

INTRODUCTION

Breach, Neglect, Guidance

New Perspectives on Military Politics

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Introduction

We need to rethink the role played by militaries in politics. The normative positions we have inherited from the past sixty years of civil-military relations scholarship are neither theoretically compelling nor do they serve the pressing needs of practitioners. Indeed, the most characteristic concern of the field—to keep officers out of politics—is not only unrealistic but undesirable.¹ The stakes are high. Our viewpoints do not remain cloistered within the walls of academia. Rather, our theories are actively taught to officers through professional military education programs and internalized as part of the professionalization process. Thus, we are complicit in creating and sustaining the military professional's self-image, for good or ill. We have a responsibility to not promote outdated or misguided conceptions of how officers can, should, and do relate to domestic and foreign political processes. Unfortunately, we often lack better answers. For all our failures, we have barely begun to study many of the most impactful forms of political work undertaken by officers.

This book is the first volume in the first series of books dedicated to military politics, a field of research focused on the active role played by militaries in shaping their political environments (the term is defined at length in chapter 1). It is a starting point, a launching pad. The authors of this volume do not all agree on the destination, but we do agree on the scale of the problem, and the failure of the field thus far to address the most important dilemmas facing officers.

This brief introduction provides three reasons why getting military politics right is among the most urgent tasks facing militaries and democratic governments. The answers are to be found in the events that took place in Washington, DC, on 6 January 2021; in Kabul, Afghanistan, on 15 August 2021; and in Kyiv, Ukraine, on 24 February 2022. These three

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events, spanning a little over four hundred days, crystallize the failures of the field to provide civilian and military practitioners with insights and guidance into the most salient problems facing democratic societies. For those in uniform, these events fit into three starkly different categories, representing problems of *principal breach*, *principal neglect*, and *principal guidance*. For our democratic societies more broadly, each type of problem raises unanswered questions about how officers should respond. This uncertainty is, in turn, the very thing that we seek to dispel by introducing our new perspectives on military politics—in this volume, and in the new body of work.

Washington and the Problem of Principal Breach

As readers will discover throughout the chapters of this book, military politics shares a great deal with the field of civil-military relations (CMR), although it seeks to break new ground partly in order to avoid the limitations of that field. CMR has been dominated by US-centered analyses and US-based theoretical constructs since its formation in the 1950s. Despite this focus on the American case, the field has nevertheless proven surprisingly ill-equipped to explain appropriate responses to the type of events heralded by the storming of the United States Capitol on 6 January 2021.

It was, of course, widely acknowledged that CMR under President Donald J. Trump’s administration were fundamentally new and different (Brooks 2021; Cohn 2018). Trump’s tight symbolic identification with the military, very limited grasp of military affairs, and tendency to “govern by tweet” all made this a dynamic relationship for senior officers to navigate. When Trump began to signal his intent to remain in office after the constitutionally mandated transfer of power on 20 January, the CMR field could offer no clear guidance for the officers who would ultimately be standing in his way (or standing aside) as he performed this authoritarian coup.

Let us consider two sorts of approaches broadly advocated by CMR scholars and commentators. In an open letter to Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, two well-known retired officers, John Nagl and Paul Yingling, urged Milley to “give unambiguous orders directing U.S. military forces to support the Constitutional transfer of power” (Nagl and Yingling 2020) if Trump were to somehow remain in office on 21 January. From their perspective, the greatest danger was in a showdown between Secret Service agents and federal marshals (literally) fighting a Trump-funded private security force. If the latter were to defeat the former, then the military could either intervene against Trump’s orders (presumably) or sit passively on the sidelines, which could allow Trump to establish de facto

control under “a fig leaf of legitimacy.” This scenario was widely mocked by civil-military relations experts. Two, Kori Schake and Jim Golby, wrote their own open letter “to repudiate the deeply irresponsible position” of Nagl and Yingling (2020). In their view, the military could have no conceivable role to play in preventing a Trumpian coup attempt. This was not because they expected a peaceful transfer. They also foresaw the potential for a violent end to the administration:

Nagl and Yingling conjure the nightmare of President Trump calling violent protestors and unaccountable security forces (what they term a private army) into the streets, and we confess we share that worry. . . . Mobilizing the American military solely on the chairman’s un-Constitutional discretion to suppress them is to remove our military from civilian oversight. Which is to destroy the basis on which the American people trust them and to grant the military, and the military alone, the authority to resolve political disputes. (Schake and Golby 2020)

The paradox is clear in the phrase “to grant the military, and the military alone, the authority to resolve political disputes.” If the military alone can resolve political disputes (of a certain sort), but the military can only act when appropriately guided by a civilian principal who is in turn acting in accordance with law and tradition, then political disputes involving a faithless principal are unable to be resolved. This is the principal breach problem, a theoretical limitation of the CMR tradition.

Thus, already in August 2020, reality had met and threatened to surpass the theoretical limits of the field. I wrestled with similar concerns as Nagl and Yingling (2020), and although I found their prediction hard to accept, I proposed six other scenarios in which a Trumpian coup could occur, arguing that “the hardest thing in each of these scenarios will be to pinpoint a moment in time beyond which officers refuse to follow Trump’s orders” (Crosbie 2020). My point then (and now) is that the bright line separating lawful from unlawful acts would almost certainly be obscured to the point where officers would be confronted with genuinely difficult choices. My concerns were directly countered by James Joyner, a retired US Marine Corps officer and a professor at the Marine Corps University. He found the specter of armed Trump supporters “nonsensical” and argued that if “Trump issues manifestly illegal orders, Milley and company will, as is their duty, refuse to follow them” (Joyner 2020). For Joyner, the bright line would remain clearly visible to all.

The two sides were speaking past each other. For some, the danger was that Trump would recognize American military leaders’ sincere commitment to CMR norms and use this against them by relying on their inaction to achieve the first steps of an illegal seizure of power. For others, the

greater danger was that military leaders, recognizing a sincere threat in Trump, would abandon their traditional commitments to CMR norms and insert themselves into the democratic process without justification. The second group believed that military leaders would not follow illegal orders, would quickly recognize the proper chain of command, and thus would remain inactive until legitimate civilian control was reestablished. The first group feared that the legality of orders and the proper chain of command would be purposefully obfuscated, and that military inaction could create a power vacuum filled by armed loyalists.

These dramatic events were, of course, forecasted for 21 January. As actually transpired, blood was spilled two weeks earlier than expected, when a group of armed Trump loyalists forced their way into the Capitol. Four people in the crowd died, one shot by a Capitol Police officer, one from a heart attack, one from a stroke, and one, accidentally overdosing on amphetamines, was crushed in the stampede. One officer died from injuries sustained in the attack, and four others killed themselves days after the attack (Cameron 2022).

What role did the military play (or not play) in how this insurrection unfolded? Some have looked for signs of military complicity in the coup attempt itself. Among the more than seven hundred people later charged in relation to the events of that day, eighty were veterans, and one, Marine Corps Major Christopher Warnagiris, was an active-duty officer (Watson and Legare 2021), a small but a worrying sign of radicalization within the broader military community. For our purposes, however, the greater sin was one of omission, of not acting quickly enough to prevent the violence. The insurrection was fomented during a speech by the president and other speakers at 11 a.m. near the White House. A large crowd then walked to the Capitol. District of Columbia authorities, including the Capitol Police, called for immediate assistance from the National Guard beginning at 1:49 p.m., following the initial breaching of barricades by members of the crowd. It would take three hours for guardsmen to arrive.

By December 2021, with the release of the DOD Inspector General's Report, the perspectives of the senior leadership of the Department of Defense became clear. Then-acting secretary of defense Christopher C. Miller believed that deploying military personnel to the Capitol could create "the greatest Constitutional crisis probably since the Civil War" (Inspector General, US Department of Defense 2021, 30). This was not a Schake and Golby (2020) and Joyner (2020) type of concern that the military, acting of its own authority, would be stepping beyond civilian oversight, and thus should be held back. Recall that the Nagl and Yingling (2020) and Crosbie (2020) position held that the greater danger lay in inaction, fearing that armed Trump loyalists would make strategic gains while the military remained

paralyzed by inactivity. Miller's concerns went beyond even these concerns to a fear that the president "would invoke the Insurrection Act to politicize the military in an anti-democratic manner" (Goodman and Hendrix 2021). Several reports suggest this was precisely the same fear held by both Miller and CIA director Mike Pompeo (Goodman and Hendrix 2021). In a detailed review of the Inspector General Report's findings, the exact reason for the three-hour delay of the deployment of the National Guard was spelled out by law scholars Ryan Goodman and Justin Hendrix (2021) as follows: "senior military officials constrained the mobilization and deployment of the National Guard to avoid injecting federal troops that could have been re-missioned by the President to advance his attempt to hold onto power."

6 January 2021 marks a theoretical rupture in American CMR thinking. Surpassing even the worst-case scenarios floated by concerned scholars, the thinking of senior US defense officials was evidently rooted in a belief that the US military was acting under conditions that could be described as "principal breach," wherein the principal, Trump, was assumed to be planning to issue orders in breach of civil-military norms and against the spirit of the Constitution (whether or not these would also have been illegal). To forestall a scenario in which a faction of the military was presented with "breach" directives (and could have been tempted to follow those orders), the senior leadership of the Department of Defense delayed the deployment of the Guard until after Trump publicly stated he was not in favor of the Capitol's occupation by his supporters.

The field can no longer afford to dismiss as "nonsensical" (Joyner 2020) or "irresponsible" (Schake and Golby 2020) the possibility that officers may find themselves navigating such *principal breach* scenarios, even in the American context. Thus, new military politics perspectives are needed that help illuminate these sorts of challenging dynamics.

Kabul and the Problem of Principal Neglect

The high drama of 6 January, which stressed American civil-military relations (and CMR theory) to the breaking point, finds a counterpoint in the slow advance of the Taliban toward Kabul in the weeks leading up to 15 August 2021. Following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the United States rapidly organized a US-led invasion of Afghanistan that succeeded in taking and holding the capital only two months later, with the First Fall of Kabul occurring on 12 November 2001. For nineteen years, nine months, and three days, Kabul was held by Americans and their allies or by a friendly regime. American forces were significantly reduced by the time the Taliban launched its final major offensive in May 2021, and fully

withdrew by the end of August 2021, following the Second Fall of Kabul (Macias 2021).

Total US involvement in the nineteen-year conflict is estimated by the Watson Institute's *Costs of War* project at \$2.313 trillion, with 2,324 American servicemembers killed; 4,007 US contractors killed; and a total estimated 243,000 people killed (Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs 2022). The Second Fall of Kabul, signaling the failure of the American war effort despite these enormous costs, is a military politics problem of the first order, albeit a problem of a completely different type than the one represented by the insurrection of 6 January. For some, particularly those in uniform charged with executing its policy, the war is an example of a *principal neglect* failure: the direction received by the military from its civilian leaders made it impossible for it to satisfactorily realize American political ends through the use of the military instrument (alongside other instruments of national power). From such a perspective, drawing upon standard CMR theories, the military is exempt from criticism. It did as it was directed to do, and the civilian principal, though proven wrong, was "right to be wrong" (in other words, the failure of civilian guidance in no way can be blamed on the military, and is simply a cost of doing business for democracies).

Almost identical conclusions were drawn by a large faction of US Army officers following the Vietnam War, and for decades this was interpreted to mean that the Army should never again allow itself to be pulled into an unwinnable war. As a consequence, army leaders fought to justify procurements, personnel policies, and doctrinal revisions predicated on quickly resolving highly kinetic operations against near-peer opponents. Instead, these army leaders bequeathed to their successors a military that had forgotten precisely the sorts of skills that it would be called upon to use in Afghanistan and Iraq. Now, \$2.313 trillion and 243,000 human lives later, we still have no more compelling answer to the question of how military leaders should avoid being pulled into unwinnable wars—an intolerable failure of the imagination of scholars, given the stakes involved.

We know that military leaders must navigate scenarios of principal neglect, where guidance from the civilian leadership does not suffice to achieve beneficial ends for the society. We also know that we do not entirely understand how those in uniform should navigate these waters. Here, too, new military politics perspectives are desperately needed.

Kyiv and the New Challenges of Principal Guidance

On Wednesday, 24 February 2022, Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy opened the first of his many wartime speeches by framing the Russian

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invasion in familiar terms: “What do we hear today? It’s not just rocket explosions, battles, the roar of aircraft. It is the sound of a new Iron Curtain lowering and closing Russia away from the civilized world” (Zelenskyy 2022b). The return to a Cold War security posture after a thirty-year hiatus suggests the need to rethink the military politics surrounding *principal guidance*, especially in the many states that have signaled resolve to increase defense spending and recommit to a hard security orientation.

Although the scholarly and practitioner communities were well aware that an invasion was possible, many were nevertheless taken by surprise, including, it seems, Zelenskyy himself, who had announced two days earlier that “a broad escalation on the part of Russia will not happen” (Zelenskyy 2022a). Partly the surprise was due to the nearly universal belief that a Russian invasion, the lowering of the “new” Iron Curtain, was above all expected to be *new*. Various described as having adopted a “hybrid,” “new generation,” “non-linear” or “fourth generation” military doctrine, Russia’s leaders were expected to downplay conventional force and leverage instead the cyber domain, alongside sophisticated manipulation of the diplomatic, information, and economic environments (Bērziņš 2020; see also Stoker and Whiteside 2020 for a critical perspective). Instead, “rocket explosions, battles, the roar of aircraft” dominated the opening weeks of the campaign: in operational terms, the fires and maneuver functions appear to have been the focus of planners, with such critical functions as command and control, force protection, and sustainment all inexplicably failing across the offensive. Indeed, the functions where Russian forces were expected to focus their effort (and to most easily excel), namely intelligence, information, and civil-military cooperation (CIMIC), were least effective (see Crosbie 2019).

The Russian invasion of Ukraine raises two sets of conflicting questions from a military politics perspective. On the one hand, the new Russian approach to war, evidenced by doctrinal revision, organizational change, and prior success in Crimea, among other data points, points to Russia’s effectiveness at targeting our political vulnerabilities, and particularly at creating uncertainty regarding when competition spills over into a state of war. NATO’s officers can counter these sorts of threats by becoming more attuned to political vulnerabilities, and more politically minded generally. Thus, a CMR or military politics response to the implications of the new Russian warfare for democracies would raise such questions as: How can we educate officers to be better at confronting so-called hybrid political threats? How do we avoid securitizing our institutions while improving their resilience? How should we rethink the place of military expertise in purposefully degraded information environments?

On the other hand, the invasion of Ukraine has revealed Russia’s limitations. There are therefore dangers of both overcorrecting and undercorrecting in response to Russia’s poor operational performance in Ukraine.

For example, some might conclude that perhaps there never was a compelling need for officers to focus on political vulnerabilities, although this would be effectively to dismiss the insights gained from how Russia approached operations in Crimea and Syria, and dismiss similar threats posed by other near-peer states. For our purposes, what matters is that no matter how these debates are ultimately resolved, there remains a new uncertainty regarding the political fluency of those in uniform—many of whom have internalized traditional CMR notions of apolitical professionalism and thus feel uniquely ill-equipped to address such concerns.

Military leaders today have every reason to expect highly informed principal guidance regarding military response options for war in Europe, but are more than ever confused as to what their role is in helping to formulate that guidance. Military politics perspectives are therefore also critically needed here.

New Perspectives on Military Politics

The chapters of this book work toward a common goal of illuminating the most pernicious dilemmas facing practitioners (civilian and military alike) and identifying the most promising new pathways forward. The book is divided into three parts. Part I focuses on developing theoretical challenges to the existing CMR framework. Part II looks specifically at the military politics of senior officers, offering a variety of empirical evidence to demonstrate the very great degree to which senior officers are agentic political actors, with evidence from the recent past, from today, and (through survey data) from the near future. Part III explores the intersection of military politics and military operations, considering the degree to which political concerns filter down onto the battlefield. The volume concludes with a final chapter, in which I recommend three platforms to develop a military politics research program.

In the first chapter in Part I, I answer the questions “what *are* military politics” (in the broadest sense) and “what *is* military politics” (in the specialized sense intended by this book series). To answer the first question, I provide a basic definition with sufficiently broad contours that all the chapters of this volume fit comfortably within. The answer to the second question is not so straightforward. I first consider the development of the CMR field and identify some paths not taken. I then explain why two major traditions within CMR might reject the very premise of a military politics research paradigm, and make note of major theoretical shortcomings of both. Next, I survey the way that the term “military politics” has been used by other scholars. I establish three basic theoretical commitments shared by the majority

of these scholars: a commitment to viewing the military as a politically agentic (as the name suggests); to viewing the military as comprising multiple actors; and to viewing the military and civilian spheres as overlapping fields that are co-constructed by civilian and (multiple) military actors. Finally, I provide brief genealogies drawn from a broad literature to indicate two basic aspects of a military politics approach—one of which focuses on vertical alignment efforts, and the other on horizontal alignment efforts.

In chapter 2, Anders Theis Bollmann and Søren Sjøgren offer an important theoretical intervention in military thinking. Contextualizing their argument at the intersection of military politics with new theories of war (particularly, hybrid warfare and cognate notions), they argue that debates over the immutable nature of war not only misunderstand Clausewitz's original formulation but (more importantly) fail to address our current dilemmas in a productive manner. Instead, they argue for a "war assemblage" approach, which posits that our collective understanding of war is at most a set of stabilized arrangements, not revelations of an enduring nature. From this starting point, basic Clausewitzian themes, particularly regarding "war as politics by other means," should be recast in more active dialogue with developments in both war and politics, producing (at best) a rough mapping of the contingent arrangements at any given moment.

Part II of the volume introduces four new perspectives on senior officership. In chapter 3, Yagil Levy introduces the concept of "military contrarianism." Drawing on the case of Israel, Levy's theory reveals the ways in which military leaders and their civilian masters bargain. Levy demonstrates that the Israeli military's leaders routinely find ways to resist politicians' will when they view it as harmful to the military's enterprise interests. The theory posits that the form and intensity of the military's opposition reflects the convergence of the level of perceived harm done to the military and the prior power relations, which are themselves determined largely by the civilians' need for military legitimation. Looking beyond the Israeli case, the theory has important implications for understanding the military politics in any democratic setting in which military support is useful to politicians. In such settings, military contrarianism is likely to be an important factor shaping military behavior.

In chapter 4, Sharon K. Weiner explores the evolving role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff since the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. Her argument, which can be productively contrasted with Levy's theory of military contrarianism (chapter 3), provides a startling new look at the political character of the world's most influential officers. Weiner argues that since 1986, the political influence of service chiefs has both grown and transformed. Now, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) plays a critical role in aligning service interests with

political aims, and not exclusively in the interest of the political master. Although intended to be a sort of umpire, instead the CJCS has remained beholden to parochial service interests and primarily works to achieve a balance among the services.

In chapter 5, James D. Campbell shifts from the standard active-duty focus that has dominated the field to consider the surprisingly central role played by the organized militia in American military politics. Campbell's focus is on the National Guard of the United States, the state-based militia that supplies reserve components to the US Army and Air Force, but which has also long played a key role within the internal politics of the nation and individual states and territories. Campbell argues that the National Guard's role is becoming increasingly important at the highest political levels due to both its recent deployments in high-profile domestic incidents and its critical role in supporting operations abroad. Because of the exceptionally complex regulatory and legal context within which National Guard leaders (Adjutant Generals) must operate—effectively a double system of state and federal governance—these leaders are likely to be among the most politically savvy and politically effective senior officers. Thus, Campbell argues, Adjutant Generals should be recognized as an important population for future research.

Part II ends by looking ahead. In chapter 6, Steven Lee Katz offers a first look at his important new survey of American war college students, those officers most likely to rise to leadership positions in the near future. Katz's survey asked students to reflect on lawful but morally questionable scenarios that challenge the military professional ethic, and draws from these data remarkable insights into the views of "tomorrow's generals" on dissent, disobedience, and principled resignation. Katz looks closely at principal breach scenarios, challenging his respondents to consider their own personal red lines with respect to resisting civilian direction. The findings conform closely with the theoretical insights advanced in Part I and raise unsettling questions when contrasted with Levy's and Weiner's observations about how "today's" military leaders actually do military politics in Israel and the United States.

Part III introduces four new perspectives on how military politics affect the conduct of war. Part III begins with Carrie A. Lee's discussion of military politics on the battlefield (chapter 7), which is built around the critical historical case of an American and British invasion of North Africa, Operation Torch (1942). Lee argues that Huntington took the wrong lessons from World War II, and thus had little justification for his famed theory of an apolitical officer corps. Operation Torch was initially opposed by American senior officers, including Chief of Staff of the Army General George C. Marshall, who viewed the operation as politically compromised. Ultimately, the civilian and military leadership did strike a balance between

domestic politics, alliance politics, and operational needs, but surprisingly at the expense of electoral gains. Lee grapples with this military politics puzzle in order to understand how effective officers engage in political discussions and negotiation within the boundaries of their professional responsibility and expertise.

In chapter 8, Stephen M. Saideman examines similar dynamics in the present tense, exploring military politics in twenty-first-century multinational operations. Saideman agrees with Lee that officers must inevitably make decisions with an impact on public policy and must therefore be viewed (in part) as political actors. Exploring their political agency in multinational operational settings, he identifies two broad categories of action: “managing the home game,” which roughly corresponds with the “vertical alignment” described in chapter 2; and dealing with the multinational chain of command, which roughly corresponds with the “horizontal alignment” described in chapter 1. He examines ways in which officers interpret directives (broadly or narrowly), build and enhance relationships with the commanders of allied contingents, and plan and scheme scenarios—all of which contributes to a creating military political resilience in the operation.

In chapter 9, Lena Trabucco analyzes judicial observer effects on both military and civilian actors in times of war. Trabucco argues that pending (or probable) court decisions affect national security policy (the judicial observer effect) and do so differently for civilian and military actors. Surprisingly, she finds that American military leaders were more concerned with their vulnerability to international courts and may have behaved with a greater “chill” than did their civilian counterparts. This dynamic is particularly challenging to study in alliance and coalition environments, but also all the more likely in those contexts to affect how senior officers act.

Chapter 10, by Carsten Rønnfeldt, brings the analysis from the highest military and civilian levels down to quite junior officers. Rønnfeldt offers two “smoking guns” in proof of the claim that junior officers can have highly autonomous roles to play in the military politics of their state, at least in the case of small powers like Norway. His two cases (the Norwegian contribution to Operations Unified Protector and Silver Arrow) both demonstrate scenarios of quite extreme principal neglect, where political control was exceptionally minimal and junior officers were left to interpret the political aims of their deployment with relative autonomy. Rønnfeldt uses these cases to provide a final challenge to the Huntingtonian framework that haunts so many of these chapters.

In the final chapter, I conclude with three recommendations for a military politics research platform. Such research should be *post-normative* (platform 1), no longer aiming to provide an idealized version of the military politics relationship; *reflexive* (platform 2), sensitive both to its impact

on military politics dynamics and to what is needed for such research to be produced; and *military-centered* (platform 3), situating the military as a unique intervening variable with military actors understood as having agency to shape their political environment, even as they are themselves shaped by their political context.

Conclusion

This volume's title, *Military Politics: New Perspectives*, invites an engagement with the past and the future. The future orientation of the title is explicit. We are oriented to the endless "new," the commitment to constantly refreshing our perspectives in order to better capture the dynamic features of social and political life. By contrast, the past orientation is implicit, gesturing to older perspectives on military politics. While the literatures that have used the term "military politics" are addressed in detail in chapter 1, the title equally gestures toward older perspectives on CMR, a framing that is today better known to readers. Looking backward to these earlier formulations, the aim of these chapters is clear: to move beyond the framing and assumptions that have defined the broader field, whether under the banner of military politics, CMR, or something else.

This temporal duality is reflected in the image on the cover of this volume, a photograph of Norman Foster's famous renovations to the Reichstag, taken on a cloudy day. The image is fitting for a number of reasons. The individuals ascending the spiral staircase do so against a backdrop of gloom and uncertainty, not so unlike today's troubled security climate. As they ascend, they appear to move further away from their fellow travelers on the other side of the dome. And yet, all paths converge at the top. There, they find themselves positioned to look down upon the work of German lawmakers, simultaneously a symbolic and a literal form of democratic oversight holding governments to account. The rebuilding of German democracy and the rebuilding of the Reichstag were in a sense parallel projects. In architect Norman Foster's words:

Throughout our rebuilding of the Reichstag we respected the imprints of the past—whether civic vandalism or the graffiti of war—and felt that it should be preserved for future generations. Junctions between old and new were articulated, and where the existing fabric had been repaired it was clearly expressed. (Rosenfield 2014)

The present volume aims at something similar. Since World War II, scholars and officers alike have circled around the question of the political agency of militaries, without yet ascending, so to speak, to a point of clarity where the

true complexity of military politics has been clearly visible. That point is argued throughout the chapters of this book. It is as though for decades we have been looking at eye level upon the work of officers and policymakers, glimpsing their interactions but looking mostly at their backs, their faces turned to one another. Norman Foster sought a different vantage point, a point above the fray in which networks and patterns could be more easily discerned.

The present volume and the book series to which it belongs encourages an ascent to such a vantage point. Notably, as we ascend, we may find ourselves distanced temporarily from one another, as the consequence of the variance between our areas of empirical focus or theoretical vocabulary—CMR distanced from military politics, for example. This perception of distance will disappear if we continue to our ultimate destination, that elevated vantage point where a broader understanding of this relationship can be obtained. Recognizing as we do that the present state of the field fails in critical respects to capture the political agency of militaries within their domestic and international settings, we argue for new perspectives, rooted in the (often overlooked) past but aiming to illuminate a still obscure future.

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Note

1. Evidence for this claim is presented throughout this book. Most notable among recent critiques of civil-military relations is Brooks's (2020) identification of the "paradoxes of professionalism" that collectively reveal just how much our theoretical debates fall short of addressing the practical realities facing officers. See also Brooks, Golby, and Urben (2021) for an elaboration within the American context.

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