomesticPolicy	1	0	0
Seidule, Ty	West Point and its Cadets are not Campaign Props	WaPO	2020	DomesticPolicy	1	0	0
Vindman, Alexander	Coming Forward Ended My Career. I Still Believe Doing What's Right Matters	WaPO	2020	DomesticPolicy	1	0	0
McRaven, William	Trump is Working to Actively Undermine the Postal Service - and Every Major U.S. Institution	WaPO	2020	DomesticPolicy	1	1	1
Vindman, Alexander and Gans, John	Trump Has Sold off America's Credibility for His Personal Gain	NYT	2020	DomesticPolicy	1	0	0
McRaven, William	Biden Will Make America Lead Again; We Need a President with Decency and a Sense of Respect	WSJ	2020	DomesticPolicy	1	1	0
Allen, Thad	Trump is Failing to Provide For the Common Defense	WaPO	2020	DomesticPolicy	1	0	0

Main Regression Results Using Strict Levels of Polarization.

The majority of this appendix presents the same results shown in the main body of Chapter 3, but using the non-smoothed levels of polarization.

Table 28 presents the main results using strict (non-smoothed) levels of Congressional and affective polarization; that is, the level of polarization that was most recently measured in a formal way prior to the writing of the opinion piece. As I discuss in the main body of the chapter, there are two major differences between the results shown in Table 28 and the main regression Table from the main body of the chapter (Table 10).

The first is that in Table 28, the positive and statistically significant finding for measures of congressional polarization is not robust to measures of affective polarization. The second is that in Table 28, the coefficient for election year is positive and statistically significant in some models (4-5). I discuss these differences in the main body of the chapter.

Table 29 displays the results of regressing violations of each separate principle using the "stricter" measurements of polarization.

One important finding is that in models 1-3, the coefficients for house and senate polarization are statistically significant and positive. Note also that in these specifications, the coefficient for election year is not statistically significant, though in each of these models, the sign on the coefficient for election year is positive.

The story is different, however, in models 4-6, where the dependent variable changes from the log of the odds that a publication violates the principle of civilian control to the principle of non-partisanship. Note that in all of these models, the coefficient for election year is positive and statistically significant, whereas the coefficient for polarization, regardless of type, is negative and statistically significant. These results, together, indicate that it is the presence of an election year that is associated with an increasing likelihood that retired military officer commentary violates the principle of non-partisanship, and that increasing polarization actually has the opposite effect - that increasing polarization makes

Table 28: Main Regression Results (Non-Smoothed Levels of Polarization), Chapter 3

	Dependent variable:							
	Proportion Violating		Log Odds of Violating Any Civ-Mil Principles					
	OLS		*logistic*			*generalized linear mixed-effects*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Trust in Military	−0.001	0.001	−0.050	−0.022	0.022	−0.097	−0.043	−0.011
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.034)	(0.026)	(0.020)	(0.072)	(0.067)	(0.063)
Election Year	0.027	0.031	0.482	0.543*	0.630*	0.506	0.354	0.571
	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.322)	(0.321)	(0.326)	(0.517)	(0.470)	(0.541)
House Polarization	0.008**		0.104***			0.057		
	(0.004)		(0.037)			(0.063)		
Senate Polarization		0.008*		0.077***			0.082*	
		(0.004)		(0.028)			(0.045)	
Aff. Polarization					0.006			−0.018
					(0.013)			(0.035)
Casualty Rate (lagged)	−0.001	−0.001	−0.006	0.0001	−0.011	−0.010	−0.007	−0.040
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.026)	(0.024)
Author Rank			0.087	0.081	0.116	−0.330	−0.070	0.129
			(0.098)	(0.098)	(0.105)	(0.260)	(0.300)	(0.355)
Washington Post			−0.431	−0.377	−0.248	−1.463**	−1.029	−0.934
			(0.363)	(0.362)	(0.356)	(0.614)	(1.036)	(0.617)
Wall Street Journal			−0.364	−0.346	−0.446	−1.234*	−0.896	−1.248
			(0.435)	(0.438)	(0.432)	(0.732)	(1.389)	(0.789)
Constant	−0.412*	−0.483*	−7.297***	−6.521***	−4.588***	−1.351	−5.008	−6.651
	(0.228)	(0.250)	(2.375)	(2.159)	(1.779)	(5.076)	(3.167)	(5.332)
Observations	42	42	366	366	366	366	366	366
R^2	0.162	0.150						
Adjusted R^2	0.071	0.058						
Log Likelihood			-142.704	-142.808	-148.583	-128.107	-135.449	-126.074
Akaike Inf. Crit.			301.409	301.617	313.167	274.214	288.899	270.148
Bayesian Inf. Crit.						309.338	324.022	305.272

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 29: Regression Results: Log Odds of Breaking Individual Central Principles of Civil-Military Relations

	Dependent variable:								
	Violates Civilian Control			Violates Non-Partisanship			Violates Non-Interference		
	logistic			*logistic*			*logistic*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Trust in Military	−0.079	−0.065	0.014	0.139	0.149*	0.173*	−0.094	−0.102	0.033
	(0.050)	(0.044)	(0.028)	(0.088)	(0.089)	(0.091)	(0.491)	(0.378)	(0.084)
Election Year	0.130	0.167	0.322	3.809***	4.289***	4.598***	−0.329	−0.461	−0.418
	(0.339)	(0.342)	(0.335)	(1.285)	(1.481)	(1.548)	(0.898)	(0.898)	(0.916)
House Polarization	0.132***			−0.105*			0.807		
	(0.042)			(0.060)			(0.998)		
Senate Polarization		0.118***			−0.134**			0.442	
		(0.032)			(0.055)			(0.335)	
Aff. Polarization			0.010			−0.160***			0.044
			(0.015)			(0.055)			(0.037)
Hostile Casualty Rate (lagged)	−0.005	0.008	−0.012	−0.012	−0.031	−0.013	0.004	0.052	−0.063
	(0.011)	(0.013)	(0.011)	(0.023)	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.104)	(0.104)	(0.058)
Rank	−0.027	−0.041	0.003	1.359*	1.519*	2.170**	1.002	1.029	1.270
	(0.084)	(0.085)	(0.083)	(0.782)	(0.819)	(1.089)	(0.809)	(0.794)	(0.898)
Constant	−6.968***	−5.950**	−3.701*	−20.352**	−21.772**	−29.474**	−76.434	−41.930	−21.095**
	(2.591)	(2.327)	(1.942)	(8.578)	(9.246)	(11.638)	(94.974)	(34.778)	(10.276)
Observations	377	377	377	377	377	377	377	377	377
Log Likelihood	-129.099	-126.594	-136.402	-32.210	-30.372	-27.082	-25.683	-25.279	-28.889
Akaike Inf. Crit.	270.198	265.188	284.804	76.420	72.745	66.164	63.366	62.559	69.779
Note:							*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

it less likely a retired officer publication violates the principle of non-partisanship. Models 7-9 indicate that polarization has no impact on the likelihood that a particular commentary piece violates the principle of non-interference.

The results shown in models 4-6 are particularly surprising, as we would not expect that rising polarization leads to a decrease in the likelihood that retired officer commentary violates the principle of non-partisanship. To further investigate how an election year and polarization impact the likelihood that a retired military officer opinion publication violates the principle of non-partisanship specifically, I run models 4-6 again, but drop the control for election year. The reason for dropping the control for election year is because I suspect that when included, it is perhaps capturing some of the work that polarization might be doing or at least contributing towards. These results are displayed in Table 30.

Table 30 shows that when the controls for election year are removed, the coefficients for polarization remain negative but now are statistically insignificant, with the exception of model 3 that uses a measure of affective polarization. Combined with the results of models 4-6 in Table Table 29, these results mean that we cannot state that increasing polarization directly leads to an increase in the likelihood that retired military officer commentary violates the principle of non-partisanship in particular. This is an important result, as it provides a cautionary tone for the results of the main regression table.

The word of caution is simply that increasing polarization seems to lead to an increase in the likelihood that retired military officer commentary violates *at least one* of the principles of civil-military relations, and the principle of civilian control in particular, given that the coefficients for polarization in models 1-3 in Table 29 were all highly statistically significant and positive. The results therefore do not support the notion that increasing polarization leads to an increase in the likelihood that retired officer commentary will violate each principle, nor that it will necessarily violate the principles of non-partisanship and non-interference at all.

Based off of the statistical analysis presented here, we can only state that increasing

Table 30: Regression Results: Log Odds of Retired Military Officer Commentary Violating the Principle of Non-Partisanship without Controlling for Election Year

	Dependent variable:		
	Violation of the Principle of Non-Partisanship		
	logistic		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Trust in Military	0.022	0.029	0.052
	(0.059)	(0.046)	(0.045)
House Polarization	−0.022		
	(0.052)		
Senate Polarization		−0.063	
		(0.044)	
Aff. Polarization			−0.101**
			(0.045)
Hostile Casualty Rate	−0.0003	−0.004	0.010
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Rank	1.128*	1.286*	1.445*
	(0.657)	(0.734)	(0.789)
Constant	−14.029**	−13.318*	−14.568*
	(6.909)	(7.400)	(7.837)
Observations	377	377	377
Log Likelihood	-41.397	-40.438	-38.129
Akaike Inf. Crit.	92.794	90.877	86.257
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

polarization is associated with an increased likelihood that retired military officers will violate at least one of the central principles of civil-military relations, and particularly, the principle of civilian control. Furthermore, this result is true, but only when we use congressional rather than affective measures of polarization.

Robustness Tests

In this section of the Appendix, I demonstrate a series of robustness checks.

Robustness to the Trump Presidency Years

I first include a series of robustness tests to the years of the Trump Presidency to determine whether the Trump years are in fact vital to obtaining the result that polarization drives the degree to which retired military officer commentary violates one or more of the principles of civil-military relations. To investigate this possibility, I truncate the data at certain years and then proceed with regression analysis that mirrors the models included in the chapter's main regression table. The results are displayed in Table 31.

The results seem to indicate that including the Trump years matters, but only somewhat. For example, when the dependent variable is the proportion of annual commentary that violates one or more of the central principles of civil-military relations (models 1-4), the coefficient for polarization is not statistically significant in models 1 and 2, when the data is truncated to exclude commentary authored in the years 2018, 2019, and 20. However, when I include the year 2018 (models 3 and 4), polarization becomes statistically significant and positive.

In models 5-8, where the dependent variable is the log of the odds that a particular piece of commentary violates the central principles of civil-military relations, a statistically significant result for polarization is obtained beginning in model 7, and the result holds for model 8.

Table 31: Regression Results: Robustness Checks (Data Cutoff Thru Years Near and During Trump Administration)

	Dependent variable:							
	Proportion Violating				Log Odds of Breaking a Central Principle			
	OLS				*logistic*			
	thru 2017	thru 2017	thru 2018	thru 2018	thru 2015	thru 2016	thru 2017	thru 2018
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Trust in Military	−0.0003	0.002	−0.001	0.001	−0.020	0.0001	−0.036	−0.011
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.039)	(0.032)	(0.039)	(0.031)
Election Year	0.013	0.017	0.005	0.011	0.349	0.610	0.330	0.327
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.061)	(0.062)	(0.447)	(0.375)	(0.359)	(0.352)
House Polarization	0.005		0.007*		0.028		0.066**	
	(0.004)		(0.004)		(0.037)		(0.034)	
Senate Polarization		0.003		0.007		0.016		0.051**
		(0.005)		(0.005)		(0.029)		(0.026)
Hostile Casualty Rate (lagged)	−0.0005	−0.0001	−0.001	−0.001	0.009	0.006	0.001	0.002
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Rank					0.098	0.107	0.143	0.134
					(0.111)	(0.103)	(0.101)	(0.097)
Constant	−0.245	−0.235	−0.348	−0.410	−4.163	−4.523**	−6.145***	−6.109***
	(0.235)	(0.282)	(0.239)	(0.278)	(2.581)	(2.302)	(2.320)	(2.162)
Observations	39	39	40	40	292	318	334	340
R^2	0.073	0.044	0.118	0.095				
Adjusted R^2	-0.037	-0.068	0.017	-0.008				
Log Likelihood					-90.554	-105.583	-117.708	-124.636
Akaike Inf. Crit.					193.107	223.167	247.417	261.272

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Thus, the Trump Presidency years matter in terms of obtaining the positive and statistically significant results for polarization, but only a portion of the Presidency matters (2017 and 2017 matter when the dependent variable is the proportion that violates a central principle of civil-military relations, and only 2017 matters when the dependent variable is the log of the odds that a particular piece violates the principles).

Robustness Checks to Interaction of Polarization and Military Prestige

I now run a series of models that check to see if any interaction between polarization and military prestige matters. The results, which are displayed in Table 32, show that there is no meaningful impact of interacting polarization and military prestige, either when the dependent variable is the total number of pieces authored (model 1), the proportion of annual pieces that violate the principles of civil-military relations (model 2), or the log of the odds that a single piece violates one or more of the central principles (models 3 - 6).

Table 32 shows that when we interact trust in the military with the respective measurements of congressional polarization, the interaction terms are inconsistent in terms of direction and only statistically significant in three of the six models (models 4, 5, and 6). In model 4, the interaction term is statistically significant, but so are the coefficients for both trust in the military and polarization. Both of these are positive, while the interaction term is negative. So it becomes somewhat difficult to really isolate the potential impact of any sort of interaction between the two main independent variables of interest in model 4. Model 5 yields similar difficulties, but in the opposite manner: both of the independent variables by themselves are negative and statistically significant, while the interaction term is minimally positive but statistically significant. The results of model 6 are similar to model 4 in that the interaction term is negative and statistically significant, while the separate coefficients for the variables of military prestige (trust in the military) and polarization are each positive and statistically significant.

Table 32: Checking for Impacts of Interacting Prestige with Polarization

	Dependent variable:					
	Num Annual Pubs	Proportion Violating	Log Odds of Violating Any Civ-Mil Principles			
	OLS	*OLS*	*logistic*		*generalized linear mixed-effects*	*logistic*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Trust in Military	−0.642	0.084*	0.658	1.399***	0.623***	1.442***
	(0.723)	(0.050)	(0.428)	(0.541)	(0.002)	(0.438)
Election Year	2.927*	0.030	0.494	0.507*	0.316***	0.460
	(1.555)	(0.057)	(0.306)	(0.307)	(0.002)	(0.319)
House Polarization	−0.034		0.738*		0.716***	
	(0.732)		(0.404)		(0.002)	
Senate Polarization		0.104*		1.640***		1.705***
		(0.057)		(0.596)		(0.486)
Hostile Casualty Rate (lagged)	−0.097**	−0.0005	−0.004	0.004	−0.022***	0.004
	(0.043)	(0.002)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.002)	(0.010)
Author Rank			0.092	0.089	−0.071***	0.095
			(0.082)	(0.082)	(0.002)	(0.096)
Washington Post					−0.687***	−0.466
					(0.002)	(0.374)
Wall Street Journal					−1.221***	−0.343
					(0.002)	(0.440)
Prestige*Polarization (House)	0.009		−0.009		−0.009***	
	(0.010)		(0.006)		(0.0001)	
Prestige*Polarization(Senate)		−0.001		−0.022***		−0.022***
		(0.001)		(0.008)		(0.007)
Constant	7.571	−6.475*	−56.391*	−109.048***	−58.621***	−112.540***
	(49.339)	(3.575)	(30.960)	(39.343)	(0.002)	(31.804)
Observations	42	42	377	377	366	366
R^2	0.655	0.212				
Adjusted R^2	0.607	0.102				
Log Likelihood			-147.016	-144.618	-124.751	-138.266
Akaike Inf. Crit.			308.031	303.236	269.501	294.532
Bayesian Inf. Crit.					308.528	
Note:						*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

In short, there are really no consistent patterns that emerge when an interaction term between polarization and military prestige are included that merit noteworthy attention.

Endogeneity Checks

The last major item of interest in this appendix include a series of checks for endogeneity. In line with the theory developed in Chapter 2, the most potentially problematic relationship involves instances of political behavior that violate the principles of civil-military relations and the level of trust in the military (military prestige). We might be particular concerned that acts of political behavior, in this case, the writing of opinion commentary by retired military officers, somehow drives the level of trust the public places in the military in a meaningful way.

Table 33 presents the results of several OLS regressions in which the dependent variable is the level of trust the public places in the military. I include several control variables, including dichotomous indicators of instances of commentary that violate one or more of the central principles of civil-military relations (models 1-2), commentary that violates the principle of non-partisanship in particular (model 3), as well as an interaction term that captures the combined effect of polarization and an instance of retired officer commentary violating any of the central principles of civil-military relations or the principle of non-partisanship in particular (models 2 and 3, respectively).

The results of Table 33 indicate that there is not a strong and statistically significant relationship between instances of violations to the principles of civil-military relations and the level of trust the public places in the military. The coefficients for instance of violation of any central principle (models 1 and 2) and violation of the principle of non-partisanship (model 3) are all statistically insignificant. The coefficients on the interaction terms in models 2 and 3 are likewise statistically insignificant. Therefore, at least with respect to the behavior of authoring opinion commentary, endogeneity does not appear to pose a significant problem. The level of trust the public places in the military is not the result of

Table 33: Regression Results: Endogeneity Checks (Regress Military Prestige on Polarization and an Instance of Retired Military Actor Opinion Commentary Breaking Any Central Principle / Non-Partisanship in Particular)

	Dependent variable:		
	Military Prestige		
	OLS		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Instance of Violation of Any Central Principle	−0.362	8.118	
	(0.884)	(8.156)	
Senate Polarization	0.358***	0.375***	
	(0.038)	(0.042)	
Violation of Non-Partisanship Principle			24.901
			(35.564)
House Polarization			0.499***
			(0.035)
Election Year	−1.759***	−1.747***	−2.202***
	(0.664)	(0.664)	(0.607)
Hostile Casualty Rate (lagged)	0.109***	0.107***	0.063***
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.016)
Violation of Central Principle * Polarization (Senate)		−0.112	
		(0.107)	
Violation of Non-Partisanship Principle * Polarization (House)			−0.283
			(0.436)
Constant	44.438***	43.257***	30.729***
	(2.808)	(3.026)	(2.840)
Observations	377	377	377
R^2	0.247	0.249	0.394
Adjusted R^2	0.238	0.239	0.386
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

instances of opinion commentary violating the central principles of civil-military relations.

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All regression tables used in Chapter 3 were produced with the help of the Stargazer package, designed by Marek Hlavac (Hlavac 2018).

Appendix to Chapter 4

This chapter Appendix roughly aligns with the chronological order of the chapter.

Note on the Campaign Media Analysis Group and its Role in the Data

WiscAD and WMP gather the television advertisements with the assistance of a commercial company, the Campaign Media Analysis Group (CMAG). CMAG provides several pieces of information when releasing the data, such as the media market in which a particular advertisement aired, the estimated cost of running a particular advertisement, the time of day the advertisement was run, and other variables. A group of scholars and graduate students affiliated with WiscAD and WMP then conduct additional coding on the advertisements. This coding varies to some extent by election cycle, but otherwise remains markedly similar. The additional variables that are coded for in each election cycle include items such as the specific issues that an advertisement mentions or addresses during the advertisement, whether a candidate is featured during the advertisement, and whether a given advertisement takes on a negative tone, and more.

Cleaning the data from five separate data sets was a considerable project. I had to merge several variables and implement a common naming scheme across the data in order to enable a meaningful comparison of the data over time. It was also a considerable project to map county population and county veteran population data onto media markets.

Descriptive Statistics Overview Table

Table 34 displays, for each election cycle, the total number of airings of advertisements and the percentage of these advertisements that are entirely thematic of issues pertaining to defense, national security, and/or veterans issues.

Table 34: Summary Statistics, The Military in Presidential Campaign Advertisements, 2000-2016

Election Cycle	Total Airings	% Airings Defense/Vet/Security Themed
2000	267,359	.7
2004	795,631	21.6
2008	1,053,675	7.7
2012	1,417,984	.8
2016	996,392	15.6
2000-2016	4,531,041	9.3

Additional Regression Tables

Here I present additional regression tables for the chapter. These regression tables do not include election cycle - campaign season fixed effects, and instead include the variables of polarization and the hostile military casualty levels (expressed as a rate) sustained by US forces in a given year. Values for polarization and lagged hostile casualty levels are assigned based on *when* an advertisement is aired (logit) and what campaign season an advertisement belongs to (primary versus general). Because Congressional polarization is measured every two years, there is no difference in the value of polarization assigned to ads run during the primary verses general campaigns. There is a difference in an ads assigned hostile casualty level. For ads aired as part of an election cycle's primary campaign, I assign a lagged hostile casualty level that corresponds to the year *before* the general election is held. That is, for all ads aired in the 2004 primary campaign, these take on a lagged hostile casualty value for 2003, because 2003 is when the primary campaign for the 2004 Presidential Election began. All ads aired in the 2004 General Election, however, take on a lagged hostile casualty level value for 2004.

I include a control for the level of congressional polarization in the US House and or US Senate, which comes from a measure of ideology based off of roll-call voting data over time (Jeffrey B Lewis et al. 2020). Polarization is included as a control because one might suspect that civilians react to changing levels of polarization by featuring military figures in

campaign ads in ways that increasingly challenge the principles of civil-military relations.

I also include a measure of military casualties, and I lag the measure by one year. I include a measure of casualties because it as plausible to think that the level of casualties sustained by US military forces shapes how civilian actors use military figures during campaign ads. I lag the level of casualties by one year because a previous year's casualty levels may be partly responsible for spurring the decision made by civilian candidates to design advertisements that feature military actors behaving in a particular manner.[83]

Logistic Regression, without Election Cycle - Campaign Season Fixed Effects

Additional logistic regression results for Chapter 4 are displayed in Table 35.

Table 35 indicates that even when fixed effects for election cycle - campaign season are removed, the coefficient for veteran density retains its staying power and its significance. Indeed, the coefficient for veteran density is positive and statistically significant in all nine models.

OLS Regression Results, without Election Cycle - Campaign Season Fixed Effects

Table 36 displays OLS Regression Results when campaign cycle - election season fixed effects are removed.

Table 36 indicates that even after campaign cycle - election season fixed effects are removed, the coefficient for veteran density is positive in all models, and statistically

[83] This variable is constructed from a number of sources, and consists of the number of hostile US casualties sustained in a given calendar year per 100,000 Active Duty military forces. I include in this measurement those casualties that are the result of what the Department of Defense classifies as either "hostile action" or a "terrorist attack." Annual data is provided from the Department of Defense from 1980-2010. I then used data from the Department of Defense regarding the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to construct a measurement for years outside of this time range. See D. of Defense (2011); D. of Defense (2021b); D. of Defense (2021c); D. of Defense (2021a); D. of Defense (2021e); D. of Defense (2021d); D. of Defense (2021f); D. of Defense (2021g) for more details.

Table 35: Logistic Regression Results, Chapter 4 Appendix, Without Election Cycle - Campaign Season Fixed Effects

	Dependent variable:								
	Mil. Img	Act. Dty. Img	Vet Img.	Combat Img.	Prom. Appearance	Any Viol.	Endorse	Attack	Outside Issues
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Per. Vet. Pop.	0.037***	0.056***	0.026***	0.046***	0.089***	0.056***	0.060***	0.111***	0.139***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Libertarian	−11.503	−10.652	−10.887	−9.720	−11.853	−12.781	−12.102	−12.854	−18.868
	(8.261)	(8.259)	(8.263)	(13.620)	(22.436)	(37.020)	(37.017)	(36.969)	(1, 222.694)
Other Party	−1.055***	−0.884***	−1.808***	−0.419***	−12.244	−11.801	−11.721	−11.105	−16.623
	(0.088)	(0.103)	(0.158)	(0.104)	(19.398)	(32.826)	(32.984)	(30.309)	(1, 047.952)
GOP	−0.026***	−0.010**	−0.192***	−0.354***	−3.501***	−3.049***	−2.772***	−5.678***	−17.270
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.022)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.106)	(39.144)
Vet.Candidate	1.071***	1.035***	1.050***	1.628***	1.262***	0.585***	0.344***	4.532***	−1.499***
	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.015)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.066)	(0.059)
Sen. Polar.	0.069***	0.045***	0.063***	−0.021***	0.019***	0.082***	0.032***	0.351***	0.104***
	(0.0004)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.004)	(0.003)
Cas. Rate (lagged)	−0.010***	−0.016***	−0.017***	−0.002***	−0.044***	−0.022***	−0.016***	−0.049***	−0.019***
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0002)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Constant	−6.906***	−5.967***	−7.004***	−2.511***	−4.882***	−9.811***	−6.498***	−31.998***	−13.169***
	(0.031)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.061)	(0.083)	(0.108)	(0.108)	(0.346)	(0.280)
Observations	3,530,061	3,530,061	3,530,061	3,530,061	3,530,061	3,530,061	3,530,061	3,530,061	3,530,061

Note: $^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

Table 36: OLS Regression Results, Chapter 4 Appendix, Without Election Cycle - Campaign Season Fixed Effects

	Dependent variable:								
	Mil. Img	Act. Dty. Img	Vet Img.	Combat Img	Prom. Appearance	Any Viol.	Endorse	Attack	Outside Issues
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Per. Vet. Pop.	0.008***	0.007***	0.006***	0.006***	0.002**	0.0003	0.0003	0.0004	0.00002
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.0005)	(0.0004)
Sen Polar.	−0.001	−0.006***	−0.003***	−0.007***	−0.003***	0.001***	−0.0002	0.001***	0.001***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.0003)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Cas. Rate (lagged)	−0.001***	−0.001***	−0.002***	−0.001***	−0.001***	−0.0002***	−0.0001	−0.0002***	−0.00003
	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.00004)	(0.00003)
Constant	0.253***	0.473***	0.330***	0.544***	0.269***	−0.028	0.022	−0.074***	−0.042***
	(0.071)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.044)	(0.026)	(0.019)	(0.017)	(0.011)	(0.010)
Observations	1,239	1,239	1,239	1,239	1,239	1,239	1,239	1,239	1,239
R^2	0.033	0.081	0.097	0.121	0.116	0.021	0.002	0.123	0.028
Adjusted R^2	0.031	0.078	0.095	0.119	0.114	0.019	-0.0002	0.121	0.026

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

significant in five of nine models, including in model 6, where the dependent variable indicates the proportion of advertisements aired during a particular media market's campaign season that features a military figure appearing prominently.

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2000

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2004

The data were obtained from a project of the University of Wisconsin Advertising Project includes media tracking data from TNSMI/Campaign Media Analysis Group in Washington, D.C. The University of Wisconsin Advertising Project was sponsored by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts. The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Wisconsin Advertising Project or The Pew Charitable Trusts.

2008

The data were obtained from a project of the University of Wisconsin Advertising Project includes media tracking data from TNSMI/Campaign Media Analysis Group in Washington, D.C. The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Wisconsin Advertising Project.

2012

The data were obtained from the Wesleyan Media Project, a collaboration between Wesleyan University, Bowdoin College, and Washington State University, and includes media tracking data from Kantar/Campaign Media Analysis Group in Washington, D.C. The Wesleyan Media Project was sponsored in 2012 by grants from The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Wesleyan Media Project, Knight Foundation, MacArthur Foundation or any of its affiliates.

2016

The data were obtained from the Wesleyan Media Project, a collaboration between Wesleyan University, Bowdoin College, and Washington State University, and includes media tracking data from Kantar/Campaign Media Analysis Group in Washington, D.C. The Wesleyan Media Project was sponsored in 2016 by a grant from The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Wesleyan Media Project, Knight Foundation, or any of its affiliates.

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