

Military & Media:
A Close Contextual Analysis Of Moveon.Org's Controversial
Attack Ad Of General David Petraeus

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On the eve of the sixth anniversary of the September 11th terror attacks on the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon, MoveOn.org, a family of organizations “started by Joan Blades and Wes Boyd, two Silicon Valley entrepreneurs” took out a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* publicly attacking General David Howell Petraeus, a four-star General and Commander of the Multi-National Force deployed in Iraq (MoveOn.org). In the ad, MoveOn.org accused Petraeus of “cooking the books for the white house” (“General Petraeus or General Betray Us”). The non-profit organization, frustrated “with the partisan warfare in Washington D.C. and the ridiculous waste of our nation's focus...,” had little regard for increased troop levels in Iraq. The ad also coincided with General Petraeus’ testimony to a congressional hearing focused on the efficacy of that troop surge, which saw an additional 30,000 soldiers sent to Iraq to quell the growing sectarian violence, and strike a blow to Al-Qaeda. But the ad had unforeseen consequences. It drew focus away from Petraeus’ testimony. It allowed “supporters of the surge strategy in Iraq [to] change the subject from the progress in Iraq to the rhetoric used by war opponents” (Tapper, ABC News).

When the ad was published, it caused an outcry from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. Upon reading the ad, President George W. Bush said “I felt like the ad was an attack, not only on General Petraeus, but on the U.S. military,” and “it’s one thing to attack me; it’s another thing to attack somebody like General Petraeus” (Bush). And while the response from the Democrats was not as strongly worded, it was still present. Speaking on ABC’s *Good Morning America*, Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) said she “...would have preferred that they not do such an ad.” Furthermore, former presidential candidate and Senator John Kerry (D-MA) criticized the ad, saying, “I don’t like any kind

of characterizations in our politics that call into question any active duty, distinguished general who I think under any circumstances serves with the best interests of our country” (Barrett and Thai). As Petraeus’ congressional hearing began, the focus had shifted from the efficacy of the troop surge in Iraq to the rhetoric wielded by MoveOn.org. As Ryan Grim wrote on the website *Politico*, the ad “was a blunder of the highest order, uniting Republicans and distracting Democrats at a time when the party could instead be pressing for an end to the war.” The advertisement attracted national and international attention, and even prompted the United States Senate, in a landslide 72-25 vote, to pass a resolution that officially condemned the ad (“Senate condemns ‘General Betray Us’ ad”). The official condemnation, sponsored by Senator John Cornyn (R-TX), passed in the Senate, with the sole purpose of expressing “the sense of the Senate that General David H. Petraeus, Commanding General, Multi-National Force-Iraq, deserves the full support of the Senate and strongly condemn[s] personal attacks on the honor and integrity of General Petraeus and all members of the United States Armed Forces” (S.AMDT.2934). The House also passed a similar resolution condemning the "General Betray Us" advertisement.

Petraeus had been a life-long military man. Born in 1952, David Petraeus “was commissioned into the infantry as a second lieutenant after graduating from Military Academy at West Point in 1974” (“David Howell Petraeus”). Petraeus quickly ascended through the ranks and by 1991, “he was promoted to lieutenant colonel and commanding officer of a regiment within the 101st Airborne Division.” But he “...really began attracting Washington's attention in 2003 with his command of the 101st Airborne Division in Baghdad, Iraq, and, later, in Mosul. He had written his doctoral thesis about

counterinsurgency...” and “at the behest of President Bush, Petraeus was sent to Iraq in 2007 to implement his new counter-insurgency ideas” (“David Howell Petraeus”). In the eyes of the Senate, Petraeus’ service record and conduct up until that point had established a high level of “honor and integrity” (S.AMDT.2934). The MoveOn.org ad, which attacks Petraeus by claiming he is “a military man constantly at war with the facts,” is significant because it attacks the General’s credibility and implies he is a liar or incompetent; that “every independent report on the ground situation in Iraq shows that the surge strategy has failed. Yet the General claims a reduction in violence” (MoveOn.org). But why was MoveOn out to discredit Petraeus? What are its overarching goals? According to its website, “MoveOn is a community of more than 8 million Americans from all walks of life who use innovative technology to lead, participate in, and win campaigns for progressive change.” It also has a civic action branch that “primarily focuses on education and advocacy on important national issues” (MoveOn.org). It was founded in 1998 and has since become an organization with millions of members. And one of the goals it presented to its membership was to bring soldiers home from Iraq and to challenge the claims that the troop surge had been successful. But did its “General Betray Us” ad further the organizations goals or set the political action group back? Analysis of not only the text and imagery in the ad, but the context in which the ad was placed is needed.

Rhetorical Criticism and Close Reading

A purely theoretical approach to analyzing MoveOn.org’s controversial ad, even if thorough, may miss identifying the significance of the language used within the text.

“Highly theoretical approaches to rhetorical criticism” focus too much on “the generation of abstract methods,” and not enough on the “actual conduct of discourse” (Burghardt 199; Leff). Instead, “close textual analysis, or ‘close reading’” is better suited to study “the relationship between the inner workings of public discourse and its historical context in order to discover what makes a particular text function persuasively” (Burghardt 199). Close textual analysis focuses “on the rhetorical action embodied in particular discourses” (Leff 378). “Probing the discourse microscopically – at the level of the sentence, phrase, word, and syllable” helps derive its meaning and efficacy (Burghardt 199). Through a close reading of the advertisement, “the particulars of the case – the local circumstances that frame and motivate the work and the unique blend between formal and material elements that constitute its substance” are analyzed (Leff 382). The ad also uses imagery to connect and persuade the reader, and therefore the picture of General Petraeus used in the text must be examined. Looking past the subject in the picture, the composition of a photograph has layers of meaning. Framing, angle, lighting; all evoke an emotional response. But more than just dissection of the text and picture is needed. Breaking down the language used in MoveOn’s ad helps explain the approach the authors used, but the analysis will be insufficient unless the text and picture are examined along with their context.

In the 1986 essay titled “Textual Criticism: The Legacy of G.P. Mohrmann” published in *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Michael Leff writes:

...textual criticism reveals the formidable number of elements involved in the enterprise: the close reading and rereading of the text, the analysis of the historical and biographical circumstances that generate and frame its composition, the

recognition of basic conceptions that establish co-ordinates of the text, and an appreciation of the way these conceptions interact within the text and help determine its temporal movement (380).

Examining the events that were taking place in the world at the time the ad was published helps us discover where the text derives its power of persuasion, and whether it effectively uses the audience's emotion to enact change, whether the ad "formulates a response to the circumstances and events in public consciousness and deploys its own internal resources to alter public consciousness about these circumstances and events" (Leff). Through a close textual analysis of the "General Betray Us" advertisement, I aim to show the ad as a catalyst of political change concerning the war in Iraq, and establish the agendas, both explicit and implicit, MoveOn.org had in mind when it placed the ad. By closely reading the ad, I hope to show how MoveOn.org blended fact and emotive language to influence political change, and how it used persuasion to shift the beliefs of members of the public, and Congress. And while, as a whole, the advertisement was effective, it had unforeseen consequences for the MoveOn organization.

The Advertisement

At first glance, there are two things immediately noticeable when looking at the "General Betray Us" advertisement: the large, close-up photograph of General Petraeus taken during a congressional hearing regarding the state of the military campaign in Iraq and the title. To begin, I will examine the photograph. The picture fills more than a third of the full-page ad. The General is clothed in his dress uniform, and the picture was taken from his left side, making visible his numerous medals and decorations, as well as his stars, which can be seen clearly across his left shoulder. He is seated in front of four

microphones, with his mouth slightly agape, leaving the General looking somewhat dumbfounded. It is interesting that the authors of the ad chose to use this particular photograph. Aside from the comical look the General has, the picture comes across as a stately portrait of a stately man in a stately situation. Being that the General's decorations can be seen clearly, along with all four of his stars, the picture illustrates a man who has spent his life serving in the United States military, which some people would consider highly honorable, and worthy of praise. At any given time, there are approximately 30 four-star Generals in the Armed Forces. In fact, only four-star Generals are full Generals. Soldiers with fewer than four stars have modifiers in their rank. A one-star General is actually a Brigadier General, a two-star is a Major General, and a three-star is a Lieutenant General (Department of Defense). Returning to the photograph, having the stars clearly visible only adds to Petraeus' credibility, which should work against MoveOn.org's plan to discredit the General and bolster support for the growing anti-war movement in the United States. A CNN poll taken in March of 2007 found that only 32% of those surveyed favored the war in Iraq, down from 72% in March of 2003. Furthermore, the poll found that more than six in 10 people opposed the war, and nearly half say they strongly oppose it (CNN Poll, 2003). But when one takes into account the overall opinion of the leadership in the military and White House that the ad's authors have, showing the General as a life-long, high-ranking Army officer could be seen as more evidence of his incompetence, and his affiliation with an administration that MoveOn.org has criticized.

Another interesting feature of the photograph is that it was shot up, meaning, from the perspective of the viewer, the General is being seen from below. The angle of the shot

is important because “certain camera angles add a unique perspective which can affect the audience's perception” (Cennamo). The angle used in the ad makes Petraeus appear larger, and somewhat intimidating. It’s a common shot seen in political advertisements as “many political candidates prefer to be shot from a slightly lower angle to make themselves look taller and more important” (Cennamo). This type of shot is also used to introduce villains in movies “to make them appear more sinister” (Cennamo). The same camera angle was used in a photograph of another infamous military man that has been called to testify during congressional hearings in the past.



Above is a side-by-side comparison of the picture used in the MoveOn.org advertisement and a picture of Oliver North’s 1987 congressional hearing. Even then, the angle of the camera was known to have a profound affect on the viewer’s perception of the subject. In *Picture Perfect: Life in the Age of the Photo Op*, Kiku Adatto writes about a conversation between acclaimed movie director Steven Spielberg and a democratic congressman during North’s hearing. Spielberg offers the lawmakers a lesson on camera angles and perception:

“Watch this” Spielberg said, as he turned down the sound and directed the congressmen’s attention to North’s image on the screen. “The camera on North is shooting up, from about four inches below his eyes. This is the way they shot Gary Cooper in the western, *High Noon*, to make him look like a hero...it doesn’t matter what North says” (Adatto).

Adatto illustrates how camera angles contribute to the viewer’s perception of the pictures subject. While North was shot from “four inches below his eyes,” Petraeus was shot from a significantly lower angle, perhaps increasing a viewer’s perception of power.

There are additional similarities between Oliver North and David Petraeus. According to Sourcewatch.org, a project started by the Center for Media and Democracy, and the Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, Oliver North:

...entered the U.S. Marines, graduated from Annapolis (1968), served in the Vietnam War, and attained the rank of lieutenant colonel. In 1981 he was assigned to the National Security Council, and in 1983 he became the liaison to the Nicaraguan contras. In Nov., 1986, North emerged as the central figure in the Iran-contra affair. He was fired by President Reagan later that month. Under a grant of immunity he testified before Congress in July, 1987. He was convicted (1989) on criminal charges arising from the affair, but his conviction was later reversed on the grounds that immunized testimony had been used at his trial (“Oliver North”).

The Iran-Contra Affair, one of the most controversial events of the 1980’s, had to do with illegal weapons sales to Iran. Those profits were then used to fund anti-communist rebels in Nicaragua. The records documenting this transaction were destroyed, and the

American public was directly lied to by high members of the Government, including President Ronald Reagan. Oliver North was in charge of the clandestine weapons deals with Iran, and was ultimately found guilty on a myriad of charges, including destroying documents and obstruction of an investigation (“Oliver North”). During the scandal, President Reagan went on national television and denied the weapons sales to Iran ever took place. A week following the initial broadcast, Reagan returned to the airwaves and publicly acknowledged the sales had, in fact, taken place. It marked a “betrayal” – a word championed by MoveOn.org – by an American president, and his administration. And while Petraeus was not accused of illegal activity, he was brought before a congressional hearing to answer for his actions, much like North.

When looking at the Petraeus photo, people may be reminded of Oliver North, the Iran-Contra Affair, the congressional hearings during the scandal, and the betrayal. Viewers of the advertisement may also be reminded of the lies that were told to the American public regarding important foreign affairs. MSNBC host Rachel Maddow drew comparisons between Oliver North and David Petraeus, noting the similar way both military men are represented in the media, and how both men were associated with high-profile military operations that were under question (Maddow). That aspect becomes directly relevant to the advertisement, and the political end that MoveOn.org is trying to promote, which is a distrust of the Bush administration, his military leadership, and the information the government disseminates regarding the war in Iraq. And that brings me to the title of the advertisement.

Much like the picture chosen for the ad, the title – “General Petraeus or General Betray Us: Cooking the Books for the White House” – is also intended to evoke negative

emotions. It uses highly emotive language, and is meant to be a hook, a way to attract readers. Petraeus and “betray us” also rhyme, which sticks with readers. Rhyming is a characteristic of oral narratives and is, in a sense, a mnemonic device that aids in memory (Paul). And although seemingly innocuous, the first two words of the title – General Petraeus – may connote more than just who the article is about. Following the troop surge, General Petraeus was hailed as the man who was going to turn around the growing sectarian violence in Iraq, and gain control of the chaotic civil war. His name was synonymous with victory in Iraq. Lawrence Korb, a former Pentagon official under President Clinton who is now with the Center for American Progress in Washington, said “They [officials in the Bush administration] bet the farm on Petraeus,” and indeed many people, including President Bush, said that the man behind the military’s counter-insurgency manual – Gen. Petraeus – was going to be able to turn things around (qtd. in Lubold). This leader, this “savior of the war,” was the man who was going to defeat the insurgents and bring U.S. soldiers home. But, as suggested by the second part of title – “...or General Betray Us” – Gen. Petraeus may not be everything the Bush administration said he is.

The definition of betray, as found in the online edition of the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is as follows: “1: to lead astray; *especially* : seduce, 2: to deliver to an enemy by treachery, 3: to fail or desert especially in time of need <*betrayed* his family>, 4 a: to reveal unintentionally <*betray* one's true feelings> b: show, indicate c: to disclose in violation of confidence <*betray* a secret>” (“Betray”). This definition coincides with a statement published in *The Wall Street Journal* just one day after the MoveOn.org advertisement was published:

“Betrayal,” as every military officer knows, is a word that through the history of their profession bears the strain of acts that are both dishonorable and unforgivable. That is to say, MoveOn.org didn’t stumble upon the word; it was chosen with specific intent, to convey the most serious accusation possible against General Petraeus, that his word is false, that he is a liar and that he is willing to betray his country. The next and obvious word to which this equation with betrayal leads is treason. That it is merely insinuated makes it worse (“Trashing Petraeus”).

The choice to use the word “betray” was not just an attack on Gen. Petraeus’ credibility, but a personal attack. In effect, the word insinuates Petraeus is a liar, treasonous; and, by no means, should anything he reports be taken as truth.

The ad, and its passionate language, set-off a maelstrom of protest from both sides of the aisle, although mostly from Republicans that felt Gen. Petraeus and the troop surge was doing what the Bush administration intended them to do, which was to turn the corner in Iraq and gain ground against Al-Qaeda. But did MoveOn.org’s ad have an unforeseen effect, a negative externality? Though the purpose of the ad was undoubtedly to bolster support for the growing anti-war movement in the U.S. and force President Bush to set a troop withdrawal date for soldiers serving in Iraq, there were side-effects that stemmed from the placement of the ad.

The Intended Outcome and the Side-Effects

MoveOn.org intended the full-page advertisement to discredit Gen. Petraeus, and label him a liar. It claimed Petraeus was “cooking the books,” or falsifying reports of the

efficacy of the troop surge and the overall campaign in Iraq, and effectively duping the American people (MoveOn.org). The authors also intended the ad to coincide with one of MoveOn's "main preoccupation[s]," which is "ending the Iraq war" (Bai). But there were other subtle outcomes MoveOn.org had in mind when placing the ad. It brought the organization into the forefront of political activism, and "for MoveOn...the Republican uproar over the full-page New York Times ad – "General Petraeus or 'Betray Us'?" it asked, tearing into the public progress report the commander in Iraq was about to deliver in Congress – represented the kind of stellar publicity that no army of publicists could have conjured" (Bai). The old adage "there's no such thing as negatively publicity" rang true for MoveOn as its "...leaders gleefully reported that, on the day of the resolution, MoveOn received more than \$500,000 from more than 12,000 people, its best fund-raising day of the year" (Bai). Additionally, "over four days, in the midst of the row [of controversy], it took in \$1.6m" ("An ad too far"). According to "Eli Pariser, a 25-year-old internet whiz" and the leader of MoveOn's management team, "MoveOn is always looking for... 'the message objective' – the controversy that will viscerally attract more liberals to sign up and write checks" (Bai). This "visceral" advertisement is a perfect example of how MoveOn used powerful language with deep-seated, connotative meaning – a play on pathos, if you will – to provoke an emotional response, much like Douglas MacArthur used in his 1962 acceptance address at the West Point Military Academy where he was presented the Sylvanus Thayer Award. In a speech entitled "Duty, Honor, and Country," MacArthur chose words and descriptions that were not just heard, but felt. One passage in particular provokes a strong emotional response:

Always for them [soldiers]: Duty, honor, country. Always their blood, and sweat, and tears, as they saw the way and the light. And 20 years later, on the other side of the globe, again the filth of dirty foxholes, the stench of ghostly trenches, the slime of dripping dugouts, those boiling suns of relentless heat, those torrential rains of devastating storms...always victory, always through the bloody haze of their last reverberating shot, the vision of gaunt, ghastly men, reverently following your password of duty, honor, country (Macarthur).

This passage describes the true misery of war and how, rising above it all, soldiers still believe in three words: duty, honor, country. Although Macarthur uses literary devices like anaphora, alliteration, description, and polysyndeton that help deliver a stronger punch, the basic effect is the same as the “General Betray Us” ad. MoveOn.org wanted people to “feel” when they read the advertisement, much like one “feels” when reading Macarthur. But Macarthur wasn’t out to sway anyone as much as inspire. MoveOn.org was trying to sway people, and still is.

In Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, Aristotle describes emotion, specially dividing it into three parts: the state of mind of the person experiencing the emotion, against whom the emotion is felt, and for what reasons an emotion may have arisen. According to Aristotle, all three are required when creating an emotional response intended to sway someone’s judgement. “The emotions,” Aristotle writes, “are those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgements and which are accompanied by pain and pleasure, for example, anger, pity, fear, and other such things and their opposites” (Aristotle 121). MoveOn.org effectively identified the state of mind of the population that they wanted to sway; the emotion they wanted to create and whom

the emotion should be against; and the reasons for the emotion. MoveOn was targeting far-left liberals, and those who may have been “on-the-fence” in how they felt about the state of the war in Iraq. The organization wanted to promote opposition to the war, and force Congress and the President to set a withdrawal date for troops serving in Iraq, and to do so they targeted the architect of the troop surge, Gen. David Petraeus. MoveOn knew the state of mind of the American public. In a poll conducted by Reuters around the time the ad was placed, President Bush’s approval rating was 29%, one of the lowest ratings of his presidency (Whitesides). People were fed up with Bush, and fed up with the way his administration conducted the war in Iraq. And MoveOn effectively identified the reasons for the emotions they wanted to provoke. The body of the advertisement lists numerous reasons why the American people should not believe Gen. Petraeus’ testimony:

Every independent report on the ground situation in Iraq shows that the surge strategy has failed. Yet the General claims a reduction in violence. That’s because, according to the *New York Times*, the Pentagon has adopted a bizarre formula for keeping tabs on violence. For example, deaths by car bombs don’t count. The *Washington Post* reported that assassinations only count if you’re shot in the back of the head — not the front. According to the Associated Press, there have been more civilian deaths and more American soldier deaths in the past three months than in any other summer we’ve been there. We’ll hear of neighborhoods where violence has decreased. But we won’t hear that those neighborhoods have been ethnically cleansed (MoveOn.org).

Following the three parts of an emotion set out by Aristotle, MoveOn effectively played on the emotions of liberals to enact political change. But this approach may have had

some negative consequences. The organization may have benefited from the publicity the ad brought monetarily, and with an increase in membership, but it also damaged the pool that it draws from that money and those people, the group in which most of MoveOn's members originate: the Democratic Party.

According to an article in *The Economist*, "for years Democrats have fought the perception that they are soft on defense and low on patriotism. [Sen. Hillary] Clinton even sponsored a bill to ban the burning of the American flag. The Petraeus ad will not help their case" ("An ad too far"). Additionally, in September of 2007, "MoveOn sent an e-mail message to members asking whether it should start organizing potential primary challenges against Democrats who were not tough enough on the war, a move that upset Democratic leaders (Luo and Zeleny). Along with upsetting some Democratic leaders, many went as far as to say "they winced when they saw the MoveOn advertisement. While they may have agreed with its overall point, that the troop buildup has not worked, several Democratic officials said privately that the advertisement had been counterproductive" (Luo and Zeleny). The ad was counterproductive indeed: the scathing advertisement drew attention away from the testimony of Gen. Petraeus, and the state of the war in Iraq. MoveOn benefited as an organization, but the ad "...stifled the conversation Democrats wanted to have about the war" (Bai). The ad also united the Republican Party in opposition, and "became a life raft for the Republican party as the war debate kicked into high gear." Some Republicans were opposed to the Bush administration's war efforts but, following the ad, "GOP members were able to put aside their differences and rally their disapproval of the ad" ("Senate condemns 'General Betray Us' ad). Additionally, in the placing of such a controversial advertisement,

MoveOn.org incurred scrutiny from most of Congress, the President, and Republican presidential candidate Rudy Giuliani. Giuliani began to investigate the relationship between *The New York Times* and MoveOn.org. During his inquiry, the former mayor of New York City found some discrepancies between the amount *The New York Times* charged MoveOn for the full-page ad, and the newspaper's regular price for an ad comparable to the one placed by MoveOn. As reported in *The Washington Post*, "MoveOn said it paid \$65,000 for the ad, far less than the standard \$180,000 rate for a full-page ad. A *Times* spokeswoman told a Reuters reporter that the content of the ad was not considered and that there are many different rates for a full-page ad" (Shear). Subsequently, MoveOn.org was required to pay the difference, approximately \$77,500. This finding publicly damaged the credibility of MoveOn by insinuating that the organization had some private tie to *The New York Times*.

The Conclusion

Though controversial, the "General Betray Us" advertisement effectively accomplished what its authors intended. It caused a scandal that gripped the nation for weeks and increased MoveOn.org's membership significantly. It also resulted in more than \$1,000,000 of donations to the organization. The ad effectively brought to question the validity of General Petraeus' testimony, prompting leading politicians to engage in debate over the credibility of the General, the true state of the war in Iraq, and efficacy of the troop surge. But the advertisement did more than just bring to light discrepancies in one military leader's testimony; it used fact blended with provocative language to create a visceral response. MoveOn, although not without annoying some of its members, was "shrewdly gaming liberal politics in the way the National Rifle Association has longed

gamed conservative politics; the more controversy, the more members it attracts, and the more power it has to leverage on their behalf” (Bai). And even though the advertisement “almost completely eclipsed the general’s testimony and his bleak assessment of the Iraq situation,” it did, however, bring to light some inconsistencies in the handling of the war (Bai). It *may* have been controversial, abrasive, and embellished, but the ad did what it was intended to do: to question Gen. Petraeus’ credibility, to bring to light the “real” situation in Iraq, to begin a national debate on the direction of the war, and – possibly most important in the eye’s of the advertisement’s authors – to increase MoveOn’s membership (currently more than 3.2m) and its funds, leaving the organization in a great position for future campaigns for political change. And while those accomplishments benefited MoveOn in the short term, leaders of the political action group ultimately acknowledged they made a mistake when creating the ad. In 2008, executive director Eli Pariser said that it was wrong to use the words “betray us” in the advertisement, and that he “wouldn’t do the headline the same way” (Raasch). The ad has since been removed from MoveOn’s website.

Petraeus is not the only high-profile general to be pulled into the public for his perceived actions or inactions. General Stanley McChrystal was a high-ranking military officer in charge of the United States’ operations in Afghanistan, but was subsequently forced to resign by President Barack Obama. McChrystal made comments in an issue of *Rolling Stone* criticizing some of the Obama administration’s top advisors and Vice President Joe Biden. Further analysis of the way McChrystal and his resignation were portrayed in the press could yield interesting results. Was McChrystal perceived more favorably than Petraeus in the media? Did McChrystal have the backing for lawmakers or

was their support diminished due to the fact that McChrystal and his aides were the ones who attacked the way the war effort was being handled. Further research is needed to compare the two generals and the way they emerged from their respective scandals.

In the case of General Petraeus, he bounced back from the attack ad, eventually taking over the war effort in Afghanistan from McChrystal in 2010. Reviews of how well he performed in Afghanistan are mixed, with many critics claiming Petraeus' troop strategy, one that had been successful in Iraq, yielded few gains. Then in 2011, Petraeus became the head of the Central Intelligence Agency after then CIA director Leon Panetta resigned to become President Obama's Secretary of Defense. Petraeus served a little more than a year before he found himself mired in a scandal involving an affair with the female author writing his biography, Paula Broadwell. An investigation into the affair revealed Broadwell was given access to classified information, as well as access to Petraeus' email account. The news of the affair, and the FBI investigation, led to Petraeus' resignation as director of the CIA. He is now a visiting professor at City University of New York where he teaches public policy. His extramarital affair aside, Petraeus' emerged from the MoveOn advertisement controversy relatively unscathed. The ad shifted focus away from the congressional hearing and the war in Iraq. The ad attacked Petraeus, making him somewhat of a victim, and prompted lawmakers from both sides of aisle to rally to his defense. Had the focus been allowed to remain on the efficacy of the troop surge in Iraq, Petraeus' future may have turned out differently.

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