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CENTER

Congressional Briefing

Civil-Military Relations

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#nhcbriefing

Eliot Cohen is the Robert E. Osgood Professor of Strategic Studies at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). After receiving his BA and PhD degrees from Harvard he taught there and later at the Naval War College, before coming to SAIS in 1990. His books include, most recently, *The Big Stick: The Limits of Soft Power and the Necessity of Military Force* as well as *Conquered into Liberty: Two Centuries of Battle Along the Great Warpath that Made the American Way of War* and *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* among others. He served in the US Army Reserve, was a director in the Defense Department's policy planning staff, led the US Air Force's multivolume study of the first Gulf War and has served in various official advisory positions. In 2007-2009 he was Counselor of the Department of State, serving as Secretary Condoleezza Rice's senior adviser, focusing chiefly on issues of war and peace, including Iraq and Afghanistan. His public commentary appears in *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times* and on major television networks, and he is a contributing editor at *The Atlantic*.

Richard Kohn is Professor Emeritus of History and Peace, War, and Defense at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he taught from 1991 to 2011, chaired the Curriculum in Peace, War, and Defense and directed the Triangle Institute of Security Studies. He has taught military history and civil-military relations at CUNY, Rutgers University-New Brunswick, and as a visitor at Dickinson and the US Army and National War Colleges. From 1981 to 1991 he was Chief of Air Force History and Chief Historian for the United States Air Force. He has been a Pulitzer Prize juror, a two-term president of the Society for Military History, and consulted widely for government and academic commissions and organizations. His publications include the Pulitzer Prize finalist *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802* (1975); the edited volume, *The United States Military under the Constitution of the United States, 1789-1989* (1991); and (as one of five co-authors) *The Exclusion of Black Soldiers from the Medal of Honor in World War II* (1997), the report that resulted in the award of seven medals of honor to black soldiers of that conflict. He partnered with Peter Feaver of Duke University in the Triangle Institute study of the gap between the military and American society. He is currently putting together a collection of his essays on civil-military relations for Routledge Publishers, and continuing work on a study of presidential war leadership in American history.

Jacqueline E. Whitt is Associate Professor of Strategy at the US Army War College in the Department of National Security and Strategy. Her first book, *Bringing God to Men: American Military Chaplains, Religion, and the Vietnam War* was published with the University of North Carolina Press in 2014 and in 2016 won the Richard W. Leopold prize for the best work on foreign policy, military affairs, historical activities of the federal government written by a federal employee. She was a lead author and editor for a textbook, *Model UN in a Box*, designed for teaching a simulations-based class on the United Nations. She is also the co-editor of *Stand Up and Fight: The Creation of U.S. Security Organizations, 1942-2005*, published by SSI in 2015. She is currently working on various projects regarding religion in the contemporary military and a book project on strategic narratives in the United States since 1945, looking at how narratives about strategy are influenced by and themselves shape strategic choices.



- Civil-military relations fall into three general categories
 - o The relationship between the military and society
 - o The relationship between the military as a set of institutions and other institutions such as the press, the courts, universities, and business
 - o The relationship between the top military leadership and civilian leaders in Congress and the executive branch

- Civilian control of the military is a foundational aspect of American government and politics
 - o Civilian control is not defined as the absence of a coup or insubordination, but the relative influence of the military vis-a-vis certain political leaders
 - o The proper relationship between civilian and military leadership consists of an unequal dialogue
 - Unequal: civilians must be in charge
 - Dialogue: it is up to both sides to ensure clear and honest communication
 - o Historically, the relationship has been marked by as much unease, distrust, miscommunication, tension, and conflict as of cooperation
 - o There has been growing stress in the relationship since the beginning of the Cold War, and civilian control has weakened

- The American system of civil-military relations has a number of peculiarities which make it different from other countries
 - o The role of the President as Commander-in-Chief
 - o Divided responsibilities between Congress and the Executive
 - o Control of states over important elements of the armed forces
 - o A recent departure from our traditions is the replacement of the citizen-soldier by full-time or part-time professionals

- Current challenges
 - o Presence of serving and retired general officers to an unusual extent in the current administration
 - Many observers have muted their worries because of a lack of confidence in an inexperienced and impulsive president who has voiced unconventional views
 - This situation has put considerable stress on civil-military relations, and is troubling from a broader point of view
 - o Diminishing representation of America's business, academic, and social elites in the military
 - o Growth of a gap between the military and society
 - Military has the highest trust and confidence of the public compared to other institutions
 - Military has become accustomed to a high level of public approbation and support