



Our Army: Soldiers, Politics, and American Civil-Military Relations

Jason K. Dempsey

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Conventional wisdom holds that the American military is overwhelmingly conservative and Republican, and extremely political. *Our Army* paints a more complex picture, demonstrating that while army officers are likely to be more conservative, rank-and-file soldiers hold political views that mirror those of the American public as a whole, and army personnel are less partisan and politically engaged than most civilians.

Assumptions about political attitudes in the U.S. Army are based largely on studies focusing on the senior ranks, yet these senior officers comprise only about 6 percent of America's fighting force. Jason Dempsey provides the first random-sample survey that also covers the social and political attitudes held by enlisted men and women in the army. Uniting these findings with those from another unique survey he conducted among cadets at the United States Military Academy on the eve of the 2004 presidential election, Dempsey offers the most detailed look yet at how service members of all ranks approach politics. He shows that many West Point cadets view political conservatism as part of being an officer, raising important questions about how the army indoctrinates officers politically. But Dempsey reveals that the rank-and-file army is not nearly as homogeneous as we think--or as politically active--and that political attitudes across the ranks are undergoing a substantial shift.

Our Army adds needed nuance to our understanding of a profession that seems increasingly distant from the average American.

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