





# Colin Powell

This article is about the American politician. For the British soccer player, see [Colin Powell \(footballer\)](#). rank of [General](#).<sup>[12]</sup>

**Colin Luther Powell** (/ˈkoʊlɪn/; born April 5, 1937) is an American statesman and a retired four-star general in the United States Army.<sup>[1]</sup> He was the 65th United States Secretary of State, serving under U.S. President George W. Bush from 2001 to 2005, the first African American to serve in that position.<sup>[2][3][4][5]</sup> During his military career, Powell also served as National Security Advisor (1987–1989), as Commander of the U.S. Army Forces Command (1989) and as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1989–1993), holding the latter position during the Persian Gulf War. He was the first, and so far the only, African American to serve on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and was the first of two consecutive African American office-holders to hold the key administration position of U.S. Secretary of State.

## 1 Early life and education

Powell was born on April 5, 1937,<sup>[6]</sup> in Harlem, a neighborhood in the New York City borough of Manhattan, to Jamaican immigrant parents Maud Arial (née McKoy) and Luther Theophilus Powell. He also has Scottish ancestry.<sup>[7][8]</sup> Powell was raised in the South Bronx and attended Morris High School, a former public school in the Bronx, from which he graduated in 1954. While at school, he worked at a local baby furniture store where he picked up Yiddish from the shopkeepers and some of the customers.<sup>[9]</sup> He also served as a *Shabbos goy*.<sup>[10]</sup> He received his BS degree in geology from the City College of New York in 1958 and was a self-admitted C average student. He was later able to earn a MBA degree from the George Washington University in 1971, after his second tour in Vietnam.

Despite his parents' pronunciation of his name as /ˈkoʊlɪn/, Powell has pronounced his name /ˈkoʊlɪn/ since childhood, after the heroic World War II flyer Colin P. Kelly Jr.<sup>[11]</sup> Public officials and radio and television reporters have used Powell's preferred pronunciation.

## 2 Military career

Powell was a professional soldier for 35 years, holding a variety of command and staff positions and rising to the

### 2.1 Training

Powell described joining the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) during college as one of the happiest experiences of his life; discovering something he loved and could do well, he felt he had "found himself." According to Powell:

“It was only once I was in college, about six months into college when I found something that I liked, and that was ROTC, Reserve Officer Training Corps in the military. And I not only liked it, but I was pretty good at it. That's what you really have to look for in life, something that you like, and something that you think you're pretty good at. And if you can put those two things together, then you're on the right track, and just drive on.”<sup>[13]</sup>

Cadet Powell joined the Pershing Rifles, the ROTC fraternal organization and drill team begun by General John Pershing. Even after he had become a general, Powell kept on his desk a pen set he had won for a drill team competition.

Upon graduation, he received a commission as an Army second lieutenant.<sup>[14]</sup> After attending basic training at Fort Benning, Powell was assigned to the 48th Infantry, in West Germany, as a platoon leader.<sup>[15]</sup>

### 2.2 Vietnam War

In his autobiography, Powell said he is haunted by the nightmare of the Vietnam War and felt that the leadership was very ineffective.

Captain Powell served a tour in Vietnam as a South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) advisor from 1962 to 1963. While on patrol in a Viet Cong-held area, he was wounded by stepping on a punji stake.<sup>[16]</sup> The large infection made it difficult for him to walk, and caused his foot to swell for a short time, shortening his first tour.

He returned to Vietnam as a major in 1968, serving in the Americal Division (23rd Infantry Division), then as assistant chief of staff of operations for the Americal Division. During the second tour in Vietnam he was decorated for bravery after he survived a helicopter crash,

single-handedly rescuing three others, including division commander Major General Charles Martin Gettys, from the burning wreckage.<sup>[15][17]</sup> He was charged with investigating a detailed letter by Tom Glen (a soldier from the 11th Light Infantry Brigade), which backed up rumored allegations of the My Lai Massacre. Powell wrote: “In direct refutation of this portrayal is the fact that relations between American soldiers and the Vietnamese people are excellent.” Later, Powell’s assessment would be described as whitewashing the news of the massacre, and questions would continue to remain undisclosed to the public. In May 2004 Powell said to television and radio host Larry King, “I mean, I was in a unit that was responsible for My Lai. I got there after My Lai happened. So, in war, these sorts of horrible things happen every now and again, but they are still to be deplored.”<sup>[18]</sup>



*Powell in April 1989, as the Commanding General of FORSCOM.*

### 2.3 After the Vietnam War

Powell served a White House fellowship, a highly selective and prestigious position, under President Richard Nixon from 1972 to 1973.

In his autobiography, *My American Journey*, Powell named several officers he served under who inspired and mentored him. As a lieutenant colonel serving in South Korea, Powell was very close to General Henry “Gunfighter” Emerson. Powell said he regarded Emerson as one of the most caring officers he ever met. Emerson insisted his troops train at night to fight a possible North Korean attack, and made them repeatedly watch the television film *Brian’s Song* to promote racial harmony. Pow-

ell always professed that what set Emerson apart, was his great love of his soldiers and concern for their welfare. After a race riot occurred, where African American soldiers almost killed a Caucasian officer, Powell was charged by Emerson to crackdown on black militants; Powell’s efforts led to the discharge of one soldier, and other efforts to reduce racial tensions.<sup>[15]</sup>

### 2.4 A “political general”

In the early 1980s, Powell served at Fort Carson, Colorado. After he left Fort Carson, Powell became senior military assistant to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, whom he assisted during the 1983 invasion of Grenada and the 1986 airstrike on Libya.

In 1986, Powell took over the command of V Corps in Frankfurt, Germany, from Robert Lewis “Sam” Wetzell.



*President Ronald Reagan and National Security Advisor Powell in 1988*

Following the Iran Contra scandal, Powell became, at the age of 49, Ronald Reagan’s National Security Advisor, serving from 1987 to 1989 while retaining his Army commission as a lieutenant general.

In April 1989, after his tenure with the National Security Council, Powell was promoted to four-star general under President George H. W. Bush and briefly served as the Commander in Chief, Forces Command (FORSCOM), headquartered at Fort McPherson, Georgia, overseeing all Army, Army Reserve, and National Guard units in the Continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. He became only the third general since World War II, joining Dwight D. Eisenhower and Alexander Haig, to reach four-star rank without ever serving as a division commander.

Later that year, President George H. W. Bush selected him as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>[19]</sup>

### 2.5 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Powell’s last military assignment, from October 1, 1989, to September 30, 1993, was as the 12th Chairman of





*Powell in November 1989, on his official Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff portrait.*

the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the highest military position in the Department of Defense. At age 52, he became the youngest officer, and first Afro-Caribbean American, to serve in this position. Powell was also the first JCS Chair who received his commission through ROTC.<sup>[20]</sup>

During this time, he oversaw 28 crises, including the invasion of Panama in 1989 to remove General Manuel Noriega from power and Operation Desert Storm in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. During these events, Powell earned his nickname, "the reluctant warrior." He rarely advocated military intervention as the first solution to an international crisis, and instead usually prescribed diplomacy and containment.

As a military strategist, Powell advocated an approach to military conflicts that maximizes the potential for success and minimizes casualties. A component of this approach is the use of overwhelming force, which he applied to Operation Desert Storm in 1991. His approach has been dubbed the "Powell Doctrine". Powell continued as chairman of the JCS into the Clinton presidency but as a dedicated "realist" he considered himself a bad fit for an administration largely made up of liberal internationalists.<sup>[21]</sup> He clashed with then-U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright over the Bosnian crisis, as he opposed any military interventions that didn't involve US interests.<sup>[22]</sup>

During his chairmanship of the JCS, there was discussion of awarding Powell a fifth star, granting him the rank of General of the Army. But even in the wake of public and Congressional pressure<sup>[23][24]</sup> to do so, Clinton-



*General Colin Powell, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, waves from his motorcade during the Persian Gulf War Welcome Home Parade in New York City.*

Gore presidential transition team staffers decided against it.<sup>[25][26][27]</sup>

## 2.6 Dates of rank

## 2.7 Awards and decorations

### 2.7.1 Badges

- Combat Infantryman Badge
- Expert Infantryman Badge
- Ranger Tab
- Parachutist Badge
- Pathfinder Badge
- Air Assault Badge
- Presidential Service Badge
- Secretary of Defense Identification Badge
- Joint Chiefs of Staff Identification Badge
- Army Staff Identification Badge

### 2.7.2 Medals and ribbons

### 2.7.3 Foreign decorations

## 2.8 13 Rules of Leadership

First printed in the August 13, 1989 issue of *Parade* magazine,<sup>[30]</sup> these are Colin Powell's 13 Rules of Leadership.<sup>[31][32]</sup>

1. It ain't as bad as you think.
2. Get mad, then get over it.
3. Avoid having your ego so close to your position that when your position falls, your ego goes with it.
4. It can be done.
5. Be careful what you choose. You may get it.
6. Don't let adverse facts stand in the way of a good decision.
7. You can't make someone else's choices.
8. Check small things.
9. Share credit.
10. Remain calm. Be kind.
11. Have a vision.
12. Don't take counsel of your fears or naysayers.
13. Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier.

## 3 Potential presidential candidate

Powell's experience in military matters made him a very popular figure with both American political parties. Many Democrats admired his moderate stance on military matters, while many Republicans saw him as a great asset associated with the successes of past Republican administrations. Put forth as a potential Democratic Vice Presidential nominee in the 1992 U.S. presidential election<sup>[33]</sup> or even potentially replacing Vice President Dan Quayle as the Republican Vice Presidential nominee,<sup>[34]</sup> Powell eventually declared himself a Republican and began to campaign for Republican candidates in 1995.<sup>[35]</sup> He was touted as a possible opponent of Bill Clinton in the 1996 U.S. presidential election, possibly capitalizing on a split conservative vote in Iowa<sup>[36]</sup> and even leading New Hampshire polls for the GOP nomination,<sup>[37]</sup> but Powell declined, citing a lack of passion for politics.<sup>[38]</sup> Powell defeated Clinton 50-38 in a hypothetical match-up proposed to voters in the exit polls conducted on Election Day.<sup>[39]</sup> Despite not standing in the race, Powell won the Republican New Hampshire Vice-Presidential primary on write-in votes.<sup>[40]</sup>

In 1997 Powell founded *America's Promise* with the objective of helping children from all socioeconomic sectors. That same year saw the establishment of The Colin L. Powell Center for Leadership and Service. The mission of the Center is to "prepare new generations of publicly engaged leaders from populations previously under-represented in public service and policy circles, to build a strong culture of civic engagement at City College, and to mobilize campus resources to meet pressing community needs and serve the public good."<sup>[41]</sup>

Powell was mentioned as a potential candidate in the 2000 U.S. presidential election, but decided against running.<sup>[42]</sup> Once Texas Governor George W. Bush secured the Republican nomination, Powell endorsed him for president and spoke at the 2000 Republican National Convention. Bush eventually won, and Powell was appointed Secretary of State.

## 4 Secretary of State



*Powell in 2001, as the Secretary of State.*

As Secretary of State in the Bush administration, Powell was perceived as moderate. Powell was unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate. Over the course of his tenure he traveled less than any other U.S. Secretary of State in 30 years.<sup>[43]</sup>

On September 11, 2001, Powell was in Lima, Peru, meeting with President Alejandro Toledo and US Ambassador John Hamilton, and attending the special session of the OAS General Assembly that subsequently adopted the Inter-American Democratic Charter. After





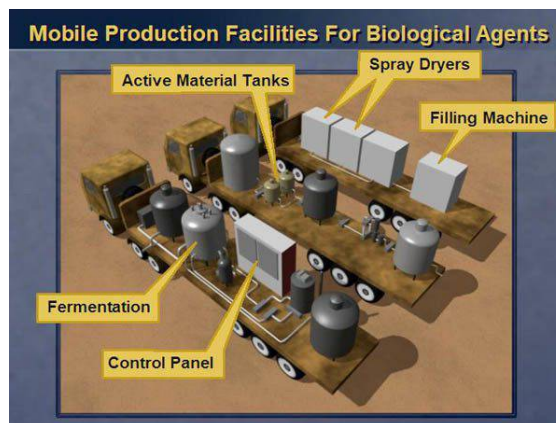
*Powell, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld listen to President George W. Bush speak.*

the September 11 attacks, Powell's job became of critical importance in managing America's relationships with foreign countries in order to secure a stable coalition in the War on Terrorism.

Powell came under fire for his role in building the case for the 2003 Invasion of Iraq. In a press statement on February 24, 2001, he had said that sanctions against Iraq had prevented the development of any weapons of mass destruction by Saddam Hussein. As was the case in the days leading up to the Persian Gulf War, Powell was initially opposed to a forcible overthrow of Saddam, preferring to continue a policy of containment. However, Powell eventually agreed to go along with the Bush administration's determination to remove Saddam. He had often clashed with others in the administration, who were reportedly planning an Iraq invasion even before the September 11 attacks, an insight supported by testimony by former terrorism czar Richard Clarke in front of the 9/11 Commission. The main concession Powell wanted before he would offer his full support for the Iraq War was the involvement of the international community in the invasion, as opposed to a unilateral approach. He was also successful in persuading Bush to take the case of Iraq to the United Nations, and in moderating other initiatives. Powell was placed at the forefront of this diplomatic campaign.

Powell's chief role was to garner international support for a multi-national coalition to mount the invasion. To this end, Powell addressed a plenary session of the United Nations Security Council on February 5, 2003, to argue in favor of military action. Citing numerous anonymous Iraqi defectors, Powell asserted that "there can be no doubt that Saddam Hussein has biological weapons and the capability to rapidly produce more, many more." Powell also stated that there was "no doubt in my mind" that Saddam was working to obtain key components to produce nuclear weapons.<sup>[45]</sup>

Most observers praised Powell's oratorical skills. However, Britain's *Channel 4 News* reported soon afterwards that a UK intelligence dossier that Powell had referred to



*Computer-generated image of an alleged mobile production facility for biological weapons, presented by Powell at the UN Security Council. On May 27, 2003, US and UK experts examined the trailers and declared they had nothing to do with biological weapons.<sup>[44]</sup>*



*Powell holding a model vial of anthrax while giving a presentation to the United Nations Security Council in February 2003.*

as a "fine paper" during his presentation had been based on old material and plagiarized an essay by American graduate student Ibrahim al-Marashi.<sup>[46][47]</sup> A 2004 report by the Iraq Survey Group concluded that the evidence that Powell offered to support the allegation that the Iraqi government possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) was inaccurate.

In an interview with Charlie Rose, Powell contended that prior to his UN presentation, he had merely four days to review the data concerning WMD in Iraq.<sup>[48]</sup>

A Senate report on intelligence failures would later detail the intense debate that went on behind the scenes on what to include in Powell's speech. State Department analysts had found dozens of factual problems in drafts of the speech. Some of the claims were taken out, but others were left in, such as claims based on the yellowcake forgery.<sup>[49]</sup> The administration came under fire for having acted on faulty intelligence, particularly what was single-sourced to the informant known as Curveball. Powell later recounted how Vice President Dick Cheney had joked with him before he gave the speech, telling him,

“You’ve got high poll ratings; you can afford to lose a few points.” Powell’s longtime aide-de-camp and Chief of Staff from 1989–2003, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, later characterized Cheney’s view of Powell’s mission as to “go up there and sell it, and we’ll have moved forward a peg or two. Fall on your damn sword and kill yourself, and I’ll be happy, too.”<sup>[50]</sup>

In September 2005, Powell was asked about the speech during an interview with Barbara Walters and responded that it was a “blot” on his record. He went on to say, “It will always be a part of my record. It was painful. It’s painful now.”<sup>[51]</sup>

Wilkerson said that he inadvertently participated in a hoax on the American people in preparing Powell’s erroneous testimony before the United Nations Security Council.<sup>[52]</sup>

Because Powell was seen as more moderate than most figures in the administration, he was spared many of the attacks that have been leveled at more controversial advocates of the invasion, such as Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz. At times, infighting among the Powell-led State Department, the Rumsfeld-led Defense Department, and Cheney’s office had the effect of polarizing the administration on crucial issues, such as what actions to take regarding Iran and North Korea.



Secretary Powell with NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

After Saddam Hussein had been deposed, Powell’s new role was to once again establish a working international coalition, this time to assist in the rebuilding of post-

war Iraq. On September 13, 2004, Powell testified before the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee,<sup>[53]</sup> acknowledging that the sources who provided much of the information in his February 2003 UN presentation were “wrong” and that it was “unlikely” that any stockpiles of WMDs would be found. Claiming that he was unaware that some intelligence officials questioned the information prior to his presentation, Powell pushed for reform in the intelligence community, including the creation of a national intelligence director who would assure that “what one person knew, everyone else knew.”

Additionally, Powell has been critical of other instances of U.S. foreign policy in the past, such as its support for the 1973 Chilean coup d’état. From two separate interviews in 2003, Powell stated in one about the 1973 event “I can’t justify or explain the actions and decisions that were made at that time. It was a different time. There was a great deal of concern about communism in this part of the world. Communism was a threat to the democracies in this part of the world. It was a threat to the United States.”<sup>[54]</sup> In another interview, however, he also simply stated “With respect to your earlier comment about Chile in the 1970s and what happened with Mr. Allende, it is not a part of American history that we’re proud of.”<sup>[55]</sup>

Powell announced his resignation as Secretary of State on November 15, 2004. According to *The Washington Post*, he had been asked to resign by the president’s chief of staff, Andrew Card.<sup>[50]</sup> Powell announced that he would stay on until the end of Bush’s first term or until his replacement’s confirmation by Congress. The following day, Bush nominated National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice as Powell’s successor. News of Powell’s leaving the Administration spurred mixed reactions from politicians around the world — some upset at the loss of a statesman seen as a moderating factor within the Bush administration, but others hoping for Powell’s successor to wield more influence within the cabinet.

In mid-November, Powell stated that he had seen new evidence suggesting that Iran was adapting missiles for a nuclear delivery system.<sup>[56]</sup> The accusation came at the same time as the settlement of an agreement between Iran, the IAEA, and the European Union.

On December 31, 2004, Powell rang in the New Year by pressing a button in Times Square with New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg to initiate the ball drop and 60 second countdown, ushering in the year 2005. He appeared on the networks that were broadcasting New Year’s Eve specials and talked about this honor, as well as being a native of New York City.<sup>[57]</sup>

## 5 Life after diplomatic service

After retiring from the role of Secretary of State, Powell returned to private life. In April 2005, he was privately telephoned by Republican senators Lincoln Chafee



and Chuck Hagel,<sup>[58]</sup> at which time Powell expressed reservations and mixed reviews about the nomination of John R. Bolton as ambassador to the United Nations, but refrained from advising the senators to oppose Bolton (Powell had clashed with Bolton during Bush's first term).<sup>[59]</sup> The decision was viewed as potentially dealing significant damage to Bolton's chances of confirmation. Bolton was put into the position via a recess appointment because of the strong opposition in the Senate.



*Powell with United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.*

On April 28, 2005, an opinion piece in *The Guardian* by Sidney Blumenthal (a former top aide to President Bill Clinton) claimed that Powell was in fact “conducting a campaign” against Bolton because of the acrimonious battles they had had while working together, which among other things had resulted in Powell cutting Bolton out of talks with Iran and Libya after complaints about Bolton's involvement from the British. Blumenthal added that “The foreign relations committee has discovered that Bolton made a highly unusual request and gained access to 10 intercepts by the National Security Agency. Staff members on the committee believe that Bolton was probably spying on Powell, his senior advisors and other officials reporting to him on diplomatic initiatives that Bolton opposed.”<sup>[60]</sup>

In July 2005, Powell joined Kleiner, Perkins, Caufield & Byers, a well-known Silicon Valley venture capital firm, with the title of “strategic limited partner.”

In September 2005, Powell criticized the response to Hurricane Katrina.<sup>[61]</sup> Powell said that thousands of people were not properly protected, but because they were poor rather than because they were black.

On January 5, 2006, he participated in a meeting at the White House of former Secretaries of Defense and State to discuss United States foreign policy with Bush administration officials. In September 2006, Powell sided with



*Powell walks with newly crowned King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, Vice President Dick Cheney, and former President George H. W. Bush, Saudi Arabia, August 2005.*

more moderate Senate Republicans in supporting more rights for detainees and opposing President Bush's terrorism bill. He backed Senators John Warner, John McCain and Lindsey Graham in their statement that U.S. military and intelligence personnel in future wars will suffer for abuses committed in 2006 by the U.S. in the name of fighting terrorism. Powell stated that “The world is beginning to doubt the moral basis of [America's] fight against terrorism.”<sup>[62]</sup>

Also in 2006, Powell began appearing as a speaker at a series of motivational events called *Get Motivated*, along with former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani. In his speeches for the tour, he openly criticized the Bush Administration on a number of issues. Powell has been the recipient of mild criticism for his role with *Get Motivated* which has been called a “get-rich-quick-without-much-effort, feel-good schemology.”<sup>[63]</sup>

In 2007 he joined the Board of Directors of Steve Case's new company Revolution Health. Powell also serves on the Council on Foreign Relations Board of directors.<sup>[64]</sup>

Powell, in honor of Martin Luther King Day, dropped the ceremonial first puck at a New York Islanders hockey game at Nassau Coliseum on January 21, 2008. On November 11, 2008, Powell again dropped the puck in recognition of Military Appreciation Day and Veterans Day.<sup>[65][66]</sup>

Recently, Powell has encouraged young people to continue to use new technologies to their advantage in the future. In a speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies to a room of young professionals, he said, “That's your generation...a generation that is hard-wired digital, a generation that understands the power of the information revolution and how it is transforming the world. A generation that you represent, and you're coming together to share; to debate; to decide; to connect with each other.”<sup>[67]</sup> At this event, he encouraged the next generation to involve themselves politically on the upcoming Next America Project, which uses online debate to pro-



vide policy recommendations for the upcoming administration.

In 2008, Powell served as a spokesperson for **National Mentoring Month**, a campaign held each January to recruit volunteer mentors for at-risk youth.<sup>[68]</sup>

Soon after **Barack Obama's 2008 election**, Powell began being mentioned as a possible cabinet member.<sup>[69]</sup> He was not nominated.

In September 2009, Powell advised President Obama against surging US forces in Afghanistan.<sup>[70]</sup> The president announced the surge the following December.

On March 14, 2014, **Salesforce.com** announced that Powell had joined its Board of Directors.<sup>[71]</sup>

## 6 Political views

A liberal Republican, Powell is well known for his willingness to support liberal or centrist causes.<sup>[72]</sup> He is pro-choice regarding abortion, and in favor of “reasonable” gun control.<sup>[72]</sup> He stated in his autobiography that he supports affirmative action that levels the playing field, without giving a leg up to undeserving persons because of racial issues. Powell was also instrumental in the 1993 implementation of the military’s don’t ask, don’t tell policy,<sup>[72]</sup> though he later supported its repeal as proposed by **Robert Gates** and **Admiral Mike Mullen** in January 2010, saying “circumstances had changed”.<sup>[73]</sup>

The Vietnam War had a profound effect on Powell’s views of the proper use of military force. These views are described in detail in the autobiography *My American Journey*. The **Powell Doctrine**, as the views became known, was a central component of U.S. policy in the **Persian Gulf War** (the first U.S. war in Iraq) and **U.S. invasion of Afghanistan** (the overthrow of the **Taliban** regime in Afghanistan following the **September 11 attacks**). The hallmark of both operations was strong international cooperation, and the use of overwhelming military force.

Powell was the subject of controversy in 2004 when, in a conversation with **British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw**, he reportedly referred to neoconservatives within the Bush administration as “fucking crazies.”<sup>[74]</sup> In addition to being reported in the press (though generally, the expletive was censored in the U.S. press), the quote was used by **James Naughtie** in his book, *The Accidental American: Tony Blair and the Presidency*, and by **Chris Patten** in his book, *Cousins and Strangers: America, Britain, and Europe in a New Century*.

In a September 2006 letter to Sen. **John McCain**, General Powell expressed opposition to President Bush’s push for military tribunals of those formerly and currently classified as enemy combatants. Specifically, he objected to the effort in Congress to “redefine Common Article 3 of the Geneva Convention.” He also asserted: “The world is beginning to doubt the moral basis of our fight against

terrorism.”<sup>[75]</sup>

Powell endorsed President Obama in 2008 and again in 2012. When asked why he is still a Republican on Meet the Press he said, “I’m still a Republican. And I think the Republican Party needs me more than the Democratic Party needs me. And you can be a Republican and still feel strongly about issues such as immigration, and improving our education system, and doing something about some of the social problems that exist in our society and our country. I don’t think there’s anything inconsistent with this.”<sup>[76]</sup>

### 6.1 Views on the Iraq War

While Powell was wary of a military solution, he supported the decision to invade Iraq after the Bush administration concluded that diplomatic efforts had failed. After his departure from the State Department, Powell repeatedly emphasized his continued support for American involvement in the **Iraq War**.

At the 2007 Aspen Ideas Festival in **Colorado**,<sup>[77]</sup> Powell revealed that he had spent two and a half hours explaining to President Bush “the consequences of going into an Arab country and becoming the occupiers.” During this discussion, he insisted that the U.S. appeal to the United Nations first, but if diplomacy failed, he would support the invasion: “I also had to say to him that you are the President, you will have to make the ultimate judgment, and if the judgment is this isn’t working and we don’t think it is going to solve the problem, then if military action is undertaken I’m with you, I support you.”<sup>[78]</sup>

In a 2008 interview on **CNN**, Powell reiterated his support for the 2003 decision to invade Iraq in the context of his endorsement of **Barack Obama**, stating: “My role has been very, very straightforward. I wanted to avoid a war. The president [Bush] agreed with me. We tried to do that. We couldn’t get it through the U.N. and when the president made the decision, I supported that decision. And I’ve never blinked from that. I’ve never said I didn’t support a decision to go to war.”<sup>[79]</sup>

Powell’s position on the **Iraq War troop surge of 2007** has been less clear. In December 2006, he expressed skepticism that the strategy would work and whether the U.S. military had enough troops to carry it out successfully. He stated: “I am not persuaded that another surge of troops into Baghdad for the purposes of suppressing this communitarian violence, this civil war, will work.”<sup>[80]</sup> Following his endorsement of **Barack Obama** in October 2008, however, Powell praised **General David Petraeus** and U.S. troops, as well as the Iraqi government, concluding that “it’s starting to turn around.”<sup>[79]</sup> By mid-2009, he had concluded a surge of U.S. forces in Iraq should have come sooner, perhaps in late 2003.<sup>[81]</sup> Throughout this period, Powell consistently argued that Iraqi political progress was essential, not just military force.

## 6.2 Role in presidential election of 2008

Powell donated the maximum allowable amount to **John McCain's** campaign in the summer of 2007<sup>[82]</sup> and in early 2008, his name was listed as a possible **running mate** for Republican nominee McCain's bid during the 2008 U.S. presidential election.<sup>[83]</sup> However, on October 19, 2008, Powell announced his endorsement of **Barack Obama** during a *Meet the Press* interview, citing "his ability to inspire, because of the inclusive nature of his campaign, because he is reaching out all across America, because of who he is and his rhetorical abilities," in addition to his "style and substance." He additionally referred to Obama as a "transformational figure".<sup>[84][85]</sup> Powell further questioned McCain's judgment in appointing **Sarah Palin** as the vice presidential candidate, stating that despite the fact that she is admired, "now that we have had a chance to watch her for some seven weeks, I don't believe she's ready to be president of the United States, which is the job of the vice president." He said that Obama's choice for vice-president, **Joe Biden**, was ready to be president. He also added that he was "troubled" by the "false intimations that Obama was Muslim." Powell stated that "[Obama] is a Christian — he's always been a Christian... But the really right answer is, what if he is? Is there something wrong with being a Muslim in this country? The answer's no, that's not America." Powell then referenced **Kareem Rashad Sultan Khan**, a Muslim American soldier in the U.S. Army who served and died in the Iraq War. He later stated, "Over the last seven weeks, the approach of the Republican Party has become narrower and narrower [...] I look at these kind of approaches to the campaign, and they trouble me."<sup>[84][85]</sup> Powell concluded his Sunday morning talk show comments, "It isn't easy for me to disapprove Sen. McCain in the way that I have this morning, and I regret that [...] I think we need a transformational figure. I think we need a president who is a generational change and that's why I'm supporting Barack Obama, not out of any lack of respect or admiration for Sen. John McCain."<sup>[86]</sup> Later in a December 12, 2008, CNN interview with **Fareed Zakaria**, Powell reiterated his belief that during the last few months of the campaign, Palin pushed the Republican party further to the right and had a polarizing impact on it.<sup>[87]</sup>

## 6.3 Views on the Obama administration

In a July 2009 CNN interview with **John King**, Powell expressed concern over President Obama growing the size of the federal government and the size of the federal budget deficit.<sup>[88]</sup> In September 2010, he criticized the Obama administration for not focusing "like a razor blade" on the economy and job creation. Powell reiterated that Obama was a "transformational figure."<sup>[89]</sup> In a video that aired on CNN.com in November 2011, Colin Powell said in reference to Barack Obama, ". . . many of his decisions have been quite sound. The financial system

was put back on a stable basis."<sup>[90]</sup>

On October 25, 2012, 12 days before the presidential election, he gave his endorsement to President Obama for re-election during a broadcast of **CBS This Morning**. He cited success and forward progress in foreign and domestic policy arenas under the Obama Administration, and made the following statement:

"I voted for him in 2008 and I plan to stick with him in 2012 and I'll be voting for he (sic) and for Vice President Joe Biden next month."

As additional reason for his endorsement, Powell cited the changing positions and perceived lack of thoughtfulness of **Mitt Romney** on foreign affairs, and a concern for the validity of Romney's economic plans.<sup>[91]</sup>

In an interview with ABC's **Diane Sawyer** and **George Stephanopoulos** during ABC's coverage of President Obama's second inauguration, Powell criticized members of the Republican Party who "...demonize the president". He called on GOP leaders to publicly denounce such talk.<sup>[92]</sup>

## 6.4 Views on LGBT issues

In late May 2012 he expressed support for the legalization of same-sex marriage. He had earlier supported the repeal of **Don't Ask Don't Tell**.<sup>[93]</sup>

## 7 Personal life

Powell married **Alma Johnson** on August 25, 1962. Their son, **Michael Powell**, was the chairman of the **Federal Communications Commission (FCC)** from 2001 to 2005. His daughters are **Linda Powell**, an actress, and **Annamarie Powell**. As a hobby, Powell restores old Volvo and Saab cars.<sup>[94][95]</sup> In 2013, he faced questions about a relationship with a Romanian diplomat, after a hacked AOL email account had been made public. He acknowledged a "very personal" email relationship but denied further involvement.<sup>[96]</sup>

## 8 Civilian awards and honors

Powell's civilian awards include two **Presidential Medals of Freedom**, the **President's Citizens Medal**, the **Congressional Gold Medal**, the **Secretary of State Distinguished Service Medal**, the **Secretary of Energy Distinguished Service Medal**, and the **Ronald Reagan Freedom Award**. Several schools and other institutions have been named in his honor and he holds honorary degrees from universities and colleges across the country.



- In 1988, Powell received the *Academy of Achievement's Golden Plate Award*.
  - In 1990, Powell received the U.S. Senator John Heinz Award for Greatest Public Service by an Elected or Appointed Official, an award given out annually by *Jefferson Awards*.<sup>[97]</sup>
  - In 1991, Powell was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President George H. W. Bush.
  - In 1991, Powell was awarded the *Spingarn Medal* from the *NAACP*.<sup>[98]</sup>
  - In 1991, Powell was inducted into the *Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans*,<sup>[99]</sup> which “honors the achievements of outstanding individuals in U.S. society who have succeeded in spite of adversity and of encouraging young people to pursue their dreams through higher education.”
  - On September 30, 1993, Powell was awarded his second Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton.
  - On November 9, 1993, Powell was awarded the second *Ronald Reagan Freedom Award*, by President Ronald Reagan. Powell served as Reagan's National Security Advisor from 1987–1989.<sup>[100]</sup>
  - On December 15, 1993, Colin Powell was created an honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath by Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom.
  - In 1998, he was awarded the prestigious *Sylvanus Thayer Award* by the *United States Military Academy* for his commitment to the ideals of “Duty, Honor, Country.”
  - The 2002 *Liberty Medal* was awarded to Colin Powell on July 4 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In his acceptance speech, Powell reminded Americans that “It is for America, the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave, to help freedom ring across the globe, unto all the peoples thereof. That is our solemn obligation, and we will not fail.”<sup>[101]</sup>
  - The Coat of Arms of Colin Powell was granted by the Lord Lyon in Edinburgh on February 4, 2004. Technically the grant was to Powell's father (a British subject) to be passed on by descent. Scotland's King of Arms is traditionally responsible for granting arms to Commonwealth citizens of Scottish descent. Blazoned as:
 

*Azure, two swords in saltire points downwards between four mullets Argent, on a chief of the Second a lion passant Gules. On a wreath of the Liveries is set for Crest the head of an American bald-headed eagle erased Proper. And in an escrol over the same this motto, “DEVOTED TO PUBLIC SERVICE.”*
- The swords and stars refer to the former general's career, as does the crest, which is the badge of the 101st Airborne (which he served as a brigade commander in the mid-1970s). The lion may be an allusion to Scotland. The shield can be shown surrounded by the insignia of an honorary Knight Commander of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath (KCB), an award the General received after the first Gulf War.
- In 2005 Powell received the *Bishop John T. Walker Distinguished Humanitarian Service Award* for his contributions to Africa.
  - *AARP* honored Powell with the 2006 *AARP Andrus Award*, the Association's highest honor. This award, named in honor of *AARP's* founder, Dr. *Ethel Percy Andrus*, is presented biennially to distinguished individuals who have generated positive social change in the world, and whose work and achievements reflect *AARP's* vision of bringing lifetimes of experience and leadership to serve all generations.
  - In 2005 Colin and Alma Powell were awarded the *Woodrow Wilson Award for Public Service* by the *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars* of the *Smithsonian Institution*.
  - Colin Powell was initiated as an honorary brother in *Sigma Phi Epsilon*.
  - Powell is a recipient of the *Silver Buffalo Award*, the highest adult award given by the *Boy Scouts of America*.
  - A street in *Gelnhausen*, Germany was named after him: “General-Colin-Powell-Straße”.<sup>[102]</sup>
  - In 2002, scholar *Molefi Kete Asante* listed Colin Powell on his list of 100 *Greatest African Americans*.<sup>[103]</sup>
  - In 2009, an elementary school named for Colin Powell opened in *El Paso*. It is in the *El Paso Independent School District*, located on *Fort Bliss* property, and serves a portion of *Fort Bliss*.<sup>[104]</sup> There is also a street in *El Paso* named for Powell, *Colin Powell Drive*.
  - Powell is an *Honorary Board Member* of the humanitarian organization *Wings of Hope*.<sup>[105]</sup>
  - Since 2006, he is the chairman of the Board of *Trustees for Eisenhower Fellowships*.<sup>[106]</sup>
  - In 2006, The *Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace* at The *Hebrew University of Jerusalem* awarded Colin Powell with the *Truman Peace Prize* for his efforts to conduct the “war against terrorism,” through diplomatic as well as military means, and to avert regional and civil conflicts in many parts of the world.<sup>[107]</sup>

- In September 2012 Union City, New Jersey opened Colin Powell Elementary School, which was named after Powell, and dedicated the school on February 7, 2013, with governor Chris Christie in attendance.<sup>[108]</sup> Powell himself visited the school on June 4, 2013.<sup>[109]</sup>

## 9 See also

- Plame affair
- Pottery Barn rule
- Republican and conservative support for Barack Obama in 2008

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## 12 External links

- Appearances on C-SPAN
  - *Booknotes* interview with Powell on *My American Journey*, January 7, 1996.
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- Colin Powell at the Internet Movie Database
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