

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?  
BUILDING A MENTAL CONSTRUCT FOR SENIOR OFFICERS  
CONTEMPLATING LEAVING THE SERVICE OVER MATTERS OF POLICY

BY  
MAJOR ERNESTO DIVITTORIO

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## APPROVAL

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

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HAROLD R. WINTON (Date)

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IAN B. BRYAN (Date)



## DISCLAIMER

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



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Ernesto DiVittorio graduated from the Illinois Institute of Technology in 1997 with a B.S. in Civil Engineering and from the American Military University in 2009 with an M.A. in Military Studies - Air Warfare. Major DiVittorio is also a Distinguished Graduate of the Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base, AL. His Air Force career has included three assignments as an instructor and evaluator Weapon Systems Officer in the F-15E Strike Eagle and three combat deployments engaged in operations over Iraq and Afghanistan. Major DiVittorio's next assignment will be at the Pentagon serving in Checkmate.



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I thank my family for enduring this arduous year. To my wife, who spent eight months in Afghanistan caring for our troops this year, you are one of my greatest heroes. To my girls, thank you for the resilience you demonstrated this year, I love you both. Special thanks to our nanny who helped a single dad through the last six months of the academic year, I would be a zombie by now without you.

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## ABSTRACT

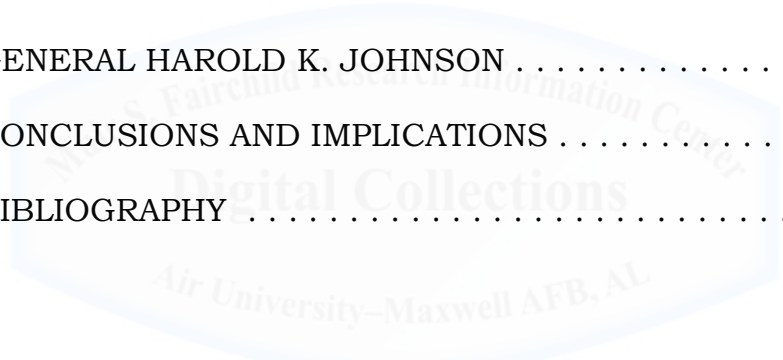
This study offers a mental construct that attempts to answer the question: *What issues should senior military officers consider when contemplating departure from the armed forces over policy differences with civilian leaders?* It begins by using previous civil-military relations studies to derive a theory that proposing that senior military officers can retire or resign when they have acute policy disagreements without endangering national security or the military's subordination to civilian leadership. The mental construct takes the form of a series of six questions that senior military officers can use to analyze the costs and benefits their departure might have on their future, their service's future, and national security. The questions asked are:

1. Will my departure adversely affect civilian control of the military?
2. Will my departure adversely affect the morale of my fellow servicemembers?
3. Will my departure provide aid and comfort to the enemy?
4. If I depart the armed forces, is there a competent replacement?
5. Do I intend to disagree with policy publicly?
6. Will staying in the armed forces and complying with those policies I find disagreeable unacceptably violate my principles and values?

Two historical examples are then used to evaluate the mental construct's utility: the first is Lieutenant General James M. Gavin, who chose to retire in response to policy differences with the Eisenhower Administration; the second is General Harold K. Johnson, who considered resigning in protest to the Johnson Administration's handling of the Vietnam War but chose to remain on active duty. The thesis concludes with an assessment of the mental construct's utility and the study's implications.

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## Introduction

*Having rendered their candid expert judgments, professionals are bound by their oath to execute legal civilian decisions as effectively as possible - even those with which they fundamentally disagree - or they must request relief from their duties, or leave the service entirely, either by resignation or retirement.*

U.S. Department of Defense

In the spring of 1933, the Army Chief of Staff, General Douglas MacArthur, accompanied the new Secretary of War, George B. Dern, to the White House. The two men were visiting President Franklin Roosevelt to discuss the Army's budget. Secretary Dern began by arguing that German rearmament and mounting Japanese aggressiveness made any further cuts to the Army budget unwise. General MacArthur added that the nation's safety was at stake.

Roosevelt pointedly disagreed with both men and yielded nothing. Following the exchange, an emotionally exhausted MacArthur said "something to the general effect that when we lost the next war, and an American boy, lying in the mud with an enemy bayonet through his belly and an enemy foot on his dying throat, spat out his last curse, I wanted the name not to be MacArthur, but Roosevelt."<sup>1</sup> Furious with the general's impertinence, the President retorted, "You must not talk that way to the President!"<sup>2</sup> Realizing the gravity of his insubordination, MacArthur apologized to the commander in chief, offered his resignation, and turned to leave. As the general reached the door, the President said, "Don't be foolish, Douglas; you and the budget must get together on this."<sup>3</sup> As they left the White House, Secretary Dern told the general he

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Larrabee, *Commander in Chief: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants, and Their War*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 307-08.

<sup>2</sup> Larrabee, *Commander in Chief*, 307.

<sup>3</sup> Larrabee, *Commander in Chief*, 307.

had saved the Army. MacArthur continued to protest the budget cuts, again threatening resignation.

### **Background**

MacArthur's threat of resignation was an act of protest in response to the president's policies, and the general's actions may have violated the Constitutional tenet of civilian control over the armed forces. Civilian control of the armed forces is a vital cornerstone of American democracy. By taking the oath of office, commissioned officers pledge their obedience to their civilian leaders. Supporting the Constitution requires one to honor and obey its contents. Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution declares, "The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the Service of the United States."<sup>4</sup> These words clearly establish the authority of the president over the armed forces.

Although General MacArthur was able to influence policy toward his preferences in 1933, a new commander in chief found his actions in 1951 inexcusable. While serving as commanding general of United Nations forces during the Korean War, the general made an unauthorized public statement containing a veiled threat to expand the war to China. MacArthur challenged the president's grand strategy and justified doing so saying, "I find in existence a new and heretofore unknown and dangerous concept that the members of the armed forces owe their primary allegiance and loyalty to those who temporarily exercise the authority of the executive branch of the Government, rather than to the country and its Constitution they are sworn to defend. No proposition could be more dangerous."<sup>5</sup> MacArthur's articulation of this "dangerous concept" conveniently ignores Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution.

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<sup>4</sup> United States., *The Constitution of the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2006), Article II, Section 2.1.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew B. Ridgway, "A Code of Loyalty," *New York Times*, 2 May 1973.

The president rightly relieved MacArthur of command for publicly challenging his policy.<sup>6</sup>

Truman's actions were not unique in the 235 years of American military history. President Lincoln replaced the commander of the Army of the Potomac seven times before settling on General Ulysses S. Grant.<sup>7</sup> Lincoln fired General George McClellan twice, in part because the president believed the general opposed his policies. While McClellan's disagreement may have been tolerable had it been kept private, it was clear vitriol had spread through the ranks. Lincoln personally dismissed Major John Key from the Army for comments made indicating something other than the president's publicly stated policy was being implemented.<sup>8</sup>

The most recent example of a senior military leader and his staff coming into contention with an administration is that of General Stanley McChrystal. In his speech to London's Institute for Strategic Studies on 1 October 2001, General McChrystal rejected calls for the war effort to be scaled down in Afghanistan, an option suggested by Vice President Joseph Biden.<sup>9</sup> His blunt speech shocked and angered advisors to the president. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates rebuked the general's comments saying, "It is imperative all of us taking part in these deliberations, civilians and military alike provide our best advice to the president, candidly but privately."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, "Why did President Truman dismiss General MacArthur?," <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/trivia/macarth.htm>, (accessed 22 January 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command : Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 21.

<sup>8</sup> Cohen, *Supreme Command*, 39.

<sup>9</sup> John Burns, "McChrystal Rejects Scaling Down Afghan Military Aims," *The New York Times*, no. 2 October 2009 (2009), <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/02/world/asia/02general.html> (accessed 22 January 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Alex Spillius, "White House Angry at General Stanley McChrystal Speech on Afghanistan," *The Telegraph*, no. 5 October 2009 (2009), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/barackobama/6259582/White-House-angry-at-General-Stanley-McChrystal-speech-on-Afghanistan.html> (accessed

The following summer, President Obama announced he was replacing General McChrystal following the publication of an article in *Rolling Stone* magazine in which the general and his staff were attributed with making disparaging remarks about the President, the Vice President, and their policies. In his speech the President said, "The conduct represented in the recently published article does not meet the standard that should be set by a commanding general. It undermines the civilian control of the military that is at the core of our democratic system, and it erodes the trust that's necessary for our team to work together to achieve our objectives in Afghanistan."<sup>11</sup> The actions of Generals McChrystal, McClellan, and MacArthur all resulted in their removal from active duty after their policy disagreements became widely known.

What should senior military leaders do when they have acute policy differences with their political masters? Leaving the armed forces by resignation or retirement is an option, albeit controversial.

### **Research Question**

A senior officer's contemplation of leaving the service in protest raises important issues of civil-military relations and requires extremely fine judgments. This thesis asserts that an officer can legitimately resign or retire over policy differences, and attempts to assist the officer considering such a weighty decision by answering an important question: *What issues should senior military officers consider when contemplating departure from the armed forces over policy differences with civilian leaders?*

Answering this question is particularly important as the United States enters the second decade of the twenty-first century. As evidenced in the conduct of General McChrystal and his staff, protracted counterinsurgencies stress the military in many ways. An additional

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<sup>11</sup> President Barack Obama, "June 23, 2010: Statement by the President in the Rose Garden," (Washington D.C.: The White House, 2010).

stressor is the recent repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy, which will, when fully implemented, permit homosexual citizens to serve openly in the armed forces.<sup>12</sup> Examining the reasoning behind and consequences of past departures from active duty and contemplation thereof may provide senior military leaders with a framework for considering when such an action is appropriate. It also has the potential to contribute to constructive dialogue about the American practice of civil-military relations.

As professionals, military officers are responsible for the management of violence and, by implication, the threat of violence.<sup>13</sup> However, the violence or threat thereof that they manage serves the purpose of securing the state. The military philosopher Carl von Clausewitz, famously explicates the purpose of wars as “a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means.”<sup>14</sup> In the service of their state, officers are expected to leverage violence in the implementation of policies with which they may not agree. When the disagreement is minor, an officer’s sense of duty normally results in his saluting smartly and pressing on. However, conflicts have frequently arisen in the instances when the issue is of great importance to the nation, the officer, or both.

### **Definitions**

This thesis confronts the question of departing the armed forces through retirement or resignation. The two actions are not synonymous; the differences are described below.

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<sup>12</sup> The White House, "The President Signs Repeal Of "Don't Ask Don't Tell": "Out of Many, We Are One", *The White House Blog* (2010), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2010/12/22/president-signs-repeal-dont-ask-dont-tell-out-many-we-are-one> (accessed 9 May 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State; the Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge,: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 13.

<sup>14</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 87.

Retirement is available to officers that have no active-duty service commitments after twenty years of military service. When an officer retires, he becomes an inactive reservist, available for recall should the president decide to do so. A military retirement entitles an officer to at least half his base pay rate for life, medical benefits, and access to services available to military members.

Resignation severs the ties between an officer and the armed forces. Despite the duration of active-duty service, anyone who resigns will not receive a pension or benefits. Normally, resignation is reserved as an alternative to disciplinary action for a nefarious act; however, there are also examples of senior military officers resigning their commission to pursue political office. George Washington resigned his commission prior to engaging in politics.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Dwight Eisenhower resigned his commission prior to accepting the Republican nomination.<sup>16</sup>

Regardless of whether a senior military officer chooses to retire or resign, he must first conclude that the action he intends to take is correct. Formulating the required decision-making calculus is the purpose of this thesis.

### **Methodology**

The goal of Chapter One is to construct a mental framework that informs a senior officer's reaction to acute policy differences with his civilian masters. The chapter will explore two topics: civil-military relations theory and the ethics of officership. It begins with a review of the documents that serve as a foundation for a code of military ethics. Next, the review of American civil-military relations will focus on the work of Samuel Huntington, Morris Janowitz, and Peter Feaver. Questions asked of their theories include: What is the appropriate

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Swain, "Reflection on an Ethic of Officership," *Parameters* vol 37 no 1 (2007): 12.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose and Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 273.

relationship between and responsibilities of the armed forces and government? What are appropriate methods for senior officers to address differences over policy? Following a review of these influential civil-military treatises, the chapter investigates the question of leaving military service over policy differences in order to determine if the existing literature addresses senior officer resignations and early retirements. If so, what does the literature say? What appear to be the advantages and disadvantages of differing positions? The purpose of the review is to derive a theory of American civil-military relations that would allow senior officers to depart from the armed forces over policy differences. Primary sources supporting my mental construct include documents written by our founding fathers, memoranda, speeches and op-ed pieces from politicians, military officers, and academia. Secondary and tertiary sources will include additional books and journal articles on civil-military relations.

Forging the emergent civil-military theory allows for the creation of a mental construct for evaluating the positive and negative consequences of an action. This construct, will then be applied to two historical examples in which military leaders disagreed with civilian leaders over policy. In the case of Lieutenant General James Gavin, his disagreement with President Eisenhower's policies resulted in his leaving the Army, and subsequently serving in the Kennedy administration. Army Chief of Staff, General Harold K. Johnson contemplated and ultimately decided against resignation in response to his opposition of President Johnson and Secretary of Defense McNamara's policies in Vietnam. Testing the construct against historical examples allows me to draw conclusions on the validity of the mental construct across a variety of distinct circumstances and suggest changes to its structure.

The final chapter brings together my findings by summarizing and synthesizing the argument of the Chapter One with lessons learned after applying the construct to Chapters Two and Three. It concludes by

commenting on the mental construct's validity as a tool for senior officers considering resigning or retiring when they disagree with policy.

### **Limitations**

This thesis seeks to answer a narrowly focused question. It assumes that the senior military leader in question has attempted to shape policy within the confines of his or her responsibilities. Unable to resolve the disagreement, the officer contemplates a departure from active duty. This stipulation is important to make because there are many options available to senior military officers prior to leaving the service. We shall now examine the general context of these options and the particular question at hand by examining the major literature on American civil-military relations.



## Chapter 1

### A Synthetic Framework for Decisions Affecting Civil-Military Relations

*I, [name] having been appointed a (rank) in the United States (branch of service), do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God.*

U.S. Armed Forces Oath of Office

This chapter develops a mental construct senior officers could use when contemplating resignation or early retirement as the result of an acute policy difference with civilian leaders. According to Webster's, a construct is a product of ideology, history, or social circumstances.<sup>1</sup> Depiction of the product as a mental construct that acknowledges that this set of considerations concerning the decision to depart active military service will flow from an array of ideology, history, and social circumstances.

Building a construct about an issue that is simultaneously personally relevant and of significant national importance requires considerations from two fields of study: social science and ethics. Civil-military relations are about the interaction between military officers and their civilian masters, the specifics of which reflect the political philosophy of a given state. The personal considerations that take place in this environment do so in the context of professional ethics.

The chapter begins with consideration of the documents that form a foundation for a code of military ethics. Next it reviews three important American civil-military relations theories. It then examines opinions

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<sup>1</sup> (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 11th ed., s.v. "Construct")

concerning leaving the military service over policy differences and offers a synthesis of the civil-military relations theories. Finally, the mental construct considers professional, legal, and moral issues and inquiries for use by senior leaders contemplating retirement or resignation over acute policy differences.

### **Foundational Documents for a Code of Military Ethics**

The ethical obligations of officers in the United States Armed Forces are contentious. Most professions have codified ethical norms that govern their behavior; however, despite some claims to the contrary the professional soldier does not have a written code of ethics.<sup>2</sup> When asked if the National Defense University should draft a printed code of ethics during a 2009 interview, Admiral Michael Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, responded, “I would agree that we do need more of a focus on military ethics and civil-military relations in our schoolhouses ... But I am not sure we need to draft up a new code, though I would certainly be willing to consider it. We’ve done exceedingly well without one to date.”<sup>3</sup>

Without a codified code of ethics to define appropriate forms of dissent, officers in the armed forces have publicly deliberated about what their responses should be to national policy. Claiming a professional obligation to express dissent, some officers have fueled a debate about what is and is not ethical behavior. This debate includes military officers, civilian leaders, and academia. This section reviews the documents that could serve as the foundation for a code of ethics for American military officers: the Constitution, the officer’s “Oath of Office,” and the commission from the President<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> David H. Gurney, "An Interview with Michael G. Mullen," *Joint Force Quarterly* no 54 (2009): 7.

<sup>3</sup> Gurney, "An Interview with Michael G. Mullen," 7.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Swain, "Reflection on an Ethic of Officership," *Parameters* vol 37 no 1 (2007): 1-2. The section on foundational documents is inspired and informed by Dr. Swain's essay.

According to Colonel Richard Swain, USA, Ret., “The ethic of commissioned service begins with the Constitution, the Nation’s governing compact.”<sup>5</sup> Article VI of the Constitution mandates, “all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution.”<sup>6</sup> When an officer takes the oath of office found in Title 5 of U.S. Code, he is swearing (or affirming) his intention to, “support and defend the Constitution.”<sup>7</sup> Supporting the Constitution means accepting subordination to the nation’s citizenry and its elected officials. The document establishes itself, any new laws, and treaties as “the supreme Law of the Land.”<sup>8</sup> Prima facie, officers are legally bound to obey the Constitution.

Obedying the Constitution requires officers to follow the orders of the constitutionally designated commander in chief. Article II of the Constitution designates the President as commander in chief of the armed forces, “The President shall be commander in chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the militia of the several states, when called into the actual service of the United States.”<sup>9</sup> Despite commanding the armed forces, the president is neither as powerful in his exercise of authority over the armed forces as many think or he is nor as he may wish to be.<sup>10</sup> Rather, the executive and the legislative branches share power over the military services.<sup>11</sup>

The first article of the Constitution grants the legislative branch of government several powers to provide for the nation’s defense:

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<sup>5</sup> Swain, "Reflection on an Ethic," 2.

<sup>6</sup> United States., *The Constitution of the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2006), art. 7.

<sup>7</sup> The author would like to thank Dr. Richard Swain for pointing out that the “Oath of Office” is in Title 5 of U.S. Code.

<sup>8</sup> United States., *The Constitution of the United States of America*, art. 7.

<sup>9</sup> United States., *The Constitution of the United States of America*, art. 2, sec. 2, cl. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Peter L. Hays, Brenda J. Vallance, and Alan R. Van Tassel, *American Defense Policy*, 7th ed. (Baltimore: John’s Hopkins University Press, 1997), 63.

<sup>11</sup> Hays, Vallance, and Van Tassel, *American Defense Policy*, 74.

*The Congress shall have the power ... to declare war, grant letters of marquee and reprisal, and make rules concerning captures on land and water;*

*To raise and support armies, but no appropriation of money to that use shall be for a longer term than two years;*

*To provide and maintain a navy;*

*To make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces;*<sup>12</sup>

These powers reflect the founding fathers' fear of executive misuse of the armed forces rather than a military coup.<sup>13</sup> Control over the military purse is Congress' greatest check and balance to the president's authority as commander in chief. In order to appropriate funding for the military knowledgeably, Title 10 of the U.S. Code requires members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to provide recommendations to Congress: "After first informing the Secretary of Defense, a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff may make such recommendations to Congress relating to the Department of Defense as he considers appropriate."<sup>14</sup>

An officer's Oath of Office binds him to support, defend, and bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution. The premises surrounding the affirmation of the oath are understood when he says, "that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion." This is important because once sworn the officer subordinates himself to civilian leaders elected by the citizenry. However, the promise to "well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office" he is entering requires him to constantly reevaluate his own suitability as an instrument of national policy.

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<sup>12</sup> United States., *The Constitution of the United States of America*, art. 1, sec. 8, cl. 11-14.

<sup>13</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State; the Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge,: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 168.

<sup>14</sup> "Joint Chiefs of Staff," Title 10 *U.S. Code*, Subtitle A, Part I, Chapter 5, Section 151. 2010 ed.

The officer's commission, granted by the President, provides instruction for and gives authority to the appointed officer. It instructs the officer "to observe and follow such orders ... as may be given by the President ... or other superior officers."<sup>15</sup> Particularly important to the present research question is the line which states, "This commission is to continue in force at the pleasure of the President."<sup>16</sup> If an officer offers his resignation, the President, or those executing his authority, has the option to deny the request.

Three documents guide ethical behavior in the officer corps: the Constitution of the United States of America, the Oath of Office, and the Officer's Commission.<sup>17</sup> Holistically, the documents chart a complex course that requires an officer to balance sometimes seemingly incompatible responsibilities while remaining true to his own personal sense of morality. These documents are also foundational to the subject of American civil-military relations.

### **Civil-Military Relations Theory**

Broadly defined, civil-military relations describe the connection between society and the armed forces established for their protection. The subject is interdisciplinary in nature: historians, political scientists, sociologists, lawyers, and military officers are only some of those who contribute to the dialogue. In the twentieth century, the publication of Samuel Huntington's, *The Soldier and the State*, focused considerable attention on the subject. The study of civil-military relations became distinct in the 1960s with the advent of professional organizations such as the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society and its journal, *Armed Forces and Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal*.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "Certificate of Commission," *Defense Department Form 1 Air Force*, 25 Nov 2008.

<sup>16</sup> "Certificate of Commission," *Defense Department Form 1 Air Force*, 25 Nov 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Swain, "Reflection on an Ethic," 1-2.

<sup>18</sup> Additional information on the IUS may be found on its website: <http://www.iusafs.org/>.

Despite its recent emergence as a separate academic discipline, the study of civil-military relations has its roots in the writings of ancient Chinese general Sun Tzu. In the introduction to Samuel Griffith's translation of Sun Tzu's treatise, *The Art of War*, Griffith explains that Sun Tzu relates war to the immediate political context, to include unity and stability on the home front.<sup>19</sup> He believed national unity was essential for victory and only attainable under a benevolent government.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to explaining the importance of the government uniting its citizens behind a war effort, Sun Tzu also offered guidance on the relationship between a ruler, his general, and the army:

*Now the general is the protector of the state. If this protection is all-embracing, the state will surely be strong; if defective, the state will certainly be weak.*

*Now there are three ways in which a ruler can bring misfortune upon his army.*

*When ignorant that the army should not advance, to order an advance or ignorant that it should not retire, to order retirement. This is described as 'hobbling the army'.*

*When ignorant of military affairs, to participate in their administration. This causes the officers to be perplexed.*

*When ignorant of command problems to share in the exercise of responsibilities. This engenders doubts in the minds of the officers.<sup>21</sup>*

Sun Tzu warns the sovereign to avoid meddling in military matters for fear of crippling or complicating the general's situation. However, he qualifies these statements by prefacing the verses with, "when ignorant." His precondition implies that Sun Tzu understood that kings can and will involve themselves in wars and that when they do they should be

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<sup>19</sup> Sunzi and Samuel B. Griffith, *The Illustrated Art of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6.

<sup>20</sup> Sunzi and Griffith, *Art of War*, 62.

<sup>21</sup> Sunzi and Griffith, *Art of War*, 121-22.

knowledgeable on military matters or risk defeat. Furthermore, he advocated ignoring a sovereign's advice if it did not agree with the general's own estimate, "Your servant has already received your appointment as Commander and when the commander is at the head of the army he need not accept all the sovereign's orders."<sup>22</sup> More than two thousand years later, another great military thinker's work offered a different theory of civil-military relations.

In 1793, at the age of thirteen, Carl von Clausewitz fought in his first campaign against the French.<sup>23</sup> This experience set Clausewitz "on the path of recognizing war as a political phenomenon."<sup>24</sup> During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Clausewitz wrote his magnum opus, *On War*, studying the whole of war in order to grasp the proper relationships among its parts.<sup>25</sup> Clausewitz's relevance to civil-military relations is captured in the dictum that, "War is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means."<sup>26</sup>

This aphorism's message for statesmen and soldiers is that war cannot be divorced from its context; therefore, it is not possible to develop war plans without a strategic estimate of one's own and the enemy's political conditions.<sup>27</sup> For Clausewitz, this means the sovereign has a say in the conduct of war at all times and at every level:

*We can now see that the assertion that a major military development, or the plan for one, should be a matter for purely military opinion is unacceptable and can be damaging. Nor indeed is it sensible to summon soldiers, as many governments do when they are planning a war, and ask them for purely military advice. But it makes even less sense for theoreticians to assert that all available military resources should be put at the disposal of the commander so that on*

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<sup>22</sup> Sunzi and Griffith, *Art of War*, 84.

<sup>23</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 6.

<sup>24</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 13.

<sup>26</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 87.

<sup>27</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 7.

*their basis he can draw up purely military plans for a war or a campaign. It is in any case a matter of common experience that despite the great variety and development of modern war its major lines are still laid down by governments; in other words, if we are to be technical about it, by a purely political and not a military body.*<sup>28</sup>

Clausewitz also faults the logic of people who criticize politicians' influence on the management of war, "Their quarrel should be with the policy itself, not with its influence. If the policy is right--that is, successful--any intentional effect it has on the conduct of the war can only be to the good. If it has the opposite effect the policy itself is wrong."<sup>29</sup> Therefore, Clausewitz believes the only way a sovereign can interfere improperly in war is by directing his military to "produce effects foreign to their nature."<sup>30</sup> To avoid doing this, he recommends the commander in chief be designated a member of the cabinet so civilian leaders can make informed decisions while conducting a war, and so senior military commanders can be aware of political considerations.<sup>31</sup>

Through firm maintenance of the bond between war and politics, Clausewitz portrays the behavior of war as complex and adaptive. In affairs of state, goals change, thus affecting the conduct of wars. If the military leader is to serve the ends his civilian masters seek, a stable relationship is required. Clausewitz asserts the requirement for two-way communication between politicians and statesmen during times of war.<sup>32</sup>

Both theorists interpreted subordination differently. Sun Tzu believed disregard for the sovereign's orders acceptable when policy differences arose. Clausewitz couched subordination of the military to its sovereign in a back-and-forth exchange with the military commander in

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<sup>28</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 607.

<sup>29</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 608.

<sup>30</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 608.

<sup>31</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 608 n. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Major Edwin Redman, "From Rampart to Chamber House: Soldiers, Statesmen, and the Dialogue of War" (Air University, 2005), 14.

chief. In the United States, the commander in chief of the military is the president, a civilian. Therefore, preservation of the armed forces' unwavering loyalty even when senior officers disagree with the president's policies is complicated. Effective maintenance of civilian control over the armed forces is the essential tenet of American civil-military relations theorists.

### **American Civil-Military Relations**

Several scholars of American civil-military relations emerged after World War II. Unlike Sun Tzu and Clausewitz, who were military officers, most American theorists are civilian academics. Three theorists: Samuel Huntington, Morris Janowitz, and Peter Feaver, offer differing viewpoints on the military's relationship with its civilian masters. Each prescribes an appropriate manner for officers to express disagreement with policy. Implicit guidance concerning departure from the military over differences with policy may be inferred from their theories when it is not explicitly addressed. Examining these theorists informs the research question. Each theorist's work is scrutinized to see if it explains the handling of disagreements between civilian leaders and their military subordinates, connects acute policy differences to issues of broader national security, and anticipates the outcome of a senior officer's departure from the armed forces in protest. This analysis is followed by an assessment of each theory's strong and weak arguments.

### **Huntington**

Samuel Phillips Huntington was a political scientist who spent most of his professional career teaching at Harvard University. In 1957, Huntington wrote *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* as an examination of the relationship between

military professionalism and political power.<sup>33</sup> Motivated by the challenge presented to the United States from the Soviet Union, Huntington believed the contradiction between American liberalism and military conservatism indicated that there was a problem for national security. For the United States to win the Cold War, he believed, there were two options, “The tension between the demands of military security and the values of American liberalism can, in the long run, be relieved only by the weakening of the security threat or the weakening of liberalism.”<sup>34</sup>

Huntington believed that achieving the proper balance in civil-military relations increased the likelihood of securing the nation by conserving resources and minimizing risk.<sup>35</sup> This belief translated to a “principal focus of civil-military relations [being] the relation of the officer corps to the state.”<sup>36</sup> In Huntington’s theory of civil-military relations, there are two primary actors: the officer corps and the government. The officer corps provides for the security of the nation from military threats.<sup>37</sup> It is a homogenous body to which Huntington assigns a single, conservative ideology.

Huntington refers to the government as the state which “is the active directing element of society and is responsible for the allocation of resources among important values including military security.”<sup>38</sup> He argues that within the American government there are two bodies competing for influence over the military services: the president and the congress. The competition for influence creates friction between the two bodies. That friction is exacerbated because the Founding Fathers never

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<sup>33</sup> Samuel P. Huntington." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Web. 06 Feb. 2011. (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/766295/Samuel-P-Huntington>).

<sup>34</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 456.

<sup>35</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 3.

<sup>37</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 3.

intended to maintain a large, standing army. When the nation required forces greater than the Army had habitually maintained, as it did in WWI, it conscripted large numbers of soldiers and discharged the vast majority upon the termination of conflict. America's rise as a world power, the specter of communism, and the accompanying Cold War dramatically changed this pattern. A large, standing force and the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons thrust the armed forces into the forefront of international relations.

Huntington established an organizational model for civil-military relations that emphasized the differences between the military and its civilian masters. Civilians guarantee control over the armed forces by answering the question; how do you minimize military power?<sup>39</sup> Huntington presented two options: enhance civilian power (subjective control) or enhance military professionalism (objective control).<sup>40</sup> Objective control is Huntington's ideal type, "Civilian control in the objective sense is the maximizing of military professionalism ... it is that distribution of political power between the military and civilian groups which is most conducive to the emergence of professional attitudes and behavior among the members of the officer corps."<sup>41</sup> The political power Huntington ascribes to the military is not the power to create policy; rather, it is the power to *militarize* itself.<sup>42</sup> This focusing on technical military issues frees the politician to act in the realm of policy unthreatened by military interference. Such freedom requires statesmen, whom it is assumed do not understand the intricacies of military science, to stay out of the military's bailiwick, "The statesman has no business deciding, as Hitler did in the later phases of World War

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<sup>39</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 80.

<sup>40</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 80-83.

<sup>41</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 83.

<sup>42</sup> Huntington's use of "militarize" encompasses the organization, utilization, training, equipping, and command of armed forces.

II, whether battalions in combat should advance or retreat.”<sup>43</sup>

Conversely, the military officer cannot make political judgments. In fact, “the antithesis of objective civilian control is military participation in politics.”<sup>44</sup> One critique of this construct is that Huntington’s objective model of control effectively creates a “barricade” between senior military officers and their civilian leaders’ discussion of policy and military actions.<sup>45</sup>

Military professionalism, as defined by Huntington’s concept of objective control, allows no room for officers to disagree publicly with policy. As a profession, officers are experts in the management of violence with specialized education and training in that field. They are not politicians. Politicians deal with state policy, which Huntington identifies as being “beyond the scope of military competence.”<sup>46</sup>

Therefore, there are only three responsibilities to the state within the purview of a military professional: represent claims of military security within the state, provide advice on the implications of alternative courses of action, and implement the decisions of politicians “even if it is a decision which runs violently counter to his military judgment.”<sup>47</sup>

Huntington recognized the interrelation of politics and war, but in his view the practitioners of the latter must always acquiesce to the policies of the former, “The top military leaders of the state inevitably operate in this intermingled world of strategy and policy. They must always be alert to the political implications of their military attitudes and be willing to accept the final decisions of the statesmen.”<sup>48</sup>

When Huntington writes of resignation as a possible course of action for an officer, it is in the context of Elihu Root’s theory of General

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<sup>43</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 77.

<sup>44</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 83.

<sup>45</sup> Redman, "From Rampart to Chamber House", 17.

<sup>46</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 71.

<sup>47</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 72.

<sup>48</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 73.

Staff organization, which he faults for “mixing, as it did, the political and military responsibilities of the Secretary and Chief of Staff.”<sup>49</sup>

Huntington’s treatment of military dissent suggests that resignation or retirement over policy differences is an unacceptable act. If senior military officers are to execute the orders of their civilian leaders, even if it is counter to their judgment, they must obey orders in support of these policies, “Success in any activity requires the subordination of the will of the individual to the will of the group.”<sup>50</sup>

To Huntington, a professional officer corps is the backbone of the armed forces; therefore, a violation of that military professionalism in his theory is analogous to an assault upon the national defense, “The greatest service [soldiers] can render is to remain true to themselves, to serve with silence and courage in the military way. If they abjure the military spirit, they destroy themselves first and their nation ultimately.”<sup>51</sup> Following this reasoning, the more senior the officer and severe the form of dissent, the greater the threat to the nation.

Many students of civil-military relations agree with Huntington’s uncompromising view of the threat to national security that could grow from public dissent among senior officers. These scholars consider resignation over policy differences to be a severe example of dissention. In his pointed article, “Always Salute, Never Resign,” Richard Kohn states, “resigning (asking for retirement or reassignment) ... destroys the professionalism of the U.S. armed forces.”<sup>52</sup> If resignation in protest is such a perilous course of action, what are its anticipated consequences? Huntington tells us what he believes happens if the officer corps protests, “... they abjure the military spirit, they destroy themselves first

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<sup>49</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 253-54.

<sup>50</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 63.

<sup>51</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 466.

<sup>52</sup> Richard Kohn, “Always Salute, Never Resign: How Resignation Threatens Military Professionalism and National Security,” in *Foreign Affairs* (2009).

and the nation ultimately.”<sup>53</sup> Kohn agrees. Resignation not only undermines civil-military relations, but it can endanger the nation by “giving heart to enemies and shaking the morale of the armed forces.”<sup>54</sup> National security hinges on officers “always saluting, never resigning.”

Huntington’s theory does not support departing the service over policy differences. He prescribed objective civilian control in order to maximize the officer corps’ professionalism. Objective civilian control provided men who were “ready to carry out the wishes of any civilian group.”<sup>55</sup> Huntington’s construct of objective control is plausible, only if the state united powers over the military in a single person or body. In the United States, the Constitution dictates a separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches that not only permits, but makes honest service in the highest military assignments unprofessional in the ideal-type. In an age of 24-hour news, the questioning of a service chief of staff by the Senate Armed Services Committee creates sound bites that might weaken support for the Commander in chief. Huntington’s solution was for society to mirror the military’s conservatism. Morris Janowitz offers a different perspective and a different prescription.

### **Janowitz**

Morris Janowitz was a University of Chicago-educated sociologist and founder of the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society, an interdisciplinary institution dedicated to the study of armed forces and their role in society. Within the field of sociology, many consider Janowitz to have founded the subfield of “military sociology.”<sup>56</sup> In 1960, Janowitz published *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*. Janowitz wrote the book to reconcile the age of nuclear

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<sup>53</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 466.

<sup>54</sup> Kohn, "Always Salute, Never Resign."

<sup>55</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 84.

<sup>56</sup> James Burk, "Morris Janowitz and the Origins of Sociological Research on Armed Forces and Society," *Armed Forces & Society* vol 19 no 2 (1993): 168.

weapons with the persona of the professional officer. He believed nuclear weapons and participation in limited wars, “was blurring the distinctions between [civilian leaders and the military].”<sup>57</sup> In a world of rapid technological and political change he questioned how civilians would continue to control the armed forces.<sup>58</sup>

Unlike Huntington, Janowitz does not view the officer corps as a homogenous body. Janowitz identifies two sets of values within the officer corps: absolutism and pragmatism, or conservatism and liberalism.<sup>59</sup> He wrote, “Both theories claim to be grounded, in a scientific and professional understanding of war-making, but in actuality, they give expression to the fundamental social and political values inherent in American society.”<sup>60</sup> The absolutist philosophy grew out of the frontier and punitive expedition tradition; it espoused warfare as the foundation for international relations, “the more complete the victory, the greater the possibility of achieving political goals.”<sup>61</sup> Conversely, the pragmatic school identified war as only one instrument of power, “along with ideological and economic struggle.”<sup>62</sup> Like Clausewitz, the pragmatists viewed war as “political intercourse with the addition of other means.”<sup>63</sup>

Janowitz provides further refinement by differentiating between the officer corps writ large and the officer corps’ “elites.”<sup>64</sup> The elites are those officers with “the greatest amount of actual or potential power.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants : Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 8.

<sup>58</sup> Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (Glencoe, Ill.,: Free Press, 1960), lvi.

<sup>59</sup> Lt Gen James Gavin prescribed the conservative/liberal labels; Janowitz states the two sets of labels are roughly equivalent. Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 264-65.

<sup>60</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 264.

<sup>61</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 264.

<sup>62</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 264.

<sup>63</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 87.

<sup>64</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 6.

<sup>65</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 6.

Senior military leaders, particularly those of the three-and-four-star rank, are considered elites in this study.<sup>66</sup> Janowitz agrees with Huntington's labeling of the primary civilian actors; and he observed that since World War II, both Congress and the president have sought to strengthen their control over the armed forces by creating additional bureaucracies.<sup>67</sup> Like Huntington, Janowitz believed military professionalism and civilian respect for that professionalism provide the foundation for military subordination. "Civilian supremacy is effective because the professional soldier believes that his political superiors are dedicated men who are prepared to weigh his professional advice with care."<sup>68</sup> However, because Janowitz saw the officer corps as heterogeneous, he believed objective civilian control to be unattainable.<sup>69</sup> To develop effective control of a heterogeneous military establishment, Janowitz developed a convergence theory of civil-military relations.<sup>70</sup>

This convergence theory rejects Huntington's assertion that the military could only maximize national security during the Cold War either if it remained ideologically distinct from society, or if the citizenry adopted more conservative beliefs. Instead, Janowitz argued that the imperatives of international relations in the nuclear age required a fusion of military and civilian ideologies. Both military schools of thought mentioned above, absolutism and pragmatism, had corresponding

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<sup>66</sup> I chose to categorize three and four star generals as elites for two reasons. First, Title 10 of the U.S. Code ties these ranks to specific positions designated by the president and subject to approval by the Senate. When an officer leaves the position requiring three or four stars, he reverts back to two stars (O-8) unless assuming another assignment requiring the O-9 or O-10 rank. When an officer of these ranks retires it is incumbent upon the Secretary of Defense to gain approval from the President to retire the officer in the current rank. The second reason is the choice of my first case study, that of Lieutenant General James Gavin.

<sup>67</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 347.

<sup>68</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 367.

<sup>69</sup> Suzanne C. Nielsen and Don M. Snider, *American Civil-Military Relations : The Soldier and the State in a New Era* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 245.

<sup>70</sup> Giuseppe Caforio, *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military*, *Handbook of Sociology and Social Research* (New York: Springer, 2006), 77.

philosophies within the broader population.<sup>71</sup> However, Janowitz did not see this synthesis resulting in a perfect “middle ground.” He believed a pragmatic doctrine had the requisite flexibility needed during the Cold War. His preference for pragmatism led Janowitz to prescribe the evolution of the armed forces into a constabulary force.

Janowitz’s constabulary force placed America in the role of global policeman, able to respond to a small regional crisis as deftly as a global thermonuclear war. He envisioned the constabulary force concept as the reification of pragmatism’s superiority over absolutist doctrine in the Cold War. Absolutists have a singular focus on unconditional surrender. MacArthur’s desire to expand the Korean War into China was an example of the absolutist school’s desire to fight total wars to such an end.<sup>72</sup> In contrast, a constabulary force would be, “continuously prepared to act, committed to the minimum use of force, and seeks viable international relations, rather than victory.”<sup>73</sup> The flexibility in means, ranging from nuclear weapons to limited war, emerges from the pragmatic belief that there is no single solution to international relations.<sup>74</sup>

To meet the dilemmas of international relations during the Cold War “the officer corps has been seeking to redefine its professional requirements.”<sup>75</sup> To that end, Janowitz believed the officer corps must broaden its educational aperture. He thought it best for the military if all officers were educated in political-military affairs:

*The prescribed career of the future is one that will sensitize the military officer to the political and social consequences of military action. It is not true that all officers need to be broadly educated in political-military affairs, although this is a desirable objective. However, all officers must be trained in the meaning of civilian supremacy. Under the constabulary concept, even the most junior officer, depending on his*

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<sup>71</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 275.

<sup>72</sup> Nielsen and Snider, *American Civil-Military Relations*, 245.

<sup>73</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 418.

<sup>74</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 274.

<sup>75</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 418.

*assignment, may be acting as a political agent. Political-military affairs should start in the military academy where tactical training must be related to the requirements of international relations, and continue at higher levels of education and professional experience.*<sup>76</sup>

A shift away from the study of engineering and toward that of international relations indicated to Janowitz that officers recognized the increasing requirement for his prescription.<sup>77</sup> However, Janowitz believed the evolution of the constabulary force was more than an intellectual exercise. “The constabulary force concept is designed both to insure the professional competency of the military and to prevent the growth of a disruptive sense of frustration.”<sup>78</sup>

Janowitz argued that such frustration, if unchecked, would produce dissent within the officer corps. Unlike Huntington, Janowitz did not address senior leader dissent in detail. *The Professional Soldier*, in its entirety, is Janowitz’s prescription for minimizing dissent. Through indoctrination, in the form of a broad social sciences education, he envisioned a pragmatic officer corps that would appreciate the gradations within international relations and consequently national defense policy. Civilian leaders would select officers who were less hostile toward civilian intervention for key assignments.<sup>79</sup> When those pragmatic senior military leaders disagreed with policy, Janowitz felt that the officer’s professionalism would temper the response.<sup>80</sup> Thus, as long as dissent was within professional boundaries, it was a healthy part of choosing the correct policy. Janowitz did not address what would or should happen if officers expressed dissent outside of those boundaries.

If senior military officers still disagreed with policies following an informed debate on the issues, I believe that Janowitz’s convergence

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<sup>76</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 426.

<sup>77</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 433.

<sup>78</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 435.

<sup>79</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 252.

<sup>80</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 234.

theory would allow for resignation or retirement as a method of regulating tension in civil-military relations. Janowitz closed *The Professional Soldier* with a warning for civilian leaders. “To deny or destroy the difference between the military and civilian cannot produce genuine similarity, but runs the risk of creating new forms of tension.”<sup>81</sup>

### **Feaver**

Peter Feaver offers a different theory to inform the interaction between senior military officers and civilian leaders in the midst of tensions resulting from policy disagreements. Feaver is the Alexander F. Hehmyer Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at Duke University and Director of the Triangle Institute for Security Studies (TISS).<sup>82</sup> In 1990, he received his doctorate in political science from Harvard, where Huntington served as one of his dissertation mentors.<sup>83</sup> He offers an alternative to Huntington’s civil-military relations theory, which he believed, “[did] not stand up to the historical record.”<sup>84</sup> Feaver published *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* in 2003. However, much of the conception and writing of the book took place prior to the attack of 11 September 2001.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, the massive shift in American defense posture following 9/11 does not negate the significance of the question he attempts to answer: how do civilians control the armed forces?

In *Armed Servants*, Feaver espouses a principal-agent theory, in which the government is the principal, or superior, and the officer corps

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<sup>81</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 440.

<sup>82</sup> Board of Advisers, “Dr. Peter Feaver,” Center for a New American Security, <http://www.cnas.org/node/819> (accessed 18 February 2011).

<sup>83</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, vii.

<sup>84</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 9. Recall that in *The Soldier and the State*, Huntington suggested American society must adopt a conservative ideology if the United States would successfully weather the security dilemma presented by the Soviet Union. In chapter 2 of *Armed Servants*, Feaver argues the United States won the Cold War despite societies continued liberality.

<sup>85</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 1.

is the agent, or subordinate.<sup>86</sup> Feaver acknowledges the existence of additional agents, such as the National Guard and Reserves but chooses to exclude them.<sup>87</sup> Feaver's exclusion of guardsmen and reservists does not contradict Huntington, who views reservists as nonprofessionals.<sup>88</sup>

Feaver groups the president and Congress together into a single civilian principal. He makes this categorization decision to provide a simpler application of game theory for testing the principal-agent model.<sup>89</sup>

Feaver uses agency theory, appropriated from the principal-agent framework in economics, to build a flexible model for answering how civilians control the military.<sup>90</sup> Feaver thus believes "civil-military relations are best understood as a game of strategic interaction," in which the players make decisions based on calculated risk.<sup>91</sup> Feaver acknowledges the professionalism of the officer corps and recognizes that American senior military officers will not frequently, if ever, vie for control of the government. Agency theory thus accepts military subordination without assuming military obedience.<sup>92</sup> During daily interactions, civilian leaders decide how closely they will monitor the military professional's work, and senior military leaders determine whether or not they will "shirk" based on the potential of detection and punishment.<sup>93</sup> The working-shirking model produces a spectrum of possible outcomes that are demonstrable using simple game theory. Where Janowitz and

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<sup>86</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 56-57.

<sup>87</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 98.

<sup>88</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 17.

<sup>89</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 98-99.

<sup>90</sup> Major Jeff Donnithorne, "Culture Wars: Air Force Culture and Civil-Military Relations" (Air University, 2010), 14.

<sup>91</sup> Peter D. Feaver, "Crisis as Shirking: An Agency Theory Explanation of the Souring of American Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society* vol 24 no 3 (1998): 407.

<sup>92</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 10.

<sup>93</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 3. A simple definition of shirking is doing anything other than what civilian leaders want. In Chapter 3 of *Armed Servants*, Feaver defines shirking as, "doing things the way those in the military want."

Huntington offered unvarying theories of civil-military relations, Feaver's agency theory "turns U.S. civil-military relations into a variable."<sup>94</sup>

Feaver's theory explains how senior military officers' relations with their civilian leaders should be conducted. In the United States, citizens express their policy preferences through the election of representatives. Elections are society's voice, and "Voters should get the leaders they elect, even if the leaders they elect are less desirable than the alternatives they rejected."<sup>95</sup> The officer's role is to advise his civilian leaders and accept the decision made. Likewise, the civilian should listen to the advice of his generals, but the decision is ultimately his. Feaver does not afford the officer corps a final voice in decisionmaking:

*While decisionmaking may in fact be politics as usual--the exercise of power in pursuit of ends--it is politics within the context of a particular normative conception of whose will should prevail. ... In the civil-military context, this means that even if the military is best able to identify the threat and the appropriate responses to that threat for a given level of risk, only the civilian can set the level of acceptable risk for society. ... The military assesses the risk, the civilian judges it.*<sup>96</sup>

Feaver does not differentiate between resignation over policy differences and other forms of dissent. In agency theory, leaking information, public statements contradicting policy, and resignations (or threat thereof) are all examples of shirking. During the Clinton Administration, someone in the armed forces surreptitiously released to the press an argument that there would be massive resignations in protest if the president lifted the ban on homosexuals serving in the military.<sup>97</sup> Under pressure from the armed forces and members of Congress, the president compromised and instituted the "don't ask, don't

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<sup>94</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 285.

<sup>95</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 298.

<sup>96</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 6.

<sup>97</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 203.

tell” policy. According to Feaver, when the military exerts political pressure, as in the example above, it “undermines democracy.”<sup>98</sup>

It is unclear how Feaver connected dissent, including resignation over policy differences, to national security. This might be due to the limited scope of *Armed Servants*, which addresses “civil-military relations in the United States play out on a day-to-day basis.”<sup>99</sup> Feaver clearly believes that subordination to civilian orders is imperative, “even when they are wrong about what is needed for national security.”<sup>100</sup> Professionalism, epitomized by swearing an oath “to protect and defend the Constitution,” requires servicemembers to risk their lives and command others to do the same, in response to civilian orders, “even stupid orders.”<sup>101</sup> However, Feaver confuses policy with orders when he castigates officers who resign in protest by creating an analogy between battlefield leadership and military leadership at the highest levels, “On the battlefield and at the tactical level, resigning in protest is called mutiny and it is punished severely. At the strategic-political level, would not mass or highly salient resignations in protest be almost as poisonous for civil-military relations?”<sup>102</sup> Further confusing Feaver’s treatment of resignation, he finds resignation for reasons of conscience permissible, “The military has an obligation to advise strenuously against legal but foolish orders--in fact, at some point individual military agents may be compelled by conscience to offer up their resignation if they can no longer faithfully execute a policy.”<sup>103</sup>

*Armed Servants* argues that resignation over policy differences undermines democracy. As a viable next step in the study of civil-military relations, Feaver suggests examining how civilian control affects

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<sup>98</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 301.

<sup>99</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 3.

<sup>100</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 298.

<sup>101</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 9.

<sup>102</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 301.

<sup>103</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 301.

the ability of the armed forces to carry out their duty to defend and advance the national interest.<sup>104</sup> However, his closing thoughts in *Armed Servants* clarify the contradiction of the previous two statements, making it clear that he believes shirking, including resignation in protest, are worse for democracy than obeying any lawful order: “Let civilian voters punish civilian leaders for wrong decisions. Let the military advise against foolish adventures, even advising strenuously when circumstances demand. But let the military execute those orders faithfully. The republic would be better served even by foolish working than by enlightened shirking.”<sup>105</sup>

### **The Three Theories: Strengths and Weaknesses**

Huntington and Feaver studied the topic with the interest of political scientists in how the government controlled the military services, while Janowitz’s sociological lens identified heterogeneity within the officer corps and sought to explain how the two organizations could converge. Each author’s theory has strengths and weaknesses.

The strength of Huntington’s construct is its solid foundation in democratic theory. Despite the threat from the Soviet Union, he never suggests placing the military in charge of international relations. Huntington based his treatment of civil-military relations on the Constitutional prerogative of civilian control. The Constitution clearly establishes the primacy of civilians over the military and does not permit the armed forces to choose which lawful orders they will obey, regardless of the potential detriment to the republic’s national security. However, the Constitution also institutionalizes an inherent flaw in his prescription of objective control. However, without fundamental changes, Huntington’s recommendation of objective control is impossible to implement in the United States. Either the nation has to modify the Constitutional balance of power over the armed forces, or society must

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<sup>104</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 298.

<sup>105</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 302.

adopt a conservative ideology. Huntington recognized this paradox and suggested the latter. An additional weakness of Huntington's theory relevant to the present research question is his classification of the professional officer as merely a technician. Because objective control permitted statesmen and soldiers independence within their respective spheres, Huntington believed senior military leaders could fight future wars without opining on anything outside the very narrow purview of combat operations. Janowitz (and Clausewitz before him) envisioned senior military leaders who would be generals first, but also statesmen. Generals George Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower typify the general/statesmen. If civilian leaders expect an officer to provide a range of military options to advance policy interests, an officer corps must have fairly astute political awareness.

The strength of Janowitz's treatment of the professional officer corps is the appreciation for an officer with a broad educational background. Janowitz recognized the complexity of international relations in the nuclear age and presciently foresaw the move away from total wars, such as WWI and WWII, toward limited wars and military operations other than war. Officers who subscribe to a pragmatic doctrine are able to offer alternative courses of action to their superiors. Additionally, they are willing to recommend options utilizing the armed forces appropriately in conjunction with other instruments of power because they are familiar with the nuance of instruments beyond their direct purview. However, Janowitz's convergence theory fails to make a connection between officer dissent and national security. This shortcoming is not an oversight, but a result of the disparity between the focus of political scientists and sociologists. Feaver explains the difference in the two treatments of civil-military relations, "To political scientists, institutional civilian control is the heart of civil-military relations. To sociologists, civil-military relations is about the integration

(or the absence of it) of civil and military institutions.”<sup>106</sup> While Janowitz appreciates the complex and heterogeneous aspects of the officer corps, he anticipated a decrease in dissent through normalization of military and societal ideologies. However, civil-military relations have not normalized. Many academics claim that there now exists a crisis in American civil-military relations.<sup>107</sup>

The greatest strength of Feaver’s agency theory is its accounting for the contemporary strains in civil-military relations. Feaver benefited over both Huntington and Janowitz from witnessing an additional forty years of American civil-military interaction, which included the end of the Cold War. By turning civil-military relations into a variable, he was able to account for different ideologies in the officer corps and society (as did Janowitz) while acknowledging the overall homogeneity of the military agent. Agency theory does an excellent job of explaining the behavior of senior military leaders that express dissent in public. However, Feaver gives short shrift to the ethical dilemmas of senior military leadership. Feaver’s consolidation of the executive and legislative branches of government as a single principal has two drawbacks. First, it oversimplifies the frequently divergent relationship between these two bodies of government. Second, it fails to account for the ethical dilemma posed to senior officers who have a constitutional obligation to serve both branches. Additionally, Feaver’s measurement of military performance as either working or shirking is too binary to explain the complex interaction between men at the highest levels of national leadership. In his treatment of Gen Ronald Fogleman’s decision to request early retirement, Feaver acknowledges that the catalyst for the decision was ethical, but he does not delve deeper into this decision or similar decisions made by other senior military leaders.

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<sup>106</sup> Peter D. Feaver, "Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control," *Armed Forces & Society* vol 23 no 2 (1996).

<sup>107</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 218-22.

### **The Question of Leaving the Service over Policy Differences**

A synthesized civil-military theory must account for questions of morality because officers are simultaneously subordinates to the civilian polity, leaders of the military, and individuals with their own values. This section presents arguments both for and against leaving the armed forces over acute policy differences. It concludes with a brief statement of a civil-military relations theory derived from the three American theories examined.

### **Arguments for Retiring or Resigning over Policy Differences**

Most arguments in favor of resignation over policy differences propose the action as a method of advocating a different policy. Proponents of this course of action believe it is the responsibility of senior military officers to make a stand on issues of significant consequence to the national defense.<sup>108</sup> Within this school of thought there is a range of disparate opinions about acceptable dissent prior to offering resignation. The stronger arguments offer options that do not challenge democratic rule. Weaker arguments, such as the one made by Lt Col Andrew Milburn, claim the ethic of officership grants an officer “a moral autonomy and obligate him to disobey an order he deems immoral; that is, an order that is likely to harm the institution writ large.”<sup>109</sup> This argument is spurious. It contradicts the documents foundational to defining an ethic of officership. When swearing or affirming an oath to protect and defend the Constitution, an officer acknowledges his subordination to the decisions of his civilian leaders. In the American chain of command, the military is subordinate to elected officials, and the elected officials; are subordinate to the electorate. An officer’s opinion that an order *might* harm the institution neither obligates nor permits disobedience. Milburn does not favor the decision to resign

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<sup>108</sup> Andrew R. Milburn, "Breaking Ranks Dissent and the Military Professional," *JFQ: Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 59: 101-02.

<sup>109</sup> Milburn, "Breaking Ranks," 102.

quietly because it “is likely to accomplish little to divert the decision maker from his course.”<sup>110</sup> Motivated by the opinion that senior military officers must “use [their] privilege to accomplish more than the personal, perhaps selfish, goal of conscience appeasement,” he does not place significant value in individual morality beyond how it affects the institution.<sup>111</sup>

Navy Chaplain, Capt George Clifford, makes a more temperate argument for departing the service over policy differences. Clifford’s treatment of departing the service acknowledges occasions when an officer’s loyalty to self may take precedence to his loyalty to the institution. He believes the circumstances necessary to justify resignation are very high, “such as when a senior is never satisfied with a subordinate’s effort or performance or demands that the subordinate sacrifice all aspects of personal life to perform non-mission essential duties.”<sup>112</sup> Clifford believes officers should only depart the service because an assigned responsibility will significantly compromise his moral standards or the duty is one an officer must not perform.<sup>113</sup> Similarly to Milburn, Clifford places the greatest value in the officer’s action affecting change to the policy he finds morally egregious. However, Clifford believes a senior officer should do this in private. Only after an officer has expressed his dissent privately to no avail, should he resign and express his dissent in public.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Milburn, "Breaking Ranks," 107.

<sup>111</sup> Milburn, "Breaking Ranks," 106.

<sup>112</sup> George M. I. I. Ch Ret Clifford, "Duty at All Costs," *Naval War College Review* vol 60 no 1 (2007): 113.

<sup>113</sup> Clifford, "Duty at All Costs," 106. Clifford defines duties an officer must not perform as, “egregious, illegal orders.” These are situations few officers are likely to face in their careers.

<sup>114</sup> Clifford, "Duty at All Costs," 123. In situations where the moral basis for an officer’s dissent is religious in nature, Clifford suggests departing in silence. The paradox in this distinction is Clifford’s assumption that any moral objection to a policy is anything other than a personal.

The preceding examples demonstrate a common theme among many proponents of resignation in protest - the desire to influence policy decisions they find disagreeable. I will offer an alternative use of resignation in protest later. But first it is necessary to study the arguments against resignation.

### **Arguments against Retiring or Resigning over Policy Differences**

In a stinging response to Milburn, Dr. Richard Kohn argues that Milburn's argument represents "an attack on military professionalism that would unhinge the armed forces of the United States."<sup>115</sup> Kohn is the most noteworthy advocate against departing the armed forces in dissent of policy. His argument is three-fold: resignation in protest encourages civilians to choose more compliant officers, it undermines professionalism, and it assaults civilian control of the armed forces.

Kohn asserts that allowing resignation over policy differences would encourage civilian leaders to choose senior military officers "more for compliance and loyalty than for competence, experience, intelligence, candor, moral courage, professionalism, integrity, and character."<sup>116</sup> It is difficult to argue the logic possessed by this line of thinking; however, astute civilian leaders may appreciate the wisdom in Winston Churchill's "willingness to pick commanders who disagreed with him and did so violently."<sup>117</sup> Michael Desch deftly counters Kohn's argument by pointing out civilians were likely to appoint officers for their pliability before the age of frequent military protest.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Richard Kohn, "Richard Kohn Fires a Warning Flare about a Joint Force Quarterly Article," *Foreign Policy*, [http://ricks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/09/29/richard\\_kohn\\_fires\\_a\\_warning\\_flare\\_about\\_a\\_joint\\_force\\_quarterly\\_article](http://ricks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/09/29/richard_kohn_fires_a_warning_flare_about_a_joint_force_quarterly_article) (accessed 17 December 2010).

<sup>116</sup> Richard Kohn Richard Myers, MacKubin Thomas Owens, Lawrence Korb, "Salute and Disobey?," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 5 (2007).

<sup>117</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command : Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 127-28.

<sup>118</sup> Richard Myers, "Salute and Disobey?."

The final thread of Kohn's three-fold argument, closely related to the question of professionalism, is the assertion that resignation over differences in policy is an affront to civilian control of the armed forces. Kohn believes resignation in protest to acute policy differences is the ultimate offense to civilian control of the military. "There is no such thing as a 'proper civil-military balance.' What is necessary for effective policy, good decisions, and positive outcomes is a relationship of respect, candor, collaboration, cooperation - and subordination. Nothing would undermine that relationship more than a resignation by a senior military officer."<sup>119</sup> Kohn's link between resignation and professionalism is debatable. He claims that officers who tender their resignation, "for moral or professional reasons are imposing their own conceptions of morality and professional behavior on the country."<sup>120</sup> Kohn asserts this action, "contravenes an officer's oath to support and defend the U.S. Constitution."<sup>121</sup> He does not offer a particular article of the Constitution that resignation undermines; but the tenor of his prose points to an overall sense of insubordination, ergo, unprofessional behavior. Kohn ties resignation to policymaking, a responsibility clearly delegated to elected officials by the Constitution. He also questions the international relations knowledge of senior officers. "The role of senior military officers is to advise and then execute civilian leader's orders ... Officers cannot possibly know all of the larger national and international considerations that go into a policy or decision, in peace or in war."<sup>122</sup> Professional military education challenges this assertion and receives treatment in the next section.

### **A Synthesized Theory of Civil-Military Relations**

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<sup>119</sup> Kohn, "Always Salute, Never Resign."

<sup>120</sup> Kohn, "Always Salute, Never Resign."

<sup>121</sup> Kohn, "Always Salute, Never Resign."

<sup>122</sup> Kohn, "Always Salute, Never Resign."

The alternative offered below argues resignation over policy differences can be a useful tool for the maintenance of civil-military relations if handled differently than Milburn, Clifford, or Kohn suggests. A theory of civil-military relations derived from the theories of Huntington, Janowitz, and Feaver should maximize each theory's aforementioned strengths and minimize the weaknesses. Additionally, it should be informed by an argument for ethical resignation. The desired output is a framework which subordinates the military to its civilian masters but offers alternatives when a senior military leader is struggling with civilian policies. The theory outlined below is a bridge between those works previously referenced and the mental construct that follows.

In the United States, civil-military relations theory defines how democratically elected civilians exercise control over a military establishment that possesses significant coercive force. Following WWII, with the continued maintenance of large and active armed forces, civil-military relations theory must also account for the role of the armed forces in grand strategy. Specifically, it must address how the military instrument of power relates to the other primary instruments of power: diplomacy, information, and economics. Senior military leaders must be conversant in all instruments of power if they are going to provide the best advice to the commander in chief and congress.

The central proposition of my theory is: *Officers can depart the armed forces when they have acute differences with policy implemented by their civilian leadership, but only when they have duly considered consequences and benefits to themselves but, much more importantly, to the nation.* This theory subordinates the senior military officer to his civilian masters but acknowledges that American servicemembers are still citizens with the rights granted to them by their Creator and guaranteed by the Constitution they swore to defend. Unlike Feaver's binary work or shirk model, this theory allows for the complex nature of human interaction. Another advantage of this theory is its accounting

for the liberal arts education many officers receive through professional military education and other opportunities provided by their service. Curricula such as that offered at the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS), provide officers with the knowledge that Huntington, Feaver, and Kohn fail to attribute to them.<sup>123</sup>

Three subordinate propositions derive from the central proposition above: what circumstances must be satisfied to validate the decision to depart the service over policy differences, what are the risks of retiring or resigning over policy differences, and what are the rewards of such an action.

A senior military officer should consider the conditions surrounding the situation. By framing his environment, an officer can consider the costs/benefits calculation in the context of his own unique circumstances. During this exercise he might uncover additional risks and/or rewards for inclusion in his analysis.

Those students of civil-military relations that disagree with the notion of a senior officer's leaving the service over policy differences cite several risks. The most dangerous risk is that resignation or retiring in protest suborns civilian control of the armed forces. Another concern is that civilian leaders will choose more compliant officers to replace those leaving. When determining how he should proceed, a senior military officer must assess the likelihood of these risks and include it in his cost/benefit calculation.

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<sup>123</sup> The mission of SAASS is to create warrior-scholars who have a superior ability to develop and evaluate strategy. The SAASS curriculum is an intensive 50-week program designed to accomplish two things: enhance the student's ability to think critically about the relationship of military force and statecraft and also argue effectively and responsibly about military strategy using evidence and logic gained from interaction with other students and faculty in the graduate colloquium. Students read extensively on a broad range of subjects to include history, political science, international relations, and sociology. Books read at SAASS include: Thucydides, Robert B. Strassler, and Richard Crawley, *The Landmark Thucydides : A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Free Press, 1996); Clausewitz, *On War*; Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*; Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976).

Finally, proponents for retiring or resigning over policy differences espouse several benefits. These include the maintenance of the officer's principles and the possibility that their departure offers the opportunity to oppose publicly a policy they believe is harmful to national security.

There is the potential for an infinite number of answers to the questions above; however, the mental construct which follows represents my best guess at six of the most important questions a senior military officer must ask himself when deciding whether he should act.

### **A Mental Construct for Considering Departure over Policy Differences**

When a senior officer considers departing the armed forces over policy differences, the oath he swore to support and defend the Constitution necessitates considering the effects his action will have on national security. The following mental construct should inform the senior officer's deliberation.

1. *Will my departure adversely affect civilian control of the armed forces?*

A myriad of elements should be included when considering how their actions might affect civilian control of the military. The list of factors could be almost infinite depending on the context but may include the officer's national popularity, public opinion of the president and Congress, the current portrayal of civil-military relations by the media and academia, and the officer's intentions after departing the armed forces.

2. *Will my departure adversely affect the morale of my fellow servicemembers?*

A charismatic leader can motivate a military unit, or even an entire service. If he departs when a policy is in contention morale and support may suffer. Furthermore, a coterie often accompanies senior military officers when they attain the highest positions in the armed forces.

These officers may serve in important staff positions. If their senior officer sponsor departs the service, ripples may spread throughout the staff.

*3. Will my departure provide aid and comfort to the enemy?*

A clever enemy collects information on the disposition of its opponent's civil-military relations. If there is dissention, then it is probable that the enemy will be aware of the disagreement. This rift might provide them aid and comfort by informing their own policy decisions and war plans, or they might use the information to weaken friendly morale.

*4. If I depart the armed forces, is there a competent replacement?*

An officer should consider who is likely to replace him if he leaves the armed forces. During a time of war, the lack of a replacement might mean an unfit officer is given command at a time critical to national security. Conversely, the military is full of capable officers and no senior leader should believe that they are irreplaceable.

*5. Do I intend to disagree with policy publicly?*

When a very senior officer disagrees with a policy, it may be within his purview to advise the President. Likewise, if asked questions on policy by the Congress, a senior military leader has a responsibility to provide his honest, professional opinion. Senior officers, though intimately involved in politics, should be apolitical. Gen George Marshall epitomized the apolitical officer loyally serving his nation and both branches of government trusted him.

Public dissent other than testimony before congress, which is established by U.S. Code, is unprofessional. Milburn's argument that officers have a duty to interfere in civil-military relations in order to stop a "bad" decision is an act of politicking. Publicly proffering opinions on policy, leaking information to the press, and writing op-ed pieces

disputing the merits of a policy or any other decision made by civilian leaders fall into this category.

I have argued that an active-duty senior military officer can offer dissent in two forums: to his chain-of-command in private or in response to questioning from congress. If an officer feels compelled to disagree with policy using another medium, he should retire or resign.

6. *Will staying in the armed forces and complying with those policies I find disagreeable unacceptably violate my principles and values?*

Even the most vehement opponents to the act of senior officers departing the service over acute policy differences acknowledge that there are likely circumstances which warrant resignation or retirement. If an officer no longer believes he can, “well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which [he] is about to enter,” then he owes it to himself, his commander in chief, his nation, and (when applicable) his deity to leave the service.

Testing these questions against historical examples might indicate whether the synthesized civil-military relations theory and questions above are valid across a variety of circumstances and suggest changes to the theory and construct for the future. The next two chapters examine historical examples to determine the usefulness of this mental construct and offer changes if necessary.

## Chapter 2

### Lt Gen James Maurice Gavin

On 31 March 1958, Lt Gen James M. Gavin retired from the US Army. Gavin's decision to leave the Army resulted largely over disagreements with defense policies of the Eisenhower Administration. Studying the circumstances surrounding his decision provides an opportunity to examine the relevance of the mental construct developed in the previous chapter against a historical example of a senior officer who left the armed forces over policy differences.

This chapter begins by examining the context of General Gavin's departure. A biographical sketch and a brief explanation of the national defense issues with which the general disagreed with provide this context. The next two sections detail the course of events that led to General Gavin's retirement and the consequences of his actions. Finally, conclusions drawn from this historical example suggest modifications to the mental construct.

#### **The Context**

General Gavin's second wife, Jean, described him as follows: "My husband was a born fighter ... he fought to sell the most newspapers, gather the most coal, get the most work done. Later, as an enlisted man in the Army, with no high-school education, he fought against heavy odds, in competitive Army examinations, to win an appointment to West Point."<sup>1</sup> Examination of Gavin's decision to depart from the armed forces must begin with an appreciation of his journey and the historical context of the 1950s.

As a child, Gavin learned self-reliance and the value of moral courage; he also developed a keen intellectual curiosity. The adopted son

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Gavin, "When My Husband Retired from the Army," *Good Housekeeping*, June 1958, 227.

of Irish immigrants, Gavin never had a close relationship with his parents. Nevertheless, he idealized the environment of Mount Carmel, Pennsylvania's Irish community. He described the Irish as follows: "idealistic, emotional, took their patriotism for granted, held strong views about most things and expected other people to do the same. They never hesitated to express their views, and it was assumed that one would fight for them if need be."<sup>2</sup> Gavin valued hard physical work, but he also possessed an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. Even as a child, he read and wrote prolifically.<sup>3</sup> At seventeen, Gavin only found one employer that hired young men with minimal education and no marketable skills but promised career advancement and additional schooling—the United States Army. During his one year as an enlisted soldier, Gavin observed the value of an active, interested leader. Recognizing a budding intellect in the young NCO, Gavin's first sergeant persuaded him to compete for an appointment to West Point.<sup>4</sup> On 1 July 1925, eighteen months after enlisting in the Army, Gavin entered the U.S. Military Academy.<sup>5</sup>

After graduating from West Point, Gavin refined the characteristics he developed in his first 22 years. He was self-reliant, a trait he learned from never having been close to his adopted family. He was also intellectually curious. He valued the moral courage required to advocate new ideas and act on one's belief of right and wrong. Finally, Gavin had

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<sup>2</sup> James M. Gavin, *War and Peace in the Space Age*, 1st ed. (New York,: Harper, 1958), 22-23.

<sup>3</sup> As a thirteen year-old, Gavin bought a second-hand typewriter and began typing small notes to himself and keeping them for reference. This is a habit he maintained throughout his life. T. Michael Booth and Duncan Spencer, *Paratrooper : The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 30-31.

<sup>4</sup> Gavin discovered an opening for an NCO that knew semaphore. He taught himself, passed the requisite test, and was promoted to corporal in six months. Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper : The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 36.

<sup>5</sup> Gavin, *War and Peace in the Space Age*, 31-33.

learned from his first sergeant the importance of personally attending to his soldiers.<sup>6</sup>

Gavin found the decade following graduation to be somewhat anticlimactic. As he learned the profession of soldiering through practice, he attended Infantry School in Georgia and the Artillery School in Oklahoma; he completed an assignment with the Philippine Scouts, served a company command in California, and finally received orders to West Point to serve on the faculty of his alma mater.<sup>7</sup>

As a member of the Department of Tactics at the Military Academy, Gavin delighted in the “opportunity to discuss new tactical ideas and to study and learn through teaching.”<sup>8</sup> Regarded as a “natural instructor” by his superiors, Gavin used “hands-on” teaching methods in his courses; his students called his classes the most useful they had in the lead-up to WWII.<sup>9</sup> During his assignment as a tactics instructor at West Point, Gavin was able to study the early German airborne operations.<sup>10</sup> His research led him to believe wholeheartedly in the efficacy of airborne operations and the need for further Army development in that field. In order to further the development of American airborne tactics, Gavin applied for airborne duty and completed training in August.<sup>11</sup>

Gavin began to distinguish himself from his peers as an officer developing doctrine during the infancy of airborne operations in the United States. He developed FM 31-30, *Tactics and Technique of Air-Borne Troops*. This document combined information gleaned from Soviet and German operations with Gavin’s own innovative ideas. According to two of his biographers, the publication was farsighted and got him

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<sup>6</sup> This paragraph is based on the author’s own analysis of Gavin’s traits, derived from multiple sources.

<sup>7</sup> Gavin, *War and Peace in the Space Age*, 35.

<sup>8</sup> Gavin, *War and Peace in the Space Age*, 38.

<sup>9</sup> Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper : The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 65.

<sup>10</sup> Gavin, *War and Peace in the Space Age*, 43.

<sup>11</sup> Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper : The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 66.

noticed, “As a result of the manual, he received a great deal of attention, and the nature of his brand of soldiering became public. His insight earned him leadership. His other qualities would make him an outstanding commander.”<sup>12</sup>

Gavin emerged from the crucible of WWII as an American hero.<sup>13</sup> He was one of only a handful of senior officers who made all four combat jumps in Europe.<sup>14</sup> When the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division returned to the United States in January of 1946, Gavin led his men in a ticker-tape victory parade held by the City of New York.<sup>15</sup> During the war he rose from commanding officer of the 505<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment to commanding general of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. Now a major general, he had to adjust to peace, as did the Army.

The end of WWII produced immediate force reductions. Army manpower shrank from an 8.25 million personnel high during the war down to 593,000 soldiers in 1950.<sup>16</sup> Many believed ground forces to be an anachronism. They believed atomic weapons were the ultimate answer to future wars. The Air Force encouraged this thinking and benefitted as the Strategic Air Command (SAC) grew from “a minor Air Force agency, into the force that would be responsible for delivering thermonuclear bombs to Russian targets.”<sup>17</sup> On the eve of the Korean War, the United States had come to rely upon nuclear retaliation.

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<sup>12</sup> Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper : The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 77.

<sup>13</sup> General Gavin’s WWII exploits are well-documented, if a reader wishes to delve deeper into the history of American airborne operations in WWII, Clay Blair’s *Ridgway’s Paratroopers* or Gavin’s own *On to Berlin* are excellent departure points.

<sup>14</sup> Gavin jumped in all four major airborne assaults in Europe: Sicily, Salerno, Normandy, and the Netherlands. James M. Gavin, *On to Berlin: Battles of an Airborne Commander, 1943-1946* (New York: Viking Press, 1978).

<sup>15</sup> Gavin rose through the ranks as many war-time officers do. Beginning as the regimental commander of the 505<sup>th</sup>, he concluded the war in Europe as commander of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper : The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 312.

<sup>16</sup> Gavin, *War and Peace in the Space Age*, 105,20.

<sup>17</sup> Campbell Craig, *Destroying the Village : Eisenhower and Thermonuclear War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 36.

The Korean War offered the United States a glimpse of limited war in a bipolar world overshadowed by nuclear weapons. There was an opportunity to balance the structure of armed forces following the armistice. However, the conclusion reached by most following the war was the character of the conflict in Korea was an anomaly, a singular event unlikely to reoccur.

Gavin's star continued to rise during this period. In 1947 he wrote *Airborne Warfare*, outlining his thinking on future war.<sup>18</sup> His assignments led him to the Pentagon where he worked on weapon systems evaluation, becoming intimately familiar with nuclear weapons as one of only a few Army officers to attend the Nuclear Weapons School at Sandia AFB.<sup>19</sup> Later, he served in Europe where he advocated flexibility in military - response options. These options included developing and deploying tactical nuclear weapons as part of American collective security agreements. He later wrote, "Nuclear weapons are essential to an adequate defense of Western Europe ... In defending against Soviet land forces matched with nuclear missiles, the NATO nations must themselves be equipped with a family of surface-to-surface nuclear missiles."<sup>20</sup> Receiving orders returning him to the Pentagon, he would have a soapbox to stand upon when advocating for a stronger Army.

When General Gavin reported to Washington, DC, for his second Pentagon assignment, Dwight Eisenhower was president. Gavin believed an Eisenhower presidency would benefit the Army, but an old friend, Gen S. LeRoy Erwin, told him, "if Eisenhower is elected, it will not be good for

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<sup>18</sup> Gavin did not believe the organizations created to fight WWII were sufficient to win the next war. He advocated greater mobility and believed airborne troops provided the best national and international security. James M. Gavin, *Airborne Warfare*, 1st ed. (Washington.: Infantry Journal Press, 1947).

<sup>19</sup> Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper : The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 329.

<sup>20</sup> Gavin, *War and Peace in the Space Age*, 144-45.

the Army.” Gavin would come to believe that Erwin’s assessment was correct.<sup>21</sup>

The Eisenhower Administration centered its “New Look” for international strategy on a doctrine of nuclear deterrence. By exploiting the destructive power of nuclear weapons, Eisenhower intended to reduce defense spending.<sup>22</sup> The name given to the strategy was massive retaliation. Massive retaliation was deleterious to the Army and, in Gavin’s opinion, national security. These policies placed Gavin’s professional predilections in direct contention with those of the White House.

### **The Course of Events: The Pentagon, 1954 - 1958**

Gavin went to work as the Army G-3, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Training. In this capacity, he managed Army plans, training, research, and development.<sup>23</sup> The position afforded Gavin an opportunity to address his misgivings about massive retaliation. One qualm he had was the perceived inequities in the defense budget. An encounter with Air Force General Curtiss LeMay is indicative of why Gavin was troubled, “I was with [Senator] Symington over at the F Street Club on day when Curt LeMay came in ... And Symington said to him ... “Curt, you know what happens. We send you guys over a million dollars or five million dollars, and the Air Force gets this, and the Navy gets that, and the Army gets nothing.” [LeMay] said, “Sure, that’s right,” chomping down on his cigar.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> James Gavin, "Opinions of General Eisenhower," in James M. Gavin Papers (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1981).

<sup>22</sup> Craig, *Destroying the Village*, 43-45.

<sup>23</sup> Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper : The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 346.

<sup>24</sup> Donald Andrews and Charles Ferguson, "Senior Officer Debrief Program-Lt Gen James Gavin " in James M. Gavin Papers (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1975).

Gavin was not alone in his distaste for massive retaliation.<sup>25</sup> Several colonels on the Army Staff met with him on Saturdays to discuss the Army's role in the future of national security.<sup>26</sup> Gavin believed it was important to be transparent in all the group's actions because any hint of subterfuge could result in accusations of being a communist sympathizer.<sup>27</sup> These colonels, later formalized under Brig Gen Lyal Metheny as a coordination group for the Army Chief of Staff Maxwell Taylor, provided information to the *New York Times* that attacked the other services, criticized massive retaliation, and advanced budget proposals at odds with the administration.<sup>28</sup> However, before General Taylor became Army Chief of Staff, Gavin and the colonels met under the watchful eye of Gen Matthew B. Ridgway.

General Ridgway had his own misgivings over the direction of defense spending and its impact on national security. In a 9 December 1953 memorandum for the Secretary of the Army, Ridgway stated, "Our capability of winning the cold war and of bringing the Soviet-Communist world power position within manageable proportions may well be decreased, rather than increased."<sup>29</sup> Ridgway's opinions put him in direct contention with the Eisenhower Administration. Contravening the custom of appointing service chiefs for two two-year terms, President Eisenhower replaced Ridgway after only one two-year term.

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<sup>25</sup> It is interesting that in most of Gavin's written arguments against massive retaliation he focused on the lack of flexibility it offered the US in limited wars. However, in his oral history interview he stated, "I know what [the results of a nuclear attack] would be, they would be 425, 000, 000 people killed ... And this is why I opposed it." Ferguson, "Senior Officer Debrief Program-Lt Gen James Gavin".

<sup>26</sup> James Gavin, "Personal Letter from Gavin to Adm Arleigh Burke," in James M. Gavin Papers (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1981).

<sup>27</sup> James Gavin, "Beyond the Stars: The Unpublished Autobiography of James Gavin," in James M. Gavin Papers (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute), 172.

<sup>28</sup> Jay M. Parker and Naval War College (U.S.). Center for Advanced Research., *The Colonel's Revolt : Eisenhower, the Army, and the Politics of National Security* (Newport, R.I.,: 1994), 1-5.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew B. Ridgway, "Memorandum for the Secretary of the Army, Subject: Military Strategy and Posture," in Matthew B. Ridgway Papers (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1953).

On 1 July 1955, General Maxwell Taylor replaced Ridgway as Chief of Staff. Gavin and Taylor were professional rivals, and the former harbored resentment toward the latter dating back to his cadet days at West Point.<sup>30</sup> When Taylor took over, Gavin expected reassignment because an incoming Chief of Staff customarily brought in his own key staff officers.<sup>31</sup> Reassignment did not come, and Gavin asked his new service chief if he could leave the Pentagon to take command of Continental Army Command (CONARC).<sup>32</sup>

Taylor did not replace Gavin, but he divided the responsibilities of the G-3 between two positions. The Chief of Staff offered Gavin the choice of the new G-3 position which consolidated responsibility for plans, operations, and training, or a new position in charge of research and development (R&D). Although Gavin had risen in the Army as a combat leader, he chose the research and development job "because of its great potential in terms of the Army's needs."<sup>33</sup>

In addition to dissatisfaction related to the direction of defense strategy, Gavin was concerned with America's position in the space race. As the head of Army R&D, Gavin spent time with Wernher von Braun and his team of German scientists who had defected to the United States at the end of WWII. Although von Braun had told Gavin the Army could develop a satellite orbiting the earth relatively quickly, Gavin received an order from the JCS in May of 1956 forbidding him to launch a satellite.<sup>34</sup> Later, Secretary of Defense Wilson issued a memorandum on 26

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<sup>30</sup> Gavin related the origins of his distaste for Taylor to many people following his retirement. An excellent source is the oral history he participated in as part of the Senior Officer Debrief Program. Ferguson, "Senior Officer Debrief Program-Lt Gen James Gavin ".

<sup>31</sup> Gavin, "Beyond the Stars," 197.

<sup>32</sup> Gavin, "Beyond the Stars," 199.

<sup>33</sup> Gavin, "Beyond the Stars," 199.

<sup>34</sup> Ferguson, "Senior Officer Debrief Program-Lt Gen James Gavin ".

December 1956 restricting Army missiles to a range of 200 miles.<sup>35</sup> This made it impossible for the Army to orbit anything.

When the Soviet Union launched Sputnik on 4 October 1957, the idea of a communist satellite passing over the nation frightened American public. General Gavin was with von Braun in Huntsville, Alabama, when the press announced the Soviet launch. Two days later in Taylor's office Gavin was asked, "What are we going to tell the White House?" Gavin had an answer to Taylor's question, "General, it's easy, just simply tell the truth: the Joint Chiefs of Staff blocked the Army from launching a satellite."<sup>36</sup>

Gavin blamed the range restrictions placed upon Army missiles by the JCS for impeding American space dominance. He aired his disillusionment with the JCS during congressional testimony on 13 December 1957. Gavin's criticism was front-page news the next day.<sup>37</sup>

Eisenhower was displeased with Gavin's testimony. The White House phoned the new Secretary of Defense, Neil McElroy, reminding him that there would be no testimony recommending the reorganization of the Joint Chiefs.<sup>38</sup> This sort of censorship disturbed Gavin. From his vantage point, the National Defense Act of 1947 had interposed the Department of Defense between the services and Congress. Furthermore, in Gavin's view, the Constitutional responsibilities of the commander in chief and Congress created a dilemma that forced senior officers to choose between lying or being insubordinate.<sup>39</sup>

Gavin had remained at the Pentagon despite the divergence of his views with those of the White House. Having an officer of his stature

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<sup>35</sup> Gavin, *War and Peace in the Space Age*, 154.

<sup>36</sup> Gavin, "Beyond the Stars," 222.

<sup>37</sup> During testimony to the Senate Preparedness Subcommittee, General Gavin told the panel that the Secretary of Defense was not receiving the best advice. He advocated for a joint panel of retired generals to advise the Secretary instead of dual-hatted service chiefs who cannot be truly joint while still beholden to their service.

<sup>38</sup> Gavin, "Beyond the Stars," 225.

<sup>39</sup> Gavin, *War and Peace in the Space Age*, 169-73.

present during congressional testimony benefitted the Defense Department.<sup>40</sup> Gavin was ordered to attend a congressional hearing with Assistant Secretary of Defense Donald Quarles. Instead of speaking before Congress, the general sat with two other flag officers behind the Secretary as the latter gave testimony. Because no one asked the officers any questions, an impression was created of the generals having with the Secretary's testimony, which made Gavin "very uncomfortable."<sup>41</sup>

Distressed by this event, Gavin visited Secretary of the Army Wilbur Brucker. He told the Secretary that he did not appreciate being used to create the impression of confirming Secretary Quarles' testimony. Brucker spent an hour explaining to the general that he could not be accused of perjury. This altercation disturbed Gavin even more: "I had never thought of perjury as a subject of concern to me before. He pointed out that one could pass on considerable misinformation to Congress provided it could not be proven that you intended to deceive. It shook me a bit at the time and I realized that it was symptomatic of the state of affairs in which the military was drifting."<sup>42</sup>

In late 1956, Gavin began considering leaving the Army.<sup>43</sup> Despite acute differences of opinion with the existing national military strategy, he had served for three years; but incidents such as the one described above and his continuing dissatisfaction with the policies of President Eisenhower weighed heavily on him. His wife Jean described his attitude at the time: "Washington had taken a terrible toll. Jimmie had always been the most energetic, alive man I've ever known ... But when instead

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<sup>40</sup> Gavin described this as, "being used on the Hill." Ferguson, "Senior Officer Debrief Program-Lt Gen James Gavin".

<sup>41</sup> Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper: The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 380.

<sup>42</sup> Gavin, "Beyond the Stars," 214-15.

<sup>43</sup> In his unpublished autobiography, Gavin states, "Looking ahead, 1957 was going to be a very interesting year. For me, it was going to be a year when some difficult decisions had to be made ... If the situation became intolerable, which was likely, I would simply leave the Service, probably by retirement." Gavin, "Beyond the Stars," 218.

of the bouncy, one-hundred-and-twenty-paces-per-minute stride of the paratrooper, he would set off morning after morning for his customary walk to the Pentagon with a slow step and a droop to his usually erect shoulders.”<sup>44</sup>

Gavin met with Taylor on 23 December 1957 to request a transfer away from Washington. The Chief of Staff told Gavin he would think about the request, but Gavin would remain in the Pentagon a fifth year to defend the Army budget. Gavin responded by telling Taylor, “I had thought a lot about [spending another year in DC] and I could not do that and be an honest man in my relations with him and with the staff in the Joint Chiefs of Staff.”<sup>45</sup> He then told Taylor that if he could not transfer to another posting, he would retire without delay. Gavin immediately went to his office, drafted his request for retirement to be effective 31 March 1958, and delivered it to the office of Secretary of the General Staff, General William Westmoreland within the hour.<sup>46</sup> For his part, Westmoreland tried to dissuade Gavin from retiring, “which seemed [to Westmoreland] to be contrary to the interest of the Army.”<sup>47</sup>

Secretary of the Army Brucker approved James M. Gavin’s request for retirement on 8 January 1958.<sup>48</sup> However, the consequences of Gavin’s actions began to be felt even earlier.

### **The Consequences**

General Gavin’s request for retirement stemming from his differences with Eisenhower’s policies had many consequences.<sup>49</sup> He

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<sup>44</sup> Jean Gavin, "When My Husband Retired."

<sup>45</sup> James M. Gavin, "Letter to Prof Harold Deutsch," in James M. Gavin Papers (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute).

<sup>46</sup> Gavin, "Beyond the Stars," 226.

<sup>47</sup> William C. Westmoreland, "Personal Letter to Lt Col Bradley Biggs, USA (Ret)," in James M. Gavin Papers (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1975).

<sup>48</sup> James M. Gavin, "Request for Voluntary Retirement," in James M. Gavin Papers (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1957).

<sup>49</sup> The author uses the plural of policy here to acknowledge General Gavin’s disapproval with massive retaliation as well as the organization of the JCS. Westmoreland,

remained a public figure late into life, continuing to exert influence on national policy. However, the nation felt the repercussions of his request for retirement before Secretary Brucker approved his paperwork.<sup>50</sup>

Someone leaked Gavin's request before the Secretary of the Army approved it. "The news of his retirement created a minor sensation."<sup>51</sup> According to Jean Gavin, this took her and the general by surprise, "[Gavin's reasons for retiring], we thought, were purely personal differences, of little official importance and of even smaller public interest. We discovered very quickly that we were wrong."<sup>52</sup>

Calls began to inundate the Gavin household. Friends, fellow officers, newspapers, and wire services were trying to express words of encouragement or disappointment, or to get their questions answered to meet a publishing deadline.<sup>53</sup> However, none of this was as spectacular as the congressional hearing on 6 January 1958.

Politicians and the press corps could not fathom an officer leaving a good posting and a promising future. Senator Lyndon B. Johnson grilled General Gavin on his past four years in the Pentagon. The senator seemed certain the general was leaving the Army because he was being denied promotion due to "his record of outspoken Hill testimony and his most recent statements, suggesting the Joint Chiefs of Staff need be abolished-or at least reorganized."<sup>54</sup>

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"Personal Letter to Lt Col Bradley Biggs, USA (Ret)." And Gavin, *War and Peace in the Space Age*, 20.

<sup>50</sup> Because Gavin submitted his paperwork to Westmoreland on 23 December 1957, the Secretary of the Army was on Christmas Holiday and General Taylor left for the Middle East after meeting with Gavin that same day. Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper : The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 385.

<sup>51</sup> Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper : The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 386.

<sup>52</sup> Gavin, "When My Husband Retired," 225.

<sup>53</sup> According to Gavin, the press did not believe people "retire" from the Pentagon, they only "quit." Despite Gavin's potential for further advancement, his timing was not unusual. He had 30 years time in service (including his enlisted time) and was well past the customary three-year tour in Washington. Gavin, "Beyond the Stars," 227.

<sup>54</sup> Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper : The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 387.

Gavin repeatedly denied that he was maneuvering for a fourth star or had been denied promotion. He told the Johnson Committee, "Four stars had nothing to do with it. If it was the kind of Army that was right, I would be proud to serve in it as a private. This is the important thing. When the point comes where I cannot obey and can't be honest with myself and Congress, I can no longer be of service in the Army."<sup>55</sup> He explained that he "was completing thirty years of service in March and that [he] would not agree to defend next year's Army budget."<sup>56</sup> Johnson told Gavin that it was important that "men of [Gavin's] ability" not leave the service and the entire committee would like him to reconsider his decision.<sup>57</sup>

On 7 January, Secretary Brucker called on Gavin. With the Vice Chief of Staff, General Lyman Lemnitzer, present Brucker expressed his regret that Gavin was resigning and offered him promotion if he would stay at the Pentagon one more year. Gavin declined the offer, explaining again that promotion had nothing to do with his decision, "I pointed out to [Brucker] ... that the one thing that was intolerable to me was continuing to defend a budget that I believed to be unsound and an Army program that was causing the Army to deteriorate critically at a time when it should have been gaining strength."<sup>58</sup>

Westmoreland supports Gavin's claim that he was not maneuvering for a fourth star. Furthermore, he believed the Secretary of the Army was truly "disappointed that Gavin (a champion on the scene) was leaving the Army at a time when it was having difficulty maintaining its position as a major element of National Defense."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> James M. Gavin, "Collection of Excerpts from Missile Technology," in James M. Gavin Papers (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute).

<sup>56</sup> Gavin, "Beyond the Stars," 229.

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<sup>58</sup> Gavin, "Collection of Excerpts from Missile Technology."

<sup>59</sup> Westmoreland, "Personal Letter to Lt Col Bradley Biggs, USA (Ret)."

Ultimately, Gavin stuck by his decision to retire. Secretary Brucker met with him again the following day to attempt one more time to persuade the paratrooper to stay. But Gavin “could not accept any of it, for to do so would be to admit to the theory that he had, indeed, bargained with his retirement for a promotion.”<sup>60</sup> On 31 March 1958, Lt Gen James “Slim Jim” Gavin retired from the Army in a ceremony at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in front of his old command, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division.<sup>61</sup>

Gavin did not appear to consider the effect his departure would have on the morale of service members. Despite his opposition to massive retaliation, many believed he still stood a good chance of becoming Chief of Staff. In a letter dated 3 September 1975, Lt Gen Donald Booth recollected to Gavin that “when you told me you were going to retire ... I did not want to see you retire because I felt sure you would shortly be promoted ... and I also knew full well that you would have been Chief of Staff had you stayed in the Army as an active general.”<sup>62</sup> Westmoreland was concerned with the “adverse morale effect on the many Gavin admirers in the Officers Corps.”<sup>63</sup>

Gavin’s retirement also affected many veterans who had served with him in combat. As Jean Gavin explained, “Men who served under Jimmie wrote wistfully that they hated to lose him. Veterans, long back in civilian life, sent messages of support.”<sup>64</sup> However, the effect of his departure on the morale of soldiers soon passed; and Gavin took actions that would have a profound impact on the future of national defense policy.

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<sup>60</sup> Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper : The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 388.

<sup>61</sup> Gavin, "When My Husband Retired," 228.

<sup>62</sup> Donald P. Booth, "Personal Letter to James M. Gavin," in James M. Gavin Papers (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1975).

<sup>63</sup> Westmoreland also stated, “The Army needed senior officers of Gavin’s leadership, imagination, and persuasion. Westmoreland, "Personal Letter to Lt Col Bradley Biggs, USA (Ret)."

<sup>64</sup> Gavin, "When My Husband Retired," 225.

A few months after retiring, Gavin published his second book, *War and Peace in the Space Age*. In the preface he outlined his hopes for the volume, "We Americans must devote more attention to our problem of national survival. And we must learn to think of the earth as a tactical entity and of space as the next great strategic challenge-space and the mind of man. This book is a modest effort to do this very thing ... If it can make a contribution to the defense of this country, and of the West, against the menacing encroachment of Communism, it will have been well worth the while."<sup>65</sup> In the book Gavin told the world about himself, and he defended the need for new technology in war.<sup>66</sup>

Gavin's book was indicative of his post-retirement plan for influencing policy. He would spend much of the remainder of his life as a critic of defense policies with which he did not agree, while simultaneously advocating for the technologies he believed critical for national security. This practice contradicted a statement he had made when announcing his retirement in January 1958, "I am not going out to write and raise a rumpus and things."<sup>67</sup> With *War and Peace*, the retired general raised his first post-Army rumpus and reached one very important reader.

Senator John F. Kennedy read and reviewed *War and Peace in the Space Age* in October 1958.<sup>68</sup> In his appraisal of Gavin's book, the future president reaches two conclusions: "there is a dangerous military gap between the overall capabilities of the United States and the Soviet Union that will steadily widen ... [and] this gap was not inevitable and was largely produced by actions taken since 1953."<sup>69</sup> Influences from Gavin's work as well as those of Generals Ridgway and Taylor, would

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<sup>65</sup> Gavin, *War and Peace in the Space Age*, x.

<sup>66</sup> Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper: The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 392.

<sup>67</sup> "Opinion: Atom-Age Army," *Time*, 11 August 1958.

<sup>68</sup> John F. Kennedy, "General Gavin Sounds the Alarm," *The Reporter*, 30 October 1958.

<sup>69</sup> Kennedy, "General Gavin Sounds the Alarm," 35.

influence the defense posture taken by Kennedy when he ran against Richard Nixon in 1962.<sup>70</sup>

During the prelude to his presidential campaign, Kennedy and Gavin met several times. The two became friends, and President-elect Kennedy designated Gavin as the grand marshal of his inaugural parade.<sup>71</sup> Kennedy soon offered the ambassadorship of France to Gavin, a position the general accepted for a two-year term.

Gavin continued to be an outspoken critic of defense policies with which he disagreed into the 1980s. In 1965 he testified before Congress against widening involvement in the Vietnam War.<sup>72</sup> This was particularly damaging to the Johnson Administration because it had been Gavin's report to General Ridgway in 1954 that convinced President Eisenhower to withhold support for continued French effort in Indochina.<sup>73</sup>

In the last fifteen years of his life, James Gavin worked on a book about his four years in the Pentagon. He wanted the book to be "on public service and private morality."<sup>74</sup> As he was aging, Gavin wrote many of his friends and acquaintances to obtain information regarding events in the Pentagon between 1954 and 1958.<sup>75</sup> His unpublished autobiography, "Beyond the Stars," contains the fruits of some of this research.<sup>76</sup> However, the general never completed the work. Gavin died

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<sup>70</sup> Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper : The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 394. And Kennedy, "General Gavin Sounds the Alarm," 35.

<sup>71</sup> Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper : The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 402.

<sup>72</sup> Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper : The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 424-26.

<sup>73</sup> Ridgway, "Memorandum for the Secretary of the Army, Subject: Military Strategy and Posture." And Booth and Spencer, *Paratrooper : The Life of Gen. James M. Gavin*, 360-63.

<sup>74</sup> James M. Gavin, "Personal Letter to Col. Earl H. Blaik, USA (Ret.)," in *James M. Gavin Papers* (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1978).

<sup>75</sup> The James M. Gavin Papers at the Military Historical Institute in Carlisle, PA contains a myriad of personal correspondence between Gavin and others concerning this period.

<sup>76</sup> *Beyond the Stars* was never published, and is currently the object of a custody battle between the daughters of General James Gavin. The author obtained permission to use

on 23 February 1990. He was buried on the grounds of West Point, his “Spartan mother.”<sup>77</sup>

One can make a good argument that, taken as a whole, Gavin’s retirement benefitted national security. The historical record does not support any assertion that his retirement broadly undermined civil-military relations or specifically undermined presidential authority. His advocacy of a flexible military force, however, clearly influenced President Kennedy. Massive retaliation had narrowed presidential options in response to the spread of communism. Kennedy’s “Flexible Response” strategy gave the nation a more useful response to emerging threats of limited and unconventional war than Eisenhower’s doctrine had provided. Personally, the decision to depart the service permitted Gavin to hold tight to his convictions. His status as a war hero, and the reputation he developed as an intellectual, permitted him to contribute to the American policy debate for several more decades.

### **Conclusions**

Analysis of Gavin’s thoughts and actions demonstrates that several items in the mental construct were operative during the period he considered departing the Army over acute policy differences. What is not certain is whether Gavin considered each question posed, or even if its implications confronted him.

Civilian control of the military was a contributing factor to Gavin’s retirement. He did not subvert civilian control of the military, but the conflict between his Constitutional responsibilities according to Article I and Article II placed him in situations in which he was expected to testify to Congress about the JCS opinion on a matter even if he did not agree with that opinion. In a 25 May 1956 hearing, Senator Symington swore Gavin in before he testified. Writing about the event years later, Gavin

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excerpts of the manuscript in this thesis from Dr. Crane of MHI. Gavin, "Beyond the Stars."

<sup>77</sup> Gavin, *War and Peace in the Space Age*, 10.

said, "I felt uncomfortable about this because there was an implication in the act that I would not tell the truth unless I was duly sworn. The Senator later explained that he knew we were under considerable pressure in the Pentagon and he wanted to put us in the position that if we did tell the truth and were then taken to task by our Pentagon superiors, we could explain why we had to."<sup>78</sup> Friction between an officer's duty to inform Congress and support the Commander in Chief still occurs today.<sup>79</sup>

General Gavin viewed the decision to retire as one of extremely personal import. The morale of his fellow service members did not appear to factor into his decision-making process. Therefore, despite the pleas for him to remain on active duty from Westmoreland, Booth, and those who heard about his retirement request before 8 January, he retired as intended. It is possible that Gavin did not give long consideration to the morale of others because the United States was not engaged in a shooting war at the time and he was not in a position of command, but these assertions are based on conjecture.

There is no evidence that General Gavin's decision provided aid and comfort to the Soviet Union, America's principal adversary during the Cold War.

During conversations concerning a follow-on assignment for Gavin, he and General Taylor discussed a competent replacement for the R&D position. Both men agreed Lt Gen Arthur Trudeau would be the perfect man for the job.<sup>80</sup> Trudeau had graduated 17<sup>th</sup> in a class of 400 at West Point and he had a graduate degree from UC Berkley. He served in the

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<sup>78</sup> Gavin, "Beyond the Stars," 201.

<sup>79</sup> Congress asked Army Chief of Staff, Gen Eric Shinseki what he believed to be appropriate troop levels for an invasion of Iraq. When his response did not concur with the response of Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and Gen Tommy Franks, Shinseki's superiors treated him harshly. Richard Swain, "Reflection on an Ethic of Officership," *Parameters* vol 37 no 1 (2007): 7.

<sup>80</sup> Gavin, "Beyond the Stars," 224.

Corps of Engineers before taking a wartime command in the Korean War.<sup>81</sup> Trudeau served capably in this position after Gavin's departure.

Gavin often said that he wished to retire quietly; however, his actions contradicted that statement.<sup>82</sup> He waited many years to discuss the Pentagon politics surrounding his retirement stating at one time, "I have been invariably pressed for many facts associated with my retirement in 1958, and I have declined to discuss them because of the sensitive nature of the problem."<sup>83</sup> However, beginning with his statements to the media on 7 January 1958 through the publishing of *War and Peace in the Space Age*, he fought against those policies that had led him to retire.

It was not, however, Gavin's direct influence on the American population that changed policy. Rather, it was the influence his work had on several men, including the future President Kennedy, that contributed to the shift from massive retaliation to flexible response.

Finally, the evidence strongly indicates that James Gavin's personal principles drove him to leave the Army, despite the likelihood that he could one day lead the service. His willingness to remain in the Army if Taylor reassigned him suggests that it was his position in the Pentagon and its proximity to the policies with which he deeply disagreed that created the conditions he could no longer endure.

Four of the mental construct's six elements were operative in Gavin's decision to retire. There was no evidence Gavin was concerned that his decision would provide aid and comfort to the enemy and no evidence that his decision provided either. Similarly, I found no evidence that Gavin considered the morale of his fellow soldiers when making his decision. Of the four operative elements, the primary factor influencing

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<sup>81</sup> Calvin J. Landau, "Engineer Memoirs: Lieutenant Arthur G. Trudeau," (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1986).

<sup>82</sup> One example can be found in *Time Magazine*: "Opinion: Atom-Age Army."

<sup>83</sup> James M. Gavin, "Personal Letter from James Gavin to James Hollingsworth," in *James M. Gavin Papers* (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1978).

the decision was Gavin's own moral principles. Analysis of Gavin does not suggest the inclusion of additional factors in the mental construct. But, it is also clear he recognized that freedom from the responsibility of active service would give him the opportunity to articulate publicly his reservations about the Eisenhower Administrations' national security policy.

Years after retiring from the Army, Gavin granted an interview to several students from the Army War College. One of the interviewers asked, "If there was one decision that you made in your career that you could, right now, go back and change, what would it be?" Gavin replied, "I did think of one ... What occurred to me last night was and it wasn't a decision. But it was after I had been with Taylor for about a year or two, I think that I should have absolutely insisted and threatened to retire then, if I couldn't leave Washington and go to troop duty ... I felt I had a lot to give the Army. I hated to retire. I love the Army. But now, looking back, it's the best thing I ever did; to have retired when I did."<sup>84</sup> Unlike Gavin who was satisfied with his decision to depart over policy differences with his political superiors, General Harold K. Johnson spent the rest of his life questioning his decision not to do so.

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<sup>84</sup> Ferguson, "Senior Officer Debrief Program-Lt Gen James Gavin ".

## Chapter 3

### General Harold K. Johnson

General Harold Keith Johnson served as Army Chief of Staff from July 1964 until July 1968.<sup>1</sup> During his tenure, American involvement in Vietnam increased significantly. H.R. McMaster referred to General Johnson and his counterparts in the Joint Chiefs of Staff as “five silent men” for refusing to protest against President Lyndon Baines Johnson’s Vietnam policies.<sup>2</sup> General Johnson reflected on his decision to continue serving, despite having deep reservations about President Johnson’s Vietnam policy and strategy, for the rest of his life.

This chapter begins with a synopsis of General Johnson’s career and the civil-military environment during Presidents Kennedy and Johnson’s administrations. It then details the course of events during General Johnson’s years in the Pentagon from 1963 to 1968. Next, it considers the consequences of General Johnson’s decision to remain in his position, despite his acute policy differences with the president. Finally, it examines what conclusions from this historical example suggest concerning modifications to the mental construct developed in Chapter One.

#### **The Context**

During General Johnson’s retirement ceremony, President Johnson said he was “gentle, faithful, loyal, wise, and - as the thousands of men who have served under him will testify - beloved.”<sup>3</sup> The story of

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<sup>1</sup> I will refer to Harold K. Johnson as General Johnson for the remainder of the chapter to differentiate between the subject of this chapter and President Lyndon Baines Johnson, whom I will refer to as President Johnson.

<sup>2</sup> “Five Silent Men” is the title of a chapter in McMaster’s book. H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty : Lyndon Johnson, Robert Mcnamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam*, 1st ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Lewis Sorley, *Honorable Warrior: General Harold K. Johnson and the Ethics of Command*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 302.

General Johnson's life prior to becoming the Army Chief of Staff illustrates where he developed these attributes.

Johnson's high school class motto, "build for character, not for fame," is a metaphor for his formative years.<sup>4</sup> He learned the value of hard work and loyalty growing up in Grafton, North Dakota. Both a strong working-class family and deeply held religious beliefs played important roles in his early experiences.<sup>5</sup> Johnson was active in the Boy Scouts, an organization with which he would remain affiliated for the rest of his life.<sup>6</sup> Many years later, Johnson agreed with an old friend who observed that he "could not help but think that this was all of a great pattern for [Johnson] ... your Boy Scout training ... your Christian home - nothing would be the same without that good boyhood start."<sup>7</sup>

Johnson worked diligently to gain admission to the US Military Academy.<sup>8</sup> During his time at West Point he performed adequately, graduating 232d in his class of 347.<sup>9</sup> Following graduation Johnson was not certain he would make the Army a career; however, his early assignments left him believing he was good at soldiering.<sup>10</sup>

In 1940, Johnson volunteered for assignment to the Philippine Scouts. Traveling with his wife, Dorothy, and their first son, he made the three-week journey to the Philippine Islands where he would eventually

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<sup>4</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 1-3.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson added the opening of the Scout Oath, "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country," when he swore his oath as Chief of Staff. Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 3,176.

<sup>7</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Author Lewis Sorley describes Johnson organizing an advanced math course he needed to apply for West Point. In order to obtain enough participants for Grafton's math teacher to come in early he convinced seven friends to sign up for the class. Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Prior to his assignment to the Philippines, Johnson commanded 3 companies and attended the Infantry School where he was designated a superior graduate. Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 24-29.

become the S-3 (Operations Officer) for the 57<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.<sup>11</sup> Before WWII and during his brief period of fighting against the Japanese, Johnson proved to be an excellent officer. His commander wrote in his performance report that “he was priceless to me as a regimental commander. His energy, initiative, and ambition are unlimited. He will be at the top in any group.”<sup>12</sup>

But Johnson’s time as a combatant was short-lived. The Japanese quickly captured him and most of his fellow soldiers. Johnson had grown away from his early Christianity; but his brief period of fighting and the subsequent captivity, including the infamous Bataan Death March, changed this. Johnson’s biographer, Lewis Sorley, said “this marked the beginning of his return to a deep and lasting religious commitment that would sustain him for the rest of his days.”<sup>13</sup> After repatriation, Johnson and fellow prisoners of war were uncertain about prospects in an Army full of combat-experienced veterans.<sup>14</sup> Officers with considerable combat experience get most command opportunities. However, Johnson continued to receive professional military education and assumed battalion command in 1950, following attendance at the Armed Forces Staff College.<sup>15</sup>

The Korean War provided Johnson the combat bona fides that had eluded him during WWII. His battalion deployed to Korea in August 1950, and Johnson that he was a combat leader. In his first week of combat, then Colonel Johnson earned the Distinguished Service Cross for “extraordinary heroism.”<sup>16</sup> Subsequent to battalion command,

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<sup>11</sup> United States Army, "Lieutenant General Harold K. Johnson-Biographical Data," in *Gen Harold K. Johnson Papers* (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1964).

<sup>12</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 35.

<sup>13</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 38.

<sup>14</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 86.

<sup>15</sup> Army, "Lieutenant General Harold K. Johnson-Biographical Data."

<sup>16</sup> Johnson exposed himself to enemy fire by personally leading a counterattack to regain a lost position. His example kept the attack moving only to be overcome later by opposing forces. Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 94-95.

Johnson commanded two regiments in Korea and culminated his fourteen months of combat as the I Corps Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations (G-3).<sup>17</sup>

Following the Korean War, Johnson continued to move into positions of greater responsibility, but he never again commanded a combat unit. One assignment he found very satisfying was serving as Commandant of the Army's Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. During his tenure at Fort Leavenworth, Johnson set high standards for personal integrity.<sup>18</sup> He also explored and expounded upon his own theory concerning the role of ground forces.<sup>19</sup> Johnson summarized his thoughts saying, "Armed forces exist to maintain, to restore, or to create an environment of order or a climate of stability within which government under law can function effectively."<sup>20</sup> Johnson's theories about the role of war, his loyalty, and his integrity dominated his thoughts when he returned to the Pentagon in 1963.

During the period following the Korean War, significant changes occurred in American civil-military relations. The preceding chapter highlighted the friction between senior Army officers and the Eisenhower administration. The election of President John F. Kennedy, introduced a new and challenging dynamic between the president, his Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the recently retired General Maxwell Taylor.

Kennedy began his presidency by restructuring the National Security Council. He regarded the structure he inherited as cumbersome and decided he would only use it for pro forma consultation required by

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<sup>17</sup> Army, "Lieutenant General Harold K. Johnson-Biographical Data."

<sup>18</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 126.

<sup>19</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 129.

<sup>20</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 129-30. Several references offer insights into General Johnson's feelings on the utility of an Army in controlling an area. He espoused his theories during several speeches to the Army War College while Chief of Staff and also provided his thoughts to the officers recording his oral history between the years of 1970 and 1974. Finally, Lewis Sorley summarizes the general's ideas in his biography.

the National Security Act of 1947. Kennedy's actions, along with the Defense Reorganization Act of 1958, diminished the voice of the JCS in national security matters and command of the military.<sup>21</sup>

Kennedy placed a high premium on intellectual qualifications.<sup>22</sup> He named Robert McNamara, a former faculty member at Harvard University and the Chief Executive at the Ford Motor Company, Secretary of Defense. McNamara and his "Whiz Kids" derided the inter-service rivalry in the Pentagon and held most military officers in low regard.<sup>23</sup> The new defense secretary moved to increase centralization of control over the armed forces within his expanded office. One dramatic manifestation of his actions was the creation of the Systems Analysis Division led by Alain Enthoven.<sup>24</sup>

President Kennedy held General Maxwell Taylor in high regard. Like General James Gavin, whose book *War and Peace in the Space Age* had piqued the president's interest, Taylor's *Uncertain Trumpet* convinced Kennedy that America did not have the appropriate military capabilities for future conflicts.<sup>25</sup> Three months after becoming president, Kennedy created the position of Military Representative to the President and brought Taylor out of retirement to fill the position. Taylor, who had previously argued that Congress should be aware of dissenting views

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<sup>21</sup> Rupert Glover, "Senior Officer Debrief Program: Interview with General Harold K. Johnson," in *Gen Harold K. Johnson Papers* (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1973). In his oral history, General Johnson described how the creation of the Assistant Secretary of Defense removed the services from any operational influence and created a direct channel from the Secretary of Defense to the operating commands. The JCS became, in General Johnson's estimate, a message center for the Secretary of Defense.

<sup>22</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 4.

<sup>23</sup> The young, well-educated men McNamara placed in leading roles within the DoD were commonly referred to "Whiz Kids" by the generals in the Pentagon.

<sup>24</sup> It was the belief of McNamara and Enthoven that statistics could be used to analyze defense programs and issues to make appropriate decisions. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 16-19.

<sup>25</sup> Maxwell D. Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper ;, 1960).

among the nation's top military leaders, changed his opinion while serving Kennedy.<sup>26</sup>

Kennedy subsequently named Taylor as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Following Taylor's installation at the Pentagon, the president abolished the post he had created to bring Taylor back into government service. Within the Pentagon, Taylor and McNamara found much common ground and developed a close relationship.<sup>27</sup> This development further alienated the Joint Chiefs of Staff from the Kennedy Administration as American involvement in Vietnam increased.

This involvement in Vietnam had begun seven years before General Johnson returned to the Pentagon in 1963. France had withdrawn from Vietnam in 1956, and the US Military Assistance Advisor Group assumed responsibility for training the South Vietnamese forces.<sup>28</sup> By the summer of 1963, there were 16,500 US military advisers serving in Vietnam.<sup>29</sup> The tenuous situation in South Vietnam became worse in the waning months of 1963. President Kennedy allowed his ambassador in Vietnam to foment a coup that resulted in the overthrow of the Diem government in early November. The JCS opposed the overthrow of the Diem government, but the administration did not solicit its advice.<sup>30</sup> Kennedy was assassinated on 22 November 1963. Lyndon Baines Johnson was sworn in as president two hours later. President Johnson inherited Kennedy's staff and a burgeoning problem in Vietnam.

### **The Course of Events: The Pentagon, 1963 - 1968**

Kennedy's assassination rocked the world. Americans mourned and military leaders worried the assassination might be part of a larger

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<sup>26</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 10-14. McMaster goes into great detail on the political maneuvering of General Taylor during this period.

<sup>27</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 22-23.

<sup>28</sup> University of Illinois, "Vietnam War Timeline," <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/vietnam/timeline.htm>.(accessed 30 March 2011).

<sup>29</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 32.

<sup>30</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 41.

plot against the United States.<sup>31</sup> Lyndon Johnson's sudden, unanticipated elevation to the presidency cast a cloud of uncertainty over America's commitment to South Vietnam. Force reductions in Vietnam were under consideration when President Johnson assumed the role of commander in chief.<sup>32</sup> The projected cuts bothered General Johnson who worried about doing "too much with too little" and led him to write in the notes of a 29 October 1963 JCS meeting: "Should argue people as well as forces (structure) and modernization. Moral question as OPS [Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations] as to whether I shouldn't be pushing for adequate flesh for the bones."<sup>33</sup>

During Johnson's presidency relationships between the JCS and the president continued to deteriorate. A month after General Johnson wrote the above mentioned note, the newly sworn-in president convened a meeting to discuss Vietnam, with no one from the JCS in attendance.<sup>34</sup> This may have been due in part to the high regard the president already held for his Secretary of Defense, who continued to benefit from his capable handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis.<sup>35</sup> McMaster argues that President Johnson's relationship with his senior military officers was adversely affected by a personal sense of insecurity and a consequent need for affirmation.<sup>36</sup>

Displeased with the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam, President Johnson replaced the MACV commander, Gen Paul D. Harkins, with his deputy, Gen William C. Westmoreland.<sup>37</sup> When considering replacements for Harkins, Secretary McNamara listed four

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<sup>31</sup> Rupert Glover, "Senior Officer Debrief Program: Interview with Gen Harold K. Johnson," in *Gen Harold K. Johnson Papers* (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1972), 44.

<sup>32</sup> Glover, "Senior Officer Debrief Program: Interview with Gen Harold K. Johnson."

<sup>33</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 147.

<sup>34</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 147.

<sup>35</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 29, 53.

<sup>36</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 49-51.

<sup>37</sup> MACV is the abbreviation for the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.

candidates: Westmoreland, Creighton Abrams, Bruce Palmer, and Harold Johnson.<sup>38</sup> Taylor had placed his protégé Westmoreland in the deputy position months before the decision anticipating the president and McNamara would replace Harkins.<sup>39</sup> The president ultimately chose Westmoreland because he had “played on the team to help [the president]” in the past.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to making a leadership change in Vietnam, the president also created an independent committee to investigate and make recommendations concerning continued involvement in Indochina. The Sullivan Committee, headed by career diplomat William Sullivan, was charged with “the management of US policy and operations in South Vietnam.” The JCS met with Sullivan five days after his appointment. While the Chiefs could not agree upon a correct way forward in Vietnam, Sullivan had his own ideas. He disagreed with the military officers’ assumption that a military presence in Vietnam had to be heavy forces; instead, his committee developed a program of graduated pressure against North Vietnam.<sup>41</sup> McNamara thought the committee’s recommendation offered a response that would keep China and the Soviet Union from getting involved.<sup>42</sup>

The Joint Chiefs’ reactions to the Sullivan Committee’s recommendations reveal the continuing problem of inter-service rivalry within their ranks as well as the rivalry they had with their Secretary of Defense. General Johnson commented on the consequences of the rivalries within the JCS years later, “If you get too much of this adversary relationship, you spend all of your time contesting and none of your time

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<sup>38</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 157.

<sup>39</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 66.

<sup>40</sup> The quote comes from the notes of a meeting between President Johnson, General Wheeler, and General Abrams held on 26 March 1968. Cited in: McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 322.

<sup>41</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 66-68.

<sup>42</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 73.

solving, or a very limited amount of your time solving. This is what occurred, I think, in the McNamara Pentagon.”<sup>43</sup>

General Johnson never questioned civilian control of the military. However, he was concerned with what he saw as increasing occurrences of civilian “command” of the military. Control meant directing the military through policy formulation and budget approval; however, command implies directing forces. The president and defense secretary were part of the chain of command, involving them in the conduct of war. Johnson often reminded those he spoke to that the JCS served as advisers only and the civilian leadership could disregard their advice if they desired.<sup>44</sup> He attributed this to the Defense Reorganization Act of 1958 which “created civilian command, but without an assumption of all the intangible and abstract obligations and responsibilities of that accompany command.” The result of civilian command frustrated Johnson; he believed that when things would go wrong the civilian officials left the military officers to take the fall while they hid from the recriminations.<sup>45</sup>

One result of increased civilian control over American actions in Vietnam was the designation of Taylor as ambassador to South Vietnam. When the president replaced Ambassador Lodge with Taylor, he also gave Taylor complete control over the American military in South Vietnam.<sup>46</sup> American ambassadors to a foreign country lead the country team, but during times of war the military’s combatant commander’s chain of command does not include the ambassador. President Johnson modified the command structure in South Vietnam to give Taylor authority over MACV, which Lodge never had. Additional repercussions of this

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<sup>43</sup> Glover, "Senior Officer Debrief Program: Interview with General Harold K. Johnson."

<sup>44</sup> Harold K. Johnson, "Address by General Harold K. Johnson to the Army War College," in *Gen Harold K. Johnson Papers* (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1966).

<sup>45</sup> Glover, "Senior Officer Debrief Program: Interview with General Harold K. Johnson," 8.

<sup>46</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 110-11.

unexpected move were the ascension of Gen Earle Wheeler to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and Johnson's promotion to full general and confirmation as the Army Chief of Staff.

As the new Chief of Staff, Johnson inherited an Army on the precipice of a major war that did not in his estimate have the manpower it needed to fight that war.<sup>47</sup> Soldiers were permitted to separate from the Army while the service was trying to build up for major combat operations. In fiscal year 1966, the Army inducted and trained more than 488,000 soldiers, but released 255,000.<sup>48</sup> This turnover significantly lowered the Army's experience level. As experienced soldiers left, non-commissioned and commissioned officer quality suffered. In order to fill leadership billets the Army was forced to lower its standards of performance and shorten its time in grade requirements for promotion.<sup>49</sup> If the US went to war it would not be with the force Harold K. Johnson envisioned.<sup>50</sup>

General Johnson did not disagree with US actions in Vietnam.<sup>51</sup> He believed intervention was necessary to defend freedom. A comment he made to a soldier during his time in Korea reflected this sentiment toward combating communism abroad, "He could defend his home, his

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<sup>47</sup> During the Eisenhower administration the cuts into the Army budget which helped Gavin decide to retire were in part responsible for this situation. Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 178.

<sup>48</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 218.

<sup>49</sup> Rupert Glover, "Senior Officer Debrief Program: Interview with Gen Harold K. Johnson," in *Gen Harold K. Johnson Papers* (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1973), 29-30.

<sup>50</sup> Information for this paragraph came from several sources, but is captured best in Johnson's oral history. During his interview, Johnson described the performance of young officers during the period as comparatively effective, but went on to say, "When you are preparing people for war, a comparatively effective performance isn't really what you are shooting for." Glover, "Senior Officer Debrief Program: Interview with Gen Harold K. Johnson."

<sup>51</sup> General Johnson corresponded with friends after the war and expressed some of his thoughts about the Vietnam War, "I leave with no regrets, except that we have failed to reach a solution in Vietnam in my tenure." Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 299-300.

family, his sweetheart on that cold, snowy hill in Korea, or someday he could expect to defend his home from a foxhole in his own front yard.”<sup>52</sup>

General Johnson’s major problems with prosecuting the Vietnam War concerned the Johnson Administration’s strategy. Unlike Air Force Chief of Staff General Curtis Lemay and Marine Commandant General Wallace Greene, Johnson did not support the idea of heavy bombardment of North Vietnam.<sup>53</sup> Instead, he believed the way to win was to gain control over South Vietnam, and control would be gained by closing with and defeating the enemy.<sup>54</sup> In January 1965, Johnson predicted that 600,000 to 700,000 soldiers would be needed and that the counterinsurgency would last from five to twenty years.<sup>55</sup> He related this as a fundamental military axiom, “Get there first, with the most.”<sup>56</sup>

In order to achieve these troop levels, General Johnson recommended that the president mobilize the Reserves. However, in April 1965 President Johnson rejected this advice from his senior military officers.<sup>57</sup> The general considered this the single greatest mistake made during the Vietnam War.<sup>58</sup> He believed that the decision not only degraded the Army’s ability to fight off the Viet Cong and NVA, but also impeded garnering public support for the war.<sup>59</sup>

For a man of General Johnson’s strong personal integrity, the actions of President Johnson’s administration were clearly difficult to accept.<sup>60</sup> There were numerous instances of deception and manipulation by men within the president’s inner circle. In one instance, McNamara

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<sup>52</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 103.

<sup>53</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 275.

<sup>54</sup> Johnson, "Address by General Harold K. Johnson to the Army War College," 3.

<sup>55</sup> George H. Gray, "Project 1975: General Harold K. Johnson, Retired," in *Gen Harold K. Johnson Papers* (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1975), 8.

<sup>56</sup> Gray, "Project 1975: General Harold K. Johnson, Retired," 7.

<sup>57</sup> Johnson, "Address by General Harold K. Johnson to the Army War College."

<sup>58</sup> Gray, "Project 1975: General Harold K. Johnson, Retired," 13.

<sup>59</sup> Gray, "Project 1975: General Harold K. Johnson, Retired," 29.

<sup>60</sup> I make this assumption based on the strong personal convictions of General Johnson and the blatant examples of deceit that occurred during his time in the Pentagon.

solicited the opinion of the Joint Chiefs' in a way that forced them to provide advice that the president wanted to hear. McNamara manipulated the Chiefs by stipulating restraints that involved restricting the use of force. President Johnson interpreted the memorandum the JCS provided concerning these restraints as an endorsement of limited military action.<sup>61</sup> Another time, the administration suggested the strikes against North Vietnamese targets were supported by the JCS unanimously, when in fact the JCS were only remotely involved in the deliberations.<sup>62</sup> It was also frustrating that by 1968 meetings between the president and his JCS were, according to General Johnson's biographer, "devoid of any serious considerations of substance."<sup>63</sup>

Several times during his four-year term as Chief of Staff, Johnson contemplated resignation.<sup>64</sup> However, every time he considered resignation he rejected the alternative. During a speech at the Army War College after his retirement, Johnson said: "I was totally opposed to the commitment [to Vietnam] without mobilization [of the reserves]. I expressed my view to the Chairman. We were scheduled to go to the White House to meet as a group with the President the next day ... I was very determined that I was going to resign if it came to that. But the more I thought about it, the more I came to believe that I could not walk away from the Army and the soldiers we were sending to Vietnam."<sup>65</sup>

Despite his serious reservations about the prosecution of the Vietnam War, Johnson remained loyal to the president. During congressional testimony he evaded giving the House Armed Services Committee an estimate of how many troops he thought would be

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<sup>61</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 116.

<sup>62</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 127, 30-31. According to McMaster, President Johnson used CJCS General Wheeler to provide the appearance that he and his advisers discussed the selection of targets with the JCS.

<sup>63</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 291.

<sup>64</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 303.

<sup>65</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 269-70.

necessary for success in Vietnam.<sup>66</sup> When questioned while speaking at The Ohio State University, Johnson refused to answer a “hypothetical question” concerning how he would resolve the situation in Vietnam.<sup>67</sup> Johnson retired from the Army on 2 July 1968. He left quietly, declining a parade or formal ceremony. During a gathering in the White House on 3 July, he accepted an oak leaf cluster to his Distinguished Service Medal and slipped off into retirement.<sup>68</sup>

In the years following his unsuccessful struggle to get the president to mobilize the reserves, Johnson continued to work behind the scenes to bring about change in the war.<sup>69</sup> When General Abrams took command of MACV in spring of 1968, he implemented the recommendations that came out from the report of a study commissioned by Johnson in 1965.<sup>70</sup> The study’s recommendations included delegating command of military forces to the senior US representative at the provincial level and authorizing more direct US involvement in South Vietnamese governance to help it accomplish the duties expected of a stable administration.<sup>71</sup>

General Johnson’s five years in the Pentagon from 1963 through 1968 were confusing and frustrating. President Johnson placed a significant measure of trust in Secretary of Defense but very little trust in the JCS. McNamara and Taylor capitalized on inter-service rivalries and their own influence with the president to gain favor for the policies they

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<sup>66</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 309-10.

<sup>67</sup> Harold K. Johnson, "Transcript of Tape Recording: General Johnson, Chief of Staff to Ohio State University," in *Gen Harold K. Johnson Papers* (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1966).

<sup>68</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 302.

<sup>69</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 296.

<sup>70</sup> A team of officers and civilians from different academic and professional backgrounds wrote the report titled, “A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of Vietnam.” This type of approach is similar to studies conducted by organizations trying to solve ‘wicked problems.’ Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 227, 41.

<sup>71</sup> Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations, "A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam," (Department of the Army, 1966), 1.

supported. The two men also influenced the selection of personnel for key positions in the DoD and MACV, ensuring like-minded men were chosen. Throughout this period, General Johnson believed in the ends associated with the Vietnam War; however, he struggled with the ways and means, personified primarily by insufficient manpower as the Vietnam War expanded. General Johnson considered the president's decision not to authorize the call-up of the reserves the greatest mistake of the war. Although he considered resignation several times, General Johnson decided to serve out his term as Army Chief of Staff and work to effect change from within the system.

### **The Consequences**

In January 1968, six months before Johnson's retirement, the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong launched the Tet offensive. Press coverage of the attack ignited American interest in the war and seriously undermined the assurances of the military concerning progress.<sup>72</sup> Amid declining popular support, President Johnson announced he would not run for reelection.

America elected Richard Nixon president in November 1968. The president's new National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, soon began secret peace talks with the North Vietnamese, China, and the Soviet Union.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, Nixon ordered heavy bombing of North Vietnam in operations Linebacker I and II. By 1973, Nixon's plan of Vietnamization was in effect, and the last American combat troops left South Vietnam.<sup>74</sup> America lost over 58,000 servicemembers in the Vietnam War, and another 350,000 were wounded.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Illinois, "Vietnam War Timeline."

<sup>73</sup> Illinois, "Vietnam War Timeline."

<sup>74</sup> Vietnamization is the name given to the plan to organize, train, and equip the South Vietnamese military in order for their subsequent assumption of all operations, relieving American forces to return home.

<sup>75</sup> National Archives, "Statistical Information About Casualties of the Vietnam War," The National Archives, <http://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics.html>.(accessed 10 April 2011).

Assuming General Johnson had resigned, one must ask whether his departure over policy differences with the White House and Secretary McNamara would have made a difference. Although the argument is counterfactual it is useful to investigate two scenarios.

One argument is that if Johnson had resigned and publicly spoken out against the president's decision not to activate the reserves, he would have brought increased attention to the war in 1965. Despite his own belief in the legitimacy of American aims in Vietnam, his spectacle might have sparked intense public debate prior to the 1968 Tet offensive when public opinion began to swing away from operations in Vietnam.<sup>76</sup> His actions could have lent credence to those who were already speaking against Vietnam, such as James Gavin and Matthew Ridgway.<sup>77</sup> This, in turn, might have led to an earlier American disengagement from a lost cause at less cost in blood and treasure.

Conversely, and probably more likely, Johnson's resignation would have resulted in his being viewed as a "disgruntled, old general for 48 hours and then [being] out of sight."<sup>78</sup> President Johnson's administration had several reservations concerning the call-up of reserves which might have included concern over how the Soviet Union and China would interpret a call-up, the loss of a strategic reserve to support potential war in Europe, and an overall reluctance to upset the domestic environment.<sup>79</sup> If General Johnson had resigned, it is possible that the remaining Chiefs would have backed the president and

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<sup>76</sup> Illinois, "Vietnam War Timeline."(accessed

<sup>77</sup> United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. and James M. Gavin, *Conflicts between United States Capabilities and Foreign Commitments. Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Ninetieth Congress, First Session, with Lt. Gen. James M. Gavin (U.S. Army Retired) on February 21, 1967* (Washington,: U.S. Govt. Print. Off.). and George C. Mitchell, *Matthew B. Ridgway : Soldier, Statesman, Scholar, Citizen* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002), 178.

<sup>78</sup> Johnson used this quote often in his speeches and interviews following his retirement. Gray, "Project 1975: General Harold K. Johnson, Retired," 18.

<sup>79</sup> Gray, "Project 1975: General Harold K. Johnson, Retired," 14-17.

Secretary McNamara.<sup>80</sup> Ultimately, the tenor of national security policymaking at the time indicates that little would have changed.

### **Conclusions**

Analysis of Johnson's thoughts and actions demonstrate that all items in the previously developed mental construct were operative as he considered resigning in protest over his differences with the president. However, Johnson's decision not to resign indicates that while he served as Chief of Staff he believed the costs of departing the Army outweighed the potential benefits.

Johnson's understanding of civilian control over the military played a major role in his decision to remain in the Army.<sup>81</sup> The Defense Reorganization Act of 1958 gave him no authority, other than that delegated by the Secretary of Defense. Johnson believed this meant he could only make recommendations to the Secretary of Defense and the president.<sup>82</sup> Their choice to disregard his advice was, in his construct, their Constitutional right.

Johnson's interpretation of his Article I responsibilities to Congress led him to believe that he owed ultimate allegiance to the president. During Congressional testimony, Rep F. Edward Hebert warned the JCS "their credibility would suffer unless they provided Congress with their honest opinions." Johnson rebuked the congressman and reminded the panel "the Chiefs were principal military advisers to the president, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Based on the pliability of the JCS in the past, the author assumes the remaining Chiefs might not support General Johnson, using a resignation by one chief as an opportunity to promote their own service's agenda.

<sup>81</sup> Rupert Glover, "Senior Officer Debrief Program: Interview with Gen Harold K. Johnson," in *Gen Harold K. Johnson Papers* (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1973).

<sup>82</sup> Harold K. Johnson, "Elements of Command," in *Gen Harold K. Johnson Papers* (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1969).

<sup>83</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 311.

One can make a fairly compelling argument that the JCS failed America during this period. Title 10 of the US Code requires the JCS to “make such recommendations to Congress relating to the Department of Defense as he considers appropriate.”<sup>84</sup> McMaster supports this claim pointing out, “Because the Constitution locates civilian control of the military in Congress as well as in the executive branch, the Chiefs could not have been justified in deceiving the peoples’ representatives about Vietnam.”<sup>85</sup>

It is reasonable to infer from his actions that Johnson considered how his resignation would affect the morale of the Army. Maj Gen Michael Davison told Johnson he could not resign, noting that “[Johnson’s] leadership is too important for the Army as it is today.” Sorley says, “Johnson quietly thanked the younger man for his views, ending the conversation.”<sup>86</sup> Johnson’s selflessness might have added a notion of guilt over abandoning comrades in arms as an element of his decision-making calculus.

Johnson also worried that his resignation might provide aid and comfort to the enemy. During an interview for an oral history, Johnson commented on the critical remarks about the conduct of the war made by retired Marine Corps General David Shoup, “I don’t think that the points that General Shoup has made, for example, that he served any useful purpose ... I don’t think he shortened the war, or reduced casualties at all ... I would, as a matter of fact, adopt the contrary viewpoint, and that is by creating this opposition ... I think the outcries that came up by the opponents [to the war] gave comfort to the enemy,

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<sup>84</sup> “Joint Chiefs of Staff,” Title 10 *U.S. Code*, Subtitle A, Part I, Chapter 5, Section 151. 2010 ed.

<sup>85</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 331.

<sup>86</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 269.

and gave them reasonable expectation of the belief that they had a substantial support in the United States.”<sup>87</sup>

Whether Shoup’s actions or the departure in protest by a member of the JCS would have actually emboldened the enemy is very difficult to determine. However, the North Vietnamese comprehended the strategic effect a picture or story had on the American public.<sup>88</sup> It is unlikely that had Johnson resigned in early 1965, the US would have embarked on a new course before the North Vietnamese were cognizant of American discord. It is arguable that North Vietnam could have taken some advantage of any senior military officers’ departure over policy disagreements with regard to Vietnam, but exactly how is difficult to determine. Nevertheless, even a remote chance of this reaction deterred Johnson from quitting.

Concern over a suitable replacement also factored into Johnson’s decision, but the degree is difficult to discern. Sorley argues that Johnson believed “resignation would be a meaningless act, making at best a brief splash in the newspapers, then would be quickly forgotten, while others more amenable would be brought in to do the administration’s bidding.”<sup>89</sup> Sometime in 1964 or 1965, Johnson had a discussion with Air Force Lt Gen John McPherson, to the effect that, “it wouldn’t take them five minutes to get someone to replace us.”<sup>90</sup>

General Johnson did not depart the service in protest. Instead, he served quietly, retired when it was his time to go, and did not make any waves for the Johnson administration or, subsequently, President Nixon. During his speaking engagements and interviews following his career in

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<sup>87</sup> Glover, "Senior Officer Debrief Program: Interview with Gen Harold K. Johnson."

<sup>88</sup> Department of Political Science, "Jane Fonda and the Vietnam War," Wellesley College, <http://www.wellesley.edu/Polisci/wj/Vietimages/fonda.htm>.(accessed 27 April 2011).(accessed 26 April 2011). A famous example of the North Vietnamese using strategic communication was the photographs and recorded messages they got from actress Jane Fonda.

<sup>89</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 303.

<sup>90</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 269.

the Army, the general would honestly discuss the differing points of view of the actors involved in the process and offer the reasons for both sides' thinking. That Johnson did not intend to change policy is indicated by the mediums in which he discussed the events that took place while he was in the Pentagon. Johnson only spoke with military officers and would not authorize the release of the contents of his interviews to anyone outside the armed forces.<sup>91</sup>

Johnson was a principled man, and did not believe his frustrations trumped the president's authority. Johnson observed that "no military commander can set himself up as higher than his president. Each time that this confrontation takes place, the man in the uniform had better lose, or we're not going to have the kind of government we now enjoy."<sup>92</sup>

Later in life, Johnson told Brig Gen Albion Knight he had changed his mind concerning his decision not to resign in protest. Knight asked the general if he would do anything differently if he could live life over again. Johnson pondered aloud whether God had meant for him to resign in protest. He said, "I made the typical mistake of believing I could do more for the country and the Army if I stayed in than if I got out. I am now going to my grave with that lapse in moral courage on my back."<sup>93</sup>

Johnson's criticism of his own decision not to resign elucidates an officer's duty to himself as a moral actor. This is what General Ronald Fogleman described as being able to "get up and look at yourself in the mirror every day."<sup>94</sup>

Thus, all six elements of the mental construct were operative when General Johnson considered but rejected resigning in protest. Despite

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<sup>91</sup> Gray, "Project 1975: General Harold K. Johnson, Retired."

<sup>92</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 270.

<sup>93</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 304.

<sup>94</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants : Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 217. This is an excerpt from a statement by Gen Ronald Fogleman, concerning his decision to retire early from his post as Air Force Chief of Staff.

his personal frustrations during his term as Army Chief of Staff, he chose to continue serving. It is apparent that he believed remaining in the Army was the right thing to do for reasons encompassed by the first five elements of the mental construct. Analysis of Johnson's actions and deliberations does not suggest the inclusion of additional factors in the mental construct.

Generals Johnson and Gavin faced difficult civil-military relations during their tours in the Pentagon. Neither articulated a formal decision-making framework when contemplating resignation; however, both men used several of the elements presented in the sequence of questions outlined in Chapter One. In the next chapter I will synthesize lessons drawn from both historical examples with that sequence of questions.



## Chapter 4

### Conclusions and Implications

This thesis suggests the issues that senior military officers should consider when contemplating departure from the armed forces over policy differences with civilian leaders. Chapter One developed a theory of civil-military relations that explains how senior military officers can retire or resign when they have acute policy disagreements. The questions that followed the theory represent my effort to capture the most significant questions an officer should use to inform his decision. Chapters Two and Three use historical examples to test the construct and make relevant modifications.

The following analysis consists of four sections. First, it summarizes the argument developed in Chapter One. Next, it synthesizes the insights taken from the historical examples with the conceptual ideas used to build the mental construct. It then draws conclusions regarding the mental construct's utility as a tool for senior military officers considering departing the armed forces over policy differences. Finally, it suggests implications that this research may have on the study of civil-military relations and proposes areas needing additional study.

#### **Summarizing the Argument**

Chapter One argues that departing the armed forces over acute policy differences does not have to jeopardize American civil-military relations or national security. The chapter offers the mental construct as an instrument to help high-ranking military officers determine if the decision to retire or resign over policy differences might have consequences detrimental to national security.

Developing a theory of American civil-military relations requires an understanding of the foundations of the professional ethic of military

officers. Although there is no codified code of military ethics, three documents guide ethical behavior in the officer corps. These documents, also foundational to the broader subject of American civil-military relations, are the Constitution of the United States of America, the Oath of Office, and the Officer's Commission.<sup>1</sup> Holistically, these documents chart a complex course that requires an officer to balance sometimes seemingly incompatible responsibilities to the executive and legislative branches of government while remaining true to his own personal principles.

American civil-military relations theorists use these documents as a departure point for explaining how civilians control the mightiest military in history. Huntington's concept of objective civilian control drew clear distinctions between the creation of policy and the conduct of military actions. He prescribed the former to civilians, while the latter was strictly the purview of the professional officer corps. Alternatively, Janowitz's convergence theory asserts that a fusion of military and civilian ideologies is necessary to maintain civilian control and provide for the common defense. Finally, Feaver uses agency theory to explain how senior military officers use cost/benefit analysis to decide whether they will obey their civilian leaders. All three theories have merit and inform my theory of American civil-military relations.

Arguments supporting or refuting the practice of retiring or resigning over policy differences vary. The most convincing arguments do not challenge democratic rule by claiming "a moral autonomy [that obligates] him to disobey an order he deems immoral."<sup>2</sup> Nearly all arguments in favor of departing over policy differences seek to influence policy through the action of retirement or resignation. Conversely, Kohn

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Swain, "Reflection on an Ethic of Officership," *Parameters* vol 37 no 1 (2007): 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew R. Milburn, "Breaking Ranks Dissent and the Military Professional," *JFQ: Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 59: 102.

argues that resignation in protest encourages civilians to choose more compliant officers, undermines professionalism, and weakens civilian control of the military.

I develop a civil-military relations theory which asserts that senior military officers can retire or resign over acute policy differences. Its subordinate propositions inquire about the circumstances, risks, and rewards involved in making the decision to leave the armed forces and relating these to maintenance of American national security.

### **Analysis of the Mental Construct**

This section synthesizes the mental construct conceptualized in Chapter One with the insights gained through the study of the Gavin and Johnson examples. All six questions are analyzed and conclusions are drawn on how departing the service over a disagreement with policy affects national security.

#### *1. Will my departure adversely affect civilian control of the military?*

Kohn argued that “nothing would undermine [civil-military relations] more than a resignation by a senior military officer.”<sup>3</sup> However, Atkeson counters that, “Resignation should not be considered an act of disloyalty.”<sup>4</sup> The preceding historical examples suggest that the act of leaving the service over policy differences does not have to result in an adverse impact to civilian control of the armed forces. How an officer conducts himself before, during, and after leaving the service is far more important than the act of resigning or retiring over policy differences.

General Gavin’s retirement did not undermine civilian control of the armed forces. Gavin submitted his retirement paperwork quietly. When circumstances beyond his control led to his departure’s becoming public knowledge, he conducted himself professionally and refrained from

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Kohn, "Always Salute, Never Resign: How Resignation Threatens Military Professionalism and National Security," in *Foreign Affairs* (2009).

<sup>4</sup> Edward B. Atkeson, "When Duty Demands: Resigning in Protest," *Army*, no. December (1992): 26.

speaking out against policy until he settled into retirement. Gavin's perception of civilian leadership's exerting too much control over the armed forces and creating situations that suggested he agreed with policies he did not led to his retirement. After Gavin left, nothing changed—the Eisenhower administration continued to expect senior officers to testify in support of the administration's policies rather than their own, and they did so.

General Johnson chose not to resign because he interpreted his role as Army chief of staff as one of an adviser whose advice could be discounted at any time. Johnson never said that he viewed resignation over policy differences as an affront to civilian control. However, I believe the evidence implies that while Johnson was still on active duty, he felt that resignation would degrade civilian control. Of the two scenarios examined concerning the effect General Johnson's resignation might have had on the Johnson administration's war policy, the one that it would have had negligible effect is the more likely.

Civilian control of the military is the cornerstone of American civil-military relations. The principle of military subordination is rooted in the Constitution. Neither Gavin's nor Johnson's stories suggests that leaving the service over policy differences will adversely affect civilian control. The ideal of American civil-military relations is greater than any one man's actions, and the nation has proven to be adept at managing dissent.

*2. Will my departure adversely affect the morale of my fellow servicemembers?*

Military officers, especially those in command, have an unwritten obligation to look after the well-being of their subordinates. Whether it is during a time of relative peace or war, there is the possibility that a leader's departure might affect his organization.

Gavin chose to retire despite requests from senators and pleas from peers to remain in the Army. The multitude of correspondence he received communicating the sorrow felt after his departure demonstrates that a senior leader's actions influence others. However, my research did not uncover evidence that the disappointment expressed over the beloved WWII hero's retirement reduced service effectiveness due to a decline in morale.

During the Vietnam War, there were officers concerned that Johnson's leadership was critical to the Army. General Davison's remark that Johnson could not resign because his "leadership is too important to the Army" is indicative of this sentiment.<sup>5</sup> Johnson's selflessness almost certainly indicated that he considered the morale of the Army when deciding not to resign.

A senior officer's decision to leave the armed forces will likely disappoint members of the military. However, officers and enlisted alike have a strong sense of duty. Even in the recent example of General McChrystal's retirement, decreased morale did not debilitate the armed forces deployed to Afghanistan.

### *3. Will my departure provide aid and comfort to the enemy?*

An enemy might find solace in a rift between a senior military officer and America's civilian leader. Before making any final decision on departing the service, senior officers must consider the possibility that the nation's enemies will benefit from his actions.

In Gavin's case, the threat of nuclear Armageddon was the greatest concern for both American and Soviet leaders. Whether Gavin disagreed with President Eisenhower's policy of massive retaliation did not change the decision-making calculus for the Soviet Union, which still had to consider the United States' growing strategic nuclear capability.

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<sup>5</sup> Lewis Sorley, *Honorable Warrior: General Harold K. Johnson and the Ethics of Command*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 269.

General Johnson observed the increase in anti-war rhetoric that coincided with General Shoup's remarks about President Johnson's Vietnam policy. He believed American opposition to military action in Vietnam, even if it came from a vocal minority, emboldened the enemy and this influenced his decision not to resign despite his vehement disagreement with the administration's conduct of the war.<sup>6</sup>

During times of relative peace the decision to leave the armed forces in protest is unlikely to embolden America's enemies. Similarly, if a threat is existential, it is doubtful that the enemy will be comforted by an officer's departure because the nation's focus is likely to remain on the threat. However, during limited wars like the Vietnam War it is possible the enemy will benefit. How much advantage a foe gains will vary in each case.

4. *If I depart the armed forces, is there a competent replacement?*

Military officers often invoke this question when debating against resignation as a form of protest to policy.<sup>7</sup> Many officers are fearful that a senior officer's departure over policy differences will result in the nomination of a less-well-qualified and more compliant successor.

Before Gavin submitted his resignation, he discussed a suitable replacement with General Taylor. Both men agreed General Trudeau was the best choice.<sup>8</sup> After Trudeau's confirmation, he served admirably in his capacity as the head of Army research and development.

General Johnson also considered who would replace him if he left the service and concluded that President Johnson and Secretary McNamara

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<sup>6</sup> Rupert Glover, "Senior Officer Debrief Program: Interview with Gen Harold K. Johnson," in *Gen Harold K. Johnson Papers* (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1973).

<sup>7</sup> The author has found that whenever the question of resignation over policy disagreements surfaces in discussion among officers, those that do not agree with the practice note that one possible outcome is that less-well-qualified officers will be chosen to lead.

<sup>8</sup> James Gavin, "Beyond the Stars: The Unpublished Autobiography of James Gavin," in *James M. Gavin Papers* (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute), 224.

would choose someone “more amenable.”<sup>9</sup> The historical record does not suggest General Johnson ever broached the subject of a suitable replacement with his leaders while he was considering resignation. This was almost certainly due to his unswerving loyalty to the president and secretary of defense.

This question requires a senior leader to make an honest assessment of his contribution and the ability of someone else to serve in the same capacity. The United States does not promote weak officers to the highest ranks of the armed forces; therefore, despite the possibility that an officer’s replacement may have a different opinion on a policy there should be little doubt they can perform in the requisite capacity. Furthermore, it is beneficial for the nation to have senior military leaders who are not hindered by personal doubts concerning policy enacted by civilian leaders. However, if an officer contemplating resignation believes that his likely replacement is unworthy or unable to perform the requisite duties, then he should continue to serve until a suitable replacement is found or his term expires.

5. *Do I intend to disagree with policy publicly?*

There are only two acceptable avenues for officers to express dissent: privately to their superiors or before Congress in response to questioning. Disputing policy publicly is unprofessional and runs counter to the ethics of officership.

Following WWII, Gavin wrote several articles prior to retiring from the Army. He did not write these pieces to dispute either Truman’s or Eisenhower’s policies. He argued for the force composition he believed best for the Army and the nation during the Cold War.<sup>10</sup> Despite his

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<sup>9</sup> Sorley, *Honorable Warrior*, 303.

<sup>10</sup> James M. Gavin, *Airborne Warfare*, 1st ed. (Washington.: Infantry Journal Press, 1947). Others might disagree with my assertion regarding General Gavin’s intentions. I drew my conclusion on Gavin’s aims based on the timeline of publishing his advocacy

penchant for writing, Gavin chose not to author anything explicitly contradictory to the policy of massive retaliation or the political environment within the Pentagon while he was on active duty. Only during questioning before Congress did Gavin express his dissatisfaction.

Johnson remained faithful to the president, choosing to remain on active duty until he completed his term as Army chief of staff. After his retirement he spoke honestly of his opinions but also provided the opinion and supporting logic of the civilian leaders with whom he disagreed. He chose the venues in which he spoke carefully and would not authorize the release of his statements to anyone outside the armed forces.<sup>11</sup> Johnson's actions indicate of how he viewed civil-military relations and the unique roles and responsibilities established by the Defense Reorganization Act of 1958.

Despite the different manner that each officer viewed dissent, both men behaved professionally. Gavin kept his opinions private unless asked during congressional testimony. Johnson's understanding of his role led him to believe he could only dissent in private to his chain-of-command. Sine qua non, if a senior officer intends to voice openly his opposition, then he should resign or retire first.

*6. Will staying in the armed forces and complying with those policies I find disagreeable unacceptably violate my principles and values?*

Military servicemembers retain their citizenship and the freedoms protected by the Constitution. The last passage of the Oath of Office requires an officer to affirm that he will "well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office" he is entering. To do this successfully, senior military officers must constantly reevaluate their own ability to serve their country.

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piece, *Airborne Warfare*, which was published while President Truman, who agreed with the need for a robust Army, was in office and before Eisenhower's inauguration.

<sup>11</sup> George H. Gray, "Project 1975: General Harold K. Johnson, Retired," in *Gen Harold K. Johnson Papers* (Carlisle, PA: Military Historical Institute, 1975).

The political machinations of the Pentagon disturbed Gavin. He frequently requested reassignment because he found it difficult to reconcile his disagreement with Eisenhower's policy of massive retaliation. When General Taylor made it clear that Gavin would remain in the Pentagon for an unusual fourth year, Gavin decided that doing so would require him to violate his own principles.

Johnson chose to subordinate his frustrations because that is what he believed duty required. However, later in life he second-guessed his decision not to resign. Johnson denied himself the opportunity to act upon his own morality and the consequence was self-doubt for the rest of his life.

America deserves officers that can serve with a good conscience. If a policy violates an officer's personal morality in such a manner that he cannot retain his personal integrity, then he must think deeply about his ability to serve "well and faithfully." If he concludes that he cannot, then he owes himself, his commander in chief, and the United States the offer of his resignation.

### **Is the Mental Construct a Useful Tool?**

Using historical examples to test the questions in the mental construct demonstrates that it is a useful tool for senior military officers contemplating resignation or retirement over policy differences. The questions consider national security, service matters, and individual principles. No single question should be considered more important than the others, and I make no claim that the six questions I have chosen are the only questions an officer should consider.

American politics and its subset, American civil-military relations, are complex systems. M. Mitchell Waldrop defines a complex system as one with "a great many independent agents [that] are interacting with

each other in a great many ways.”<sup>12</sup> Because humans are the agents interacting in civil-military relations, there are a multitude of possible outcomes in any given scenario. Humanity exists at the edge of chaos, where “the components of [the] system never quite lock into place, yet never quite dissolve into turbulence.”<sup>13</sup> This means that every senior officer thinking about retiring or resigning over policy differences should consider a mental construct such as the one offered here in addition to the other unique circumstances of their environment. It is my hope that military leaders will find this framework and the stories of these two exceptional officers useful. If for no other reason than to provide a departure point for future debate, I offer this thesis.

### **Implications**

This thesis reconciles the personal morality and professional ethics of senior military officers with the requirement to subordinate the armed forces to civilian leaders. It uses two historical examples to demonstrate that senior military officers can resign from the armed forces over policy differences without undermining civil-military relations or harming national security. Kohn asserts, “There is no tradition of resignation at the most senior level of the U.S. armed forces. Just one instance, such as McChrystal resigning, could set a very dangerous precedent. Presidents, senior defense officials, and senators would inevitably begin to vet military nominations more routinely on the basis of whether the officer might quit.”<sup>14</sup> Gavin’s example refutes the first claim and the promotion system in the armed forces challenges the second by ensuring that regardless of who the civilian leaders choose for the highest military posts, the officers were vetted through an extremely discerning process of nearly 30 years.

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<sup>12</sup> M. Mitchell Waldrop, *Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 11.

<sup>13</sup> Waldrop, *Complexity*, 293.

<sup>14</sup> Kohn, "Always Salute, Never Resign."

The mental construct is useful for officers as well as students of civil-military relations discussing appropriate methods of dissent. Application of historical examples to civil-military relations theory reifies the arguments for respectful resignation or retirement. In the future, the study of officers who resign or retire over policy differences can be examined using my construct and conclusions drawn concerning whether military subordination suffered or national security was weakened.

There are several opportunities for future research on this topic. Another researcher may choose to test the mental construct against additional historical examples or modify the construct in an attempt to develop a more comprehensive set of questions. Additionally, the question of what constitutes appropriate dissent by an officer who is retired (not resigned) promises to foment significant debate. I am confident that regardless of what someone writes or says next about American civil-military relations, it will not be the final word.

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