

**Statesmen, Soldiers, and Strategy:  
The Influence of Civil-Military Relations on U.S. National  
Security Decision-Making**

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## ABSTRACT

### Statesmen, Soldiers, and Strategy: The Influence of Civil-Military Relations on U.S. National Security Decision-Making

Dessie Zagorcheva

This dissertation analyzes how statesmen and soldiers make decisions on war and peace and identifies key linkages between a state's civil-military relations and its international relations. It shows that there is a clear connection between a state's civil-military relations and the making of strategy. This study analyzes how different patterns of civil-military relations affect a state's propensity to use military force, as well as its ability to design effective military strategies to achieve its political objectives. It develops a framework, which allows us to derive hypotheses as to the conditions under which policy-makers would be more likely to make *informed* decisions on the use of force. The dissertation studies how top decision-makers process information and advice and the political and psychological dynamics that affect the policy-making process. I show that firm civilian control, while necessary, is not a sufficient condition and does not automatically translate into effective national security decision-making or victorious military strategies. Even wealthy and powerful states with firm control over their militaries have paid, at times, enormous cost in blood and

treasure due to poorly-conceived diplomatic and military strategies. In the coming years, we are certain to have many occasions when the U.S. uses or considers the use of military force. That is why scholars should continue studying the dynamics of the relations between civilian and military leaders at the pinnacle of government and their effect on the making of military strategy and national security policy.

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I did not want to mention names so I do not forget anyone, but, my deepest gratitude is to Prof. Robert Jervis. I have been incredibly fortunate to have him as an advisor and mentor. He taught me how to question and defend ideas but, more importantly, he provided guidance and support when I had almost given up on finishing the dissertation. I hope that one day I would be as good an advisor to my students as prof. Jervis has been to me.

Above all, I want to thank my parents and family for their love, enthusiastic support, and patience through the ups and downs of this process. They had to put up with my long absences, absentmindedness, blank stares, and other academic quirks and side effects of writing a doctoral dissertation. I can never thank them enough.

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**This dissertation is dedicated to Veneta and Pencho Zagorchevi –  
the Best Parents on Earth**



## Chapter 1

### Introduction

How do political and military leaders decide to use or threaten military force? How are we to explain the variance in the quality of the decision-making process? Why, at times, in deliberations on national security issues do decision-makers manage to assess correctly the political and military aspects of their environment and the threat they confront and to design the most appropriate military strategy? Why, at other times, is the decision-making process lacking a critical evaluation of the strategic situation and why can't decision-makers match military means to political ends? Is the creation of a "team of rivals" at the top of the government the surest path to effective national security decision-making? Do democracies make better decisions on war and peace than non-democracies? The key to answering these questions, I argue, is found in the relationship between political and military leaders at the pinnacle of government. This dissertation explains how statesmen and soldiers make decisions on war and peace and identifies key linkages between a state's civil-military relations and its international relations. This study shows that there is a clear connection between a state's civil-military relations and the making of strategy. It analyzes how different patterns of civil-military relations affect a state's propensity to use military force, as well as its ability to design effective military strategies to achieve its political objectives. This dissertation develops a framework, which allows us to derive hypotheses as to the conditions under which policy-makers would be more likely to make *informed* decisions on the use of force.

This dissertation shows that firm civilian control, while necessary, is not a sufficient condition and does not automatically translate into effective national security decision-making or victorious military strategies. Even wealthy and powerful states with firm control over their militaries have paid, at times, enormous cost in blood and treasure due to poorly-conceived diplomatic and military strategies, the 2003 U.S. war on Iraq being the most recent examples. In the coming years, we are certain to have many occasions when the U.S. uses or considers the use of military force. That is why, scholars should continue studying the dynamics of the relations between civilian and military leaders at the pinnacle of government and their effect on the making of military strategy and national security policy.

This study revisits one of the main debates in the literature on civil-military relations and policy-making regarding the usefulness of “assertive” and “delegative” civilian control (or “objective” control, in Samuel Huntington’s terms)<sup>1</sup>. While I do not attempt to prescribe the “ideal” type of civil-military relationship that could work under almost all conceivable circumstance, this study does lead to a rejection of Samuel Huntington’s “objective control” model, which has been dominant in both the academic and defense policy communities for half a century now.<sup>2</sup> I use Peter Feaver’s concept of “assertive” civilian control, which overcomes many of the problems of Huntington’s typology of “objective” and “subjective” forms of control, developed in *The Soldier and the State*. Assertive civilian control is a more pro-active form of control than “objective”

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Feaver introduces the assertive-delegative typology of civilian control in *Guarding the Guardians* (1992). It is based on the civilians’ decisions how much to delegate to the military and how extensively to monitor the military’s actions. Assertive civilian control is when civilians delegate little and monitor a lot, while delegative control involves higher degrees of delegation and lower forms of monitoring.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957).

control, and allows “direct civilian supervision over the military, particularly over military operations.”<sup>3</sup> Huntington’s model is found deficient both descriptively and prescriptively. As Garofano argues, embracing objective control does not guarantee victory in any case. On the contrary, the theory of objective control and the thought process and governmental arrangements that it entails hinder the process of making informed decisions on using force. They do so by discouraging the inclusion and integration of relevant political, social, economic and country – or region-specific knowledge and information. They also encourage a passive military approach to analyzing and presenting costs and risks...<sup>4</sup>

Huntington’s model presupposes clearly defined political and military domains and also that both sides (the civilian and the military) respect the boundaries and refrain from interfering in each other’s domain. According to this model, effective planning and conduct of a war would be achieved when civilian leaders are involved only in the “grand-strategic” realm while leaving the “tactical” and “operational” realms to the military. Along these lines, Huntington explains why in his view the U.S. was successful in World War II: “so far as the major decisions in policy and strategy were concerned, the military ran the war.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Feaver, *Guarding the Guardians: Civilian Control of Nuclear Weapons in the United States* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> John Garofano, “Effective Advice in Decisions for War: Beyond Objective Control,” *Orbis* (Spring 2008), p. 239.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 315. For an argument that Huntington is wrong and that FDR was actually a very assertive commander-in-chief, see, among others, Eric Larrabee, *Commander in Chief: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants, and Their War* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), especially pp. 14-15; Eliot Cohen, “A War That Was Not Left to the Generals,” *Joint Force Quarterly* (Spring 2003).

Such division of labor would reserve the dialogue between top civilian and military leaders only for the beginning and the end of a war. At the beginning, the politicians should decide on the objectives and give the go-ahead to the military. Then they should sit back and leave the military professionals to prosecute the war free of political interference. Or, as Helmuth von Moltke (the Elder) wished, politicians should fall silent the minute the war begins. Huntington's theory warns that if civilian leaders want to increase effectiveness they should not interfere with military professionalism. Civilians involving themselves in military matters would be equivalent to a patient advising her surgeon what kind of operation is needed and how to perform the surgical procedure. The failures in Vietnam have been blamed on politicians' failure to follow Huntington's objective control. More recently, supporters of traditional theory were invigorated, saying that had Rumsfeld behaved according to the Huntington's prescriptions instead of micromanaging the military, this country would not have been in such trouble in Iraq.<sup>6</sup>

However, this study shows that Huntington's theory has been the problem rather than the solution.<sup>7</sup> As Clausewitz and others teach, war is indeed very political and since, at times, even the smallest tactical decisions may have significant political consequences, Huntington's idea of a clear separation between the political and the military domain is very often impractical.<sup>8</sup> According to Matthew Moten, "The essential flaw in

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Michael C. Desch, "Bush and the Generals," *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2007), pp. 97-108.

<sup>7</sup> For a similar view, see John Garofano, "Effective Advice in Decisions for War: Beyond Objective Control," *Orbis* (Spring 2008), pp. 238-254.

<sup>8</sup> For a similar argument, and also for a detailed analysis as to how and why American civil-military relations have *not* conformed to Huntington's "objective control" theory, see Peter Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control," *Armed Forces and Society* (Winter 1997), pp. 149-178. See also Peter Feaver, *Guarding the Guardians*; Eliot Cohen,

Huntington's theoretical wall is that it splits the responsibility for policy from the responsibility for strategy. This bifurcation demands too little both of military professionals and the civilian superiors."<sup>9</sup> Also, there is no "purely" military opinion or advice that could effectively serve the decision-making process. As Clausewitz asserts:

Nor indeed is it sensible to summon soldiers, as many governments do when they are planning a war, and ask them for *purely military advice*. But it makes even less sense for theoreticians to assert that all available military resources should be put at the disposal of the commander so that on their basis he can draw up purely military plans for a war or a campaign.

No major proposal required for war can be worked out in ignorance of political factors; and when people talk, as they often do, about harmful political influence on the management of war, they are not really saying what they mean. Their quarrel should be with the policy itself, not with its influence.<sup>10</sup>

Cases of effective decision-making show that in order to be useful, military advice should be politically informed. Such is the case of then Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Matthew Ridgeway, for example, who violated the prescriptions to stay within the purely military realm and provided policy-makers with a more thorough assessment of what it would mean to commit U.S. forces in Indochina when President Eisenhower was considering the issue in 1953-54. Gen. Ridgeway gave the political leadership a comprehensive report, taking into account various economic and political factors, such as estimated casualties and their effects, cost of reserves mobilization, analysis of the domestic popular support of enemy forces, U.S. domestic political implications of a possible troops commitment, and others.

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*Supreme Command*, Chapters 1, 7, and Appendix ("The Theory of Civilian Control"); John Garofano, "Effective Advice in Decisions for War: Beyond Objective Control," *Orbis* (Spring 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Matthew Moten, "A Broken Dialogue," in *American Civil-Military Relations, the Soldier, and the State in a New Era*, Suzanne C. Nielsen and Don Snider, eds., (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), p. 60.

<sup>10</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 607-08.

Contrary to Huntington, most of my findings support Eliot Cohen's conclusions as to what is needed for effective national-security decision-making and war leadership<sup>11</sup> and his "unequal dialogue" model although I find some deficiencies in his model as well, as discussed later on. Cohen's model is an improvement over Huntington to the extent that it accounts better for the political character of war and the intimate connection between politics and war. This study provides additional new evidence in support for Cohen's argument that a constant exchange of ideas between statesmen and soldiers and *assertive* civilian control lead to a more effective decision-making and conduct of wars.<sup>12</sup> In Cohen's "unequal dialogue," civilian leaders, rather than sitting back, are querying, probing, and prodding, but without "dictating in detail" what the military should do.<sup>13</sup> My case studies show why Cohen is correct in emphasizing the importance of an ongoing, uninterrupted dialogue between civilian and military leaders during the planning and the conduct of a war. Such a vigorous civil-military dialogue is needed in order to make military force serve the political objectives of a state. It is crucial for an effective policy-making process. For example, my analysis of the decision-making in the lead-up to the 1991 Gulf War shows that assertive civilian control and civilian involvement in operational matters actually enhanced the effectiveness of the strategy- and policy-making process in several ways: by expanding the number of alternative strategies considered by decision-makers, by stimulating more creativity and novel ideas from both

<sup>11</sup> *Supreme Command* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> As explained in previous chapters, I use Peter Feaver's concept of "assertive" civilian control, which overcomes many of the problems of Huntington's typology of "objective" and "subjective" forms of control, developed in *The Soldier and the State*. Assertive civilian control is a more pro-active form of control than "objective" control, and allows "direct civilian supervision over the military, particularly over military operations." See Peter Feaver, *Guarding the Guardians: Civilian Control of Nuclear Weapons in the United States* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> The dialogue is "unequal" because by definition civilians have the last word.

the civilian and the military sides, by “keeping the military honest” and thus providing more accurate information during the policy discussions, and ultimately, by helping to match better military means and political ends.

At the same time, my 2003 Iraq war case study shows that Cohen’s model also falls short because it does not convincingly draw a line between assertive civilian control and civilian micromanagement and does not explain when assertive control can contribute to a more effective decision-making process rather than turn into civilian meddling. Assertive civilian control is insufficient for effective decision-making. Based on Cohen’s model alone, it is very difficult to define the parameters of a civil-military relationship that would be conducive to effective strategy- and policy-making and implementation. That is why this study specifies some of the problems with Cohen’s model and the circumstances under which assertive civilian control would be likely to turn into civilian micromanagement of the military and would have negative consequences for decision-making and policy implementation. Assertive civilian dominance could lead to some problems if the civil-military relationship is characterized by intense civil-military preference divergence, as we observed, for example, in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war and in the Clinton Administration. When civilian and military leaders hold highly diverging preferences, assertive civilian decision-makers may be tempted to monitor the military very extensively and to interfere often in order to make sure that civilian preferences will dominate.

Resolving the Huntington-Cohen debate is of more than theoretical significance and has become even more urgent lately<sup>14</sup>. Some leading scholars and experts on

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<sup>14</sup> Eliot Cohen’s side has been joined by others, most notably, Peter Feaver with his book and, more recently, his *International Security* article “The Right to Be Right: Civil-Military Relations and the Iraq Surge Decision.”

national security have blamed the problems in Iraq on Rumsfeld's and Wolfowitz's assertive control of the military and have called for returning back to Huntington's model of "objective control." Michael Desch, for example, argues that "it would have been far better for the United States if Bush had read Huntington's *The Soldier and the State* rather than Cohen's *Supreme Command* over his 2002 summer vacation."<sup>15</sup> Advising Defense Secretary Bob Gates on how to improve civil-military relations, Desch states: "The key is that Gates needs to recognize that Rumsfeld's meddling approach contributed in significant measure to problems in Iraq and elsewhere. The best solution is to return to an old division of labor: civilians give due deference to military professional advice in the tactical and operational realms in return for complete military subordination in the grand strategic and political realms."<sup>16</sup> While especially now it is very tempting to denounce all forms of assertive civilian control and equate them with Rumsfeldian micromanagement, this dissertation shows why the suggested "return to Huntington" would be the wrong solution.<sup>17</sup> Familiar suggestions of the kind "give the military all they want and get out of the way" are not going to work and should not be taken seriously.

This study highlights the very political nature of foreign policy decision-making, which may affect negatively the quality of the process of decision-making. Decision-makers' political motivation (i.e., to see their preferred options adopted as the government's policy) often leads them to distort the decision process in various ways in order to enhance the chances of their preferences winning. A variety of manipulation

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Desch, "Bush and the Generals," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 86 Issue 3 (May/June 2007), p. 99.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>17</sup> Along these lines, in a review of Cohen's book *Supreme Command*, Russell Weigley argues for the need of "escaping the pernicious theory that civilians must keep hands off the conduct of war." In: *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (October 2002), p. 127.



strategies have been used during all stages of the decision-making process. As my case studies show, such strategies include: a) manipulating the structure of the decision-making group – e.g., excluding from discussions people who hold dissenting views and/or including others who espouse similar preferences; holding important meetings to debate policy options when one’s opponents are out of town; seeking advice from outsiders known to be sympathetic to one’s preferences, etc; b) manipulating the group’s operating procedures and/or the decision criteria (e.g., adopting tenets of the Powell Doctrine as the dominant standard for judging arguments); c) shaping the agenda of policy meetings and thus having the crucial say on what gets debated; d) framing the issues, e) salami tactics, and others.<sup>18</sup> These manipulation techniques make the decision-making process less effective. In order for scholars to analyze them well, they need to use a framework which includes variables similar to the ones this study uses.

The framework, developed in this dissertation, uses explanatory variables, such as the civil-military balance of power and preference divergence, which reveal important aspects of the decision-making process. Such approach emphasizes that the civil-military balance of power is indeed a variable even in mature democracies with firm civilian control over their militaries. It is better in demonstrating that while *de jure* in democracies civilians always have the authority, the *de facto* balance of power may, at

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<sup>18</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Paul Hoyt and Jean Garrison, “Political Manipulation within the Small Group: Foreign Policy Advisers in the Carter Administration,” in Paul ‘t Hart, Eric K. Stern and Bengt Sundelius, eds., *Beyond Groupthink: Political Group Dynamics and Foreign Policy-making* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 249. See also Garrison’s comparative study of the Nixon and Carter administrations which shows the bitter struggles between National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, whose strongly diverging preferences led them to manipulate the decision process in various ways in order to advance the policies they favored. Jean Garrison, *Games Advisors Play: Foreign Policy in the Nixon and Carter Administrations* (Texas A&M University Press, 1999).

times, favor the military. There are periods when the military may be able to dominate debates on the use of force and military preferences may prevail over civilian wishes.

This approach is also useful in highlighting the importance of studying the preferences of policy-makers on issues of war and peace and their impact on the decision-making process (in addition to systemic variables). One could hardly provide a detailed explanation of the decision process without studying the ideas and belief of top policy-makers. If we study the preferences of political and military leaders on when and how to use or threaten force, we could predict the type of action they would recommend in a given situation. The civil-military balance of power tells us whose preferences (civilian or military) are likely to dominate in the final decision. If, in addition, we examine the *level of divergence* in the views of statesmen and soldiers, we could anticipate how effectively they would share and analyze information, and how well they are likely to interact and coordinate with each other in the process of strategy-making and implementation. For example, *high* levels of preference divergence affect negatively decision-makers' processing of information and advice – top political leaders are more likely to discount advice (or not seek it at all) from military advisors with whom they disagree strongly. Military advice is less trusted when civilian and military preferences are highly diverging. Also, policy-makers would be less likely to share information with such advisors. Furthermore, intense civil-military preference divergence leads civilian leaders to attempt to monitor the military very closely in order to make sure that the final decisions (and their implementation) reflect their preferences, and not the highly diverging preferences of the military.<sup>19</sup> Such overly close monitoring often turns into

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<sup>19</sup> For the relationship between preference divergence and delegation of authority see, for example, Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

micromanagement of the military with very negative consequences. High preference divergence very often produces alienation between political and military leaders and a rupture in the civil-military dialogue, which is indispensable for a healthy decision-making process. Hence, in order to have an effective decision-making process, it is important that the divergence between civilian and military preferences on the main issues is not so intense as to provide incentives to civilian and military leaders to distort the decision-making process in the ways described above.<sup>20</sup> In her book, Risa Brooks develops an argument using similar independent variables and a different dependent one – strategic assessment. Brooks convincingly argues about the importance of looking at preference divergence although she does not integrate this with some other literatures I have used, namely, findings from communication and persuasion theories and from rhetorics and opinion change as to what makes advice persuasive.

Focusing on the level of preference divergence between civilian decision-makers and their military advisors also allows us to integrate findings from communication and persuasion theory, which further demonstrate the central role the relationship between politicians and their advisors plays in the foreign policy-making process. The dynamics created by this relationship affect directly the quality of decision-making. The persuasiveness of information and advice depends, to a large degree, on what decision-makers think of the *source* of the information and not only of its *content*. Decision-makers are more easily persuaded by information coming from advisors who they believe share their preferences, interests and values, whom they trust, and consider

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<sup>20</sup> See Risa Brooks, *Shaping Strategy: The Civil-Military Politics of Strategic Assessment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 270.

knowledgeable on the issues in question.<sup>21</sup> Decision-makers are more receptive to advice when they perceive there is only a *low* level of preference divergence between them and their advisors. By focusing on the source of information and advice and how top decision-makers perceive this source, we can reveal some other ways in which the policy-making process could be less than rational. At times, perfectly good information could be rejected or discounted because it comes from the “wrong” source. These are cases when we reject information and advice, maybe even automatically or without having seen it, only because we strongly disagree with or distrust the source of this information. This is different from cases when advice is rejected because it does not fit with decision-makers’ preexisting beliefs – this concerns the content of advice and how close the content is to the preferences of the decision-maker. When advice is rejected because of its source, it may be the case that the decision-maker has not even familiarized herself with the content of the information. It could have been perfectly good information and very useful for the decision to be made; it could also have been information, which the decision-maker would have accepted had it come from another advisor. Being sensitive to the fact that decision-makers could reject information only because they perceive as adversarial the advisor who provides that information could help us to search for ways for critical information to reach policy-makers and be taken into account.

Examining the advisory process at the pinnacle of government through my theoretical framework leads to some counter-intuitive findings as well. For example, my

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<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Carl Hovland, Irving Janis, and Harold Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion: Psychological Studies of Opinion Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), especially Chapter 2, “Credibility of the Communicator;” Arthur Lupia, Mathew D. McCubbins, and Samuel L. Popkin, eds., *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice, and the Bounds of Rationality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Arthur Lupia, “Who Can Persuade Whom? Implications from the Nexus of Psychology and Rational Choice Theory,” In James H. Kuklinski, ed., *Thinking About Political Psychology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 51-88.

research shows that the so-called “yes-men” (here defined as the advisors who share the preferences of top decision-makers without the pejorative connotation this term usually carries) could enhance rather than diminish the effectiveness of the decision-making process. Conventional wisdom has it that it is harmful for decision-makers to surround themselves with “yes-men.” In this view, the lack of vigorous dissent would lead to a failure to consider the full range of alternative options and, as a result, the policy choice would be sub-optimal. However, by focusing on the effects of high preference divergence on the ways decision-makers search for and process information, my research reveals a more complicated picture. Actually, at times, these “yes-men” are the only possibility for transmitting of dissenting views rather than being a barrier to alternatives.<sup>22</sup> As shown, decision-makers often disregard advice and information coming from a person whose views, ideas, and interests are highly divergent from their own. If a decision-maker receives a dissenting opinion from someone with whom she disagrees on almost everything, this dissent would be discounted because it could be attributed to the “bias” of the “adversarial” source. If, however, the contrary opinion comes from an advisor whose views and ideas have been similar to hers most of the time (i.e., a “yes-man”), the decision-maker is more likely to take such advice seriously and may even reconsider her position.

By studying the preferences of top civilian and military leaders, we can also see other trends that may look counter-intuitive. For example, especially after the Vietnam war, in US foreign policy and national security strategy debates, civilian leaders have been the ones more often pushing for the use of force, while military leaders have been

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<sup>22</sup> For somewhat similar reasoning, see Randall Calvert, “The Value of Biased Information: A Rational Choice Model of Political Advice,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (June 1985), pp. 530-555.

more dovish, often resisting the use of the military instrument and pushing for other means, such as diplomacy and economic sanctions. Hence, to the extent that we observe a militarization of U.S. Foreign policy, it has been a civilian militarization – i.e., brought about by the more hawkish preferences of civilian leaders.<sup>23</sup>

Ultimately, the case studies show that improving national security decision-making is *not* a question of *either* enhancing the quality of the *people* in top positions *or* improving the quality of the *process* but of both – people *and* process. In the words of Joseph Collins, “...no matter how the decision-making process is designed, it will be strongly affected by the beliefs and experience of the officials involved, especially the President who will set the tone for his or her administration. Sound national security decisions will require great people and effective and efficient processes. Both of these will require an engaged President attuned to both policy and process.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Significance**

This dissertation contributes to the literature on international security by identifying key linkages between a state’s civil-military relations and its international relations and by explaining how statesmen and soldiers make decisions on war and peace. Since these are decisions of life and death, the purpose of my research is to enhance our understanding of how relations between top civilian and military officials affect a state’s ability to confront major threats to its security. This dissertation also contributes to the scholarship on civil-military relations by showing the importance of shifting our focus

<sup>23</sup> Michael Desch, "Civil-Militarism: The Civilian Origins of the New American Militarism", *Orbis* 50, No. 3 (Summer 2006), pp. 573-583.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Collins, "Choosing War: The Decision to Invade Iraq and Its Aftermath," Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University (April 2008), p. 27.

away from traditional conceptions of civilian control and concentrating on the impact of civil-military relations on the process by which states decide to use or threaten military force. Civilian control has been overemphasized as a dependent variable at the expense of other variables which are at least as important and much more interesting. This is particularly true for countries like the U.S. and other mature democracies, where civilian control *per se* is not in question (hence, not a variable) and where a military coup is highly unlikely.

Steeped in the democratic peace literature, many international security scholars take for granted that democracies make better decisions on war and peace. However, I show that a democratic form of government is not sufficient to explain the variance in the effectiveness of decision-making processes. My analysis of the impact of different patterns of civil-military relations on decision-making leads us to challenge the democracy/autocracy dichotomy. Using insights from the Principal-Agent theory, as well as theories on communication and persuasion, I show that, regardless of regime type and even with firm civilian control, a government which is characterized by high levels of civil-military preference divergence could be prone to ineffective decision-making, miscalculations, and inability to match political goals and military means. Hence, such a state could be dangerous to international security.

Furthermore, it is not only this country's national security that is at stake. Because of the U.S. hegemonic status and because of the size of its military, unlike in the past, the state of U.S. civil-military relations at present affects the rest of the world in no small measure. It affects countries that are or could be targets of U.S. military force, states who are U.S. allies within NATO and beyond and partners who are struggling with the consolidation of democratic civilian control of their own militaries and are attempting

to follow the U.S. model of civilian control. While obvious, Eliot Cohen's observation in this regard remains true. "American choices about the use of force, the shrewdness of American strategy, the soundness of American tactics, and the will of American leaders have *global* consequences."<sup>25</sup>

This study also helps fill a gap in existing scholarship on civil-military relations. The civilian side of the civil-military relationship is understudied and this dissertation attempts to remedy this. Most of the research has been focused on the military – under what circumstances are they most likely to stage a coup and succeed or fail, what are the military preferences in regard to the use of force, and more recently, what are military attitudes toward Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTWA), and others. My dissertation shows that while menace to civilian control and national security policy-making can come from the military, it can also come from the civilian leadership itself and the latter possibility should not be overlooked. Often we ask "who's to guard the guardians?" without asking who's to guard the military from incompetent civilians. In this connection, my research highlights the importance of analyzing the educational and professional background of top civilian and military leaders which traditional models of CMR downplay or neglect altogether. Civilian leaders' lack of understanding of the military institution and the uses and, most of all, limitations of force as a tool of foreign policy can lead to disasters. Civilians' limited knowledge and expertise in national security can cause problems in either of two ways. First, ignorant *and* assertive statesmen could mismanage the military, committing it to imprudent missions or interfering with or micromanaging its every action. Alternatively, civilian ignorance

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<sup>25</sup> Eliot Cohen, "Are U.S. Forces Overstretched? Civil-Military Relations," *Orbis* (Spring 1997), p. 186 (emphasis added).



could also manifest itself as uncritical deference to military judgment, either because politicians cannot exercise the necessary oversight or because they lack the authority to oppose military leaders. In both cases, national security policy could be in danger.

## Chapter 2

### Theory

In order to account better for states (like the US) whose militaries are socialized in the norms of civilian control, this study uses a model, which analyzes civil-military relations as a strategic interaction. The two players in this interaction (the political leaders and the military) are strategic actors in that they have a range of choices and they decide how to act based not only on their own goals but also on their expectations about what the other side would choose to do in a particular situation. For example, civilian leaders decide what monitoring mechanisms to use based on their expectations about whether the military will choose to follow closely political orders or whether they will choose to “shirk.” Similarly, the military may choose one over the other based on their expectations about the likelihood of military shirking being detected and the severity of the expected punishment if caught disobeying or thwarting civilian orders.<sup>26</sup>

Defense and foreign policy decision-making is seen as part of “politics as usual” or struggle for influence between civilian and military leaders, in which statesmen and soldiers are often in competition for control. “Politics pervade civil-military relations even if there is no coup.”<sup>27</sup> “Much as the executive branch and the Congress vie for control over policy, so do civilians try to assert control over military operations while the

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<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 2; Paul Hoyt and Jean Garrison, “Political Manipulation within the Small Group: Foreign Policy Advisers in the Carter Administration,” p. 251.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants*, p. 11.

military endeavor to retain as much autonomy as possible.”<sup>28</sup> In this approach, the civilians and the military are viewed as political (and not only bureaucratic) actors who make and implement policy decisions and, at the same time, pursue their own interests and political and institutional well-being. Under some circumstances, this may lead them to attempt to distort the decision-making process in a way that favors their preferences. For example, in its attempts to take care of its own organizational interests, the military may at times, have an incentive to thwart the goals of its civilian masters, especially in cases when civilian and military preferences diverge highly. Precisely because the decision-making process is inherently political, participants in it may try to manipulate it in order to advance their preferred policies and such distortion of the process may make it less effective.<sup>29</sup>

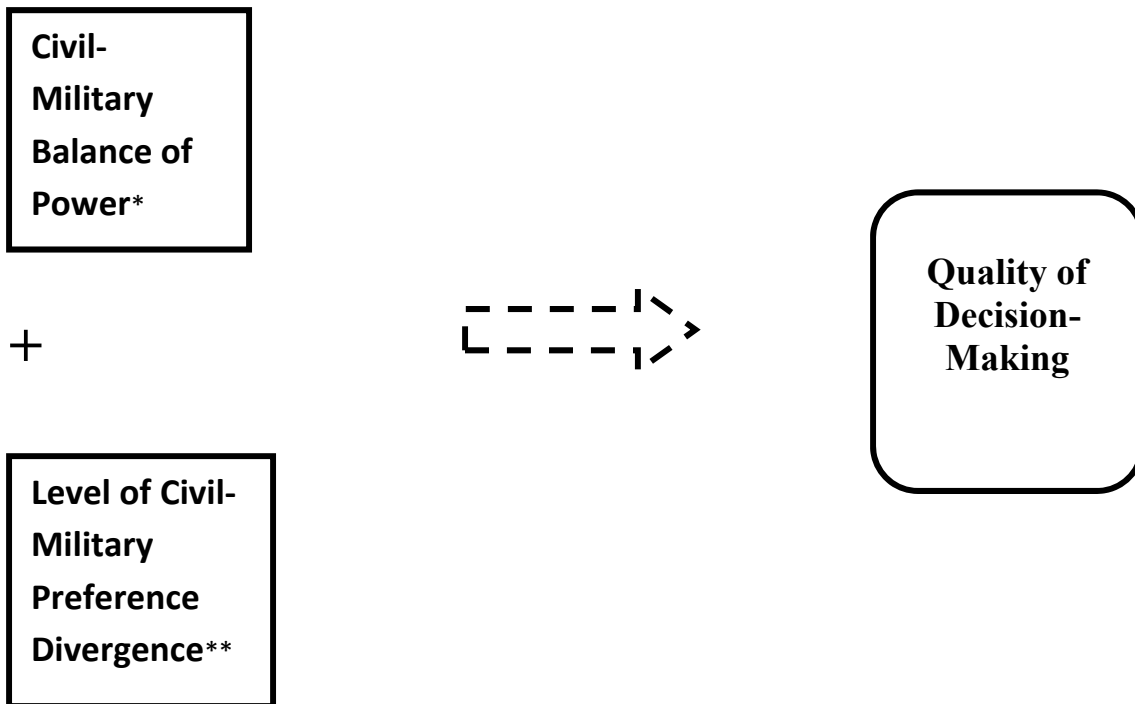
I develop a framework, which allows us to derive hypotheses as to the conditions under which policy-makers would be more likely to make *informed* decisions on the use of force. My theory is premised on the straightforward assumption that the effectiveness of the national security decision-making process depends on the quality of the dialogue and interactions between top civilian leaders and their military advisors. I argue that the effectiveness of the decision-making process depends, to a large extent, on two key variables of the civil-military relationship – the civil-military balance of power and the level of divergence between civilian and military preferences on issues related to U.S. national security and the use of force (Diagram 1 below).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124; Paul Hoyt and Jean Garrison, “Political Manipulation within the Small Group: Foreign Policy Advisers in the Carter Administration,” p. 249.

<sup>29</sup> For a similar view, see Paul Hoyt and Jean Garrison, *Ibid.*, p. 249.

### Diagram 1

**The Quality of the Decision-Making Process as a Function of the Civil-Military Balance of Power and the Degree of Civil-Military Preference Divergence**



\* The Civil-Military Balance of Power varies on a continuum with civilian dominance on the one end to military dominance, on the other.

\*\* The Level of Civil-Military Preference Divergence varies from “high” to “low.”

In brief, the argument is that one can expect a more effective decision-making process when civilian decision-makers are dominant *and* the level of civil-military preference divergence is low than when, for example, the military dominates *and* civilian and military preferences diverge highly. Preference divergence held constant, assertive

civilian dominance is preferable. Regarding the differences in views and ideas between civilian and military officials, low levels of preference divergence is associated with a more effective decision-making process, while high levels of preference divergence usually lead to poor civil-military communication and coordination and inability to integrate political and military considerations into the strategies and policies.

My theory is summarized in Table 2 below.

**Table 2**

**The Quality of the Decision-Making Process as a Function of the Civil-Military Balance of Power and the Degree of Civil-Military Preference Divergence**

Level of Civil-Military Preference Divergence	Civil-Military Balance of Power	
	Civilian Dominance	Military Dominance
Hi	Quadrant 1  <b>Poor Quality Decision-Making</b>	Quadrant 2  <b>Worst Quality Decision-Making</b>
Low	Quadrant 3  <b>Good Quality Decision-Making</b>	Quadrant 4  <b>Mixed Quality Decision-Making</b>

While neither of the independent variables alone could explain the decision-making process, in combination, the degree of preference divergence and the civil-military balance of power provide important insights. I argue that the quality of the decision-making process is shaped by the particular configuration of top civilian and military officials' relative power and the level of divergence between their preferences, as shown in Table 2. In each of the 4 settings in the table, we have a distinct pattern of civil-military relations, characterized by a particular combination of preferences and relative power. Each of these patterns creates variable dynamics during the decision-making process and could account for variations in a state's ability to design strategies and deal with the challenges in its security environment. Thus, by analyzing some of the possible configurations of the two independent variables (degree of civil-military preference divergence and the political-military balance of power), we can deduce several hypotheses about the quality of the decision-making process in those environments (reflected in the four quadrants of Table 2).

### **Hypotheses**

What can we expect for cases that would fall in Quadrant 1 (civilian dominance combined with high levels of civil-military preference divergence)?

#### *Hypothesis 1*

*When civilian leaders are dominant and civilian and military preferences diverge highly, the decision-making process will be of poor quality.*

Why should we expect an ineffective decision-making process in that case? Under conditions of civilian dominance and intense preference divergence between statesmen and soldiers, I hypothesize that the high preference divergence (even when combined with strong civilian dominance) would create dynamics that would affect negatively all components of the policy-making and implementation processes. More precisely, intense civil-military disagreement would make the functioning of the advisory process ineffective by decreasing civilian and military officials' incentives to share information with each other and also by hampering their interaction and coordination in planning and implementing policy decisions.

For example, intense civil-military preference divergence usually leads to significant problems with the exchange of information as well as with coordination and cooperation between civilian and military leaders. The dominant side (in the case, the civilians) may try to marginalize opposing views by excluding some military leaders from policy debates or discounting in advance the merits of their judgment. Excluding the military from many of the debates at the highest levels and ignoring or disregarding their advice could lead to a dysfunctional analysis of alternative options for military action and, ultimately, undermined strategy and policy. Strong civil-military preference divergence could undermine the coordination and collaboration among leaders at the top because each side would like a different outcome. This could lead to a failure to fully integrate military views with political and diplomatic policy. Intense differences in civilian and military preferences could also lead to lack of trust, which often causes civilian micromanagement of the military, which further intensifies civil-military conflicts. My case study of the 2003 Iraq illustrates similar dynamics of cases falling in Quadrant 1.

### *Hypothesis 2*

*When the military is dominant and civilian and military preferences diverge highly, the decision-making process will be highly dysfunctional. High civil-military preference divergence would result in poor communication and information sharing and it will also impede the cooperation and coordination between civilian and military leaders.*

My theory expects cases in Quadrant 2 (military dominance combined with a high level of civil-military preference divergence) to be the worst possibility from the standpoint of decision-making. In its attempts to protect its own preferences, each side may skew the decision-making process by undermining effective information gathering and analysis, as well as coordination and cooperation. Because of the high level of preference divergence, one would *not* expect a free flow of information or an extensive analysis of alternative options. Each side could have incentives to manipulate or withhold information. High preference divergence could also lead to the use of leaks, foot-dragging, and other tactics for blocking the preferred option of the other side. Civilians would not necessarily get what they want. Also, because of military dominance, the political and diplomatic perspectives may not necessarily be included in the analysis of options. The implementation process would often be characterized by lack of integration between political objectives and military means. At the same time, in order to restore the balance of power, civilians may be tempted to use intrusive monitoring, which may intensify the conflict with the military. Dynamics which are characteristic for decision processes in Quadrant 2 are illustrated by my case study on the first Clinton Administration.



### *Hypothesis 3*

*When civilian leaders are dominant and civil-military preference divergence is low, we expect an effective decision-making process. Top civilian and military leaders will communicate and share information willingly, and they will coordinate and cooperate with each other smoothly during the policy-making and implementation process.*

Quadrant 3 (civilian dominance combined with low levels of civil-military preference divergence) seems to be the best of all worlds from the point of view of the quality of the decision-making process. Civilian and military leaders are in agreement and, hence, neither side would have an incentive to withhold or manipulate information. Both sides are likely to share private information since they have an incentive to ensure that their mutually preferred outcome is realized in the best possible way. The political leadership is likely to benefit from a more complete analysis and evaluation of the military aspects of the situation since military advisors would feel free to speak their mind. The military is also going to benefit from a more open and frank discussion of the political constraints as seen by the civilian leadership and this could increase their mutual understanding and facilitate coordination. Because of civilian dominance, assertive civilian control becomes an option. Assertive control, however, would not deteriorate into micromanagement in such cases (and unlike in Quadrant 1) because of the commonalities in civilian and military perspectives. Civilians would not feel the need to employ intrusive mechanisms of control because they would expect the military to carry out their orders without foot-dragging and in accordance with civilian preferences (which happen to be military preferences too). We can expect a good integration of political

objectives and military means. My case study on the 1991 Gulf War illustrates such dynamics.

A note of caution is in order here. At least hypothetically, there might be a problem if civilian and military leaders agree “too” much and the decision-making team starts suffering from group-think. In such a case, not many alternative options would be considered, and the leadership would easily unite behind their common preference, which might not be the optimal solution. However, as noted earlier, such a situation of full agreement should not be equated with “low” preference divergence, which is the healthiest option for effective decision-making.

#### *Hypothesis 4*

*When the military is dominant and civilian and military preferences are close, the decision-making process will be of mixed quality.*

The quality of the decision-making process in cases falling in Quadrant 4 (military dominance and low level of civil-military preference divergence) is expected to be “mixed.” On the one hand, decision-making will benefit from the low level of divergence between civilian and military preferences; on the other, however, military dominance may lead to difficulties in integrating the military instrument with the political view. As one of my case studies shows (the final stages of the 1991 Gulf War, including the armistice talks at Safwan), even in the case of success (i.e., a military victory), political objectives were not fully achieved because such integration was lacking. The armistice talks, which Schwarzkopf had to conduct almost entirely on his own, illustrate this point. The insufficient civilian involvement at the end of the 1991 Gulf War led to the failure to integrate military and political policies and ultimately, caused the inability

of the U.S. to turn a big military victory into a political one as well. In this case, civilian leaders failed to ensure that their ground commander, Gen. Schwarzkopf, would take into account not only the purely military but the wider political and diplomatic implications of a tactical issue such as the Iraqi negotiators' request to be allowed to use armed helicopters. Schwarzkopf agreed to that request after making sure that the helicopters would not endanger in any way the security of U.S. and coalition forces. As it turned out, however, this decision had much broader (and tragic) consequences -- Saddam Hussein used the helicopters to brutally suppress the Shiite uprising and keep himself in power. Such developments could have most probably been prevented had civilian leaders intervened in time to explain to the military commander the political implications of the Iraqi domestic situation and the importance of this decision for the overall success of US political objectives in the war.

Comparing cases falling in Quadrant 1 and Quadrant 2, one may wonder why the quality of the decision-making process in the first one is expected to be better than in the second one (that is, for cases in Quadrant 1, I hypothesize "poor" quality while for Quadrant 2, my theory expects "worst.") Since the main problems for the decision-making process for cases in both quadrants would stem from the *high* level of civil-military preference divergence, can't we hypothesize just the opposite (i.e., that for cases in Quadrant 1 the situation could be worse than in Quadrant 2)? We should note, however, that what also matters here is whose preferences are dominant at the end. My theory predicts a better overall decision-making process for Q 1 rather than Q 2 because in the former, civilians are dominant. Certainly, it could happen (and has actually happened) civilians to be wrong about some or even all aspects of decisions regarding a particular military intervention and, being dominant in a given situation, they could

impose their wrong preferences. Still, from a normative perspective, this situation is preferable than a situation in which military preferences dominate. After all, the real meaning of the principle of civilian control is that “civilians have the right to be wrong,” as Peter Feaver put it.<sup>30</sup>

### **Methodology, Case Selection, and Alternative Explanations**

To test the above hypotheses about the quality of the decision-making process under varying conditions (as described in Table 1), subsequent chapters present in-depth case studies of US deliberations on the use of force and the making of strategy under presidents George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the potential causal effects of civil-military relations on the quality of the decision-making process. Hence, the test here is against the null hypothesis that there is no causal relationship between CMR and the effectiveness of the decision-making process, and not against alternative theories.<sup>31</sup> While there are other variables that affect the decision-making process, my claim is that civil-military relations are a *necessary* factor for the full understanding of its effectiveness. This is not to exclude other variables that could potentially influence my dependent variable (and could be confounding factors). Where ever appropriate in the case studies, I discuss such alternative explanations, but I do not systematically disprove competing theories. The

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> On two-cornered as opposed to three-cornered tests, see Stephen van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997). For the distinction of “two cornered fights” and “three-cornered fights” see Imre Lakatos, “Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programs,” in Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, eds., *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

task here is more limited – to show that civil-military relations have a consistent and very significant impact on the quality of the decision-making process.

I use qualitative methods (and process tracing in particular) to test my hypotheses. Qualitative methods are the most suitable to evaluate my theory because it requires a detailed analysis of the ideas and beliefs of top civilian and military decision-makers, the sources of their influence over decision-making, and the process of their daily interactions.<sup>32</sup> By using process tracing, we can find whether the behavior of policy-makers in the various cases is consistent with the logic and expectations of my theory. As King, Keohane and Verba suggest, methods like process tracing are suitable because “within each sequence of events, process tracing yields many observations. ... By increasing the number of observations relevant to the implications of a theory, such a method can help to overcome the dilemmas of small-n research and enable investigators and their readers to increase their confidence in the findings of social science.”<sup>33</sup> My case studies are based on a variety of primary and secondary sources, as well as interviews with policy-makers and defense experts for the most recent cases.

Cases were selected to provide maximum variation on the independent variables (level of civil-military preference divergence and civil-military balance of power) and to include all the possible patterns of civil-military relations in the table below.

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<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); John Odell, “A Major Milestone with One Major Limitation,” *Qualitative Methods* (Spring 2006), pp. 37-40.

<sup>33</sup> Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 227.

<b>Level of Civil-Military Preference Divergence</b>	<b>Civil-Military Balance of Power</b>	
	<b>Civilian Dominance</b>	<b>Military Dominance</b>
<b>Hi</b>	<b>2003 Iraq War</b>	<b>Bosnia 1993-97</b>
<b>Low</b>	<b>1991 Gulf War</b>	<b>End of 1991 Gulf War and Armistice Talks at Safwan</b>

Certainly, there were other contemporary cases that could have been a good test for my theory and would have contributed to the historical record, but were rejected on other grounds. For example, I decided that the case of the 1999 Kosovo intervention (Operation Allied Force) was not suitable because the main divisions at the time were not between top civilian and military leaders, but within the military and the political establishments. Such selectiveness allows us to avoid cases in which there is no meaningful civil-military divide and, hence, speaking of civil-military preference divergence and its potential effects on decision-making would not shed much light on events. Unlike in the Kosovo case, in the chosen cases the divisions within the civilian elite and the inter-service rivalries are at a very low level, which does not affect the overall framework of analysis.

Another motive guiding the case selection is the possibility to control for some of the confounding variables by holding them constant while CMR vary. One alternative explanation could be that regime type determines the effectiveness of decision-making. It is widely believed that democracies make better decisions on war and peace than autocracies.<sup>34</sup> By selecting US cases and holding regime type constant, I show that there is a high variation in the quality of the decision-making process *within* regime type. Democracies with intense civil-military preference divergence could also be prone to ineffective decision-making and miscalculations, and could exhibit an inability to match political goals and military means, leading to strategic failures. This dissertation shows that the effectiveness of decision-making depends on changes in the patterns of civil-military relations at the top of a government, regardless of regime type.

Another alternative explanation could be leaders' personalities.<sup>35</sup> One could argue that it was not the high level of civil-military preference divergence that affected negatively decision-making, but the personalities of leaders like President Clinton and Secretary Rumsfeld and their idiosyncratic characteristics. After all, there some important personal characteristics that influence heavily how decision-makers process information, and thus, the policy-making process as a whole. However, my cases studies show that personality as a variable is insufficient to explain the variance in the

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<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Dan Reiter and Allan Stam, *Democracies at War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>35</sup> On the importance of personality in foreign policy decision-making in general, and on structuring decision-makers' advisory apparatus, see, for example, Patrick Haney, *Organizing for Foreign Policy Crises: Presidents, Advisors, and the Management of Decision-Making* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002); Alexander George, *Presidential Decision-Making in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980); Alexander George, "Findings and Recommendations," in Alexander George, ed., *Avoiding War: Problems of Crisis Management* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991); John Burke and Fred Greenstein, *How Presidents Test Reality: Decisions on Vietnam, 1954-1965* (New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 1989).

effectiveness of decision-making. The dynamics created by the relations between a state's top civilian and military officials shape the decision-making process independently of leaders' personalities. Studying closely the relationship between top civilian leaders and their military advisors with the help of my theoretical framework shows that information is not necessarily "available" to leaders in the ways we usually assume and that leaders' cognitive, emotional, and psychological characteristics are not the only barrier to searching and processing information. The various dynamics created by different patterns of civil-military relations are as important for knowing what information and advice decision-makers would accept or disregard. Hence, personalities matter, but decision-makers' personalities operate in and are constrained by the broader setting, which consists of the relationships of the civilian leaders with their military advisors. In the same way, as other contexts – the international environment, the state, and the bureaucratic contexts matter, my framework points to the context of the relationship, which empowers or constraints the personalities.

One example from my case studies is Dick Cheney and his different behavior due to the different relationship settings he found himself in. During the G. H. W Bush administration, there was a generally friendly, open, and trustful relationship between the civilian leaders and their top military advisors. In this setting, the then Secretary of Defense behaves as an assertive and probing leading, but also one who was willing to sit back and let the military do its job, without micromanaging it. In the administration of Bush, Jr., it was a very different Dick Cheney. He found himself in a highly tense and adversarial civil-military relationship, defined by lack of trust and suspicion. Both sides were trying to advance their diverging preferences and were, at times, distorting or concealing information to strengthen their case. Cheney and Rumsfeld were ready to



exclude top military advisors from discussions, arguing their advice was not that useful because the Generals were either “stuck in the Cold War” or were not on the team and were sabotaging their efforts.

### Chapter 3

#### **Power, Preferences, and Decision-Making: Operationalization and Measurement of Key Variables**

This chapter continues with defining the main variables in my framework, namely: the quality of the decision-making process (the dependent variable), as well as the two explanatory factors – (a) the civil-military balance of power and (b) the level of civil-military preference divergence. In order to explicate better the logical underpinnings of my theoretical framework, I will also discuss contentious issues regarding the conceptualization of the variables as well as their operationalization and “measurement.” While there is no consensus in the field as to “the best” way of measuring civilian and military “power” and “preferences,” let alone “quality of the decision-making process,” this dissertation uses some of the more often preferred indicators of these variables, and also addresses numerous conceptual difficulties and definitional debates along the way.

#### **The Quality of the Decision-Making Process**

The main focus of this study is the quality of the decision-making *process* on the use of force and what patterns of civil-military relations at the top of a government make the process more or less effective. The process of decision-making is defined as the interactions between senior civilian and military officials generating policies on key issues of national security. Following Alexander George’s emphasis on procedural

rationality, I define an *effective* decision-making process as one during which policy-makers:

Ensure that sufficient information about the situation at hand is obtained and analyzed adequately so that it provides policymakers with an incisive and valid diagnosis of the problem... Facilitate consideration of all the major values and interests affected by the policy issue at hand. Assure a search for a relatively wide range of options and a reasonably thorough evaluation of the expected consequences of each. Provide for careful consideration of the problems that may arise in implementing the options under consideration.<sup>36</sup>

By contrast, defective decision-making most often exhibits the following characteristics: “incomplete survey of objectives and alternatives; poor information search; failure to work out contingency plans; selective bias in processing information; failure to examine risks or preferred choice<sup>37</sup> A review of dysfunctional decision-making on the use of force confirms that the process in such cases most often includes: choosing a policy without presentation or evaluation of alternatives; suppressing information or advice; making decisions based on preconceptions or assumptions that are left unchallenged; lack of critical debate or analysis of the situation at hand; lack of careful assessment of the capabilities and political will of one’s own state and/or the adversary.

What then are the characteristics of a healthy decision-making process? Decision-makers should: seek information that allows them to define adequately their internal and external environment (or the crisis situation at hand), the state’s interests at stake, and the threats to these interests; evaluate the available tools at their disposal to deal with the threats. Based on a critical evaluation of the situation, decision-makers should be able to

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<sup>36</sup> Alexander George, *Presidential Decision-Making in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), p. 10. See also John Elster, “Introduction,” in John Elster, ed., *Rational Choice* (Oxford, U.K.: Basil, Blackwell, 1986), pp. 34-59.

<sup>37</sup> David Mitchell and Tansa George Massoud, “Anatomy of Failure: Bush’s Decision-Making Process and the Iraq War,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* (2009) 5, p. 268.

choose a course of action that advances a state's interests at acceptable cost. Ideally, the decision-making process should include a "free and fair hearing" of different views and opinions and an open debate of alternatives.<sup>38</sup> In reality, especially in a crisis situation, few American administrations and other governments have performed according to this ideal model. However, keeping the ideal type in mind is useful for analytical purposes because it could provide us with a model for comparison with how particular foreign policy choices have been made. For example, one could analyze whether in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war, top civilian decision-makers and their military advisors evaluated critically the kind of war they were embarking on.

For the purposes of this study, *effective decision-making* is defined as *a process characterized by a free flow and exchange of information between civilian and military officials in order to facilitate the analysis and evaluation of alternative options, as well as smooth interaction and coordination between them in order to achieve integration of political and military considerations in the adopted policy.* Informed decisions on the use of force require both political and military knowledge and effective interactions between civilian and military leaders who possess these two different kinds of wisdom. The dynamics of the interactions between civilian and military officials have a major impact on the quality of deliberations. A continuing, uninterrupted, and vigorous dialogue between statesmen and soldiers is indispensable for effective national security decision-making.<sup>39</sup> Hence, for the purposes of operationalizing the dependent variable

<sup>38</sup> John Garofano, "Deciding on Military Intervention: What is the Role of Senior Military Leaders?," *Naval War College Review* 53, no. 2 (Spring 2000), pp. 40-64.

<sup>39</sup> Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*; Andrew Bacevich, "Elusive Bargain: The Pattern of U.S. Civil-Military Relations Since World War II, Paper presented at Rutgers University, p. 2; Tami Biddle, "Leveraging Strength: The Pillars of American Grand Strategy in World War II," *Orbis* (Winter 2011);

(*quality of the decision-making process*), we can disaggregate the decision-making process into the following components: 1) information sharing, analysis and evaluation of alternative options; 2) interaction and coordination between civilian and military officials; 3) choosing a policy from existing alternatives.<sup>40</sup> Then we could analyze how the independent variables (civilian and military relative power and level of preference divergence) affect each of these components.

Regarding the first component of the policy-making process, the free flow of information is crucial for a rigorous analysis of alternative strategies. An effective decision-making necessitates relations between top civilian and military leaders that facilitate the deliberations among them, lead to a productive exchange of ideas and help statesmen cope with the complexity and uncertainty of their external and internal environments and the issues at stake. What evidence of healthy decision-making are we looking for in regard to information sharing, analysis, and evaluation? In order to evaluate the effectiveness of this component of the decision-making process, I have collected evidence for each case, showing: the extent to which there is a free flow and exchange of information between civilian and military officials (e.g., regular frank and open discussions between civilian and military leaders; no or few cases of concealing of information); whether both sides are willing to share their private information<sup>41</sup>; the

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Major Bradley J. Harms, "The American Civil-Military Relationship: A Delicate Balance," Master's Thesis, United States Marine Corps, Command and Staff College, 2007/08.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, John Garofano, "Deciding on Military Intervention: What is the Role of Senior Military Leaders?," *Naval War College Review* 53, no. 2 (Spring 2000), pp. 40-64; Risa Brooks, *Institutions at the Domestic/International Nexus: The Political-Military Origins of Strategic Integration, Military Effectiveness, and War*, Ph.D. Dissertation (UCSD: 2000).

<sup>41</sup> For example, military leaders possess private information most likely about the military capabilities of a state and its allies and adversaries, the risks and costs of various military plans, their likelihood of success, etc. Civilian leaders most likely have private information through political and diplomatic channels and

number and quality of alternative options proposed during the deliberations and whether there is a critical evaluation of their costs and benefits; the extent to which key assumptions are challenged and whether participants in the process attempt to address contradictory information and ambiguities; whether top political and military decision-makers feel free to offer their honest advice; whether civilian or military officials attempt to conceal or distort information during the discussions (e.g., cases of inflated estimates of the costs or benefits of an intervention); the extent to which either side (civilian or military) attempts to prematurely foreclose less preferred options (through manipulation of information or through leaks, threats of resignation or by any other means), and others.

Regarding interaction and coordination between top civilian and military officials, an effective decision-making process on the use of force and other issues of national security requires not simply military subordination, but also a constant consultation between top civilian and military leaders in order to match military means to political objectives and to be responsive at all times to the changing conditions of the diplomatic and military situation. Successful policy-making requires that the military view is taken into account and at the same time, democracy presupposes that it is subordinate to the civilian view. The making of reasoned policy and strategy requires that we combine “the uneven and conflicting stores of knowledge possessed by military and civilian advisors.”<sup>42</sup> In order to have such an effective relationship, it is important that both civilian and military officials have certain knowledge of the other side, its responsibilities

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their contacts with other governments. All of this information is important for the effective assessment and planning of strategy, and if concealed, the decision-making process would suffer.

<sup>42</sup> John Garofano, “Deciding on Military Intervention: What Is the Role of Senior Military Leaders?,” *Naval War College Review* (Spring 2000). Available at: <http://www.nwc.navy.mil/press/Review/2000/spring/art2-sp0.htm>.

and constraints. They should attempt to understand each other's assumptions and concerns. As Russell Weigley so ably put it:

The most desirable civil-military relations in a democracy are not simply those in which civilian leadership almost always prevails. The most desirable civil-military relations are those in which there is a nearly altogether candid exchange of ideas between the soldier and the statesman, along with a consequent founding of a policy and strategy upon a real meeting of minds. Only the former, lesser ideal has been realized most of the time in American history. The meeting of the minds has been relatively rare.<sup>43</sup>

Smooth coordination between civilian and military officials is very important because it affects the degree to which political and military concerns would be integrated in the final strategy and, ultimately, the extent to which the military instrument would serve properly the political goals of a state. In this connection, my case studies examine how civilian and military leaders interact with each other and how they participate in the joint advisory councils. Evidence is collected to address the following questions in each of the case studies: How often do top civilian and military leaders interact? Do they meet regularly? Is, for example, one group marginalized by the other? Do politicians look for military advice from outside of their regular circle of advisors? Is the civilian or the military side trying to sabotage the decision or implementation process by foot-dragging or leaks? What is the level of trust between top civilian and military officials? Do civilian leaders resort to micromanagement or other intrusive methods of control and monitoring of the military?

In regard to the choosing of the final policy, one could look at whether, at the end, either the civilian or the military side has the power to impose its preferences and whether the final decision is a result of deliberations or whether the choice is "imposed"

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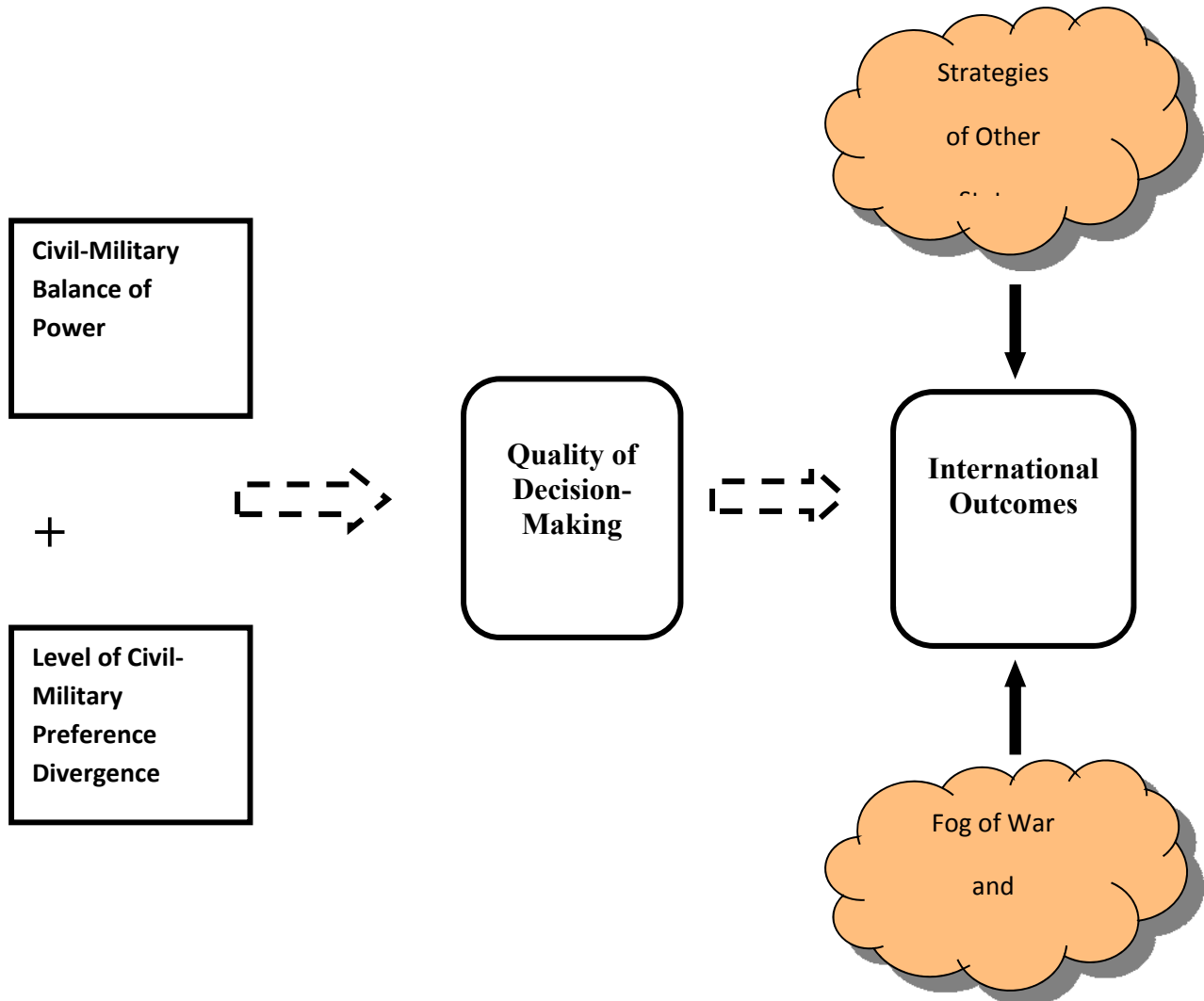
<sup>43</sup> "The Soldier, the Statesman, and the Military Historian," *The Journal of Military History* 63 (October 1999), p. 810.

unilaterally and has little to do with the merits of the preceding arguments. Or, in cases of conflict between civilian and military preferences, what kind of a compromise, if any, was achieved in the final decision? Are there consistent and deliberate efforts on the part of decision-makers to link military analysis with political policy? How well did statesmen and soldiers manage to integrate political and military considerations? Did the chosen means serve the political ends?

While this study explains how different patterns of civil-military relations affect the quality of the decision-making process, there is no claim that effective decision-making always produces effective policies and international outcomes. In addition to the quality of the decision-making process of a state, the outcome depends also on the strategies of other actors, as well as on various circumstances some of which are beyond the state's control (Diagram 2 below). Hence, when my theoretical framework expects a high or low quality decision process, this does not mean one should necessarily predict a similar international outcome.



Diagram 2



As case studies show, a “good” decision-making process does not guarantee a good outcome.<sup>44</sup> While process and outcome are certainly linked, at times, good

<sup>44</sup> Surprisingly, there are very few studies on the link between the quality of the decision-making process and the outcomes of the decisions. (It is *assumed* rather than demonstrated that good process produces good outcomes.) For an exception, see Mark Schafer and Scott Crichlow, “The Process-Outcome Connection in Foreign Policy Decision-Making: A Quantitative Study Building on Groupthink,” *International Studies Quarterly*, 46 (2002), pp. 45-68. The authors analyze 31 cases of decisions from 1975 to 1993 and confirm the positive correlation between process and outcome.

outcomes could come as a result of a bad policy-making process and vice versa. Decision-makers could blunder into success. This is especially true for some types of outcomes and for particular countries. For example, a country as powerful as the United States has a much bigger margin of error than other states. Because of its overwhelming military advantage, no matter how incompetent at times U.S. strategy-making is, in the last decade or so, when engaging non-peer competitors, there has been little chance the US would lose a conflict militarily (although, of course, a military victory does not mean the achieving of political objectives.) While a good outcome at times could be achieved merely by flipping a coin, having in mind how costly decisions on the use of force could be, my study proceeds on the assumption that an effective decision-making process in most cases would produce a better outcome and hence, it is vital to continue studying the factors leading to effective decision-making.

In traditional scholarship on the subject, civil-military relations (CMR) have most often been the dependent variable.<sup>45</sup> In contrast, this dissertation poses two key aspects of CMR -- namely, the relative power of top civilian and military officials and the degree of divergence in their preferences -- as the key independent variables, which, in combination, provide powerful insights into the quality of the decision-making process.

### **The Civil-Military Balance of Power (BOP)**

The first independent variable -- *the balance of power (BOP) between civilian and military officials* -- represents the relative influence<sup>46</sup> of civilian and military officials

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<sup>45</sup> Here I have in mind the vast comparative politics literature which focuses exclusively on military coups.

<sup>46</sup> In this dissertation “power” and “influence” are used interchangeably although conceptually this is not necessarily correct. Discussions on the differences between power and influence, however, go beyond the scope of this study.

over decision-making. Power is an elusive concept, which has defied definition.<sup>47</sup> Analysts are even skeptical of the possibility of determining military influence on decision-making. After all, only policy-makers themselves know who or what has influenced their thinking; at times, even they do not know or would not like to acknowledge.<sup>48</sup> For the purposes of this study, I will define power as the *blend of bargaining resources* decision makers possess at any given time and *their skills and will* to use these resources in order *to achieve an outcome consistent with their preferences*. This definition borrows from one of the leading scholars on presidential power, Richard Neustadt, who argues that there are three sources of presidential influence: (1) “formal powers, often termed authority, vested by the Constitution, laws, or customs [...] along with the status they confer...” (2) “professional reputation, amounting to impression in the Washington community about the skill and will with which he put those things to use.” And (3) “...prestige, his public standing...”<sup>49</sup> Since power is issue- and time-

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, “Two Faces of Power,” *American Political Science Review*, 56 (1962); Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, “Power and Its Two Faces Revisited: A Reply to Geoffrey Debnam,” *American Political Science Review*, 69 (1975), pp. 900-904; Anthony de Crespigny, “Power and Its Forms,” *Political Studies* No. 16 (1968), pp. 192-205; Geoffrey Debnam, “Nondecisions and Power: The Two Faces of Bachrach and Baratz,” *American Political Science Review* No. 69 (1975), pp. 889-99; Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Colin Gordon, ed., Leo Marshall, John Merpham, and Kate Soper, trans., New York: Pantheon, 1980; Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, eds., *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (Houndmills: Macmillan Education, 1974); Richard Merelman, “On the Neo-Elitist Critique of Community Power,” *American Political Science Review*, No. 62 (1968), pp. 451-60; Nelson Polsby, *Community Power and Political Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); Raymond E. Wolfinger, “Nondecisions and the Study of Politics,” *American Political Science Review*, No. 65 (1971), pp. 1063-80.

<sup>48</sup> Richard K. Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (New York: Free Press, 1990), p. 185.

specific, the balance of power changes from one setting to another, depending on the issue and institutional framework.

One important difference of my approach is that my theoretical framework emphasizes that both civilian and military power over decision-making does vary, even in democracies. This is not difficult to see if we adopt the way the military is viewed in comparative politics – i.e., as a political actor which has sources of power that vary over time and which variance has important effects on the state, its governmental institutions and its policies.<sup>50</sup> (This view is different from the one that portrays the military merely as a bureaucratic actor which implements policies decided upon by the government of a state.) My theoretical framework assumes that military officials are not simply unbiased professionals who merely execute the orders of their civilian masters. Military leaders are at the same time political actors who have potential sources of countervailing power, such as: the ability to narrow decision-makers' options through controlling information and framing alternatives; bureaucratic maneuvering; building coalitions with supporters in Congress; appealing to favorable media/public opinion; leaks<sup>51</sup> and resignations.<sup>52</sup> The military could be ordered, but it could, at least to a certain extent, resist or twist the orders of its civilian masters when it disagrees with them.

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Felipe Aguero, *Soldiers, Citizens, and Democracy: Post-Franco Spain in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Latin America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986; Samuel Finer, *The Man or Horseback* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1962); Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>51</sup> For a good discussion of how leaks are used during the decision-making process, see Morton Halperin, Priscilla Clap (with Arnold Kanter), *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006), pp. 184-90.

<sup>52</sup> I mean the use of rumors and/or threats of resignation. Actual resignations (in the case of the U.S.) have been extremely rare.

The civil-military BOP varies on a continuum from “civilian dominance,” on the one end, to “military dominance” on the other. Although power is a continuous variable, for the purposes of this study I discuss only two of its possible values: “civilian dominance” and “military dominance.” “Military dominance” in this study does *not* equal “military” or “militarized” government – a government in which the armed forces rule directly or indirectly and dominate policy-making on domestic *and* foreign affairs. Even in stable democracies such as the United States, which have established robust norms of civilian control and a firm day-to-day hold over their militaries, the level of military influence over decision-making varies significantly. There are periods when the military may be able to dominate debates on the use of force and military preferences may prevail over civilian wishes.<sup>53</sup> “Military dominance” indicates precisely such a distribution of power favoring the military. There is an important distinction between a military intervening or being dominant in the domestic politics and the governance of a country, on the one hand, and a military being involved in (and/or dominating temporarily) only the security policy of a state.<sup>54</sup>

As analyses of defense and foreign-policy decision-making find and as my case studies show, temporary military dominance over decision-making in democracies may obtain in several ways. One such path to military dominance – civilian “abdication” of control - is discussed in the chapter on the 1991 Gulf War. Other ways for the military to become dominant include circumstances when, for example, the civilians are divided while the military is united, when the statesmen lack experience and understanding of

<sup>53</sup> Arguably, such was the case in the first Clinton Administration.

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, Timothy Colton and Thane Gustafson, eds., *Soldiers and the Soviet State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

national security matters and/or military officials are more politically and bureaucratically savvy than their civilian counter-parts, etc.<sup>55</sup> The first several years of the Clinton Presidency, for instance, are a good illustration of such dynamics. Furthermore, I show that the variance in the civil-military balance of power has an important impact on the quality of the decision-making process and the content of specific policies, and needs to be taken into account. The BOP tells us whose preferences – civilian or military – are going to dominate when preferences are in conflict.

It is important to find “measures” of power that are independent from the outcome of political-military debates during the decision-making process. We should *not* conclude, for example, that the balance of power in some case favored the civilians because at the end civilian preferences carried the day; we should determine the balance of power independently of whose preferences dominated at the end. That is why, in order to establish the power status of each side – the civilian and the military<sup>56</sup>, I look at indicators of both *formal* and *informal* influence, such as:

the legal (formal) powers of civilian and military officials (based on constitutional arrangements and other relevant legislation, such as the Goldwater-Nichols Act in the case of the US);

the level of unity of civilian and military elites;

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<sup>55</sup> Christopher Gibson, *Countervailing Forces: Enhancing Civilian Control and National Security through Madisonian Concepts*, Ph. D. Dissertation (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Michael Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Richard Kohn, “The Erosion of Civilian Control of the Military in the United States Today,” *Naval War College Review* (Summer 2002).

<sup>56</sup> Here the focus is only on top-level officials in the *executive* branch of a government. (In the case of the US, for example, the role of civilians in the legislature is discussed separately.)

the availability (or lack) of public support for political and military leaders and specific policies under consideration<sup>57</sup>;

the availability and strength of allies – e.g., Congress, the media, other influential political actors;

the educational and professional background of top civilian and military leaders, their expertise in foreign and defense affairs, in particular, and their political and bureaucratic skills;

related to the above, the ability of civilian leadership to exercise assertive civilian control;

None of these indicators is without problems and there is no agreed upon method of measuring power. Since evaluating these indicators and “calculating” the civil-military balance of power remains ultimately a subjective judgment, for each case study I also provide the opinions and evaluations of other scholars – experts on civil-military relations, who have made their independent evaluations of civilian and military influence on decision-making. As imprecise as they may be, the above indicators help us determine the civil-military balance of power in each case well enough as to be able to situate the cases in Table 2 accordingly and, from there, to derive hypotheses for the effectiveness of the decision-making process as discussed later in this chapter.

How then has the power of US political and military leaders varied over time and how could we use the above indicators to evaluate civilian and military influence? As the case studies will show in more detail, the balance of power between statesmen and soldiers has been shifting along a continuum from civilian dominance to military dominance and this variance has had a significant impact over the decision-making

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<sup>57</sup> For a similar way of measuring power see, for example, Risa Brooks, *op. cit.*

process. In the words of Claude E. Welch, the extent of political and military influence changes over time depending on the “shifting balances between the strengths of the civilian political institutions on the one side, and the political strengths of military institutions on the other.”<sup>58</sup> The next paragraphs discuss the sources of formal and informal civilian and military power in more detail and the evidence we should be looking for in order to determine the civil-military balance of power in each case.

### Legal powers

My analysis of the *legal/institutional* powers centers on the main constitutional checks on the power of the military as well as key defense reorganization laws in order to examine how changes in institutional rules and norms have affected the relative power of top civilian and military officials and their relations. Almost all definitions of the concept of civilian control emphasize the legal/institutional arrangements designed to safeguard civilian supremacy. In the case of the United States, for example, scholars stress the importance of the separation of powers between the Executive and Congress – the President being the Commander-in-Chief while Congress having the right to declare war and the authority to provide for the common defense. However, while the U.S. Constitution guards against an eventual attempt of the military to take over the civilian authorities, it does not insure *effective day-to-day* civilian control. No constitution by itself can do that. As Adam Yarmolinsky writes: “The three constitutional checks on the power of the military – the power reserved to the Congress to declare war, the two-year limitation on Army appropriations, and the specification of a civilian Commander in Chief – were all taken quite seriously by the Founding Fathers. *In fact, they have proved*

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<sup>58</sup> *Civilian Control of the Military: Theory and Cases from Developing Countries* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1976), p. 2.



*largely irrelevant to the central dilemmas of civilian control in the second half of the twentieth century.”*<sup>59</sup>

In discussing the legal powers of civilian and military officials, some defense reorganization laws require more attention since they have had a very significant impact on the balance of influence in US civil-military relations. Let's take, for example, the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act (GNA). It is ironic that this law in practice weakened civilian control since one of its main goals was its strengthening.<sup>60</sup> The Goldwater-Nichols Act, which has been called the most sweeping reform legislation in the history of this country, represents an organizational revolution and is among the key reasons for the increased influence of the military in the 1990s.<sup>61</sup> This legislation helped change the balance of power in favor of the military in at least two ways. First, it increased the unity of the military by centralizing military power in the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and in the Joint Staff (CJCS). Under this act, the CJCS becomes the principal military advisor to the President and the Secretary of Defense and has the right to give his opinion and advice not only when asked but even when not asked. He (one day she) is empowered to develop the military's budget proposals and strategic plans. The chairman is also given complete control of the Joint Staff. This legislation also increased inter-

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<sup>59</sup> “Civilian Control: New Perspectives for New Problems,” *Indiana Law Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Summer 1974), p. 655, emphasis added.

<sup>60</sup> The two main goals of legislators were to increase military effectiveness and to strengthen civilian authority. (These two could be in conflict at times). Some other objectives of the Goldwater-Nichols Act were to improve the quality of military advice provided to top civilian decision makers, to provide for more efficient use of resources for defense, to place clear responsibility on the commanders of the unified and specified combatant commands for the accomplishment of missions assigned to them, to ensure that these commanders' authority is commensurate with the responsibilities of the missions assigned to them, to enhance the effectiveness of military operations, and to improve the management of DOD in general.

<sup>61</sup> See for example, Mark Perry, *Four Stars* (Boston: Houghton Mufflin Company, 1989), p. 338. See also: Gordon Nathaniel Ledeman, *Reorganizing the Joint Chiefs: The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986* (Westport, London: Greenwood Press, 1999).

service cooperation and coordination. The latter, however, together with the enhanced status of the Chairman of the JCS in practice facilitated the expression of united military preferences, which led to increased political power of the military. (It became more difficult for civilians to play the services off one another.) For example, discussing the consolidation of power of the military services and the empowerment of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Richard Kohn writes:

*Civilian control ... as it was intended by the Founding Fathers, has been eliminated by years of well-meaning reform legislation, culminating in the Goldwater-Nichols Act. ... In their understandable quest for efficiency, the military reformers have ... disenfranchised the civilian officials of each service, and created autocracy in the Joint Staff and arbitrary power in the person of the Chairman.*<sup>62</sup>

The consequences of these institutional changes, which promoted jointness and strengthened the military formulation of strategy became quite obvious under Gen. Powell. As a result, civilian leaders were often presented *not with different military options* from which they could choose *but with a unified military position*, which they could overrule or disregard “only at the greatest political peril.”<sup>63</sup>

The second way in which the GNA increased potential military influence over decision-making was by re-enforcing previous attempts of the military to improve its members’ graduate education and by increasing the value of serving in *joint* assignments. The Act increased the professional expertise of top military officials. A less-noted aspect of this legislation is that by making joint duty a requirement for promotion to flag-rank, it led to the increase in the quality of the officers serving on the Joint Staff. Improving the quality of the Joint Staff may weaken civilian control and civilian influence on decision-

<sup>62</sup> “An Exchange on Civil-Military Relations,” *The National Interest*, No. 36 (Summer 1994), pp. 23-24.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

making if it coincides with decrease in the military expertise of civilians at the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the lower-level political appointees. Arguably, this is exactly what happened during the first Clinton Administration when civilian officials were, at times, overawed by their military counterparts.

While it is true that the Goldwater-Nichols Act strengthens significantly the voice of the Chairman as the nation's highest ranking and most powerful officer, as I will argue in subsequent chapters against legislative/institutionalist determinism, this act in and of itself does not guarantee that military advice will be dominant. As my case study on the 2003 Iraq war and the relations between Secretary Rumsfeld and CJCS Gen. Richard Myers show, this legislation gives the top military leaders the right to be heard, but not to be heeded. (Rumsfeld did not find it very difficult to disregard the Chiefs when he wanted to do so.) More importantly, developments after the adoption of the GNA confirm that the power of top civilian and military leaders cannot be determined solely based on their legal powers. The *actual* power of decision-makers cannot be derived from the texts of the laws alone.

That is why I argue that in order to understand the civil-military balance of power better, scholars have to look beyond the legal or formal powers of each side and analyze the informal factors of influence discussed below. The legal/institutional arrangements tell us how civilian control works *in theory* -- power to make decisions on foreign and domestic issues, in time of war and in time of peace, lays in the hands of civilian officials. They decide where to draw the line between the military and the political realms, how much to delegate to the military and what monitoring mechanisms to use. Civilians decide whether to consult the military and how much to listen to their advice.

Or as Kohn writes: “civilians possess not only all the face cards and all the trump cards, but make up the rules of the game.”<sup>64</sup>

The *reality* of civil-military relations, of course, is much more complex and cannot be fully understood without taking into account the informal sources of power. As Richard Neustadt reminds us, constitutional “powers” are no guarantee for actual power. In the every-day interactions of civilian and military decision makers, gathered together to make life and death decisions, *persuasion rather than direct command* is the rule. Civilian leaders’ formal authority does not *automatically* translate into an ability to make the military do what they want them to do. Civilian leaders do not simply command the military; they must argue and bargain in order to persuade.<sup>65</sup> As Andrew Bacevich wrote: “The dirty little secret of American civil-military relations, by no means unique [to the Clinton Administration], is that *the commander in chief does not command the military establishment*; he cajoles it, negotiates with it, and, as necessary, appeases it.”<sup>66</sup> Command has only a limited role in leadership. Exasperated Franklin Roosevelt once remarked:

“...But the Treasury and the State Department put together are nothing compared with the Na-a-vy. The admirals are really something to cope with – and I should know. To change anything in the Na-a-vy is like punching a feather bed. You punch it with your right and you punch it with your left until you are finally

<sup>64</sup> “Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations,” *The National Interest*, No. 35 (Spring 1994), p. 16. See also Richard H. Kohn, “The Erosion of Civilian Control of the Military in the United States Today,” *Naval War College Review* (Summer 2002). Available at: <http://www.nwc.navy.mil/press/Review/2002/summer/art1-su2.htm>.

<sup>65</sup> “The power to persuade is the power to bargain.” In Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: the Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (New York: Free Press, 1990), p. 32.

<sup>66</sup> “Discord Still: Clinton and the Military,” *The Washington Post*, January 3, 1999, p. C 1 (emphasis added).

exhausted, and then you find the damn bed just as it was before you started punching.”<sup>67</sup>

While very important, formal/institutional authority is not a good predictor of influence. Because of the insufficiency and/or inadequacy of direct command in civil-military relations (and in decision-making in general), scholars have looked beyond the legal powers in order to identify other factors influencing the civil-military BOP.

One such factor is the extent of *unity of the military and the civilian institutions*. There are numerous cases when civilian or military officials have skillfully used the divisions in the opposite camp and wielded exaggerated influence. In the case of the U.S., civilian control and oversight of the military have been further complicated by the fact that the civilian institutions responsible for control (the Congress and the President) have their power divided by law. Scholars developing the principal-agent model for analyzing civil-military relations have emphasized the difficulties in controlling the agent when the principals are divided.<sup>68</sup> All else being equal, the military has more influence when civilians are divided. Civilians have also played the military services off one another when the military has not been united.

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<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Marriner S. Eccles, *Beckoning Frontiers. Public and Personal Recollections* (New York: Knopf, 1951), p. 336.

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, Deborah D. Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons From Peripheral Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Deborah Avant, “Are the Reluctant Officers Out of Control? A Principal-Agent Explanation of Military Resistance in the Post-Cold War,” *Security Studies* Vol. 6, No. 2 (Winter 1996/97), pp. 71-113; Terry Moe and Michael Caldwell, “The Institutional Foundations of Democratic Government: A Comparison of Presidential and Parliamentary Systems,” *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics*, Vol. 150, No. 1 (1994), pp. 171-195; David Locke Hall, *The Reagan Years: A Constitutional Perspective on War Powers and the Presidency* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991); Robert S. Gilmour and Alexis A. Helley, eds., *Who Makes Public Policy? The Struggle for Control between Congress and the Executive* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1994); Harold Koh, “Presidential War and Congressional Consent: The Law Professor’s Memorandum in *Dellums v. Bush*,” *Stanford Journal of Law*, Vol. 27 (Spring 1991), pp. 247-264.

Such lack of unity among the civilians and the military is common and has clearly affected the balance of power. Cases show that the civilian principals have disagreed on both policy goals and the means for achieving the goals. Such disagreements between the principals make it easier for the military to disobey or to choose to align itself with the preferences of either the Executive or Congress depending on whose preferences are closer to what the military prefers. Even when Congress and the Executive are more or less in agreement on policy goals, disagreement on the different methods for monitoring and oversight could make civilian control less firm. In his discussion of the problem of a legislative-executive divide and its impact on civil-military relations, Betts concludes that “[t]he means at the President’s disposal for silencing the Chiefs are limited because the National Security Act in effect mandates end runs by reinforcing military access to Congress, and because congressional leaders exact commitments from the Chiefs in their confirmation hearings to keep Congress informed of their disagreements with the administration.”<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, there are divisions not only between the President and Congress, but *within* Congress and the Executive as well. For example, one such case when the divisions within Congress greatly strengthened the voice of the military was the major disagreements between Senator Nunn and Representative Dellums over the “gays in the military” controversy at the start of the Clinton Presidency.

Another factor which has affected significantly the balance of power between civilian and military leaders and which has often been overlooked is decision-makers’ *level of education and experience in national security matters*. Again, we should admit that we do not have a very accurate way of measuring the level of experience and

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<sup>69</sup> Richard K. Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 45.

expertise of top civilian and military officials and which kinds of knowledge and expertise exactly lead to increased influence over the policy-making process. For the purposes of this study, political and military experience and expertise are measured by the number and type of relevant assignments an individual has held, such as appointments with the OSD staff, or with the Executive and Legislative branches of government, or think-tanks and universities.<sup>70</sup> While such measures may not be accurate and are not very adequate if one would like to quantify decision-makers' education and experience as a source of power, this way of measuring is good enough for the purposes of my theoretical framework for which we only need to establish approximately the relative power of civilian and military officials so we know whether the balance of power favors the civilians or the military.

How has the level of education and experience of civilian and military officials been changing over time? In the last three-four decades, the U.S. military has become more politically and bureaucratically sophisticated. My research shows that especially in the last decade or so the military has significantly improved its ability to compete with civilian officials at the higher political-military levels.<sup>71</sup> This is due mainly to the increased number of courses on international relations and American politics currently taught at war colleges, and also to programs that expose some of the military's best and brightest to politics and policy-making in Washington. (These include internship and fellowship programs in various executive agencies or on Congressional staffs.) In comparison to the 1960s when Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was ruling the

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<sup>70</sup> This is done through an examination of biographies of civilian and military personnel in the top positions of the decision-making apparatus and analyzing their educational and employment background.

<sup>71</sup> See also Roman and Tarr's chapter in Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

Pentagon with an iron hand, by the time President Clinton took office, military officials were better educated and with significantly more politico-military experience, having served as policy advisors or as senior staff officers at the Pentagon and other departments or agencies of the federal government. Certainly, if taken on its own merits and out of the civil-military context, this development is quite positive and should have beneficial effects on decision-making – one would think that the more educated and experienced military advisers we have, the better. However, as I show in subsequent chapters, the problem was not the rise in education and experience of top military leaders, but that, unfortunately, this increase in power potential on the military side was accompanied by a marked decline in civilian expertise in military matters, which led to increased military influence in the Clinton years and an inability by civilian leaders to preside authoritatively over the military and guide the making of strategy.

For example, an analysis of the civil-military relationship under Lyndon Johnson and in the first Clinton administration illustrates how important it is to take into account leaders' education and experience in explaining variations in civilian and military influence over decision-making. In the McNamara's Pentagon, the military team was no match for the civilian "Whiz Kids" who (with the creation of the Office of Systems Analysis) radically changed the evaluation criteria for determining the merits of alternative policy options – they substituted quantitative methods and systems analysis for military judgment. Thus, by winning the debate over evaluation criteria, top civilians were able to win most of the subsequent debates on policy choices. In a similar fashion, in the first Clinton administration, thanks to their increased competence and their political savvy and sophistication, military leaders managed to win over their civilian counterparts and impose the Weinberger/Powell Doctrine as the basis for evaluation of policy



options; then in subsequent debates some alternatives were not even discussed fully but discarded from the start because they did not fit well with the requirements of the Powell Doctrine.

As my case studies show, the level of national security education and experience of decision-makers affects not only the civil-military balance of power, but the quality of the decision-making process and the content of policies as well. Lacking expertise in defense issues and not being militarily savvy, statesmen are not likely to ask the “right” questions during deliberations on the use of force; they would not be able to push the military to get more “objective” information and may be boxed into a decision simply because they have been unable to make the military provide more options. At the same time, military officials lacking bureaucratic skills and knowledge and understanding of the domestic political process will be unable to stand up to civilian leaders when they believe politicians are wrong. Because of lack of political expertise, such military officials may fear to express an opinion, which civilian leaders will dislike or will not be able to dissuade statesmen from scatter-brained actions. In either case, policy-making will suffer.

Studying decision-makers’ national-security related knowledge and experience then is important since they are a source of influence over the decision-making process; hence, they are important for estimating the balance of power between civilian and military leaders. At the same time, however, my research shows that decision-makers’ knowledge and experience, while necessary, are not sufficient for making effective decisions. For example, the administration of George W. Bush included some of the most experienced foreign- and defense-policy officials (e.g., Dick Cheney, Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Condoleezza Rice, and others), but nevertheless the

decision-making leading up to the 2003 Iraq war was highly dysfunctional. Former Vice President Dick Cheney notes an additional aspect of experience which needs to be taken into account:

But even with all that background, we had made mistakes when we first started working together. The lesson here is that while experience matters, it's not just each individual's experience that's important, but experience working together as a team. We learned a lot from our missteps during the failed coup as well as from our success with Just Cause. And I believe it was because we'd had real experience managing crises together that we were able to respond as well as we did eight months later when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.<sup>72</sup>

Scholars have also found that top decision-makers' lack of military service affects their propensity to resort to the use of force. Regarding military service, the Triangle Institute for Security Studies (TISS) project on the "Gap Between the Military and Civilian Society" shows that until the mid 1990s, the percentage of veterans was always higher in the Congress than in corresponding age and educational groups in the population. After 1995, however, there have been fewer veterans as a percentage in the political elite as compared to the population.<sup>73</sup> In 1993-94, 62 percent of the Senate and 41 percent of the House were veterans. In the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, however, these figures for the Senate and the House were 36 percent and 29 percent respectively.<sup>74</sup> Such trends may affect the level of understanding of military policy in Congress, and the overall ability of the legislative branch to perform effective oversight of the military. Moreover,

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<sup>72</sup> Richard B. Cheney (with Liz Cheney), *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2011).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10. Bianco and Markham have found that there is both an absolute decline in the number of veterans in both houses as well as a relative decline in the number of veterans compared to the general population. For details see William T. Bianco and Jamie Markham, "Vanishing Veterans: The Decline of Military Experience in the U.S. Congress," in Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn, eds., pp. 275-287.

<sup>74</sup> Norman Ornstein, "The Legacy of Campaign 2000," *Washington Quarterly* (Spring 2001), p. 102. See also William M. Welch, "Most U.S. Lawmakers Lack Combat Experience," *USA Today*, November 12, 2001, p. 12.

other related studies have found that the presence (or absence) of veterans has a strong effect on American use of force. For example, studying U.S. military behavior from 1816 to 1992, Peter Feaver and Christopher Gelpi conclude that the higher the proportion of veterans in the political elite, the lower the probability that the U.S. would use force.<sup>75</sup> In the coming years, in trying to make predictions about US propensity to use military force in crises, such factors need to be taken into account – for example, there may be an increase in the number of veterans in Congress and in the White House since many of the those who have served in Afghanistan and Iraq have expressed willingness to run for elective office and some of them have already been elected.

### **Level of Civil-Military Preference Divergence**

The second explanatory variable -- *the level of civil-military preference divergence* -- is the extent to which civilian and military preferences on key international security issues converge or diverge. “Preferences” are defined broadly to include views, attitudes, opinions, values, and interests.<sup>76</sup> This study focuses mainly on civilian and military preferences on issues related to U.S. foreign policy and national security, their core vision of America’s role in the world, the role and uses of military power and other tools of statecraft, the character of war, and their understanding of civilian control and CMR. The level of divergence between civilian and military preferences is coded as

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<sup>75</sup> Peter Feaver and Christopher Gelpi, “Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick? The Impact of Veterans in the Political Elite on the American Use of Force,” unpublished paper, 6/15/2001.

<sup>76</sup> For a similar inclusive definition, see the most authoritative study on civilian and military preferences, Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

varying from “high” to “low.”<sup>77</sup> “Low” preference divergence does not mean a state of complete agreement or total overlap of the views and interests of civilian and military leaders. When preference divergence is low, some disagreements between civilian and military officials do exist but they are more about the details or the minor issues; they are not major philosophical differences and there exists a basic overlap of perspectives.

How do we establish the level of civil-military preference divergence at a given time? This could be done by establishing the views of top civilian and military leaders on important issues related to Foreign policy and the use of force and then by evaluating the degree to which they are in agreement or conflict. Examples of key questions that are considered in each case in order to establish the level of preference divergence include: what are the main US foreign policy objectives at the time? Which of these objectives are worth pursuing by force (e.g., regime change, defence of human rights, defence of key allies, defence of key resources, etc.)? How effective is military force for achieving certain foreign policy goals? What is the role of the military in general? Should force be used in the crisis in question? How force should be used? What kind of civilian control do they prefer? If civilian and mil leaders’ preferences diverge on many or most of these core issues, there is a high level of preference divergence at the time. High civil-military preference divergence denotes the existence of deep and lasting divides between top civilian and military leaders over security policy. As discussed in more details in the case studies, there was a low civil-military preference divergence, for instance, in the administration of George H. W. Bush. Examples of high civil-military preference divergence are the Clinton administration and the Rumsfeld Pentagon.

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<sup>77</sup> Just like the BOP, this is a continuous variable, but I focus only on these two specific levels.

As evidence for the preferences of civilian and military leaders I use the recommendations they provide during the policy-making process, as well as various other sources revealing their ideas and beliefs on the issues – e.g., historical accounts, biographies, decision-makers’ speeches, interviews, memoirs, as well as opinion surveys and other academic studies of elite beliefs.<sup>78</sup> Documenting preferences and the level of preference divergence in this way makes my approach different from those who *assume* a *constant* (as opposed to variable) level of divergence and conflict (just because civilians and the military do have different views on issues) or those who deduce civilian and military preferences from existing theories – e.g., some use organizational theory to argue that militaries always prefer offensive doctrines because they are seen as maximizing military autonomy and defense budgets, which are good for the health of the military as an organization. It is true that most of the time there is at least some level of divergence between civilian and military views<sup>79</sup>, but as I show the intensity of this divergence varies and it is important to know whether we have a high or a low level of preference divergence at a given time because this affects the way civilian and military officials make and implement policies. My approach does not assume *a priori* either similarity or divergence of civilian and military preferences, but documents the extent to which preferences actually diverge at a given time and then analyzes how low and high levels of preference divergence respectively affect the quality of the decision-making process. When we analyze ideas and beliefs, we have to always be careful about endogeneity problems. Stated ideas could be rationalizations of policies pursued on other grounds

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<sup>78</sup> Needless to say, because speeches, interviews, and memoirs do not necessarily provide an unbiased reflection of decision-makers’ preferences, we should be cautious when using such sources.

<sup>79</sup> See, for example, Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 58-59.

rather than causes of those policies. In this sense, ideas may appear to explain the adopted strategy or policy while in fact they are a result of it.

Civilian and military preferences diverge for a variety of reasons many of which are beyond the scope of this study. One such reason is that political and military leaders bring into the decision-making process their different backgrounds, perspectives, and concerns. Politicians have to take into account a variety of social, economic, political and diplomatic considerations, and not only the military and security dimensions of an issue. Also, as supporters of bureaucratic politics have argued, decision-makers' preferences could be determined by one's position within the government bureaucracy – “where you stand depends on where you sit.” An example for this would be General Marshall who, while Chief of Staff, opposed the idea of the State Department to use aid in order to promote reforms in the Chinese government, but once he became Secretary of State, started to support this idea and found himself in conflict with the new chief of staff. Another explanation for the origins of preferences on the use of force is past experience, especially something as dramatic as the Vietnam War. The Powell Doctrine, for example, is directly traceable to General Powell's service in that war. Past experience is also not a uniform explanation because different people take different things from the very same experience; there were contradictory lessons from the Vietnam War, as well as from almost all major crises.

Clashing civilian and military preferences could result from the struggle for control over some overlapping roles and functions of civil and military institutions. Statesmen and soldiers perceive as blurred the lines between the “properly” military and civilian prerogatives. “Spheres of influence” that are at the uncertain border between the civilian and the military realm are often contested. For example, the military prefers

maximum operational autonomy while civilians prefer tighter control in order to ensure that the military instrument will truly serve the political objectives. This dissertation does not attempt to explain in detail the causes of the preference divergence or the process of preference formation. The emphasis here is on the fact that civil-military preference divergence is not constant but varies over time and that the degree to which civilian and military preferences overlap or are in conflict has a significant impact on the quality of the decision-making and implementation processes.

Table 1 below summarizes what would be a case of clashing civilian and military preferences on several critical issues.

Table 1

Issue	Civilian Preference	Military Preference
<i>Use of Force in Crises (Whether to Use Force)</i>	With certain exceptions, civilian leaders have been more willing to use force than the military. The post-Cold War period especially has been characterized by “repeated clashes between promiscuous civilians and reluctant warriors.” <sup>80</sup>	With the exception of some hawks, the military often prefers “force as a last resort.” Especially after the Vietnam War, the military has become more vocal in its opposition to the use of force. <sup>81</sup>
<i>Mode of Use of Force (How to Use Force)</i>	Limited force could be used, even on behalf of open-ended objectives, or for signaling, not necessarily for victory; political considerations always dictate how much force would be used; political logic (e.g., growing concern for civilian casualties or consideration of allies’ preferences) dominates over military logic; Civilian leaders have been more willing to use force and they are also more	Prefer to use overwhelming force quickly and decisively to achieve clear and attainable objectives; prefer to use force only for the defense of vital interests and only if public and Congressional support is assured <sup>82</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Peter Feaver and Christopher Gelpi, “Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick? The Impact of Veterans in the Political Elite on the American Use of Force,” unpublished paper, 6/15/2001. For the famous exchange between then US Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright and Gen. Colin Powell, which captures well many similar although less famous civil-military clashes, see Colin Powell and Joseph Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Ballantine, 1995), pp. 576-577. Powell remembers that Madeleine Albright has asked: “What is the point of having this superb military that you are always talking about if we can’t use it?” The general admitted he thought he would have an aneurysm.

<sup>81</sup> See David H. Petraeus, *The American Military and the Lessons of Vietnam: A Study of Military Influence and the Use of Force in the Post-Vietnam Era* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 1987). Petraeus’ study confirms earlier findings by Richard K. Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

<sup>82</sup> The dominant preferences within the military are codified in the Weinberger Doctrine (or the Powell Doctrine since the 1990s). For the original formulation, see Casper W. Weinberger, “The Use of Military Power,” *Defense ’85*, (Arlington, VA: American Forces Information Service, January 1985), pp. 2-11. See also, Colin L. Powell, “United States Forces: Challenges Ahead,” *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1992/93), pp. 32-45. Such views on the use of force are dominant among the Vietnam generation, especially in the Army, and are less prevalent among the Navy and the Air Force.



	likely to place constraints on the use of force.	
<b>Control Over Operations</b>	Civilians prefer “assertive control” in order to ensure that military operations will not jeopardize political goals;	The military prefer “objective control” – clear division of spheres of influence and civilian non-interference in the “military” sphere; prefer as much autonomy over operations as possible; Believe that civilian meddling or micro-management leads to battlefield disasters
<b>Political Objectives</b>	Civilian leaders have multiple objectives which necessitate trade-offs; vagueness in objectives retains politicians’ flexibility; <i>fuzzy</i> objectives help maintain alliances and/or deflect opposition; they also allow statesmen to claim “victory” and extricate themselves from a conflict after declaring that the objectives have been achieved	For the military, <i>clarity</i> of objectives is a must; the military believes this is one of the most important lessons of the Vietnam war, “lost” at least in part because of lack of clear purpose <sup>83</sup>

The next paragraphs build intuition as to why elite civilian and military preferences are important and how the level of preference divergence affects the quality of the decision-making process. The content of elite civilian and military preferences, together with the relative power of statesmen and soldiers, ultimately determine whether a country will go to war or will choose other means to achieve its goals. Perhaps counter-

<sup>83</sup> A 1974 survey conducted by Brigadier General Douglas Kinnard found that “almost 70 percent of the Army generals who managed the [Vietnam] war were uncertain of its objectives.” Kinnard concludes that this “mirrors a deep-seated strategic failure: the failure of policy-makers to frame tangible, obtainable goals.” For an excellent critique of this “fixed article of military belief,” see Russell Weigley, “The Soldier, the Statesman, and the Military Historian,” *The Journal of Military History* 63 (October 1999), p. 818.

intuitively, in the United States, especially after the Vietnam War, the military has more often than not been opposed to the use of force and has preferred other means for achieving this country's political objectives. After the end of the Cold War, it is interesting that to the extent that there is militarization of American foreign policy (defined as overusing military means at the expense of other tools of statecraft), it is due to hawkish *civilian* leaders, and not to the military.<sup>84</sup> In case after case, it is the generals who are trying to put the breaks on zealous politicians, pushing for the use of force in crises. In order to predict whether, for example, in a crisis, a country will be more likely to choose use of force, one should study the preferences of its civilian and military leaders and their relative influence over the decision-making process.

I argue that the level of divergence between civilian and military ideas and beliefs needs to be taken into account because it affects decision-makers' incentives during the deliberation and implementation of policies. The level of civil-military preference divergence also affects the key aspects of the decision-making process – i.e., the ways in which civilian and military leaders gather and exchange information, the comprehensiveness and rigor of their policy discussions, and the ways in which leaders coordinate and cooperate with each other in the decision-making and implementation phase. An analysis of the level of preference divergence between top decision-makers and their advisors can also tell us how receptive leaders would be to the opinions and information provided by these advisors. For example, the level of civil-military preference divergence is very important because of the different ways decision-makers seek and interpret information and advice depending on the *source*, which provides them

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<sup>84</sup> For a similar argument, see Michael Desch, "Civil-Militarism: The Civilian Origins of the New American Militarism," *Orbis*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Summer 2006), pp. 573-583.

(as opposed to the content of advice). Political leaders are more likely to discount advice (or not seek it at all) from advisors with whom they disagree strongly.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, they are more receptive to sharing information with and listening to people whose preferences and interests they see as similar to their own. Low levels of civil-military preference divergence are not only inevitable, but they could be beneficial for decision-making as well. Such conflict could be stimulating and lead to search of additional information and a more thorough evaluation of alternative options.

The injection of dissenting views during deliberations and their critical evaluation could be crucial for effective decision-making. Studies show that decision-makers could be receptive to discrepant advice when it comes from people who largely share their views. At the same time, discrepant opinions given by advisors whose preferences are very different from the leaders' preferences, are most often rejected or discounted. For example, during the Vietnam war, Lyndon Johnson reacted very differently to similar advice provided by George Ball and Clark Clifford and this was mainly because Johnson and Clifford have been in agreement on almost everything concerning the war from the very beginning, while Johnson expected Ball to have dissenting views in almost all cases anyway. That is why Ball's views were discounted, while Clifford's arguments that the war was un-winnable had a very strong impact on LJB.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Theories of communication and persuasion show that, in general, people are more easily persuaded by information coming from sources who they believe share their interests, beliefs, values, and whom they trust. See, for example, Carl Hovland, Irving Janis, and Harold Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion: Psychological Studies of Opinion Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), especially Chapter 2, "Credibility of the Communicator;" Arthur Lupia, Mathew D. McCubbins, and Samuel L. Popkin, eds., *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice, and the Bounds of Rationality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Arthur Lupia, "Who Can Persuade Whom? Implications from the Nexus of Psychology and Rational Choice Theory," In James H. Kuklinski, ed., *Thinking About Political Psychology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 51-88.

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, Alexander George "The Case of Multiple Advocacy in Making Foreign Policy," *American Political Science Review* 74 (September, 1972).

Studying the level of conflict in the preferences of decision-makers is important also from the stand-point of social identity theory. Social psychologists show how conflicting views among decision-makers split them into competing factions formed around their preferred policies. The higher the level of conflict, the more cohesive the “in-group” becomes; furthermore, the level of animosity towards the “out-group” intensifies as well.<sup>87</sup> Such dynamics most often affect negatively the effectiveness of the decision-making process because decision-makers resort to various manipulative strategies in order to advance the policy preferences of the in-group and/or decrease the chances for success of the out-group. Most recently, such was the case in the George W. Bush administration when the group around Vice President Cheney systematically excluded from the process people around Colin Powell, who, according to Cheney, were “not on the team.”

Evidence shows that top policy-makers and their advisors (political, military, and others) have made numerous attempts to manipulate the foreign-policy decision-making process in order to advance their preferred policies. The use of manipulation tactics is ubiquitous.<sup>88</sup> Manipulating the decision process is especially pronounced precisely when preferences diverge highly and each side is bent on winning. A variety of manipulation strategies have been used during all stages of the decision-making process. Such strategies include: manipulating the structure of the decision-making group (i.e., who is

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<sup>87</sup> See, for example, Juliet Kaarbo and Deborah Gruenfeld, “The Social Psychology of Inter- and Intra-Group Conflict in Governmental Politics,” *Mershon International Studies Review* 42 (1998), pp. 226-233; Robert Baron, “So Right It’s Wrong: Groupthink and the Ubiquitous Nature of Polarized Group Decision-Making,” *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 37 (2005), pp. 219-253.

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, Garrison’s comparative study of the Nixon and Carter administrations which shows the bitter struggles between National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, whose strongly diverging preferences led them to manipulate the decision process in various ways in order to advance the policies they favored. Jean Garrison, *Games Advisors Play: Foreign Policy in the Nixon and Carter Administrations* (Texas A&M University Press, 1999).

allowed to attend meetings when policy options are presented and debated), manipulating the group's operating procedures, shaping the agenda of policy meetings, framing the issues, salami tactics, and others.<sup>89</sup> All of these manipulation techniques could make the decision-making process less effective. For example, if one manipulates the make up of the decision group by regularly under-representing views one disagrees with, this could lead to distorting the decision-making process toward the preferred views of the manipulator which under "normal" circumstances may not have prevailed and may not have been the better policy choice.

Also, consistent with the above and the logic of the principal-agent theory, I show that high preference divergence exacerbates the problem of private information inherent in the civil-military relationship. In cases of intense preference divergence, both the civilian principal and the military agent have an incentive to withhold or distort information in order to support an outcome closer to their own preferences. For example, if one side favors military intervention and knows that the other side disagrees, it is likely to de-emphasize the costs and risks of using force in order to make its preferred option more appealing. Such manipulation of information could contribute to poor analysis of options during the formulation of strategy. Furthermore, intense preference divergence increases the incentives of each side to pursue its own set of goals and, hence, it diminishes the chances for cooperation between civilian and military officials. Ultimately, this could lead to a failure to fully integrate military views with political and

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<sup>89</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Paul Hoyt and Jean Garrison, "Political Manipulation within the Small Group: Foreign Policy Advisers in the Carter Administration," in Paul 't Hart, Eric K. Stern and Bengt Sundelius, eds., *Beyond Groupthink: Political Group Dynamics and Foreign Policy-making* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997).

diplomatic policy and a failure to match successfully political objectives and military means.

My case studies illustrate in detail the impact of high and low levels of civil-military preference divergence on the decision-making process. While some level of “creative” civil-military conflict could improve the decision-making process, intense preference divergence leads to ineffective policy-making. Defining and evaluating civilian and military preferences during the policy-making process is not easy. It is not often the case that we find a near perfect line-up of all civilians on one side of an issue versus the military on the other. At times, the civilians or the military or both are split internally. The problem posed by such internal divisions could be solved by careful case selection as discussed later on in this chapter.

### **Factors Affecting the Persuasiveness of Advice**

Military officials may provide the perfect advice but it will have no effect on the decision-making process unless policy-makers are receptive to it. Hence, we need to investigate the conditions under which advice is more influential. How do decision-makers get persuaded to choose one course of action over another? How do they decide to accept or reject information coming from their advisors? Two main factors influence decision-makers’ willingness to accept or reject advice: 1) the content of the message and 2) the source of the advice (more precisely, policy-makers’ attitudes towards the source/the communicator). Different aspects of the content of advice that affect the likelihood of its acceptance have been studied extensively in cognitive psychology, as well as communication theory (e.g., studies on motivated and unmotivated biases; learning from history; studies in opinion change and persuasion, and others.) My

dissertation finds support for many of the existing propositions of this literature. For example, the content of advice may be seen as problematic and may be rejected for several reasons. It could be perceived as low quality. It could be seen as good advice but very difficult to implement or impractical. Or it could be that the content of the advice does not fit with the preferences of decision-makers; they could have already committed to a different course of action and the psychological and political costs of changing their mind at that stage may be prohibitive. (Studies of various biases find that advice is more likely to be accepted if it fits with decision-makers' pre-existing beliefs and ideas.)<sup>90</sup>

The second factor, which affects the quality of communication between civilian and military officials and the reception of advice, is decision-makers' attitude towards the source of advice. It is an obvious but poorly-investigated variable and this study attempts to contribute some additional evidence on this count. Evidence shows that decision-makers, at times, reject advice not because they disagree with its content but because they have negative attitudes towards the advisors providing the information. Regarding the source of advice, policy-makers usually reject the opinion of advisors who they perceive as incompetent or having views and goals different from their own. Needless to say, those two reasons for rejecting advice (content and source) are not contradictory or mutually exclusive, and in some cases it could be difficult to separate them. But differentiating whether advice was rejected because of its content or source could be useful, for example, in cases when decision-makers reject communications they would have accepted from an alternative source and when the rejection of such advice leads to costly errors. Discounting or rejecting information only on the basis of who provides it

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, Robert Jervis, "Rational Deterrence: Theory and Evidence" (1989); Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*; Robert Jervis, "War and Misperception," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (Spring 1988), pp. 675-700.

could be quite irrational, especially in cases when decision-makers dismiss advice out of hand, without even acquainting themselves with its content while the message could have been very convincing otherwise. This happens when the source is perceived as adversarial. Or, as theories of communication and persuasion show, if a source is not trusted, it will not be listened to.<sup>91</sup> Such was the case with the “war” between DoD and State in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq War and this affected the decision-making process very negatively. In the words of Dov Zakheim, “A second equally compelling reason that the Defense Department rejected State’s planning effort for Iraq is that the two agencies were in a turf war and consequently responded to each other in a knee-jerk fashion. ... almost anything that State proposed was *immediately rejected* at some level of Defense *simply because the idea was State’s*. And State reciprocated in kind.”<sup>92</sup> The Chapter on the 2003 Iraq war analyzes this in more detail.

Now I will turn to some of the most important factors that affect how much decision-makers trust a source of communication<sup>93</sup>: 1) The expertness of the source, including but not limited to his/her knowledge/expertise, intelligence, education, prestige (the public perception of the source’s expertness) 2) Decision-makers’ perceptions of the intent and sincerity of the source – e.g., whether decision-makers believe the source may have a political or personal agenda, different from their own, which may cloud his/her judgment and recommendations; 3) past experience and interactions with the source 4)

<sup>91</sup> Carl Hovland, Irving Janis, and Harold Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion: Psychological Studies of Opinion Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 46.

<sup>92</sup> Dov Zekheim, *A Vulcan’s Tale: How the Bush Administration Mismanaged the Reconstruction of Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2011). Emphasis added.

<sup>93</sup> This discussion is based primarily on Carl Hovland, Irving Janis, and Harold Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion: Psychological Studies of Opinion Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), especially Chapter 2, “Credibility of the Communicator;” Arthur Lupia, Mathew D. McCubbins, and Samuel L. Popkin, eds., *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice, and the Bounds of Rationality*.



the form and the way in which the source proffers his/her advice - e.g., cases show that for high-ranking officials it matters significantly whether advice, especially dissenting views, are offered in private or publicly. The next paragraphs discuss briefly each of these factors and how they may be related.

All else being equal, decision-makers are more likely to be persuaded by advisors who are highly knowledgeable about the issues under discussion. At the same time, knowledge and expertise alone do not guarantee that an advisor will be trusted. Policy-makers may believe that their advisors are highly expert and still reject their advice if they suspect them of having some self-serving motives.<sup>94</sup> As Richard Kohn argues, “officers who are suspected by politicians and by the public of being influenced by their own ideology, or of possessing strong beliefs about the best policy, vitiate the credibility of their advice as being entirely professional.”<sup>95</sup> The importance of decision-makers’ perception of the intentions of their advisors is confirmed by my case studies.

Research also confirms that advice is influential precisely when decision-makers do not doubt the sincerity of their advisors and are not suspicious they are prioritizing their own personal or political interests. Rumsfeld and Cheney explain Cheney’s big influence with President George W. Bush with two facts: the Vice-President did not have an agenda of his own and he scrupulously stayed out of the lime light and never shared publicly any of the advice he provided to Bush, especially in cases the two disagreed. Arguably the most influential Vice-President in American history, Cheney did not enjoy this status mainly because of his knowledge and experience in Washington, although they were important. The reason Bush trusted him so much was that unlike other Vice-

<sup>94</sup> Carl Hovland, Irving Janis, and Harold Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion*, pp. 20-23.

<sup>95</sup> Richard Kohn, “Building Trust,” p. 278.

Presidents, Cheney had no political ambitions of his own. He was not going to run for the Presidency so Bush knew that his advice would not be colored by a personal agenda. As Cheney himself writes:

And the impact of my advice depended first and foremost on my relationship with the president. At the end of the day, it wouldn't have mattered how many years of experience I had or how many other offices I'd held, if the president wasn't interested in what I had to say." "First, I made clear early on that I would not be running for president myself in four or eight years. The president never had to worry that I was taking a position with an eye toward how it might be perceived by voters in Iowa or New Hampshire. I also decided to limit my exposure to the press.<sup>96</sup>

Another important factor affecting trust is officials' past experience. This is among the most important influences and was also shown to be relevant to some of the top civilian officials examined in my case studies. The past experience of decision-makers and their previous interactions with military, diplomatic or intelligence advisors proves to influence behavior significantly. A case in point is the way Vice President Dick Cheney formed his own unflattering attitude of the intelligence community and a reason why he treated the information the IC provided in the lead-up to the Iraq war with utter mistrust. As Cheney himself admitted, he had many doubts about the intelligence precisely because of his past experience in government. In his view, the CIA has gotten it wrong more than once and they could be making a mistake again just because "intelligence is an uncertain business, even in the best of circumstances."<sup>97</sup> The CIA did

<sup>96</sup> Richard B. Cheney (with Liz Cheney), *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2011), p. 305.

<sup>97</sup> Richard B. Cheney, Speech before the National Convention of the American Veterans of Foreign Wars, August 26, 2002.

not warn us at the time the Soviet Union was so close to collapse. There were other cases, even more pertinent to the decision on Iraq - Cheney remembered how the CIA did not predict that Saddam's tanks will roll across the border into Kuwait and that intelligence analysts before the 1991 Gulf War underestimated how close Saddam was to developing a nuclear weapon. After having felt misled (and even betrayed) by intelligence experts more than once, he thought it safer not to trust them anymore or, at least, to probe deeply the information which comes from them.

Other examples come from the Kennedy administration – the President and SecDef McNamara lost a lot of respect and trust in the military because of military advice provided during the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis. As JFK confided to his brother, “An invasion [of Cuba] would have been a mistake – a wrong use of power. But the military are mad. They wanted to do this. It's luck we have McNamara over there [at the Pentagon].”<sup>98</sup> This negative experience affected JFK's evaluation of the judgment of high-ranking military officials and made him think that his civilian advisors could provide better recommendations. As H. R. McMaster writes: “In Kennedy's mind, the poor advice given by the JCS, coupled with a negative outcome of negotiations, started to close his mind to military advisers and forced him to seek ways in which to control the JCS.”<sup>99</sup> While serving as Vice President, LBJ participated in the decision-making process in both cases – the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis. These experiences “reinforced his contempt of the Joint Chiefs and most other senior military officers who

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<sup>98</sup> Richard E. Neustadt and Graham Allison, Afterword to John F. Kennedy and Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Thirteen Days* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1999), p. 126

<sup>99</sup> H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), p.8.

Johnson alternatively ignored, cajoled, lied to and insulted during his administration.”<sup>100</sup>

In the case of American civil-military relations, the Vietnam War is the experience that dramatically affected trust between the military and the civilians. In the words of Richard Kohn, “The Vietnam War did much to destroy trust between civilians and the military in the government. It led a whole generation of military people to distrust civilians and civilian control, and to vow never again to be sent into battle without adequate resources, a winning strategy, the support of the American people, and an exit strategy.”<sup>101</sup>

The 4<sup>th</sup> factor affecting decision-makers’ trust – forms of structuring and presenting advice – is particularly important for dissenting advice and has often played an important role in civil-military relations. One of the leading American scholars on civil-military relations, Don Snider, finds that it matters significantly whether dissent is public or private and that private forms of dissent strengthen the trust relationship between civilian and military leaders.<sup>102</sup>

Top civilian officials have made it very clear that their attitude towards advisors and colleagues have changed when private dissent and criticism have been made public – deliberately or inadvertently, as confirmed by my case studies as well.

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<sup>100</sup> Col. Robert Rice (USA), “McNamara and Rumsfeld: Control and Imbalance in Civil-Military Relations,” Master’s Thesis, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, March 2008, pp. 10-11; see also Robert McNamara, *In Retrospect* (New York: Random House, 1995), pp. 97-8.

<sup>101</sup> Richard Kohn, “Building Trust: Civil-Military Behaviors for Effective National Security,” in: *American Civil-Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era*, p. 273.

<sup>102</sup> Snider discusses three separate trust relationships which are inter-related: that between the military profession and the American people; between the military profession and the elected representatives of the people; and between senior military leaders and their subordinates in the military. Of particular importance for this study are his arguments on how civilian and military leaders perceive and understand acts of dissent and how such acts affect their trust relationship. In: Don M. Snider, “Dissent and Strategic Leadership of the Military Profession,” *Orbis* 52, No. 2 (Spring 2008), pp. 256-77.

### **Relation between preference divergence and trust.**

Preference divergence shows to be closely related with trust (high preference divergence is correlated with low levels of trust). The next paragraphs discuss this relationship also because trust between civilian and military officials has proven to be very important for effective decision-making.<sup>103</sup> The level of trust affects the way civilian and military leaders communicate and interact with each other. It also affects the extent to which civilian leaders would be receptive to military advice. My case studies show that the making of effective strategies and policies is very rarely possible if civilian and military leaders distrust each other. Such was the case, for example, under Kennedy/Johnson/McNamara, Clinton and Rumsfeld - the civil-military relationship lacked trust and this affected negatively the ability of the US to produce coherent policies, integrating military and political considerations. The lack of trust affects negatively the quality of the civil-military dialogue and, thus, the quality of the decision-making process itself. More specifically, in cases when the civilians distrust the military, they usually ignore their advice and, at times, even exclude them from the debates.<sup>104</sup> They turn to

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<sup>103</sup> See, for example, Richard Kohn, "Building Trust: Civil-Military Behaviors for Effective National Security," in *American Civil-Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era*, pp. 264-290; Don M. Snider, "Dissent and Strategic Leadership of the Military Profession," *Orbis* 52, No. 2 (Spring 2008), pp. 256-77; Mackubin Thomas Owens, "What Military Officers Need to Know about Civil-Military Relations," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Autumn 2006), pp. 68-80; David C. King and Zachary Karabell, *The Generation of Trust: Public Confidence in the U.S. Military since Vietnam* (Washington, DC: AEI Press, 2003); Tami Biddle, "Leveraging Strength: The Pillars of American Grand Strategy in World War II," *Orbis* (Winter 2011); Marybeth P. Ulrich, "A Primer on Civil-Military Relations for Senior Leaders"; Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency: Civil-Military Relations from FDR to George W. Bush* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2005); Major Bradley J. Harms, "The American Civil-Military Relationship: A Delicate Balance," Master's Thesis, United States Marine Corps, Command and Staff College, 2007/08; Colonel David Touzinsky, "Civil-Military Relations, National Security and the Chairman of the JCS," Master's Thesis, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, 2010; Brandon DeWind, "Civil-Military Relations: From Vietnam to Operation Iraqi Freedom," School of Advanced Military Studies, 2009.

<sup>104</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, pp. 159-60.

relying primarily on civilian advice and thus, the expertise and input of the military cannot be integrated into the policies. In the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war, distrust led to ignoring not only military advice, but also the expertise of State and the CIA. All of this ultimately resulted into a flawed strategy. Regarding civil-military interaction, lack of trust usually leads civilian leaders to micro-manage the military, Vietnam and the 2003 Iraq war cases being the most obvious in this respect.

The relationship between preference divergence and trust is a complex one. While there seems to be a correlation between highly diverging preferences and lack of trust, there is no causation. On many occasions, naturally, when decision-makers have seen that they and their top military advisors have very different preferences on the use of force in general, or about a particular operation, they have had doubts about the advice they will receive from the officers or the way the military will execute their orders. In such circumstances, civilians have even resorted to close monitoring or micromanagement to ensure that civilian, and not military, preferences are fulfilled at the end. However, high preference divergence does not always go together with lack of trust. We may strongly disagree with somebody and still trust him/her. Likewise, we may have similar views with someone but not trust him/her. Before discussing in more detail the relation between preferences and trust, let's analyze what other factors also affect trust.

The table below sums up 4 possibilities for the relation between preference divergence and trust. If we apply this to the relationship between civilian and military leaders, Quadrant 1 will be a case of civilian and military officials having similar ideas and interests and trusting each other (e.g., the civil-military relationship under Bush, Sr.). Quadrant 2 will be a case where political and military officials have diverging ideas, views, and interests but trust each other (e.g., FDR and the military in the decision-

making process during Operation Torch in 1942). Quadrant 3 is a relationship in which politicians and military officers have similar ideas but distrust each other. Quadrant 4 refers to a relationship in which civilian and military officials disagree significantly on the most important issues and do not trust each other (e.g., the relationship between Rumsfeld and the military for the most part of the W. Bush Administration; civil-military relations under Kennedy/Johnson/McNamara; civil-military relations in the first Clinton Administration).

Level of Trust	Level of Preference Divergence	
	Low	Hi
Hi	Quadrant 1	Quadrant 2
Low	Quadrant 3	Quadrant 4

Based on this, we can think of the circumstances under which it is more likely for the conditions for a good-quality decision-making process to be fulfilled, namely: having a continuous civil-military dialogue - free and open communication and exchange of information and ideas between civilian and military leaders, and smooth coordination, interaction and cooperation between them. Civilian and military leaders would be most likely to communicate effectively and cooperate with each other if they are in Quadrant 1

– having similar ideas and interests and trusting each other. As my case studies show, under such conditions, political and military officials exchange ideas freely, do not try to distort, manipulate or conceal information, civilians are more likely to be open to hearing military advice, and the military is more likely to implement decisions without shirking. Civilian and military leaders will be least likely to design and implement good strategies and policies under conditions like the ones in Quadrant 4 - a situation in which the two sides have highly diverging views and interests and the level of trust between them is very low. In such situations, communication and interaction between civilian and military officials is likely to be difficult and the relationship will most likely be tense. Both sides may be sharing information only selectively to benefit their own preferred course of action. Civilians may discount or reject advice coming from the military and may decide to micromanage the officers to ensure their compliance.

Zakheim’s interesting observation about the Crusader story also links mistrust with the subsequent high levels of preference divergence over strategy making in Iraq, saying we cannot understand the latter without the former. “The lack of trust presaged the bitter rift that opened up during the following year between Shinseki, on the one hand, and Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz, on the other, over the size of the force that was required to prosecute the invasion and occupation of Iraq. It is simply not possible to understand the latter without the former.”<sup>105</sup> In this case, first trust was lost, then the lack of trust exacerbated the differences in the preferences of civilian and military officials on key issues of strategy-making on Iraq. It is often the case that high preference divergence does not get bitter if trust is still present. An example of that is the relationship between

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*



FDR and Marshall, who disagreed on a lot of occasions, sometimes bitterly, but they were still able to keep the civil-military relationship functioning effectively because they never lost trust in each other. In this sense, trust could mitigate to some extent the negative consequences of high preference divergence.

Most analysts offer the civil-military relationship under FDR (especially the relationship between the President and Gen. Marshall) as a useful model of well-functioning advisory relationship which contributed significantly to the American success in the war. How was it possible for a trustful and cooperative civil-military relationship to be preserved despite the significant differences in civilian and military preferences? As is well-known, FDR and Marshall disagreed on some key strategic and political issues – e.g., Marshall opposed sending munitions to Britain and the Soviet Union, arguing that they are needed more at home for the American rearmament; he disagreed with the President’s decision to occupy Greenland and Iceland in 1941 and to invade North Africa in 1942. However, both sides did their best to build and maintain an effective civil-military relationship. President Roosevelt encouraged a frank dialogue and vigorous debates; he provided opportunities for the military to address important issues and to express their disagreements with civilian views.<sup>106</sup> FDR showed genuine respect for the military leaders and did not micromanage. As for General Marshall, according to Kohn, with his civilian bosses in the White House and Congress he “was often brutally frank, sometimes even confrontational, but always cooperative and never dismissive.”<sup>107</sup> At the

<sup>106</sup> See, for example, Richard Kohn, “The Erosion of the Civilian Control of the Military in the United States,” *Naval War College Review*, (Summer 2003); Major Bradley J. Harms, “The American Civil-Military Relationship: A Delicate Balance,” Master’s Thesis, United States Marine Corps, Command and Staff College, 2007/08, p. 7.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

same time, Marshall dutifully kept all his disagreements with the President private. “Marshall was honest and straightforward; he never leaked a word or undermined his bosses’ decisions.”<sup>108</sup> He was convinced that it was very important for the US government to present a united front both domestically and internationally. The general also understood that any indiscretion can ruin the trust between him and the President and diminish his influence in internal debates. As George Marshall shares in an interview, “I thought it was far more important in the long run that I be well established as a member of the team and try to do my convincing within the team, rather than to take action publicly contrary to desires of the president and certain members of Congress.”<sup>109</sup> Above all, FDR never doubted Marshall’s loyalty. Even when he disagreed, Marshall always faithfully executed Presidential orders and never questioned FDR’s authority to decide on the use of military force. For example, when Roosevelt rejected Marshall’s advice and ordered the invasion of North Africa instead of the cross-channel invasion, the military did their best to execute the order.

Since trust is such an important component of the civil-military relationship and since it affects the quality of the decision-making process, the next paragraphs discuss briefly what the recent literature says about factors ruining trust between political and military officials and the ways to improve it. Richard Kohn also discusses particular developments in recent history that have made civilian leaders distrustful of the military and have made them even more determined to exercise tougher control over the Pentagon. “Over a half century, bureaucratic maneuvering, end runs to Congress, sophisticated

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 288.

<sup>109</sup> George Marshall interview, 22 January 1957, in *George C. Marshall Interviews and Reminiscences for Forrest C. Pogue*, ed. Larry I. Bland (Lexington, Virginia, 1991), p. 297.

public relations campaigns, leaks, and alliances with contractors and with local communities and veterans groups have aroused the political leadership's suspicion and diminished its trust in the military, whatever its rhetoric of support for the military and national defense."<sup>110</sup> Kohn goes on to suggest steps that each side – civilian and military – can take in order to inspire more trust. For example, military leaders should be candid. They should avoid activities that might be or be perceived to be maneuvering or manipulating the civilians in order to achieve outcomes according to military preferences, including “leaking, denying information, failing to implement orders or policies or slowing them down, end runs to Congress, or framing choices so as to limit or manipulate the options.” Building trust also requires that civilian officials do not doubt the military would obey their orders. Also, "Flag officers should speak up but not out, that is, not speak publicly but keep their advice confidential, prevent their staff from leaking papers or advice, and not let either become public unless communicated in testimony when Congress asks for their personal views."<sup>111</sup>

Civilians should also do their fair share for inspiring trust. They should learn to understand the military – its needs, culture, past experiences and their effects on its way of thinking. While the proper civil-military relationship is one of subordination of the military, an effective decision-making process requires an ongoing dialogue in which the military should be encouraged to freely express its disagreements. “Civilians should treat military people and their institutions with genuine respect. This does not mean automatically deferring to them, to their judgment or advice. ... civilians should support

<sup>110</sup> Richard Kohn, “Building Trust: Civil-Military Behaviors for Effective National Security,” in: *American Civil-Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era*, p. 274.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

and defend the military against unwarranted or unfair criticism...[they] must hold the military accountable for its actions, [but] should also be accountable; they have no business hiding behind the military to cover for their own mistakes.”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., pp. 285-6.

## Chapter 4

### The Goldwater-Nichols Act and Civilian Control:

#### The Unintended Consequences of Institutional Reforms

My analysis of the *legal/institutional* powers of civilian and military leaders centers on the main constitutional checks on the power of the military as well as key defense reorganization laws in order to examine how changes in institutional rules and norms have affected the relations between top civilian and military officials. By examining the legal powers of top decision-makers, we can illustrate some of the key arguments started in the Theory Chapter: 1. When we analyze the power of civilian and military officials, both formal (legal/institutional) and informal sources of power (e.g., professional reputation, education and experience, public standing/prestige, support by key political actors, such as Congress and the public) are important in explaining the civil-military balance of power and its variance. 2. While legal powers are certainly important, I argue against legal determinism in that laws in and of themselves do not guarantee that civilian or military officials will dominate or that military advice would be taken into account. Developments after the adoption of the Goldwater-Nichols Act confirm that the actual power of top civilian and military leaders cannot be determined solely based on their legal powers. Hence, in order to understand the civil-military balance of power better, scholars have to look beyond the legal or formal powers of each side and analyze the informal factors of influence. 3. Laws like the GNA or any other institutional changes could and do affect the effectiveness of the decision-making process but only on the margin because they cannot be relied upon to fix problems in the civil-military relationship and, as this dissertation shows, it is the dynamics of the relationship

between top civilian and military officials that matters for the quality of decision-making on the use of force.

More specifically, this chapter argues that, in practice, the Goldwater-Nicholas Act, has weakened civilian control, which goes contrary to one of the main goals of this legislation, namely, strengthening civilian authority and improving the effectiveness of the decision process. I explain why this law, which has been called by some the most sweeping reform legislation in the history of this country, is one of the key reasons for the increased influence of the military in the 1990s. This legislation helped change the balance of power in favor of the military in at least three ways: 1) by unifying the military and thus strengthening it in debates with civilian officials; 2) by enhancing the relative power of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and transferring to him key functions; and 3) by increasing significantly the competence and preparedness of the officers, serving in joint staffs, while failing to do the same for their civilian counterparts. These changes in practice facilitated the expression of *united* military preferences, which led to increased political power of the military. It became more difficult for civilians to play the services off one another. The consequences of these institutional changes, which promoted jointness and strengthened the military formulation of strategy became quite obvious under Gen. Colin Powell. As a result, civilian leaders were often presented not with different military options from which they could choose but with a unified military position, which they could overrule or disregard only if they were willing to pay a very high political price.

While it is true that the Goldwater-Nichols Act strengthened significantly the voice of the Chairman as the nation's highest ranking and most powerful officer, as I argue against legislative/institutionalist determinism, this act in and of itself does not

guarantee that military advice will be dominant. As my case study on the 2003 Iraq war and the relations between Secretary Rumsfeld and CJCS Gen. Myers show, this legislation gives top military leaders the right to be heard, but not heeded.

Furthermore, this chapter shows that in order to understand the civil-military balance of power, scholars have to look beyond the legal powers of each side. The legal/institutional arrangements tell us only how civilian control works *in theory*: power to make decisions on foreign and domestic issues, in time of war and in time of peace, lays in the hands of civilian officials. However, the every-day aspects of civilian control and how civil-military relations affect the decision-making process are better explained through a model of strategic interaction, which takes into account the sources of *informal* influence of civilian and military officials during the decision-making process, as well as the intensity of preference divergence between them, as explained in Chapters II and III of this study. The analysis of the consequences of the Goldwater-Nichols Act confirms the importance not only of *informal* power, but also some particular sources of such power, which the theory of this study has used to explain the overall balance of power between top civilian and military officials. Such sources of power are, for example: the level of education and experience of top political and military decision-makers, their political and bureaucratic skills, and whether they are united or divided within.

The chapter proceeds as follows: The first section discusses briefly the reforms prior to the Goldwater-Nichols Act (GNA)<sup>113</sup> and sets the context for the reform legislation of the mid 1980s. It points to the importance of the legal/institutional framework of the civil-military relationship but argues that it is not sufficient to explain

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<sup>113</sup> Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, Public Law 99-433, 99th U.S. Congress, October 1, 1986.

important aspects of the decision-making process, such as why, for example, civilian leaders reject military advice. Secondly, I discuss the main objectives and provisions of the GNA and how they affected the main actors in the decision-making process. The third section analyzes the extent to which the objectives of the law have been met. It challenges the conventional wisdom of the GNA as a success by pointing to some of its serious negative consequences. This section ends with a brief comparison between Generals Colin Powell and Richard Myers as Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which shows that while they served under the same legal provisions, their role and influence while being the principal military advisor to the top civilian leadership differed significantly. This once again makes the case against legal determinism. The fourth section discusses the positive and negative aspects of recent proposals to use the GNA as a model for Interagency reform and the fifth section concludes.

### **I. Institutional Reforms Prior to the GNA**

The passing of the GNA in 1986 was preceded by two other major re-organizations of the U.S. Armed forces and the National Security apparatus after World War II. The first one happened with the adoption of the National Security Act in 1947 (signed into law on July 26 by President Truman). This legislation set up a unified military command known as the National Military Establishment (NME). It also created the CIA, the NSC, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>114</sup> The National Security Act shifted responsibility away from the service secretaries and gave the OSD authority over the

<sup>114</sup> Douglas Stuart, "Constructing the Iron Cage: The 1947 National Security Act," In *Affairs of the State: The Interagency and National Security*, Edited By Gabriel Marcella (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008), pp. 53-96.



national military establishment.<sup>115</sup> Although this law placed the NME under the control of the Secretary of Defense (SecDef), at first, this newly-established position had very limited powers. This started to change in 1949 when the original Act was amended and the NME was renamed the Department of Defense.

The National Security Act of 1947 also “mandated a chairman to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), but did not define his power, stipulating that the JCS were the principle military advisors to senior civilian leadership, the President, NSC and the SecDef.”<sup>116</sup> The Tydings Bill, a supplement to the amended National Security Act, left the Chairman of the JCS with limited powers. It listed the following duties of the Chairman: 1. Serve as the presiding officer of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2. Provide the agenda for meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 3. Inform the Secretary of Defense and when appropriate the President, of those issues upon which agreement among the Joint Chiefs of Staff has not been reached.<sup>117</sup> This shows the Chairman was first among equals. He did not have the ability to control the Service Chiefs. The reluctance to give more substantial powers to the Chairman resulted from the fear of creating a Czar-like position. Parochial service interests dominated and the inter-service rivalries often made it impossible for the JCS to provide effective advice.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), p. 13.

<sup>116</sup> Major Brandon L. DeWind, “Civil-Military Relations: From Vietnam to Operation Iraqi Freedom,” Master’s Thesis, School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2009, p. 13.

<sup>117</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff Special Historical Study, *A Concise History of the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 1942-1979*, Historical Division Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 1980, p. 32.

<sup>118</sup> H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), p. 14.

The problems created by the inter-service rivalries motivated the second major reform, which happened under President Eisenhower with the adoption of the Defense Reorganization Act of 1958. The new law provided the mandate for unified and specified commands, continued to consolidate power in the Secretary of Defense and strengthened the organization of the JCS. The act sought to "centralize control over the services, remove redundancies, streamline command channels, and provide for tighter civilian control at the Pentagon."<sup>119</sup> It stripped the JCS of most of their power, shifting it to the Secretary of Defense. Even though the JCS retained the status of principal military advisers, they were taken out of the chain of command.

The reforms in the late 1940 and 1950s aimed at improving bureaucratic efficiency and concentrated authority in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Robert McNamara was the first to put to use the enormous authority accumulated in his office. Critics argued that the powers of the Secretary of Defense not only made him in charge of strategic planning and operational direction of forces but also marginalized military expertise. "Whirlwind DOD reorganization ... resulted in a command structure that marginalized the judgment of senior officers. In 1965, for example, prior to the critical decision to send ground forces to Vietnam, JCS met with the President only twice."<sup>120</sup>

The above logic leads to the conclusion that the legal provisions at the time, namely, the Chairman's institutional weakness together with the concentration of power in the hands of the Secretary of Defense, are to blame for the flaws in the decision-making process during the Vietnam War. As this argument goes, because of the

<sup>119</sup> H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam*, p. 14.

<sup>120</sup> Major Christopher M. Bourne, "Unintended Consequences of the Goldwater-Nichols Act," *Joint Forces Quarterly* (Spring 1998), p. 102.

legislative changes, for the most part in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, Secretary McNamara managed to cut the JCS out of the loop and did not consult with them. In the words of Major DeWind, “McNamara disregarded military advice and closely directed the war himself. The Joint Chiefs disagreed with operational directions from the National Command Authorities (NCA), *but the National Security Act as amended provided few checks against a strong-willed Secretary ignoring or suppressing their advice.*”<sup>121</sup>

However, while certainly important, the legal/institutional framework is insufficient to explain the deficiencies in the national security decision-making process during the Vietnam War. Analysts should look into the quality of the civil-military relationship for a better understanding. That Kennedy, Johnson, and McNamara often disregarded military advice could be explained with their low opinion and even disdain of the military leaders and the profound lack of trust, characteristic of the civil-military relationship at the time.<sup>122</sup> Had top civilian leaders believed that the Joint Chiefs and the commanders on the ground had something useful to say, they would have certainly consulted with them more often. There was nothing in the laws that would have prohibited or discouraged frequent exchange of ideas.

The problem was that for a variety of reasons – e.g., strong preference divergence between civilian and military leaders, as well as civilian decision-makers’ disappointment with the quality of military advice in previous cases (the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis, among others), the Presidents and the Secretary of Defense did not trust

<sup>121</sup> Major Christopher M. Bourne, “Unintended Consequences of the Goldwater-Nichols Act,” *Joint Forces Quarterly* (Spring 1998), p. 102. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>122</sup> H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997).

and had little respect for the expertise of their top military officers. In such circumstances, it is not surprising that civilians would disregard the military's recommendations. Dale Herspring's and H.R. McMaster's case histories of the Vietnam War, for example, have documented how because of the SecDef disdain for the military, he rerouted the lines of communication from the JCS to the President directly through his office and often would not forward the military's communiqués to the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>123</sup> McNamara's successor as SecDef, Clark Clifford, trusted and respected the Joint Chiefs more. Because of that, he was more willing to listen to their opinions and advice. As a result, communication between top civilian and military officials improved during his brief tenure although the provisions of the relevant laws did not change.<sup>124</sup>

On occasion political leaders reject military advice because it conflicts with their preferred policies, not because it is of low quality or the institutional arrangements are flawed and the military are cut out of the process. As Holloway writes, "the use of military force from the Bay of Pigs to Beirut shows that the President often does not accept JCS advice when it conflicts with his chosen course."<sup>125</sup> With or without the GNA, accepting or rejecting military advice will remain the prerogative of the President and the Secretary of Defense. Hence, in order to understand better the decision-making process, we have to analyze not only the institutional arrangements but also the variables determining the civil-military relationship at a given time.

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<sup>123</sup> See, for example, Dale R. Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, pp. 159-160.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>125</sup> James L. Holloway III, "The Quality of Military Advice," *American Enterprise Institute Foreign Policy and Defense Review*, vol. 2, no. 1 (February 1980), p. 34.

## II. Main objectives and provisions of the GNA<sup>126</sup>

By the beginning of the 1980s, many analysts and policy-makers saw a growing need for another reform of the defense establishment. Despite all the efforts in the past, the problems stemming from what were seen as excessive inter-service rivalries had not been overcome. Most saw inter-service rivalry as almost entirely bad and not as a source of competition and diversity. After all, inter-service rivalries had produced some of America's most humiliating military disasters, such as Desert One. The services seemed to be bitterly fighting for their parochial interests, at times at the expense of the national interest. (In the heat of the Cold War, in the Navy office at the Pentagon, there was a sign saying: "Don't forget the real enemy: the U.S. Air force.") Such rivalries were causing inefficient allocation of resources and producing redundant capabilities – an unnecessary burden on the budget.<sup>127</sup> Inter-service rivalries were to blame for military forces that often were not only grossly ineffective but also very expensive. This argument motivated yet another round of legal reforms. Congressional leaders wanted to pass legislation in order to empower the Chairman of the JCS and to make sure the services can truly operate in a joint manner rather than having each service fight the wars on their own. The perceived need for a legislative reform grew when General David Jones himself, the then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, went before the House Armed Services Committee in a closed session on February 3, 1982 and made a dramatic statement, urgently calling Congress to action. The General said: "The system is broken. I

<sup>126</sup> Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, Public Law 99-433, 99th U.S. Congress, October 1, 1986.

<sup>127</sup> For details see *Senate, Defense Organization: The Need for Change: Staff Report to the Committee on Armed Services*, 99th Cong., 1st sess., 16 October 1985, Senate Print, 99-86 (a.k.a. *The Locher Report*). This study details several historical examples of military operations, including Desert One and Grenada, in which service rivalries played a key role and had negative consequences (pp. 354-60).

have tried to reform it from inside, but I cannot. Congress is going to have to mandate necessary reforms.”<sup>128</sup> His remarks were particularly important because he was the serving Chairman and it was for the first time such a high-ranking officer has spoken out so critically of the system. Soon afterwards, the then Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Edward Myer, made an even more radical appeal for reform.<sup>129</sup>

Some of the main concerns at the time were related to what many perceived as an imbalance between service and joint interests and the almost total dominance of the services. The services had weakened the unified commanders and had a *de facto* veto in debates in the Joint Staff. “Initiatives in the Joint Staff went through five levels of review, in which each service had, effectively, a veto. Papers tended to be reduced to the lowest common denominator, inoffensive to any service, even before they reached the chiefs themselves, where the necessity for unanimous agreement caused them to be denatured even further.”<sup>130</sup> However, on issues of major interest to them, the services aligned with each other in opposition to the secretary of defense.<sup>131</sup>

General Jones organized a selected group to study the problems and to propose possible reforms. The report of the Chairman’s Special Study Group concluded that “[t]he problem is one of balance. A certain amount of service independence is healthy and desirable, but the balance now favors the parochial interests of the services too much,

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<sup>128</sup> Quoted in: James Locher, “Has It Worked? The Goldwater-Nichols Act,” *Naval War College Review* (Autumn 2001, Vol. 14, No. 4), p. 101.

<sup>129</sup> Edward C. Meyer, Gen., USA, “The JCS - How Much Reform is Needed?” *Armed Forces Journal International*, April, 1982, pp. 82-90.

<sup>130</sup> James Locher, “Has It Worked? The Goldwater-Nichols Act,” *Naval War College Review* (Autumn 2001, Vol. 14, No. 4), p. 102.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104.

and the larger needs of the nation's defense too little."<sup>132</sup> Because of the fierce battles for funding among them, each service often saw the others as "the real enemy." Involved in the zero-sum competition for resources, the services failed to reach an agreement on numerous occasions and the military leadership seemed paralyzed. During the Vietnam War, for example, the military was almost constantly divided and could not present an alternative strategy of its own. This strengthened McNamara's position even further and made it easier for civilian preferences to dominate unchecked during the decision-making process. Such divisions were affecting not only the relative influence of the military on decision-making, but also the effectiveness of the policies and strategies. When the military voice is so weakened, civilian leaders have to make their decisions based either on narrow service interests from the Chiefs or relying on civilian advisers and disregarding military opinion altogether.

The failures of the Vietnam era contributed to the calls for reform but were not the only factor. Several military operations, including the aborted 1980 Iran Hostage Rescue, the 1983 Marine Barracks bombing in Beirut, and URGENT FURY, revealed multiple problems in the ability of the services to work together and in command and control arrangements, in general. Also, a series of procurement scandals at the DOD questioned the ways in which tax payers' money was spent and the efficiency of many of the Pentagon's practices, more broadly. After thorough reviews of the state of the military establishment, law-makers expressed their high dissatisfaction with the following issues: severe inter-service rivalries; poor quality of military advice; ineffective civil-military relations; imbalance between the responsibility and authority of unified commanders (i.e.,

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<sup>132</sup> Chairman's Special Study Group, *The Organization and Functions of the JCS: Report for the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff* (Arlington, VA.: Systems Research and Applications Corp., 1982), p. 54.

their responsibilities were significant, while their authority was weak); cumbersome and confused operational chains of command; ineffective strategic planning (i.e., much more attention was devoted to programming and budgeting while long-range planning was neglected); and others. It took about five years of fierce debates and intensive bureaucratic infighting before the Goldwater-Nichols reform could be passed.

### Objectives of the Act

The Goldwater-Nichols Act set up nine objectives, aimed at improving the effectiveness of the DOD.<sup>133</sup> They included:

- Strengthen civilian authority
- Improve military advice to the President as commander in chief of the armed forces, Secretary of Defense, and National Security Council
- Place clear responsibilities on the unified commanders in chief for mission accomplishment
- Ensure that a unified commander's authority is commensurate with his responsibilities
- Improve joint officer management
- Increase attention to strategy formulation and contingency planning
- Provide for the more efficient use of resources
- Enhance the effectiveness of military operations
- Improve Defense Department management and administration.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. See also James R. Locher, "Taking Stalk of Goldwater-Nichols," *Joint Force Quarterly* (Autumn 1996).

<sup>134</sup> I discuss in more detail only the first 5 objectives because they are most relevant to the broader subject of this study.



The first objective was to strengthen civilian authority. The authors of the Act hoped to achieve this in several ways. First, they solidified the power of the Secretary of Defense (SecDef). The law clearly stated who was in charge of the Department of Defense ... "the secretary has the sole and ultimate power within the Department of Defense on any matter on which the Secretary chooses to act."<sup>135</sup> Second, to strengthen further civilian control, the law made the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) a powerful ally of the Secretary. The chairman was relieved from the obligation to negotiate with the service chiefs. This made his institutional perspective similar to that of the SecDef and easier to be on the same team. The 1986 legislation also strengthened the roles of the service secretaries and specified the responsibilities of each service secretary to the defense secretary.

The second objective of Goldwater-Nichols was to "improve military advice provided to the President, National Security Council and Secretary of Defense". As explained earlier, before the enactment of the GNA, the Chairman of the JCS had less power than the Joint Chiefs (JCS) themselves and this power was relatively ill-defined. The CJCS did not have much leverage over the Joint Staff. Since the Chairman did not have the powers to adjudicate among the Service Chiefs, service parochialism was left unchecked. The military advice for the civilian leadership had to be agreed upon by the Service Chiefs, and reaching an agreement or a compromise among all 4 services was quite difficult.<sup>136</sup> In order to get everyone on board to support them, recommendations were often watered-down and of little use. In the words of General Jones, "The corporate

<sup>135</sup> Congress, House, Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986: Conference Report [to accompany H.R. 3622], 99th Cong., 2d sess., Report 99-824, p. 101.

<sup>136</sup> Former senior DOD officials quoted in HASC Hearings 1982, p. 508.

advice provided by the Joint Chiefs of Staff is not crisp, timely, very useful, or very influential.”<sup>137</sup> James Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense from 1973 to 1975, was even more critical: “The proffered advice is generally irrelevant, normally unread, and almost always disregarded.”<sup>138</sup>

In order to mitigate service rivalries and to address the problems with military advice, the Goldwater-Nichols Act designated the CJCS the *principal* military advisor to the SecDef and the President (Title II of the Act)<sup>139</sup> and “transferred all corporate functions of the JCS to the chairman.”<sup>140</sup> Under this act, the chairman need not “coordinate” his advice with the service chiefs and unified commanders although of course he may decide to consult with them. If the chiefs are not unanimous, in the words of the Act, “the Chairman shall, as he considers appropriate, inform the President, the National Security Council, or the Secretary of Defense of the range of military advice and opinion with respect to that matter.”<sup>141</sup> In addition, the President may “direct that communications between the President or the Secretary of Defense and [the CINCs] be transmitted through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.” (Presidents Reagan and G.H.W. Bush did exactly that.)

<sup>137</sup> Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services [HASC], Investigations Subcommittee, Reorganization Proposals/or the Joint Chiefs of Staff Hearings before the Investigations Subcommittee, 97th Cong., 2d sess., 1982, HASC no.97-47, p. 54.

<sup>138</sup> Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Organization, Structure, and Decision-making Procedures of the Department of Defense: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, 98th Cong., 1st sess., S. Hrg. 98-375, pt. 5, 2 November 1983, p. 187.

<sup>139</sup> See Richard Meinhart, *Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff's Leadership Using the Joint Strategic Planning System in the 1990s: Recommendations for Strategic Leaders* (U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2003), p. 6; Colonel David Touzinsky, “Civil-Military Relations, National Security and the Chairman of the JCS,” Master’s Thesis (U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, 2010), pp. 9-10.

<sup>140</sup> James Locher, p. 112.

<sup>141</sup> Peter Chiarelli, “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols,” JFQ, Autumn 1993, p. 75.

To assist the Chairman, the GNA also created the position of Vice Chairman of the JCS – the second highest ranking officer in the Armed forces but also without command authority over combatant forces (Title II). The creation of the position of the Vice Chairman ended the practice of rotating Service Chiefs through the CJCS position during the times the Chairman was absent. Further, the GNA made the Joint Staff responsible exclusively to the Chairman.<sup>142</sup> The law was credited with eliminating the messy and confusing channels through which military advice made its way to the top civilian leadership. It was believed a good idea that the GNA empowered the CJCS to speak with a strong coherent voice on behalf of the military. With the new provisions, the Chairman acquired unique access and *potential* influence with the top civilian decision-makers. The CJCS was given additional responsibilities and was thus empowered to coordinate and synchronize the services to be able to operate successfully in a joint environment. These additional responsibilities of the CJCS, codified in the Goldwater-Nichols Act and listed in Chapter 5, Title 10 U.S. Code included: providing strategic direction, strategic planning, contingency planning, advice on requirements, programs and budget, as well as developing joint doctrine, training and education, and a comprehensive examination of the National Military Strategy each even numbered year.<sup>143</sup>

The third and fourth important objectives of the GNA had to do with the power and responsibility of the unified combatant commanders (CoComs).<sup>144</sup> More specifically,

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<sup>142</sup> James Locher, p. 112.

<sup>143</sup> Touzinsky, pp. 9-10.

<sup>144</sup> On October 24, 2002, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld ordered that the functional and regional commanders - the "CINCs", be referred to as "combatant commanders" when applied to "unified" regional organizations (e.g., USCENTCOM), or "commanders" when talking about "specified" units such as the

they aimed to place clear responsibilities on the unified commanders in chief for mission accomplishment and to ensure that a unified commander's authority is commensurate with his responsibilities. To solidify the responsibility of the Combatant Commanders, the GNA clarified their chain of command, now going from the CoComs to the SecDef and the President and cutting out the JCS and the CJCS. Some have argued that this change has been very effective, as recently demonstrated in the relationship between President Bush and the CoCom in relation with the Surge in Iraq.<sup>145</sup> Further, the GNA removed the JCS from the operational chain of command. It also required all combat forces, regardless of service, to be assigned to the unified commanders (Title I of the Act).<sup>146</sup> Before the passing of the law, the services could move forces in and out of regional commands without the approval of the CINCs. The GNA gave the CINCs the authority and responsibility for their commands

The fifth objective related to improving joint officer management. The authors of the law took special care to improve the quality of officers in joint positions by establishing a joint officer specialty occupational category and personnel policies to provide incentives to attract officers to joint duty assignments (Title IV of the GNA). Prior to the reforms of 1986, the problem was that military officers serving in joint-duty assignments were insufficiently qualified, both in terms of education and experience.<sup>147</sup>

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U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM). Secretary Rumsfeld said the term "CINC" was inappropriate because, under the Constitution, the President is the only commander-in-chief. This order was meant not just to re-iterate the military's subordination to civilian authorities but to send a signal that Rumsfeld is serious about strengthening civilian control. See, for example, Jim Garamone, "'SINC' is Sunk," [American Forces Press Service, www.defenselink.mil](http://www.defenselink.mil), Oct. 25, 2002.

<sup>145</sup> Fred Barnes, *How Bush Decided on the Surge*, "The Weekly Standard," April 2, 2008, accessed March 2, 2009. Available at: [http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer\\_preview.asp?idArticle](http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer_preview.asp?idArticle)

<sup>146</sup> James Locher, p. 112.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

This was a result of the fact that joint duty was held in low regard or even considered “the kiss of death” as far as someone’s military career was concerned. The studies done by Congress found that most officers were unwilling to serve in joint assignments and were concerned that their work in joint billets would be monitored for loyalty by their services. That is why the GNA included several elaborate provisions to attract high quality officers to the Joint Staff and to the staffs of the unified commanders in chief. For example, the Act mandated that: “officers who are serving in, or have served in, joint duty assignments are expected as a group to be promoted at a rate not less than that for all officers of the service in the same grade and competitive category.” And also, “officers may not be selected for promotion to brigadier general or rear admiral (lower half) unless they have served in a joint duty assignment.” (Title IV of the GNA)

### **III. The Unintended Negative Consequences of the GNA**

How well have the objectives of the GNA been met? According to traditional evaluations, the GNA has been largely successful in accomplishing its objectives.<sup>148</sup> The following section analyzes the successes and failures of the GNA and challenges many aspects of the conventional wisdom by pointing to various unintended negative consequences of the Act.

Analysts and policy-makers argue that the successes of the GNA include: strengthened civilian control; improved quality of military advice; increased cooperation and interoperability among the services; enhanced military effectiveness; improved

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<sup>148</sup> See, for example, Major David Borkowski, p. 6.

professional military education; and the unification of the national military command structure.

Regarding civilian authority, many agree that the role and the stature of the secretary of defense have been buttressed. "The SecDef clearly is the ultimate authority in the Department of Defense, and his role in the chain of command is clear. He enjoys the independent military advice of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff."<sup>149</sup> Civilian experts and military leaders are also convinced that the GNA strengthened the role of the Chairman as well, although they disagree as to the effects of this on civilian control and the quality of the decision-making process.

As for the quality of military advice to the commander in chief and the Sec Def, some of the top civilian and military officials have described it as greatly improved. Richard Cheney, as the secretary of defense under President George H.W. Bush, thought it represented "a significant improvement" over the "lowest common denominator" of the past.<sup>150</sup> General Shalikashvili said, "We have been able to provide far better, more focused advice."<sup>151</sup>

Another accomplished objective of the GNA, according to the conventional wisdom, is the improvement of jointness. The goal was, by extending jointness in some areas to produce superior military and coalition operations. Even critics of the GNA admit that the law has succeeded in this regard and that "some of the parochialism and obstructionism of the services conceivably has diminished in the face of the growing

<sup>149</sup> James Locher, p. 111. See also Borkowski, p. 6.

<sup>150</sup> "About Fighting and Winning Wars: An Interview with Dick Cheney," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, May 1996, p. 33.

<sup>151</sup> John M. Shalikashvili (Gen. USA), "Goldwater-Nichols: Ten Years from Now," remarks, National Defense University Symposium, Washington, D.C., 3 December 1996.

power of the chairman of the JCS, the Joint Staff, and the theater CINCs.” General Colin Powell also shares this view: “Performance of the Armed Forces in joint operations has improved significantly and Goldwater-Nichols deserves a great deal of the credit.”<sup>152</sup> Eliot Cohen, however, cautions that jointness should not become orthodoxy. It “requires a critical examination and a dispassionate review of its impact on long-term strategic thinking and civilian control.”<sup>153</sup> Jointness should not be treated as an end in itself, but a means to achieving improvements in areas of importance to national security.

Many argue that the most notable achievement of the GNA has to do with improved military effectiveness. The GNA is credited with the success of the US military in the operations since the law came into effect. High-ranking officers have supported this view. For example, both General Gordon Sullivan, former Chief of Staff of the Army, and General Merrill McPeak, former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, emphasize that the successful operations are proof that the GNA has achieved the objectives of its authors.<sup>154</sup>

Supporters of the law maintain that the GNA should be credited for the improved military effectiveness because it successfully clarified the chain of command and the mission responsibility of the unified commanders in chief.<sup>155</sup> Military and civilian officials have often praised the benefits of the shortened chain of command. For example, General Norman Schwarzkopf, commander in chief of Central Command during Desert Storm,

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<sup>152</sup> "The Chairman as Principal Military Adviser: An Interview with Colin L. Powell," *Joint Force Quarterly*, Autumn 1996, p. 30.

<sup>153</sup> Eliot Cohen, "Civil-Military Relations," *America the Vulnerable*, p. 90.

<sup>154</sup> Peter Chiarelli, p. 74.

<sup>155</sup> James Locher, p. 111.

found it very important for the success of the Operation that his responsibilities had been clarified. “Goldwater-Nichols established very, very clear lines of command authority and responsibilities for subordinate commanders, and that meant a much more effective fighting force.”<sup>156</sup> Goldwater-Nichols has also fulfilled another main objective of the reform: it has made the authority of the unified commanders commensurate with their responsibilities.

Another important success of the law is what is universally agreed to be a substantial improvement in the quality of officers serving in joint duties. The GNA succeeded in creating incentives for the military’s best officers to seek joint service, joint training, and joint education. In the words of James Locher, “The qualifications of joint officers have improved dramatically. These officers have come to see joint experience as something that can promote their careers or provide useful skill sets for the future.”<sup>157</sup>

### The Unintended Negative Consequences of the Act

The next paragraphs discuss some problems with traditional evaluations of the GNA as largely successful and draws attention to the unintended negative consequences of the law. The conventional wisdom is that “for the most part, the GNA has achieved what it was meant to achieve, as evidenced in the outstanding performance of the military in Operations Just Cause, Desert Storm, Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia, and current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.”<sup>158</sup> According to James Locher, “Overwhelming successes in

<sup>156</sup> Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, 102d Cong., 1st sess., 24 April; 8, 9, 16, 21 May; and 4, 12, 20 June 1991, p. 318.

<sup>157</sup> James Locher, “Has It Worked?,” p. 109.

<sup>158</sup> DeWind, p. 17.



military operations and peacetime activities have provided visible evidence of the positive results."<sup>159</sup>

Critics of the conventional wisdom have challenged the achievements of the GNA along two lines: I. The GNA is perhaps neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the U.S. successes in the military operations after the adoption of the law. II. The GNA has had some very serious negative consequences which may outweigh its benefits. This chapter discusses some of those negative results, including: diminution of civilian control; reducing the sources of military advice and thus, making it harder for decision-makers to arrive at the best policy choice; militarization of U.S. Foreign policy; attenuation of long-term thinking in military planning.

According to the first line of critique, analysts challenge the causal logic of those who judge the GNA as a success because of subsequent US military successes.<sup>160</sup> Supporters of the law contend that since the US has been victorious in so many military operations after the passing of the law, the GNA has been a success. For example, Operation Desert Storm is often taken as demonstrating the success of the 1986 law. This judgment is widespread, shared by both Republicans and Democrats, civilian and military. At the time, the *Washington Monthly* concluded that "Goldwater-Nichols helped ensure this war had less inter-service infighting, less deadly bureaucracy, fewer needless casualties, and more military cohesion than any major operation in decades."<sup>161</sup> Forbes magazine also saluted "[t]he extraordinarily efficient, smooth way our military has

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<sup>159</sup> James Locher, p. 111.

<sup>160</sup> Thomas Donnelly, p. 4.

<sup>161</sup> Katherine Boo, "How Congress Won the War in the Gulf," *Washington Monthly* (October 1991), p. 31. See also, "The Chairman as Principal Military Adviser: An Interview with Colin L. Powell," *Joint Force Quarterly* (Autumn 1996), p. 30.

functioned in the Gulf [as] a tribute to [the GNA], which shifted power from individual military services to officials responsible for coordinating them."<sup>162</sup>

The evidence supports better a more nuanced evaluation. In the case of *Desert Storm*, in particular, the operation was not truly joint; the services actually fought their separate wars. The land invasion was preceded by a thirty-seven-day air campaign; the Marine thrust into Kuwait was poorly synchronized with the Army's "left hook" maneuver into southern Iraq. In general, many have argued that the military successes in the operations in the 1990s and to this day were not a surprise since the US did not fight a peer competitor and would have won militarily even without the GNA, having in mind its total superiority. Winning the peace after having won the war has been one of the main problems for the US in most of these interventions and the GNA has not been able to help sufficiently on that count.

The next paragraphs detail the second line of critique, namely, how some of the law's provisions have had effects that go counter its objectives. In the words of Professor Mackubin Owens of the Naval War College, "The contributions of the Goldwater-Nichols Act . . . are marginal at best, and . . . the unintended consequences of the act may well create problems in the future that outweigh any current benefits."<sup>163</sup> The unintended negative consequences that analysts are most concerned about include: diminution of civilian control; reducing the sources of military advice and thus, making it harder for decision-makers to arrive at the best policy choice; militarization of U.S. Foreign policy; attenuation of long-term thinking, and others. No one argues that the GNA is the cause

<sup>162</sup> Malcolm S. Forbes Jr., "Fact and Comment," *Forbes*, March 18, 1991.

<sup>163</sup> Mackubin T. Owens, Jr., "Goldwater-Nichols: A Ten-Year Retrospective," *Marine Corps Gazette*, December 1996, pp. 48-53.

of the above negative developments but that it has contributed to them, together with a variety of other factors, and this needs to be taken into account for a full evaluation of the consequences of the law.

The weakening of civilian authority may be among the most serious unintended results, having in mind that the Act aimed at precisely the opposite. Critics of the GNA (e.g., John Lehman, Richard Kohn, Eliot Cohen, and others) argue that it has actually led to the erosion of civilian control in three ways: 1) by unifying the military and thus strengthening it in debates with civilian officials; 2) by enhancing the relative power of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and transferring to him key functions; and 3) by increasing significantly the competence and preparedness of the officers, serving in joint staffs, while failing to do the same for their civilian counterparts.<sup>164</sup>

1) One of the main criticisms against the Goldwater-Nichols Act is that it centralized military power in the Joint Staff and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and thus diminished civilian control. Those concerned about the diminution of civilian control, like Christopher Bourne, argue that the GNA “gave inordinate political power to the military by elevating the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff almost to the level of his nominal superior, the Secretary of Defense, thereby jeopardizing civilian control.”<sup>165</sup> The structural changes, imposed by the GNA, unified the military. This made it difficult for civilian leaders to play off the service chiefs against each other or the views of the chiefs against the theater commanders. While the military side of the DOD is more united as a

<sup>164</sup> See, for example, John F. Lehman, "Is the Joint Staff a General Staff?," *Armed Forces Journal International* (August 1995), p. 16; Richard H. Kohn, "The Crisis in Military-Civilian Relations," *National Interest* (Spring 1994), pp. 3-17.

<sup>165</sup> Major Christopher M. Bourne, "Unintended Consequences of the Goldwater-Nichols Act," *Joint Forces Quarterly* (Spring 1998), p. 100.

result of the GNA, civilians are often divided (along party and/or institutional lines – e.g., White House vs. Congress). And just like in battles, the side which can deliver a strong and coherent effort almost always wins against a disjointed adversary.

2) Especially after Gen. Colin Powell’s tenure as CJCS, many were concerned that the Goldwater-Nichols Act may have shifted power too far in the direction of CJCS and the Joint Staff.<sup>166</sup> Analysts, concerned about the changing balance of power between civilian and military officials, blame the provisions in the Act having to do with the relative authority of the Secretary, Chairman, and Joint Staff. Christopher Bourne, for example, argues that the GNA has damaged civilian control by dramatically reducing the secretariat and transferring several key functions to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. “The Secretary is now largely limited to formulating general defense policy. The *Organization and Functions Guidebook* lists his duties as “the formulation of general defense policy and policy related to all matters of direct and primary concern to the DOD, and . . . execution of approved policy.” At the same time, the GNA made the Chairman “responsible for strategic direction; strategic planning; contingency planning; requirements, programs, and budget; doctrine, training, and education; and roles and missions.”<sup>167</sup>

Some even complained of the creation of an “imperial Joint Staff” and warned that the US needs to take into account that German failure in two world wars was, in part, due to “monolithic general staff that failed to provide for serious debate and alternative perspectives.”<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Chiarelli, p. 75.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Roncolato, “The Goldwater-Nichols Act: The Need for Debate,” p. 9.

3) Another factor that led to the weakening of civilian control and the shift of influence towards the military was the increased quality of the officers serving on the Joint Staff. In and of itself, enhancing the competence and preparedness of military officers to serve on joint staff is undeniably a good thing. The problem was that the GNA failed to enhance the quality or power of their civilian counterparts. “As a result [of Goldwater-Nichols], the weight of influence within the Pentagon has shifted decidedly in favor of the Joint Staff, which has an increasingly strong hand in bargaining with OSD and sometimes takes positions at variance with it.”<sup>169</sup> Late Secretary Les Aspin has confirmed the shift in the quality of people working on the military and the civilian side of the Pentagon. “Because of Goldwater-Nichols, the quality on the military side has gone up tremendously, where the reverse has happened on the civilian side. Revolving-door restrictions have made government service so unattractive that the pool from which you can pick political appointees is not as rich as it once was.”<sup>170</sup>

As Secretary Les Aspin noted, during the process of making decisions, “the side capable of making the best arguments will normally prevail.”<sup>171</sup> With the incentives introduced by the GNA, the Joint Staff has become superbly capable of making winning arguments at the expense of its civilian counterparts at the Pentagon and the Congressional Committees that oversees the DOD. Thus, as a result of the GNA, in the corridors of power in Washington a unified and better qualified military staff often stands

<sup>169</sup> Eliot Cohen, “Civil-Military Relations,” *America the Vulnerable*, p. 89.

<sup>170</sup> Les Aspin, quoted by Kitfield, “Pentagon Power Shift.”

<sup>171</sup> Les Aspin, quoted by James Kitfield in “Pentagon Power Shift,” *Government Executive*, vol. 26, no. 4 (April

1994), p. 72.

up against divided and less competent civilians. This is the exact opposite situation from the one we had when McNamara and his Wiz Kids were running the show at the Pentagon when the military leaders could barely keep up with their civilian bosses, not to mention win an argument. The gap in the quality of the civilian and military staffs was very visible under the first Clinton Administration, for example, and this had significant influence over the decision-making process, as Chapter 6 of this study shows. Due to their increased political competence and bureaucratic savvy the military was very often winning the debates on the use of force and thus, military preferences dominated.

Combining all three factors, the diminution of civilian control in this argument is due to making the Chairman responsible for the most important decisions related to national security policy and also giving him sole control over the military staff, which is more effective than the civilian staff.

Regarding the provisions amending the formal powers of the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs - the key here is that the law provides only *potential* influence for both officials. The GNA does not definitively determine the power of top civilian and military officials. It is true that the law gave the Chairman significant new functions that could make him an important player but the law also says that in carrying out those duties, the CJCS is “subject to the authority, direction, and control of the President and the Secretary of Defense” (10 U.S.C. 153). The Chairman only makes recommendations to them and it is up to the President and SecDef to accept or reject his advice. The law on paper is often different from the law in reality. For example, the GNA in theory should buttress a weak Chairman against an overbearing Secretary of Defense. But, as many analysts have noted, things did not quite work that way under Secretary Rumsfeld during his second tenure at the help of the Pentagon.

The GNA does provide for the Chairman of the JCS to be able to advise the top civilian leadership but there is nothing in the law that guarantees he/she is going to be listened to or heard. Whether top civilian leaders are going to listen to the CJCS (as it happened during the tenure of George Bush, Sr.) or not (as was the case most of the time under Bush Jr./Rumsfeld) depends not entirely and not mainly on the legal provisions, but on factors such as level of divergence of civilian and military preferences, balance of *informal* power (including factors such as the personality, education and experience of the position-holders), the quality of the civil-military relationship, etc. The law provides potential influence but whether this influence will be exercised and how big it is going to be in reality depends on the above factors which go beyond the institutional framework given by the law. For example, as shown, Colin Powell's personality with his background and experience had a lot to do with him becoming the most powerful CJCS (since Gen. Maxwell Taylor), as most agree, and not only the institutional/structural changes mandated by the GNA. That is why, in order to understand better the decision-making process, the quality of military advice, and the influence top military leaders have on decision-making, one needs to use a framework, including the explanatory factors this study proposes rather than focus solely on legislative provisions.

Regarding the increased competence and enhanced experience of top military staffers, the solution is not to try to reverse this, of course, but to attempt to enhance the quality of their civilian counterparts. In this connection, there have been some proposals that could be effective. For example, in order to provide incentives for DOD civilians to pursue professional development or to broaden their experience and skills through education, training, or interdepartmental and interagency rotations, the Beyond Goldwater–Nichols study recommends that “Congress establish a new Defense

Professional Corps to attract the best and brightest civilians to DOD and to expand opportunities for professional development and career advancement.”<sup>172</sup>

Critics of the GNA have argued that the law also fails in its objective of improving military advice. Former Secretary of the Navy John Lehman believes that making the Chairman the *principal military adviser* (10 U.S.C. 153) and cutting the Service Chiefs out of the decision-making process has “limited not only the scope of military advice available to the political leadership, but also the policy- and priority-setting roles of the service chiefs and civilian service secretaries.”<sup>173</sup> Along the same lines, Eliot Cohen argues that the GNA has reduced the sources of military advice and thus made it more difficult for civilian decision-makers to make the best choice.<sup>174</sup> Having diversity of opinions is very important for an effective decision-making process. American military successes in World War II were due, in part, precisely to the ability of top military leaders to express freely diverse views.<sup>175</sup> They knew that they could disagree with FDR without fearing negative repercussions for their careers. Decades later, many of their colleagues, advising Rumsfeld/Bush Jr., did not think this was possible and this undoubtedly affected the quality of their advice and, thus, the decision-making process. But this was only partly due to the GNA and more directly related to Rumsfeld’s personality and leadership style and the civil-military relationship at the time.

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<sup>172</sup> Clark Murdock, Richard Weitz, “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: New Proposals for Defense Reform,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, No. 34, p. 7.

<sup>173</sup> John F. Lehman and Harvey Sicherman, “America’s Military Problems and How to Fix Them,” Foreign Policy Research Institute WIRE: A Catalyst for Ideas, 9 February 2001. Available at: [www.fpri.org](http://www.fpri.org).

<sup>174</sup> Eliot Cohen, “Civil-Military Relations,” in *America the Vulnerable*, p. 89.

<sup>175</sup> See, for example, Tami Biddle, “Leveraging Strength: The Pillars of American Grand Strategy in World War II,” *Orbis* (Winter 2011); Major Bradley J. Harms, “The American Civil-Military Relationship: A Delicate Balance,” Master’s Thesis, United States Marine Corps, Command and Staff College, 2007/08.



Cohen and others are correct to point that the president and secretary of defense need more than one senior military adviser in order to avoid biases and distorted perceptions any single advisor naturally has developed over his/her years of service. In the words of John Garofano, the Chairman of the JCS, whoever he/she is, “cannot possibly possess the background necessary for including and integrating the pools of expertise relevant to decisions for war.”<sup>176</sup> It is true that the GNA does not prohibit civilians from seeking advice from the other chiefs. However, it discourages such actions. The law permits a Chief who disagrees with the Chairman to submit separate advice, and the President, National Security Council, or Secretary may request dissenting views. However, insiders well-acquainted with the decision-making process correctly note that a dissenting officer could present a divergent position to the National Command Authorities (on his own initiative or by request) perhaps once or twice during his tenure and remain effective.<sup>177</sup> In this way, the GNA inhibits dissent and does not support an advisory system of multiple sources of advice. As a result, during the 1991 Gulf war, then secretary of defense Cheney had to resort to some creative methods in order to generate additional military options, which he was not getting from the Chairman and the JCS. (Chapter 5 of this dissertation on the 1991 Gulf War discusses this in more detail.) Another problem, reinforcing the above negative effects, is that the law enables the Chairman to control the issues considered by the Joint Chiefs by controlling the agenda of the JCS meetings.

The upshot, then, is that contrary to its stated objectives, the GNA has not made it easier for the top political leaders to get high-quality military advice. An effective

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<sup>176</sup> John Garofano, p. 249.

<sup>177</sup> Christopher Bourne, p. 103.

decision-making process requires that top civilian officials receive a range of alternative opinions on the issues. If we limit the diversity of advice, we limit the options of decision-makers and increase the chance of them not making the optimal choice. It is true that the process of making a decision is facilitated if we limit decision-makers' options, but in this way we also decrease their chances to design effective policies.

Critics of the GNA argue that recent US military interventions are a good illustration of the above problems with military advice. One such example is the 1991 Gulf War, when, according Thomas Donnelly, then Chairman of the JCS Gen. Powell and the senior civilians of the G H. W. Bush administration committed a blunder by failing to think through how the war should end. "The increasingly centralized command of U.S. armed forces only helped to narrow the discussion of alternative strategies."<sup>178</sup> Also, the performance of recent chairmen of the JCS--Army General Hugh Shelton, Air Force General Richard Myers, Marine Corps General Peter Pace, and Admiral Michael Mullen – in providing advice to the Bush, Jr. Administration raises questions about the effectiveness of the advisory system itself. However, it would be incorrect to link the various misfortunes of the US in the W. Bush's wars exclusively with the advisory system and the GNA. Many other factors contributed to them. Some analysts have blamed, for example, the secretive nature of the top officials in the administration and the controlling personality of the Secretary of Defense – factors that could also explain, in part, how and why dissent was stifled and alternative views often suppressed. Still, it remains an important counterfactual – whether a less centralized advisory system could have led to better results. As we know, the then Army Chief of Staff, General Shinseki,

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<sup>178</sup> Thomas Donnelly, "What Lies Beyond Goldwater-Nichols?," pp. 3-4.

had different views on the number of troops needed for the post-invasion stage of the operation. Had the system encouraged more open discussions with the inclusion of the Chiefs, things might have turned out better. Very often it is known only with hindsight which was the “right” advice in a particular situation. But the way to increase the chances of designing effective strategies and policies is to have an open dialogue between top civilian and military leaders.<sup>179</sup> Again, such an advisory system cannot be achieved only through legislative reforms.

Another unintended consequence is that the GNA may have led to the increasing imbalance in US Foreign and national security policy between military and non-military tools of statecraft. Could it be that what many perceive as the militarization of foreign policy (overusing military means at the expense of other tools of statecraft) is, in part, due to the Goldwater-Nichols reforms? It is argued that the Clinton Administration, using the GNA, tasked regional combat commanders to use a variety of non-military approaches in their regions as well and this turned those commanders into “Proconsuls.”<sup>180</sup> They became the point persons not only for US military policy, but for American diplomacy and foreign policy as well. “[These commanders] are perceived by states and other actors to hold a position of preeminence, as the most influential United States government regional representative. The result, as experienced in Iraq, is that the United States has relied on its military to carry out diplomatic, foreign assistance, stabilization, reconstruction, and governance activities for which the military instrument

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<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>180</sup> Dana Priest, “The Proconsuls: A Four-Star Foreign Policy?,” a series of article, published in the *Washington Post*. See also, Dana Priest, *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace With America's Military* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2004).

is ill-suited and ill-trained.”<sup>181</sup> Certainly, the GNA is not the only cause of such developments. The decreasing budget of the State Department, the ratio between the budgets of the State and the Pentagon, and the overall diplomatic atrophy have also contributed to the current situation. But the role of the Goldwater-Nichols reforms in this connection should not be overlooked.

The GNA has had other unintended consequences that could affect negatively the decision-making process. One such development is an attenuation of long-range thinking. This is due to the weakened voice of the services and their exclusion from planning. Hence, debates and decisions are dominated by the short-term perspective of the Joint Staff and the regional and functional commanders, who are naturally more interested in the military operation at hand and the current needs of the armed forces rather than future needs and trade-offs.

Another negative development Eliot Cohen and others have warned about is the weakening of competition for resources and missions among the services. “In all other walks of life, the United States has traditionally appreciated the merits of competition. Yet in the Pentagon the trend has been towards centralized control and allocation of resources. Particularly as technology allows the services to compete for roles and missions (in the area of deep strike, for example), it makes sense to enhance rather than diminish the competitiveness that has been so valuable in the past.”<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Gordon Adams, *The Politics of National Security Budgets* (Muscatine, IA: The Stanley Foundation, February 2007), p. 14.

<sup>182</sup> Eliot Cohen, “Civil-Military Relations,” *America the Vulnerable*, p. 89.

### **Brief case study – a comparison between Generals Colin Powell and Richard Myers as Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff**

This brief case study shows that the provisions of the law themselves are not definitive either for the balance of power between civilian and military leaders or the effectiveness of the decision-making process. It all depends on how the Chairman and his civilian counterparts use the legal provisions. The first person to serve as Chairman under the GNA was General Colin Powell. The power and influence General Powell held as Chairman were unprecedented. A comparison between his tenure and the tenure of some of his successors shows that the *informal* power of the Secretary of the Defense, the Chairman and the other top political and military officials matters significantly, and not only the prerogatives which the laws formally give them. General Powell's approach in carrying out his duties as Chairman contrasted with that of General Richard Myers. Both generals served their Chairmanship under the same law, but they executed their duties in very different ways. Reviewing the experiences of these two officers helps explain how they approached their roles as Chairman and why they did it in different ways.

There is a consensus that General Powell made full use of the powers given him by the GNA. As Colonel Touzinski argues, Powell “took full advantage of his position by actively pursuing and safeguarding the interests of the US Military. He also understood that his tenure would establish the limits and boundaries of power for the Chairman as he put into execution the newly assigned responsibilities specified in the GNA.”<sup>183</sup> A big difference in how Generals Powell and Myers saw the role of the

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<sup>183</sup>Touzinsky, p. 3.

Chairman is visible in the different ways they acted during the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq war respectively. Powell was much more activist and assertive while Myers was more pliant and deferential to Rumsfeld. During the 1991 Gulf War, Gen. Powell deftly placed himself between the then field commander, General Norman Schwarzkopf, Commander of U.S. Central Command and the then Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney.<sup>184</sup> He knew that the Goldwater-Nichols Act had taken the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs out of the chain of command, and that the Combatant Commanders worked directly for the Secretary of Defense. Powell also realized that information is power and he guarded vigorously his ability to have as much information from the top players as possible, so he could shape events according to his preferences on the use of force. By inserting himself between the top civilian leadership and Schwarzkopf, General Powell effectively filtered most information requests from the White House, the Secretary of Defense and Congress that were directed for General Schwarzkopf. He was always in the information flow, and he made the best use of his position. His efforts also allowed General Schwarzkopf to focus on war fighting.

As CJCS, Gen. Powell was adamant in avoiding what he judged were the errors of the Vietnam War, and especially civilian micromanagement. A primary objective of General Powell was in mitigating the impact of the notorious 6,000 mile screw driver, made infamous during the Vietnam War when the top civilian leadership was picking bombing targets from the Oval Office. In his memoirs, he is very clear about the enormous influence Vietnam had on him, “I had been appalled at the docility of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, fighting the war in Vietnam without ever pressing the political leaders to

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<sup>184</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, pp. 308-9, 318; Touzinsky, p. 14.

lay out clear objectives for them. Before we start talking about how many divisions, carriers and fighter wings we need, I said we have to ask to achieve what end?”<sup>185</sup>

As Chairman of the JCS during the 2003 Iraq war, Gen. Richard Myers played a different role and did not insert himself between the Secretary of Defense and the CENTCOM Commander, Gen. Tommy Franks. Secretary Rumsfeld usually spoke directly with his subordinate combatant commanders and this was very much in accordance with the command and control relationship as designed in the GNA.<sup>186</sup> These differences in the role of the Chairman of the JCS under Generals Powell and Myers cannot be explained by differences in the institutional arrangements since the law did not change. Some argue that the differences in the personalities with their experiences and beliefs matter profoundly and need to be taken into account as well.<sup>187</sup> General Powell is described as assertive, pro-active, independent and willing to stand up against his civilian bosses, while General Myers - as a pliant team-player, who avoided expressing a personal opinion, especially if it was different from the opinion of the SecDef.<sup>188</sup> Touzinsky, among others, explains such differences with their different experiences during the Vietnam War and the lessons they took from it. “In one case, we have an officer [Colin Powell] who experienced war in a very personal manner given the fact that he was on the ground witnessing the bloodshed. When given the opportunity, he acted aggressively with his civilian supervisors in avoiding the errors of a previous war. In comparison, the

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<sup>185</sup> Colin Powell, *My American Journey*, p. 464.

<sup>186</sup> Touzinsky, pp. 16-17.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>188</sup> See, for example, Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York, NY: Random House, 2007), Chapter 1.

other officer's experience in war was perhaps less personal in that he never saw the carnage since he never stepped foot on Vietnam soil."<sup>189</sup>

While important, this certainly does not tell the whole story either. We cannot fully explain the differences without also looking at the civilian side of the equation in these cases and at the civil-military relationship at the time. As Secretary of Defense, Don Rumsfeld asserted himself and was determined, in the name of civilian control, not to allow Myers or any other military officer to become another Powell. As Herspring writes, "*Regardless of Goldwater-Nichols*, which made the chairman the President's chief advisor on military affairs, Rumsfeld was determined to decide what role, if any, the Chiefs would play. If he wanted them to advise the President, he would say so-although in practice this would not happen very often."<sup>190</sup> The quality of the civil-military relationship was also very different in both cases. That President Bush, Sr. allowed communications between him and the field commander to pass through the Chairman was due to the fact that G. H. W. Bush trusted Colin Powell and valued his advice. In the administration of the Senior Bush, the civil-military relationship was amiable while under Bush, Jr./Rumsfeld, it was highly adversarial, dominated by mutual distrust and even dislike.<sup>191</sup>

This shows that the institutional/legislative factors are insufficient to explain the quality of the civil-military relationship, the balance of power in it, or the process of decision-making. While the power of civilian and military officials is certainly based on

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<sup>189</sup> Touzinsky, pp. 16-17.

<sup>190</sup> Dale R. Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 379. Emphasis added.

<sup>191</sup> See, for example, Colonel David Touzinsky, "Civil-Military Relations, National Security and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff," Master's Thesis, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, 2010, pp. 1-3; Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 409.



the prerogatives given to them in the Constitution and the laws, the sources of *informal* power are also very important. According to Richard Kohn, the sources of General Powell's power included "his experience, his shrewdness and adeptness, his personal charm and charisma, the web of contacts of people who knew and trusted him, his obscurity-to-fame personal story and his race."<sup>192</sup> Roncolato adds to this list: "His [Powell's] truly joint perspective, his political savvy and his ability to forge coalitions within the bureaucracy were unsurpassed."<sup>193</sup> The different roles Generals Powell and Myers played while serving as Chairman of the JCS, and the experience of the other Chairmen show that the letter of the law has been the same but its spirit has been constantly re-interpreted by the people in office, depending on their views and beliefs, their preferences regarding the issue under discussion, the level of their political and military knowledge and bureaucratic savvy, and the quality of the civil-military relationship at a given time. That is why it is not very productive to try to analyze the civil-military relationship and the decision-making process by focusing exclusively on the legal provisions.

#### **IV. Is the Goldwater-Nichols Act a good model for reform of the Interagency?**

Many of those who argue that the GNA is the paradigm of military effectiveness, naturally see it as a model worth emulating in other reform efforts. They have argued that the consequences of the Goldwater-Nichols Act have been so positive for the DOD that other departments and agencies need to be reformed using the GNA as a blueprint. More recently, after severe disappointments with interagency cooperation and

<sup>192</sup> Richard Kohn, "Out of Control: the Crisis in Civil-Military Relations," p. 7.

<sup>193</sup> Roncolato, "Goldwater-Nichols Act: The Need for Debate," p. 7.

coordination in Afghanistan and Iraq, some have called for an interagency reform based on the GNA. They contend that the GNA has proved that jointness and centralization are the winning trend for the future and that they should be institutionalized in the Interagency, just like the DOD did after the adoption of the GNA. “In order to meet the national security demands of the 21st century, the structure of interagency organizations, as well as the process used to coordinate these organizations, legislative reform equivalent to an interagency GNA will be required.”<sup>194</sup>

The predominant view has been that the US government should adopt new approaches to national security policy-making and design a system, which emphasizes “integrated effort, collaboration, and agility” in order to better combine military and non-military policy tools.<sup>195</sup> “Thus our programs would no longer be disparate and fragmented, we’d be looking at them in a holistic way. In other words, we would be doing for government what the Goldwater-Nichols Act did for the military.”<sup>196</sup> What is the reasoning behind this claim and how convincing is it?

Everybody would agree that in order to respond effectively to current challenges and threats, the U.S. government will need cooperation from all departments and agencies, working across traditional agency lines to formulate coherent and comprehensive

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<sup>194</sup> Borkowski, p. 22.

<sup>195</sup> Project on National Security Reform, *PNSR Recommendations: Forging a New Shield* (Arlington, VA: Project on National Security Reform, 2008), PNSR Recommendations, pp. ii-iii. Available at:

<http://www.pnsr.org/data/files/pnsr%20forging%20a%20new%20shield.pdf> (accessed

July 2012). See also Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington, VA:

Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, December 2007), pp. 47-48.

<sup>196</sup> Charles Bowers, “Nation-Building Exposes Two National Security Holes in the Whole of Government,” Strategy Project (U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA: 2009), p. 17.

responses.<sup>197</sup> Certainly this is easier said than done. Currently, cooperation among the different government agencies is not proceeding smoothly for a variety of reasons, among which: turf battles, policy disagreements caused by diverging perspectives and different priorities and goals, disagreements about the causes and consequences of various crises around the world and the role the US should play in them, if any. As a result, U.S. response to crises has often been slow and ineffective. Lack of unity of effort among government agencies has been one of the major culprits.<sup>198</sup> For a dramatic failure of the inter-agency process, we need look no further than the US experience in the 2003 Iraq war.

Why exactly the GNA could serve as a model for the interagency? In this view, the GNA is a powerful example of how a large and complex organization could be restructured and how its reform could produce positive results in meeting the strategic needs of the US. More specifically, supporters of this argument maintain that currently the interagency is plagued with many of the same problems experienced by the Department of Defense prior to the Goldwater-Nichols Act.

U.S. Government departments and agencies over time have tended toward bureaucratic stove piping. They also exhibit many of the parochialisms demonstrated by the services prior to the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act. The lack of clear leadership and responsibility within the interagency for national security issues are reminiscent of the military prior to the Goldwater-Nichols Act. In addition, the interagency lacks the ability to coordinate effective strategy and planning development. A final point of friction within the interagency is the lack of interagency education and training necessary to increase awareness and cooperation within the interagency framework.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Major David Borkowski, "The Interagency breakdown: Why we need legislative reform to coordinate execution of the National Security Strategy," Master's Thesis, United States Marine Corps, Command and Staff College, April 2008, p. 1.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Some analysts have challenged the argument that the GNA, and more centralization, is a good model for reforming the government. Their main counter-point is that centralization may be unwise and even dangerous because it can lead to loss of diversity of opinions.<sup>200</sup> The supporters of this argument are not against greater unity of effort on the part of the various government agencies. They do agree that this is necessary. But they are concerned that increased centralization may stifle flexibility. As a recent study analyzing the GNA observes, the "most relevant [principle of organization] is that in an era of fast-moving, unpredictable challenges, government should be more agile."<sup>201</sup> Agility could be lost, however, if the GNA is applied too strictly to the Interagency, maintain critics.

The GNA might not necessarily be the right model to use to reform the interagency, as a growing number of analysts contend, because centralization is not necessarily what is needed. They argue that it is actually decentralization that should be credited for the US recent counterinsurgency successes, which are due to more autonomy for commanders on the ground.<sup>202</sup> As Major Borkowski, among others, shows, some of the successes in Iraq and Afghanistan have resulted from decentralized practices and creative effort on the ground:

The startling improvement in the counterinsurgency capabilities of U.S. forces has come from the bottom up--from the frantic reading of the classic literature on the subject, to the ad hoc improvisations of small unit commanders in combat, to practical wisdom circulated on websites established by soldiers and Marines, and even to the writing of the Army-Marine Corps counterinsurgency manual (which had little, if anything, to do with

<sup>200</sup> See, for example, Thomas Donnely, p. 5.

<sup>201</sup> Clark A. Murdock and Michèle A. Flournoy et al., *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era, Phase 2 Report* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 2005), available at [www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/bgn\\_ph2\\_report.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/bgn_ph2_report.pdf) (accessed May 1, 2008), p. 6.

<sup>202</sup> Thomas Donnely, p. 5.

the turgid joint doctrinal apparatus at Joint Forces Command)--rather than from the top down. Similarly, where interagency processes have proven successful--such as provincial reconstruction teams in Iraq and Afghanistan, or the partnerships between Petraeus and Crocker in Baghdad or between former presidential envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and Lieutenant General David Barno in Kabul--it has come from people responding to situations as they find them rather than following orders from headquarters.<sup>203</sup>

Others warn that we should be very cautious when using the analogy of the Goldwater-Nichols Act because of the significant differences between the DOD and the Armed Forces on the one hand, and the interagency community, on the other. In this view, the Interagency should not adopt the GNA model wholesale because of these substantial differences – e.g., the military services are much more alike than the Department of the Interior and the Department of Homeland Security, for example. Furthermore, “the armed services have always been united by a common core mission—to protect and defend our nation on the battlefield. In contrast, each of the federal departments and agencies has a unique purpose and mission that it often does not share a great deal of in common with the others.”<sup>204</sup> Hence, the GNA analogy should not be overextended.

Another problem with using the GNA as the model for interagency reform is related to some suggestions that would alter the education of government officials. Supporters of this idea believe that the GNA-stimulated education reform is relevant to the current needs of public servants. Discussing the changes which should be made, Borkowski writes: “Education would be necessary for interagency personnel. For personnel to reach the Senior Executive or General/Admiral (Executive) level they would be required to work and receive credit for interagency experience. This experience would

<sup>203</sup> Major David Borkowski, p. 6.

<sup>204</sup> Joel Bagnal, “Goldwater-Nichols for the Executive Branch: Achieving Unity of Effort,” p. 52.

include a formal academic program and work experience within interagency.”<sup>205</sup> However, before engaging in radical reforms one has to answer the question what kind of education such officials need. The answers that have been provided so far are less than convincing. Certainly, there is nothing wrong in studying about and having some experience with different agencies. But if the recent wars teach us anything the problem is not only and perhaps not even mainly about the lack of knowledge about the inter-agency process. Many analysts have correctly emphasized the need for high-ranking government officials to study languages and to know more about the history, culture and traditions of foreign countries.<sup>206</sup> If they possess such knowledge, they would be able to understand better what kind of role, if any, the US could play in certain situations and whether any kind of intervention, including military, is warranted. In this way, officials would not be left to wonder after a botched intervention why the government apparatus could not solve the problems. Some crises are simply beyond outside help and no “can do” attitude can change that.

Politics and military affairs today require greater level of expertise than before. As John Garofano writes, “in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, narrowly defined political or military expertise is not the only – or even the most valuable – currency for effective civilian and military leaders.”<sup>207</sup> He goes on to suggest “a trio of knowledge skills: deep regional or

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<sup>205</sup> Major David Borkowski, p. 19.

<sup>206</sup> John Garofano, “Beyond Objective Control,” *Orbis* (Spring 2008).

<sup>207</sup> John Garofano, “Effective Advice in Decisions on War: Beyond Objective Control.” *Orbis* (Spring 2008), p. 243.

functional knowledge relating to international security; integrative thinking; and appreciation for linkages among strategic levels of analysis.”<sup>208</sup>

There also is a problem with overestimating the possibilities of a legislative reform and expecting it can deliver things that in reality no law can do. In this connection, there are some ludicrous suggestions and quite unrealistic hopes related to what changing the law can accomplish. For example, Major Brandon DeWind proposes “... a revision of Goldwater-Nicholls at the level of whole of government reform. ... an update should include a National Security Council centric organization that would force the Departments of Defense, State, and Homeland Security to operate on equal footing, sharing power within the government. This would ensure that government in whole would speak with one voice. The reform would be focused on a whole of government transformation, modeled on how the Goldwater–Nicholls Act reformed the Department of Defense.”<sup>209</sup> No US government (not even the Executive Branch of the government) could ever speak entirely with one voice unless we change the political system and institute some form of dictatorship. It is worth reminding that even under communism, there were bureaucratic divisions and infighting in the Soviet Government.

## V. Conclusion

The Goldwater-Nichols Act case study offers several lessons. First, institutional organization is important and it deserves serious study. Legislative changes in the organization of the U.S. defense establishment over the years have had important effects on the making of national security policy. Periodic re-organizations may be necessary.

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<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>209</sup> Major Brandon DeWind, p. 50.

“Congress came to the department’s rescue in 1986, but today the Pentagon’s organizational problems are again stacking up, and at an ever faster pace.”<sup>210</sup> But such reforms should not be relied upon as panacea. After a dramatic failure, the political pressure to reform the apparatus of government and especially those agencies that are perceived to have failed, may become irresistible. The changes in government agencies after the 9/11 attacks are a case in point. As often happens, some of these changes have had negative consequences. Pointing to the intense political pressure after 9/11 to reform agencies and departments, Paul Pillar argues that some of these reforms were unnecessary and/or have led to unsatisfactory results. As an example he uses the creation of the National Counter-terrorism Center, which in his view, duplicated and complicated many of the existing responsibilities of CTC, where Pillar had served.<sup>211</sup> Furthermore, many problems lie beyond institutional organization and they cannot be solved through legislative reforms. Institutional tinkering is not sufficient, and at times, it may not be even necessary.

Every law has unintended consequences and many of them are negative. Hence, it is quite difficult to predict whether the benefits of passing an institutional reform will outweigh the costs. Most likely, we will solve some problems but will create new ones. The brief history of legislative reforms prior to the GNA confirms this. As Bourne argues, “Presidents Truman and Eisenhower thought that their amendments to the National Security Act improved civilian control by empowering the Secretary [of Defense]. But the unintended consequence was grossly distorted civilian control.” The

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<sup>210</sup> Chiarelli, p. 74.

<sup>211</sup> Paul Pillar, *Intelligence and U.S. Foreign Policy: Iraq, 9/11, and Misguided Reform* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011)



GNA is no exception and, as some contend, its unintended consequences may outweigh the successes.

This chapter shows that the traditional evaluations of the Goldwater-Nichols Act as an overall “success, given subsequent joint operations in Panama, the Persian Gulf, and Somalia”<sup>212</sup> does not take into account the many unintended negative consequences the Act has had. Some of the most troubling results of the Act - diminution of civilian control; reducing the sources of military advice and thus, making it harder for decision-makers to arrive at the best policy choice; militarization of U.S. Foreign policy; attenuation of long-term thinking in military planning - go demonstrably counter its own objectives and affect negatively the policy-making process. We should take such analyses into account before deciding on whether the GNA is a suitable model for reforming the Interagency. While thinking of future reforms, we must keep in mind that “organizational reforms are rife with unintended consequences. With the national security of our country on the line, the first principle must be to do no harm.”<sup>213</sup>

This chapter shows that the *legal/formal* powers of decision-makers alone are insufficient to shed light on the civil-military balance of power (or the state of civilian control) and to understand the civil-military dynamics at the top of the government. That is why we need to analyze decision-makers’ *informal* power as well. Just like we cannot legislate morality into top-ranking government positions, such laws cannot address the broader dimensions of civil-military relations that are much more directly related to the effectiveness of the decision-making process on the use of force. Changing

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<sup>212</sup> Chiarelli, p. 74.

<sup>213</sup> “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era,” Phase 2 Report (Washington, DC: CSIS, July 2005), p. 25.

the legal framework would not be sufficient to improve the quality of the decision-making process because, as shown in this chapter, the process depends much more on particular dynamics of the civil-military relationship and not so much on the legal framework. Legislative reforms would be in vain if top civilian and military leaders cannot build an effective working relationship with each other. Even if it were possible to design a law that produces perfect military advice, it will be useless unless policy-makers are receptive to it. In the words of Henry Kissinger, “Presidents listen to advisors whose views they think they need, not to those who insist on a hearing because of some organizational chart.”<sup>214</sup> Changing organizational diagrams and creating well-organized advisory systems cannot guarantee good decisions. To paraphrase George Marshall, the price of civilian control and of effective decision-making is eternal vigilance on the part of both soldiers and civilians. No law by itself can solve the problems.

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<sup>214</sup> Quoted in Harry Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1982), p. 27.

## Chapter 5

### The Influence of Civil-Military Relations on Decision-Making in the Gulf War of 1991

Previous chapters developed the argument of this dissertation about the influence of different patterns of civil-military relations on the effectiveness of the decision-making process. We saw that the ability of statesmen and soldiers to make informed decisions on the use of force depends primarily on two key variables of the civil-military relationship: 1) the civil-military balance of power (which can vary between civilian dominance and military dominance), and 2) the level of divergence between civilian and military preferences on issues related to US national security and the use of force (varying on a continuum from “low” to “high”).<sup>215</sup> This chapter focuses in more detail on one particular pattern of civil-military relations, which is characterized by a combination of assertive civilian dominance and a low level of divergence between civilian and military preferences (Quadrant 3 of Table 1). The chapter also analyzes how temporary civilian abdication of control affects the decision-making process.

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<sup>215</sup> The *dependent* variable of this study is the effectiveness of the decision-making process and the two *explanatory* variables are: 1) the civil-military balance of power and 2) the level of civil-military preference divergence.

**Table 1****The Effectiveness of the Process of Decision-Making as a Function of the Civil-Military Balance of Power and the Level of Civil-Military Preference Divergence**

Level of Civil-Military Preference Divergence (Ideational Conflict)	Civil-Military Balance of Power	
	Civilian Dominance	Military Dominance
<b>Hi</b>	Quadrant 1 <b>Ineffective Process</b>	Quadrant 2 <b>Worst</b>
<b>Low</b>	Quadrant 3 <b>Effective Process</b>	Quadrant 4 <b>Mixed</b>

The argument in brief is that one can expect a more effective decision-making process when civilian decision-makers are dominant *and* when the level of civil-military preference divergence is low (i.e., cases in Quadrant 3) than when the military dominates *and* civilian and military preferences on the issues under debate diverge highly (as in cases that fall in Quadrant 2).

This chapter continues to flesh out several of the theoretical issues which are the focus of the dissertation. One such issue is the impact of assertive civilian control on the

process of decision-making and policy implementation.<sup>216</sup> Another related issue is clarifying the conditions under which assertive control could slide into civilian micromanagement of the military and, thus, have negative effects on strategy-making and/or military effectiveness. These issues are discussed in the context of the on-going debate between two contending models from the literature which offer solutions as to what should be the relations between top civilian and military officials in order to achieve effective decision-making, planning and conduct of a war – Samuel Huntington’s “objective control” model and Eliot Cohen’s “unequal dialogue” model.<sup>217</sup>

Huntington’s model, which has dominated the field for half a century now, presupposes clearly defined political and military domains and also that both sides (the civilian and the military) respect the boundaries and refrain from interfering in each other’s domain. According to this model, effective planning and conduct of a war would be achieved when civilian leaders are involved only in the “grand-strategic” realm while leaving the “tactical” and “operational” realms to the military. Along these lines, Huntington explains why in his view the U.S. was successful in World War II: “so far as the major decisions in policy and strategy were concerned, the military ran the war.”<sup>218</sup> Such division of labor would reserve the dialogue between top civilian and military leaders only

<sup>216</sup> As explained in the theory chapter, this study uses Peter Feaver’s concept of “assertive” civilian control, which overcomes many of the problems of Huntington’s typology of “objective” and “subjective” forms of control, developed in *The Soldier and the State*. Assertive civilian control is a more pro-active form of control than “objective” control, and allows “direct civilian supervision over the military, particularly over military operations.” See Peter Feaver, *Guarding the Guardians: Civilian Control of Nuclear Weapons in the United States* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 9.

<sup>217</sup> See respectively Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957) and Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York, London: Simon & Schuster, 2002).

<sup>218</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 315.

for the beginning and the end of a war. At the beginning, the politicians should decide on the objectives and give the go-ahead to the military. Then they should sit back and leave the military professionals to prosecute the war free of political interference. Or, as Helmuth von Moltke (the Elder) wished, politicians should fall silent the minute the war begins. Huntington's theory warns that if civilian leaders want to increase effectiveness they should not interfere with military professionalism. Civilians involving themselves in military matters would be equivalent to a patient advising her surgeon what kind of operation is needed and how to perform the surgical procedure.

However, as Clausewitz and others teach, war is indeed very political and since, at times, even the smallest tactical decisions may have significant political consequences, Huntington's idea of a clear separation between the political and the military domain is very often impractical.<sup>219</sup> Take an example from America's most recent war. On April 11 and 12 of 2003, the National Museum of Baghdad was looted while U.S. soldiers stood by. Sending a platoon most probably would have sufficed to protect this symbol of Iraqi culture and history. But, in the heat of battle, no one ordered the troops to stop the looting. This certainly looks like a purely military decision, which should be left to commanders on the ground. Had one of Rumsfeld's civilian aides in Washington picked up the phone to issue such an order, s/he would have been accused of violating the precepts of proper civil-military relations. What happened as a result of the looting? Besides irreparable damage to Iraqi cultural heritage, the looting and especially the widespread perception that U.S. troops did not do much to stop it, had a serious negative effect on US military and political goals.

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<sup>219</sup> For a similar argument, and also for a detailed analysis as to how and why American civil-military relations have *not* conformed to Huntington's "objective control" theory, see Peter Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control," *Armed Forces and Society* (Winter 1997), pp. 149-178. See also Peter Feaver, *Guarding the Guardians*; Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, Chapters 1, 7, and Appendix ("The Theory of Civilian Control").

After such a miserable start of U.S. post-war presence in Iraq, it became much more difficult to earn the trust of the local population and pacify the country enough as to start its reconstruction. This created a situation of chaos and lawlessness and the perception that US troops were not actually in charge. The numerous reports of violence and unrest tarnished the spectacular military victory of coalition forces and the US was accused of being interested only in Iraq's oil (when it turned out that the Oil Ministry was the only building defended by U.S. troops). Thus, a small military action (or inaction) ended up having enormous political consequences. This episode is a good illustration of how interwoven military decisions even at lower levels of war are with political objectives. It also shows the need for continuing vigorous civil-military dialogue in order to make military force serve the political objectives of a state.

In Eliot Cohen's alternative to Huntington -- the "unequal dialogue" model, a constant exchange of ideas between statesmen and soldiers and assertive civilian control lead to a more effective decision-making and conduct of wars. In Cohen's "unequal dialogue," civilian leaders, rather than sitting back, are querying, probing, and prodding, but without "dictating in detail" what the military should do.<sup>220</sup> This chapter shows why Cohen is correct in emphasizing the importance of an on-going and uninterrupted dialogue between civilian and military leaders during the planning and the conduct of a war and it provides more supporting evidence for the argument that assertive civilian control could enhance the effectiveness of the decision-making and implementation process. Cohen's model is an improvement over Huntington to the extent that it accounts better for the political character of war and the intimate connection between politics and war. But Cohen's model also falls

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<sup>220</sup> The dialogue is "unequal" because by definition civilians have the last word.

short because it does not convincingly draw a line between assertive civilian control and civilian micromanagement and does not explain the conditions under which assertive civilian control could turn into micromanagement rather than lead to good policy and strategy-making. While a careful reading of *Supreme Command* should make clear even for Cohen's critics that he does *not* advocate civilian micromanagement, based on his model it is very difficult to define the parameters of a civil-military relationship that would be conducive to effective decision-making and implementation. For example, in the "Afterward" of his book Cohen talks approvingly of George W. Bush administration's performance in the lead-up to and after the taking of Baghdad in 2003. "One thing was clear: the planning and conduct of the Iraqi war of 2003 followed the model of the unequal dialogue, and though it may have been painful, it yielded a swift and relatively cheap victory on the battlefield. In that respect, at the very least, Rumsfeld won his war."<sup>221</sup> In an interview with the History News Network Cohen said, "It appears that Rumsfeld is a very active secretary of defense, rather along the lines essential for a good civil-military dialogue: pushing, probing, querying. But not, I think, dictating in detail what the military should do."<sup>222</sup> However, while Rumsfeld should be given credit for returning to the principles of assertive civilian leadership, often under him assertive control turned into civilian micromanagement of the military and increased willingness to override military advice on operational and even tactical issues, at times with disastrous consequences. (One of the most well-known examples is his interference in the phasing of troops deployments.)

Although, contrary to Huntington, most of my findings support Eliot Cohen's conclusions as to what constitutes effective war leadership and Cohen's "unequal dialogue"

<sup>221</sup> Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, p. 240.

<sup>222</sup> Stephen Goode, *Insight*, available at: <http://hnn.us/comments/12702.html>.



model, this study goes a step further by specifying some of the problems with assertive civilian control, especially when combined with *high* civil-military preference divergence. For example, my case study of the 2003 Iraq war -- a combination of firm civilian dominance and a *high* level of preference divergence (Table 1, Quadrant 1) -- shows why assertive civilian control is insufficient for effective decision-making. Furthermore, this case illustrates how the combination of assertive civilian dominance with intense divergence between the preferences of civilian and military officials could lead to a variety of problems, such as poor sharing of information during the decision-making process, disregarding relevant information because it comes from the “wrong” source, insufficient analysis of policy options, and civilian micromanagement. That is why, this study contends, contrary to Samuel Huntington and Eliot Cohen, that we cannot define the kind of the civil-military relationship that would best serve the decision-making and implementation process based solely on the type of civilian control (e.g., assertive or delegative) or lack of it, and whether civilians or the military interfere or stay out of each other’s domain. We also need to take into account another key variable, namely, the intensity of preference divergence between civilian and military officials.

This chapter illustrates the dynamics of the decision-making process in cases when civilian leaders are dominant and when the divergence between civilian and military preferences is low (Table 1, Quadrant 3). One of the main hypotheses of the dissertation is that this particular pattern of civil-military relations leads to a more effective decision process. Why would my theoretical framework predict a “good” quality decision-making for such cases? The logic is that conditions of assertive civilian dominance and a low level of civil-military preference divergence would affect positively the main activities of top civilian and military leaders in decision-making and implementation, such as: gathering,

exchange and analysis of information; formulating and discussing of alternative options for action; and cooperation and coordination in the implementation of the chosen policy. More specifically, this chapter tests the following hypotheses expected to hold when civil-military preference divergence is low and the civilian side is firmly in control (cases in Quadrant 3):

1. When there is a *low* level of civil-military preference divergence (i.e., no large difference in the views, opinions, and goals of civilian and military leaders), both sides would have an interest in maximizing the availability of information. Sharing information should be unproblematic and decision-makers would not feel a need to misrepresent or hide information.

1-a When there is a low civil-military preference divergence, there will be a free flow and exchange of information between civilian and military leaders.

1-b When there is a low civil-military preference divergence, more policy options would be presented and analyzed and both sides (the civilian and the military) would feel free to speak their mind during the deliberations.

1-c When there is a low civil-military preference divergence, civilian officials would be more receptive to military views. They would be likely to consult often with their military advisors and will be less suspicious of the content of military advice.

2. When civilian and military officials hold similar preferences, both sides have more incentives to cooperate with each other. Alignment in civilian and military preferences leads to a smoother interaction and coordination between civilian and military leaders during the decision-making process and in the conduct of military operations.

2-a A low civil-military preference divergence leads to a more cordial and respectful civil-military relationship.

2-b When there is a low civil-military preference divergence, the civilians are more likely to trust the military to follow closely dominant civilian preferences.

2-c When there is a low preference divergence, civilian officials (or the dominant side) would not perceive a strong need to monitor intrusively the military. Hence, civilian micro-management (or meddling in military affairs) would be less likely.

If the above propositions hold, we are likely to have an effective decision-making process – that is, top civilian and military officials are more likely than not to assess correctly the political and military aspects of a crisis and the threats and opportunities they're facing, and to formulate and implement strategies that successfully achieve their military and political objectives.

This chapter proceeds as follows: In the first two sections, I discuss the balance of power between civilian and military officials under George H. W. Bush and Dick Cheney and the level of civil-military preference divergence in order to show why the 1991 Gulf War belongs in Quadrant 3 of Table 1. Regarding the civil-military balance of power, my findings debunk conventional wisdom that the 1991 Gulf War was the Generals' War. While analyzing the preferences of political and military leaders on key issues of US Foreign policy and the use of military force, I find important similarities and overlaps in the views and ideas of top political and military officials at the time. By analyzing the process of decision-making and war planning for Desert Shield/Desert Storm and, more specifically, how the civil-military balance of power and the *low* divergence between civilian and military preferences affected the making and implementation of US military strategy and policy, the third section confirms the hypotheses of this chapter. The last section explores the final stages of the 1991 Gulf War, characterized by civilian abdication of control, and the impact of civilian abdication on decision-making and implementation.

### The Civil-Military Balance of Power in the George H. W. Bush Administration

The first independent variable -- *the balance of power between civilian and military officials* -- represents the relative influence of civilian and military leaders over decision-making, and varies on a continuum from civilian dominance to military dominance. Saying that the balance of power favors the civilians over the military, for example, means that in most cases when civilian and military preferences diverge, civilian preferences will prevail.<sup>223</sup> It is important to emphasize that even in countries such as the U.S., with robust norms of civilian control, the civil-military balance of power is actually a variable.<sup>224</sup>

The following section shows that the civil-military balance of power in the administration of George H. W. Bush is best defined as assertive civilian dominance (Table 1, Quadrant 3). (As explained in more detail later on, this is true with the exception of the very last stages of the war, where the decision-making process is characterized by *civilian abdication*.) The role and power of the civilian leadership in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm are clouded by convenient misreading of both the Vietnam and the Gulf War. The Vietnam war is usually portrayed as the classic case of failure due to civilian micromanagement, while the 1991 Gulf War is given as a counter-example – a great success due to enlightened civilian leadership who knew how to give a clear mission to the military and all the resources it needed, and then step aside and leave the professionals to do the fighting. Operation Desert Storm and its success are seen by many as the triumph of the

<sup>223</sup> See, for example, Michael Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: the Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

<sup>224</sup> For a similar argument, see for example, Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). See also Risa Brooks, *Institutions and the Domestic/International Nexus: The Political-Military Origins of Strategic Integration, Military Effectiveness, and War* (Ph.D. Dissertation, UCSD, 2000).

Huntingtonian ideal of “objective civilian control,” an example of civilians setting clear strategic objectives and then letting the military use overwhelming force to achieve them. The conventional wisdom about the 1991 Gulf War is that Desert Storm was not only fundamentally different from the Vietnam War, but that it was fought in the “right” way precisely because of the lessons the military learned in Vietnam.<sup>225</sup> This conventional portrayal of the civil-military relationship in the Gulf War is not merely inaccurate but its implications could be dangerous for our understanding of issues of civilian control, as well as for the making of policy and military strategy.<sup>226</sup>

Contrary to the widely-held perception of the 1991 Gulf war as the Generals’ War<sup>227</sup>, from the very start of the decision-making process, the civilians asserted control and made clear to the military that some decisions would be reserved only for the politicians and they would be the ones to draw the line between what was considered political and what was military. Without meddling unnecessarily, in most cases, civilian leaders made sure that political considerations were taken into account.

President Bush “was clearly the person in full command of decision-making.”<sup>228</sup> Dick Cheney, as Secretary of Defense, saw affirming his authority as the civilian in charge

<sup>225</sup> Jeffrey Record, *Hollow Victory* (Washington, New York, London: Brassey’s, 1993), p. 119.

<sup>226</sup> For a similar argument, see Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, especially chapters 1, 6, and 7. As Cohen argues, “contrary to received opinion, the fault in Vietnam was a deadly combination of inept strategy and excessively *weak* civilian control.” *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>227</sup> As Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor sum up the main point of their book with the same title, “From start to finish, it would be the generals’ war to win or lose.” *The Generals’ War*, p. 415.

<sup>228</sup> Edward Draachman and Alan Shank with Edward Kannyo and Steven Ligon, *Presidents and Foreign Policy: Countdown to Ten Controversial Decisions* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 300.

of the Pentagon, as his first task upon coming to the building.<sup>229</sup> Civilian leaders understood they had to deal with very outspoken military officers, who believed that in order not to repeat the mistakes of the Vietnam War, they should advise the civilians not only on *how* to fight a war but on *whether* it should be fought in the first place. Furthermore, some in the military believed they should not merely advise but should *insist* that their input on strategic matters be taken into account.<sup>230</sup> Disturbed by media reports saying he knew little of the military and was not in control of the DOD, Cheney “seized an early opportunity to say, I am not afraid of generals and admirals. In this job, I run them.”<sup>231</sup> Right after he was confirmed as Defense Secretary, he chose to rebuke publicly the Air Force chief of staff, General Larry Welch, for appearing to be negotiating with Congress over the modernization of land-based nuclear missiles.<sup>232</sup> Cheney knew that such “chastisements” of top officers were usually done in private; he also found out that actually Gen. Welch had done nothing inappropriate. However, Cheney chose to stand firm and show who was in charge. As far as his power and control were concerned, Cheney knew that in Washington what *appeared* to be happening was as important, or even more so, than what was actually happening. He

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<sup>229</sup> See, for example, David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 68; Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 300.

<sup>230</sup> See Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn, *Soldiers and Civilians: the Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001); H.R. McMaster, *Derelection of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1997); Douglas E. Delaney, “‘Us’ and ‘Them’: Colin Powell and American Civil-Military Relations, 1963-1993,” *Canadian Military Journal*, Spring 2002.

<sup>231</sup> Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 406. See also Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, pp. 300-1.

<sup>232</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: the Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993), p. 94. See also Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals’ War: the Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995), pp. 100-101; Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, pp. 74-80.

could not allow generals to even be perceived as negotiating with Congress on strategic issues behind the Secretary's back.

The civilians, and President Bush and Defense Secretary Cheney, in particular, explicitly asserted their authority when they thought the military might be overstepping the proper boundaries. For example, during one of the very first meetings of the principals on August 3 when Colin Powell asked whether it was worth going to war to liberate Kuwait, Cheney asked him to leave such political issues to the politicians. The Secretary remarked: "Colin, you're Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. You're not Secretary of State. You're not the National Security Advisor anymore. And you're not Secretary of Defense. So stick to military matters."<sup>233</sup> While Powell thought it was his duty to bring up questions that would lead policy-makers to think of what kind of American involvement would be supported by the public and to request clarity of objectives from his political leaders (e.g., defend Saudi Arabia vs. eject Iraq from Kuwait), the general agreed with Cheney that he had overstepped in this case.

In September of 1990 the Defense Secretary did not hesitate to fire General Michael Dugan, the Air Force Chief of Staff, after the latter made statements to reporters from the *Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times* that did not exactly coincide with official administration policy.<sup>234</sup> After a visit with U.S. commanders in Saudi Arabia, Gen. Dugan, a passionate (and blunt) advocate of air power, was quoted by the *Washington Post* as saying that "The Joint Chiefs of Staff have concluded that U.S. military air power – including a massive bombing campaign against Baghdad that specifically targets Iraqi president Saddam

<sup>233</sup> Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, pp. 465-6. See also Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, pp. 314-15.

<sup>234</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 94.

Hussein – is the only effective option to force Iraqi forces from Kuwait if war erupts...”<sup>235</sup>

More troublesome than the above comment, which enraged the other services and the Army General in Colin Powell, was Dugan’s suggestion that he did not “expect to be concerned” with political constraints when selecting bombing targets.<sup>236</sup> While Secretary Cheney was impressed by the good work Gen. Dugan had done from the start of his term as Air Force Chief of Staff, he decided to fire him nevertheless in order to show that the civilian leadership would not tolerate any stepping out of bound by the military. “Cheney thought long and hard. Policing the four-stars was part of his ongoing job managing the building. Dugan was not the first, nor would he likely be the last, officer to step out of line.”<sup>237</sup> On another occasion, Gen. John Chain, the commander of Strategic Air Command, at a meeting with reporters, made comments that implied doubt about the feasibility of the Administration’s plan to ban land-based missiles with multiple warheads. As a result, the general was ordered to Washington for a “private dressing down” by Cheney.<sup>238</sup>

Such cases of disciplining of generals, especially since they occurred early on in the administration, clearly showed the military that the civilian leadership was willing to punish what it viewed as unacceptable behavior on the part of its uniformed subordinates. The military got the message. As Gen. Powell wrote, “It was not lost on me that Mr. Cheney has shown he knew how to fire generals.”<sup>239</sup> Times and again, civilian leaders showed that they

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<sup>235</sup> Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 290.

<sup>236</sup> Rick Atkinson, “U.S. to Rely on Air Strikes if War Erupts,” *The Washington Post*, September 16, 1990, p. A1.

<sup>237</sup> Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 294.

<sup>238</sup> See, for example, Michael Gordon, “Cheney Has Staked Out Authority in the Pentagon,” *The New York Times*, September 18, 1990, p. A12.

<sup>239</sup> Colin Powell, “Exchange on Civil-Military Relations,” with John Lehman, William Odom, Samuel Huntington, and Richard Kohn, *The National Interest*, vol. 36 (Summer 1994), pp. 23.



would oversee the military closely and would not allow to be misled. For example, when in doubt about reports coming from the Air Force, Dick Cheney ordered the Air Force Inspector General to investigate the performance of the F-117 in Panama because it seemed the planes had not been as accurate as the Air Force had claimed. This and similar cases sent a signal to generals and admirals that the civilian leadership was not going to tolerate “shirking.” As the principal-agent theory would predict in such cases, the military understood that under this civilian leadership “shirking” would have high probability of being detected, and that when detected, punishment would be severe.<sup>240</sup> Hence, such an understanding contributed to the military’s willingness to comply with civilian directions and ultimately guaranteed a balance of power favoring the civilians.

Besides close civilian involvement and oversight, another very important determinant of influence over decision-making is the professional preparation and experience of top civilian and military officials.<sup>241</sup> For example, research shows that when top civilian leaders have had an advantage in professional preparation over their military counterparts, policy choices have on the whole reflected civilian preferences. That is why, professional preparation and experience should be taken into account in any analysis of the civil-military balance of power at the top. Based on these criteria, the civilian leadership in

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<sup>240</sup> For some of the best applications of the principal-agent theory to the study of American civil-military relations, see Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants*; Deborah Avant, “Are the Reluctant Warriors Out of Control: Why the U.S. Military is Averse to Responding to Post-Cold War Low-Level Threats,” *Security Studies* Vol. 6, No. 2 (Winter 1996/97), pp. 51-90.

<sup>241</sup> As explained in more detail in the theory chapter, decision-makers’ professional preparation and expertise are defined in terms of their knowledge about and experience in foreign and defense policy and decision-making, and national security, more broadly. Christopher Gibson and Don Snider, for example, measure the level of decision-makers’ professional preparation by coding for level of education and assignment history. See Christopher Gibson and Don Snider, “Civil-Military Relations and the Potential to Influence: A Look at the National Security Decision-Making Process,” *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Winter 1999), pp. 193-218.

the Bush White House could be ranked among the very top.<sup>242</sup> George H. W. Bush himself was one of the most experienced presidents in foreign policy and national security affairs.<sup>243</sup> Besides being a naval aviator in World War II, he had also served as a CIA Director, Chief of the U.S. Liaison Office in China, Ambassador to the United Nations, and Vice President. (Bush confided to an advisor that these various professional experiences made it easier for him to see “all the pieces” in a crisis situation.<sup>244</sup>) He kept in office people like Jim Baker and Richard Clarke who had amassed significant national security experience in the Regan administration. The President’s National Security Advisor, Brent Scowcroft, a retired Air Force Lieutenant General, had an extraordinary 29-year military career of his own. He understood the military’s point of view and was sensitive to their concerns. The President also brought in new advisors with excellent preparation, knowledge, and ability to deal with military affairs.

Compared to top brass in the 1960s who were overpowered by McNamara’s Whiz Kids and their quantitative systems analysis, top military leaders in the 1990s were not only much better educated, but also more experienced in policy-making because they had served as senior staff officers and/or policy advisors to civilians in the Pentagon and the White House. “Having served as national security advisor, [Powell] understood the workings of

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<sup>242</sup> Christopher Gibson, *Countervailing Forces: Enhancing Civilian Control and National Security Through Madisonian Concepts*, Ph.D. Dissertation (Cornell University, 1998); David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 58, 62.

<sup>243</sup> Christopher Gibson, *Countervailing Forces*, p. 112. See also David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 70; Steve A. Yetiv, *Explaining Foreign Policy: U.S. Decision-Making and the Persian Gulf War* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 9; Edward Draachman and Alan Shank with Edward Kannyo and Steven Ligon, *Presidents and Foreign Policy: Countdown to Ten Controversial Decisions* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 292.

<sup>244</sup> Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 315.

government better than anyone else in uniform, and just as well as any of the civilians.”<sup>245</sup> Precisely because of his service as a National Security Advisor in the Reagan Administration, Powell could also understand much better the views of Bush’s National Security Advisor (Scowcroft) and the challenges he was facing. As shown later, their common backgrounds led to better mutual understanding and more trust between civilian and military leaders, which in turn contributed significantly to the effectiveness of the decision-making process.

That Gen. Colin Powell was possibly the most powerful and influential Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in recent history has led some to claim that the balance of power in the Bush administration favored the military over the civilians. In fact, as my analysis shows, this is incorrect. True, Powell’s influence on military decision-making was significant. It came as a result of several factors: the expanded powers given to him under the Goldwater-Nichols Act, his vast military and political experience, and his congenial personality. The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 strengthened the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field Commanders. Under this legislation, the Chairman became the primary military advisor to the President and the Secretary of Defense and, unlike in the past, did not have to present to them the lowest-common-denominator of all the service Chiefs’ opinions. This law also placed the Joint Staff under the personal control of the Chairman and not the services. Colin Powell used these new arrangements to the fullest and “as a result [of this legislation], [he] wielded power and influence beyond that exercised by previous chairmen.”<sup>246</sup> Although this is largely correct, it is misleading to characterize the

<sup>245</sup> Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, p. 189.

<sup>246</sup> Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, p. 471. See also Eliot Cohen, “Playing Powell Politics: The General’s Zest for Power,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 1995; Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, p. 188.

decision-making process as being dominated by Powell and the military. As this chapter shows, in the few cases when civilian and military preferences diverged, civilian preferences dominated at the end. This was *not* the Generals' war, as it is popularly referred to.

While it is true that Colin Powell was among the most political of generals and that he had significant influence on the decision-making process, some of the harsher critiques of him are misplaced.<sup>247</sup> In what is perhaps the most scathing criticism of General Powell, the prominent historian and expert on civil-military relations Russell Weigley concluded that Powell had managed to resist or twist the wishes of his civilian masters more successfully than any of his predecessors.<sup>248</sup> However, one should note that the evidence for Weigley's conclusions about Powell overstepping the proper civil-military balance is relevant to the General's role and influence in the decision-making on Bosnia in the Clinton Administration, and not the Gulf War. In this case, however, in the only situation where Powell seemed to have been the dominant influence on decision-making - namely, the decision for secession of hostilities at midnight of Feb. 28, 1991, discussed later in this chapter -- it was not because he usurped control, but because it was ceded to him by his political bosses.

This section showed that the balance of power favored the political leadership. This was due to the fact that top political decision-makers were united around the President, that they possessed a sufficient experience in national security affairs, and that they stayed deeply involved in military affairs, thus making the military know that shirking will not be tolerated.

<sup>247</sup> For something close to an indictment of Colin Powell, see Richard H. Kohn, "The Erosion of Civilian Control of the Military in the United States today," *Naval War College Review* (Summer 2002).

<sup>248</sup> See Russell Weigley, "The American Military and the Principle of Civilian Control from McClellan to Powell," *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 57, No. 5 (October 1993), pp. 27-58.

## Elite Civilian and Military Beliefs and the Level of Civil-Military Preference Divergence<sup>249</sup>

This section illustrates that in the run-up to Desert Storm, civilian and military preferences on most of the major issues were in convergence. Top civilian and military leaders in the Bush White House viewed key issues of war and peace in remarkably similar ways. Decision-makers and their military advisors shared many views and beliefs about America's involvement in international politics and the use of force as a tool of statecraft. Top civilian and military officials were largely in agreement on both issues related to the use of force in general, as well as on many issues specific to the conduct of Desert Shield/Desert Storm. In general, civilian and military leaders believed that military force was a legitimate and effective instrument, which should be used with the support of the American people. Some of those who had served in World War II and were to a large extent shaped by this experience, believed that isolationism is not an option for the United States. For President Bush, for example, what Saddam Hussein had done to Kuwait was reminiscent of Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia – a case of blatant aggression of the strong against the weak. In such a situation, the United States and the international community, Bush thought, could not stay idle. The US had the duty to reverse this unconscionable act in order to avoid another "Munich." As one of Bush's advisors said of the President, "He is deathly afraid of appeasement. His generation had to fight a war over it, and he feels that if he blinks today,

<sup>249</sup> The *sources* of civilian and military ideas and beliefs on key foreign policy issues, including the use of force, are explained in the Theory Chapter of the dissertation. This chapter deals mainly with the *content* of elite beliefs/preferences and the extent to which civilian and military preferences diverge.

he will be leaving a real mess for the next generation to clean up.”<sup>250</sup> While the Munich analogy had a powerful impact, even more important was the influence of Vietnam.<sup>251</sup>

One cannot entirely explain decision-makers’ preferences on key foreign policy issues without understanding the enormous impact of the Vietnam War on both civilian and military officials. Vietnam was the defining experience for generals Powell and Schwarzkopf who had served two tours in that war and this experience was the key to understanding their views on statecraft and the use of force. What then Major Powell learned in Vietnam was what Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Powell would assert: “And when we go to war, we should have a purpose that our people understand and support; we should mobilize the country’s resources to fulfill that mission and then go in and win.”<sup>252</sup> The military believed that it had fought in Vietnam with one hand tied behind its back, the political objectives were unclear, and that tragedy had resulted from political micromanagement.

The “lessons” of Vietnam had ultimately crystallized in the Weinberger Doctrine, which became the driving force behind the military’s preferred way of making war. (The Doctrine could be summed up as follows: The U.S. should use force only if vital interests are at stake; troops should be committed only if there is a clear intention of winning; troops should be committed only if they have clearly defined objectives and the capacity to achieve them; the relationship between the objectives and the size of troops committed

<sup>250</sup> Quoted in Kenneth T. Walsh, “Commander in Chief,” *U.S. News and World Report*, December 31, 1990, p. 25.

<sup>251</sup> For the influence of the “lessons of Munich” and the “lessons of Vietnam” on foreign policy decision-making see, for example, Jeffrey Record, *Making War, Thinking History: Munich, Vietnam, and Presidential Uses of Force from Korea to Kosovo* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2002).

<sup>252</sup> Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*.

should be continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary; troops should not be committed without public and Congressional support; use of force should be considered only as a last resort.)<sup>253</sup> Although among civilian leaders the Weinberger Doctrine had always had its fierce opponents<sup>254</sup>, within the military it was elevated to a creed. Secretary Weinberger's six principles for the use of force were considered the basis for sound strategy and were later re-enforced by the "Powell Doctrine" of overwhelming force.<sup>255</sup> A lot more could be said about the lessons learned by the military from Vietnam and how this war shaped the ideas and beliefs of top leaders, but this would go beyond the purposes of this chapter.<sup>256</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, some of the "lessons" the military learned from that time were incorrect, some were self-serving. While it is important whether the military and the civilians learn the "right" lessons from a war, what matters even more for the argument here is the content itself of the elite civilian and military ideas and beliefs about the use of force (right or wrong) and the extent to which these civilian and military preferences diverge.

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<sup>253</sup> Casper Weinberger, "The Uses of Military Power," Remarks prepared for delivery the National Press Club, Washington, DC, November 28, 1984. Reprinted in *Defense* (January, 1985), pp. 1-11. Also available at: [www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil/ecampus/gpc/prework/strategy/use.htm](http://www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil/ecampus/gpc/prework/strategy/use.htm).

<sup>254</sup> Secretary of State George Shultz has been among the most outspoken opponents of Secretary Weinberger's principles on the use of force. Shultz argued that the doctrine was too restrictive and that, if followed, it would make it very difficult for the US to use military power as a tool of diplomacy.

<sup>255</sup> While the Weinberger and the Powell "doctrines" are not identical, a detailed discussion of the similarities and differences between the two, as well as their influence on U.S. Foreign policy, goes beyond the scope of this chapter. The Weinberger/Powell Doctrine here is discussed only to the extent that it relates to civilian and military preferences on the use of force, as well as to the influence it has had on specific aspects of the decision-making process in particular cases addressed by this dissertation.

<sup>256</sup> Suffice it to say, as many other large bureaucracies, the military establishment was selective in its learning from this war – it chose to learn some lessons while ignoring others. For example, the US military neglected various studies showing that its inability to fight non-conventional wars led to the debacle, and refused to accommodate their recommendations. At the same time, the uniforms were captivated by Harry Summers' book, which argued that the failure resulted *not* from the military's unwillingness and inability to adapt to counterinsurgency, but from not fighting the war conventionally enough. See Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (New York: Dell, 1982).

Importantly, at the time of the Gulf War, unlike in many of the other cases, the basic principles of the Weinberger Doctrine on the use of force were widely shared among senior civilian and military officials. Most of the senior civilian leaders in the administration of George H. W. Bush had an understanding of the “lessons” of the Vietnam experience which was very similar to that of their military advisors.<sup>257</sup> George Bush’s interpretation was the following: “Never fight a war with a hand tied behind your back. Never send a kid into battle unless you’re going to give him total support. Don’t send him in underequipped. Don’t send a mission in undermanned. Don’t send them in where you tell commanding officers what they can’t do.”<sup>258</sup> On more than one occasions, civilian leaders referred to the commonly accepted version of the Vietnam War and reassured the military that the coming war with Iraq would be radically different. For example, President Bush declared:

Prior to ordering our forces into battle, I instructed our military commanders to take every necessary step to prevail as quickly as possible, and with the greatest degree of protection possible for American and allied service men and women. ...this will not be another Vietnam ... Our troops will have the best possible support in the entire world, and they will not be asked to fight with one hand tied behind their back. I’m hopeful that this fighting will not go on for long and that casualties will be held to an absolute minimum.”<sup>259</sup>

These exact same words could have been spoken by any military commander because they were a re-iteration of the Doctrine and were an expression of the military’s own preferences as to the “right” way to go to war: resist civilian “meddling”; use

<sup>257</sup> The politicians had accepted many of the “lessons” of Vietnam as drawn by the military, regardless of the fact that some of these were incorrect. For a similar argument, see Russell Weigley, “The American Civil-Military Cultural Gap,” in Richard Kohn and Peter Feaver, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians*, pp. 238-39. See also Andrew Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 47.

<sup>258</sup> Kenneth T. Walsh, Interview with President Bush, *U.S. News and World Report*, December 31, 1990, p. 24. See also Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 307.

<sup>259</sup> George H. W. Bush, Address to the Nation Announcing Allied Military Action in the Persian Gulf, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, January 16, 1991.



overwhelming force to achieve a quick and decisive victory; withdraw troops immediately after objectives have been achieved, without getting involved in a protracted and bloody aftermath.<sup>260</sup>

One of the key shared ideas of civilian and military officials was a preference for a decisive use of overwhelming force.<sup>261</sup> The military preference for overwhelming force was made abundantly clear during the decision-making process, and especially during the numerous discussions of the plan for the ground campaign. For example, in order to even start thinking seriously about an offensive option for getting Iraq out of Kuwait, General Schwarzkopf repeatedly requested an additional two-division corps from Europe. Powell not only supported such force levels but added up to them. In his words, “We had learned a lesson in Panama. Go in big, and end it quickly. We could not put the United States through another Vietnam.”<sup>262</sup> From the very beginning, civilian leaders also pledged to avoid “the mistakes” of Vietnam, among the biggest of which was “gradualism.” The military was firmly against gradual application of limited force. The civilians concurred and promised that instead of applying force incrementally, they would allow the military to use massive force for a quick and decisive victory. The military was glad to see that the politicians had kept this promise earlier, during the 1989 invasion of Panama. At some point during the planning process for Operation Just Cause, President Bush had said: “If you need two men to do a job, send four. And I want our people to have whatever they

<sup>260</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 302.

<sup>261</sup> See, for example, Kenneth T. Walsh, “Commander in Chief,” *U.S. News and World Report*, December 31, 1990, p. 25.

<sup>262</sup> Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 487; Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 113.

need to do the job.”<sup>263</sup> The generals could not agree more. The massive build-up of American forces for Desert Shield/Desert Storm was also meant to show exactly how much both civilian and military leaders wanted to make it clear that the coming invasion would not resemble Vietnam in any way.

In other cases of decision-making on the use of force, there have often been severe differences between the military and civilian authorities as to how much force ought to be used, and such differences have at times disrupted the decision-making process. (Other chapters document at length the high preference divergence between top civilian and military leaders on key issues related to the use of force in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war and how these big ideational differences impeded the effectiveness of the decision-making process.) In this case, however, of great importance was the fact that the military preference for massive force, among others, was shared by the top civilian officials.<sup>264</sup> In the lead-up to Desert Storm, the political leadership in Washington fully backed up the requests of Powell and Schwarzkopf for massive force. For the offensive option, for example, the generals had requested doubling of the forces already deployed in the region for the defensive/deterrent strategy, including moving the VII Corps from Europe. “Cheney supported Schwarzkopf and Powell without conditions. ... Finally, Bush said, ‘If that’s what you need, we’ll do it.’”<sup>265</sup>

<sup>263</sup> Quoted in Kenneth T. Walsh, “Commander in Chief,” *U.S. News and World Report*, December 31, 1990, p. 24.

<sup>264</sup> For comparison, during the 2002-03 debates on the invasion of Iraq, military leaders were proposing a force of several hundreds of thousands (upward of 300, 000) while Secretary Rumsfeld and the civilian leadership was arguing that a force of about 70, 000 should be able to do the job.

<sup>265</sup> Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, pp. 319-20; H. Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn’t Take a Hero*, pp. 301-2; Rick Atkinson, *The Crusade*, p. 113.

Another important point of civil-military agreement concerned the sensitive issue of control over operations. While, in general, political leaders did not hesitate to practice assertive civilian control, they had a healthy respect for the military's need for operational autonomy. Dick Cheney had been in the White House during the Mayaguez incident and "had seen first hand the tendency of the people at the top ... to meddle needlessly and counterproductively in military operations. " That is why, as Secretary of Defense, he favored "a clean, clear-cut chain of command – as short as possible. And no meddling from the top. Stay out of their hair."<sup>266</sup> As Secretary Cheney characterized himself and the President, they belonged to what he called the "'Don't screw around' school of military strategy.'" <sup>267</sup> Bush himself promised: "I would avoid micromanaging the military."<sup>268</sup> His leadership style was liked by the generals. Just like the officers, the President believed in a clear chain of command and giving clear instructions. According to Colin Powell, "President Bush, more than any other recent President, understands the proper use of military force. In every instance he has made sure that the objective was clear and that we knew what we were getting into."<sup>269</sup>

Another important issue of agreement between civilian and military leaders was that air power alone could hardly win a war. While deciding on how to deal with Saddam Hussein, neither the civilians nor the military (with the exception of some in the Air Force) were comfortable with the "air strikes only" option. Brent Scowcroft, a retired Air Force Lieutenant General, "was not prepared to say air power could win a major conflict. It

<sup>266</sup> Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, pp. 175-76.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>268</sup> George H. W. Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 354.

<sup>269</sup> In: Colin Powell, "Why Generals Get Nervous," *New York Times*, October 8, 1992, p. A35.

never had. He was aghast that the Air Force chief was pushing that line...”<sup>270</sup> Bush, Cheney, and Powell also believed that ground troops would be needed.<sup>271</sup> Colin Powell warned that “[t]he trouble with airpower is that you leave the initiative in the hands of [the] enemy” to decide whether he has had enough punishment.<sup>272</sup> Air-only strategies would not be successful, according to him, because the enemy “can hunker down [or] dig in, [or] disperse to try to ride out such a single-dimension attack. ... Such strategies are designed to hope to win, they are not designed to win.”<sup>273</sup> That is why the Chairman preferred to plan “a full campaign – air, land, sea, and space – to remove the decision from Saddam’s hands.”<sup>274</sup>

Regarding preferences on whether to use force for getting Saddam out of Kuwait, most traditional accounts of the 1991 Gulf crisis overstate the extent to which civilians supported the use of force while the military advocated economic sanctions. In fact, the civilians, just like the generals, wanted to give every *non*-military option a chance before the country decided to use force. The difference actually was *not* that the generals were stubbornly insisting on the use of economic sanctions while the civilians were pushing for the use of force, but rather on how much exactly both sides were willing to wait for sanctions to produce the desired effect. Civilian decision-makers were somewhat less

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<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 292-93.

<sup>271</sup> Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, pp. 292-93.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 299-300. See also Michael Gordon, “Cheney Sees Need to Act Militarily Against the Iraqis,” *The New York Times*, December 4, 1990, p. A1.

<sup>273</sup> United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, *Crisis in the Persian Gulf: Sanctions, Diplomacy, and War: hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, One Hundred First Congress, second session: hearing held December 4, 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, and 20, 1990* (Washington, DC: U.S. G.P.O., 1991). See also Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 342.

<sup>274</sup> Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 476.

patient than their military counter-parts and less convinced that economic coercion would work.

Conventional wisdom overstates Powell's support for economic sanctions and opposition to the use of force in this case in particular. While the then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs could be correctly labeled "the reluctant warrior" (especially in comparison with some of his civilian masters from the first Clinton Administration), his reluctance to commit US troops was much higher in cases of humanitarian interventions (e.g., Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, or the so-called "operations other than war"), and *not* in the lead-up to Desert Shield/Desert Storm, where he was assured the military could fight in its preferred conventional way. President Bush Sr. himself has denied the existence of the alleged wide gap between his views and Powell's on the use of force option.<sup>275</sup> That civil-military preference divergence on economic sanctions was not very high becomes clear also from a closer reading of two key events in the decision-making process: the September 24, 1990 meeting of Bush, Cheney, and Powell to discuss alternative options to respond to the Gulf crisis and Powell's and Cheney's Congressional testimonies on December 4, 1990.

During the September 24 meeting, Powell and Bush discussed primarily two courses of action: 1) an offensive option and 2) what the Chairman saw as an alternative to war – "sanctions and strangulation."<sup>276</sup> Regarding the military option, Powell wanted to make sure that the military leadership had explained the details of the deployment schedules and

<sup>275</sup> In May of 1991, in connection with the appearance of various media stories exaggerating the differences between Bush and Powell on the issue, Bush made a phone call to Powell, saying "Colin, pay no attention to that nonsense." The President also said: "Nobody's going to drive a wedge between him [Powell] and me. I don't care what kind of book they've got, how many unnamed sources they have, and how many quotes they put in the mouth of somebody when they really weren't there." Cited in *My American Journey*, p. 521 and also in Gen. Richard Myers, "A Word from the Chairman," *Joint Force Quarterly* (Autumn 2002), p. 5.

<sup>276</sup> For a detailed account of this meeting, see Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico *My American Journey*, pp. 479-80. Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, pp. 299-302.

given civilian decision-makers enough time to decide as to what they wanted to do next. At the meeting, the President and Colin Powell also discussed another option – continuing the defensive build-up and, at the same time, keeping economic sanctions in place. According to the Chairman, “Containing Iraq from further aggression through the defensive strategy and strangling her into withdrawal through sanctions remained a live option.”<sup>277</sup> What has remained largely unnoted is that at that time, Powell brought to the attention of the President what he called “a serious disadvantage” of economic sanctions – importantly, it was that “sanctions left the initiative with the Iraqis to decide when they had had enough. And history has taught us that sanctions take time, if they work at all.”<sup>278</sup>

Interestingly, the Chairman did *not* advocate either of the options. Although at the time he himself preferred to give economic sanctions a little bit more time, he stopped short of advocating this. As Woodward writes, the Chairman “pulled away from the brink of advocating [containment and economic strangulation] personally.”<sup>279</sup> This may be a surprise for those who exaggerate Powell’s support for economic sanctions. However, such a position is entirely consistent with Powell’s understanding of his role as the principal military advisor to the president – he was trying not to advocate but to present the alternatives as fully as possible in order for civilian decision-makers to be able to make their choice based on a sound knowledge of the consequences of each option. Powell believed that he owed civilian leaders a full account of all possible options for action (military and non-military alike), with their advantages and disadvantages. He thought that he needed to bring all aspects of an issue to the attention of decision-makers so they could

<sup>277</sup> Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 480.

<sup>278</sup> Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 466.

<sup>279</sup> Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 302.

fully understand the consequences of their choices. As he wrote: “My responsibility that day was to lay out all options for the nation’s civilian leadership. However, in our democracy it is the President, not the generals, who make decisions about going to war. I had done my duty. .... If the President ... decided it must be war, then my job was to make sure we were ready to go in and win.”<sup>280</sup>

Along similar lines, in his congressional testimony on December 4, 1990, Colin Powell was very careful *not* to argue for or against sanctions or the use of force. Again, he stopped short of *advocating* continuing with economic sanctions. Testifying before the House Committee on Armed Services, Powell described some of the existing war plans and emphasized that the military was preparing a *combined* air, ground, and sea attack in order to achieve a quick victory and minimize casualties. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff made a very strong argument against relying on air power alone, saying it could not provide a decisive victory. Notably, Powell carefully avoided making a recommendation in favor or against the use of force.<sup>281</sup> The Chairman did not take sides on the question of *whether* economic sanctions would work and *how long* should the US wait before deciding sanctions were not successful and, hence, military force should be used. As to whether to continue with economic sanctions, Powell correctly believed that “how long to wait is a political, not a military, judgment.”<sup>282</sup> The fact that Powell made a strong and passionate argument against relying solely on air power (in case military action

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<sup>280</sup> Colin Powell with Joseph Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 480.

<sup>281</sup> See, for example, United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, *Crisis in the Persian Gulf: Sanctions, Diplomacy, and War: hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, One Hundred First Congress, second session: hearing held December 4, 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, and 20, 1990* (Washington, DC: U.S. G.P.O., 1991), pp. 540-543.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 543. See also Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 342.

was taken) showed that the Chairman was not afraid of being outspoken and presenting a strong opinion, which might not be liked by everyone. At the same time, that Powell did not advocate the use or non-use of military force showed that he knew his proper role in the chain of command and respected the prerogatives of the civilian leadership.

That Gen. Powell did not make an argument in favor of continuing with economic sanctions shows that his preferences were not that much different from civilian preferences at the time. This could also be shown by comparing Powell's and Cheney's testimonies. At the same hearing, Secretary Cheney presented a clearer argument for the use of force. He stated that since he had not seen evidence showing that economic sanctions could be made to succeed, force would be the only sure way to guarantee that Saddam is expelled from Kuwait. The Defense Secretary noted that his thinking on the utility of sanctions has evolved "because of Iraq's decision to call off gasoline rationing and new Administration analyses about Iraq's ability to increase farm production and mobilize additional troops."<sup>283</sup> He argued that waiting for sanctions to produce a decisive result might have negative consequences. For example, economic sanctions were hurting American allies such as Turkey more than they were hurting Saddam. Cheney argued that, in the absence of more decisive actions, Hussein would continue to pillage Kuwait. He would also mobilize more of his troops and strengthen Iraqi fortifications. Such measures could make a future military campaign against him more difficult. In addition, the Secretary of Defense warned that, if military action were delayed, the fragile international coalition could falter. Colin Powell expressed *similar* concerns:

Let me also say a word about the impact of sanctions and the concept of exercising patience. The sanctions are having an impact, they couldn't help but have one, and probably a serious

<sup>283</sup> Michael Gordon, "Cheney Sees Need to Act Militarily Against the Iraqis," *The New York Times*, December 4, 1990, p. A1.



one. But none of the learned witnesses who have appeared before this committee know whether or not sanctions will work or when they will work. ... Also, the nation of Kuwait and the people of Kuwait continue to suffer terribly, the world economy suffers, the political and diplomatic pressure that we have been able to apply, it seems to me, will start to fracture over time. So, waiting is not without its own cost. In the final analysis, how long we wait is a political judgment. The Armed Forces must be ready to accomplish their assigned mission whether the answer to the question of waiting is 6 months, 8 months, 12 months, 18 months, or any other number of months that our political leaders and the leaders of the coalition decide to wait.<sup>284</sup>

In other words, small differences between civilian and military leaders did exist to the extent that some in the military believed for longer than the civilians that economic sanctions might be successful against Saddam. What is also important here, however, is that both civilian and military officials were in agreement that the determination as to whether the US would stop relying on sanctions and turn to force was for political leaders to make and when they did make it, the military obliged.

As shown, civilian and military preferences on most of the important issues were in convergence. Civilian and military leaders had many similar ideas regarding broadly the role and use of force in foreign policy, and they also shared views in regard to issues specific to the crisis in the Gulf. Political and military leaders agreed on the objectives of the war against Saddam; there was almost no disagreement on the conduct of the war either.<sup>285</sup> Other analysts have pointed out the low level of civil-military preference divergence in this case as well. For example, Rick Atkinson notes what he calls a “striking congruence” in civilian and military preferences during the term of Bush, Sr.<sup>286</sup> Eliot

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<sup>284</sup> United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, *Crisis in the Persian Gulf: Sanctions, Diplomacy, and War: hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, One Hundred First Congress, second session: hearing held December 4, 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, and 20, 1990* (Washington, DC: U.S. G.P.O., 1991), pp. 542-43.

<sup>285</sup> Scott A. Cooper, “The Politics of Air Strikes,” *Policy Review*, No. 107.

<sup>286</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 450.

Cohen as well points to the preference convergence between civilian leaders and the Chairman of Joint Chief of Staff. “This widely popular general ... shared many policy outlooks with his civilian superiors.”<sup>287</sup> General Schwarzkopf in his autobiography also makes a similar statement regarding the ideas and beliefs of the key decision-makers: “We ended up in unanimous agreement on every major issue.”<sup>288</sup>

It is important to note that this kind of convergence in the preferences of civilian and military leaders does not happen very often. As the rest of the case studies in this dissertation show, it has more often been the case that civilian and military officials disagree on how force should be used – the military most often favors the quick and massive use of force in accordance with the criteria of the Weinberger/Powell Doctrine, while politicians prefer incremental use of measured force.<sup>289</sup> The 1991 Gulf War case differs markedly from other situations when the use of force has been considered, for example, under the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations. In this case, the George H. W. Bush administration “had no quarrel with the Powell Doctrine,”<sup>290</sup> while in the other cases we observed a *high* level of civil-military preference divergence - most civilian leaders sharply disagreed with some of the main tenets of the Powell Doctrine, while the military still held on to it, as shown in other chapters.<sup>291</sup> Importantly, this high level of

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<sup>287</sup> Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, p. 189.

<sup>288</sup> H. Norman Schwarzkopf with Peter Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*.

<sup>289</sup> On the “civil-military gap” on issues of whether and how to use force, see Peter Feaver and Christopher Gelpi, *Choosing Your Battles*, Chapter 2.

<sup>290</sup> Christopher Gibson, *Countervailing Forces*, p. 228, 232.

<sup>291</sup> For the significant differences between George W. Bush’s and Rumsfeld’s views on the use of force and the prescriptions of the Weinberger Doctrine see also Donald Rumsfeld, “Guidelines When Considering Committing U.S. Forces,” March 2001. Available at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2002/d20021017guidelines.pdf>

civil-military agreement was known from the very early stages of the decision-making process when the top civilian and military decision-makers started discussions on Operations Plan 02-1001 on August 4 at Camp David. While some analysts of decision-making on the use of force have noted the variance in the level of divergence between civilian and military preferences in the different cases, its impact on the process of decision making has rarely been explored. The next sections will do exactly that and show how, as expected by my theoretical framework, the *low* preference divergence in combination with assertive civilian control contributed to positive decision-making climate and facilitated the making of military policy and strategy.<sup>292</sup>

### **Decision-Making in the 1991 Gulf War**

In this particular case, I will show 1) how the combination of assertive civilian dominance and low level of divergence between civilian and military preferences, as it is for cases in Quadrant 3 in Table 1, contributed to a more effective decision process; and 2) how “civilian abdication” and ceding control to the military in the final stages of the Gulf war led to ineffective process, and ultimately, did not allow the military victory to be turned into a political triumph as well. (A mismatch between political goals and military means or inability to make military means serve political objectives is precisely what my theoretical framework would lead us to expect for cases of military dominance or civilian abdication -- Quadrant 2 and Quadrant 4).

The next paragraphs show that, in contrast with conventional wisdom, in the lead-up to the 1991 Gulf War and for most of the military campaign itself, this country had an

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<sup>292</sup> See, for example, Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, pp. 247-51.

active civilian leadership – querying, probing, prodding, challenging the views of their military advisors, not afraid to involve themselves into the details of military planning, and denying the existence of a separate “purely military” sphere in which civilian intervention would be unacceptable. Furthermore, the decision-making process and the conduct of military operations were more effective *because* of this assertive civilian leadership and not in spite of it, as supporters of the Huntington’s theory would argue. At the same time, due mainly to the low level of divergence between civilian and military preferences, civilian leaders refrained from “micromanagement.” The decision-making process reflected both a mixture of civilian and military preferences, and a firm civilian direction.<sup>293</sup>

Contrary to predominant interpretations of this case as the classic example of benign civilian neglect and almost total freedom of the military, during the planning and the execution of the campaign the civilian leadership was not only involved in the details of military planning, but at times was quite assertive about it. While the relationship between top civilian and military leaders was respectful and collegial, political leaders did not hesitate to assert control or to displease the military on occasion. Contrary to conventional wisdom portraying the civilians as detached and leaving almost everything to the military, it was not lost on Gen. Powell that President Bush was interested in “all the details. He wanted to be the player, the guy who made as many of the calls as possible.”<sup>294</sup> For eight years, Bush had been observing Reagan’s style and found it overly delegative. He did not approve of such detached leadership. “Mr. Bush likes the expression ‘hands-on,’ which in politics signifies involvement of the President in details of issues. Mr. Bush,

<sup>293</sup> See, for example, Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, p. 191.

<sup>294</sup> Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 225.

the longtime insider, the close observer of past mistakes, is striving for that happy medium – neither too involved nor too remote. To achieve that light hands-on touch, he tries to avoid both dominating his ‘team’ and letting it manipulate or define him.”<sup>295</sup> As described by his aides, the President provided confident and assertive leadership.<sup>296</sup> This stemmed from his extensive diplomatic and political experience and his deep interest in foreign policy issues.

The Defense Secretary as well showed a keen interest in military planning and got deeply involved in the decision process. Cheney was an activist and a probing leader. Contrary to popular accounts, he liked to immerse himself into the details of war plans. For example, early in the process, he requested that the Joint Staff give him some highly classified briefings on offensive war planning. “Beginning November 26, he was given a series of nuts-and-bolts tutorials on such subjects as Building an Air Attack Plan; Target Categories for an Air Campaign; Breaching Iraqi Forward Defenses; Logistics Sustainment; ...Army Anti-Armor Capabilities; Amphibious Operations; and other sensitive topics like special operations and intelligence.”<sup>297</sup> On a daily basis, Secretary Cheney kept asking Gen. Powell and other military leaders numerous questions in order to make sure he was familiar with all the necessary details and could convey them to the President.<sup>298</sup> According to Schwarzkopf, during one of Cheney’s and Powell’s visit to Riyadh: “Cheney peppered us with questions on everything from the truck shortage to

<sup>295</sup> William Safire, “Bush’s Cabinet: Who’s Up, Who’s Down,” *The New York Times*, March 25, 1990, p. 30.

<sup>296</sup> See, for example, Stanley Renshon, “Good Judgment, and the Lack Thereof, in the Gulf War,” in Stanley Renshon, ed., *The Political Psychology of the Gulf War: Leaders, Publics, and the Process of Conflict* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993), p. 84.

<sup>297</sup> Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 330.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, *The Commanders*, p. 176.

possible terrorist threats...<sup>299</sup> The Secretary of Defense had adopted a skeptical view and did not take anything on faith.<sup>300</sup> He was following one of Powell's own maxims: "Don't be afraid to challenge the pros, even in their own backyard."<sup>301</sup> "Cheney had learned the value of questioning everything. ... He had brought the generals and admirals into his office for repeated grilling, taken them to the White House for special briefings, ordered a dozen studies and insisted on answers."<sup>302</sup> Bush Sr., Cheney and the other civilian leaders behaved like Eliot Cohen's model statesmen – they were not afraid to question and challenge the military professionals on their turf.

The effectiveness of the decision process was helped by this determination of civilian leaders to watch the military closely and evaluate incoming information critically. When civilian leaders show the ability and willingness to grasp military plans in detail, this not only gives them a fuller understanding of the military aspects of the situation, but also further deters the military from trying to get away with incorrect information or keeping secrets. Probing civilian leadership mitigates the possibility of receiving incomplete or biased information and, thus, makes it less likely that politicians would fall prey to military parochialism.

Also, the activist and assertive attitude of civilian principals helped enhance the effectiveness of the decision process by generating options that otherwise would not have been forthcoming. The Defense Secretary drew on numerous sources of information,

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<sup>299</sup> H. Norman Schwarzkopf with Peter Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 395.

<sup>300</sup> See, for example, Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 309.

<sup>301</sup> Oren Harari, *The Powell Principles: 24 Lessons from Colin Powell, a Legendary Leader* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003).

<sup>302</sup> Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, pp. 328-29.

including his own military advisors, outside experts, and media reports, in order to stimulate debate. Based on these sources, as well as his own extensive reading on the Iran-Iraq war, Cheney compiled a list of questions he used to “pulse the system for information” during the planning process. For example, when at the start of the deliberations the Secretary of Defense was feeling that the generals were responding somewhat slowly and not presenting him and the president with a full range of military options, he decided to prod the military into action. Cheney wanted to get more options from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and was willing to try different channels. He asked his military assistants, Admiral Bill Owens and Colonel Gary Trexler, to go to their own services and provide him with information as to what the military could do if the civilians wanted to consider, for example, a surgical air strike as retaliation for Saddam’s actions. The Defense Secretary ordered them to “bang on the system and find out what we can do and how fast we can do it.”<sup>303</sup>

Assertive civilian leadership ensured that there would be additional strategy options put on the table. The Administration’s discussions of the military plan for Desert Storm illustrate this point. When in mid October of 1990, both the air and the ground offensive plans were briefed to the President and the rest of the Group of Eight (better known as the “Gang of Eight”),<sup>304</sup> top civilian leaders liked the plan for the air offensive.<sup>305</sup> Both civilian and military officials agreed that the air campaign plan was a good start and, with

<sup>303</sup> Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 235.

<sup>304</sup> The “Gang of Eight” consisted of President Bush, Vice President Dan Quayle, Secretary of State Jim Baker, National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, John Sununu, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Powell, and Robert Gates, Scowcroft’s deputy and later to become Director of Central Intelligence. On occasion, Marlin Fitzwater, the White House Press Secretary, also participated in the deliberations of the Group of Eight.

<sup>305</sup> The air campaign was the brainchild of Colonel John Warden, a Vietnam combat pilot and the author of *The Air Campaign: Planning for Combat*.

some improvements, could be implemented. However, the ground campaign plan was found weak, especially by civilians, but even by Gen. Powell. One of the most serious problems of this plan was the envisioned main attack which was supposed to drive through the middle of the Iraqi main defenses. Critics of the plan argued that if such an attack were implemented, American forces would be outnumbered and an easy target for the enemy. Powell and the other Chiefs believed that while with the currently allocated ground forces (one corps) any plan would be problematic, the currently-proposed one was just “faulty.”<sup>306</sup> Civilian leaders were even more disappointed with the briefing and did not hide that. Secretary Cheney called it “high diddle diddle right up the middle.” Brent Scowcroft was particularly critical, while Bob Gates compared Gen. Schwarzkopf to Gen. McClellan. Cheney required a new version of the offensive plan “with a little imagination this time.”<sup>307</sup>

Feeling that general Schwarzkopf was being cautious, Cheney got his own staff to do some planning and began presenting the CENTCOM commander with their ideas about how to fight Saddam (including the so-called “Western excursion”). The generals did not see these ideas as a stroke of military genius. In his memoirs, Schwarzkopf related some of them with irony: “What if we parachute the 82nd Airborne into the far western part of Iraq, hundreds of miles from Kuwait and totally cut off from any kind of support, and seize a couple of missile sites, then line up along the highway and drive for Baghdad? ... The most bizarre [idea] involved capturing a town in western Iraq and offering it to Saddam in exchange for Kuwait.”<sup>308</sup> The CENTCOM commander described such planning as being

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<sup>306</sup> Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 471

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 486.

<sup>308</sup> H. Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 368.



"as bad as it could possibly be..." and admitted he was rattled. Certainly, the planning efforts of Cheney's staff would be considered a violation of Huntington's preferred "objective control" model, a political intrusion into the military sphere. But, contrary to Huntington, such efforts were beneficial and largely successful in their purpose – Cheney's goal in conducting these planning exercises was not to write the military plan for the war, but to spark more creative thinking from the military. "Even if the Western Excursion was not the perfect plan, it had already accomplished one of Cheney's goals: it had lit a fire under the military. They would not be coming back with any more 'high diddle diddle plans.'"<sup>309</sup>

Cheney correctly felt that "he needed multiple sources of information. 'There was no way he was going to let himself be captive of the JCS or Collin Powell.'"<sup>310</sup> Going directly to the services for information (rather than through the Joint Chiefs) was Cheney's way to prod the military to act faster. The Secretary also decided to have a one-on-one meeting with Gen. Powell in order to explain again how important it was for President Bush to be presented with workable military options.<sup>311</sup> While the military did not necessarily like Cheney's activism, it got the message that the political leadership was very serious about exploring military options and obliged. Thus, political leaders and the decision process itself benefited from a wider range of military options than it would have been the case without this kind of civilian prodding. In the end, the two-corps ground campaign the military executed was significantly improved and included various creative

<sup>309</sup> Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 152. See also Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 321-22.

<sup>310</sup> Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 235.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

ideas from the planning efforts of several groups, sparked to life by the military's fear that if they did not plan better, the civilians would make them execute a version of the hated "Western Excursion."<sup>312</sup>

Rather than being hands-off as usually portrayed, top civilian leaders spent a lot of time during the planning process inquiring with the military about targeting in order to ensure that political considerations for minimizing collateral damage are taken into account. Gen. Powell described the process this way: "We went over the target list one last time. [Cheney] seemed to have memorized it. He spent hours in the National Military Command Center peppering my staff with questions. He left his briefers drained."<sup>313</sup> Three days before the start of the air campaign, Bush and Cheney reviewed the target list yet again, paying special attention to targets that could cause political controversies. The President asked several targets -- statues of Saddam Hussein and triumphal arches -- to be dropped.<sup>314</sup> After the meeting with Bush, Secretary Cheney went over the target list again with Gen. Powell to ensure that the military understood the political constraints -- civilian casualties should be kept to a minimum and Iraqi national and religious symbols should be protected.<sup>315</sup> The military showed understanding for the limitations under which its civilian bosses were operating. "Powell had worked hard with Schwarzkopf to make sure the offense showed some restraint. Collateral damage had to be minimized. Of the half dozen bridges inside the Baghdad city limits, the air campaign was, at Powell's urging,

<sup>312</sup> One of the modifications CENTCOM made in its plans, for example, was the adoption of the flanking movement, proposed by Powell's staff. See Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 145-48.

<sup>313</sup> Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 503.

<sup>314</sup> Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 364.

<sup>315</sup> This was specified in National Security Directive 54 (the go-ahead for the war).

only going to hit two.”<sup>316</sup> This firm civilian control, combined with careful civil-military coordination and cooperation during the planning process, led to the war being fought with minimal civilian casualties.

Another example of assertive and competent leadership without micromanagement was the meeting held by Cheney and Wolfowitz on December 19 during their visit in Riyadh. They wanted to report to Bush on the state of readiness of the troops. During the meeting with Gen. Schwarzkopf, through re-examining the war plan, they made sure that everything was proceeding according to civilian orders. Both Cheney and Wolfowitz had many questions about the war plan, and especially about the ground offensive, which they thought would be more complicated than the air war. The two leaders requested a series of briefings to cover all aspects of both the air and ground campaign plans. “Cheney fired away with questions. He didn’t want anyone making optimistic assumptions; he wanted to make sure the command was stocking up supplies for a long conflict.”<sup>317</sup> Civilian and military officials also discussed the possibility of Saddam using chemical weapons, as well as the target selection and anticipated casualties. Cheney and Wolfowitz, together with military leaders, re-examined the alternative options and considered again their consequences. Political leaders understood that at times such questioning could be unpleasant for the officers and be seen as a challenge to their authority, but they tried to draw them out on all aspects of the air and ground war plans. Once they were convinced that the military understood political guidance and was going to follow it, Cheney and Wolfowitz reassured the uniforms that this would not be another Vietnam and that the military would not have its hands tied behind its back.

<sup>316</sup> Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 374.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 347.

Contrary to Huntington's precepts, the politicians did not shut up once the war had begun. Civilian leaders asserted control during the military campaign as well, and not only prior to its start. They did not hesitate to impose political restraints when they thought the situation required it. Such was the case with Iraq's Scud missiles, for example. From the very start of the air campaign, when Iraq launched Scuds at Tel Aviv, the civilian leadership's main political concern was to make sure that Israel did not retaliate because, in this case, US leaders feared the Arab states would leave the coalition. That is why, civilian officials decided they had to do everything possible to destroy the Iraqi Scud launchers, or at least to convince Israel that the US military would put a sufficient effort into this task. From a military standpoint, however, the effort to suppress the Scuds made little sense. The missiles were very inaccurate and, in this sense, they were considered militarily unimportant. Thus, Schwarzkopf and other military leaders argued that diverting air planes for the purpose of chasing Scuds was useless and it was hindering the broader air campaign. But Cheney made sure political considerations dominated and insisted that CENTCOM put more sorties on the missile launchers.<sup>318</sup> Secretary Cheney demanded and received daily detailed progress reports from the military about the Scud-hunting. The decision as to whether it was worth it to divert sorties from the air campaign and focus them on the Scud-hunt was a political one and Bush and Cheney did not hesitate to make that judgment, knowing full well that they angered many in the Air Force.<sup>319</sup> As a result of this firm civilian control, Washington managed to prevent Israel's entry into the war.

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<sup>318</sup> See, for example, Tom Mathews, "The Secret History of the War," *Newsweek*, Vol. 117, No. 11, March 18, 1991; Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 234; Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, p. 193; Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, pp. 95-6.

<sup>319</sup> Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 232-39.

Another example of civilian assertiveness and involvement in the details of military planning was the careful vetting of targets in Baghdad which started after the bombing of the Al Firdos bunker which killed 204 civilians and turned into a PR disaster. After the incident, Washington started reviewing all targets in the Iraqi capital proposed by the air planners.<sup>320</sup> The air force generals, supported by Schwarzkopf himself, fought back, saying that Washington's interference was unduly truncating the air campaign. They argued that Saddam had just started to feel the enormous pain about to be inflicted upon him and his war machine and these restrictions were coming at the worst possible moment. The civilian leadership, however, thought that another Al Firdos could lead to loss of domestic and international public support and overruled the purely military logic of their commanders.

This pattern of civil-military relations (*low* civil-military preference divergence combined with assertive civilian dominance) did have a significant positive impact on the way policy-makers collected and processed information and on the quality of their analysis of the strategic situation. When civil-military preference divergence is low, my theoretical framework expects that the principal-agent problem of private information would not be severe, and thus, the effectiveness of the decision process would be enhanced. In other words, when civilian and military officials have similar preferences, both sides would have an interest in sharing information, rather than in concealing or distorting it, as is the case when preferences diverge highly and each side has an incentive to skew the decision process in order to bolster its own preferred outcome. Under such circumstances (similarity of civilian and military views and interests) both sides would be more willing to exchange

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<sup>320</sup> See, for example, Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 326-27; Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, pp. 288-90.

information with each other, and this would create a better climate for open discussions and analysis of various policy options, thus, contributing to the effectiveness of the decision process. The National Security Council (NSC) meetings under Bush Sr. provide a good illustration. The President used these meetings to gather information and to listen to different views from top officials. As Schwarzkopf writes about them, “President Bush wanted to look at every facet of the crisis. ... I was impressed by his willingness to listen to what everybody had to say and not make snap judgments or decisions before he had the complete picture. He went around the table, searching for specific information...”<sup>321</sup> Similar was the atmosphere during the meetings of the Group of Eight - Bush’s chief advisors with whom he made decisions.<sup>322</sup> Without being confrontational, the President enjoyed policy debates and “did not get upset when others disagreed with him.”<sup>323</sup> His openness to debate created good conditions for a lively ongoing civil-military dialogue on national security issues. But it was not mainly Bush’s open-mindedness that affected positively the decision process.

More importantly, in this case, the high level of civil-military agreement on key issues meant that neither side had an interest in manipulating or withholding information. This led to a generally free flow of information between civilian and military leaders and facilitated the exchange of ideas and deliberation between them. For most of the time, there was a good decision-making climate which allowed frequent uninhibited discussions

<sup>321</sup> H. Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 298.

<sup>322</sup> For a detailed analysis of Bush’s decision-making and leadership style see, for example, Stanley Renshon, “Good Judgment, and the Lack Thereof, in the Gulf War,” in Stanley Renshon, ed., *The Political Psychology of the Gulf War: Leaders, Publics, and the Process of Conflict* (Pittsburgh, Pa. : University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993); James David Barber, *Presidential Character*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992), p. 6; Brigitte Nacos, “Presidential Leadership during the Persian Gulf Conflict,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (Summer 1994), pp. 543-61.

<sup>323</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 298.

between military and civilian officials. Technical military, as well as domestic and international political issues were considered during numerous meetings of Bush's top-level advisors. Richard Armitage describes the sessions in the Tank between the Defense Secretary and the Joint Chiefs of Staff as having "plenty of discussion." "People speak. People go back and forth. This is particularly true with Secretary Cheney who was wont to argue with his service chiefs."<sup>324</sup> Time and again, top civilian and military officials would discuss each other's concerns about different military options, and Bush and Cheney would encourage the military to share their doubts and reservations.

Re-assured by the similarities in their philosophies of war and peace, civilian and military leaders felt free to disagree and contradict each other. Military leaders were determined to provide accurate information to the civilian leadership. As Gen. Schwarzkopf asserted (not necessarily self-servingly): "Every shred of information we gave the President would be the most accurate we had, even if it reflected unfavorably. If we told him we *could* do something, we *would* be able to deliver on our promise."<sup>325</sup> Gen. Powell also did not hesitate to give the politicians "the cold bath of reality."<sup>326</sup> Unlike during the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war, when uniformed leaders often did not feel free to express their views to Secretary Rumsfeld, in this case the military was not afraid to discuss openly. "Powell felt free enough to speak up when he believed a canon of military operations was being violated, and Cheney was prepared to protect his chairman."<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> In: "Colin Powell as JCS Chairman: A Panel Discussion on American Civil-Military Relations," Working Paper No. 1, Project on U.S. Post Cold-War Civil-Military Relations (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, December 1995).

<sup>325</sup> H. Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 299.

<sup>326</sup> Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 513.

<sup>327</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 310

During a Congressional testimony shortly before the beginning of the war, Senator Bill Cohen asked Colin Powell whether Powell “stood in awe” of his civilian bosses and whether he felt free to give honest advice. The Chairman replied: “I am not reluctant or afraid to give either the Secretary of Defense, the President, or any other member of the National Security Council, my best, most honest, most candid, advice. Whether they like it or not.”<sup>328</sup> When military leaders do not feel the pressure to sugarcoat their information in order to please their civilian bosses, it is less likely that top civilian decision-makers would make a bad choice because of faulty information. After the war, President Bush re-iterated his gratefulness to Gen. Colin Powell, Admiral David Jeremiah, and the other military leaders for providing honest advice. “We had a lot of meetings. And General Powell leveled with me, and Admiral Jeremiah leveled with us, and Norm Schwarzkopf leveled with us ... And he [Powell] gave me straightforward advice ... he spoke his mind; he did it openly.”<sup>329</sup> Another sign of the existence of free and open discussions was that during this period, compared to the time in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war, there were much fewer leaks from the military to the media or congressional leaders.

As shown in Chapter 7 on the 2003 Iraq War, decision-makers are likely to discount advice (or not seek it at all) from sources with whom they disagree on many key issues or who they perceive as having different interests in a given situation. (In other words, in cases of *high* civil-military preferences divergence, civilian leaders tend to disregard military advice.) For example, in the lead-up to the 2003 war with Iraq, Secretary Rumsfeld and his civilian colleagues at the Pentagon believed that there was a

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<sup>328</sup> Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, pp. 342-43.

<sup>329</sup> George H. W. Bush, “Remarks Announcing the Reappointment of General Colin L. Powell as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a News Conference,” May 23, 1991.



wide gap between their views on national security issues and the beliefs held by their military advisors. Rumsfeld thought that many in the military top echelon were incapable of fully understanding and adapting to the new realities. He believed some uniformed leaders were adamantly opposed to his transformation efforts and to a war with Iraq and that they were very risk-averse and with no desire to modify the way the military prepare for and fight America's wars. Hence, because of the high divergence between civilian and military views, Rumsfeld was not very interested in advice coming from his uniformed leaders who he saw as being "stuck in the Cold War." As Arthur Lupia shows, "perceived common interest [is] necessary for persuasion... persuasion is impossible when the speaker and listener have conflicting interests. For when the listener perceived a speaker to have conflicting interests, her best response is to ignore the cue."<sup>330</sup>

Unlike in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war, during the 1991 Gulf Crisis, due mainly to the *low* level of conflict between civilian and military views and beliefs, political leaders consulted with the military on a regular basis and were receptive to what uniformed leaders had to say, without of course always agreeing with their recommendations. Unlike Rumsfeld in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war, President Bush Sr. wanted military advice and "sought it at every turn."<sup>331</sup> The military was included in every major decision. As Gen. Powell says:

...we were blessed with a group of political leaders, a President, and a secretary of defense who ... allowed the military to participate in the decision-making process from the very beginning, and allowed me as chairman to be a part of the inner sanctum. When discussions were going on, the secretary of defense and I were there to make sure that the military input was there in the beginning and not sort of after the fact, after political judgments had been made. So there was, as close as possible,

<sup>330</sup> "Who Can Persuade Whom? Implications from the Nexus of Psychology and Rational Choice Theory," In James H. Kuklinski, ed., *Thinking About Political Psychology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 62-3.

<sup>331</sup> *Triumph without Victory: the Unreported History of the Persian Gulf War*, p. 95.

integration between political issues and political thinking and military issues and military decisions.<sup>332</sup>

In this case military leaders felt that their opinions were valued and respected.<sup>333</sup>

In sharp contrast with the decision-making process leading to the 2003 Iraq war when Rumsfeld often disregarded military advice, in the administration of Bush Sr., civilian officials made sure military opinion was well represented and this helped enhance the effectiveness of the decision process. For example, during the debate on the effectiveness of the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq, while Cheney himself was becoming less and less convinced that containment or “economic strangulation” would be sufficient to achieve the goal of getting Saddam out of Kuwait, he wanted the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs as well to be able to express his views on this issue directly to the President. Knowing full well that Powell might have views somewhat different from his own, the Secretary of Defense nevertheless arranged a special visit with Bush in order Powell to be able to present his arguments on both use of force and economic sanctions. This situation was radically different from the way the Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs (Generals Hugh Shelton and Dick Myers) were treated in the George W. Bush administration. Rumsfeld curbed the influence of the Chiefs significantly, and at some point even suggested to Gen. Shelton that military advice should go through Rumsfeld rather than directly to the President.<sup>334</sup> This went contrary to the intent of the Golfwater-Nichols Act and ultimately

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<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>333</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 329.

<sup>334</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 382. See also Rowan Scarborough, *Rumsfeld's War: the Untold Story of America's Anti-Terrorist Commander* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2004), p. 121.

hurt the quality of the decision process.<sup>335</sup> The effectiveness of the advisory process at the top of the government could suffer if the independence of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is undermined because in that case the President would not have any alternative views to consider – a situation, which could be particularly dangerous in case the civilian view (coming to the President from the Secretary) happens to be wrong. By making sure that Gen. Powell had an additional meeting with Bush during this crucial debate, Cheney was protecting the integrity of the decision process and, in particular, the ability of the Commander-in-Chief to get information and advise directly from his top military leader.

Thus, this pattern of civil-military relations, characterized by a combination of low level of civil-military preference divergence and assertive civilian leadership, contributed to a free flow and exchange of information between political leaders and their chief uniformed advisors. Unlike in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war when the civil-military dialogue was truncated mainly because of the very high level of preference divergence between Rumsfeld and the generals, this time the policy-making process benefited from presenting and evaluating a full range of military and non-military opinions; and the rigorous analysis of alternative strategies ultimately increased the effectiveness of the decision process.

The level of civil-military preference divergence affects not only the information gathering and analysis during the decision process, but also the cooperation between civilian and military officials. Smooth civil-military collaboration is very important because it affects the degree to which political and military concerns would be integrated in the final strategy and, ultimately, the extent to which the military instrument would

<sup>335</sup> Congress passed the Goldwater-Nichols Act, making the Chairman the primary military advisor to the President, precisely so that the President could hear the military's views and be able to consider a variety of options.

serve properly the political goals of a state. In the case of the 1991 Gulf War, the similarity in civilian and military views and ideas was also the basis for the cordial and respectful relationship established between top policy-makers and their key military advisors, which facilitated the decision process. A civil-military relationship of mutual respect and trust, essential for effective planning and conduct of wars, is much more likely to develop when civilian and military leaders hold similar beliefs on major national security issues. The personal and professional backgrounds of top civilian and military officials contributed further to the good understanding between them, which facilitated their cooperation during the decision-making process. As shown earlier, most of the top civilian officials had a solid grasp of national security affairs, including military matters. Unlike in the Clinton administration, the military had enormous respect for George H. W. Bush as its commander-in-chief. Besides being the youngest Navy pilot in World War II, George H. W. Bush had won the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal “for heroism and extraordinary achievement.” The President’s experience in World War II had given him a clear understanding of and sensitivity to the human costs of war. It also gave him confidence in his ability to make the tough calls in time of crisis. As Bush said, “When it came time for me to send our kids to Panama, and later to the Middle East, I thought back on my own experiences in combat and what it was like to be shot at.”<sup>336</sup> This was very important for the military, since they knew they were ordered to war by civilian leaders who knew what being in combat meant.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Quoted in Kenneth T. Walsh, “Commander in Chief,” *U.S. News and World Report*, December 31, 1990, p. 25.

<sup>337</sup> My findings confirm existing research, showing that top decision-makers’ military service or lack of such influences significantly their views on military force, as well as their propensity to use force. Civilian leaders with prior military service most often have preferences closer to the preferences of the military. See, for example, Peter Feaver and Christopher Gelpi, *Choosing Your Battles*, Chapter 3.

Another factor that contributed to the effective civil-military coordination and collaboration in the decision process was that just like their civilian counterparts, senior military leaders also possessed considerable political sophistication and experience in working at the highest levels of government.<sup>338</sup> Colin Powell, the “political general,” understood better than most in his position the political and diplomatic pressures under which his President was working. “George Bush was under enormous pressure, and I could see it in his taut features. He was trying to balance Arab states, Israel, Western allies, the Soviets, Congress, and the American public, like a juggler spinning plates on the tops of poles, wondering how long he could keep everything in the air,” the general wrote in his memoirs.<sup>339</sup> Powell’s deep understanding of the domestic and international challenges confronting his political leaders earned him their trust. When political and military leaders have similar preferences on the key questions regarding the use of force and when civilian leaders trust that their military advisors understand their political considerations, the former feel much less need to monitor intrusively the military and are more willing to give them a freer hand. In the case of the 1991 Gulf War, civilian leaders trusted their military advisors and had confidence in their abilities. President Bush said of Chairman Powell, “When he briefed me, I found there was something about the quiet, efficient way he laid everything out and answered questions that reduced my fears and gave me great confidence. I admired his thoroughness and above all his concern for his troops.”<sup>340</sup>

<sup>338</sup> Christopher Gibson, *Countervailing Forces*, see especially chapters 4 and 5. See also Sam Sarkesian, John Williams, and Fred Bryant, *Soldiers, Society, and National Security* (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1995).

<sup>339</sup> Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 498.

<sup>340</sup> Quoted in Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 302.

Even more important for the collaboration between top political and military officials was the fact that while the political leaders stayed actively and closely involved in strategy-making and military planning, they did not micromanage the military. “Bush allowed the military professionals to handle operational matters ... he believed it was their job to implement policy.”<sup>341</sup> After ensuring that the political perspective was taken into account, civilian leaders kept their promise to refrain from interference. Unlike in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war when civilian micromanagement was common, in this case its lack promoted the smooth interaction between political and military leaders.

Since a combination of civilian assertiveness and *lack* of political meddling is an essential condition for good civil-military cooperation, and, thus, for effective decision-making, we should establish the conditions under which it is possible to have dominant and assertive civilian leaders who, at the same time, refrain from micromanaging the military. A careful examination of the civil-military relationship during the 1991 Gulf War with the help of my theoretical framework, which emphasizes the importance of the level of civil-military preference divergence, in addition to the level and type of civilian control, provides an answer. We see that when civil-military preference divergence is low (as was the case in the George H.W. Bush administration), even assertively dominant civilian officials do not feel much of a need to micromanage because they trust that the military would follow closely their preferences (since these, more or less, happen to be the preferences of the military as well).

The sharp contrast between the decision-making process in the 1991 Gulf War and the one under George W. Bush and Donald Rumsfeld provides a good illustration of this

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<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 299. See also pp. 329-30.

logic. Bush Jr. and Rumsfeld were very strongly impressed by Eliot Cohen's book *Supreme Command* and believed in assertive civilian leadership.<sup>342</sup> Secretary Rumsfeld did everything by the book and was credited with strengthening civilian control, trying to push transformation through the Pentagon bureaucracy, and awakening the military to the realities of the post-9/11 strategic environment and the "new kind of war". However, decision-making and implementation for the Iraq War were significantly flawed. The decision process under Rumsfeld did not have many of the benefits which firm and involved civilian direction usually brings because Rumsfeld's assertiveness often turned into micromanagement and, for the most part, he cut off military advice. Why did Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and others end up interfering almost constantly with the military professionals while Bush Sr. and Cheney managed to be assertive and involved without being micromanagers? Rumsfeld and other political leaders often meddled and micromanaged their military subordinates because they were faced with a very high level of civil-military preference divergence. As chapter 7 shows, civilian leaders knew very well that the military's views on issues regarding the use of force in general and on Iraq, in particular, were very different from their own. When there is a high level of conflict in the views and ideas of civilian and military officials, civilians fear that the military has an agenda of its own and they think they have to monitor the uniforms very closely to ensure that the military would follow civilian preferences rather than its own. That is why my theoretical framework suggests that we should examine not only the firmness of civilian control but the level of civil-military preference divergence as well. When we have a pattern of civil-military relations, characterized by civilian dominance and a *high* level of

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<sup>342</sup> See, for example, James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 197.

civil-military preference divergence, it is very likely that civilian dominance would often turn into civilian meddling because civilian leaders would fear that the military might pursue its own preferences if not managed and monitored tightly and constantly.

While decision-makers' individual characteristics and leadership style are certainly important, I have argued that what matters more is the particular pattern of civil-military relations, defined by the variation in the level of civil-military preference divergence and the civil-military balance of power. The *lesser* importance of the influence of personal characteristics could be seen also in the significant difference in the relationship of Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz with the military during the 1991 and the 2003 wars with Iraq. As a Secretary of Defense and Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, when they and the military held *similar* preferences on key issues, Cheney and Wolfowitz practiced assertive civilian control *without* being micromanagers. In the George W. Bush administration, as a Vice-President and a Deputy Secretary of Defense, when there was a *high* level of civil-military preference divergence, Cheney and Wolfowitz were squarely in Rumsfeld's camp of assertive civilian officials who were often meddling with the military.<sup>343</sup>

### **Decision-Making on War Termination**

Decisions to end a war are among the most difficult choices policy-makers face. Since war termination unavoidably combines considerations from both the political and the military realms, the interaction between political and military leaders at this stage is crucial. History is replete with cases where battlefield victories have been squandered due to a

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<sup>343</sup> This is not to deny the personality changes that might have occurred between 1991 and 2003. Dick Cheney is perhaps the decision-maker who has changed most. For example, according to Brent Scowcroft, "The real anomaly in the Administration is Cheney. I consider Cheney a good friend—I've known him for thirty years. But Dick Cheney I don't know anymore." Quoted in Jeffrey Goldberg, "Breaking Ranks," *The New Yorker*, Vol. 81, No. 34 (October 31, 2005), p. 54.



clumsy ending of the war.<sup>344</sup> The next part of this chapter shows that in the final stages of Operation Desert Storm (more specifically, during the decision-making on war termination and the preparation for the armistice talks) civilian officials in the Bush administration abdicated control to the top military leadership (mainly to Gen. Powell). This led to a poor integration of political and military actions and, ultimately, to the failure to make the military victory serve political objectives to the fullest.<sup>345</sup> The brief comparison between the decision process and outcomes in the two periods in this case (the first one, characterized by assertive civilian leadership and the second – by civilian abdication) gives further support to Cohen’s argument that a country in a crisis would be better served if its statesmen practice the “unequal dialogue” with their military subordinates rather than the Huntingtonian version of delegating to the military professionals.

How did the 1991 Gulf war end and who made the critical decisions about the timing of the cease-fire? The decision to end the war was based on important political judgments and the civilian leaders, rather than making those judgments themselves, left them largely to the military. This is the essence of abdication of control. In the final stages of the campaign, there were two key decisions to be made: 1) were U.S. objectives accomplished so that the war could be ended, and 2) how to conduct armistice negotiations. Both of these decisions were clearly political and they should have been made by the President and his key civilian advisors, in consultation with the military leadership. The civilian leadership, however, mismanaged the process. Besides the question of whether it was a good choice to end the Gulf war at 100 hours in its ground

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<sup>344</sup> For what is for many an obvious truth, namely, that the outcomes of few wars, if any, are determined on the battlefield, see Michael Howard, “When are Wars Decisive,” *Survival*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Spring 1999), pp. 129-30.

<sup>345</sup> See, for example, Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, p. 194.

campaign, it is important to analyze how effective the decision process that led to this choice was and how one could explain it, using my theoretical framework. This section analyzes the particular pattern of civil-military relations and their impact on decision-making first in the decision to end the ground campaign and then during the preparation and conduct of the armistice talks. (While at that time, the level of civil-military preference divergence remained low, due to civilian abdication, these decisions should be placed in Quadrant 4 of Table 1.)

How was the decision to terminate the war made? Gen. Colin Powell appears to have been the dominant influence in making the choice on the timing of the “secession of hostilities”.<sup>346</sup> Atkinson states that the initiative for ending the ground war after 100 hours “clearly came from the American military, and, given the chairman’s dominance over the Joint Chiefs, that meant Powell.”<sup>347</sup> Eliot Cohen also puts the main responsibility on the Chairman. “Gen. Powell made the recommendation, arguing that the president’s victory conditions have been fulfilled. ... By all accounts, the political leadership went along with Powell’s recommendation.”<sup>348</sup> On February 27, 1991 (in mid afternoon, Washington time, and approximately 10 pm in the theater), President Bush held a meeting of his senior advisors to discuss the situation on the ground and a possible secession of fighting. At this meeting, Gen. Powell made a very powerful presentation on how coalition forces had achieved the objective of expelling Iraq from Kuwait. “Both Norman and I feel that we’re

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<sup>346</sup> This argument is supported by, among others, Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 450; Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, pp. 194-95; Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, pp. 423-4; Russell Weigley, “The American Civil-Military Cultural Gap,” in Richard Kohn and Peter Feaver, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians*, p. 242.

<sup>347</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 450.

<sup>348</sup> Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, pp. 194-95.

within the window of opportunity to end this. It's clear that the Iraqi army is broken. If anything, they're just trying to get out. That was our mission: to get them out. And I can report to you that they are well on their way to being out. In fact, we're crucifying large number of them."<sup>349</sup> Powell strongly argued that the political goals had been achieved and it was time to end the war since fighting which did not serve political purposes was simply wanton killing. Continuing the attack, he said, "would be un-American and unchivalrous" because it would inflict horrible carnage on already fleeing enemy units without serving any political objectives.<sup>350</sup> When President Bush asked him whether the military wanted another day, he responded: "By tonight there really won't be an enemy there. If you go another day, you're basically just fighting stragglers."<sup>351</sup>

In order to understand better how the decision to terminate the ground war at 100 hours was made one should also look at the critically important relationship between Washington and the CENTCOM Commander, Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf. While the CINC's role in the decision process was certainly not insignificant, in this case, just like in most other cases of disagreements, he yielded to Powell. On February 27, at a briefing in Riyadh ("the mother of all briefings"), Gen. Schwarzkopf stated that the coalition forces had accomplished their mission. Regarding the retreating Iraqi forces, the CENTCOM Commander incorrectly added: "The gates are closed. There is no way out of here. All Republican Guard divisions in the theater had been destroyed except for 'a couple that we're in the process of fighting right now.'" When asked, though, whether ground forces

<sup>349</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 469.

<sup>350</sup> Douglas Waller and John Barry, "The Day We Stopped the War," *Newsweek*, January 20, 1992, p. 16.

<sup>351</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 469.

were blocking the roads to Basrah, Schwarzkopf replied, 'No.'"<sup>352</sup> Later on, at the same press conference, the CINC amended his previous statements, saying: "When I say that the gate is closed, I don't want to give the impression that absolutely nothing is escaping. Quite the contrary. What isn't escaping is heavy tanks, what isn't escaping is artillery pieces ... I'm talking about the gate that is closed on the war machine that is out there."<sup>353</sup>

From his headquarters in Riyadh, about 300 miles away from the theater, Schwarzkopf did not have a clear view of what was happening on the battlefield. Partly due to the fog of war, the CINC did not fully realize that the roads to Basra had not been entirely sealed off and he did not manage to make this clear in his phone conversations with the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington.<sup>354</sup> Schwarzkopf could be criticized for not consulting the field commanders who had a better view of the situation on the battlefield and knew that it could take another day or more of hard fighting to trap the remaining Republican Guard forces.<sup>355</sup> (He consulted only the high-level officers in Riyadh.) While certainly Schwarzkopf could have done more to clarify the situation on the ground, the civilian leadership should bear the primary responsibility for not urging him more vigorously to do that.

Privately, Schwarzkopf and other senior military officers were either unsure or in opposition to the idea to stop the fighting and preferred that the military be given one or

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 471. See also Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*; Edward Draachman and Alan Shank, *Presidents and Foreign Policy*, p. 303.

<sup>353</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 471.

<sup>354</sup> Douglas Waller and John Barry, "The Day We Stopped the War," *Newsweek*, January 20, 1992, p. 16.

<sup>355</sup> See, for example, Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 429. See also Robert A. Divine, "The Persian Gulf War Revisited: Tactical Victory, Strategic Failure," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Winter 2000), p. 137. Mackubin Thomas Owens, "With Eyes Wide Open," *National Review Online*, August 14, 2002. Available at: <http://www.nationalreview.com/owens/owens081402.asp>.

two more days to accomplish the objectives.<sup>356</sup> But Schwarzkopf failed to make such a recommendation or in anyway to express strong disagreement with Washington. "... when given the opportunity to urge that the fighting continue – to Powell, to Cheney, and to Bush – Schwarzkopf demurred."<sup>357</sup> Had Schwarzkopf been more assertive in requesting another day to finish the job, he would have gotten it.<sup>358</sup> However, as I explain below, Schwarzkopf most likely did not feel he was in a position to do that because of Powell's strong preference for ending the war.

If he felt ending the fight was premature, why did not Schwarzkopf object more vigorously to such a recommendation and present evidence that the troops still had work to do? It is most likely that Schwarzkopf felt pressured by Powell and did not think his or any other commander's objections would make any difference because of the way Powell had presented to him the views of the civilian leadership.

Powell warned Schwarzkopf as early as Monday, February 25, that the mood [in the White House] was shifting toward an early end to the fighting ... Powell repeated the warning on Tuesday, February 26, and Wednesday, February 27. Schwarzkopf ... argued each time that he needed more time to close the loop around the Iraqi forces. But he, too, saw the handwriting on the wall, and he put out the word in Riyadh to prepare to shut down the offensive.<sup>359</sup>

<sup>356</sup> In an interview with David Frost *after* the war (March 27, 1991), General Schwarzkopf said that his "recommendation had been ... continue the march. I mean, we had them in a rout and we could have continued to wreak great destruction upon them. We would have completely closed the doors and made it in fact a battle of annihilation. And the president made the decision that we should stop at a given time, at a given place, that did leave some escape routes open for them to get back out..." Soon after this interview, the White House and the Pentagon issued statements denying this and Schwarzkopf apologized to the President for "a poor choice of words." In his autobiography, the General clarifies that when asked his opinion he had said he had no problem with such a decision. In: H. Norman Schwarzkopf with Peter Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero: Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, the Autobiography* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), pp. 469-70.

<sup>357</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 476. See also, Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 429.

<sup>358</sup> This is confirmed by Powell himself. In his memoirs he writes, "And there is no doubt in my mind that if Norm or I had the slightest reservation about stopping now, the President would have given us all the time we needed." *My American Journey*, p. 508.

<sup>359</sup> Douglas Waller and John Barry, "The Day We Stopped the War," *Newsweek*, January 20, 1992, p. 16.

Powell did not exactly asked Schwarzkopf for his opinion as to the timing of the cease-fire but told him that the White House was leaning toward ending the war (which was actually Powell's own preference). When Bush asked of Schwarzkopf's views, Powell got on the phone with the CINC and told him, "I've presented our views [to Bush] and the thinking [at the White House] is that we should end it today,"<sup>360</sup> The CINC would hardly disagree with such a formulation; he would feel that his consent is required.

The finale came when Powell and Bush called Schwarzkopf from the Oval Office to discuss the exact timing of the cease-fire. Powell talked first, during the midday meeting of the Gang of Eight. But 'Powell had already told Schwarzkopf ahead of time that the president was going to stop the war,' a Pentagon source claims. 'The way Powell presented it to Schwarzkopf, how could he object?' Bush then got on the phone to see if Stormin' Norman had any objection. Schwarzkopf, evidently trying to be a good soldier, voiced no protest on the cease-fire or its timing to the commander in chief.<sup>361</sup>

Most probably, that's why Schwarzkopf also did not raise with the Chairman the objections of the field commanders. Some of them were very angered by the decision to announce "cessation of hostilities" at that time because they were convinced they could have cut off much of the Iraqi army without slaughtering them.<sup>362</sup> Gen. McCaffrey, among others, was incredulous, but all commanders felt they had to comply with the orders.<sup>363</sup>

In making the decision to terminate the war, civilian leaders were strongly influenced by Powell's arguments.<sup>364</sup> Secretary Baker explained after the end of the war

<sup>360</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 471.

<sup>361</sup> Douglas Waller and John Barry, "The Day We Stopped the War," *Newsweek*, January 20, 1992, p. 16.

<sup>362</sup> The VII Corps and the 18<sup>th</sup> Corps, in particular, were still actively engaged in fighting, trying to complete their mission. See, for example, Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 422-32; Edward Draachman and Alan Shank, *Presidents and Foreign Policy*, p. 297.

<sup>363</sup> Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 419-23.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424.

that he made up his mind based on what Powell was saying at these meetings. As he remembered, Gen. Powell told them that “we were killing literally thousands of people.”<sup>365</sup> “As for the senior civilians in the Bush administration ... they were also laboring under a misimpression. After hearing Powell’s presentation, Scowcroft and Wolfowitz thought the Republican Guard was essentially cut off and all but destroyed.”<sup>366</sup> Secretaries Cheney and Baker and National Security Advisor Scowcroft agreed with Powell’s recommendation without much additional questioning of other military advisors. Civilian leaders, however, did not have to take these claims on faith. Had civilian leaders been more inquiring, they would have known, for example, that Powell’s recommendation was not a collective decision of the Joint Chiefs and this understanding might have led them to get the opinion of other senior military leaders as well. Powell did not ask the Chiefs as to their opinion on this issue. This decision came as a *fait accompli* for them.<sup>367</sup> He anticipated no disagreement from any of the Chiefs. While that was largely true for the majority of them, the Air Force Chief, Tony McPeak, at the time had very serious doubts about it and thought the war should be continued for another two or three days to achieve American objectives.<sup>368</sup>

There were some important political judgments involved in Powell’s recommendation and civilian leaders should not have left those to him. For example, Powell was very sensitive to media accounts of the ground and air offensive and what he

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<sup>365</sup> Frontline, *The Gulf War: an In-depth Examination of the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf Crisis*, Interview with James Baker. Available at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/baker/1.html>.

<sup>366</sup> Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, p. 424.

<sup>367</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 475.

<sup>368</sup> Gen. McPeak later regretted he did not speak up, but also thought this would not have changed Powell’s mind. See Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 475.

thought could become a public relations problem, hurt the image of the military, and cloud the spectacular victory the troops had achieved on the ground.<sup>369</sup> He worried about the television coverage of the so-called “Highway of Death,” and that, in his view, the media was “starting to make it look as if we were engaged in slaughter for slaughter’s sake.”<sup>370</sup> Especially troubling was a *Washington Post* story, which said that American pilots “swarmed over Iraqi armor and truck columns, slaughtering the scattering vehicles by the score in a combat frenzy variously described as a ‘turkey shoot’ and ‘shooting fish in a barrel.’”<sup>371</sup> The military leadership worried that international and domestic publics could see the ongoing campaign as coalition troops trying to kill an enemy that was already beaten and surrendering.<sup>372</sup>

It is natural in such situations for U.S. military leaders to care about the reputation of their institution and also to have the inclination to end the fighting quickly and bring their soldiers home alive. But it is the responsibility of statesmen to decide when even legitimate and wise military concerns as those should be overridden by political ones. When politicians abdicate this responsibility, even the most brilliant military victory may not lead to the achievement of their goals. Civilian leaders should have been actively involved in making these critical political judgments. Even if one agrees with this particular decision<sup>373</sup>, it was not up to the military to decide, for example, as to whether US

<sup>369</sup> Edward Draachman and Alan Shank, *Presidents and Foreign Policy*, p. 296.

<sup>370</sup> Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 520.

<sup>371</sup> Rick Atkinson, William Clairborne, “Allies Surround Republican Guard, Say Crippled Iraqis Are Near Defeat,” *The Washington Post*, February 27, 1991, p. A1.

<sup>372</sup> See, for example, Edward Draachman and Alan Shank, *Presidents and Foreign Policy*, pp. 295-96. See also Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, p. 416.

<sup>373</sup> At times, good decisions could come as a result of a bad process and vice versa.



reputation would have suffered (if fighting was to be continued). And it certainly was not up to Colin Powell to judge that political objectives had been accomplished and, hence, offensive operations could be suspended.

The decision for ending the ground campaign at 100 hours seems to have been guided by public relations concerns more than political and military considerations. As it turned out, the media stories about the “Highway of Death” were not true. Military leaders on the ground (and other observers) reported that while a lot of enemy vehicles and other military equipment were destroyed, almost no people were killed because the Iraqis abandoned the vehicles and ran away. As Lt. Gen. Paul Van Riper stated, “I walked the whole thing. I don't think I counted more than maybe 13, 14 dead Iraqis. So yes, there was a lot of destruction in that so-called Mile of Death, but not a lot of death.”<sup>374</sup> Gordon and Trainor charge that Powell and Schwarzkopf wanted to end the war quickly not only to save lives, but also “to win bragging rights for himself [Schwarzkopf] and the U.S. Army.”<sup>375</sup> According to them, that is why, for example, the general proposed to end the war on February 28 - a 5-day war, which would beat the 1967 Arab-Israeli war by one day. (At the end, after consulting with his aides President Bush decided to suspend offensive operations at midnight EST, which made it the 100-hour war.<sup>376</sup>)

Rather than accepting uncritically Powell's narrow definition of achieving the political objectives (i.e., getting Saddam out of Kuwait), civilian leaders could have insisted on achieving an end state that was more fully consistent with the originally stated political

<sup>374</sup> *Frontline*, Interview with Lt. Gen. Paul Van Riper (U.S. Marine Corps – Ret.), *Rumsfeld's War*. Available at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/pentagon/interviews/vanriper.html>.

<sup>375</sup> Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 405.

<sup>376</sup> For the official White House Statement, see Papers of George H. W. Bush: Book 1, January 1 to June 30, 1991, pp. 187-88.

objectives. If they were not fully satisfied with the results, they could have reminded the military that victory on the battlefield does not equal victory in war. As critics of the decision to end the ground campaign after 100 hours argued, the ending of the war at the time left key US goals, such as the destruction of the Republican Guard in the Kuwait Theater of Operations, unaccomplished.<sup>377</sup> Back in November of 1990, President Bush formulated US political objectives as follows: “The immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait; the restoration of Kuwait’s legitimate government... and the restoration of security and stability in the region.”<sup>378</sup> A day before the start of the campaign, National Security Directive 54<sup>379</sup> stated its goals in a similar way:

- a. to effect the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait;
- b. to restore Kuwait's legitimate government;
- c. to protect the lives of American citizens abroad; and
- d. to promote the security and the stability of the Persian Gulf.

Importantly, the civilian leadership had instructed the military to *destroy* the Republican guard. In its Operations Order 91-101 of January 17, 1991, CENTCOM translated political goals into military objectives in the following way: “Attack Iraqi political-military leadership and command-and-control; gain and maintain air superiority; sever Iraqi supply lines; destroy chemical, biological, and nuclear capability; destroy

<sup>377</sup> See, for example, *The Generals’ War*; Jeffrey Record, “The Weinberger-Powell Doctrine Doesn’t Cut It,” United States Naval Institute, Proceedings (October 2000).

<sup>378</sup> George H. W. Bush, "Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Deployment of Additional United States Armed Forces to the Persian Gulf," November 16, 1990. Available at: <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/papers/1990/90111614.html>. Accessed: 6/05. See also George H. W. Bush, “Address to the Nation Announcing the Deployment of United States Armed Forces to Saudi Arabia,” August 8, 1990.

<sup>379</sup> The White House, January 15, 1991.

Republican guard forces in the Kuwaiti Theater; liberate Kuwait.”<sup>380</sup> This was CENTCOM’s own terminology as well – not simply to defeat it, to make it “combat ineffective,” or to expel it from Kuwait - the Republican guard had to be “destroyed.”<sup>381</sup> But the objective of destroying the Republican Guard in the Kuwait Theater of Operations (KTO) was not fully achieved.

In a testimony to Congress, Gen. Schwarzkopf claimed that the coalition had destroyed all of Iraq’s forty-two divisions in the KTO. This turned out to be an exaggeration. “By subsequent Army calculations, about one third of all Iraqi forces got away.”<sup>382</sup> According to the CIA After Action Evaluation, half of the Republican Guard Armor got away, including the Hammurabi Division, which in 1994 threatened Kuwait again. Estimates showed that half of the Republican Guard tanks and nearly 70% of their troops escaped.<sup>383</sup> When Powell advised ending the military campaign, he stated that the US objective to eject Iraq out of Kuwait was achieved.<sup>384</sup> Civilian leaders did not challenge this narrowing down of objectives and did not insist on continuing the fighting until the goal of destroying the Republican guard in the KTO was achieved. (Military experts differ on this, but according to most, the accomplishment of this goal would have taken another 2-3 days.)

<sup>380</sup> CENTCOM Operations Order cited in Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: the Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993), p. 21.

<sup>381</sup> See also Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, p. 476.

<sup>382</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, pp. 495, 161-62. See also Douglas Waller and John Barry, “The Day We Stopped the War,” *Newsweek*, January 20, 1992, p. 16.

<sup>383</sup> See, for example, Defense Intelligence Agency Report, March 1991. See also Robert A. Divine, “The Persian Gulf War Revisited: Tactical Victory, Strategic Failure,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Winter 2000), p. 137; Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, p. 429.

<sup>384</sup> Saddam Hussein announced Iraq’s withdrawal from Kuwait on February 26, 1991.

Later on, some administration officials had second thoughts and claimed they would have objected ending the ground war at that time had they known that so many of the enemy's tanks and troops were going to escape. Everyone's favorite culprit – the fog of war – was blamed for declaring secession of hostilities at 100 hours. Officials explained that their decision to end the war was based on intelligence reports assessing the damage to the enemy which later proved to be wrong. For example, on Wednesday (Feb. 27, 1991), the Joint Staff told Secretary Cheney that the Republican Guard had already been cut off from retreat to Basrah, which as it turned out later, was not true since not all enemy forces were encircled. "CENTCOM's daily intelligence summary for February 27 reported that 'the Republican Guards are encircled ... They have few options other than surrender or destruction.'"<sup>385</sup> This, however, goes to the heart of the problem of what I defined as "civilian abdication." Civilian officials were supposed to insist on more complete battle damage assessments, and to wait for those if need be, rather than make such a crucial decision based on fragmentary reports. As Col. Mark Garrard (USAF) correctly advised, "US leaders must resist the temptation to rush the decision-making process on war termination and allow the relevant facts to develop more fully during the interagency process. Let the next Saddam sit and sweat while we hold his territory, consult with our coalition partners, and patiently explore our options."<sup>386</sup>

While analysts of the decision-making process have correctly blamed Schwarzkopf for not doing more to dispel the fog of war and provide more accurate information, it was primarily the responsibility of the civilian leadership in Washington to clarify the nuances

<sup>385</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 470.

<sup>386</sup> Col. Mark Garrard, "War Termination in the Persian Gulf," *Aerospace Power Journal* (Fall 2001); available at: <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj01/fal01/garrard.html>.

and contradictions in the statements of the CINC at the Feb. 27 news briefing and to require more information as to what exactly had been destroyed and how much more time commanders needed to accomplish the job, if there was any doubt that the military objectives were achieved. Furthermore, the civilian leadership was the one responsible to ensure that political and strategic goals would be taken care of together with the military objectives. For most of the time, Bush and Cheney were leaving Powell to communicate with the theater commander. It was Powell and not the Commander-in-Chief or the Secretary of Defense, who was on the secure phone with Schwarzkopf. Powell was presenting the views of the White House to Schwarzkopf and then Schwarzkopf's reactions back to the top civilian leadership. Bush and Cheney should have been more active at the time and conducted at least some of the communication with the Theater themselves, rather than relying on Powell acting as a conduit between them and Schwarzkopf. Civilian leaders should have made sure that the CENTCOM commander knew their views of what was going on and what needed to be done and not what Powell believed those views to be. Schwarzkopf himself admitted after the war that he had difficulties understanding when Powell was expressing his own views and when he was presenting the views of the civilian leadership in Washington. "I never knew what was Powell, what was the JCS, what was the NCA [National Command Authority]. I never had the ability to sort out what was Powell, what was Scowcroft, what was Cheney, what was the President."<sup>387</sup>

What could have civilian leaders done better under the circumstances and how a more active political leadership at this point could have led to a more effective decision

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<sup>387</sup> Quoted in Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 424.

process? Besides insisting on clarifying the ambiguities in Gen. Schwarzkopf's briefing, top civilian officials could have made sure to ask (directly or indirectly) field commanders for their views; then they would have found out how different were Powell's and Schwarzkopf's views from those of the ones on the battlefield. Further, decision-makers could have taken more time to examine incoming intelligence, rather than act on fragmentary and conflicting reports from the field.<sup>388</sup>

The bigger controversy was whether restoring stability in the region included overthrowing Saddam Hussein. Contrary to conventional wisdom, some of the political objectives were much less clear than traditionally assumed.<sup>389</sup> This naturally led to ongoing debates as to whether objectives other than the liberation of Kuwait had been achieved when decision-makers declared end of hostilities. For example, the objective to "promote security and stability in the Gulf" has been interpreted variously to mean: 1) the liberation of Kuwait only; 2) the destruction of Iraq's WMD capabilities and also its offensive conventional military power, so that Iraq is not a threat to its neighbors; 3) the overthrow of Saddam Hussein who many considered perhaps the biggest threat to regional stability. Were this objective referring only to the ejection of Saddam out of Kuwait, however, it did not have to be stated because Kuwait's liberation was an objective that was declared separately (i.e., "to effect the immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait" and "to restore Kuwait's legitimate government"). The vague phrasing ("promote security and stability in the Gulf") allowed this objective to be

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<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 476.

<sup>389</sup> For a discussion of American stated and unstated objectives, see Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, pp. 195-96. See also Frontline, *The Gulf War: an In-depth Examination of the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf Crisis*, Interview with Bernard Trainor. Available at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/trainor/1.html>.

accepted by US coalition partners before the UN vote, but at the same time it also contributed to conflicting interpretations as to when the US could consider it achieved and terminate the war.

Top civilian and military leaders claimed that it was not their objective to overthrow the Iraqi dictator. As Gen. Powell stated, "in none of the meetings I attended was dismembering of Iraq, conquering Baghdad, or changing the Iraqi form of government ever seriously considered. We hoped that Saddam would not survive the coming fury. But his elimination was not a stated objective."<sup>390</sup> In an interview after the war, President Bush said that the war ended when it did because the U.S. administration believed it had achieved its objectives: liberating Kuwait and destroying Iraq's ability to threaten its neighbors. Continuing the destruction of Iraqi forces after the objectives of the war had been achieved, the President argued, would have violated what he called "the basic decency" of "our men and women in uniform."<sup>391</sup> Further, America and its allies did not want to embitter opinion in some of the Arab countries, whose publics would not have liked to see them occupying Baghdad and installing a government there. Furthermore, there were good geopolitical reasons for not completely destroying Iraq's military machine.<sup>392</sup> The U.S. did not want to leave a power vacuum in the Middle East and thus strengthen the influence of Iran. Iraq needed to be preserved relatively strong to counter-balance Iran. George H. W. Bush and Brent Scowcroft make clear in their memoirs that

<sup>390</sup> Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 490.

<sup>391</sup> Interview with George H. W. Bush, The White House, March 30, 1992.

<sup>392</sup> See, for example, *Triumph without Victory: the Unreported History of the Persian Gulf War* (New York: Times Book, 1992), p. 395.

the stability of the Persian Gulf and the Middle East was a primary goal.<sup>393</sup> As Jim Baker also stated, the administration's "one overriding strategic concern was to avoid what we often referred to as the Lebanonization of Iraq, which we believed would create a geopolitical nightmare."<sup>394</sup>

While U.S. leaders did not want to have to invade Baghdad and occupy the country in order to remove Saddam, they did want his ouster from power. Their desired end state actually was an Iraq militarily weakened but left intact as a unified state, and Saddam removed by internal opposition (or forced into exile by humiliating military defeat). Although no official document formally states so, this end state was widely understood and most top officials have testified to this effect. For example, President Bush described the end state decision-makers had in mind in the following words: "While we hoped that a popular revolt would topple Saddam, neither the United States nor the countries of the region wished to see the breakup of the Iraqi state."<sup>395</sup> Making a similar claim, Colin Powell wrote, "What was hoped for frankly, in a postwar Gulf region was an Iraq still standing with Saddam overthrown."<sup>396</sup> Furthermore, because of the rhetoric in the lead-up to the war, many argued that Saddam's ouster had become an *undeclared* goal of the war. In the months prior to the military campaign, George H. W. Bush compared Saddam to Hitler, authorized bombing of his palaces, and appealed to the Iraqi people to get rid of

<sup>393</sup> George H. W. Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 489.

<sup>394</sup> James Baker III with Thomas DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War, and Peace, 1989-1992* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), p. 435. On this point, see also Powell's autobiography where he states: "Our practical intention was to leave Baghdad enough power to survive as a threat to an Iran that remained bitterly hostile to the United States," and that, in this sense, Operation Desert Storm fulfilled "the highest purpose of military action: the use of force in the cause of order." Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 531 and p. 528.

<sup>395</sup> George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 489.

<sup>396</sup> Colin L. Powell, *My American Journey*, p. 490.



him. “In the privacy of the White House, he [the President] referred to Saddam not only as another Hitler but also as ‘that lying son of a bitch.’”<sup>397</sup> What some (including Colin Powell) called “the demonizing of Saddam” led the public to expect that his regime would be ended. That is why the fact that he was not removed from power was perceived by many as a failure.<sup>398</sup> As Margaret Thatcher sadly observed, “There is the aggressor, Saddam Hussein, still in power. There is the president of the United States, no longer in power. There is the prime minister of Britain, who did quite a lot to get things there, no longer in power. I wonder who won?”<sup>399</sup>

While ending the war when it was ended and not marching to Baghdad could still have been the right decision, the situation could have been better had civilian leaders been more assertive and had they tried to keep political objectives and military means more closely aligned. Had they not abdicated control at this critical time, most probably they would have achieved an end state much closer to what they intended. What more specifically could political leaders have done under the circumstances? Rather than leaving almost everything to Powell and Schwarzkopf, they could have participated more actively in the decision-making process by suggesting, searching for and analyzing some additional options for action. For example, one of the possibilities could have been to stop the campaign but *not* declare a cease-fire. In other words, coalition forces could have discontinued their offensive without announcing this publicly. This option had the

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<sup>397</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 194, 300.

<sup>398</sup> Ironically, after the war ended, the Bush administration declared that economic sanctions should not be lifted until the Iraqi leader is out of power. In this way, the US made the removal of Saddam an explicit policy objective, but only after the war was over and the military, which could have achieved this objective, had been withdrawn.

<sup>399</sup> FRONTLINE Show #1408T (Air Date: February 4, 1997), transcript available at: [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/script\\_b.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/script_b.html)

advantage of keeping the pressure on Saddam Hussein. By not openly declaring termination of military action, the US and its allies might have encouraged Saddam's internal enemies to overthrow his regime. One of the few key advisors at the time who expressed reservations about the decision to end the ground war after 100 hours, Paul Wolfowitz, then undersecretary of defense, argued that if the war end was announced at an early time, the Iraqi opposition could lose incentives to overthrow Saddam because it would think the world had apparently reconciled to living with him in power. "By telling the world that the ground war was over, the allies would in effect issue a reprieve to the Iraqi leader."<sup>400</sup> While discussed briefly, none of Wolfowitz's objections and/or suggestions was given much thought. Another option could have been to stop only the air attacks, but let the Army (with close support from the air) complete Gen. Franks's "double envelopment" or encircle Basrah to block the escape of Iraqi troops.<sup>401</sup> Such a scenario was not discussed either.

Another, even more serious, mistake which could have been avoided had civilians not abdicated control at the time, came when Schwarzkopf announced during his briefing that the US and its allies had no plans to capture Baghdad.<sup>402</sup> While this was true, Schwarzkopf did not have to reveal it to the Iraqis. At that moment, Saddam did not know what the US and coalition really planned to do, but he feared a possible march to Baghdad. Had Schwarzkopf not volunteered this crucial information, the US would have had much more leverage in the situation. When Saddam was publicly told that a coalition attack on

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<sup>400</sup> Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 424.

<sup>401</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 476.

<sup>402</sup> General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, CENTCOM News Briefing, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 27 February 1991. See also Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 418, 477.

Baghdad was not going to happen, he probably felt so much freer to turn his whole attention and resources to his domestic enemies. In this way, unwittingly, the general made the future work of US diplomats more difficult and this was another consequence of the lack of more assertive civilian involvement in the process. Had civilian leaders communicated better to the military what they were hoping for at the time (namely, that uncertainty about U.S. actions would keep the pressure on Saddam and that an implicit threat to go to Baghdad could still encourage a coup or a rebellion against the Iraqi dictator), Schwarzkopf would have been more careful. Political leaders, however, did not make sufficient effort to prepare the military commander accordingly. The ongoing intense civil-military dialogue that served the decision-making process so well during the planning and implantation stages of the campaign seems to have failed at this critical moment.

Lack of political direction bordering on civilian abdication was observed in the preparation for and the conduct of the armistice talks at Safwan as well<sup>403</sup>. Importantly, again, it was *not* a powerful Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a determined CINC who wanted to dominate decision-making and usurped control in this case. It was a lack of strategic direction by the civilian leadership.<sup>404</sup> While many civilian leaders were unhappy with the way the generals were handling the cease-fire arrangements, they did not intervene to give additional instructions to the military.<sup>405</sup> Thus, by inaction, they actually let political and diplomatic concerns be subordinated to military ones.

<sup>403</sup> The talks were conducted on March 3, 1991.

<sup>404</sup> Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, p. 196.

<sup>405</sup> See, for example, Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 444.

Examination of the events at the time shows that regarding the armistice negotiations Gen. Schwarzkopf received very little political guidance if at all.<sup>406</sup> He was given only two days to prepare for the cease-fire talks with the Iraqis and had to write his own “terms of reference.” Schwarzkopf related how surprised he was by a conversation he had with Colin Powell in which the Chairman informed him about this. “It had never crossed my mind that I’d have to sit down opposite Iraqi generals – and we spent a couple of minutes discussing how this might be arranged.”<sup>407</sup> When Schwarzkopf wrote the “terms of reference” and sent them to Washington for feedback, there was almost none. The State Department only changed the word “negotiate” to “discuss” in all places in the text.<sup>408</sup>

Understandably for a military commander, Schwarzkopf thought of the coming encounter with the Iraqis as simply military-to-military talks.<sup>409</sup> In this situation, the civilian leadership, understanding well the political importance of these talks and knowing that at this level almost nothing is “purely” military, should have ensured that the US military delegation was instructed properly. Left on his own, it was not surprising that Schwarzkopf planned almost exclusively military and technical issues. For example, the CINC wanted to establish a demarcation line to separate clearly the coalition from Iraqi troops; he sought an immediate release of prisoners of war and information on people

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<sup>406</sup> Bush and Scowcroft do not deny this. For example, regarding Schwarzkopf’s agreement to allow the Iraqis to continue the use of helicopters, they say, “Schwarzkopf was without instructions on the matter.” In: George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 490.

<sup>407</sup> H. Norman Schwarzkopf with Peter Petre, *It Doesn’t Take a Hero: Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, the Autobiography* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), p. 470.

<sup>408</sup> For more details, see H. Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn’t Take a Hero*, pp. 479-80; Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, pp. 196-97.

<sup>409</sup> The UN was expected to conduct the final negotiations.

missing in action; another clause required that the Iraqis identify minefields and WMD storage sites in the Kuwait theater of operations. It is natural for the military to be concerned first of all and primarily with military matters. This is where the civilian leadership needs to step in and make sure that political objectives have been served as well. Lack of political guidance in the armistice talks not only led to mistakes and missed opportunities but was ultimately detrimental to achieving US political objectives.<sup>410</sup> For example, a crucial moment during the Sawfan talks between the US and the Iraqi representatives came when the Iraqis asked Schwarzkopf whether they would be allowed to use helicopters. (They said that they needed the helicopters for transportation and logistical purposes because the highways and the bridges were badly damaged by the bombings.)<sup>411</sup> Schwarzkopf accepted Iraq's request (even after its representatives clarified they were talking about *armed* helicopters), provided they made sure not to fly over U.S. positions and did not in anyway threaten American troops.<sup>412</sup> From his strictly military point of view, this decision made sense – Schwarzkopf was concerned mainly with the safety of US and allied troops. However, due to *insufficient* civilian guidance, the CENTCOM commander lacked the broader political perspective, namely how his concession to the Iraqis could affect the internal situation in Iraq and, hence, U.S. political goals. Schwarzkopf did not take into account the fighting between Saddam's regime on the one hand, and the Shiites and the Kurds, on the other. In this broader political context, his decision to allow the armed helicopters turned out to be a tragic mistake -- later on,

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<sup>410</sup> Paul Wolfowitz himself thought Safwan was a "lost opportunity." In: Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 448.

<sup>411</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 9.

<sup>412</sup> See, for example, Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 447.

Saddam used these helicopters in his brutal suppression of the Shiite uprising and, thus, managed to keep himself in power. While in the case of the helicopters, Schwarzkopf erred out of generosity and his desire not to humiliate the defeated Iraqis, it was the responsibility of civilian leaders to make sure that the general would stick to his brief and, more importantly, of course, that this brief was scripted with the big political picture in mind.

Another serious error during the armistice talks came with Schwarzkopf's readiness to promise a *rapid* American withdrawal from the Iraqi territory seized at the time. The CENTCOM commander declared: "There will not be one single coalition force member in the recognized borders of Iraq, as soon as, as rapidly as we can get them out."<sup>413</sup> This statement is remarkable: in history almost never have the victors made such firm and generous promises to the vanquished.<sup>414</sup> It is obvious that the political leadership had not taken the time to confer with the military and discuss some of the political implications of the enormously favorable US military position at that time. The US had two Army corps deep in Southern Iraq, the coalition had total control of the skies, and the Iraqi army had just suffered a monumental defeat – such a situation was not to be repeated and could have been taken advantage of. The U.S. could have used its de facto occupation of parts of Iraq to press for further concessions. Instead, political and military leaders let that opportunity pass.

How can one explain the civilian abdication at the end of the war? Civilian leaders believed in the "lessons" of Vietnam, namely that civilian "micromanagement" had led to

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<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>414</sup> At the time, some argued that the US should at least summon high-ranking Iraqi representatives to CENTCOM's headquarters and tell them that a cease-fire would require Saddam Hussein acknowledging defeat.

the tragedy. The President was disinclined to reject Powell's recommendation to stop the fighting because he did not want to be seen as intruding in the military's domain. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, Gen. Powell was very politically sophisticated and civilian officials trusted his judgment and thought that there was less need for control. Also, political leaders regarded highly the technical competence of the military and their professionalism. Another reason for abdication of control was the fact that civilian leaders themselves had not entirely thought through the end state of the war and what a military victory should achieve in political terms.<sup>415</sup> As it has often happened, they had planned for the conduct of the war much more than for its aftermath. They did not have an end war strategy beyond getting Saddam out of Kuwait.<sup>416</sup> While most of the top decision-makers believed that after such a devastating defeat on the battlefield Saddam would be toppled from within, they did not have a plan to accomplish his overthrow. "They [the civilians] had come to accept, by default, the military's definition of victory as a battlefield outcome, in which the relationship with political objectives was defined as narrowly as possible."<sup>417</sup> Overall, in this case, civilian abdication in the final stages of the war resulted in a failure to keep the synchronization between political and military objectives. Left on their own, the military fell back on their instincts to end the war as fast as possible so the troops could be withdrawn. Powell's and Schwarzkopf's desire to withdraw quickly after the military victory and the way the conflict was ended left the US without much influence on developments in post-war Iraq. The argument here is not that the US should have gone on to overthrow Saddam; but, rather, that even without a march to Baghdad, the situation

<sup>415</sup> See, for example, Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 476.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 476-77.

<sup>417</sup> Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, p. 198.

could have been better had civilian leaders stood firmly in charge and had they taken more care in communicating and guiding the military in making the best out of the extremely favorable US military position on the ground. Had the Republican Guard in the KTO been destroyed, the aftermath of the war could have been significantly different – for example, part of the Iraqi regular Army (much of which was Shiite) could have switched sides and supported the Shiite uprising. It would have been more difficult for Saddam to remain in power were it not for the reconstituted Republican Guard. Also, ironically, the rush to end the war achieved precisely what the Powell doctrine admonished against and what the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff tried to avoid at any cost, namely, the tying up of US troops and resources in the region for more than a decade, and, ultimately, another war in 2003 to “finish the job.”

### **Conclusion**

The 1991 Gulf War case confirms the hypotheses of this dissertation regarding the impact of a combination of assertive civilian dominance and low levels of preference divergence on the effectiveness of the decision-making process. I find that alignment in civilian and military preferences combined with assertive control leads to a more thorough collection, sharing and analysis of information, more rigorous analysis of alternative policy options, and more effective coordination between statesmen and soldiers during the planning and conduct of war. Such conditions lead not only to a more open exchange of information between statesmen and soldiers but also to a more effective cooperation between them during the decision and implementation process. We find that when civilian and military leaders are in agreement on most of the key issues regarding the use of force, neither side has an incentive to withhold or manipulate information. In such cases, the political



leadership is likely to benefit from a more complete analysis and evaluation of the military aspects of the situation since military advisors would feel free to speak their mind. The military is also going to benefit from a more open and frank discussion of the political constraints as seen by the civilian leadership and this could increase their mutual understanding and trust, and facilitate the integration and political, diplomatic, and military considerations. Thus, in cases when preference divergence is *low* and civilians are dominant, the decision-making process will most likely be characterized by: a more effective information search and analysis; much less withholding or manipulation of information; a more complete analysis and evaluation of the costs and benefits of alternative strategies; a better interaction and coordination between top civilian and military officials; and, ultimately, a more successful match between political ends and military means.

Due mainly to the low level of preference divergence between statesmen and soldiers in this case, there was a free flow of information in both directions. The military felt free to discuss military issues candidly with its civilian leaders, who were also sharing openly their own political and diplomatic concerns. Different military and non-military options were presented and discussed at length. There is no evidence that either side was trying to conceal or manipulate information. Both civilian and military leaders tried to understand the constraints under which the other side was operating. Colin Powell, especially, as the go-between the top civilian leadership and commanders in the theater, showed a keen understanding of his civilian bosses' political concerns and tried to act accordingly. The mutual understanding and trust made for a positive decision-making climate. Such circumstances enhanced the effectiveness of the decision-making process because they allowed various alternative options to be considered more thoroughly.

In the lead up to Desert Storm, while the process of war planning did not always run smoothly, the low level of preference divergence between civilian and military leaders served well the assessment and re-assessment of initial war plans. The military strategy that resulted from a vigorous give and take between soldiers and civilians proved to be very successful in quickly defeating Iraq's military and liberating Kuwait. However, "civilian abdication" at the end of the war did not allow this military victory to be turned into a political triumph as well. The insufficient civilian involvement in the final stages of the war explains the failure to integrate military and political policies and, ultimately, the inability of the US to turn a big military victory into a political one as well.

Another important aspect of this chapter is that it debunks dominant interpretations of the policy-making and implementation in the 1991 Gulf War, according to which victory was achieved because of "wise" civilian leadership which provided all the force the military wanted and then let the generals fight the way they wanted. The main lesson of the 1991 Gulf War is *not* that it was successful because civilian leaders followed Huntington's theory and stayed away from military matters. This case study shows first that civilian leaders were much more assertive and interventionist than they were given credit for<sup>418</sup>, and, second, that actually when they did abdicate control at the end of the war, this did not lead to victory, but to the failure to turn a military victory into a political triumph. This chapter showed how the presence of a civilian leadership that is highly interested in matters of national security, knowledgeable, and assertively involved in military matters increases the effectiveness of the decision-making process.

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<sup>418</sup> For a similar argument see Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*. Peter Feaver also finds conventional wisdom about the assertiveness of civilian leaders in the 1991 Gulf War "debatable." See Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants*, p. 235.

Furthermore, as this case study shows, assertive civilian control does not always result in civilian meddling or micromanagement of the military. In combination with *low* divergence between civilian and military preferences, assertive political leadership improves the effectiveness of the decision-making process. At the same time, one must emphasize that the benefits of assertive civilian control are not very likely to be realized when there is *high* civil-military preference divergence. (If the level of civil-military preference divergence is high, assertive civilian leadership could slide into micromanagement – i.e., civilian leaders would likely feel the need to intervene more often and to monitor more closely in order to ensure that civilian wishes will be faithfully executed by a military which strongly opposes them.)

The evidence presented here also challenges the conventional wisdom that the civil-military relationship under Bush and Cheney was friendly and calm most of the time due to the fact that civilians did not “meddle.” The traditional argument is that because the politicians gave the military a free hand in the planning and conduct of the war, relations between soldiers and statesmen were friendly and cordial, and should serve as a model for future civilian leaders, especially those who are tempted to exercise assertive control. However, as I show, the relative calm in civil-military relations at the time is to be explained not with the alleged “hands-off” approach of civilian leaders, but with the remarkable convergence between the preferences of civilian and military officials on most of the key issues related to the use of force in general, and the 1991 war against Saddam, in particular. The constant, at times heated and contentious, dialogue between civilian and military leaders during the planning and execution of Desert Shield and Desert Storm worked relatively smoothly throughout due to the fact that senior decision-makers and their uniformed advisors espoused similar ideas about when and how the US should use

military force in the service of its foreign policy objectives, and about the proper relationship between those who make decisions on the use of force and those who implement them.

Unlike in the case of the 2003 Iraq war, when the military's wish for more troops was time and time again contradicted by Secretary Rumsfeld, in 1991 the civilian leadership was in agreement with its generals about the need to use massive force and approved the troops levels requested by generals Schwarzkopf and Powell. The cordial and trustful relationship between civilian and military leaders, which resulted from shared views and beliefs on major national security issues, allowed each side to better understand the position of the other and to feel free to express its own. Besides the lack of *severe* disagreements, another factor that contributed to a positive decision climate, was the fact that civilian decision-makers genuinely consulted their military advisors and made the military feel that their opinions were respected and valued, even in cases when the politicians would choose not to follow military advice at the end. Top civilian and military officials managed to establish a close and mutually respectful working relationship, but it did *not* come about as a result of civilian non-interference in military matters. Both President Bush and Secretary Cheney were actively involved in military decision-making. The relative calm in the relationship came as a result of several factors, among the most important of which was the high level of agreement between civilian and military officials about the use of force and its role in international politics.

This chapter confirms the value of studying elite ideas and beliefs because of their powerful impact on decision-making (as drivers as opposed to justifications). Take Gen. Powell's very influential recommendation to end the ground campaign at the time it was ended, for example. Why did the Chairman argued so passionately about the timing of the

war's end? His strong views on the "proper" way to apply military force shaped his recommendation. Use overwhelming force to prevail quickly and then withdraw immediately to save lives: these were the dictates of the Powell doctrine itself. This chapter also shows the significance of analyzing the level of divergence between civilian and military preferences and its impact on decision-making. If we study the preferences of top civilian and military officials on the use of force (together with their relative power/control over the decision-making process), we could predict whether the leadership of a country would be more likely to choose military force as a tool of statecraft. Furthermore, if in addition we study the *level of divergence* between civilian and military preferences, we could anticipate how effectively political and military leaders would share and analyze information and how effectively they are likely to interact and coordinate with each other in the process of strategy-making; in other words, we could anticipate how well a state would be able to match its military means and political objectives.

Furthermore, the 1991 Gulf War case illustrates another interesting aspect of the way different levels of civil-military preference divergence affect the quality of the decision-making process. While in general most of the evidence from the case studies presented in this study supports my hypothesis that *low* levels of preference divergence are conducive to effective decision-making, too much agreement among top advisors is not necessarily good either. Although intense disagreements between civilian and military preferences hinder decision-making, a complete preference overlap is dangerous as well since decision bodies that are very homogenous could fall prey to "groupthink." Creative thinking about various policy options and/or the choice of innovative solutions would not be stimulated if there is not at least a modicum of disagreement. In the final stages of offensive operations, Powell's arguments about the quick ending of the war, for example,

would have been more likely to be challenged by civilian leaders were they not sharing the exact same precepts which Powell espoused. In the words of William Safire, “as a result of the Bush emphasis on calm seas, internal order and at least the appearance of unanimity, we miss the Rooseveltian turbulence that often leads to original thinking.”<sup>419</sup>

As for lessons for decision-making and the conduct of war, these findings do not contain much good news. My conclusions, largely in support of assertive civilian leadership, would not be liked by most in the military who are socialized in the Huntingtonian norms of “objective” civilian control and desire military autonomy, above all. Calls for vigorous and continuing civil-military dialogue during the planning and conduct of a war are not likely to be embraced by the military, especially after Rumsfeld’s second tenure at the helm of the Pentagon. While this model of civilian control is more attuned to the needs of political leaders, not many civilians are going to be very enthusiastic about it either. As shown elsewhere, in order to be successful, besides similarity in civilian and military preferences, such assertive leadership would impose heavier intellectual and moral responsibilities on political officials as well. In order to be able to exercise assertive control, civilian leaders would need the courage and integrity to listen to bad news without shooting the messenger. They would have to possess the breadth and depth of knowledge about national security and military affairs, which very few political leaders at the top have possessed and not many are interested in acquiring. In order to be able to effectively immerse themselves at the operational level of war, civilian leaders should master their military briefs as thoroughly as their civilian ones, as Eliot Cohen advises. They would also need the experience and expertise, the confidence, and

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<sup>419</sup> William Safire, “Bush’s Cabinet: Who’s Up, Who’s Down,” *The New York Times*, March 25, 1990, p. 30.

the energy to be highly pro-active and engage their military leaders in exhausting and contentious battles over strategy along the way, and also the wisdom to know when to step back and leave the military professionals to do their job.

## Chapter 6

## Military Dominance and Diverging Civilian and Military Preferences in the First Clinton Administration and Their Effects on the Decision-Making Process

This chapter examines the very complicated civil-military relations under President Bill Clinton and how they affected decision-making on the use of force. As I have argued in previous chapters, the quality of decision-making is shaped by the particular configuration of top civilian and military decision-makers' relative power and preference divergence, as shown in Table 1 (p. 2). This chapter examines how a pattern of civil-military relations characterized by high civil-military preference divergence and military dominance affects decision-making on the use of force (Quadrant 2 in Table 1). The case study on Bosnia illustrates an important part of the argument, namely, that the influence of civilian and military officials over decision-making varies not only across regimes but within democracies, as well as within one country over time. This chapter analyzes several possible ways through which temporary *military dominance* over decision-making in democracies may obtain and how such a favorable for the military balance of power affects the decision-making process.<sup>420</sup> It also examines how high civil-military preference divergence and increased military influence, which in practice meant dominance of the Powell Doctrine, affected U.S. decisions to intervene in humanitarian crises and Military Operations Other Than War.

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<sup>420</sup> As explained in the Introduction, "military dominance" should not be equated with military rule or a military regime that has come to power as a result of a military coup.



Table 1

The Effectiveness of the Process of Decision-Making as a Function of the Civil-Military Balance of Power and the Level of Civil-Military Preference Divergence

Level of Civil-Military Preference Divergence	Civil-Military Balance of Power	
	Civilian Dominance	Military Dominance
Hi	Quadrant 1 Ineffective Process	Quadrant 2 Worst
Low	Quadrant 3 Effective Process	Quadrant 4 Mixed

The debate on the crucial impact of civil-military relations on US foreign policy was re-invigorated in the mid 1990s, when the Clinton administration seemed to have a lot of trouble controlling the military. An air-force general at the time even referred to President Clinton as “our pot-smoking, gay-loving, draft-dodging, womanizing commander in chief.”<sup>421</sup> But this debate largely missed the point. After all, even those

<sup>421</sup> Major General Harold Campbell, speech at an Air Force banquet. The general was forced to retire as a result.

who were afraid that the military was getting out of control admitted that a military coup is not in the cards. In the very same article, titled “Out of Control,” Richard Kohn, the leader of the “crisis” school, stated that “a coup has never been a serious threat, and the chances today, even of an attempt, are virtually nil.” Kohn admitted that “the real problem of civilian control is the relative weight or influence of the military in the decisions the government makes, not only in military policy and war, but in foreign, defense, economic, and social policy (for much military policy can have vast implication for various aspects of national life).” Obviously then, the principle of civilian control itself was not at stake. Michael Desch, who argued that there had been a weakening of civilian control in the post-Cold War period, also emphasized that “there is little danger that the U.S. military will launch a coup d’etat and seize power. Nor is it likely to become openly insubordinate and disobey direct orders.”<sup>422</sup> What was at stake, but was at times lost in the debate, was 1) whether military influence in decision-making has really increased and, if so, what were the main reasons for increased military influence, and 2) how such increased military influence affects U.S. decisions on the use or the threat of military force.

As explained in more detail in the Theory Chapter, in order to better account for states (like the US) whose military are socialized in the norms of civilian control, this study uses a model, which analyzes civil-military relations as a strategic interaction. In this approach, the civilians and the military are viewed as political (and not only bureaucratic) actors who make and implement policy decisions and, at the same time, pursue their own interests and political and institutional well-being. Under some

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<sup>422</sup> Michael Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 30.

circumstances, this may lead them to attempt to skew the decision-making process in a way that favors their preferences. For example, in its attempts to take care of its own organizational interests, the military may at times, have an incentive to thwart the goals of its civilian masters, especially in cases when civilian and military preferences diverge highly.

### **Hypotheses**

Similar to the analysis of the other case studies, in order to show how the specific pattern of civil-military relations characteristic for the first Clinton administration (i.e., a combination of *military dominance* and *high* civil-military preference divergence) affected the decision-making process, I will focus on the following key aspects of the decision process: 1) information gathering, analysis and evaluation of alternative options; 2) interaction and coordination between civilian and military officials; and 3) choosing a policy from existing alternatives. An effective decision-making process is characterized by a free flow and exchange of information between civilian and military officials in order to facilitate the analysis and evaluation of alternative options, as well as a smooth interaction and coordination between them in order to achieve integration of political and military considerations. In what follows, I discuss how my independent variables – civil-military balance of power and level of civil-military preference divergence – affect the information sharing and the coordination and cooperation between top civilian and military officials.

More specifically, this chapter tests the following hypotheses expected to hold for cases in Quadrant 2 – cases characterized by military dominance and a high level of civil-military preference divergence:

1) When their preferences diverge highly, the civilians and the military would be less likely to share information with each other. They may be tempted to withhold or distort information in order to favor their preferred course of action. This will lead to skewed discussions and the advantages and disadvantages of alternative strategies may not be debated fully.

2) When their preferences diverge highly, civilian and military leaders would not have incentives to cooperate and coordinate with each other. This could lead to an inability to integrate the political/diplomatic and military aspects of a policy and to match military means to political goals.

3) When preference divergence is high and the balance of power favors the military, military “shirking” is likely to increase. Shirking (in the form of foot-dragging, leaks, and other attempts to stall) would decrease the effectiveness of the decision and implementation process.

4) When the balance of power favors the military, military preferences would often prevail in the final decision.

In the following 2 sections on the civil-military balance of power and the level of preference divergence I explain why I have situated this case in quadrant 2 of Table 1 and after that, in the section on decision-making, I proceed to test the above hypotheses.

### **The Civil-Military Balance of Power in the First Clinton Administration**

Although power is a continuous variable, for the purposes of this study I discuss only 2 of its possible values: civilian dominance and military dominance.<sup>423</sup> Even in stable democracies such as the United States, which have established robust norms of civilian control and a firm day-to-day hold over their militaries, the level of military influence over decision-making varies significantly.<sup>424</sup> As analyses of defense and foreign-policy decision-making find and as previous chapters of this study show, temporary military dominance over decision-making in democracies may obtain in several ways. One such path to military dominance – civilian “abdication” of control – was discussed in the chapter on the 1991 Gulf War. Other ways for the military to become dominant include circumstances when, for example, the civilians are divided while the military is united, when the statesmen lack experience and understanding of national security matters and/or military officials are more politically and bureaucratically savvy than their civilian counter-parts, etc.<sup>425</sup> The first several years of the Clinton Presidency, as shown below, are a good illustration of such dynamics. Before analyzing the civil-military balance of power under President Clinton, we should note that it is important to find “measures” of power that are independent from the outcome of political-military debates during the decision-making process. We should *not* conclude, for example, that the balance of power in some case favored the civilians because at the end civilian preferences carried the day. That is why in order to determine the balance of

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<sup>423</sup> The introductory chapter discusses in detail how I define and operationalize the dependent and the independent variables of my theoretical framework, including the balance of power.

<sup>424</sup> Here influence is used interchangeably with power although conceptually this is not necessarily correct.

<sup>425</sup> See, for example, Christopher Gibson, *Countervailing Forces: Enhancing Civilian Control and National Security through Madisonian Concepts*, Ph. D. Dissertation (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Michael Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Richard Kohn, “The Erosion of Civilian Control of the Military in the United States Today,” *Naval War College Review* (Summer 2002).

power independently of whose preferences dominate I use the following indicators of influence:

- the legal (formal) powers of civilian and military officials (based on constitutional arrangements and other relevant legislation, such as the Goldwater-Nichols Act in the case of the US);

- the level of unity of civilian and military elites;

- the availability (or lack) of public support for political and military leaders and specific policies under consideration;

- the availability and strength of allies – e.g., Congress, the media, other influential political actors;

- the educational and professional background of top civilian and military leaders and their expertise in foreign and defense affairs, in particular, and their political and bureaucratic skills;

- related to the above, the ability of civilian leadership to exercise assertive civilian control;

None of these indicators is without problems and there is no agreed upon method of measuring power. Since evaluating these indicators and “calculating” the civil-military balance of power remains ultimately a subjective judgment, for each case study I also provide the opinions and evaluations of other scholars – experts on civil-military relations, who have made their independent evaluations of civilian and military influence on decision-making. As imprecise as they may be, the above indicators help us determine the civil-military balance of power in each case well enough as to be able to situate the cases in Table 2 accordingly and, from there, to derive hypotheses for the effectiveness of the decision-making process as discussed later in this chapter.

As shown in other chapters as well, one of the very important ingredients of power is the education and (national security-related) experience of top political and military officials.<sup>426</sup> While in the previous Bush administration, most of the top civilian official possessed substantial political and military expertise and experience, this was not true for the Clinton incoming team. President Clinton himself had much less national security experience in comparison with his predecessors. He was the first president after FDR without military service. As a former Governor from Arkansas he had little, if any, national security experience as well. But even worse for his standing with the generals was the fact that he had avoided the draft during the Vietnam war and that he had said some three decades earlier that he “loathed” the military.<sup>427</sup> (What Clinton actually wrote in a letter to his ROTC commander at the time was: “I am writing too in the hope that my telling this one story will help you to understand more clearly how so many fine people have come to find themselves still loving their country but loathing the military, to which you and other good men have devoted years, lifetimes, of the best service you could give.”<sup>428</sup>) Clinton’s first Secretary of Defense, Les Aspin, did have extensive knowledge of national security issues, had served in the US Army, and also as Chair of the House Armed Services Committee, but his team at the Pentagon was much less prepared.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> Since this study is focused only on national security decision-making (and mainly on decisions on the use of force), what counts in this case is decision-makers’ experience related to foreign affairs and defense policy.

<sup>427</sup> See, for example, Richard Kohn, “The Erosion of Civilian Control of the Military in the United States Today,” *Naval War College Review* (Summer 2002).

<sup>428</sup> Bill Clinton, Letter to Col Eugene Holmes, Director of the ROTC Program at the University of Arkansas, December 3, 1969. The full text of the letter is available at:

<http://www.war-stories.com/clinton-poss-larry-1-1969.htm>

<sup>429</sup> Christopher Gibson, *Countervailing Forces: Enhancing Civilian Control and National Security through Madisonian Concepts*, Ph. D. Dissertation (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 225.

Transition periods (when a new party takes control of the White House) have often been a time of shifts in the civil-military balance of power. Christopher Gibson, among others, has shown that the national security expertise in the Executive Branch declines when a new party assumes control in eight or more years.<sup>430</sup> Civilian leaders in the first Clinton administration, which came to power after 12 years of Republican control of the White House, had among the lowest professional preparations in national security. Gibson describes the Clinton team in the Defense Department by saying that “apart from the Secretaries of Defense (Aspin and Perry), civilian appointees mostly came to their key jobs without the quality and quantity of experience – training and exposure to defense politics – that their military counterparts had.”<sup>431</sup> Research on the educational and professional background of top military and civilian personnel at the DOD shows that ever since the 1980s, the balance has started to change in favor of the military – i.e., officers on the Joint Staff, for example, have had much more political-military experience than their civilian counter-parts. (Political and military experience and expertise is measured by the number and type of relevant assignments an individual has held, such as appointments with the OSD staff, or with the Executive and Legislative branches of government, or think-tanks and universities.)<sup>432</sup> As Gibson finds, “civilian

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<sup>430</sup> Christopher Gibson, *Countervailing Forces*, p. 111. See also Christopher Gibson and Don Snider, “Explaining Post Cold War Civil-Military Relations: A New Institutional Approach,” John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, 1997.

<sup>431</sup> Christopher Gibson, *Countervailing Forces*, p. 143.

<sup>432</sup> Again, this is a controversial way of measuring what type of education and experience would make an actor more or less powerful in the political and bureaucratic battles in Washington. The reason I use such “measures” for the civil-military balance of power is because we do not have anything more precise at this time.



appointees in the 1990s came to the job with significantly less prior military experience. Even more general defense-related experience is down...<sup>433</sup>

Because of the change in political parties in the White House, the new President did not keep any of the top-level civilians at the Pentagon, who could have contributed national security expertise and, also, much needed experience in dealing with the military. The incoming political appointees at DOD lacked the professional experience of the previous administration and this showed in their interaction with their military counterparts, and also during debates on US post-Cold War policy and strategy. Also, as Gibson and Snider found, these difficulties were exacerbated by Clinton's slowness to fill top civilian positions at the DOD.<sup>434</sup> The majority of the top civilian posts in the Department of Defense were left unfilled months after the new administration took office. In the words of an unhappy military official, "There's a secretary who's getting a pacemaker and a deputy. That's it. The military has some rude things to learn – namely, that this guy [Clinton] doesn't care about them."<sup>435</sup> According to reports, the military was not pleased with the Aspin team; it felt top civilian decision-makers were lacking experience and were not providing a firm direction. "The sense among many [military leaders] is that the Aspin team is not quite sure of where it's going or what it's doing." "The mood in the Pentagon ranges from disappointment to deep dismay," Alcalá [a

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<sup>433</sup> Christopher Gibson, *Countervailing Forces*, p. 136.

<sup>434</sup> Christopher Gibson and Don Snider, "Explaining Post Cold War Civil-Military Relations: A New Institutional Approach," John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Project on U.S. Post-Cold War Civil-Military Relations, Working Paper No. 8, p. 45.

<sup>435</sup> "Feeling Snubbed by the Administration, Military Views Clinton with Growing Distrust," *Baltimore Sun*, March 21, 1993.

retired Army colonel] says. 'People feel there are some significant gaps in experience' in the civilian policy-making team."<sup>436</sup>

Not only was the civilian side weakened by its lack of national security expertise, but, at the same time, civilian officials were facing military leaders who were very well versed in bureaucratic politics. The start of the Clinton presidency was especially difficult in terms of civil-military relations because the less experienced civilian leaders had to contend with no other than Gen. Colin Powell, the most assertive Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the best political and bureaucratic operator the military has ever had at the top. As a result of the 1991 Gulf War, the general had a reputation of a national hero. As Richard Kohn put it, "In Colin Powell, the military had its most formidable leader since the Second World War. And in Bill Clinton, the administration had a president with less experience, interest, understanding, and credibility in military affairs than any since the 1920s."<sup>437</sup> In addition to the newly acquired powers from the Goldwater-Nichols Act<sup>438</sup>, Powell's professional expertise and experience, combined with his personal charm, established him as the most influential Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. As Andrew Bacevich commented on the civil-military balance of power at the time:

By 1993, the JCS chairman had established himself as perhaps the dominant figure in Washington ... The ultimate testimony to Powell's influence lies in the "Powell

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<sup>436</sup> Richard Serrano, Art Pine, "Policy on Somalia, Haiti Angers Pentagon," *Los Angeles Times*, October 19, 1993, p. 10.

<sup>437</sup> Richard Kohn, "Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations," *The National Interest*, No. 35 (Spring 1994), p. 3.

<sup>438</sup> For an argument how this law has empowered the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, see, for example, Edward Luttwak, "Washington's Biggest Scandal," *Commentary*, Vol. 97, No. 5, pp. 29-33.

Doctrine" -- the general himself defining the criteria for when and how the United States would fight its wars.<sup>439</sup>

“Powell’s greatest strength – his resume – was Clinton’s greatest weakness; both of them knew it, and they knew that the Congress and the public at large knew it as well.”<sup>440</sup> Powell was not only a superb military leader, but he was also a masterful bureaucrat who had honed his influence not only inside the White House, but on Capitol Hill as well.<sup>441</sup> Powell and other senior officers at the time understood well the political scene in Washington and knew how to influence it.<sup>442</sup> In the words of Richard Kohn: “it was under Colin Powell's tenure that civilian control eroded most since the rise of the military establishment in the 1940s and 1950s.”<sup>443</sup>

The crucial importance of the *informal* powers of the actors is most eloquently expressed in George Stephanopoulos’ portrayals of one of the first meetings between Clinton and the Joint Chiefs. “While Clinton was their host and boss, he didn’t hold the balance of power in the room. Yes, he was commander in chief, but Clinton’s formal powers were bound by the fact that he was a new president, elected with only 43 percent

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<sup>439</sup> Andrew J. Bacevich, “Joint Failure,” *The Boston Globe*, June 17, 2007. See also Charles Stevenson, “The Evolving Clinton Doctrine on the Use of Force,” *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Summer 1996), especially pp. 515-16.

<sup>440</sup> David Halberstam, *War in a Times of Peace*, p. 212.

<sup>441</sup> Further details on Colin Powell's career can be found in Howard Means, *Colin Powell: Soldier/Statesman, Statesman/Soldier* (New York: Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1992), pp. 163-179; David Roth, *Sacred Honor: A Biography of Colin Powell* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993); Kurt Campbell, “All Rise for Chairman Powell,” *The National Interest* (Spring 1991); Steven B. Roberts with Bruce B. Auster, “Colin Powell Superstar: From the Pentagon to the White House?,” *U.S. News & World Report*, Sept. 20, 1993, p. 51.

<sup>442</sup> Christopher Gibson, *Countervailing Forces*, p. 222.

<sup>443</sup> Richard Kohn, “Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations,” *The National Interest*, No. 35 (Spring 1994).

of the vote, who had never served in the military and stood accused of dodging the draft.”<sup>444</sup>

Informal power in the civil-military relationship is also a function of the extent to which top civilian policy-makers, and especially the president, commit their political capital and day to day attention to foreign and defense policy issues. “The more time [the president] spends personally on an issue, the more the administration’s position can prevail over intransigent bureaucratic actors, including the military ones.”<sup>445</sup> Unlike President George H. W. Bush who was tremendously interested and involved in foreign policy, President Clinton lacked this passion and was, at least initially, disengaged from foreign and defense policy issues. “He seemed not very interested in foreign policy [and] uncomfortable talking about it. Unlike every President since Truman, Clinton had no regularly scheduled meetings with his foreign policy team.”<sup>446</sup> In him, the military saw a president who was much more interested in domestic affairs. He had a very ambitious domestic agenda and, as he himself had explained, wanted “to focus like a laser beam on the economy.”<sup>447</sup> When civilian leaders are relatively disinterested in national security policy, the military perceives a less firm civilian control and knows that civilians are not likely to monitor very closely. “The military felt that Clinton focused a disproportionate amount of his attention on domestic policy.”<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> George Stephanopoulos, *All Too Human* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1999), p. 123.

<sup>445</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 210.

<sup>446</sup> Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge*, p. 144. See also William Hyland, *Clinton’s World*, p. 20. See also Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 333.

<sup>447</sup> William J. Clinton, *Mandate for Change*.

<sup>448</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 333.

As my theoretical framework (based on a principal-agent model) would expect in such cases, this perception (or the reality) of a lack of interest on the part of the civilian principal could lead to military “shirking” in cases when the principal’s and the agent’s preferences and goals diverge. This is often the case because the military would believe that shirking either would not be detected or, if detected, would remain unpunished by a principal pre-occupied with domestic and other matters. In the words of Peter Feaver, “one of the most significant changes from the Bush administration to the Clinton administration was the dramatically lower profile given national security issues by President Clinton. ... The diminution of the President’s role in this area inevitably weakened the hand of the civilians against the military and, by extension, contributed to a lower expectation of punishment, especially in Clinton’s first term.”<sup>449</sup>

Contributing to the problems caused by Clinton’s lack of leadership was the absence of regular NSC meetings with the President’s participation. “Clinton’s absence from the vast majority of NSC meetings dealing with issues such as Bosnia and Kosovo was inexcusable.”<sup>450</sup> Although at times civilian leaders would need to focus on domestic issues, they, and especially the president, cannot allow to be seen as “uninterested” in national security and foreign policy matters without this having a strong negative impact on their influence over the decision-making process. “The military wants to know someone is in charge, and it wants clear and concise orders, even if it does not approve of them.”<sup>451</sup>

<sup>449</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants*, p. 210.

<sup>450</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 374, 375.

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 374.

Another factor that naturally contributes to strengthening the position of the military and tilts the balance of power in its favor is a division between the civilian principals (in the case of the United States – divisions between the President and Congress, or divisions *within* the White House).<sup>452</sup> In this case, clear divisions existed between the Executive Branch and the Legislature on key foreign and military policy issues. For example, Congressman Dellums, who became Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee in 1993 (after Les Aspin left Congress to become Secretary of Defense), was strongly in support of Clinton’s campaign promise regarding gays in the military. At the same time, Senator Sam Nunn, the then very influential Chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, was openly opposed.<sup>453</sup> After the new administration took office, Clinton’s plan to lift the ban on homosexuals ran into strong opposition on the Hill. Senators Byrd and Nunn felt especially strongly about that issue. As George Stephanopoulos recalled, Senator Nunn held the Family and Medical Leave Act hostage to the ban.<sup>454</sup> The opposition in the House of Representatives was perhaps even stronger. With a large majority, the House passed a resolution against Clinton’s proposal.<sup>455</sup>

Likewise, increased military influence on decision-making resulted from that fact that top civilian leaders in the White House did not always have the support of Congressional civilians on key foreign policy issues either. There were some significant

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<sup>452</sup> Deborah Avant, “Are the Reluctant Warriors Out of Control? Why the US Military is Adverse to Responding to Post-Cold War Low-Level Threats,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1996/97), pp. 51-90; Deborah Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons from Peripheral Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

<sup>453</sup> See, for example, Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge*, pp. 42-48, 125-26, 248-51; Margaret Carlson, “Then There Wad Nunn,” *Time*, July 26, 1993.

<sup>454</sup> George Stephanopoulos, *All Too Human*, p. 126.

<sup>455</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), p. 485.

differences in civilian preferences on foreign policy in the Executive and in Congress and, at times, influential Congressional members were in alliance with the military against the administration.<sup>456</sup> For example, not everybody in Congress liked Clinton's foreign policy strategy of "enlargement and engagement." The activist role for the US in foreign policy favored by civilian officials in the Clinton administration was opposed by many Republicans and even by some conservative Democrats in Congress. They questioned the need for US sustained and active involvement and argued that after the end of the Cold War, it would be better to focus on domestic priorities and intervene abroad only when US *vital* interests are threatened.

On Bosnia, in particular, while many in Congress shared the moral outrage of the White House, key Congressional leaders, such as Representatives Dick Gephardt (D-MO) and Tom Foley (D-WA), were reluctant to intervene militarily, and were thus closer in their preferences to the caution espoused by military leaders. For example, in May of 1993, when top civilian decision-makers at the White House seemed to have decided to go with the "lift and strike" option, many in Congress on both sides of the aisle, were strongly opposed, as was the military.<sup>457</sup> As the principal-agent theory predicts, it is easier for the military to prevail in debates on foreign policy and the use of force, when civilian principals are divided. When there are divisions among the principals, the agent could unite with those principals whose preferences reflect more closely its own preferences and thus increase its influence. Regarding Bosnia, in particular, Richard Holbrooke explains this well, noting that "If the military openly opposed the deployment, our [the diplomats' and other key civilian decision-makers] political difficulties would be

<sup>456</sup> Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), pp. 138-63.

<sup>457</sup> David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 225.

vastly increased.... We had to have their [the military's] backing to get congressional and public support for the mission, which meant *they had the upper hand in the debate over what their mission would be.*"<sup>458</sup>

Furthermore, the unfavorable balance of power for civilian leaders was also a result of their unwillingness and/or inability to exercise assertive control. As administration insiders attested, Clinton was "unwilling to exercise full authority over military commanders."<sup>459</sup> David Halberstam wrote that Clinton "was intimidated more by the military than by any other political force he dealt with. [Said] a former senior NSC official who studied [Clinton] closely, ... 'he was out-and-out afraid of them.'"<sup>460</sup> The case study on the 1991 Gulf War showed that assertive civilian control, without micromanagement, had a very positive impact on decision-making and implementation. Unlike in the previous Bush administration, military officials under Clinton saw that their new civilian bosses would not necessarily monitor closely and attentively and that, at times, defying the politicians' wishes would not cost them much. Clinton's failure to assert control was criticized by Lawrence Korb, former assistant secretary of defense, who said that the military had taken advantage of the president's lack of military service and had "shown him little respect. Clinton cannot spend the rest of his time in office fearful of alienating the Pentagon. He ought to tell his new defense secretary to get control of the Pentagon or else."<sup>461</sup>

<sup>458</sup> Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 219; emphasis added.

<sup>459</sup> Jane Perlez, "For 8 years, a Strained Relationship With the Military," *New York Times*, December 28, 2000, p. 17.

<sup>460</sup> David Halberstam, "Clinton and the Generals," *Vanity Fair*, September 1, 2001, p. 230. See also David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton, and the Generals* (New York: Scribner, 2001).

<sup>461</sup> Lawrence Korb, "Less No More: How the Pentagon Undid the Defense Secretary," *Washington Post*, December 19, 1993, p. C3.



This section showed that the civil-military balance of power in the first years of the Clinton administration favored the military. As a prominent analyst of civil-military relations argued, “under Colin Powell’s leadership the military, and especially the Joint Staff, had become so powerful – while at the same time the civilian sectors of the national security establishment, under a weak and vacillating president and a disorganized and disheveled Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, had become so weak – that the military was essentially dictating policy to its civilian masters.”<sup>462</sup> In the words of a senior civilian official at the Pentagon, the Joint Chiefs of Staff “exercise an incredible veto power... There is no interest on the civilian side of this building in challenging the Joint Staff on issues like Bosnia.”<sup>463</sup> More importantly, this balance of power, unfavorable to civilian leaders, was mainly of their own making as it was due primarily to the lower level of national security experience and expertise among top civilian officials in the Executive branch, as well as the divisions between civilian principals in the White House and Congress on key issues. The impact of this favorable to the military power configuration on the making and implementation of US policy is discussed in the section on decision-making later in the chapter.

### **High Civil-Military Preference Divergence under Clinton**

This case study confirms again the importance of studying elite civilian and military preferences (broadly defined here as ideas, beliefs, opinions, and interests) on national-security related questions. We see that variations in the scope and intensity of

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<sup>462</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants*, p. 184.

<sup>463</sup> Paul Quinn-Judge, “Doubts of Top Brass on the Use of Power Carry Great Weight,” *The Boston Globe*, April 20, 1994, p. 12. See also James Nathan, *Soldiers, Statecraft, and History: Coercive Diplomacy and International Order* (Westport, London: Praeger, 2002), p. 150.

preference divergence do affect the decision-making process. The higher the gap between civilian and military leaders, the more both sides would be tempted to manipulate the decision-making process in order to advance their own preferences and the various distortions of the process decrease its effectiveness. The intuition behind this claim is that how far apart civilian and military preferences are, shapes the incentives of civilian and military officials to share or not their private information with each other, to discuss openly alternative courses of actions, and to cooperate and coordinate during the decision and implementation process. Decision-makers seek and interpret information and advice in very different ways depending on the *source*, which provides them (and not only on the *content* of advice). Political leaders are more likely to discount advice (or not seek it at all) from advisors with whom they disagree strongly.<sup>464</sup> At the same time, they are more receptive to sharing information with and listening to people whose preferences and interests they see as similar to their own.

The injection of dissenting views during deliberations and their critical evaluation could be crucial for effective decision-making. Studies show that decision-makers could be receptive to discrepant advice when it comes from people who largely share their views. At the same time, discrepant opinions given by advisors whose preferences are very different from the leaders' preferences, are most often rejected or discounted. For example, during the Vietnam war, Lyndon Johnson reacted very differently to similar

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<sup>464</sup> Theories of communication and persuasion show that, in general, people are more easily persuaded by information coming from sources who they believe share their interests, beliefs, values, and whom they trust. See, for example, Carl Hovland, Irving Janis, and Harold Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion: Psychological Studies of Opinion Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), especially Chapter 2, "Credibility of the Communicator;" Arthur Lupia, Mathew D. McCubbins, and Samuel L. Popkin, eds., *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice, and the Bounds of Rationality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Arthur Lupia, "Who Can Persuade Whom? Implications from the Nexus of Psychology and Rational Choice Theory," In James H. Kuklinski, ed., *Thinking About Political Psychology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 51-88.

advice provided by George Ball and Clark Clifford and this was mainly because Johnson and Clifford had been in agreement on almost everything concerning the war from the very beginning, while Johnson expected Ball to have dissenting views in almost all cases anyway. That is why Ball's views were discounted, while Clifford's arguments that the war was un-winnable had a very strong impact on LJB.<sup>465</sup>

Studying the level of divergence in the preferences of decision-makers is important also from the stand-point of social identity theory. Social psychologists show how conflicting views among decision-makers split them into competing factions formed around their preferred policies. The higher the level of conflict, the more cohesive the "in-group" becomes; furthermore, the level of animosity towards the "out-group" intensifies as well.<sup>466</sup> Such dynamics most often affect negatively the effectiveness of the decision-making process because decision-makers resort to various manipulative strategies in order to advance the policy preferences of the in-group and/or decrease the chances for success of the out-group. Most recently, such was the case in the George W. Bush administration when the group around Vice President Cheney systematically excluded from the process people around Colin Powell, who, according to Cheney, were "not on the team." As discussed in greater detail in the Theory Chapter, evidence shows that top policy-makers and their advisors (political, military, and others) have made numerous attempts to manipulate the foreign-policy decision-making process in order to

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<sup>465</sup> See, for example, Alexander George "The Case of Multiple Advocacy in Making Foreign Policy," *American Political Science Review* 74 (September, 1972).

<sup>466</sup> See, for example, Juliet Kaarbo and Deborah Gruenfeld, "The Social Psychology of Inter- and Intra-Group Conflict in Governmental Politics," *Mershon International Studies Review* 42 (1998), pp. 226-233; Robert Baron, "So Right It's Wrong: Groupthink and the Ubiquitous Nature of Polarized Group Decision-Making," *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 37 (2005), pp. 219-253.

advance their preferred policies. The use of manipulation tactics is ubiquitous.<sup>467</sup> Manipulating the decision process is especially pronounced precisely when preferences diverge highly and each side is bent on winning.

Also, consistent with the above and the logic of the principal-agent theory, I show that high preference divergence exacerbates the problem of private information inherent in the civil-military relationship. In cases of intense preference divergence, both the civilian principal and the military agent have an incentive to withhold or distort information in order to support an outcome closer to their own preferences. For example, if one side favors military intervention and knows that the other side disagrees, it is likely to de-emphasize the costs and risks of using force in order to make its preferred option more appealing. Such manipulation of information could contribute to poor analysis of options during the formulation of strategy. Furthermore, intense preference divergence increases the incentives of each side to pursue its own set of goals and, hence, it diminishes the chances for cooperation between civilian and military officials. Ultimately, this could lead to a failure to fully integrate military views with political and diplomatic policy and a failure to match successfully political objectives and military means.

Quite in contrast with the George H. W Bush administration, which displayed one of the most harmonious relationships between civilian and military leaders, *the Clinton*

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<sup>467</sup> See, for example, Garrison's comparative study of the Nixon and Carter administrations which shows the bitter struggles between National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, whose strongly diverging preferences led them to manipulate the decision process in various ways in order to advance the policies they favored. Jean Garrison, *Games Advisors Play: Foreign Policy in the Nixon and Carter Administrations* (Texas A&M University Press, 1999).

*administration was characterized by very high civil-military preference divergence.*<sup>468</sup>

Many of the civilians on the Clinton team were former members of President Carter's foreign policy team and their foreign policy preferences differed markedly from those of the top civilian leadership under George H. W. Bush. The "Liberal Humanitarianists" on the civilian side clashed with the more "Realist" thinking of their military. The changed international environment after the end of the Cold War contributed to this clash by giving rise to international conflicts which did not threaten U.S. vital interests but, at the same time, were difficult to ignore because of moral and humanitarian concerns.

### **Elite Civilian and Military Preferences on Foreign Policy Issues and the Use of Force**

The underlying high civil-military preference divergence in the Clinton administration is well-captured by Dale Herspring:

"[T]hroughout his [Clinton's] presidency a fundamental disagreement stood between those in his administration who favored using force around the world and the Chiefs. The latter had little interest in becoming involved in 'civil wars or other unconventional conflicts preferring ... emphasis on massive, prompt, and decisive application of overwhelming force to defeat any aggressor.' This approach, however, ran counter to main senior civilians' belief that the United States had an obligation to help build a multinational community by providing military forces when necessary. The Chiefs would constantly resist the Administration's efforts to involve them in causes, and Powell in particular attempted to dissuade such involvement as long as he was on the scene."<sup>469</sup>

<sup>468</sup> See, for example, Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge*, pp. 82-85, 142, 145, Ivo Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, pp. 135-37; Jim Hoagland, "A Better Battlefield for Bosnia," *Washington Post*, October 1, 1995.

<sup>469</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 338; Stephen Cimbala, ed., *Clinton and Post-Cold War Defense* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), p. ix.

Civilian and military officials espoused different philosophies regarding the use of military force.<sup>470</sup> With the Cold War over, the Clinton administration saw the need to define anew appropriate uses of military force in a world in which a variety of smaller conflicts posed no vital threat either to American power or American existence. In its attempts to do that, the Administration clashed with a military configured to deal with major wars and averse to the smaller ethnic and religious conflicts more likely to present a challenge in the new security environment. The military views were summed up in the Powell Doctrine of overwhelming force. In an article in *Foreign Affairs*, Gen. Powell defined the standards the military preferred to use when deciding on whether the US should commit armed forces in a crisis. As Powell wrote:

When a "fire" starts that might require committing armed forces, we need to evaluate the circumstances. Relevant questions include: Is the political objective we seek to achieve important, clearly defined and understood? Have all other nonviolent policy means failed? Will military force achieve the objective? At what cost? Have the gains and risks been analyzed? How might the situation that we seek to alter, once it is altered by force, develop further and what might be the consequences? ... When the political objective is important, clearly defined and understood, when the risks are acceptable, and when the use of force can be effectively combined with diplomatic and economic policies, then clear and unambiguous objectives must be given to the armed forces.<sup>471</sup>

Top civilian officials in the Clinton Administration disagreed strongly with the Powell Doctrine, embraced by the military as the "right way" to use force and they wanted to "steer foreign policy further away from the tenets of the Doctrine."<sup>472</sup> While the military preferred force to be used very selectively (and rarely), civilian leaders in the

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<sup>470</sup> Andrew Bacevich, "Elusive Bargain: The Pattern of U.S. Civil-Military Relations Since World War II," Paper presented at Rutgers University, p. 39.

<sup>471</sup> Colin L. Powell, "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead," *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1992/93).

<sup>472</sup> Josh Dormont, "The Powell Factor: Analyzing the Role of the Powell Doctrine in U.S. Foreign Policy," *Gaines Junction*, Vol. 3, no. 1 (Fall 2005), p. 30.

Clinton administration were much more willing to see military force as an appropriate tool of statecraft in humanitarian and other crises that do not necessarily threaten American vital interests. In his inaugural address, President Clinton stated: “When our vital interests are challenged, *or the will and conscience of the international community is defied*, we will act – with peaceful diplomacy whenever possible, with force when necessary.”<sup>473</sup> Unlike the military, civilians were seeing a wider range of roles for military power to play in a post Cold-War world – one such role could be keeping the peace in ethnic fights similar to the ones in the 1990s in the Balkans. Les Aspin argued further that at times the constraints of the Powell doctrine could be damaging to US foreign policy. He stated: “Real leadership requires a willingness to use military force, and force can be a useful backdrop of diplomacy, a complement to it, or, if need be, a temporary alternative.”<sup>474</sup> During US involvement in Somalia (1992-93), Les Aspin defended the use of force for “nation-building” – an idea which in essence was contrary to some of the main postulates of the military orthodoxy regarding the need for clearly defined political and military objectives and a quick exit after victory.<sup>475</sup>

Civilian leaders faced a military establishment, which, proud of its 1991 victory in the Gulf, felt little need or incentive to reconsider the way it fought its wars or the kinds of wars it wanted to enter in the first place. Civilian leaders saw the military as haunted or even paralyzed by the Vietnam syndrome. They believed that while the use of

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<sup>473</sup> President William J. Clinton, Inaugural Address, January 21, 1993, emphasis added.

<sup>474</sup> Cited in James Nathan, *Soldiers, Statecraft, and History: Coercive Diplomacy and International Order* (Westport and London: Praeger, 2002), p. 150.

<sup>475</sup> See, for example, Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Forces to Stay in Somalia to End Warlord Violence,” *New York Times*, August 28, 1993, p. 4; Michael Gordon, “Limits of U.S. Role; White House is Seeking to Minimize Any Use of Military in Balkan Conflict,” *New York Times*, August 11, 1992, p. 6.

overwhelming force had served the country well in conventional conflicts such as the 1991 Gulf War, the humanitarian crises of the post-Cold War era were more likely to need a rather selective use of measured force. Most in the military at the time were deeply skeptical of peace-keeping and nation-building missions, or what they called “Operations Other Than War.” They thought that such operations would strain the military and detract from its combat readiness.

The Clinton administration embraced multilateralism and saw a need for US leadership in cases of rebuilding failed states and other mainly humanitarian missions. For example, regarding Somalia, Warren Christopher stated that “there will be a sturdy American role to help the United Nations rebuild a viable nation state.”<sup>476</sup> On the contrary, the military was alarmed by what they saw as civilians’ activist approach and their willingness to participate in UN humanitarian missions. Among the Joint Chiefs, there was no enthusiasm for such missions at all. They found them vague and open-ended and not necessarily involving US vital interests. “He [Clinton] was facing a Pentagon ... unwilling to enter a small conflict whose political objective was to bring the parties to the negotiating table.”<sup>477</sup>

Among the most telling examples of highly diverging civilian and military preferences was the famous exchange between Madeleine Albright and Colin Powell on the role and use of the US military in foreign policy. Albright, then U.S. Ambassador to the UN, inquired: “What’s the point of having this superb military that you’re always talking about, if we can’t use it?” Colin Powell thought he “would have an aneurysm.

<sup>476</sup> “Christopher, in Unusual Cable, Defends State Department,” *New York Times*, June 16, 1993.

<sup>477</sup> Jane Perlez, “For 8 Years, a Strained Relationship with the Military,” *New York Times*, December 28, 2000, p. 17.



American GIs were not toy soldiers to be moved around on some sort of global game board.”<sup>478</sup> It was not that Albright and her civilian colleagues were eager to engage the country in a war – precisely because they did not want war, they argued, they were willing to use the threat of force for coercion, which, if successful, will make war unnecessary. In the words of Madeleine Albright: “We’re talking about using military force, but we are not talking about a war. I think this is an important distinction.”<sup>479</sup> The military opposition to this argument was that acts like “surgical” air strikes could lead to escalation and involve the US into protracted and messy wars.

The divide between civilian and military preferences largely coincided with the divide between supporters of the “Limited Objectives” School and the “All-or-Nothing” approach.<sup>480</sup> The clash between these two schools of thought on the use of force certainly did not start in the Clinton administration. While not new, this debate was re-invigorated under Clinton mainly because of the changed strategic environment after the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which allowed and tempted the US to intervene in conflicts it would not have considered intervening in the past. Opponents of the Powell doctrine like Les Aspin, who labeled it the “all-or-nothing” approach, argued that its precepts had become outdated and that it could not address well the problems of a world in which the Soviet threat had been supplanted by civil wars and ethnic

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<sup>478</sup> Colin L. Powell, *My American Journey*, p. 576. See also Thomas Lippman, *Madeleine Albright and the New American Diplomacy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), p. 97; Andrew Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

<sup>479</sup> Madeleine Albright, Presentation for students in February of 1998.

<sup>480</sup> For a detailed discussion of this divide, see Christopher Gacek, *The Logic of Force: the Dilemma of Limited War in American Foreign Policy*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

conflicts.<sup>481</sup> They questioned the applicability of the Doctrine to situations where the US might need to rely on force (or the threat of force) in order to stop ethnic cleansing or achieve other non-traditional missions. Civilian leaders were concerned that by insisting on decisive force, the Doctrine could tie the hands of decision-makers. Aspin's and others' argument was that the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the Soviet threat allowed the US "more flexibility to use military force in an incremental fashion in regional trouble spots ... without fear of being sucked into long-term quagmires."<sup>482</sup> The civilians believed the military was being stymied by dogmatic adherence to a doctrine that was not very suitable to the changed international circumstances. State Department officials argued that the military was still being haunted by the "Vietnam syndrome," which was preventing it to think constructively about intervening in places like the Balkans. As a senior diplomat remarked, "It's the Vietnam syndrome – the idea that you don't get involved in any application of military force unless it is overwhelming and the purpose is to win a 'victory.'"<sup>483</sup>

### **Civilian and Military Preferences Regarding the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia**

Civilian and military preferences regarding the crisis in former Yugoslavia and the US potential role in it differed significantly. They reflected the underlying

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<sup>481</sup> Aspin quoted in Richard Haass, *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1999), p. 185.

<sup>482</sup> Gerald Seib, "Saddam Hussein Seen Trying to Boost Posture of Iraq in Dealing with Clinton Administration," *Wall Street Journal*, January 12, 1992, p. 16.

<sup>483</sup> Richard Schifter, quoted in Michael Gordon, "Powell Delivers a Resounding No on Using Limited Force in Bosnia," *New York Times*, September 28, 1992, p. 1.

philosophical differences between top civilian and military officials on the use of force, analyzed in the previous section. During the presidential campaign, Clinton emphasized that if elected, his foreign policy initiatives would be guided by moral and humanitarian concerns to a larger extent than the policies of President George H. W. Bush. “President Bush’s policy toward former Yugoslavia mirrors his indifference to the massacre at Tiananmen Square and his coddling of Saddam Hussein,” Clinton accused. “Once again, the administration is turning its back on violations of basic human rights and our own democratic values.”<sup>484</sup> He also said that unlike Bush, he would use American air power if necessary in order to stop ethnic cleansing in the Balkans.<sup>485</sup> During the campaign, Clinton called for increased US involvement, including military pressure, in order to stop the atrocities in former Yugoslavia.<sup>486</sup> Among the military options suggested by the then governor were “punitive air strikes, raids to seize the detention camps, and the lifting of the arms embargo.”<sup>487</sup>

The clash between civilian and military preferences became obvious during the very first conversation between the newly-elected Commander in Chief and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. On November 19, 1992, Bill Clinton met separately with George H. W. Bush and Colin Powell to be briefed on major national security issues. Clinton used these meetings to urge the outgoing Bush administration to take a more active stance on

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<sup>484</sup> Bill Clinton quoted in Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge*, p. 139.

<sup>485</sup> Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War* (New York: Modern Library, 1999), pp. 41-42; see also Warren Strobel, *Late-Breaking Foreign Policy: The News Media’s Influence on Peace Operations* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), p. 150.

<sup>486</sup> See, for example, Charles Stevenson, “The Evolving Clinton Doctrine on the Use of Force,” *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Summer 1996), pp. 521-2.

<sup>487</sup> Michael Gordon, “Limits of U.S. Role; White House is Seeking to Minimize Any Use of Military in Balkan Conflict,” *New York Times*, August 11, 1992, p. 6.

Bosnia, but Colin Powell strongly opposed. According to Powell's memoirs, Clinton inquired whether "we could influence the situation [in Bosnia] through air power, something not too punitive."<sup>488</sup> The military's opposition to an involvement in Bosnia remained unchanged since the Bush administration. At the time, "any military initiative, including enforcing a no-fly zone, lifting the arms embargo, air strikes, or a military presence on the ground, was opposed by senior US military officers who feared it would trigger a Serb reaction."<sup>489</sup> The Chairman and the other Joint Chiefs were concerned that the civilians in the Clinton administration would pressure them to embark on yet another "do good" mission with no clear objectives. As Powell wrote, "There it was again, the ever-popular solution from the skies, with a good humanitarian twist; let's not hurt anybody."<sup>490</sup> After this first tense meeting between the president-elect and the Chairman, Clinton observed that Powell's opposition to such an idea was firm and blunt; the general "did not hold back on any subject."<sup>491</sup> In subsequent meetings with the Principals to discuss options for action in Bosnia, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs repeatedly asked what the political objective was and what would happen if using air power did not achieve the objective, thus showing again his and other officers' strong misgivings about military involvement in Bosnia.<sup>492</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> Colin Powell, *My American Journey*, p. 562. See also Jon Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention: Beliefs, Information, and Advocacy in the U.S. Decisions on Somalia and Bosnia," *International Security*, vol. 27, No. 1 (July/August 1999).

<sup>489</sup> Norman Cigar, "Paradigms and U.S. Policymaking for Bosnia (1992-1995)," paper prepared for the 1998 Conference organized by International Forum Bosnia (IFB) in Sarajevo, p. 78.

<sup>490</sup> Colin Powell, *My American Journey*, p. 562.

<sup>491</sup> Thomas Friedman, "The Transition: New Tune from Clinton, Sounds of Compromise," *New York Times*, November 22, 1992, p. 26.

<sup>492</sup> Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge*, p. 149.

At meetings of Clinton's principal advisors on Bosnia in March and April of 1993 the military maintained its strong opposition to the use of force in the Balkans, arguing that the US could be sucked further into an un-winnable conflict.<sup>493</sup> A US military intervention in Bosnia did not fit well the criteria of the Powell Doctrine and, for this reason, was strongly resisted by the military. One of their arguments was that the military and political objectives of the intervention seemed vague and it was not clear whether they were achievable with military force.<sup>494</sup> As Gen. Powell wrote in his memoirs for the last months of his tenure as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs under Clinton, "My constant, unwelcome message at all the meetings on Bosnia was simply that we should not commit military forces until we had a clear political objective."<sup>495</sup>

Similar to civil-military divisions in other cases when the use of force was considered, the military again was uncomfortable with proposals for limited military action. As Michael Gordon wrote,

General Powell also angrily rejected suggestions by former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Britain and others that the West undertake limited air strikes to deter the Serbs from shelling Sarajevo and continuing their attacks. General Powell said: "As soon as they tell me it is limited, it means they do not care whether you achieve a result or not. As soon as they tell me 'surgical,' I head for the bunker."<sup>496</sup>

According to reports, during deliberations on Bosnia in the Clinton Administration, Defense Secretary Aspin "made clear" that the US should consider the use of force in "a wider variety of shapes and sizes" than the George H. W. Bush

<sup>493</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 356.

<sup>494</sup> Christopher Gibson, *Countervailing Forces*, p. 235; Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 355.

<sup>495</sup> Colin Powell with Joseph Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 37.

<sup>496</sup> Michael Gordon, "Powell Delivers a Resounding No on Using Limited Force in Bosnia," *New York Times*, September 28, 1992, p. 1.

administration has been willing to do.<sup>497</sup> On the contrary, Gen. Powell and the rest of the military leadership strongly disagreed with proposals for limited bombing of Serbian artillery or other military targets. They argued that the Serbs could disperse its artillery to churches, mosques, schools, and other places difficult to hit without endangering civilians.<sup>498</sup> “I do not know how limited bombing will stop the Serbs from doing what they are doing,” the Joint Chiefs Chairman argued.<sup>499</sup> More importantly, the military was also concerned that limited bombing may quickly escalate to a much larger U.S. involvement in the conflict. They worried it could ultimately lead to a Vietnam-style quagmire. As Colin Powell stated, “We should always be skeptical when so-called experts suggest that all a particular crisis calls for is a little surgical bombing or a limited attack. When the ‘surgery’ is over and the desired result is not obtained, a new set of experts then comes forward with talk of just a little escalation—more bombs, more men and women, more force. History has not been kind to this approach to war-making.”<sup>500</sup>

Civilian leaders believed that the US should be willing to use force not only to achieve victory, but also to bolster diplomacy – in the case of Bosnia, for example, to get the Serbs to negotiate seriously, or for the purposes of deterrence. As Les Aspin, when he was still the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, asserted, “Those who disagree with the all-or-nothing school are unwilling to accept the notion that military force can’t be used prudently short of all-out war. If we say it is all or nothing and then

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<sup>497</sup> Gerald Seib, “Saddam Hussein Seen Trying to Boost Posture of Iraq in Dealing with Clinton Administration,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 12, 1992, p. 16.

<sup>498</sup> Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge*, p. 155.

<sup>499</sup> Quoted in Michael Gordon, “Powell Delivers a Resounding No on Using Limited Force in Bosnia,” *New York Times*, September 28, 1992, p. 1

<sup>500</sup> Colin L. Powell, “U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead,” *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1992/93).

walk away from the use of force in the Balkans, we are sending a signal to other places that there is no downside to ethnic cleansing. We are not deterring anybody.”<sup>501</sup> Civilians at the Defense Department argued for a strategy of coercion. “ ‘Compellance’ is the word now being heard in the Pentagon. It means the use of air power to persuade by punishment.”<sup>502</sup> Contrary to civilians’ belief in the effectiveness of air power for coercive purposes, Colin Powell argued that air power “alone would not be decisive in halting the Serbian forces.”<sup>503</sup>

Some significant differences in civilian and military preferences continued to exist after the signing of the Dayton agreement (December 14, 1995) as well and during the implementation phase of the Accords, starting at the end of December of 1995 when IFOR entered Bosnia. In his book on the Bosnia conflict, Richard Holbrooke listed 11 major differences between the State Department and other civilian leaders, on the one hand, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on the other, less than a week before the Dayton agreement.<sup>504</sup> The more important ones included:

- military resistance to an obligation “to respond to ‘over the horizon’ reports of attacks on international civilian personnel or gross violations of human rights”;
- military opposition to being involved in “any aspects of civilian implementation, including elections and securing freedom of movement”;
- strong military resistance to any mandate to arrest indicted war criminals;

<sup>501</sup> Quoted in Michael Gordon, “Powell Delivers a Resounding No on Using Limited Force in Bosnia,” *New York Times*, September 28, 1992, p. 1.

<sup>502</sup> William Safire, “The Case for ‘Compellance,’” *New York Times*, April 19, 1993, p. 19.

<sup>503</sup> Michael Gordon, “12 in State Department Ask Military Move Against the Serbs,” *New York Times*, April 23, 1993, p. 12.

<sup>504</sup> Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, pp. 220-21.

-- military opposition to a mandate to investigate “past incidents of attacks, atrocities or human rights violations,” and others.<sup>505</sup>

The military’s unwillingness to undertake such missions stemmed mainly from their “lessons learned” from the Somalia fiasco and the fears of “mission creep.” Emphasizing the seriousness of those differences, Holbrooke called them “the battle lines” between the two diverging viewpoints concerning the peace-keeping operation and acknowledged that the diplomats strongly contested every single issue, “winning some, losing many others” to the military.<sup>506</sup>

As this section showed, civilian and military preferences on the use of force and other foreign policy issues diverged significantly. In the words of David Halberstam, “[T]he Clinton people began their first year in office with a major foreign policy crisis in Bosnia still unresolved, and a major *philosophical split* dividing them and the military. If they had taken over the White House, they had yet to take over the government.”<sup>507</sup> The next section discusses how this high level of preference divergence combined with the dominance of the military affected the making and implementation of US policies.

### **Decision-Making**

When the balance of power favors the military over the civilians, we expect military preferences to dominate in the decision-making process most of the time (Hypothesis # 4). The next paragraphs analyze briefly some of the most important cases where civilian and military preferences diverged substantially and military preferences

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<sup>505</sup> Ibid., p. 220-1.

<sup>506</sup> Holbrooke, p. 221.

<sup>507</sup> David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 231, emphasis added.



carried the day. This is confirmed also by an analysis of cases of clashing civilian and military preferences from this time period by other authors. The most authoritative such analysis, conducted by Michael Desch, examines more than 70 cases of civil-military disputes from 1936 to 1997 and finds that during the Cold War, for example, civilian preferences prevailed in almost all cases -- 59 out of the 63 times when civilian and military preferences were in conflict.<sup>508</sup> However, in the post-Cold War period, military preferences were dominant in at least 7 of the 12 cases when preferences diverged.<sup>509</sup> In the first Clinton administration, in particular, some of the most prominent examples of military preferences dominating over civilian ones include the following: the issue of gays in the military, the debates on the change in military roles and missions, the Bosnia policy debates, the role of women in combat, and others.

Arguably, the issue with the most negative consequences for the subsequent interactions between civilian and military leaders and the one that inflicted the most severe damage on civilian control was the debate on gays in the military. As a result of the early clash between civilian and military leaders regarding the ban on homosexuals and that civilians did back off, "Clinton got his nose bloodied ... and placed himself even more on the defensive against the powerful military faction already opposed to him."<sup>510</sup> This first civil-military "fight" was won by the military and it gave them the impression that the newly-elected civilian leadership was weak and could cave when pressed. Many believed that in later debates on issues related to use of force, including Bosnia, Clinton

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<sup>508</sup> Michael Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

<sup>509</sup> Michael Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military*, see especially pp. 135-139.

<sup>510</sup> David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton, and the Generals* (New York: Scribner, 2001), p. 205.

was in no position to override military advice because of the debacle over resolving the gays in the military issue.<sup>511</sup> As Richard Kohn argued, “Nothing did more to harm the launching of the Clinton administration than ‘gays in the military,’ for it announced to Washington and the world that the President could be rolled. If the one group pledged by law and tradition to obey could roll him, then everyone could--or at least could try.”<sup>512</sup>

During the presidential campaign, Bill Clinton emphasized his intent to lift the ban on homosexuals in the military. On his first visit to Washington, DC as president-elect, when faced with strong opposition not only from the Joint Chiefs but also from some members of his own party in Congress, Clinton “backed off just a bit, saying he still intended to carry out his campaign promise on the issue, but was prepared to discuss it and find common ground.”<sup>513</sup> The civil-military relationship turned quite sour when the newly elected president announced that he would abolish the ban immediately. Regardless of whether this was done because of ignorance or arrogance, of which the new administration was immediately accused, the lack of consultation on this very sensitive issue poisoned civil-military relations further. Powell and the Joint Chiefs openly resisted such a move.

“Powell himself was very conservative on the issue [gays in the military], and friends remember him becoming quite irate when the argument was made that integrating gays into the military was a step not unlike integrating blacks some forty-five years earlier. Powell was also speaking for many of his colleagues who were decidedly

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<sup>511</sup> David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1995), p. 130.

<sup>512</sup> Richard Kohn, “Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations,” *The National Interest*, No. 35 (Spring 1994).

<sup>513</sup> Thomas Friedman, “The Transition: New Tune from Clinton, Sounds of Compromise,” *New York Times*, November 22, 1992, p. 26.

unenthusiastic about the idea. Opposition on the part of the Joint Chiefs and within the entire military cadre would be very, very strong, he said ...”<sup>514</sup> The military considered Clinton’s attempts to lift the ban as an assault on military culture. “[The military] resented his [Clinton’s] attempts to use the military as a laboratory for social engineering. They believed the military was crafted to fight and win wars, not to carry out experiments.”<sup>515</sup>

Clinton’s announcement (only several days after he took office) that he intended to lift the ban on homosexuals united the military against him to an unprecedented degree. “Joining the Chiefs in opposition to Clinton were the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Retired Officers Association, and the Association of Non-Commissioned Officers.”<sup>516</sup> Politically, such opposition was very difficult to overcome, especially for the position Clinton was in, without full Congressional support on the issue. At the time, rumors appeared in the media that the Joint Chiefs would resign over the controversy and these rumors were not denied. Says Stephanopoulos about a meeting between Clinton and the Chiefs, discussing the ban on homosexuals: “[The Chiefs’] message was clear: Keeping this promise will cost you the military. Fight us and you’ll lose – and it won’t be pretty.”<sup>517</sup>

At the end, with the help of Congressional Democrats, a “compromise” was reached.<sup>518</sup> The Clinton administration abandoned the idea of an executive order, which

<sup>514</sup> David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 205.

<sup>515</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 331.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 339-40.

<sup>517</sup> George Stephanopoulos, *All Too Human* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1999), p. 124.

<sup>518</sup> See, for example, Eric Schmitt, “Aspin Seeks a Deal on Gays That the Brass Will Bless,” *Congressional Quarterly*, June 26, 1993, p. 1670; Eric Schmitt and Thomas L. Friedman, “Clinton and Powell Forge Bond

was supposed to reverse the injustice “with a single stroke of the pen“. Instead, newly-crafted regulations would prohibit commanders from asking about a serviceman or servicewoman’s sexual orientation, but any overt evidence of homosexuality still remained a basis for discharge.<sup>519</sup> The agreed-upon “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy did not reflect civilian preferences and was actually seen as a victory for the military. Not only were civilian wishes thwarted, but, more importantly, this first interaction gave the military a reason to believe that “shirking” might not necessarily be punished. From the perspective of a principal-agent model, Clinton’s failure to prevail in his challenge to the military preferences on this issue weakened his relative power position “and contributed to greatly reduced expectations of punishment on the part of the military.”<sup>520</sup> Even more importantly, this also made civilian leaders much less willing to challenge military preferences on other issues as well. As Andrew Bacevich writes:

Powell proved that the JCS chairman could now in effect tie the president's hands. ... He questioned the wisdom of humanitarian intervention in the Balkans and elsewhere; and he torpedoed President Bill Clinton's efforts to permit gays to serve openly in the military.<sup>521</sup>

The gradually established dominance of the military in the first Clinton administration could be seen also in the evolution of the administration’s policy on

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for Mutual Survival," *New York Times*, June 4, 1993, p. 1; George Stephanopoulos, *All Too Human: A Political Education* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1999), pp. 155-63; Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge: The Clinton Presidency* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), pp. 42-8, 248-51.

<sup>519</sup> See, for example, Andrew Bacevich, “Elusive Bargain: The Pattern of U.S. Civil-Military Relations Since World War II,” Paper presented at Rutgers University, p. 40.

<sup>520</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants*, p. 213.

<sup>521</sup> Andrew J. Bacevich, “Joint Failure,” *The Boston Globe*, June 17, 2007.

peace-keeping.<sup>522</sup> At the start of their term in office, Clinton's top civilian policy advisors and cabinet members, including the US Permanent Representative to the UN at the time, Madeleine Albright, were expressing a pro-active attitude towards peacekeeping, and emphasizing the need of US involvement in such missions, as well as a desire to strengthen the role of the UN.<sup>523</sup> However, having met a strong opposition from the U.S. military, the language of "assertive multilateralism" started to disappear. In a speech at the United Nations on September 27, 1993, President Clinton announced some significant restrictions on US involvement in peace-keeping operations, including the conflict in Bosnia. His speech contained many of the arguments characteristic of the "Never Again" school, coinciding with the military perspective on the use of force and military preferences on when and how force should be used. As far as US involvement in the Balkans, Clinton asserted that before the country was committed, certain preconditions needed to be fulfilled.

"I would want a clear understanding what the command and control was. I would want the NATO commander in charge of the operations. I would want a clear timetable for the first review and ultimately the right to terminate American involvement. I would want a clear political strategy along with a military strategy. ... And I would want a clear expression of support from the United States

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<sup>522</sup> See, for example, Richard Lock-Pullan, "Learning the Limits of Virtue: Clinton, the Army and the Criteria for the Use of Military Force," *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vo. 24, No. 2 (August 2003), especially pp. 144-5. For a broad overview, see Michael MacKinnon, *The Evolution of US Peacekeeping Policy Under Clinton: A Fairweather Friend?* (London: Frank Cass, 2000); Jeremy Rosner, *The New Tug of War: Congress, the Executive Branch, and National Security* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1995); Jennifer Sterling-Folker, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Assertive Multilateralism and Post-Cold War U.S. Foreign Policy Making," in James Scott, ed. *After the End: Making U.S. Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 277-304.

<sup>523</sup> Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge*, p. 145, 324-25; Oliver Ramsbottom, Tom Woodhouse, *Humanitarian Intervention in Contemporary Conflict: A Reconceptualization* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 211; Richard Lock-Pullan, "Learning the Limits of Virtue: Clinton, the Army and the Criteria for the Use of Military Force," *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vo. 24, No. 2 (August 2003), p. 136.

Congress. Now, there are 20 other operational things I would want, but those are the big policy issues.”<sup>524</sup>

President Clinton and other high-ranking civilian officials at the time often phrased policy choices in language borrowed from the Powell doctrine. For example, in his speech to the nation on November 27, 1995, describing the Bosnia mission, the President said that it would be “precisely defined, with clear, realistic goals that can be achieved in a definite period of time” and that American troops would have everything they need to respond to challenges and violations of the agreement with “overwhelming force.”<sup>525</sup> Due to political weakness and insufficient experience and expertise in military matters, the civilian leadership accepted the dominance of military preferences on MOOTW. Even in cases when it was trying to deviate from the requirements of the Powell Doctrine, it used the military-preferred terminology to justify this, as if it was afraid of angering the military. “But he [Sandy Berger] did note a slight mutation away from the Powell approach: When air campaigns can be conducted with no American casualties and no American ground troops, there is ‘another generation of thinking that is not inconsistent with the doctrine of using overwhelming force – and that is using force for more limited purposes but in a way that gives us overwhelming advantage,’ Mr. Berger said.”<sup>526</sup>

Another win for military preferences was Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 25, which established the parameters for the deployment of US forces in peace-keeping

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<sup>524</sup> Thomas Friedman, “Clinton, at U.N., Lists Stiff Terms for Sending U.S. Forces to Bosnia,” *New York Times*, September 28, 1993, p. 1.

<sup>525</sup> President William J. Clinton, Address to the Nation, November 27, 1995.

<sup>526</sup> Jane Perlez, “For 8 years, a Strained Relationship With the Military,” *New York Times*, December 28, 2000, p. 17.

operations and was signed by President Clinton in May of 1994. Sections of the document restated the Weinberger/Powell Doctrine almost word for word, affirming that U.S. participation in peace-keeping missions would be predicated on the following conditions: “clear objectives and an endpoint for U.S. participation can be identified; domestic and congressional support exists or can be marshaled; command and control arrangements are acceptable; there exists a determination to commit sufficient forces to achieve clearly defined objectives; there exists a plan to achieve those objectives decisively.”<sup>527</sup> The language of clear political objectives and exit strategies was very much in line with military preferences on US involvement in peace-keeping missions. As if to underscore this, Lt. Gen. Wesley Clark, at the time Director for Strategic Plans and Policy for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, participated at the news conference at which Tony Lake presented PDD 25 and commented that “the military had played a major role in defining the command and control aspects of this PDD.”<sup>528</sup> This presidential directive and similar policy statements were very different from the views the Clinton civilian team started with.<sup>529</sup> Christopher Gibson observed correctly that “this policy is a major political victory for the military and those subscribers to the Powell Doctrine as it encompasses most of those tenets versus the more activist visions initially articulated by the civilian leadership at the outset of the Clinton administration.”<sup>530</sup>

<sup>527</sup> The Clinton Administration’s Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations (PDD 25), The White House, May 6, 1994. Available at: <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd25.htm>.

<sup>528</sup> White House, “Press Briefing by National Security Advisor Tony Lake and Director for Strategic Plans and Policy General Wesley Clark,” May 5, 1994.

<sup>529</sup> For an overview of peacekeeping under Clinton see Michael MacKinnon, *The Evolution of US Peacekeeping Policy Under Clinton: a Fairweather Friend?* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1999).

<sup>530</sup> Christopher Gibson, *Countervailing Forces*, p. 231.

Another good illustration of the civil-military clash over peace-keeping missions and the fact that military preferences dominated at the end was the negotiation over the Implementation Force (IFOR) for the Dayton Accords, discussed in more detail later on in the chapter. Press reports at the time showed that the overcoming of the military opposition to that peace-keeping mission was achieved only by satisfying all the conditions the military insisted on and excluding from their duties tasks such as: pursuing war criminals, conducting humanitarian missions, mine clearing, providing election security or other police functions. After such compromises on the part of civilian decision-makers “even the most skeptical commanders express[ed] confidence that the NATO force, including 20, 000 American troops, can achieve a tightly circumscribed set of goals with minimum casualties. That is largely because *the agreement meets virtually every condition the American military insisted on* for success: clear goals, a powerful force, NATO command and control, robust rules of engagement, a one-year limit and the expressed cooperation of the rival factions.”<sup>531</sup>

The military representatives in the negotiations at Dayton drafted the following clause which became part of the final document: “The Parties understand and agree that the IFOR Commander shall have the authority, without interference or permission of any Party, to do all the Commander judges necessary and proper ... The violating Party shall be subject to military action by the IFOR, including the use of necessary force to ensure compliance with the Annex.”<sup>532</sup> Having the “authority,” according to the military, meant having the ability to choose not to do something if they did not want to. The military

<sup>531</sup> Eric Schmitt, “Pentagon Confident, but Some Serbs ‘Will Fight’; Military Now Says Bosnia Peace Plan Will Work,” *New York Times*, November 27, 1995, p. A1, emphasis added; See also Warren Strobel, “This Time, Clinton is Set to Heed Advice from Military,” *Washington Times*, December 1, 1995, p. 1.

<sup>532</sup> Richard Holbrooke, *War in a Times of Peace*, p. 223.



commanders on the ground needed such a statement in order *not* to be “obligated” to go after war criminals, something that they did not want to do, while the civilians wanted them to do. Also very significant from the military’s point of view was that they managed to insert the phrase “without interference or permission of any Party” – it would keep off their backs civilians who wished to tell the military commanders what to do and how to go about their business. As discussed later in more detail, the concessions the military managed to extract ultimately narrowed the military mission to the extent that the political effectiveness of the mission was compromised.

The dismissal of Defense Secretary Aspin after less than one year in office was another win for military preferences. It was seen as a sacrifice the generals insisted Clinton make. The military wanted Aspin to take the blame for failing to send the reinforcements they had requested for Somalia.<sup>533</sup> An administration official related a conversation at the time between Bill Clinton and Colin Powell, in which the General told the President that under Aspin “relations with the military have reached a nadir.”<sup>534</sup> At least in part, military dislike for Aspin stemmed from the fact that he was perceived as one of the strong advocates for a pro-active U.S. foreign and military policy, which would have required a much higher involvement of the military in peace-keeping and peace-building operations. As one observer summed up the end of the Aspin controversy, “In future this administration will deploy troops only to defend America’s vital national interests. ... Peacekeeping has been abandoned.”<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>533</sup> R. W. Apple, Jr., “Change at the Pentagon; Wounded in Policy Wars,” *New York Times*, December 16, 1993; Richard Lock-Pullan, “Learning the Limits of Virtue: Clinton, the Army and the Criteria for the Use of Military Force,” *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vo. 24, No. 2 (August 2003), p. 141.

<sup>534</sup> Quoted in James Adams, “Aspin’s Scalp Leaves Clinton,” *Sunday Times*, December 19, 1993.

<sup>535</sup> James Adams, “Aspin’s Scalp Leaves Clinton,” *Sunday Times*, December 19, 1993.

The fact that Clinton nominated a former Navy officer, retired Admiral Bobby Ray Inman, to replace Aspin, was seen as yet another sign of Clinton's insecurity in his relations with the military. Inman's nomination was the president's way of finding someone who would please the uniforms and, at the same time, would be able to protect Clinton from being rolled by them. The situation became almost ridiculous when at the White House ceremony after his nomination was announced, Inman, in front of the Commander-in-Chief and key members of his national security team, said bluntly that he had voted for Bush and that, before accepting the nomination, he had had to reach "a level of comfort" in the President's abilities as Commander-in-Chief.<sup>536</sup>

In debates on US Bosnia policy in the Clinton administration civilian and military preferences clashed again and the military often managed to get the upper hand. In the last months of the Bush administration, the pressure to use force in Bosnia increased significantly. Although almost no one was advocating the use of ground troops, pressure from Congress, international organizations and various domestic groups mounted – the demand was to use force in order to ensure that humanitarian aid was delivered to Bosnia and also, to reconsider the arms embargo, which was considered to be favoring the Serbs. Top military officials remained strongly against the use of force and pointed to the various risks even a limited military involvement would entail. Some of the pressure on Washington to act was coming from presidential candidate Bill Clinton, who on August 5, 1992<sup>537</sup> at a campaign stop, stated that the Bush Administration was not doing

<sup>536</sup> See, for example, Stephen Engelberg, "Inman's Careful Career of the Unexpected Move," *New York Times*, December 21, 1993, p. 22.

<sup>537</sup> All dates in this chapter are taken from the following sources: Office of the Historian, *The United States and the Breakup of Yugoslavia, 1980-1995* (Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State, 1996); Ivo Daalder, *Getting to Dayton: The Making of America's Bosnia Policy* (Washington, DC: The Brookings

enough to stop the violence in the Balkans and that use of force might be necessary. “I would begin with air power against the Serbs,” Clinton concluded.<sup>538</sup> On December 11, 1992, at a news conference, President-elect Clinton suggested that the US should “turn up the heat a little” and enforce more vigorously the no-fly zones.<sup>539</sup>

With Clinton in office, the disagreements between top civilian and military officials on the role of American military power in foreign policy took central stage. The numerous debates on Bosnia showed again the very different views held by the military and the civilians on the role of military force – the civilians believed that the threat and use of force should be an integral part of U.S. diplomatic efforts, while the military believed that force should be used only after diplomacy and all else had failed.<sup>540</sup> In this particular case, most civilian leaders thought that US intervention could improve the situation without necessarily leading either to a quick resolution of the conflict or to a quagmire. They proposed that air strikes and lifting the arms embargo should be considered. To the contrary, the military argued that if the US decided to use air strikes and/or to lift the embargo on arms shipments to the Muslims, this would only broaden the conflict rather than achieve a solution. Military officers argued that there was no military solution to the Balkan conflict and that the US should continue with diplomatic initiatives.

In the first months of the new administration, civilian leaders attempted to fulfill Clinton’s campaign promise for a more vigorous and effective US involvement in Bosnia

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Institution, 2000), pp. xiii-xix; “Bosnia: Uncertain Paths to Peace: Chronology, 1990-1995,” *The New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/specials/bosnia/context/apchronology.html>

<sup>538</sup> Warren Strobel, “U.S. Had, But Lost the Chance to Lead,” *Washington Times*, May 9, 1993, p. 9.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>540</sup> See, for example, Ivo Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, p. 136.

and supported the Vance-Owen peace plan.<sup>541</sup> The administration conducted a policy review on Bosnia, which was presented on Feb. 10, 1993 by Secretary of State Warren Christopher. Christopher allowed that the US would be willing to use ground troops in the Balkans in order to implement and enforce a peace agreement, but if and only if the parties were to reach such an agreement.<sup>542</sup> This idea was met with strong resistance from the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) “and Clinton was not inclined to challenge the military on that score.”<sup>543</sup> General Powell “forcefully questioned even the most limited intervention to protect the Muslims, reflecting the concern that such steps would involve the United States in a quagmire without stopping the fighting.”<sup>544</sup>

In the early months of the administration, due to strong military opposition, civilian officials gradually moved away from Clinton’s campaign promises for a more active US participation in the Balkan conflict. “The initial Clinton decisions on Bosnia primarily reflected military thinking, both in terms of the issues to be considered and the outcome recommended.”<sup>545</sup> For example, in April of 1993, Secretary Aspin and other civilian leaders still believed “that air strikes should be considered and [were] sympathetic to the notion of lifting the arms embargo on the Muslims.”<sup>546</sup> The military

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<sup>541</sup> This peace proposal of January 1993 aimed at salvaging a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina by dividing it into 10 semi-autonomous regions under a weak central government. It was supported by the UN. However, after the Bosnian Serb Assembly rejected the plan in May of 1993, Lord Owen himself declared it “dead.”

<sup>542</sup> See, for example, John Darnton, “Europeans Welcome U.S. Role in Bosnia, Especially Its Arms,” *New York Times*, February 12, 1993, p. 10.

<sup>543</sup> Andrew Bacevich, p. 92.

<sup>544</sup> “Clinton Said to Consider Troops in Bosnia,” *New York Times*, February 10, 1993, p. 6.

<sup>545</sup> Charles Stevenson, “The Evolving Clinton Doctrine on the Use of Force,” *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Summer 1996), p. 523.

<sup>546</sup> Michael Gordon, “Limited U.S. Force Held Still an Option in Bosnia,” *New York Times*, April 9, 1993, p. 7.

has been opposing a policy of “lift and strike” and “the administration quickly abandoned the use of force option and focused on finding an alternative to the peace plan developed by the UN and the EU, which they regarded as rewarding the Serbs for aggression.”<sup>547</sup>

The next section analyzes the effects of high preference divergence on the quality of the decision-making process. The level of divergence in the preferences of top civilian and military officials affects all aspects of decision-making and implementation but its effects are especially notable in regard to information sharing and analysis (as is also shown in the chapter on the 2003 Iraq war). When there is a big gap between civilian and military preferences, my theoretical framework expects that both sides would have an incentive to withhold or misrepresent information in order to boost their own preferences. The evidence confirms that high preference divergence often results in concealing or misrepresenting information and this undermines the comprehensiveness of policy discussions. It makes it less likely that alternative policy options would be brought up and debated or that strongly-held assumptions would be challenged.

In this particular case, the military, which was strongly opposed to intervention in Bosnia, presented the case against US involvement in the Balkans in the starkest possible terms. One Army colonel likened Yugoslavia to ‘two parts of Lebanon and one part Vietnam.’<sup>548</sup> The situation in the Balkans, the military argued, was extremely difficult and there was hardly anything there that could be accomplished with the use of military force. For example, Powell’s strong opinion was that bombing would not be successful

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<sup>547</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants*, p. 263. See also Elaine Sciolino, “U.S. Backs Bosnian Peace Plan, Dropping Threats to Use Force,” *New York Times*, February 11, 1993, p. 1; Thomas Friedman, “Clinton Seeking Negotiated Path to Bosnia Pact,” *New York Times*, February 4, 1993, p. 1.

<sup>548</sup> Barton Gellman, “Defense Planners Making Case Against Intervention in Yugoslavia,” *Washington Post*, June 13, 1992, p. 16.

in coercing Milosevic. The generals argued that because of the mountainous terrain in Bosnia, it would be difficult to locate and destroy Serb artillery. It would be next to impossible to distinguish friend from foe because the positions of the warring parties were intertwined, so precision strikes would be very difficult. Furthermore, such strikes could provoke the Serbs who could retaliate by seizing members of the UN humanitarian mission on the ground.<sup>549</sup> Gen. McCaffrey warned that the US and coalition forces would have to be inserted in a chaotic environment, amid well-armed warring factions of Serbs, Muslims and Croats numbering over 200, 000. “Much of the violence is going on at night. It’s in forested country. We do not have a ground collection system on the spot. We do not have the ability to mark targets for air strikes.”<sup>550</sup>

Along the same lines, when preferences diverge highly, we observe that both civilian and military officials may be tempted to conceal or misrepresent information about the intentions and capabilities of the adversary in order to present in more favorable light their own preferred course of action. In this case, for example, the generals portrayed the Serbs as militarily very strong and proficient, and determined to fight. During the deliberations with top civilian decision-makers, military officials pointed out that Hitler had sent 38 Infantry Divisions to the Balkans without much success against the Serbs – the US could not do better, officers argue, especially having in mind that, at that time, the country had only 12 divisions on active duty. Based on this image of the enemy, the generals argued that a military operation could result in a quagmire. According to Gen. McCaffrey, “it would take considerable amount of time ... Oh, I think it would be a

<sup>549</sup> Colin Powell, *My American Journey*, p. 576.

<sup>550</sup> General Barry McCaffrey quoted in Rowan Scarborough, “Chiefs Sound Bosnia Alarm; Chaos Seen for US Troops,” *Washington Times*, August 12, 1992.

very bitter struggle.”<sup>551</sup> Quite the contrary, top civilian officials thought that the Serbian military forces “may be overrated and that an air attack might be effective in deterring Serbian attacks.”<sup>552</sup> Holbrooke and other civilians argued that the Serbs were “not the North Vietnamese ... This was not hardened Communist cadre who suffered by the millions. This was a bunch of ragtag thugs and bullies.”<sup>553</sup> U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia Warren Zimmermann shared Holbrooke’s views. In such situations, when both sides have an incentive to conceal or misrepresent private information, it is unlikely that policy discussions would be productive and, thus, the quality of the decision-making process as a whole would suffer significantly.

Discussions between top civilian and military officials about the number of US troops needed to intervene were, at times, also marred by contradictions and exaggerations. As a former state department official joked, during debates on Bosnia, no matter what the question was, the military answer always came as “several hundred thousand troops.” The military argued that if force had to be used, the US would need a massive deployment. For example, Lt. Gen. Barry McCaffrey told a Senate committee that if the US wanted to intervene in Bosnia to stop the violence, that would require “perhaps a field army ... in a year or so, one could drop the level of violence ... I would guess it would be a field army. It would be around 400, 000 troops.”<sup>554</sup> And the

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<sup>551</sup> United States Senate, Situation in Bosnia and Appropriate U.S. and Western Responses: Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, 102<sup>nd</sup> Congress, Second Session, 11 August, 1992, pp. 38-9.

<sup>552</sup> Michael Gordon, “12 in State Department Ask Military Move Against the Serbs,” *New York Times*, April 23, 1993, p. 12.

<sup>553</sup> Charlie Rose Show, Interview with Richard Holbrooke, PBS, May 26, 1998. See also, Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 218.

<sup>554</sup> United States Senate, Situation in Bosnia and Appropriate U.S. and Western Responses: Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, 102<sup>nd</sup> Congress, Second Session, 11 August, 1992, p. 38. See also

operation would be more difficult than the guerrilla fighting in Vietnam, the General advised. On the other hand, civilian officials who were supportive of a US role in Bosnia argued that using air strikes and lifting the arms embargo could bring improvements in the situation and there would be no need of a large ground-troop presence. When in July of 1993 the Bosnian Serbs intensified their siege of Sarajevo, President Clinton called for new policy options, including military ones.<sup>555</sup> Secretary Christopher, supported by Madeleine Albright, called for the use of ground forces. At a meeting of the principals on July 13, “[the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff] Adm. Jeremiah said that 70, 000 troops would be required to take Sarajevo. A week later Powell proposed several options that used fewer than the 70, 000 soldiers suggested by Jeremiah. Nevertheless, the numbers were still too high for some members of Congress.”<sup>556</sup> Earlier, in a Senate hearing, Gen. Barry McCaffrey, then a senior aide to Gen. Colin Powell, had stated that 60, 000 to 120, 000 troops would be necessary in order to secure the flow of medical supplies and food to Sarajevo.<sup>557</sup> Some senior officers had claimed that “seizing the [Sarajevo] airport and distributing relief supplies would be far more complex and costly than [was] generally understood.

Many analysts and some policy-makers at the time thought that the military was using such troops estimates in order to discourage the civilian leadership from

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Rowan Scarborough, “Chiefs Sound Bosnia Alarm; Chaos Seen for US Troops,” *Washington Times*, August 12, 1992.

<sup>555</sup> See, for example, Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge*, pp. 274-284; Ivo Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>556</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 357.

<sup>557</sup> See, for example, Michael Gordon, “Conflict in the Balkans; 60, 000 Needed for Bosnia, a U.S. General Estimates,” *New York Times*, August 12, 1992, p. 8. See also Warren Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe: Yugoslavia and Its Destroyers – America’s Last Ambassador Tells What Happened and Why* (New York: Times Books, 1996), p. 219.



intervening (by repeatedly stating preconditions of “overwhelming” and “compelling” force). Brent Scowcroft, among others, found those estimates “probably” exaggerated by the Joint Chiefs, who wanted to make US involvement in the conflict seem prohibitively costly.<sup>558</sup> Halberstam also claims that Powell’s high estimates were an attempt to test civilian resolve. The fact that the U.S. ultimately committed a little more than 35, 000 troops (at its peak) and that this number was very different from the military estimates offered during the debates could suggest that at least some of those estimates were intended to make the price of the mission seem prohibitive to civilian leaders and hence, preclude an option.<sup>559</sup> Most scholars and policy-makers agree that military advisors should honestly advise on the costs and benefits of alternative courses of action and should not knowingly and artificially increase the costs and risks of a policy option in order to dissuade decision-makers from undertaking it.<sup>560</sup> While, ideally, this should not happen, in real life it does and the contribution of an approach to civil-military relations and decision-making which takes into account the degree of preference divergence between civilian and military leaders, alerts us to when and why military advisors may resort to precisely such tactics. This is not to argue that there was no merit in the military’s arguments, but to highlight circumstances and conditions under which we are more likely to have both civilian and military leaders distort information and skew debates (i.e., conditions such as *high civil-military preference divergence*).

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<sup>558</sup> Jon Western, *Selling Intervention and War: The Presidency, the Media, and the American Public* (Washington, DC: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 150. See also, David Halberstam, *War in a Times of Peace*, p. 42; Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants*, p. 272.

<sup>559</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants*, p. 263, 272.

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

As this section showed, when preferences diverge highly, both sides may be tempted to distort information in order to support an outcome closer to their own preferred choice. In such situations, communications between civilian and military leaders will most likely deteriorate; discussions will not necessarily be informative and productive, assumptions could remain untested. Richard Holbrooke, for example, complained that in the debates on Bosnia quite often the word “Vietnam” was thrown around, but civilian and military leaders did not agree on the lessons of Vietnam and whether they were applicable to the situation at hand. However, the pattern of civil-military relations at the time precluded an open discussion about what Holbrooke and other civilian leaders believed were the “fundamental differences” between Bosnia and Vietnam. “Discussion of such distinctions was not welcome.”<sup>561</sup> Many of the military assumptions on that score remained unexamined because of the high civil-military preference divergence, which often precluded frank discussions and rigorous analysis of alternative options and because of military dominance and the inability and unwillingness of civilian leaders to challenge military preferences. High civil-military preference divergence impeded information sharing and strained civil-military communication. Just like in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war, the intense civil-military disagreements in views and attitudes in this case led to truncated discussions and missed opportunities to debate a full range of military and non-military alternatives and to correct flawed assumptions. Thus, high civil-military preference divergence led to the skewing of U.S. policy choices. “...flawed estimates translated into the perceived need for massive US forces for any

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<sup>561</sup> Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 217.

intervention, with both forces and casualties predicted on a scale that was automatically politically unpalatable.”<sup>562</sup>

The degree of preference divergence also affects another important part of the decision and implementation process, namely, the cooperation and coordination between civilian and military leaders. Intense civil-military preference divergence, I hypothesize, would increase the incentives of each side to pursue its own set of goals and, hence, diminish the chances for cooperation between civilian and military officials (because they want very different things). As a result, diplomatic and military aspects of the decision could often remain uncoordinated. In most cases, high preference divergence would lead to a failure to fully integrate military views with political and diplomatic policy and a failure to match successfully political objectives and military means. As my theoretical framework expects, high preference divergence did have negative effects upon the cooperation and coordination between civilian and military officials in the Clinton administration as well.

Lack of integration between the diplomatic and the military effort was all too obvious in Operation Deliberate Force (August 30 - September 14, 1995), for example. According to many, during that Operation, civil-military tensions escalated to a peak and this led to inability to integrate the bombing with the diplomatic strategy. In order to get the Serbs to negotiate, the politicians wanted to use the threat of air strikes or actual bombing, if the threat failed, as a coercive tool.<sup>563</sup> To achieve this, Holbrooke pressed for tighter integration between the diplomatic and the military arms, and in accordance with

<sup>562</sup> Norman Cigar, “Paradigms and U.S. Policymaking for Bosnia (1992-1995),” paper prepared for the 1998 Conference organized by International Forum Bosnia (IFB) in Sarajevo, p. 76.

<sup>563</sup> Michael Gordon, “Powell Delivers a Resounding No on Using Limited Force in Bosnia,” *New York Times*, September 28, 1992, p. 1.

the principle of civilian control, this would have translated into greater control by Holbrooke over the operation. This was strongly resisted by senior military officers on the ground. After 2 days of NATO air strikes, Admiral Smith and Lieut. Gen. Bernard Janvier, the then commander of UN forces in Yugoslavia, recommended a pause in the bombing because the Serb Commander, Gen. Ratko Mladic, had promised to start withdrawing his forces. The American diplomats and the other civilians who had insisted for the bombing in the first place were “stunned” by the military’s recommendation.<sup>564</sup> They argued that Mladic’s promise should not be believed because the general had a history of broken commitments. The diplomats insisted that the bombing continued until the Bosnian Serbs complied with NATO’s demand to pull back their heavy weapons. They attributed Smith’s recommendation to his “naivete” and lack of knowledge of the Balkan conflict. The generals, however, after achieving the bombing pause (and being reluctant to bomb in the first place), were not very willing to resume the air strikes, as the civilians urged. The situation became so tense at one point that Adm. Smith told Holbrooke he would not take orders from Washington as to whether to continue with the bombing or not. As Holbrooke remembered, the Admiral told him that as a commander he was solely responsible for the safety of his troops, and “he would make his decision, under authority delegated to him by the NATO Council, based on his own judgment. In fact, he pointed out, he did not even work for the United States; as a NATO commander he took orders from Brussels.”<sup>565</sup>

<sup>564</sup> For details, see Chris Hedges, “Rocky Path for U.S. Admiral in Bosnia,” *New York Times*, April 28, 1996, p. 14.

<sup>565</sup> Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 118. See also Kevin Sullivan, “How a Clever, Unjust Solution Ended the Bosnian War,” *The Straits Times*, December 6, 1998.

Holbrooke and other diplomats insisted on the bombing to continue and argued that such military pressure was very important in their negotiations with the Serbs. In a now famous cable, Holbrooke implored: “History could hang in the balance tonight. Give us bombs for peace.” However, coordination between the diplomatic and the military effort became almost impossible because Admiral Smith had ordered Gen. Michael Ryan, the air force commander in charge of the bombing, “to have no contact with [Holbrooke’s] negotiating team.”<sup>566</sup> Since Holbrooke and his team played the key role in the diplomacy with both the Bosnian Serbs and President Slobodan Milosevic, the lack of communication between Holbrooke’s team and the military meant that there was almost no coordination between the diplomatic and the military effort. “Indeed, the U.S. military opposed making bombing part of a larger policy. No one was more outspoken in his opposition to a bombing campaign than Adm. Leighton “Snuffy” Smith, who was both commander of all U.S. forces in southern Europe and commander of all Naval forces in Europe.”<sup>567</sup> Richard Holbrooke wrote of Smith that he “was edging into an area of political judgments that should have been reserved for civilian leaders.”<sup>568</sup> At the time, Holbrooke and his aides even suspected that “the military dissembled to the senior national security policy-making team about whether it was running out of approved Serbian targets to strike.”<sup>569</sup> The officers, on their part, were offended that the civilian leadership trusted them so little as to accuse them basically of “lying.” After 4 days of

<sup>566</sup> Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 144. See also, Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 359.

<sup>567</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 358.

<sup>568</sup> Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 118.

<sup>569</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants*, p. 267; Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, pp. 118, 145-6.

civil-military bickering, Smith agreed to resume the bombing campaign but only when it became obvious that NATO demands were not met, and after Gen. Clark, Holbrooke's military liaison officer at the time, reiterated the order to him.<sup>570</sup> Thus, high preference divergence led to lack of coordination between the diplomatic and the military arms of the mission and this insufficient coordination often caused serious problems in implementation.<sup>571</sup>

After the signing of the Dayton agreement, civil-military preferences continued to diverge on some key issues related to peace enforcement and the resulting almost total lack of cooperation between top US civilian and military officials on these issues had a damaging effect on the peace enforcement mission. The most contentious issues were whether IFOR (and, hence, the US military on the ground) would be responsible for pursuing accused war criminals and for assisting with the relocation of refugees. Civilians believed that in order to make the Dayton agreement work, the military should enforce it rigorously, including this part of the agreement which called for the arrest of alleged war criminals Radovan Karadzic, Ratko Mladic, and others. The military was very much opposed to what civilians were urging it to do. When civil-military preference divergence is high, my theoretical framework anticipates that the agent, unwilling to carry out the principal's preferences, would be more likely to shirk. "Shirking" could involve foot-dragging or various other attempts to stall. In this case, for example, one form of shirking was the refusal of military commanders on the ground to arrest alleged war criminals. For example, Admiral Leighton Smith, the U.S. commander of the 60,000 NATO force in Bosnia, argued that the military was not going to go after war

<sup>570</sup> Ivo Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, pp. 131-132.

<sup>571</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants*, p. 270; Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 337.

criminals because this could lead to armed confrontations with both sides. The military, according to the Admiral, was “not trained to do police work. Training to be a policeman is entirely different than training to be a soldier.”<sup>572</sup> He said he did not want his soldiers to have to take sides in the conflict because this would make it difficult “to perform their primary task, which is to separate the warring parties and maintain peace.”<sup>573</sup> Admiral Smith refused to chase and/or arrest anyone unless he was ordered specifically by President Clinton. Smith’s opposition was so intransigent that President Clinton, who made clear he himself supported the arrest of war criminals, accused Smith of insubordination.<sup>574</sup>

Another case of shirking was the military’s unwillingness to act when in March of 1996, NATO and the headquarters of Carl Bildt, the international coordinator for the implementation of the Dayton accords, proceeded with the agreed upon handover of five Serb-held neighborhoods to the Bosnian government. Then, according to many, “the worst catastrophe” ensued. Many of the buildings were burned or looted while the military stood by. Western diplomats accused Admiral Smith of inaction and thus “facilitating the looting of Bosnian property” and of letting “slip the last opportunity to build a multi-ethnic society. With some resolve, things could have been different, but he [Smith] refused to confront the Serbs,” who were doing the looting.<sup>575</sup> Civilian leaders

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<sup>572</sup> Quoted in Chris Hedges, “Rocky Path for U.S. Admiral in Bosnia,” *New York Times*, April 28, 1996, p. 14.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>574</sup> David Halberstam, *War in a Times of Peace*, p. 349.

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*

believed that had the military not dragged its heels, this tragedy could have been avoided and the chances for reconciliation could have increased.

Such military foot-dragging, resulting from the high civil-military preference divergence over how to enforce the peace agreement, was all too common in the case of Bosnia. U.S. diplomats and other civilians argued that military commanders were overly cautious and unwilling to enforce the agreement and that their behavior was ultimately hurting the chances for peace. Speaking angrily of Adm. Smith's timidity and non-compliance, a senior diplomat said: "He should nab these war criminals and pursue justice. The consequences of not doing this are that he will have an excellent year, he will spend billions of dollars, he will have fewer people hurt than if they had all stayed home in the United States, and there will be no peace."<sup>576</sup> The conflicts in the Balkans, more generally, are a good illustration of the impact of high civil-military preference divergence on the decision and implementation processes. In each case the big gap between the views of civilian and military officials on how to deal with these conflicts produced reluctance on the part of the generals to develop military options or to enforce peace agreements.

In addition to problems with communication, information sharing, and coordination between civilian and military leaders, evidence shows that *high* preference divergence leads to the increase of the number of "strategic" leaks. The logic of this is straightforward: when there is a high preference divergence both the civilians and the military may be tempted to resort to the help of other major actors who support their side of the argument. In such cases, civilian and military officials may leak information to

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<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.*



Congress or the media in order to influence the internal debate. In most cases, leaks have had negative impact not only on the decision-making process itself, but on the state of the civil-military relationship as well. Just like in the period prior to the 2003 Iraq war, characterized by very high preference divergence between the civilian leadership and top military officials, during the debates on Bosnia, leaks were common on both sides. One of the more important documents that was leaked to the press was Madeleine Albright's paper, "which advocated bombing strikes."<sup>577</sup> As a report correctly noted, "top military professionals have not been shy about making their discontent known" not only to the press, but to "lawmakers and to groups of retired senior officers, who often serve as channels for such complaints."<sup>578</sup> Similarly, to shore up support for their preferred course of action, civilians from the State Department made "public" their letter to the Secretary of State, protesting what they defined as the US policy of inaction in the face of "Serbian genocide."

High preference divergence also contributed to what one expert called "the toxicity of the civil-military relationship"<sup>579</sup> which further complicated decision-making on the use of force. The civilian mistrust of the military was more than reciprocated by the military's passionate dislike and even disdain for the President and his civilian aides. The Clinton presidency, at times, was marked by open hostility by the military for its

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<sup>577</sup> Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge*, p. 152, as well as pp. 96, 194-95, 303 which discuss the use of leaks during the debates on health care. See also Richard Kohn, "The Erosion of Civilian Control of the Military in the United States Today," *Naval War College Review* (Summer 2002).

<sup>578</sup> Richard Serrano, Art Pine, "Policy on Somalia, Haiti Angers Pentagon," *Los Angeles Times*, October 19, 1993, p. 10.

<sup>579</sup> Richard Kohn, "The Erosion of Civilian Control of the Military in the United States Today," *Naval War College Review* (Summer 2002), emphasis added.

commander in chief rarely seen in the past.<sup>580</sup> For example, in the *Navy Times*, a Marine Major called Clinton “an adulterous liar” and a “criminal” (in 1998). A retired Army Colonel and the director of strategy for the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, James McDonough, wrote in an op-ed,

“Implicit in our faith and confidence was the presumption that [US troops] would be committed only with the careful consideration and wisdom of our national decision makers. As it turns out, on at least one occasion during his deliberations in 1995, President Clinton might not have had his mind fully on the enormous responsibilities he was incurring by putting U.S. troops in harms’ way. According to the Starr report, during a phone call to Rep. H.L. “Sonny” Calahan (R., Ala.) on Nov. 17 to secure his vote against an attempt to deny funds to commit troops to Bosnia, the president was simultaneously receiving sexual favors from Monica Lewinsky. ... It saddens the heart to learn that President Clinton, during this one moment at least, was arguing for sending America’s armed forces into potential danger even as he must have been significantly distracted. ... the act of casual sex at a moment of great importance smacks of callous indifference, sophomoric arrogance, and reckless disregard of the sanctity of U.S. soldiers’ lives.”<sup>581</sup>

Another officer questioned whether the military is obliged to obey orders issued by “a morally defective leader with a demonstrated disregard for his troops.”<sup>582</sup> At one point, the situation became so bad that the military leadership had to issue orders reminding officers that the Uniform Code of Military Justice prohibited the use of “contemptuous words” about civilian authority. This strained civil-military relationship damaged the decision-making process in several ways: “first, by paralyzing national security policy; second, by obstructing and in some cases sabotaging American ability to intervene in foreign crises or to exercise leadership internationally; and third, by undermining the

<sup>580</sup> Eliot Cohen, “Civil-Military Relations,” *Orbis*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (1997), p. 177.

<sup>581</sup> James R. McDonough, “Clinton’s Contempt for U.S. Soldiers,” *Wall Street Journal*, 28 September, 1998, p. A28.

<sup>582</sup> Daniel Rabil (Major, Marine Corps Reserve), “Please, Impeach My Commander In Chief,” *Washington Times*, November 10, 1998.

confidence of the armed forces in their own uniformed leadership.”<sup>583</sup> While high preference divergence between civilian and military leaders was not the only factor responsible for poor civil-military relations (among other factors being Clinton’s personality and some of his actions in office), the big gap in the ideas and preferences between the politicians and the generals was a major factor as well.

We also observe significant positive changes in decision-making and implementation when civilian and military preferences became more alike as a result of new military appointments at key positions, and especially the appointment of Gen. Shalikashvili as the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The next paragraphs analyze this policy change, how it related to a higher level of preference *convergence* and what were the overall consequences for decision-making.

The new Bosnia policy of the Clinton administration was more active and more in line with the original civilian preferences. After the massacre in Srebrenica (July 15, 1995), Bill Clinton stated that “the United States cannot be a punching bag in the world anymore.”<sup>584</sup> Secretary of Defense Bill Perry and Chairman Shalikashvili were also furious. When on August 28, 1995 the Serbs shelled the Sarajevo marketplace, the President and his new Chairman decided that NATO should begin air strikes. Thus August 31 became “the busiest day of military action in NATO history, with planes ranging across all of Northern and Western Bosnia.”<sup>585</sup> Arguably, the air campaign, together with the ground offensive of the Croatian army, helped the political and

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<sup>583</sup> Richard Kohn, “The Erosion of Civilian Control of the Military in the United States Today,” *Naval War College Review* (Summer 2002).

<sup>584</sup> David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 331.

<sup>585</sup> Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War* (New York: Random House, 1998), p. 110.

diplomatic effort and brought the Serbs to the negotiating table.<sup>586</sup> On September 14, 1995, the Bosnian Serbs agreed to stop their offensive in Sarajevo, to remove heavy weaponry from the area, to open a land route out of the city, and to reopen the Sarajevo airport. NATO threatened to resume bombing if the Serbians do not follow through, but they did. On December 14, 1995, the Dayton Agreement was reached, and, as a result, 20, 000 American troops (a part of a 60, 000 NATO force, IFOR) replaced the UN troops in Bosnia.

A big part of the explanation for this policy change lies in the retirement of Gen. Colin Powell and the appointment of Gen. Shalikashvili as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Significantly, this appointment caused a decrease in civil-military preference divergence at the top, which led to improved communication and cooperation between civilian and military leaders. Many analysts have noted the important differences in the views of Generals Powell and Shalikashvili.<sup>587</sup> Dale Herspring, for example, writes:

The Clinton administration – as well as some of Shali’s colleagues on the Joint Chiefs – thought that the new chair’s views were closer to Clinton’s than Powell’s. ... They [the Administration] also liked the fact that Shalikashvili believed in greater flexibility in using military force. Early in his tenure, he indicated that he wanted to modify the Weinberger Doctrine, which specified that the United States should become involved militarily only when the vital interests of the US were at stake. Shalikashvili wanted to drop the word ‘vital.’ He could envision numerous situations in which a president would wish to advocate the use of troops even if no threat were posed to the nation’s vital interests. He also recognized that the Cold War had ended and that the United States would inevitably become involved in what the Pentagon called ‘Operations Other Than War.’<sup>588</sup>

As a result of Gen. Powell’s retirement, civilian and military preferences grew closer. The new Chairman modified the Powell Doctrine to the extent that he was more

<sup>586</sup> Ivo Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, pp. 134-35.

<sup>587</sup> See, for example, Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge*, p. 410.

<sup>588</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 350.

receptive to the military being involved in the so-called Operations Other Than War. He stated, “A president must have in his tool bag, in addition to the diplomatic tools, the economic tools, also the tool of military power to protect American interests.”<sup>589</sup> Powell’s successor thought that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff could not “put a notice on his door saying, ‘I’m sorry – we only do the big ones.’”<sup>590</sup> Importantly, “Clinton told aides that he was more comfortable with Shali than he had been with Powell.”<sup>591</sup> Other civilian policy-makers have also reported a better relationship with Shalikashvili. Richard Holbrooke writes fondly of the Polish-born General for whom English was a fourth language. According to Holbrooke, Shali had “a quick smile and disarming manner,” was “open and friendly,” and “universally liked by his civilian colleagues.” Unlike other military officers Holbrooke had to deal with, Shali “never tried to strong-arm or overwhelm civilians in a discussion, but simply stated his position and held his ground as long as possible.”<sup>592</sup> That Shalikashvili was more flexible allowed for a richer variety of military options to be considered during the decision-making process. Cooperation between civilian and military leaders also improved.

Similar changes were observed on the ground in Bosnia. The military reluctance there prevailed until the summer of 1997, when the second and more assertive Clinton civilian team was able to put in place different military commanders in NATO and locally in Bosnia. By then, on the civilian side, Secretary Christopher was replaced with

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<sup>589</sup> Quoted in Steven Erlanger and David Sanger, “On Global Stage, Clinton Finds Balance as Leader,” *New York Times*, July 29, 1996.

<sup>590</sup> David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 391.

<sup>591</sup> Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge*, p. 410.

<sup>592</sup> Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 219.

a more assertive and pro-interventionist Secretary Madeleine Albright. Albright teamed up with new National Security Advisor Sandy Berger – himself as “hawkish” as his predecessor Anthony Lake but far closer to the president and so a more potent player in civil-military squabbles. Both of them backed a more vigorous pursuit of war criminals in Bosnia.<sup>593</sup> In order to overcome military resistance and facilitate the desired change in the Clinton approach to Bosnia, civilian leaders replaced NATO commander General Joulwan with General Wesley Clark, a former military aide to Holbrooke. Admiral Smith was replaced with General Shinseki, who did not interpret IFOR’s rules of engagement as narrowly as his predecessor. Gen. Clark’s views of the military mission were much closer to the civilian views. These changes significantly decreased military resistance to enforcing fully the provisions of the Dayton accords.

Besides the degree of preference divergence, the civil-military balance of power also affects the quality of the decision-making process and the content of policies. In the first Clinton Administration, the dominance of military views was reflected in the increased ability of top military officials to establish criteria for discussing and evaluating policy options on the use of force.<sup>594</sup> Military dominance in practice meant the dominance of the principles of the Weinberger/Powell doctrine. The precepts of the Doctrine became the dominant decision criteria on the use of force.<sup>595</sup> They set firm

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<sup>593</sup> See, for example, Jeffrey Smith, “Push on Bosnia War Crimes Pledged; Berger Says U.S. Plans ‘More Effective Steps’ against Those Indicted,” *Washington Post*, December 9, 1996, p. 2; Michael Dobbs, “In Bosnia, a Dubious Peace Process,” *Washington Post*, May 2, 1997, p. 2; William Drozdiak, “Call for Pursuit of Bosnian War Criminals Resisted,” *Washington Post*, June 13, 1997, p. 36; Steven Erlanger, “On Bosnia, Clinton Support Albright against Cohen View,” *New York Times*, June 12, 1997, p. 1.

<sup>594</sup> Christopher Gibson, *Countervailing Forces*, p. 228.

<sup>595</sup> For a similar argument, see Cori Dauber, “The Practice of Argument: Reading the Conditions of Civil-Military Relations,” *Armed Forces and Society* (Spring 1998), pp. 435-446. See also Christopher Gibson, *Countervailing Forces: Enhancing Civilian Control and National Security through Madisonian Concepts*, Ph. D. Dissertation (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 227-28.

preconditions to civilian intentions to employ the military instrument. More importantly, the Doctrine implied that once a decision to use force had been made, civilian leaders should not mess around and allow the military professionals a free hand in the implementation.<sup>596</sup> Because the Doctrine claims exclusive military control over all operational decisions it allows for military criteria and considerations to shape political goals.<sup>597</sup> More specifically, the dominance of military preferences constrained the decision-making process in several ways discussed in the following paragraphs.

The dominance of the Weinberger Doctrine resulted in limiting the military options available to civilian decision-makers. This happened in both the Bosnian and the Kosovo crises in the Clinton Administration and in earlier stages of the Bosnian conflict in the first Bush administration. As Cori Dauber states, “The result was an unspoken assumption that whenever military force is to be deployed, America confronts a *binary* choice. Military interventions will always be *either* another Desert Storm *or* another Vietnam: there are no other alternatives, no sense that a spectrum of options may be available.”<sup>598</sup> Using military force to fight a war is only one option for the employing of force. (The other options include: deterrence, preventive attacks, compellence, punitive attacks, peacekeeping, peace-making, nation-building, interdiction, humanitarian assistance, and rescue.)<sup>599</sup> A full spectrum of military options should exist not only in

<sup>596</sup> Andrew Bacevich, “Elusive Bargain: The Pattern of U.S. Civil-Military Relations Since World War II,” Paper presented at Rutgers University, p. 37.

<sup>597</sup> David Johnson, “Wielding the Terrible Swift Sword: The American Military Paradigm and Civil-Military Relations,” John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Project on U.S. Post Cold-War Civil-Military Relations, Working Paper No. 7.

<sup>598</sup> Cori E. Dauber, “Implications of the Weinberger Doctrine for American Military Intervention in a Post-Desert Storm Age,” *Contemporary Security Policy* (December 2001), pp. 84-5.

<sup>599</sup> See Richard Haass’ taxonomy in Richard Haass, *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1999), pp. 49-65.

theory; otherwise, national security policy would be undermined by a lack of suitable military options.<sup>600</sup>

The Weinberger Doctrine does not provide much guidance for politicians on how to approach conflicts that do not necessarily involve U.S. vital interests. For example, precise “end states” would not be relevant to some perfectly “good” and legitimate uses of force in constabulary and other missions, which could go on for a very long time.<sup>601</sup> The Doctrine’s solution for such conflicts is either to be avoided at any cost or to be dealt with using overwhelming force. The problem, of course, is that in most cases of the so-called “complex emergencies” neither of these options would be appropriate. Limiting the military options ultimately undermines the goals of civilian leaders. “President Clinton’s goals were undermined by the means he had available, and after the failure in Somalia, policy was reformulated in line with the Army’s limited and self-referential thinking.”<sup>602</sup> The Weinberger/Powell doctrine could be a limit on U.S. flexibility in situations which may require the use of force, but not necessarily an all-out war. As Eliot Cohen has argued, the doctrine could yield “a military posture ... likely to provide civilian leaders with only the harshest of military choices, or indeed none at all”<sup>603</sup>

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<sup>600</sup> Christopher Gacek, *The Logic of Force: the Dilemma of Limited War in American Foreign Policy*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 306-312. See also Thomas Ricks, “Collin Powell’s doctrine on use of military force is now being questioned by senior U.S. officers,” *Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 30, 1995, p. A12.

<sup>601</sup> For a similar argument, see James Nathan, *Soldiers, Statecraft, and History: Coercive Diplomacy and International Order* (Westport, London: Praeger, 2002), p. 161.

<sup>602</sup> Richard Lock-Pullan, “Learning the Limits of Virtue: Clinton, the Army and the Criteria for the Use of Military Force,” *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vo. 24, No. 2 (August 2003), p. 148.

<sup>603</sup> Eliot Cohen, “Playing Powell Politics, The General’s Zest for Power,” *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 1995), p. 108.



Furthermore, critics of the Powell Doctrine argued that its all-or-nothing approach could paralyze foreign policy-makers by excluding the possibility of success of limited measures. They also maintained that even limited military objectives could be precisely defined so not to lead to a quagmire, and that in the case of Bosnia, while limited measures may not necessarily bring a quick resolution of the conflict or a victory, they could still be preferable to “doing nothing.”

Analyzing the content of military preferences and how the dominance of these preferences affected the decision-making process shows that during the discussions some policy options were not considered seriously (or were automatically excluded) because they did not conform to major precepts of the Powell Doctrine. One such option, for example, was the use of a threat of force. Following the precepts of the doctrine makes it difficult to use threats of force for coercive purposes.<sup>604</sup> “[Powell’s] tests [for the use of force] effectively deny the legitimacy of force as a tool of coercive diplomacy by restricting its use to circumstances involving clear and present threats to manifestly vital interests.”<sup>605</sup> On more than one occasion in the crisis over former Yugoslavia, when top civilian officials attempted to use military threats to pressure the Serbs to achieve a diplomatic solution, their efforts were undercut by public statements of military officials, rejecting any use of force.<sup>606</sup> This is not to argue that a strategy of coercive diplomacy would necessarily have been successful most of the time or that this strategy was the best

<sup>604</sup> See, for example, Jeffrey Record, “Perils of Reasoning by Historical Analogy: Munich, Vietnam, and American Use of Force since 1945,” Occasional Paper No. 4, Center for Strategy and Technology, Air War College, March 1998.

<sup>605</sup> Jeffrey Record, “Force Protection Fetishism: Sources, Consequences, and Solutions,” *Aerospace Power Journal* (Summer 2000).

<sup>606</sup> See, for example, Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants*, p. 265; Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge*, p. 275.

one in all cases when civilian decision-makers wanted to use it. As recent research on coercive diplomacy shows, this strategy, although a popular tool for American policy-makers, is actually quite difficult to apply, even for the only super-power, and “fails more often than it succeeds.” According to Robert Art, coercive diplomacy succeeds in achieving a state’s policy objectives only 20 % of the time.<sup>607</sup> And it is not to say that the military critique was necessarily wrong.<sup>608</sup> The point here is that civilian decision-makers, even if they happen to be wrong, should not be undercut by military reluctance or lack of options, but that this is likely to happen when civilian and military preferences diverge and the balance of power favors the military.

It is a truism that if force is to be used successfully as a tool of coercive diplomacy, U.S. credibility should not be in doubt. U.S. leaders would not be able to credibly threaten the use of force if American adversaries are convinced that self-imposed restrictions make its use unlikely.<sup>609</sup> In his book *No More Vietnams*, Richard Nixon wrote, “our ineptness in Vietnam led many Americans to question the wisdom of using

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<sup>607</sup> Robert Art and Patrick Cronin, eds., *The United States and Coercive Diplomacy: Past, Present, and Future* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2003).

<sup>608</sup> Needless to say, the caution stemming from the Powell Doctrine could, in some circumstances, be very useful, especially since it is a matter of life and death, or destruction. For example, many would have liked it and this country could have been better off had military, and not civilian, preferences dominated in 2002-03 and had the US to not invaded Iraq. But the argument here is not about whose preferences happen to be “correct” in one case or another. After all, if history is any guide, in crises, at least at the beginning, most civilian and military leaders have been wrong about key aspects of the political-military situation, such as: their own and/or their enemies’ intentions and capabilities, the intentions and capabilities of their allies, etc. But the important difference is that, under some circumstances, the original defective views and assessments are corrected and the state manages to design a military and diplomatic strategy that achieves its goals, while, under other circumstances, the state fails to do so. Hence, the argument here is about these circumstances or patterns of civil-military relations that would be conducive to an effective decision-making process, or the particular configurations of power and preferences from Table 1 that would result in a decision process which would allow the state to design appropriate strategies for achieving its objectives.

<sup>609</sup> Jeffrey Record, “Perils of Reasoning by Historical Analogy: Munich, Vietnam, and American Use of Force since 1945,” Occasional Paper No. 4, Center for Strategy and Technology, Air War College, March 1998.

our power at all” and this has turned the US “into a military giant and a diplomatic dwarf.”<sup>610</sup> Nixon cautioned that the “outstretched hand of diplomacy will have a very weak grip unless a President holds the scepter of credible military power in his other hand.”<sup>611</sup> Under the dominance of the Powell Doctrine, the United States and its allies failed to make credible threats of force against Serbia’s advances because it was clear to the Serbs that the US and allies were unwilling to actually use force in a convincing manner. As a result, more than once, Milosevic called the allies’ bluff during the Bosnia crisis and later, in the Kosovo crisis, rejected NATO’s ultimatum.<sup>612</sup>

Another consequence of the U.S. being seen as unwilling to use its power is that not only its coercive, but its deterrent capability as well, could be weakened. In this way, the Powell doctrine, rather than saving lives and treasure, may end up having the opposite effects.<sup>613</sup> As Donald Kagan observed, the US “must face the fact that whenever it chooses to stand aloof from challenges that may concern it, there is a price to pay in damage to the credibility of its policy of deterrence.”<sup>614</sup> Failure to use force in some situations may threaten US leadership as well. If US adversaries believe that the US would be unwilling to boost its threats or promises with force, American diplomacy is

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<sup>610</sup> Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams* (New York: Avon Books, 1985), p. 13.

<sup>611</sup> Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, p. 226.

<sup>612</sup> Jeffrey Record, “Force Protection Fetishism: Sources, Consequences, and Solutions,” *Aerospace Power Journal* (Summer 2000).

<sup>613</sup> See, for example, Donald Kagan, “Roles and Missions – Are U.S. Forces Overstretched,?” *Orbis* (Spring 1997).

<sup>614</sup> *Ibid.*

weakened. President Clinton himself admitted that US stance on Bosnia was weakening its status in the world, saying it “is killing the U.S. position of strength in the world.”<sup>615</sup>

Implicit in the Doctrine is that only operations that would not require a large number of casualties are permissible. This constraint may have encouraged American foes to test US resolve. During the Bosnia crisis, for example, a Senior Serbian official said in an interview for a Belgrade TV station: “Clinton has his own problems ... He can’t afford to have even a few soldiers killed in Bosnia.”<sup>616</sup> As analysts maintained, some statements during that period which emphasized the role of “force protection,” seemed to rule out the use of the military in combat in complex emergencies.<sup>617</sup> In a military still recovering from Vietnam, force-protection had become the mission. Deeply rooted in the military culture of the 1990s and due to the dominance of military preferences, “casualty aversion” had started to dominate civilian decision-makers as well. For example, when sending troops to Haiti, President Clinton stated: “My first concern, and the most important one, obviously, is for the safety and security of our troops. General Shalikashvili and Lieutenant General Hugh Shelton, our commander in Haiti, have made it clear to all involved that the protection of American lives is our first order of business.”<sup>618</sup>

<sup>615</sup> The remark was made during a July 1995 breakfast meeting with national security advisors.

<sup>616</sup> Mihajilo Markovic, leader of the former Communist Party and a close ally to then Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic, quoted in Roger Thurow, “Serbs Bet That West Won’t Risk the Thing They Fear: Ground Troops,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 21, 1994, p. A10.

<sup>617</sup> Richard Lock-Pullan, “Learning the Limits of Virtue: Clinton, the Army and the Criteria for the Use of Military Force,” *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vo. 24, No. 2 (August 2003), p. 147.

<sup>618</sup> The White House, Press Conference by the President, President Carter, Senator Nunn and General Colin Powell, September 19, 1994.

Similarly, in his speech to the nation on the night Operation Allied Force began, President Clinton ruled out the use of American ground troops in Kosovo. This was done in order to re-assure American and Western publics that there would be minimal casualties and they could continue to support the air campaign. Of course, publicly announcing that no ground forces would be used<sup>619</sup> only emboldened Slobodan Milosevic and decreased US/NATO coercive leverage. This might have ultimately led to a much longer air war.<sup>620</sup> “If it is discovered, as a matter of doctrine, that the United States cannot stomach casualties, future Saddams, and Osama bin Ladens would be emboldened.”<sup>621</sup>

Another consequence of the dominance of the Powell doctrine during this period was the delay in US response to the Balkan crisis. “The prevailing paradigms had a built-in bias against taking rapid and decisive steps which might have been effective at an early stage in stopping much of the ethnic cleansing or even in preventing it altogether, as well as in facilitating a reintegration of Bosnia.”<sup>622</sup> According to former US Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmerman, this slow reaction of the US cost some 100, 000 dead and 2.5 million internally displaced people. For the same reasons, analysts allege, in 1991, the first Bush administration could have limited the fighting in Croatia and likely

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<sup>619</sup> In his Address to the nation on March 24, 1999, Clinton said: “If he [Milosevic] decides to accept the peace agreement and demilitarize Kosovo, NATO has agreed to help to implement it with a peace-keeping force. If NATO is invited to do so, our troops should take part in that mission to keep the peace. But I do not intend to put our troops in Kosovo to fight a war.” Available at: [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/europe/jan-june99/address\\_3-24.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/europe/jan-june99/address_3-24.html)

<sup>620</sup> See, for example, Ivo H. Daalder and Michael O’Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO’s War to Save Kosovo* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2000).

<sup>621</sup> James Nathan, *Soldiers, Statecraft, and History*, p. 162.

<sup>622</sup> Norman Cigar, “Paradigms and U.S. Policymaking for Bosnia (1992-1995),” paper prepared for the 1998 Conference organized by International Forum Bosnia (IFB) in Sarajevo, p. 82.

headed off the war in Bosnia entirely had it conducted air attacks against the Serbs. At the time, strong opposition from Gen. Powell prevented such action. The then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs argued that a U.S. involvement, in order to be effective and not end in a quagmire, would require hundreds of thousands of troops.<sup>623</sup> This was enough to dissuade President Bush from taking action. As Bush, Sr. shared in an interview about a year after he had left office, “they [the military] told me ‘It’ll take 250, 000 American troops. And we can’t tell you it would be entirely successful, given the complicated terrain. And we can’t tell you when it would end.’ And I made the decision [that] I simply couldn’t send a quarter-of-a-million troops into another military quagmire.”<sup>624</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter confirmed the argument that under conditions of high civil-military preference divergence and military dominance the decision-making process could be very dysfunctional. It was shown that this particular pattern of civil-military relations affects negatively all the key aspects of the decision-making and implementation processes – i.e., sharing and analysis of information, discussion of alternative options, and cooperation and coordination between civilian and military leaders. This chapter also confirms the importance of studying the two independent variables of my theoretical framework - the level of civil-military preference divergence and the civil-military balance of power. It shows how the gap between civilian and military views and ideas on the use of force affected both decisions on when force was used and also on how it was used. The bigger the gap between civilian and military preferences, the higher is the incentive of the

<sup>623</sup> Mark Danner, “Operation Storm,” *The New York Review of Books*, October 22, 1998.

<sup>624</sup> Victor Gold, “George Bush Speaks Out,” *Washingtonian*, vol. 29, 1994.

military to thwart civilian wishes. I showed that due to the high degree of preference divergence, both the military and the civilians were not very willing to share information; when they did, information was at times skewed in order to bolster their respective preferences. This affected negatively the quality of the discussions on policy and strategy. By limiting the scope of debate, many key assumptions remained unchallenged. The dominance of military preferences precluded some options from even being discussed seriously because they did not fit well with the military's paradigm. High civil-military preference divergence also produced poor coordination between politicians and the military and led to difficulties in matching political objectives and military means.

High preference divergence combined with a balance of power in favor of the military increased not only the incentives of the officers to shirk but also their ability to do so. As Peter Feaver notes, "While the civil-military conflict rarely if ever rose to the level of open insubordination, there were numerous instances of behavior that could constitute shirking."<sup>625</sup> Lack of cooperation between civilian and military officials was notable. Military leaders often resisted successfully civilian attempts to use threats of force or limited force for coercive purposes. The civilians were exasperated because they felt their hands were tied by military reluctance to act or by the generals' slowness to develop adequate military options. Although formally civilian control was not in question and the military was not openly insubordinate, in day to day decision-making the generals enjoyed substantial influence and were in a position to challenge or block the wishes of their civilian masters.

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<sup>625</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants*, p. 271.

This chapter shows that civil-military relations in a democracy could still be interesting, if examined through a model that is different from the traditional conceptions, dominant in the IR and comparative politics literature, that focus primarily on civilian control or military coups. While at no time under the Clinton administration there was the possibility of anything approaching open insubordination of the military, there were numerous cases of military foot-dragging, end runs to Congress or the public, leaks, offering of inflated estimates.<sup>626</sup> Such actions were conducted in an attempt to block a civilian policy or preference, which the military strongly opposed. Such events and the dynamics of the civil-military relationship at the pinnacle of a government are better explained through a framework, which treats the civil-military relationship as a strategic interaction between two political actors, and focuses on variables such as the civil-military balance of power and the level of civil-military preference divergence.<sup>627</sup> In the words of Andrew Bacevich, “On the surface – with only occasional exceptions – the appearance of civilian control prevailed. That is, Clinton pretended to give orders and the military pretended to obey. Beneath the surface, a complex process of give-and-take preceded and informed policy decisions, affecting everything from progress toward ‘military transformation’ ... to the use of force.”<sup>628</sup>

By focusing on explanatory factors such as civil-military preference divergence and relative power, this chapter also challenges the conventional wisdom that democracies make better decisions on war and peace and questions whether regime type

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<sup>626</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants*, p. 271.

<sup>627</sup> For a similar approach, see Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants*, p. 2.

<sup>628</sup> Andrew Bacevich, “Elusive Bargain: The Pattern of U.S. Civil-Military Relations Since World War II,” Paper presented at Rutgers University, p. 41.



is what really determines the quality of the decision-making process. My findings show that a democracy characterized, for example, by high preference divergence between its top civilian and military officials, would most likely be prone to ineffective decision-making, miscalculations, and inability to make its military means serve its political objectives. Regardless of regime type, leaders of states which exhibit such configurations of their civil-military relations at a particular point in time are unlikely to match successfully military means to political objectives and to manage international crises.

My theoretical framework (and the focus on civil-military balance of power, in particular) also helps us to see that while civilian control is certainly one of the important characteristics of a democracy, both civilian and military influence in democracies vary substantially over time and this variance has important effects on the decision-making process. Based on the evidence presented here, one can make some tentative conclusions about the reasons for erosion of civilian control in a democracy (or causal conditions for military dominance). These reasons lie in big part not with the military, but with the civilian leadership, mainly with its level of experience and expertise in foreign and defense matters, and also its unity or lack of such, as it was under Clinton. This chapter showed that it was not so much eagerness on the part of the military to take control. Rather, the problem was a civilian leadership that was not sufficiently prepared to exercise firm control and was often divided over key foreign policy issues, including the use of force. As Yarmolinsky wrote, “The problem is not the overweening military, but the inadequate civilians, who, lacking the means, cannot even test their determination to

exercise effective control. The danger... is not that the military may take over the country, but that the country is not able to preside over the military.”<sup>629</sup>

The responsibility of the civilian leadership for its defective relationship with the military and the negative consequences of this relationship for decision-making are at times overlooked. Many are willing to put all the blame on the military leadership for being overly assertive; however, civilian leaders were equally or even more at fault because they were the ones who were not prepared to challenge military judgment. For example, Clinton and the other key foreign policy officials could have made a case for the adoption of new criteria for the use of force that would challenge the precepts of the Powell doctrine, but they did not. The lack of civilian assertiveness led, more generally, to the civilian leadership abdicating its right to make strategy. The making of strategy is the making of choices – the dominance of the military thinking (and the Weinberger doctrine in particular) often denied choice to civilian leaders, but they were complacent about it and did not reclaim their right to make the calls. As a result, “the imbalance of civil-military relations under Clinton ... damaged US strategy and strategic thinking.”<sup>630</sup>

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<sup>629</sup> Adam Yarmolinsky, "Civilian Control: New Perspectives for New Problems," *Indiana Law Journal*, Vol. 49 (1974), pp. 654-55.

<sup>630</sup> Richard Lock-Pullan, "Learning the Limits of Virtue: Clinton, the Army and the Criteria for the Use of Military Force," *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vo. 24, No. 2 (August 2003), p. 148.

## Chapter 7

### **The Impact of High Levels of Civil-Military Preference Divergence on Decision-Making: The 2003 Iraq War**

Previous chapters showed that the ability of statesmen and soldiers to make informed decisions on the use of force depends primarily on a combination of two key variables of the civil-military relationship: the civil-military balance of power and the level of divergence between civilian and military preferences on issues related to national security and the use of force. This chapter focuses in more detail on one of the possible patterns – a civil-military relationship characterized by a combination of assertive civilian dominance and a high level of divergence between civilian and military preferences (Quadrant 1 in Table 1).

**Table 1**

**The Effectiveness of the Process of Decision-Making as a Function of the Civil-Military Balance of Power and the Level of Civil-Military Preference Divergence**

Level of Civil-Military Preference Divergence	Civil-Military Balance of Power	
	Civilian Dominance	Military Dominance
<b>Hi</b>	Quadrant 1  <b>Ineffective Process</b>	Quadrant 2  <b>Worst</b>
<b>Low</b>	Quadrant 3  <b>Effective Process</b>	Quadrant 4  <b>Mixed</b>

The first part of the chapter lays out the hypotheses generated by my theoretical framework about the effects of this particular type of civil-military relations on the decision-making process. In the second part, I test these hypotheses with a case study of the decision-making process leading to the 2003 US war with Iraq.

This case study shows that strong and assertive civilian control, while desirable, does not guarantee effective decision-making. In the late 1990s, amid Bill Clinton's enormously troubled relationship with the military, when experts worried that the Generals were running the Pentagon with negative consequences for US Foreign policy,

one of the leading scholars on civil-military relations and national security remarked that if during the decision-making process in cases when civilian and military officials are in disagreement, civilian preferences prevailed most of the time, there was no problem. If, however, “the military does, there is a problem.”<sup>631</sup> In the lead up to the 2003 Iraq war, civilian preferences dominated almost all of the time. However, most agree that the decision-making process and the implementation had significant flaws. Strong civilian control does not necessarily translate into effective national security decision-making or victorious military strategies. Civilian dominance by itself says little about the effectiveness of the policy-making process, unless it is considered in combination with other characteristics of the civil-military relationship, such as the level of civil-military preference divergence. When we take into account the latter as well, we see that assertive civilian dominance in the context of high preference divergence could lead to civilian micromanagement and/or discounting of military advice; this, in turn, would affect negatively the effectiveness of the decision-making process.

This chapter also takes up in more detail another aspect of the civil-military relationship during policy-making, namely, decision-makers’ receptiveness to advice. My evidence shows that it is important to pay attention to cases when advice is rejected not because of its content but because of the source which provides it. We see that dissenting advice is more likely to be accepted if offered by a trusted source whose ideas and preferences are not very different from the preferences of the decision-makers.

The conventional wisdom about the decision-making process in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq regarding 1) civilian control is that civilian assertiveness is among the main

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<sup>631</sup> Michael Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: the Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 4-5.

reasons for American misfortunes, i.e., Rumsfeld and other top civilians constantly meddled in tactical and operational matters, which not only drove the military to utter frustration, but also made strategy-making very ineffective; and 2) regarding the reasons for which top political leaders rejected advice: decision-makers discounted or rejected dissenting advice because it did not fit with their strongly-held preferences on *whether* to invade Iraq and remove Saddam from power and *how* to prosecute the war. This chapter shows that the conventional wisdom is partly wrong on both counts.

Regarding the first, as the chapter on the 1991 Gulf War shows, assertive civilian control is not to be feared but to be praised.<sup>632</sup> In this case also, assertive control in and of itself was not the problem. The problem comes from the fact that strong civilian dominance was combined with *high* levels of civil-military preference divergence, and this combination led at times to civilian micromanagement, excluding or discounting the views of military advisors and other consequences that impacted negatively the decision-making process. But we would have no way of knowing this, using traditional frameworks of analysis because they focus almost completely on civilian control – i.e., whose preference dominate, and do not take into account other variables, such as preferences and preference divergence. Regarding the second issue, traditionally, it is argued that top decision-makers made important and costly mistakes because they suppressed dissenting opinions and did not consider alternatives. Advisors who provided critical views were isolated from the decision-making process, disregarded or even punished. Had decision-makers considered seriously military dissent, this argument goes, some of their wrong assumptions could have been corrected; they would have designed

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<sup>632</sup> See also Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command* and Peter Feaver, “The Right to be Right,” *International Security* (Spring 2011), pp. 87-125.

and implemented a strategy that would have integrated military means and political objectives better and lives and treasure would not have been wasted.

This view is misleading in part because it implies that military (and civilian) advice was rejected because of its content (i.e., because it was dissenting). Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Faith and the other top civilian decision-makers, it is argued, surrounded themselves with “yes-men” and did not accept views that differed from their own. But this is not necessarily correct. In some cases, advice was rejected not so much because of its content but because of the source that provided it – i.e., those military *and* civilian advisors (e.g., from the CIA and State) who were considered not trustworthy for any of several reasons – e.g., they were thought to be biased/to have an agenda of their own or to be “stuck in the Cold War” and incapable of providing quality advice in a post-9/11 strategic environment.<sup>633</sup>

It is important to differentiate, to the extent possible, the reasons for rejecting advice (whether it was because of the *content* of the message or because of its *source*), since in some cases civilian leaders could have considered and even accepted the dissenting views had they been offered by a trusted source. (The two reasons, of course, are not mutually exclusive and advice could be rejected for both at the same time.)

The conventional wisdom also has it that in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war there was no adequate planning for some aspects of the military operation and especially no

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<sup>633</sup> Here we should also differentiate the two main questions regarding a possible war with Iraq – *whether* to fight and *how* to fight. Regarding the first question, one can more easily make the argument that strong beliefs about the necessity of a military intervention to topple Saddam among top civilian officials prevented many of the critical views from seriously entering the debate – hence, when dissenting advice was rejected it was because of the content of advice and not so much the source – decision-makers were not interested in listening to arguments why it is not a good idea to attack Iraq since they strongly believed this was the right thing to do and there was hardly a way to convince them otherwise. Regarding the second question, there existed a higher possibility than in the first case decision-makers to be convinced by some of the arguments, had those been presented by a source they trusted.

planning for the post-war reconstruction of Iraq. But this begs questions. My research shows that actually there was substantial amount of planning conducted by both civilian and military officials. But the problem was that it was “bad” planning (i.e., planning based on wrong assumptions as it often happens in the policy-making process).<sup>634</sup> The question then is why, at times, wrong assumptions do get corrected, while at other times, they persist and lead to tragic mistakes. At the time of discussing a war with Iraq in 2002-03, information existed to contradict perhaps all of the wrong assumptions. A lot of such critically important information was collected and was presented to decision-makers. (In other words, there was sufficient information based on which policy-makers could have produced very different plans from the ones the administration actually did.) The problem was that top civilian decision-makers did not find some of this information persuasive and ignored it. However, I argue that decision-makers ignored such information not necessarily because they disagreed with it (although motivated biases did play a role) but because they did not trust the source that provided it. In order to understand why the civilian leadership did not find a lot of the information convincing, we should analyze their relationship with the primary source of this information – their senior military advisors. Why in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war top civilian officials ignored crucial information, as well as the shortcomings of the decision-making process, more broadly, could at least in part be explained with the help of my theoretical

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<sup>634</sup> See, for example, Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Knopf Publishing Group, 2006); James Fallows, “Blind into Baghdad,” *Atlantic Monthly*, January/February, 2004; James Fallows, “Bush’s Lost Year,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, October, 2004; Gerard Baker and Stephen Fidler, “The Best Laid Plans? How Turf Battles and Mistakes in Washington Dragged Down the Reconstruction of Iraq,” *Financial Times*, August 4, 2003; Nora Bensahel, “Mission Not Accomplished: What Went Wrong with Iraqi Reconstruction,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (June 2006), pp. 453-473.



framework, which emphasizes the level of civil-military preference divergence, in addition to the type of civilian control.

More specifically, this chapter tests the following propositions expected to hold for cases falling in Quadrant 1:

1. A *high* level of civil-military preference divergence (i.e., big differences in the views, ideas, and goals of civilian and military leaders), will affect negatively the way decision-makers seek and process information and advice. The civilians and the military would have an interest in concealing or distorting information in order to bolster their own preferred option.

1-a When there is a high civil-military preference divergence, there will not be a free flow and exchange of information between civilian and military leaders. Both sides will be less likely to share information with each other.

1-b When there is a high level of civil-military preference divergence, civilian officials would be more likely to disregard advice and information provided by their military advisors. They may try to exclude the military from the discussions.

1-c When there is a high level of civil-military preference divergence and the civilian side is dominant, during deliberations the weaker side (the military) would not necessarily feel free to provide honest advice or to challenge the views of the dominant side.

2. When civilian and military officials hold highly diverging preferences, both sides have little incentive to cooperate with each other. High preference divergence leads to problems in the interaction and coordination between civilian and military leaders during the decision-making process and in the conduct of military operations.

2-a A high civil-military preference divergence could lead to a more conflictual civil-military relationship.

2-b When there is a high civil-military preference divergence, the civilians are less likely to trust that the military will follow closely dominant civilian preferences.

2-c When civilian and military preferences diverge highly, the military is more likely to resist civilian wishes. (Such resistance could take the form of foot-dragging, leaks to the media or Congress, and others.)

2-d When there is a high civil-military preference divergence, civilian officials are likely to monitor intrusively the military in order to ensure that their decisions are not thwarted. Hence, civilian micromanagement is more likely.

2-e When preferences diverge highly, civilian officials may be tempted to appoint to high positions officers with similar preferences regardless of their competence. With less capable military leaders, decision-making and implementation would suffer.

If the above propositions hold, we are not likely to have an effective decision-making and implementation process. Diplomatic and military considerations are less likely to be integrated, and it would be difficult for decision-makers to match successfully political objectives with military and non-military means.

This chapter proceeds as follows: First, I discuss briefly the balance of power between civilian and military officials under Rumsfeld and the means which the Defense Secretary used to assert civilian control. Second, I analyze the highly divergent preferences of political and military leaders on key issues regarding military transformation and the use of force to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein. The third section explores the process of decision-making and war planning on Iraq and, more specifically, how the combination of assertive civilian dominance and high divergence

between civilian and military preferences affected the making of US military strategy and policy. The chapter concludes by discussing the implications of my findings for national security decision-making.

### **The Civil-Military Balance of Power under Donald H. Rumsfeld**

In order to establish the civil-military balance of power for the 2003 Iraq war, I start by analyzing the various bureaucratic changes at the Defense Department, instituted gradually after Rumsfeld took office.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld began his second tour at the helm of the Pentagon with the firm determination to reassert civilian control. He and his top civilian aides believed that, under the Clinton Administration, the generals and admirals had become too political, too influential, and not very responsive to civilian orders. Rumsfeld was determined to reverse this.<sup>635</sup> From the very beginning of his tenure, he started instituting some bureaucratic changes which diminished the influence of the armed services over decision-making and shifted more power to the civilian side of the Pentagon.<sup>636</sup> As a result, the Defense Secretary managed to consolidate decision-making power in his office to a degree unseen since Robert McNamara.

Rumsfeld started to increase his influence by showing the military that he was firmly in charge and that he would be involved in details much more than his predecessor. From their very first encounters with the new Secretary, the military was given to understand that there was no detail too small for him. For example, while working on the

<sup>635</sup> James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (New York: Viking, 2004), p. 307.

<sup>636</sup> Thomas E. Ricks, "Rumsfeld on High Wire of Defense Reform," *Washington Post*, May 20, 2001, p. A01.

Quadrennial Defense Review, Rumsfeld “personally drove the train in great detail, right down to the sentences and the commas in the documents. He involved himself in a very close, tight view of the details” which was his way of showing he was in charge.<sup>637</sup> Even at times when his popularity was low, Rumsfeld was able to draw additional influence from the support he enjoyed in the White House and the fact that the military knew he spoke for the President. For example, President Bush supported fully Rumsfeld’s views on transformation and on many other issues the two men agreed completely.<sup>638</sup> Also, Vice President Cheney, himself a former Secretary of Defense, from the very beginning showed he was firmly behind Rumsfeld and his efforts to re-assert civilian control. For Cheney and Wolfowitz, one of the most important lessons from the Gulf War of 1991 (when they served together with Colin Powell) was to keep a tight lid on the military and not let the generals acquire as much power as the then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>639</sup>

As another means of strengthening his influence, the Defense Secretary took control of the military promotion process. Parting with previous practice, Rumsfeld decreed that all promotions to three- and four-star rank go through his office. He involved himself in tasks that in the past were left in the prerogatives of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>640</sup> The military, did not like it and resentment in the ranks grew. Military officers complained of what they called Rumsfeld’s imposition of an

<sup>637</sup> Interview with Thomas White, *Frontline*, “Rumsfeld’s War,” August 12, 2004.

<sup>638</sup> See, for example, Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 380.

<sup>639</sup> James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans*, pp. 196-7.

<sup>640</sup> Defense Secretaries have usually had the prerogative to nominate four-star generals and admirals, but they have left the selection of one-, two- and three-star officers to each service’s own selection and promotion procedures.

unprecedented degree of civilian control over the services' selection of flag officers, general and admirals. The new procedures required them to send up the names of at least two or three candidates for every promotion to three- and four-star rank and all nominations to the Joint Staff. A Rumsfeld staffer and the then Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen. Peter Pace, interviewed personally all the candidates. Defense experts worried that such measures could lead to a dangerous politicization of the promotion process and that they would fill in the high ranks with yes-men and decrease military professionalism.<sup>641</sup> Some analysts claim that gradually Rumsfeld succeeded in replacing some of the senior officers on the Joint Staff who challenged his views.<sup>642</sup>

In reality, when Rumsfeld intervened in senior promotions it was not necessarily to make sure he would be surrounded with pliable officers but in order to make sure he would receive the highest quality advice. For example, the Secretary noticed early on that the names suggested by the services for the senior promotions reflected service parochialism, while he wanted and needed to encourage jointness, as the Goldwater-Nichols Act instructed. As he explains in his memoirs, these officers “needed to be able to work in Washington with other departments and agencies that were out of their well-established comfort zone. And above all, they had to be candid and forthright, willing to disagree in private with me and with the President if their military advice differed from a course being considered. I felt that the only way to ensure I was recommending those

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<sup>641</sup> Joe Galloway, “Army Shakeups Clear Path for Rumsfeld’s Vision,” April 26, 2003.

<sup>642</sup> See, for example, Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 382. See also Seymour M. Hersh, “Offense and Defense: The Battle Between Donald Rumsfeld and the Pentagon,” *New Yorker*, April 7, 2003, p. 43.

kinds of candidates to the President was to be personally involved in the selection process.”<sup>643</sup>

Furthermore, in another attempt to restrict military influence, the Defense Secretary sought to limit contacts between the military and Congress. On his second day on the job, at his first collective meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Rumsfeld “ordered the services to stop briefing members of Congress on perceived money shortages, something they had been doing in great detail just before the new broom installed itself on the Pentagon’s third floor.”<sup>644</sup> Officers alleged that the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) had even ordered no officer to talk to Congress without Rumsfeld’s permission, but then realized the absurdity of such an order and modified it to require prior “notice before any meetings.”<sup>645</sup>

As another sign of re-established civilian dominance, Rumsfeld ordered the re-naming of the CINCs, the enormously powerful (after the passing of the Goldwater-Nichols Act) regional and functional commanders-in-chief.<sup>646</sup> The CINCs were no longer to be called “Commanders-in-Chief” but “Combatant Commanders”, lest anyone forget that the President of the United States is *the only* Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. Needless to say, the regional commanders or *the proconsuls*, as some called them, because of their significantly expanded influence on US foreign policy in the

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<sup>643</sup> Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, pp. 299-300.

<sup>644</sup> George C. Wilson, “Rumsfeld Faces Big Choices in Second Tour at Pentagon,” *National Journal*, January 30, 2001.

<sup>645</sup> Paul Richter, “Bush’s Defense Secretary Goes on the Offensive,” May 22, 2001, *op. cit.*

<sup>646</sup> Vernon Loeb, “One ‘Chief’ Commands; Others are Out of CINC,” *Washington Post*, October 29, 2002, p. A19.

1990s<sup>647</sup>, did not like such a back scaling. Although quite innocent in itself, because this initiative came when the civil-military relationship had already gone sour, the uniforms perceived it as “frivolous micromanagement.”<sup>648</sup>

The CINCs were not the only ones whose influence was curbed. The same happened to the Joint Chiefs themselves. According to dominant interpretations, “[R]umsfeld left no doubt in anyone’s mind that the armed forces worked for him. Regardless of Goldwater-Nichols, which made the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff the president’s chief advisor on military affairs, Rumsfeld was determined to decide what role, if any, the Chiefs would play. If he wanted them advise the president, he would say so – although in practice this would not happen often.”<sup>649</sup> The Secretary of Defense had even suggested to his first Chairman that military advice should go through Rumsfeld rather than directly to the president.<sup>650</sup> However, the reality is again a little more nuanced. If one compares the relationship between Rumsfeld and the generals in this regard and the one between McNamara and the top military advisors, we see that Rumsfeld is no McNamara in that he has offered much more freedom to the generals, both in relation to him and in relation to the President. Unlike McNamara, Rumsfeld did not constantly accompany the top military advisors in meetings with the President in order to contradict their views. At times, Rumsfeld encouraged senior military officers to meet alone with

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<sup>647</sup> See, for example, Dana Priest, *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace with America’s Military* (New York: Norton & Co., 2003).

<sup>648</sup> Vernon Loeb, *Ibid.*

<sup>649</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 379.

<sup>650</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 382. See also Rowan Scarborough, *Rumsfeld’s War: the Untold Story of America’s Anti-Terrorist Commander* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2004), p. 121.

Bush so they can establish their own personal relationship with the Commander-in-Chief. One good example of that is the relationship between W. Bush and Gen. Franks.

The strong influence of top civilian officials was felt times and again during the decision-making process on the use of force against Iraq, when civilian preferences dominated over the views of the military on a variety of issues. As a senior government official noted, “the military has limited influence in this administration.”<sup>651</sup> However, as I show later, firm civilian control, while essential, is not sufficient for an effective decision-making process.

### **Civil-Military Preference Divergence in the Lead-Up to the 2003 Iraq War**

#### **Civilians are from Mars, the military are from Venus**

There was a wide gap between civilian and military views on almost all fronts – from military “transformation” to the use of force. In the lead-up to the 2003 war on Iraq, civil-military relations at the top were rife with conflict. The Pentagon’s civilian leadership and the military clashed on a variety of issues with serious implications for U.S. foreign and defense policy ranging from the number of troops needed for the war and the reconstruction of Iraq to the overall size and mission of US forces.

#### **Diverging Civilian and Military Preferences About “Transformation”**

Much before Rumsfeld and the military clashed over whether and how to use force against Saddam Hussein, their relationship was strained because of conflicts over

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<sup>651</sup> Thomas E. Ricks, “Timing, Tactics on Iraq War Disputed: Top Bush Officials Criticize Generals’ Conventional Views,” *Washington Post*, August 1, 2002, p. A01.



military transformation. From the very beginning of his tenure, Donald Rumsfeld started his “war” against what he viewed as the U.S. military’s Cold War mentality and the Pentagon bureaucracy that was supporting it. He advocated a top-to-bottom transformation in the way the military fights and was convinced that such a transformation could not happen without also changing the ways the Pentagon conducted its business.<sup>652</sup> The DOD documents of the time emphasize that military transformation is not only about how the US fights its wars, but also about “how we do business inside the Department.”<sup>653</sup> Rumsfeld’s vision of transformation included remaking the military into a lighter, agile, more mobile fighting force, able to deploy anywhere in the world on short notice.<sup>654</sup> According to this vision, the US military should be turned into a leaner fighting force, relying on speed and technological superiority rather than size and heavy armor.<sup>655</sup> “The transformation process must develop forces capable of defending the U.S. population, homeland, and interests, as well as swiftly defeating an adversary from a posture of forward deterrence with minimal reinforcements.”<sup>656</sup> Precision-guided munitions (PGMs), higher-resolution intelligence sensors and rapid communication networks would achieve victory without the need of a significant number of boots on the

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<sup>652</sup> Jim Miklaszewski, “War Boosted Rumsfeld’s Mission,” *NBC News*, March 12, 2004.

<sup>653</sup> One of the defining documents on military transformation is Department of Defense, “Military Transformation: A Strategic Approach,” (Fall 2003), p. 2. Available at: <http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA457320>

<sup>654</sup> *Ibid.* More recent additions to the debate on military transformation are Max Boot, *War Made New: Technology, Warfare, and the Course of History* (New York, NY: Gotham Books, 2006) and Frederick W. Kagan, *Finding the Target: The Transformation of American Military Policy* (New York, NY: Encounter Books, 2006). See also Bernard Weinraub with Thom Shanker, “A Nation at War; Under Fire: Rumsfeld’s Design on War Criticized on the Battlefield,” *New York Times*, April 1, 2003, p. 1.

<sup>655</sup> Zachary Coile, “Allies Inch Toward Baghdad,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 31, 2003, p. A1.

<sup>656</sup> Department of Defense, “Military Transformation: A Strategic Approach,” (Fall 2003), p. 2.

ground.<sup>657</sup> In some important ways, this vision was a direct challenge against the Powell doctrine of overwhelming force, preferred by the military, or at least of what constitutes overwhelming force.

As some fiery meetings with high-ranking officers from all services revealed, Rumsfeld was up against strong resistance.<sup>658</sup> The military's views of how much change was needed and how rapidly change should happen were different. As one defense official noted,

the military leadership has a very different perspective from Rumsfeld and his allies. The civilians around Rumsfeld are saying 'Take on a ton of risk so we can get where we want to be 20 years from now.' But ... everybody on the uniformed side is saying, 'No, you've got enough risk right now.' To deal with the current threats, he said, the Joint Chiefs of Staff essentially have told Rumsfeld that they don't believe any major changes should be made in the size and shape of the military.<sup>659</sup>

The officers were concerned, for example, that the Defense Secretary would propose cutting conventional forces (troops, ships, and planes) in order to pay for controversial initiatives such as national missile defense.

Especially conflictual was the relationship between Donald Rumsfeld and the Army, the service who stood to lose most from the Secretary's ideas about

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<sup>657</sup> Fred Kaplan, "Rumsfeld's Legacy: 'Military Transformation'? Mission Not-Yet Accomplished," October 19, 2004. Available at: <http://slate.msn.com/id/2108400/>.

<sup>658</sup> "Facing Change, Military Brass Clings to Outdated Ways," *USA Today*, July 18, 2001, p. 11A; Thomas E. Ricks, "For Military, 'Change is Hard'," *Washington Post*, July 19, 2001, p. A16.

<sup>659</sup> Thomas E. Ricks, July 14, 2001, *op. cit.* For more recent developments in this debate, see Mark Sappenfield, "Dueling Views of Army Size: Congress Vs. Rumsfeld," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 17, 2005.

transformation.<sup>660</sup> Some analysts even went so far as to note that in the lead-up to the Iraq war, the Defense Secretary was already fighting three wars: one with Afghanistan, a global war on terrorism, and another war with the U.S. Army. Rumsfeld's view of the Army, according to many, was unflattering. The Secretary thought the Army was too cautious and unwilling to take risks.<sup>661</sup> "He considers the Army's senior leaders cold war dinosaurs unable to adapt to a 21<sup>st</sup> Century environment and thinks the Army is too big, too heavy and too slow to respond to rapid developments abroad."<sup>662</sup> The dislike and distrust soon became mutual. The Army Chief of Staff was publicly humiliated when Rumsfeld picked Shinseki's successor and his name was leaked to the media about 15 months before Shinseki's term has expired. Reportedly, the general learned about it through *The Washington Post*. Rumsfeld categorically denies he leaked the information or told someone to leak it. Furthermore, the name that leaked was not the person who later became the Army's Chief of Staff. Myth or reality, this story worsened even more the already bad relationship between the Secretary of Defense and the Army Chief and increased resentment in the military to which it was inconceivable that anyone would treat one of its leaders, a highly-respected Vietnam-war hero, in such a disgraceful way. A retired Army general accused Rumsfeld and the Pentagon civilians of making the

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<sup>660</sup> See, for example, Michael Duffy, "Rumsfeld: Older but Wiser?," *Time Magazine*, August 27, 2001, p. 22; Thomas E. Ricks, "Rumsfeld on High Wire of Defense Reform," *Washington Post*, May 20, 2001, p. A01; Robert Schlesinger, "Rumsfeld, Army Leaders in Discord," *Boston Globe*, September 1, 2003, p. A1; Joseph L. Galloway, April 27, 2003, *op. cit.*, p. A-3; George Coryell, "Tampa's Schoomaker Picked To Head Army," *Tampa Tribune*, June 11, 2003, p. 1.

<sup>661</sup> See, for example, Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York, NY: Random House, 2006), Chapter 1.

<sup>662</sup> Joe Galloway, April 26, 2003, *op. cit.*

Army “a second-class citizen, denigrating its chief in public and ignoring the counsel of uniformed leadership.”<sup>663</sup>

One of Rumsfeld’s transformation efforts, which led to a big fight with the Army, was the cancellation of the Crusader artillery system – an \$11 million top priority program of that service.<sup>664</sup> Worse, neither the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Vice Chairman, or the theater commanders of the Army were consulted about it. Army officials, who tried to convince Congress to help them by reversing this decision, were publicly rebuked by Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz. Furthermore, the Defense Secretary and most of his civilian advisors wanted to cut an additional two divisions and a corps out of the Army which, at that time, was already down to 480, 000. The argument was that by cutting about 20 percent of the Army’s combat units, the Pentagon would be able to pay for modernization and new weapons systems. Gen. Shinseki, although he himself was an advocate of transformation, opposed this plan. In general, if one thinks of the source of advice and what civilians thought of many in the Army at the time, it would not be surprising that Army advice, even if not dissenting, may not be considered favorably.

### **A Wide Gap between Civilian and Military Preferences on the Use of Force in Iraq**

Regarding the use of force in general, civilian and military preferences diverged highly. Especially after 9/11 (and contrary to some statements made in the election campaign), civilian officials had no desire to abide by the Weinberger/Powell doctrine,

<sup>663</sup> Quoted in Joe Galloway, *Ibid.*

<sup>664</sup> For conflicting accounts of this incident see Interview with Thomas White, “Rumsfeld’s War,” August 12, 2004. See also Leslie Wayne, “So Much for the Plan to Scrap Old Weapons,” *New York Times*, December 22, 2002, p. 1.

which was still preferred by the military. Expressing his disapproval of some of the most cherished tenets of this doctrine (e.g., use of overwhelming power in a decisive way to achieve victory, and clearly defined and limited objectives), Defense Secretary Rumsfeld stated: “forget about ‘exit strategies’; we’re looking at a sustained engagement that carries no deadlines. We have no fixed rules about how to deploy our troops.”<sup>665</sup> Rumsfeld stated that victory, in the new strategic environment, is difficult to define. “I say that victory is persuading the American people and the rest of the world that this is not a quick matter that is going to be over in a month or a year or even years.”<sup>666</sup>

Regarding the use of force against Iraq, in particular, there were significant differences in the views of top civilian and military officials as well. An analysis of the three key questions, pertaining to the use of force against Saddam in debates during 2001-03 illustrates the very high level of civil-military preference divergence. First, should the US use military force to achieve regime change in Iraq? Second, if force is to be used, what is the best way to use it in order to accomplish US political objectives? Third, what should US *post-war* strategy look like?

Should force be used to depose Saddam Hussein? Regarding *whether* the US should invade Iraq, although there were some exceptions in both the civilian and the military camps<sup>667</sup>, one can clearly document a *civil-military* split. The leading

<sup>665</sup> Donald H. Rumsfeld, “A New Kind of War,” *The New York Times*, September 27, 2001. See also Donald Rumsfeld, “Guidelines When Considering Committing U.S. Forces.” Available at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2002/d20021017guidelines.pdf>

<sup>666</sup> Quoted in Thomas Ricks and Steven Mufson, “In War on Terrorism, Unseen Fronts May Be Crucial,” *Washington Post*, September 23, 2001, p. A3.

<sup>667</sup> Neither the civilian side nor the military were united. The most prominent exceptions from the views of the Rumsfeld camp on the civilian side were Secretary of State Collin Powell and his deputy, Richard Armitage – both former military. Much of the senior military (active and retired) cautioned against the use of force with the exception of some top Air Force generals.

proponents of the use of force for toppling Saddam Hussein were the *civilian* leaders at the Pentagon, including Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, and William Luti, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Near East and South Asian Affairs, who State Department officials characterized as being obsessed with the overthrow of Saddam.<sup>668</sup> Regarding *whether* to use force, gradually, after September 11, the dominant *civilian* view became that containment of Iraq had become dangerously inadequate and Saddam's forceful overthrow would enhance US security.<sup>669</sup> In this case, as in many previous cases in the past when the use of force was discussed, *the military* was more cautious than its political leaders and was attempting to put the brakes on a military invasion.<sup>670</sup>

In the first months of the George W. Bush Administration, not many high-ranking decision-makers were bent on *forcefully* removing Saddam Hussein from office. It is by now almost forgotten that the initial (pre-September 11) Bush administration policy toward Iraq resembled that of the Clinton Administration.<sup>671</sup> Even some civilian officials who later became ardent supporters of the use of force believed at the time that Saddam was deterrable.<sup>672</sup> It was only after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and

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<sup>668</sup> See, for example, Seymour Hersh, "The Debate Within," *The New Yorker*, March 11, 2002; David Rieff, "Blueprint for a Mess," *New York Times Magazine*, November 2, 2003, p. 28.

<sup>669</sup> For a brief overview of the views of civilian and military decision-makers, see Glenn Kessler, "U.S. Decision on Iraq Has Puzzling Past," *Washington Post*, January 12, 2003, p. A01. See also Alfred Prados, CRS Report to Congress, "Iraq: Divergent Views on Military Action," January 31, 2003.

<sup>670</sup> See, for example, Stephen Hayes, "The Coming War with Saddam: Sooner Than You Think," *Weekly Standard*, July 29, 2002; Mackubin Thomas Owens, "Soldier's Voice," *National Review*, September 23, 2002.

<sup>671</sup> *Frontline*, "Rumsfeld's War." Available at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/pentagon/view/>

<sup>672</sup> The most prominent of those are Dick Cheney and Condoleezza Rice. See, for example, Condoleezza Rice, "Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2000, p. 61 and Interview with Condoleezza Rice, CNN, Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer, July 29, 2001.

the Pentagon when policy changed dramatically and top *civilian* policy-makers in the DOD began perceiving the use of force as the only way to achieve regime change.<sup>673</sup> Some influential policy-makers in the Bush administration (e.g., Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle) had long argued that the 1991 Gulf War should have ended with the overthrow of Saddam. Later on, being outside the government, they (together with Iraqi exiles like Ahmad Chalabi) had even tried to persuade the Clinton administration to make ending Saddam's regime a primary objective of US foreign policy.<sup>674</sup> After returning to power and energized by 9/11, they thought the time had finally come to achieve this goal.<sup>675</sup> Top civilian policy-makers argued that the attacks of 9/11 showed that the US could and should no longer wait for threats to become imminent before it acts. As President Bush himself asserted: "Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof – the smoking gun – that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud."<sup>676</sup> Top civilian decision-makers at the Pentagon claimed that force should be used to depose Saddam because everything else had already been tried and had not worked. They became convinced that nothing short of US military action could bring Saddam's downfall and that time was running out. Some of them also thought that Iraq's military has been seriously weakened and could be defeated relatively quickly. Military

<sup>673</sup> The discussion of how and why "the hawks" became dominant within the Bush administration is beyond the scope of this chapter.

<sup>674</sup> Some observers even attribute the passing of the "Iraq Liberation Act" to their strong lobbying. See, for example, David Rieff, November 2, 2003, *op. cit.*

<sup>675</sup> On September 15, 2001, President Bush met with his top national security advisors at Camp David and the principals voted 4-0 *against* attacking Iraq (Rumsfeld abstained). Most were convinced that Afghanistan/al Qaeda should be the first target. Paul Wolfowitz argued for attacking Iraq, but he was shut up until November of 2001, when the planning for a war against Saddam began. See, for example, *Frontline*, "Rumsfeld's War: Paths to Power, The G. W. Bush Administration." Available at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/pentagon/paths/bush2.html>; Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

<sup>676</sup> George W. Bush, Speech delivered on October 7, 2002 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

action would be less costly than inaction. They argued that the use of force was justified because Iraq constituted an unacceptable threat – Saddam had WMD or was firmly committed to acquire them and was likely to share them with anti-US terrorist groups. Since Iraq had defied numerous UN resolutions and had obstructed the work of UN inspectors, civilian decision-makers claimed, *military force* may be the *only way* to eliminate the perhaps imminent threat posed by his WMD.<sup>677</sup>

On the contrary, many active-duty and retired military officials saw a possible attack on Iraq as a risky adventure, which might end up in disaster.<sup>678</sup> The military, as in many other cases when the US has contemplated the use of force, tried to slow down the drive toward war.<sup>679</sup> Its position was cautious – abandoning containment of Saddam and attacking him was so risky that it might be unwise. The uniformed leadership of the Pentagon believed that force did not have to be used because the strategy of containment was working well and Saddam could be “kept in the box” for as long as necessary.<sup>680</sup> Deterrence of Iraq, they believed, was robust, as it was supported by economic sanctions, the enforcement of the no-fly zones, and by the overwhelming US superiority. They also

<sup>677</sup> Alfred Prados, CRS Report to Congress, “Iraq: Divergent Views on Military Action,” January 31, 2003, p. 2.

<sup>678</sup> See, for example, Mackubin Thomas Owens, September 23, 2002, *op. cit.*; Thomas E. Ricks, “Military Bids to Postpone Iraq Invasion; Joint Chiefs See Progress in Swaying Bush, Pentagon,” *Washington Post*, May 24, 2002, p. A01; Eric Schmitt, “Three Retired Generals Warn of Peril in Attacking Iraq Without Backing of U.N.,” *New York Times*, September 24, 2002; Mark Thompson, Michael Duffy, “Pentagon Warlord,” *Time Magazine*, January 27, 2003, vol. 161, Issue 4, p. 22; Brent Scowcroft, “Don’t Attack Saddam,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 15, 2002, p. A12.

<sup>679</sup> James Webb, “Heading for Trouble; Do We Really Want to Occupy Iraq for the Next 30 Years?,” *Washington Post*, September 4, 2002, p. A21; Thomas E. Ricks, August 1, 2002, *op. cit.*; David Moniz and Jonathan Weisman, “Military Question Iraq War Plan,” *USA Today*, May 23, 2002, p. 1A.

<sup>680</sup> See, for example, Michael Dobbs, “Old Strategy on Iraq Sparks New Debate: Backers Say Plan Proven in Afghanistan,” *Washington Post*, December 27, 2001, p. A01; Thomas E. Ricks, “Some Top Military Brass Favor Status Quo in Iraq; Containment Seen Less Risky Than Attack,” *Washington Post*, July 28, 2002, p. A01; Interview with Thomas E. Ricks, “Rumsfeld’s War,” September 28, 2004.



warned of the serious military and political risks of an invasion, including the possibility of Saddam Hussein using weapons of mass destruction (WMD) against American and coalition forces, and the enormous challenges of urban warfare and the resulting large number of civilian casualties. Already fighting a war in Afghanistan, the military was also concerned about leaving American armed forces overstretched and, hence, unable to respond to emerging crises. When in November of 2001, Rumsfeld (directed by Bush) ordered Gen. Franks to start working on a war plan against Iraq, the CENTCOM Commander “was incredulous. They were in the midst of one war, Afghanistan, and now they wanted detailed planning for another, Iraq? ‘Goddamn, what the fuck are they talking about?’”<sup>681</sup> From what we can tell, the uniformed leadership argued that military action against Iraq could hinder US efforts in the global war on terrorism and could destabilize the entire Middle East. According to reports, Gen. Tommy Franks told Sen. Bob Graham (D-Fla.) that this country should be fighting terrorism in places like Somalia and Yemen, rather than invading Iraq. More than a year before the war started, the General complained to the Senator that “his resources were being shifted in preparation for taking on Saddam Hussein.”<sup>682</sup> Also, since many of the Arab and Muslim countries were against a US invasion of Iraq, were the US to attack, they would be less willing to support America in its fight against al-Qaeda.<sup>683</sup> The U.S. military, steeped in the Powell doctrine, was reluctant to undertake a mission for which there was no clear domestic and international support.

<sup>681</sup> Quoted in Bob Woodward (2004), *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>682</sup> William C. Mann, “Senator: Commander Told of Military Drain,” *Associated Press*, September 5, 2004.

<sup>683</sup> Alfred Prados, CRS Report to Congress, “Iraq: Divergent Views on Military Action,” January 31, 2003, pp. 4-5.

At least at the beginning, the military was united in its attempts to convince the civilian leadership to rethink its willingness to invade Iraq. In the Spring of 2002, the Joint Chiefs of Staff held several meetings during which they formed a common position, highlighting the difficulties of a military campaign against Saddam Hussein. The Chiefs' main concerns were that: (1) if the Iraqi leader believes that the US was determined to overthrow him no matter what, he would not feel constrained from using chemical or biological weapons against US troops; (2) the US might get bogged down in a bloody urban warfare which could result in massive American and Iraqi civilian casualties; (3) While Saddam, they believed, could be contained, there was a danger that his successor could be more hostile and unruly. Having in mind the costs and risks of a military campaign to overthrow Saddam, top military officials, just like before the 1991 Gulf War, were pointing to alternative means for achieving regime change.<sup>684</sup>

In regard to the second question, *how* to use force, the views of civilian and military officials diverged significantly as well.<sup>685</sup> The former preferred a military plan that resembled the one used in Afghanistan in 2001 and relied on surprise and the mobility of a light force. Civilian leaders advocated a combination of massive air strikes and US special operations forces on the ground, helping Iraqi opposition groups. They preferred an option that required "a small, mobile attack force of Iraqi dissidents and American Special Forces."<sup>686</sup> Political leaders advocated a brief air campaign conducted almost simultaneously with the ground offensive. By contrast, the military preferred a

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<sup>684</sup> Besides continuation of the policy of containment, other options included: diplomatic and economic pressure through the UN, a military coup, and an uprising of Iraqi opposition groups.

<sup>685</sup> See, for example, Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*; Barbara Slavin, "U.S. Examining Options to Deal With Hussein," *USA Today*, February 12, 2002.

<sup>686</sup> Seymour Hersh, March 11, 2002, *op. cit.*

variation of *Desert Storm*, including an intense air campaign and a massive ground-force invasion. The attack plan favored by the military required decisive use of force in order to guarantee success in the post-war stage of the operation as well. The attack plan of the political leadership in the Pentagon was in sharp contrast with the Powell Doctrine, favored by the military. The civilians argued for an invasion force much smaller than the one that fought in Operation Desert Storm in 1991, stressing that new technological developments since the Persian Gulf War had enormously improved US offensive capabilities. Secretary Rumsfeld and his advisors asserted that air power and information dominance could achieve more with a smaller force.<sup>687</sup> Such views were an extension of Rumsfeld's vision of a transformed military, relying more on special operations forces, technology, and intelligence and de-emphasizing heavy ground forces. Since the Secretary had rather strong views on the need for military transformation, it is not surprising that in this case dissenting advice would likely be rejected because it did not fit with his preferences. As Gordon and Trainor argue in *Cobra II*, Rumsfeld's views on transformation made him determined to attack with a "lean" force and that's why he rejected more traditional military plans calling for a bigger number of troops. This point is confirmed by the bulk of the evidence. For example, in the words of Joseph Collins: "Rumsfeld wanted to conduct a quick, lightning-like operation in Iraq, followed by a swift handover of power to the Iraqis. He did not want a large scale, ponderous operation like *Desert Storm*, which he saw as wasteful and outmoded. He also did not want U.S. troops unnecessarily bogged down in an endless postwar peace operation. Long, costly,

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<sup>687</sup> See, for example, Vernon Loeb and Thomas Ricks, "Questions Raised About Invasion Force," *Washington Post*, March 25, 2003, p. A17.

man-power intensive post-combat operations were anathema to Rumsfeld who was as interested in force transformation as he was in a potential war in Iraq.”<sup>688</sup>

Furthermore, civilian leaders saw the 2001 war on Afghanistan as a resounding confirmation of their vision of transformation. They asserted that the defeat of the Taliban was possible by a massive air campaign and the deployment of only a small contingent of special operations forces, aiding the Northern Alliance on the ground, and *without* a prolonged massive build-up of US troops as it would have been under a more conventional scenario. Civilian officials and Rumsfeld, in particular, saw Afghanistan as a vindication of their preferences as to how force should be used, and as a success that could be repeated in Iraq. More than that, since the military at least at the beginning had opposed the civilian preferred plan for Afghanistan, this case for Rumsfeld was perhaps another example that confirmed his low opinion of military advice. In Afghanistan, he believed, he was right and the military was wrong. Rumsfeld most likely thought that the same was true in the heated debates on the strategy for Iraq.

The military disagreed with the strategy civilians preferred.<sup>689</sup> In fact, in the debate within the Bush administration, the uniformed leadership (including former and present top officers at CENTCOM) was the biggest critic of the civilian-preferred option.<sup>690</sup> Retired Gen. Anthony Zinni, for example, called it a strategy for a “Bay of Goats.”<sup>691</sup> Furthermore, the generals were concerned that such a plan did not take into

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<sup>688</sup> Joseph Collins, “Choosing War: The Decision to Invade Iraq and Its Aftermath,” Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University (April 2008).

<sup>689</sup> See, for example, Michael Gordon, “The Strategy to Secure Iraq Did Not Foresee a 2<sup>nd</sup> War,” *New York Times*, October 19, 2004.

<sup>690</sup> See, for example, Seymour M. Hersh, December 24, 2001, *op. cit.*

<sup>691</sup> Quoted in Michael Dobbs, December 27, 2001, *op. cit.*

account the possibility of a stiff resistance from the Iraqi military, as well as the fact that Iraqi opposition groups were hardly a reliable partner.<sup>692</sup> Officers in both the US and the UK expressed strong concerns with US top civilians' plans for the invasion of Iraq.<sup>693</sup> The American military (especially the Army and the Marine Corps) believed the war plan of the civilian leadership with poorly secured supply lines and lacking heavy reinforcements, was too risky and marked a sharp departure from good military practice.<sup>694</sup>

Civilian and military views on force strength differed significantly as well.<sup>695</sup> Not surprisingly, the generals advocated a force according to the standards of the Powell doctrine -- "overwhelming force" from the very beginning of the campaign, rather than a small force at the beginning of the invasion, with trickling reinforcements at later stages. Some in the military preferred the air campaign to be longer than just a few days in order to cripple the Republican Guard before the rest of the invasion force crosses into Iraq. Gen. Franks' original attack plan required substantial forces, close to 400, 000.<sup>696</sup> This was in sharp contrast with Rumsfeld's opinion that a force of about 70, 000 would be

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<sup>692</sup> Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004). For a discussion of the military options considered in the planning process, see also Congressional Research Service, CRS Report to Congress, "Iraq: U.S. Military Options," October 2, 2003.

<sup>693</sup> See, for example, Richard Norton-Taylor and Julian Borger, "Iraq Attack Plans Alarm Top Military: US and UK commanders 'scratching their heads' to make sense of invasion," *The Guardian*, July 30, 2002.

<sup>694</sup> Thomas E. Ricks, "Projection on Fall of Hussein Disputed; Ground Forces Chiefs, Pentagon at Odds," *Washington Post*, December 18, 2002, p. A01.

<sup>695</sup> Michael Gordon, "The Strategy to Secure Iraq Did Not Foresee a 2<sup>nd</sup> War," *New York Times*, October 19, 2004; Mark Thompson and Michael Duffy, "Pentagon Warlord," *Time*, January 19, 2003.

<sup>696</sup> Congressional Research Service, CRS Report to Congress, "Iraq: U.S. Military Options," October 2, 2003; Alfred Prados, CRS Report to Congress, "Iraq: Divergent Views on Military Action," January 31, 2003. See also Toby Harnden, "Former Generals Attack Rumsfeld Tactics; Defense Secretary Accused of Ignoring Pleas for Extra Men," *Daily Telegraph*, March 26, 2003, p. 11; Edward Epstein, "Jury Still Out on Rumsfeld War Strategy," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 11, 2003, p. A19.

sufficient to do the job.<sup>697</sup> For an invasion, the military wanted “at least six combat divisions... Franks is ... insisting, despite pressure from civilians in the Pentagon, on an intense and careful American buildup in the region before Iraq can be attacked.”<sup>698</sup>

Regarding the third question – what should be done in the “post-war” phase, many in the military were not confident that civilian policy-makers had a sufficiently clear plan for dealing with the long-term security consequences of an armed invasion. Particularly severe was the contradiction over the number of troops necessary for a successful post-war occupation of Iraq. The military, and especially the Army, believed that defeating Saddam was the easier part of the job and that the U.S. would need more troops for the post-war occupation stage of the campaign. The Army insisted on going in strong because it was concerned about occupying a big and ethnically divided country like Iraq. The uniformed leadership was concerned that the plan favored by the politicians did not provide enough forces for the post-war phase of the operation. For example, senior military officials, including Gen. Hugh Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the start of the George W. Bush first administration, warned that more troops would be needed in order to prevent chaos in Iraq after ousting Saddam.<sup>699</sup> Furthermore, military officials prepared a study, which analyzed US experience in seven recent nation-building operations and especially the number of troops required to successfully maintain security in a post-conflict environment. The military presented this

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<sup>697</sup> See, for example, *Frontline: The Invasion of Iraq*, Interview with James Fallows, January 28, 2004. Available at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/invasion/interviews/fallows.html>. Accessed: 7/04.

<sup>698</sup> Seymour Hersh, March 11, 2002, *op. cit.*

<sup>699</sup> Michael Gordon in “The Strategy to Secure Iraq Did Not Foresee a 2<sup>nd</sup> War,” (*New York Times*, October 2004, p. 1) describes a Pentagon meeting of high-ranking military and civilian officials in early 2003 when such warnings were made.

study to then National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and her deputy, Stephen Hedley, but there is no evidence they took it into account.<sup>700</sup>

Days before the start of operation Iraqi Freedom, General Shinseki and Secretary of the Army White testified before the Defense Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. In response to a question by Senator Carl Levin (D-MI) about the troops required for the “pacification effort”, Gen. Shinseki suggested a number “as high as several hundred thousand”<sup>701</sup> for the post-war phase. “We’re talking about post-hostilities control over a piece of geography that’s fairly significant... It takes a significant ground force presence to maintain a safe and secure environment, to ensure that people are fed, that water is distributed, all the normal responsibilities that go along with administering a situation like this.”<sup>702</sup> The general based his estimate on his experience in Bosnia<sup>703</sup> and the number of troops the US had there per 25, 000 people. (US and allies had 60, 000 troops to secure 4-million Bosnia, and 40, 000 troops for Kosovo with population of 2 million people. For Iraq’s population of 23 million, however, the Pentagon had approximately 140, 000.) In support of his position, Gen. Shinseki also used various studies, produced by the Army, which emphasized the critical importance of the time immediately after the fall of a regime. This time was to be used

<sup>700</sup> At the same time, it should be noted that aside from Gen. Shinseki, all of the Chiefs of Staff supported the final plan during the last deliberations with President Bush before the start of the war. As Joseph Collins writes, “none of them brought up any misgivings about Phase IV, post-combat stability operations...”

<sup>701</sup> Hearing of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> sess., February 25, 2003 (Federal Document Clearing House, FDCH Political Transcripts). See also Eric Schmitt, “Army Chief Raises Estimate of G.I.s Needed in Postwar Iraq,” *New York Times*, February 25, 2003. For Shinseki’s views on the war plan, as expressed in a White House meeting on January 20, 2003, see Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006).

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>703</sup> General Shinseki was Commander, NATO Stabilization Force for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

by the occupying power for establishing a controlling presence on the ground. If not, experts warned, chaos will ensue and the US will lose the initiative. At the same time, however, with the exception of General Shinseki, not many military leaders expressed openly much of a disagreement with the war plan or with the number of troops for the war or the post-war period.

As shown, serious conflicts and fundamental differences of opinion characterized relations among senior political and uniformed leaders. Top civilian and military officials held very different philosophies as to when and how force should be used. There were major disagreements between statesmen and soldiers as to the most important aspects of war-planning on Iraq as well. The next section discusses how this high degree of civil-military conflict combined with assertive civilian dominance, affected the making of US strategy for the war and the post-war period.

### **The Decision-Making Process**

This section confirms that an effective decision-making process requires more than simply military subordination and assertive civilian leadership. It necessitates relations between top civilian and military leaders that facilitate the deliberations among them, lead to a productive exchange of ideas that helps statesmen cope with the complexity and uncertainty of their external and internal environments and the issues at stake. As Russell Weigley so ably put it:

The most desirable civil-military relations in a democracy are not simply those in which civilian leadership almost always prevails. The most desirable civil-military relations are those in which there is a nearly altogether candid exchange of ideas between



the soldier and the statesman, along with a consequent founding of a policy and strategy upon a real meeting of minds. Only the former, lesser ideal has been realized most of the time in American history. The meeting of the minds has been relatively rare.<sup>704</sup>

In order to analyze the effectiveness of the decision-making process and how high levels of civil-military preference divergence affect it, I focus on some of the key activities of top civilian and military leaders during the policy-making and implementation process, such as: 1) information gathering, analysis and evaluation of alternative options; 2) interaction and coordination between civilian and military officials; 3) choosing a policy from existing alternatives.<sup>705</sup> In the case of the 2003 Iraq war, in particular, we see that some of the benefits of assertive civilian dominance (discussed in detail in Chapter 5 on the 1991 Gulf War) were not realized mainly because of the high level of divergence between civilian and military preferences on issues related to the use of force. First, I discuss how high levels of civil-military preference divergence affect key aspects of the communication and information exchange between top civilian and military decision-makers in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war, by examining how top officials analyzed and evaluated the information available to them at the time. Second, I examine the influence of high preference divergence on the cooperation and collaboration between civilian and military officials. As the following paragraphs show, high preference divergence affected negatively the sharing of information between civilian and military leaders, the depth and rigor of their analysis of alternative military and political

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<sup>704</sup> “The Soldier, the Statesman, and the Military Historian,” *The Journal of Military History* 63 (October 1999), p. 810.

<sup>705</sup> See, for example, John Garofano, “Deciding on Military Intervention: What is the Role of Senior Military Leaders?,” *Naval War College Review* 53, no. 2 (Spring 2000), pp. 40-64; Risa Brooks, *Shaping Strategy: The Civil-Military Politics of Strategic Assessment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

options, and the coordination between statesmen and soldiers during the decision-making process and the implementation of the chosen strategy.

Civil-military relations did have a significant impact on the way policy-makers collected and processed information and on the quality of their analysis of the strategic situation. Regarding information sharing and analysis and evaluation of options, I examine the extent to which there is a free flow and exchange of information between civilian and military officials, as well as the number and quality of alternative options proposed during the deliberations; the extent to which key assumptions are challenged and whether participants in the process attempt to address contradictory information and ambiguities; whether top political and military decision-makers feel free to offer their honest advice; the extent to which either side (civilian or military) attempts to prematurely foreclose less preferred options (through manipulation of information or through leaks, threats of firing or resignation or by any other means).

The free flow of information is crucial for a rigorous analysis of alternative strategies. But when their preferences on key issues diverge significantly, statesmen and soldiers may have an incentive to manipulate or withhold information from each other in order to bolster their preferred options. In such situations, the effectiveness of the decision-making process would suffer. When civil-military preference divergence is high, principal-agent theory expects the problem of private information to be more severe. The civilian and the military side would not necessarily be willing to exchange information and this will impede discussion and analysis of policy options. In this particular case, one can find evidence for almost all of the problems related to information-sharing and analysis of options, which are anticipated under high preference divergence and civilian dominance. Such problems, detailed below, include: the dominant (civilian) side

concealing information and/or suppressing discussions of basic assumptions underlying alternative options; or the weaker side (the military) not feeling free to provide honest advice; decision-makers ignoring relevant information because it comes from a source with whom they disagree strongly on most issues; the civilians resorting to outside advisors because they distrust the information provided by their military aides.

In the lead-up to the 2003 war on Iraq, civil-military discord and disagreement strained communications and impeded the flow of information between the civilians and the military. As Bob Woodward wrote, “Communications between the civilian and military sides of the Defense Department [were] catastrophically broken.”<sup>706</sup> Early on, for example, Gen. Shinseki felt he could not get a meeting with the Secretary to discuss the on-going Army re-organization. The lack of communication, according to many military leaders, made them think Rumsfeld was keeping them at arm’s length.<sup>707</sup>

As expected, the sharp divergence in the views of civilian and military leaders on key issues led civilian officials to withhold information from the military, which further harmed the decision-making process.

As the campaign against Iraq intensified, a former aide to Cheney told me, the Vice-President’s office, run by his chief of staff, Lewis (Scooter) Libby, became increasingly secretive when it came to intelligence about Iraq’s WMDs. As with Wolfowitz and Bolton, there was a reluctance to let the military and civilian analysts on the staff vet intelligence.” “It was an unbelievably closed and small group.”<sup>708</sup>

<sup>706</sup> Bob Woodward, (2004), *op. cit.*, p. 322.

<sup>707</sup> Paul Richter, “Bush’s Defense Secretary Goes on the Offensive,” May 22, 2001, *op. cit.*

<sup>708</sup> Seymour M. Hersh, “The Stovepipe: How Conflicts Between the Bush Administration and the Intelligence Community Marred the Reporting on Iraq’s Weapons,” *New Yorker*, October 27, 2003, p. 77.

The major differences in the views of civilian and military leaders revealed in the early stages of their interaction and the way conflicts were resolved (i.e., by imposing civilian preferences rather than by discussing matters and trying to convince the other side) were significant in that they solidified Rumsfeld's unfavorable opinion of the military (of the ground forces, in particular) as incapable of fully understanding and adapting to the new realities. He thought the uniforms were stuck in the Cold War, very risk-averse and with no desire to modify the way they prepare for and fight America's wars.<sup>709</sup> Such major disagreements led to attempts on the part of the civilian leadership to exclude some military leaders from discussions because, as the civilians were convinced from previous interactions, the views of military officials were not really that valuable. The Secretary distrusted the Chiefs and believed the officers were obstructing his transformation efforts. As Dale Herspring writes, "Making no attempt to hide his disdain for many in the military, Rumsfeld allowed very few officers into his inner circle of decision-makers. He was convinced that he and his civilian cadre understood the threats facing the United States far better than those who had worn their country's uniform for many years. They lived in the past, while he was looking to the country's future."<sup>710</sup> This case confirms the importance of analyzing what decision-makers think of the source of advice and not only its content. Often, when decision-makers do not believe that their advisors are competent and loyal, the advice is not going to register with them regardless of its content. Such conditions did not favor serious and open discussions of the political and military challenges of the situation in Iraq and the making of strategy suffered.

<sup>709</sup> See, for example, Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, Chapter 1.

<sup>710</sup> Dale Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, p. 405. See also pp. 381-2.

Another factor that had a negative impact on the decision-making process was the feeling of the military that they could not disagree with Rumsfeld. They were convinced that the civilian leadership was not interested in their advice and that it could be dangerous for one's career to offer dissenting opinions. Unlike in the lead-up to the 1991 Gulf War, when civilian and military leaders frequently and openly discussed a variety of political and military issues, in this case many in the military did not feel free to give their honest advice because they thought the civilian leadership would punish dissenters.<sup>711</sup> The officers believed that the "command climate" did not always favor a free and open discussion where they could speak truth to power.<sup>712</sup> They believed they would be criticized for "old thinking" were they to advocate more troops for Iraq.<sup>713</sup>

Accounts of participants in the decision-making process at various levels show that some in the military were convinced that the secretary of defense would not tolerate dissenting views from the officers. In one case when the Senate Armed Services Committee had called senior officers to testify on issues related to Iraq and regime change, Rumsfeld, anticipating that such testimonies could deviate from official policy, denied the Senate's request.<sup>714</sup> Even Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Richard B. Myers, according to associates, "had to bite his tongue in public several times to avoid the appearance of major differences with Rumsfeld or others in the administration."<sup>715</sup>

<sup>711</sup> See, for example, Thomas E. Ricks, May 9, 2004, *op. cit.* See also Ralph Peters, "Why the Troops Don't Trust Rummy," *New York Post*, May 14, 2004.

<sup>712</sup> See, for example, Dave Moniz, December 9, 2002, *op. cit.*

<sup>713</sup> Gen. Joseph P. Hoar, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>714</sup> David Wood, *op. cit.* See also Gen. Joseph P. Hoar, "Why Aren't There Enough Troops in Iraq?" *New York Times*, April 2, 2003, p. 21.

<sup>715</sup> Bradley Graham, "Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Prefers Working and Speaking Behind the Scenes," *Washington Post*, February 28, 2003, p. A21.

Under such conditions, military leaders are disinclined to provide information and advice that differs from the preferences of their civilian bosses. Because officers are censoring their advice, the civilian leadership would not benefit from a complete analysis and evaluation of all of the political and military aspects of the situation. Information-sharing would be impeded and the quality of the decision-making process would suffer because critical views and alternative options would hardly be presented or discussed. This was the exact opposite atmosphere from the one during World War II when FDR and Churchill, despite disagreements, communicated a lot and worked effectively with their military staffs. “Both men had military advisors who could speak with frankness, and who could, when necessary, point out the pitfalls and shortcomings of their political masters’ suggestions and strategies.”<sup>716</sup> And also,

The conversations that took place at the CCS level were complex, competitive, and, in many instances, filled with rancor. But they were genuine conversations: they brought to light multiple perspectives; they forced ongoing analyses of the relationship between ends and means, and they demanded that ideas be supported by logic, evidence, and rigorous argumentation. They facilitated reflection and forced compromise in the same way that the institutions of a well-structured democratic government do.<sup>717</sup>

Rumsfeld actually seems to have been much more tolerant to dissenting views than he is given credit for. Zakheim contends that Rumsfeld’s *style* actually confused people and in reality, Rumsfeld was significantly more open to disagreement than many in the military felt. He recalls that the Secretary “would not hesitate to vent his

<sup>716</sup> Tami Biddle, “Leveraging Strength: The Pillars of American Grand Strategy in World War II,” *Orbis* (Winter 2011), p. 10.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

annoyance when he felt a briefer was unprepared or when he perceived that someone had not done his or her homework. Many of were on the receiving end of comments like ‘a trained ape could do better than that’ and not everyone grasped that Rumsfeld was not being personal.”<sup>718</sup> Furthermore, evidence shows that what he did not like was major differences in opinion between civilian and military leaders *appearing in public* while he did not mind dissenting views in principle. On the contrary, he encouraged them. However, public disagreements between top decision-makers concerned him because he believed they were quite harmful - they could encourage the enemy, be that Saddam or Osama bin Laden, to think that the US is not serious enough when, for example, it threatens military force. Hence, such differences, he argued, should be kept from the media. As far as *internal* dissent goes, more than one “snowflakes” sent to military officers at various levels encouraged them to speak out, constantly, when asked and when not asked. “I made it clear to all senior military officials that they owed me their best advice not only when I asked for it but whenever they had something to recommend.”<sup>719</sup> He periodically sent memos asking for dissenting views (and views that differed from whatever seemed to be the broad consensus). One time he actually pleaded for dissenting views saying he was willing to accept anonymous opinions just to make sure they were candid. As he wrote to Gen. Myers, “I would like to know what the general officers, and possibly some key colonels, in Iraq think about the various options we face. I don’t need to know names, but it would be helpful for me to have a sense of what the

<sup>718</sup> *A Vulcan’s Tale: How the Bush Administration Mismanaged the Reconstruction of Afghanistan.*

<sup>719</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, p. 665.

commanders at various levels think on these issues. Please include minority opinions and their reasoning.”<sup>720</sup>

Similarly, his memo on the war on terror (which was leaked) shows him willing to entertain a variety of views rather than being complacent or close-minded. This is indirect evidence that in the case he has rejected advice, this does not mean advice has been rejected because it did not fit with his preferences and beliefs. It may have been because he did not trust the people providing the advice while he may have been willing to listen to such views were they offered by a trusted source.

A case of Rumsfeld accepting a dissenting view from a general (who he trusted) is when Gen. Abizaid convinced him that the fighters in Iraq constituted an insurgency. Although at the beginning Rumsfeld had refused to use the word “insurgency” and did not think it was correct to define the anti-US opposition in that way, after many talks with Gen. Abizaid he changed his mind. The General had consistently made his case in private with the Secretary, shown evidence for his arguments, and managed to convince Rumsfeld he was right.

The intense civil-military preference divergence could explain why some of the faulty assumptions of decision-makers were not successfully challenged even though at the time there was sufficient information to show those assumptions were incorrect. Policy-makers tend to discount or disregard advice coming from a source, which they define as “adversarial” – the way Rumsfeld was seeing many in the military. Trying to avoid the benefits of hindsight, one should ask whether decision-makers could have evaluated better the strategic environment they were facing (e.g., the kind of threat posed

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<sup>720</sup> Ibid.



by the regime of Saddam Hussein), the options they had at their disposal, and whether they could have anticipated some of the difficulties and challenges of the military campaign and its aftermath, and, hence, whether they should have been better prepared for what followed.<sup>721</sup> Based on the information that was available to decision-makers *at the time* (both from the situation on the ground in Iraq and from US experience with previous cases of “nation-building”), this was certainly *not impossible*. Evidence shows that many of the serious problems the US encountered during the war and its aftermath, especially after the official end of military operations on May 1, 2003, were predicted or at least anticipated by various government agencies, such as the Army and the Marine Corps, the State Department, the CIA, and various non-governmental organizations and defense-related think tanks, who prepared numerous policy papers on Iraq.<sup>722</sup> Analyzing the relationship between civilian leaders and their top military advisors helps explain why civilian decision-makers did not find convincing and ignored some of the information presented to them by military officials – information which, if taken seriously, could have led to better policy choices.

For example, the different war strategies preferred by civilian and military officials had different underlying assumptions regarding the capabilities of the Iraqi military and its willingness to resist, the readiness of Iraqi opposition groups to overthrow

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<sup>721</sup> Many of the questions relevant to such analysis (e.g., how decision-makers assessed the threat of Iraq WMD programs or the alleged links with Al-Qaeda) are not discussed in this chapter because they require an examination of the relationship between the civilian leadership and the CIA rather than the relationship with top military advisors, which is the main focus of this study.

<sup>722</sup> See, for example, David Rieff, “Blueprint for a Mess: How the Bush Administration Prewar Planners Bungled Postwar Iraq,” *New York Times Magazine*, November 2, 2003, p. 30; Erik Schmitt and Joel Brinkley, “State Dept. Study Foresaw Trouble Now Plaguing Iraq,” *New York Times*, October 19, 2003; John Diamond, “Prewar Intelligence Predicted Iraqi Insurgency,” *USA Today*, October 24, 2004; Michael Elliott, “So, What Went Wrong?,” *Time*, vol. 162, issue 14 (October 6, 2003), p. 31.

Saddam, the possibilities for cooperation from governments in the region, and others.<sup>723</sup> Civilian leaders held an optimistic view, believing that it would not take long for the Hussein regime to capitulate and that many Iraqis, especially the Shia population, would welcome US and coalition troops as liberators.<sup>724</sup> Vice President Cheney and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz were predicting that grateful Iraqis would greet US forces on the streets of Iraq and that there would be an “explosion of joy” in the country. Another assumption was that after the military campaign ended, Iraq would not be too devastated and it would not take much time or effort to put the pieces back together.<sup>725</sup> Iraqi oil would largely pay for the reconstruction. Because of these optimistic assumptions, civilian leaders were not inclined to plan seriously for the post-war stage, believing that the Iraqis (led by Chalabi and his exiles) would be able to take care of the situation themselves, once Saddam was gone.

Ideally, during the decision-making process, all of these assumptions should have been widely debated since critical strategic and tactical decisions were based on them. There did exist information at the time to contradict most of these claims. Were these assumptions critically vetted, many of the flaws could have been exposed earlier and the Bush administration would have had a more accurate estimate of the cost of invasion and occupation of Iraq. Some military leaders did try to object and questioned the assumptions driving the options proposed by the civilian leadership, but were simply

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<sup>723</sup> While still insisting that the US has made “great progress” in Iraq, then Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz himself admitted that some of the assumptions of the civilian leadership were wrong. For details, see Peter Slevin and Dana Priest, “Wolfowitz Concedes Iraq Errors,” *Washington Post*, July 24, 2003, p. A01.

<sup>724</sup> See, for example, NBC, Interview with Vice President Dick Cheney on *Meet the Press*, March 16, 2003.

<sup>725</sup> See, for example, John Barry and Evan Thomas, “The Unbuilding of Iraq,” *Newsweek*, September 28, 2003.

ignored or, at times, publicly contradicted. For example, the Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Shinseki, and the Commander of the Marine Corps, Gen. James Jones, disagreed with the assertion that Saddam's government was going to collapse quickly.<sup>726</sup> The wisdom of drawing lessons from the war on the Taliban was also questioned. Military critics of Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz argued that strategies that might have worked in Afghanistan would not necessarily be successful in Iraq because there were more differences than similarities between the two countries.<sup>727</sup> When some in the military were warning the civilian leadership (both openly -- through testimonies to Congress, and privately) of the possible dangers of post-war Iraq that should be planned for, they were not listened to either.<sup>728</sup>

Since Gen. Shinseki was the only one among senior decision-makers at that time who had on-the-ground experience in running a stabilization force, one would expect his opinion to be given some weight, especially because this view was supported by many senior officers, as well as by other officials with extensive experience in peace-keeping. However, shortly after Shinseki's testimony, top civilian officials, most notably Paul Wolfowitz and Donald Rumsfeld himself, openly criticized his view, saying that the Army Chief of Staff was "wildly off the mark."<sup>729</sup> A senior administration official is quoted as having said that the general's remark was "bullshit from a Clintonite enamored

<sup>726</sup> See, for example, Thomas E. Ricks, December 18, 2002, *op. cit.*

<sup>727</sup> Michael R. Gordon, "The Strategy to Secure Iraq Did Not Foresee a 2<sup>nd</sup> War," *New York Times*, October 19, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>728</sup> See, for example, *Frontline*, "Rumsfeld's War," Interview with Paul Van Riper, July 8, 2004.

<sup>729</sup> Hearing of the US House Budget Committee, 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> sess., February 27, 2003 (Federal Document Clearing House, FDCH Political Transcripts). See also Eric Schmitt, "Pentagon Contradicts General on Iraq Occupation Force's Size," *New York Times*, February 28, 2003.

of using the army for peacekeeping and not winning wars.”<sup>730</sup> The military argued that the post-war reconstruction phase would be more difficult than the military part itself and the US would need more troops for the post-Saddam period.<sup>731</sup> On the contrary, Rumsfeld claimed: “It’s not logical to me that it would take as many forces following the conflict as it would to win the war.”<sup>732</sup> The Defense Secretary and other top civilian officials believed that air power and space technology could substitute for the number of ground forces the military said were needed. At the end, civilian preferences on this crucial issue remained unchanged. “Donald Rumsfeld forced his military chiefs to accept his idea that a relatively small, lightly armed force should go to war with Iraq...”<sup>733</sup> Again, insights from communication and persuasion theories help explain why the Defense Secretary and other civilians did not find the arguments of Gen. Shinseki convincing. Because of civilians’ unfavorable attitudes towards the source of information (i.e., their lack of trust in Shinseki and other military leaders, civilians perceiving them as having different interests and trying to oppose them, and seeing the outlook of the military as outdated and in conflict with their own), top political leaders did not accept the recommendations of their uniformed advisors.<sup>734</sup>

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<sup>730</sup> Quoted in Jason Vest, “Shifting Sands: How Neocons Keep Changing Their Facts to Suit Their Theories,” *The American Prospect*, August 26, 2003. Available at: <http://www.prospect.org/web/printfriendly-view.ww?id=1286>

<sup>731</sup> Mark Fineman, Robin Wright and Doyle McManus, “Wranglings, Missteps Pave the Postwar Road to Hell,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 20, 2004, p. A-1.

<sup>732</sup> “Secretary Rumsfeld Media Availability with Afghan President Hamid Karzai,” February 27, 2003. Available at: [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/t02272003\\_t0227ap.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/t02272003_t0227ap.html).

<sup>733</sup> BBC News, “Rumsfeld ‘Wanted Cheap War’, “March 30, 2003. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2899823.stm>.

<sup>734</sup> For why some sources of information are less persuasive than others, see Hovland, Janis, and Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion*, p. 37.

Other, similar to Shinseki's, warnings about the difficulties of a post-Saddam Iraq were disregarded again because civilian leaders perceived a high level of preference divergence between themselves and the sources of such warnings. For example, many specialists from the military and intelligence communities, as well as from the State Department, warned that the gravest difficulties would come in the days after Saddam was overthrown. Paul Pillar, who at the time worked as the National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia, regrets that many of the warnings by the intelligence community have been ignored by decision-makers. He maintains that the CIA provided information and analysis implying that avoiding war is the right thing to do,

or, if war was going to be launched, to prepare for a messy aftermath. ... Before the war, on its own initiative, the intelligence community considered the principal challenges that any post-invasion authority in Iraq would be likely to face. It presented a picture of a political culture that would not provide fertile ground for democracy and foretold a long, difficult, and turbulent transition. It projected that a Marshall Plan-type effort would be required to restore the Iraqi economy, despite Iraq's abundant oil resources. It forecast that in a deeply divided Iraqi society, with Sunnis resentful over the loss of their dominant position and Shiites seeking power commensurate with their majority status, there was a significant chance that the groups would engage in violent conflict unless an occupying power prevented it. And it anticipated that a foreign occupying force would itself be the target of resentment and attacks -- including by guerrilla warfare -- unless it established security and put Iraq on the road to prosperity in the first few weeks or months after the fall of Saddam.<sup>735</sup>

Most often experts warned about the danger of not being able to provide security and to take care of basics such as electricity and water. There were numerous studies that predicted quite accurately a variety of problems the US could face. For example, starting

<sup>735</sup> Paul Pillar, "Intelligence, Policy, and the War in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2006). This is also discussed in Pillar's book *Intelligence and U.S. Foreign Policy: Iraq, 9/11, and Misguided Reform* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011).

in April of 2002, the State Department conducted the Future of Iraq Project (FOI).<sup>736</sup> While the FOI was certainly not an actionable plan for post-war Iraq, it did contain a lot of pertinent information which could have shaken decision-makers' confidence in the validity of some of assumptions. The FOI project accurately predicted the widespread looting and the chaos, which would result from ousting the Iraqi leadership, stating that "the period immediately after regime change might offer ... criminals the opportunity to engage in acts of killing, plunder, and looting." As one expert recalled the warnings, "There has been major looting in every important post-conflict situation of the past decade."<sup>737</sup> This study also emphasized the importance of restoring basic services to Iraqis as soon as possible after the war, and warned about the dangers created by a total disbanding of the Iraqi military. Civilian officials were warned more than once that their plans did not provide for sufficient troops on the ground to police Iraq once the military campaign is over.

The rejection of the FOI project could also be seen as a case of not accepting information because it comes from the wrong source and not because it is critical of one's own views. From recent memoirs (and taking into account all the difficulties of using such sources as evidence) we know that the State department was not seen exactly as a loyal ally, but quite on the contrary. It was seen as unruly and, often, not very supportive of the White House.<sup>738</sup> (This is not unique to the W. Bush Administration, of course.

<sup>736</sup> See, for example, US Department of State, Daily Press Briefing, Richard Boucher, Spokesman, October 11, 2002. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2002/14340.htm>; The US Mission to the European Union, "Working Group Makes Progress on Mapping Future of Iraq," October 11, 2002; Michael Elliott, "So, What Went Wrong?," *Time*, vol. 162, issue 14 (October 6, 2003), p. 31; Jonathan S. Landay and Warren P. Strobel, "Lack of Planning Contributed to Chaos in Iraq," *Miami Herald*, July 12, 2003.

<sup>737</sup> Quoted in David Rieff, "Blueprint for a Mess: How the Bush Administration Prewar Planners Bungled Postwar Iraq," *New York Times Magazine*, November 2, 2003.

<sup>738</sup> Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, p. 322.

The State Department has been perceived in similar ways in previous administrations as well. Nixon and Kissinger, among others, distrusted the professional diplomats and often bypassed them without much consideration, if any.) Colin Powell as Secretary of State was a target of even greater suspicions. Rumsfeld explains well that regardless of the fact that the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs was valued as an experienced advisor, the relationship between Powell and W. Bush started to deteriorate gradually and this decreased the likelihood that Bush and the other top decision-makers would find Powell's arguments convincing. It did not help that people like Joe Biden, the then chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who worked very closely with Powell, called him "the good guy" in the Bush Administration and "the only person in America who doesn't understand he is a Democrat." For Cheney and Rumsfeld, Powell was "not on the team." Under the circumstances, little that Powell said would register with his colleagues, again not necessarily because they would disagree with the message but because they would distrust the source of the information. The quality of the decision-making process in the lead-up to the Iraq invasion would have certainly benefited from Powell's views but, having in mind his status among his colleagues, we can see why this did not happen.

Dov Zakheim is even more categorical that information and advice from the diplomats were rejected precisely because they were coming from the "wrong" source and not because of their content. Because of the "war" between DoD and State in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq War the decision-making process was affected very negatively, in his words. "A second equally compelling reason that the Defense Department rejected State's planning effort for Iraq is that the two agencies were in a turf war and consequently responded to each other in a knee-jerk fashion. ... almost anything that

State proposed was *immediately rejected* at some level of Defense *simply because the idea was State's*. And State reciprocated in kind.”<sup>739</sup>

The war game “Desert Crossing,” conducted in 1999 by then CENTCOM Chief Anthony Zinni, was another planning exercise that could have provided valuable lessons for decision-makers. As Zinni explained<sup>740</sup>, this war game examined problems that could arise if Iraq were invaded and what US planners should do to handle the situation. “It brought out all the problems we’re seeing now. It shocked the heck out of me.”<sup>741</sup> Zinni and the other planners in 1999 were concerned with the security situation after an invasion and suggested that as many as 400, 000 troops might be necessary to “flood” the towns and villages and establish firm control.<sup>742</sup> By the time Zinni left CENTCOM in 2000, the plans for the post-invasion period, including strategies for dealing with a post-Saddam power vacuum, social turmoil, and looting, were in an advanced stage. After 2001, however, no one seemed to even know of the existence of such plans, not to mention to have made use of them.<sup>743</sup>

Other projects that could have helped decision-makers in their planning include the study conducted by the Army War College and the National Defense University Exercise. The Army War College study reads:

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<sup>739</sup> Dov Zekheim, *A Vulcan's Tale: How the Bush Administration Mismanaged the Reconstruction of Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2011). Emphasis added.

<sup>740</sup> A more detailed discussion of “Desert Crossing” is to be found in Tom Clancy with Tony Zinni, *Battle Ready* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2004).

<sup>741</sup> Anthony Zinni quoted in Chris Strohm, “Former Commander Calls for New Military-Civilian Planning Organization,” December 7, 2004.

<sup>742</sup> Barbara Slavin and Dave Moniz, “War in Iraq's Aftermath Hits Troops Hard,” *USA Today*, July 21, 2003.

<sup>743</sup> When asked about those plans, a spokesman of CENTCOM said he had not heard of them. Anthony Zinni, who has also inquired about the matter, believes those drafts have been “pigeonholed.”



U.S. forces therefore need to complete occupation tasks as quickly as possible and must also help improve the daily life of ordinary Iraqis before popular goodwill dissipates. Even the most benevolent occupation will confront increasing Arab nationalist and religious concerns as time passes. The possibility of terrorism being directed against occupation forces probably will increase over time, and even a small number of terrorists can be expected to create serious problems for an occupation force. A popular uprising against U.S. troops is much less likely than a terrorist campaign, but is still possible if the occupation is poorly managed.<sup>744</sup>

*The possibility of the United States winning the war and losing the peace in Iraq is real and serious ... The United States may find itself in a radically different world over the next few years, a world in which the threat of Saddam Hussein seems like a pale shadow of new problems of America's own making.*<sup>745</sup>

The product of many hours of regional experts' work, these studies offered numerous valuable suggestions for dealing with the challenges of what was by then called Phase IV (the period of post-war reconstruction).<sup>746</sup> Had decision-makers encouraged a more candid exchange of ideas with their military advisors, many of the mistaken beliefs would not have withstood the test of common sense. However, on more than one occasion, civilian leaders disregarded military recommendations, as well as other similar advice provided by sources who they defined as "adversarial" because of the high preference divergence. (For example, Dick Cheney and Rumsfeld would characterize key officials from the State Department, such as Thomas Warrick, as "not being on the team" because of their initial opposition to a war with Iraq and later on,

<sup>744</sup> Conrad Crane and W. Andrew Terril, "Reconstructing Iraq: Challenges and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario," January 2003, p. 2. Available at: <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/pdf/PUB183.pdf>.

<sup>745</sup> Conrad Crane and W. Andrew Terril, "Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario," February 2003, p. 42. Available at: [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2003/Reconstruction\\_Planning.pdf](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2003/Reconstruction_Planning.pdf). Emphasis added.

<sup>746</sup> The four phases were as follows: Phase I -- preparation for combat, Phase II -- initial operations, and Phase III -- combat, Phase IV -- post-war reconstruction.

would disregard advice coming from such people precisely because they were not sharing their strategic preferences). Regarding military advice in particular, as a senior intelligence official recalls, “Rumsfeld just beat up on the military. And so they just shut up.”<sup>747</sup> The dominance of the Pentagon civilians allowed discussions to be suppressed and the views of military advisor to be undercut.

Why did not civilian leaders pay more attention to such warnings and did not plan accordingly? The common argument is that they were so determined to go to war that nothing could have stopped them and that’s why they ignored information and advice challenging their optimistic assumptions. This claim, however, applies only partially and, hence, does not provide a fully satisfactory explanation. Even if some top civilians firmly believed that war was the best choice under the circumstances, there were different options as to *how* to prosecute the war, and they could have listened to military advice in this regard. (Certainly, it was in their interest to conduct that war in the best possible way – their reputation and place in history were at stake, in addition to the security of this country, so one would expect them to have been open to professional advice regarding the “how” to use force question, even if not to “whether” to use force.) In this case, advice was rejected mainly because of its source and not its content; the source was top military leaders and others, whose *preferences were highly diverging* from the preferences of civilian leaders, and/or were not considered sufficiently competent and trustworthy to be listened to.<sup>748</sup> In other words, civilian leaders were not listening to the

<sup>747</sup> Quoted in Warren P. Strobel and John Walcott, “Planning for After the War in Iraq Non-Existent,” *Knight-Ridder*, October 16, 2004.

<sup>748</sup> Similar arguments could be made regarding the relationship between the civilians at DOD, on the one hand, and the CIA and the State Department, on the other, and about the impact of this relationship on the way Pentagon top civilians treated any information coming from State or CIA.

military's recommendations not necessarily because they did not like the content of the message. They were not listening because they did not trust the source because they saw it as having goals and interests that were very different from their own. Because of the high level of preference divergence, civilians were unlikely to find the military's claims persuasive. They took the warnings about the severe difficulties of a post-war Iraq as the generals' way of trying to prevent the war itself. They thought the military's arguments were just another attempt by reluctant generals to stop the country from going to a war they did not want from the start.

This discussion confirms the importance of analyzing whether advice is being rejected because of its content or its source and delving in more depth into the dynamics of the relationship between top political leaders and their advisors in order to understand better the attitudes of leaders toward these advisors and their perceptions of them.

The importance of decision-makers' perception, in particular, of the *intentions* of their advisors is confirmed by the evidence. One such case which affected negatively the already poor relationship between Rumsfeld and the Army was the argument over the Crusader program (in 2002) which the SecDef had decided to terminate and use the money for buying an array of precision munitions for other Army artillery systems. For many in the military, this story confirmed their view that the SecDef was biased against them, especially against the Army. But in the words of Dov Zakheim,

That was not true. What Rumsfeld had was a bias against hidebound thinking and excessive parochialism wherever and whenever he encountered it. In this case Rumsfeld felt that the Army had placed its own parochial interests over the overall needs of the Defense Department. White and Shinseki's relations with Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz never

recovered; the essential trust so necessary between the secretary's office and the service had disappeared.<sup>749</sup>

We have to also consider decision-makers' past experience with the military. In the case of Rumsfeld, he was no stranger to the Pentagon and the government, in general, and he knew how bureaucracies, not to mention such a huge bureaucracy like the military, could sabotage policy-makers if they so choose. He has experienced first-hand how the uniforms have skewed information in order to influence the choices of civilians and to get a decision in their favor.<sup>750</sup> That is why, this time around, he was determined to monitor even technical details, such as deployment orders, to make sure the military was not going shirk.

While many criticize Rumsfeld for not tolerating dissenting views, it may be more precise to say that Rumsfeld had nothing against dissent, as long as military officers disagreed in private. What he wanted from high-ranking military officers was "above all, they had to be candid and forthright, willing to disagree in private with me and with the President if their military advice differed from a course being considered."<sup>751</sup> He could not stand leaks, regardless of whether they were coming from the Pentagon or from State because he believed they were done to benefit the leakers and not the decision process or the national security of the country.<sup>752</sup> As he writes:

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<sup>749</sup> Dov Zakheim, *A Vulcan's Tale: How the Bush Administration Mismanaged the Reconstruction of Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2011), p. 155.

<sup>750</sup> Major Bradley J. Harms, "The American Civil-Military Relationship: A Delicate Balance," p. 14.

<sup>751</sup> Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, p. 300.

<sup>752</sup> *Ibid.*, especially pp. 299-300, 322-3, 326.

I expected Defense Department officials to tell me their views, debate with me, and try to persuade me when they believed I might be wrong or misinformed about important matters – right up until a decision was made and it was time to implement. I have always felt that if officials were in the room when substantive issues are discussed, they were there for a reason. I considered it their duty, whether military or civilian, to speak up and voice opinions, even if – especially if – they disagreed with me or with others taking part in the discussion. Even after I made a decision on a matter, I remained open to people in the Department asking me to reconsider, so long as the decision was being implemented in the meantime.<sup>753</sup>

While we may discount such statements as self-serving, there are other high-ranking officials at the time who also testify that Rumsfeld did not have a problem with dissenting views.<sup>754</sup>

Both Rumsfeld and Cheney are very critical of Secretary Powell particularly for not disagreeing during the internal debates of the administration on Iraq while, at the same time, hinting publicly that there are some serious differences between his views and theirs.

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<sup>753</sup> *Known and Unknown*, p. 326.

<sup>754</sup> Dov Zakheim in his memoirs shows that Rumsfeld could work with people with diverging views. For example, he discusses how during the transition period Rumsfeld had invited and indeed valued the work of some Democrats from the outgoing administration. The SecDef even defended them against less tolerant Republicans when needed. “These meetings also frequently included one or more senior political officials from the Clinton Administration ... Rumsfeld particularly appreciated the work of these people, notably that of outgoing Deputy Secretary Rudy DeLeon. Indeed, at one budget meeting in White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card’s Office, with Cheney present, one of the new appointees at the Office of Management and Budget made a demeaning remark about Rudy being a Democrat. Rumsfeld turned on that person and snarled that Rudy had been gracious enough to support the new team after having served the country on the old one, and said, in effect, that the OMB type should shut up. Shamedfaced, he did so both quickly and thoroughly.”

In his memoirs, then Vice President Cheney expresses his disappointment with Gen. Powell about his alleged failure to criticize and disagree with Administration's policies openly during the debates and argues Powell's sharing his misgivings with people outside the Administration was a mistake, which affected negatively the attitude towards him and made his advice less valuable:

Like the president I had believed that Colin Powell would be an effective secretary of state. I had long admired his talents and had personally selected him for appointment by George H. W. Bush to be chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He was superb in that job. But it was not the same when he was at the State Department. *I was particularly disappointed in the way he handled policy differences. Time and again I heard that he was opposed to the war in Iraq. Indeed, I continue to hear it today. But never once in any meeting did I hear him voice objection. It was as though he thought the proper way to express his views was by criticizing administration policy to people outside the government.*<sup>755</sup>

Specifically about the war plan in Iraq, Rumsfeld writes: "Powell did not raise any questions about troop levels, the war plan, or the numbers of troops in a postwar environment though press stories, to my great surprise, reported that Powell later indicated that he had."<sup>756</sup> Says Rumsfeld:

The reality was that Powell tended not to speak out at NSC or principals meetings in strong opposition to the views of the President or of his colleagues. This was regrettable since Powell had important experience as a leader in both military and civilian capacities, and headed a major element of American's national security

<sup>755</sup> Richard B. Cheney (with Liz Cheney), *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2011), p. 425. Emphasis added.

<sup>756</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 438.

apparatus. ... I believe that the administration would have benefited had State more often proposed strategies for discussion with the President instead of the anonymous hindsight critiques that appeared from time to time in the press accounts and books. Powell's associates in the State Department seemed to suggest, in lower-level meetings and in press interviews often attributed to 'senior administration officials', that he quite often did not favor the President's course on a given subject.<sup>757</sup>

Certainly, there is no guarantee that had Secretary Powell disagreed more often during the internal debates, his arguments would have been more likely to convince President Bush or his colleagues. That would have hardly been the case on the issue of going to war with Iraq, but is uncertain on other issues. Either way, it is important to keep in mind that some top-ranking officials may not have a problem with advisors disagreeing with them but only with them voicing criticism publicly without having done so during the internal debates. The above discussion confirms that for how influential advice would be there are other factors that matter, and not only *the content* of advice.

These factors are related to the *source* of advice – dissenting advice has a higher chance of being accepted if offered by a trusted source and in private. Arguably, the same message could have been more convincing were it to come from a friendly, trusted source. As shown earlier, evidence shows that Rumsfeld was actually more open to criticism and dissenting views than is commonly believed. General Ronald Fogleman (Ret.), former member of the Defense Policy Board, for example, remembered, "My experience with Secretary Rumsfeld is he doesn't brook fools. But if you come to the table with a solid position, he's going to listen and he's going to make a decision based on

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<sup>757</sup> *Known and Unknown*, pp. 323-4.

your input.”<sup>758</sup> And it is also true that some of the accusations that the Defense Secretary did not listen come from people who, at the time, did not have much to say and now feel it is easier to blame Rumsfeld for “being ignored.” In his so-called “snowflakes” or “Rummygrams,” Rumsfeld himself was questioning everything and searching for alternatives. The Secretary was asking some of the most penetrating questions. His critics often forget that Rumsfeld wrote some of the most critical Memos about what could go wrong in Iraq and about the ways the US is fighting the “war” on terrorism.<sup>759</sup> In his October 15, 2002 Memo, for example, the Defense Secretary listed 29 catastrophic scenarios for Iraq, including chemical warfare, escalation of ethnic strife, house-to-house combat in Baghdad, and others, in an attempt to “do everything humanly possible to prepare.”<sup>760</sup> This shows that Rumsfeld was not unwilling to think of various scenarios and alternative options. He simply did not trust some of his top military advisors to provide the solutions because of the high level of preference divergence between them. For similar reasons, some key State Department officials were excluded from different task forces dealing with post-Saddam Iraq, and information and advice coming from them was disregarded because of the clash of preferences between State and DOD at the time.

Thus, examining the advisory process at the pinnacle the government through a framework which includes preference divergence as a variable, leads us to a counter-

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<sup>758</sup> Online News Hour with Jim Lehrer, “Defense Analysts Debate Whether Secretary Rumsfeld Should Go,” October 2, 2006. Available at:

[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/government\\_programs/july-dec06/rumsfeld\\_10-02.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/government_programs/july-dec06/rumsfeld_10-02.html)

<sup>759</sup> See, for example, David Von Drehle, “Wrestling with History,” *The Washington Post*, November 13, 2005. See also Bob Woodward’s discussion of the October 15, 2002 Memo in *Plan of Attack*, pp. 205-6, and Rumsfeld’s War on Terrorism Memo (October 16, 2003), leaked to the media.

<sup>760</sup> David Von Drehle, *Ibid.*



intuitive observation – the so-called “yes-men” (here defined as advisors sharing the preferences of top decision-makers *without* the derogatory connotation this term usually has) surrounding top decision-makers are very important for the effectiveness of the decision-process and may help enhance it. Conventional wisdom is that it is harmful for decision-makers to surround themselves with yes-men because this would lead to a failure to consider the full range of alternatives. However, it could be the case that at times these “yes-men” are the only possibility for transmitting of dissenting views.<sup>761</sup> In other words, if a decision-maker receives a dissenting opinion from someone with whom she disagrees on almost everything, this dissent would be discounted because it could be attributed to the “bias” of the “adversarial” source. If, however, the contrary opinion comes from an advisor whose views and ideas have been similar to hers most of the time, the decision-maker is likely to take such advise seriously and may even reconsider her own position. In the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war, without of course being guided by theories of preference divergence, some military leaders instinctively understood this. Seeing that their views and opinions were not getting through to Rumsfeld, they decided to find someone Rumsfeld listens to in order to convey their concerns. Being perturbed about the Secretary’s frequent interference in military planning they complained to none other than Newt Gingrich, who was then a member of the Defense Policy Board, advising Rumsfeld. Gingrich agreed to “press the secretary to stop messing around with tactical-level decisions.”<sup>762</sup>

<sup>761</sup> For somewhat similar reasoning, see Randall Calvert, “The Value of Biased Information: A Rational Choice Model of Political Advice,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (June 1985), pp. 530-555.

<sup>762</sup> Michael R. Gordon, “The Strategy to Secure Iraq Did Not Foresee a 2<sup>nd</sup> War,” *New York Times*, October 19, 2004, p. 1.

The conventional explanation of what went wrong in this case, namely -- “there was no planning,” is incomplete and unsatisfactory at best. Both at the Pentagon and at Central Command there was a lot of planning and preparation for various emergencies many of which did not occur.<sup>763</sup> High-ranking participants in the decision process confirm as much. For example, former CJCS Gen. Richard Myers has discussed this issue at length in interviews and in his memoirs. The General says that there has been sufficient planning, at least from the civilians and he reserves some criticism for Gen. Franks and CENTCOM on this count. “Well, there was a lot of planning done for the postwar environment, I will say that. There was an awful lot of planning that was done for that, every possible contingency was thought about and there were plans laid for it. ... A lot of planning was done on the civilian side of the house, not necessarily on the military side of the house, but Central Command knew they were going to be responsible for the phase of operations we call Phase 4.”<sup>764</sup> In the words of James Dobbins, the Bush administration special envoy to Afghanistan and the Clinton Administration special envoy to Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo, “It’s not that there wasn’t adequate planning. There was a volume of planning. More than the Clinton administration did for any of its interventions. They planned on unrealistic set of assumptions.”<sup>765</sup> It is also insufficient to say the problem was not that there was no planning or not enough planning,

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<sup>763</sup> Mark Fineman, Robin Wright and Doyle McManus, “Preparing for War, Stumbling to Peace – U.S. is Paying the Price of Missteps Made on Iraq,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 18, 2003.

<sup>764</sup> Interview with Jim Lehrer (in 2005). In his memoirs, Gen. Meyers is more explicitly critical of Gen. Franks, explaining that Franks has been distracted with planning for his upcoming retirement and has not been fully invested in the planning.

<sup>765</sup> Quoted in Mark Fineman, Robin Wright and Doyle McManus, “Preparing for War, Stumbling to Peace – U.S. is Paying the Price of Missteps Made on Iraq.”

but that the planning was based on wrong assumptions.<sup>766</sup> While it is certainly true that faulty assumptions affected negatively the decision-making process, this is insufficient as an explanation unless we explain *why faulty assumptions at times are being corrected during the decision process, while this time, most of these assumptions were not corrected when there was enough information at the time to do so*. After all, in many cases when the use of force is considered, both civilian and military officials have often held incorrect assumptions at the start. One also needs to explain under what circumstances faulty assumptions and beliefs are more likely to be challenged and corrected. Such an explanation requires a detailed analysis of the relationship between top decision-makers and their military (and other) advisors, and especially the level of preference divergence between them – faulty assumptions are more likely to be corrected if the corrective view comes from a source who shares the beliefs, ideas, and goals of the decision-makers.

Regarding information sharing and analysis, in this particular case, as shown, most of the needed information did exist at the time, but was either disregarded or explained away because: a) there was a high level of preference divergence between the civilian leadership and the military, which was trying to present this information. Biases in information processing lead decision-makers to discount advice which comes from a source with which they disagree on many fundamental issues; b) the civilians were dominant and, hence, able to restrict the role of the opposing side.

As expected by my theoretical framework, under conditions of high civil-military preference divergence, civilians would be unlikely to trust military advice and more

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<sup>766</sup> For such an argument see Nora Bensahel, “Mission Not Accomplished: What Went Wrong with Iraqi Reconstruction,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (June 2006), pp. 453-473.

likely to look for outside advisors. In the lead-up to the war with Iraq, the military quickly learned that the civilians would rather consult with defense intellectuals like Newt Gingrich and Richard Perle than with their own generals. Not surprisingly, what most of these outside consultants had in common, besides *lack* of military experience, was that they shared the views of Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz. Particularly unnerving for top officers at the Pentagon was that during the heated debates on Iraq Rumsfeld would keep forwarding them Newt Gingrich's e-mails, which covered a variety of topics including ground combat, military tactics, weaponry, and others.<sup>767</sup> The military wondered why the Secretary would not use their professional advice on such issues and would lightly ignore the experience of his most senior officers. However, this would not be much of a puzzle after one has analyzed the civil-military relationship and the views and ideas of top decision-makers at the time – the Secretary of Defense would be unwilling to accept recommendations provided by his military advisors with whom he was at loggerheads over so many critically important issues. Since there were severe conflicts in the preferences of civilian and military officials, it was not a surprise that Secretary Rumsfeld was tempted to get advice from sources he trusted more.

Certainly, there is nothing wrong if a Secretary of Defense is seeking outside advice. After all, the military has its own institutional biases and interests and a good civilian leadership should make sure it does not become their hostage. However, in this particular case, the problem was that (1) many of the outside consultants used in the process had very little knowledge and understanding of military affairs and/or of Iraq and the Middle East, and that (2) they held the exact same views as Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz

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<sup>767</sup> Dave Moniz, December 9, 2002, *op. cit.*

on the specific issues under consideration; hence, there was little chance these views would be carefully analyzed or subjected to a critical scrutiny. In order to avoid such situations, when choosing their outside advisors, policy-makers should make sure to look not only for people who they trust and with whom they share largely similar interests and views but who also represent a variety of opinions on the subject in question; in this way, the leadership would have a multiplicity of views from which to choose, even if it decides to disregard the military's. Totally overlapping preferences are not good for an effective decision-making process either.

Thus, a civil-military relationship characterized by high preference divergence is unlikely to lead to free flow and exchange of information between civilian and military leaders. In sharp contrast to the 1991 Gulf War case, the intense civil-military disagreements in views and attitudes in this case led to truncated discussions and missed opportunities to debate a full range of military and non-military alternatives and to correct flawed assumptions.

The level of preference divergence affects not only the communication between top civilian officials and their military advisors, and the information gathering and analysis during the decision process, but also the cooperation between them. Regarding interaction and coordination, an effective decision-making process on the use of force (and other issues of national security) requires a constant dialogue between top civilian and military leaders in order to match military means to political objectives and to be responsive at all times to the constantly changing conditions of the diplomatic and military situation.<sup>768</sup> Smooth coordination between civilian and military officials is very

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<sup>768</sup> John Garofano, "Deciding on Military Intervention: What is the Role of Senior Military Leaders?," *op. cit.*

important because it affects the degree to which political and military concerns would be integrated in the final strategy and, ultimately, the extent to which the military instrument would serve properly the political goals of a state. While firm and assertive civilian control could be beneficial to the decision-making and implementation processes<sup>769</sup>, civilian micromanagement is not, and that is why it would be useful to highlight the conditions under which civilian assertiveness could degenerate into counter-productive meddling in military affairs. Including the level of civil-military preference divergence as an explanatory variable helps in doing that.

In order to judge the effectiveness of civil-military cooperation and how it is affected by the level of preference divergence, we can examine how top civilian and military leaders interact with each other and how they participate in the joint advisory councils. For example, what is the level of trust between them? Is one group deliberately marginalized by the other? Are there attempts at civilian micromanagement? When civilians are firmly in control, does the military still try to sabotage the process by foot-dragging or leaks? Evidence for “pathologies” in this respect, for example, include: one side being marginalized or completely cut out of the decision process, threats of firing or resignation, leaks to the media, end runs to Congress, and others. In regard to the choosing of the final policy, one could look at whether at the end either the civilian or the military side has the power to impose its preferences and whether the final decision is a result of deliberations or whether the choice is “imposed” unilaterally and has little to do with the merits of the preceding arguments.

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<sup>769</sup> For more detail, see, Chapters 5 and 8 of this study and also Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command. Op. cit.*

Regarding the interaction and coordination between top civilian and military officials during the lead-up to the war, there were many examples of the dysfunctions one expects to observe when there is strong civil-military conflict and one of the sides (in this case, the civilians) dominates. Such problems could include: civilian leaders resorting to micromanagement or using more intrusive mechanisms of civilian control in order to ensure that the final outcome is closer to their preferred option; civilian leaders trying to exclude military leaders from the debates and/or ignoring or disregarding military advice; military views not being entirely integrated in the decision because of civilian dominance.

A high level of preference divergence between statesmen and soldiers may often lead to attempts at micromanaging because civilians would want to ensure that their own preferences are implemented strictly. In this case, differing views between civilian and military officials on key issues led to increasing distrust. Secretary Rumsfeld and his civilian aides believed the generals were “frozen” in the Cold War and slow to adapt to the radical changes in the environment. The suspicion and mistrust between civilian and military leaders significantly affected the decision-making process. They led to what the civilian leadership saw as a necessary close monitoring of military planning in order to ensure its compliance with political objectives, and what the military said was Rumsfeld’s micromanagement of the deployment of forces to Iraq and, more generally, his intrusive involvement in all the details of the planning process.

Military leaders felt that they were not trusted and were either left out of the decision-making process or were so closely monitored that they feared military effectiveness would suffer. After his retirement, the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Henry “Hugh” Shelton, told a reporter that he “was shocked to be treated like a ‘second-rate citizen’ .. and to be distrusted on every turn. In the Pentagon,

if the military said one thing, the civilians said, ‘Well, prove it.’<sup>770</sup> Precisely because the civilian leadership distrusted the military, it was tempted to use more intrusive mechanisms of civilian control in order to ensure that civilian preferences would be carried out. In the lead-up to the war, analysts counted numerous examples of civilian micromanagement, some of which are detailed in the next paragraphs. Micromanagement then became another cause for the increased tension between Rumsfeld and the uniforms as well as an indicator of a dysfunctional relationship.

Planners of military operations in the Pentagon complained of Rumsfeld’s micromanaging of operational details and of what they saw as his disregard for professional advice. According to them, the evolution of the Iraq war plan from the original Plan 1003<sup>771</sup> was a painful and torturous process during which the Secretary and his key civilian advisers disregarded military advice, ignoring officers who had spent a life-time working on logistics. Especially annoying for some military planners was the “killing” of the Time Phased Forces Deployment List (TPFDL)<sup>772</sup>, a document which describes in detail the forces to be sent in battle, the sequence of their deployment and logistical support.<sup>773</sup> In the words of a former intelligence officer, “When you kill the tip-fiddle, you kill centralized military planning. The military is not like a corporation that can be streamlined. It is the most inefficient machine known to man. It’s the

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<sup>770</sup> Quoted in *Frontline*, “Rumsfeld’s War,” Interview with Dana Priest.

<sup>771</sup> This was the code name of the initial attack plan for Iraq.

<sup>772</sup> Called also tip-fiddle or tip-fid.

<sup>773</sup> See, for example, Richard Whittle, “Rumsfeld Inspires Love, Hate in Military,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 3, 2004; Toby Harnden, “Former Generals Attack Rumsfeld Tactics; Defense Secretary Accused of Ignoring Pleas for Extra Men,” *Daily Telegraph*, March 26, 2003, p. 11.



redundancy that saves lives.”<sup>774</sup> Then Secretary of the Army Thomas White also believes that Rumsfeld’s decision to involve himself with the smallest details of the deployments “drove everybody just about to the point of distraction.”<sup>775</sup>

Accounts of participants in the decision-making process show how the Iraq war plan (Plan 1003) was repeatedly updated and presented to Rumsfeld who returned it again and again with the insistence to cut the number of ground troops. When presented with re-iterations of Plan 1003, this planner recalls, the Secretary would say: “You’ve got too much ground force – go back and do it again.”<sup>776</sup> In this way, crucial deployments were significantly delayed because “the meddler-in-chief”<sup>777</sup> kept changing again and again Central Command’s deployment plan. “The civilians in Rumsfeld’s office vetoed the priority and sequencing of joint forces in the region – as it was requested by the war fighters – and manipulated it to support their priorities. When they did this, it de-synchronized not only the timing of the arrival of people and their organic equipment, but also the proper mix of combat and combat support units.”<sup>778</sup> The military, socialized in Huntingtonian “objective” control principles, strongly disliked such interference in its domain of expertise and believed it ultimately hurt military effectiveness.

These interactions between Rumsfeld and the generals should be analyzed in the context of Rumsfeld’s views of the military (as a cumbersome bureaucracy with ideas,

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<sup>774</sup> Quoted in Seymour M. Hersh, April 7, 2003, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>775</sup> Interview with Thomas White, *Frontline*, “Rumsfeld’s War,” August 12, 2004.

<sup>776</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>777</sup> Lawrence Freedman, “Rumsfeld’s Legacy: The Iraq Syndrome?,” *Washington Post*, January 9, 2005, p. B04.

<sup>778</sup> Quoted in Vernon Loeb, “Rumsfeld Faulted For Troop Dilution; Military Officers: Forces in Iraq Are Inadequate,” *Washington Post*, March 30, 2003, p. A19.

interests and agenda different from his own) and the way he saw civil-military relations under Clinton. As explained earlier, Rumsfeld believed that civilian control has been severely weakened under his predecessors. This attitude could be summarized best in a joke, often quoted by Mackubin Thomas Owens: “When the army did not want to do something – as in the Balkans in the 1990s – it would simply overstate the force requirements: ‘The answer is 350, 000 soldiers. What is the question?’”<sup>779</sup> Knowing the ways the military had tried to sabotage civilian policies it did not like in the past, Rumsfeld thought that the TPFDL was also just a tool used by the military bureaucracy to block him, rather than a genuine request for specific force levels. That’s why he showed he was willing not only to probe but even change the numbers and the sequence of deployment of particular units. Had there been more trust in the civil-military relationship, the TPFDL would have been discussed with much less suspicion. But trust is precisely what is most often lacking under conditions of high civil-military preference divergence.

A comparison with the 1991 Gulf War strengthens the argument that if assertive civilian control is combined with *high* levels of civil-military preference divergence, attempts at civilian micromanagement are very likely to occur. When civil-military preference divergence is low, as in the administration of George Bush Sr. even assertively dominant civilians would not feel much of a need to micromanage because they trust that the military would follow closely political preferences (since these, more or less, happen to be the preferences of the military as well). Hence, what many perceived as the more hands-off approach of the Bush Sr. administration in the 1991 Gulf

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<sup>779</sup> See, for example, Mackubin Thomas Owens, “Failure’s Many Fathers,”

War (a case which belongs in Quadrant 3 in Table 1). In contrast, in the lead up to the 2003 Iraq war Rumsfeld' and Wolfowitz's assertiveness was often turning into micromanagement in part because they were faced with a very high level of divergence between their preferences and the preferences of the military. In such situations, civilians fear that the military has an agenda of its own. They think they have to monitor the uniforms very closely in order to ensure that the military would follow civilian preference rather than its own. That is why my theoretical framework emphasizes the importance of examining the level of civil-military preference divergence, together with the civil-military balance of power (or who is in control).

Ironically, Rumsfeld was putting all this effort into close monitoring in the name of strengthening civilian control over the military. He believed, correctly, that assertive political leadership is crucial for success. However, as the above examples show, when assertive political control is combined with a high level of civil-military preference divergence, the decision-making process could be affected negatively. This is not to argue against assertive political leadership but to show that its value should not be asserted out of context. As the chapter on the 1991 Gulf War shows, assertive civilian control could be very beneficial and lead to a more effective decision-making process. Contrary to conventional wisdom<sup>780</sup>, civilian leaders should *not* be *unwilling* to involve themselves in the details of strategy-making (after they understand them) since, at times, what seems like a tactical or technical purely military detail may have profound political/strategic significance. Precisely because war is fundamentally political, effective

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<sup>780</sup> The conventional wisdom (at least in the US), especially after Vietnam, is that politicians should set the objectives and then step aside and leave the war to the generals. The classic expression of this view is Samuel Huntington, *Soldier and the State: the Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957). For the most powerful recent critique of the conventional wisdom, see Eliot Cohen (2002), *op. cit.*

civilian leaders, as history shows, have not trusted blindly military professionalism. However, they have involved themselves in military detail not in order to always second-guess the generals or plan military campaigns themselves, but in order to help the military see the bigger political and diplomatic picture and to avoid being trapped by parochial interests. This is possible if civilian leaders have good grasp of matters of national security and are willing to enter into a constant and vigorous dialogue with their military counterparts in finding the best way of matching military means to political objectives.

The problem, of course, was not that Rumsfeld (in the name of Bush) ran the war – after all, that is how it should be since it is the elected political leaders who bear ultimate responsibility for a war’s success or failure. The problem was that the severe preference divergence between civilian and military officials often prevented the much-needed dialogue between them. The making of strategy suffers when the vigorous and, at times, tense and unpleasant dialogue between political and military leaders is absent.<sup>781</sup> The high level of preference divergence between statesmen and soldiers under Bush/Rumsfeld explains the lack of effective dialogue – decision-makers simply tend to ignore communications from sources with whom they disagree sharply and toward whom they have negative attitudes. Under Rumsfeld, the dialogue between civilian and military leaders was deficient or lacking much of the time because of the highly diverging views and ideas held by civilian and military leaders.

Regarding the process of choosing a policy from existing alternatives, it was often the case that civilian preferences dominated at the expense of military views. When, for

<sup>781</sup> Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2002). Contrary to the findings of this author, in the *Afterward* of the second edition of *Supreme Command*, Eliot Cohen argues that the “unequal dialogue” worked well under Bush/Rumsfeld.

example, Gen. Franks presented the original invasion plan, Secretary Rumsfeld found it insufficiently creative and not reflecting what he thought were the technological advances the US had made after the 1991 Gulf War.<sup>782</sup> Civilian policy-makers accused military leaders of being unimaginative and risk-averse. The civilians were growing increasingly frustrated with Franks himself and the rest of the “overly reluctant” officers, as they thought of the military, and the Army, in particular. They held a meeting of the Defense Policy Board, specifically discussing how to overcome military reluctance. At the meeting, “one defense expert [suggested]: You have to have a few heads roll, especially in the Army.”<sup>783</sup> Gen. Franks found himself squeezed between Rumsfeld and a tight circle of his closest aides who insisted on a much smaller invasion force than the military felt comfortable with. While the number of troops in the final war plan was higher than Rumsfeld wanted originally, many analysts hesitate to call this a genuine compromise between the civilian views and the preferences of CENTCOM. In the words of Gordon and Trainor, “General Tommy Franks ... would draw up the new plan, but Rumsfeld would poke, prod, and question the military at every turn. Defense Department civilians would move into Franks’s planning cells to monitor his work, and the general would be summoned to Washington repeatedly to present his evolving plan and receive new guidance from his civilian masters.”<sup>784</sup> A high-ranking Pentagon officer noted, “Franks may be the draftsman, but Rumsfeld is the architect [of the plan].”<sup>785</sup> “Rumsfeld just

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<sup>782</sup> Eric Schmitt and David Sanger, “Bush Has Received Pentagon Options on Attacking Iraq,” *New York Times*, September 21, 2002.

<sup>783</sup> Quoted in Thomas E. Ricks, August 1, 2002, *op. cit.*

<sup>784</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, Chapter 1.

<sup>785</sup> Quoted in Mark Thompson, Michael Duffy, “Pentagon Warlord,” *Time Magazine*, January 27, 2003, vol. 161, Issue 4, p. 22.

ground Franks down,” according to former Secretary of the Army John White. “If you grind away at the military guys long enough, they will finally say, ‘Screw it, I’ll do the best I can with what I have.’ The nature of Rumsfeld is that you just get tired of arguing with him.”<sup>786</sup> (At the time of this writing, evidence is inconclusive as to how exactly Gen. Franks changed his original preferences and his views became closer to Rumsfeld’s. There are several (related) possibilities – the CENTCOM commander was gradually persuaded by Rumsfeld’s arguments, he was bullied by an unrelenting Secretary of Defense, or warned down – but as of now we cannot say which exactly was the case.)

In January of 2003, in order to put an end to the infighting between the departments of State and Defense, President Bush assigned responsibility for post-war Iraq to the Pentagon, which made it easier to ignore the planning conducted by other agencies and departments. Many military and intelligence officials, as well as analysts with inside knowledge of the decision-making process, observed that the usual planning procedures had been disregarded.<sup>787</sup> Because of the differences in the preferences of civilian and military officials on key issues of military planning on Iraq, the civilians tended to leave the uniformed leadership out of the planning process. There was much less involvement by the Joint Chiefs and their chairman, Air Force General Richard Myers, in the deliberations. As Ricks and others have argued, “The influence of the Joint Chiefs on military policy appears to have diminished under Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.”<sup>788</sup> Analysts of the decision-making process charge that the military was

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<sup>786</sup> Michael R. Gordon, “The Strategy to Secure Iraq Did Not Foresee a 2<sup>nd</sup> War,” *New York Times*, October 19, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>787</sup> Seymour Hersh, March 11, 2002, *op. cit.*

<sup>788</sup> Thomas Ricks, December 18, 2002, *op. cit.* See also William Arkin, “U.S. Military; Planning an Iraqi War but Not an Outcome,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 2003, p. M.1.

being more or less excluded from high-level policy councils from the very start of Rumsfeld's tenure during the QDR process.<sup>789</sup> To the extent that the usual preliminary studies under the control of the National Security Council and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were conducted at all, they were not given much weight, but were substituted by advice from outside consultants trusted by Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers, and the Joint Chiefs themselves, were apparently excluded from many of the meetings at which strategy was discussed. It appears that the Joint Chiefs had not been consulted on key issues during the planning process. For example, in the words of William Arkin:

Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is excluded from much discussion. And the service chiefs, ostensibly the senior military advisors for the Defense secretary and the president, have less opportunity to provide input. In fact, sources say, the emerging Iraq plan was never officially brought into "the tank," the Joint Chiefs' super-secure meeting room, for a discussion among the heads of all the services.<sup>790</sup>

Rumsfeld's attempts to make the Joint Chiefs subordinate to him (rather than the president) could hurt the advisory process. If the independence of the Chairman is undermined, the President would not have any alternative views to consider – this situation could be particularly dangerous in case the civilian view (coming from the Secretary) proves to be wrong, as it has happened on occasions. After all, Congress passed the Goldwater-Nichols Act, making the Chairman the primary military advisor to

<sup>789</sup> See, for example, Thomas E. Ricks, May 20, 2001, *op. cit.*

<sup>790</sup> William Arkin, "U.S. Military; Planning an Iraqi War but Not an Outcome," *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 2003, p. M.1.

the President, precisely so that the President could hear the military's views and be able to consider alternatives.

### Conclusion

While *neither* the civil-military balance of power nor the level of civil-military preference divergence *alone* could explain the decision-making process leading up to the 2003 Iraq war, *in combination*, those two factors provide important insights. Although in this case civilian control was not at stake (the military dutifully fulfilled the wishes of its civilian masters)<sup>791</sup>, the high level of preference divergence between statesmen and soldiers affected negatively the making and implementation of strategy on Iraq. A high level of preference divergence between policy-makers and their advisors often leads to distortion of information, truncated discussions and insufficient analysis of policy options, and attempts at micromanagement. In cases like this, characterized by a high degree of civil-military preference divergence and a clear dominance of the civilian side, the dominant side has both the motive and the ability to manipulate the decision-making process so that the final outcome reflects its preferences rather than the preferences of the opposing group. In such circumstances, the stronger side has not only a reason to try to exclude the weaker from the debates or keep discussions short (i.e., they strongly disagree), but also the ability to do so because of the favorable balance of power. Hence, under these conditions (a combination of high level of conflict and clear dominance), regardless of personality types or the management style of key decision-makers, there

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<sup>791</sup> This is the view of many of the leading experts on US civil-military relations. For example, Peter Feaver states: "This is a war that civilian leaders wanted, and it is being fought more or less how they wanted." Quoted in David Wood, "Debate Over Troop Strength Shows Strain in Military-Civilian Partnership," Newhouse News Service, April, 2003. Available at: <http://www.newhousenews.com/archive/wood040403.html>. Accessed: 9/04.



would always be the temptation to impose one's preferences by skewing the decision process.

This chapter highlights the impact of high levels of civil-military preference divergence on the decision-making process, and more specifically, on the ways policy-makers seek and process information and advice. By analyzing not only the preferences of top civilian and military officials but the *degree of preference divergence* between them during the decision process, we could predict how influential military advice would be in a particular case (i.e., how likely it is that statesmen would be convinced by the recommendations of their military advisors). Decision-makers are likely to discount advice (or not seek it at all) from sources with whom they disagree on many key issues or who they perceive as having different interests in a given situation. As Arthur Lupia shows, "perceived common interest [is] necessary for persuasion... persuasion is impossible when the speaker and listener have conflicting interests. For when the listener perceives a speaker to have conflicting interests, her best response is to ignore the cue."<sup>792</sup> Secretary Rumsfeld and the top civilian leadership could have probably been easier to persuade on the question of *how* to use force if they did not believe that there was a fundamental clash between their views and the preferences of their top military advisors on the *first* question – *whether* to go to war or not. Knowing that the military had argued against the war in the first place, the Defense Secretary saw higher estimates for the required troops levels as the military's way of putting roadblocks to any invasion plan against Iraq. Rumsfeld was convinced that when the services were against a mission, they wanted at least twice as many troops as they actually needed. He was not going to

<sup>792</sup> "Who Can Persuade Whom? Implications from the Nexus of Psychology and Rational Choice Theory," In James H. Kuklinski, ed., *Thinking About Political Psychology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 62-3.

pay much attention to advice from people who he perceived as having an agenda of their own.

This chapter shows that a *high* degree of divergence between civilian and military preferences, combined with clear civilian dominance, interferes with the making of strategy in at least several ways. High civil-military preference divergence affects the functioning of the advisory process at the pinnacle of government by impeding the collection, sharing, and analysis of information by civilian and military officials, and their interaction and cooperation during the planning and implementation of the chosen policy. In this particular case, there were significant problems with the exchange and analysis of information as well as with coordination and collaboration between civilian and military leaders. The severe differences between the views of Secretary Rumsfeld and the uniformed leadership of the Pentagon over military transformation and on whether and how to use force against Saddam Hussein led to the marginalization of military leaders. Excluding the military from many of the debates at the highest levels and ignoring or disregarding their advice led to a dysfunctional analysis of alternative options for action and, ultimately, undermined US strategy. Diverging civil-military preferences and civilian dominance caused the military to be afraid to give its honest advice on key issues of war planning. As expected under the circumstances, the weaker side (the military) tried various forms of passive resistance, such as foot-dragging and leaks to the media, sympathetic members of Congress and/or retired officers who could more easily voice objections against the strategy proposed by top civilian decision-makers. At times, the military was even able to create a united front with some members of Congress, who were also angered by what they saw as Rumsfeld's arrogance and a

habit of keeping them in the dark.<sup>793</sup> But, at times, the generals were simply overruled by Rumsfeld and the civilian leadership. While some level of “creative” tension<sup>794</sup> could improve the decision-making process, the high levels of distrust and friction between Rumsfeld and the military contributed to the poor analysis and formulation of strategy. Civil-military conflict also impeded the coordination and collaboration among leaders at the top and this led to a failure to fully integrate military considerations with political and diplomatic policy.

The evidence presented in this chapter confirms the significance of studying not only civilian and military preferences on key issues related to the use of force and national security, more broadly, but also the *level of divergence* between statesmen and soldiers’ preferences at any given time. This level of preference divergence and its impact on the decision-making process are often overlooked. If we study the preferences of top political and military leaders on when and how to use or threaten force, we could predict the type of action they would recommend in a given situation. If, in addition, we analyze the *degree of conflict* in the views of statesmen and soldiers, we could anticipate the level of influence advisors’ recommendations would have (e.g., when preference divergence is high, advice is more likely to be disregarded), as well as the quality of interaction and coordination between the two sides. In other words, studying the

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<sup>793</sup> The Defense Secretary managed to annoy even many Republican Senators. They held up the confirmation of several of Rumsfeld’s nominees in order to “protest what the senators consider Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld’s lack of communication with Congressional leaders.” For details, see James Dao, “In Protest, Republican Senators Hold Up Defense Confirmations,” *New York Times*, May 10, 2001, p. 30. See also Thomas E. Ricks, “82 Lawmakers Sign Letter to Pentagon,” *Washington Post*, August 3, 2001, p. 8.

<sup>794</sup> See, for example, Eliot Cohen, “The Unequal Dialogue: The Theory and Reality of Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force,” in Peter D. Feaver and Richard H. Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 429-58; Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command. Op. cit.*

intensity of preference divergence between civilian and military leaders is important because it can explain when and why decision-makers would be more open to accepting the recommendations of their military advisors, as well as when the two sides would be willing to share information rather than to conceal or distort it.

In addition, as shown, under the condition of civilian dominance, “assertive” civilian control becomes an option and this may have both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side is the fact that assertive and engaged leaders could prod an unwilling military to come up with more alternative options from which they could choose. Furthermore, assertive leaders would not allow to be misled by military parochialism. At the same time, however, when *civilian dominance* is accompanied by high levels of civil-military *preference divergence*, civilian leaders tend to resort to more intrusive mechanisms of control in order to ensure the dominance of their preferences in the final decisions. Some of these mechanisms, however, are seen by the military as “micromanagement” and they only increase the conflict between statesmen and soldiers. Increased levels of civil-military conflict may further diminish the effectiveness of the decision-making process.

Another lesson from this case study is that dissenting advice is accepted primarily from a trusted source, someone with whom decision-makers have a low preference divergence and if offered in private. Hence, from the standpoint of the effectiveness of decision-making we have to make sure not that decision-makers are surrounded with people with whom they disagree in order to provide diverging views but with people who they trust and with whom they share similar views. These people can provide the diverging opinions as well and are more likely to be listened to. That is why it is important to analyze why decision-makers reject information and advice in particular

cases, especially if what is rejected turns out to be valuable information that can make the difference between victory and defeat. If advice is not registering with some officials not because of its content but because of its source, we should change the messenger in order to manage to get through to decision-makers.

With hindsight, we know that in this case the views of the military happened to be correct more often than those of its civilian leaders. But this is not to argue that if only civilian leaders in war do exactly what their uniformed advisors tell them to do, there would be no problem. This would be the wrong lesson since, if history is any guide, military leaders, at times, have been very wrong about purely military matters. In this case as well, the generals made their fair share of mistakes or failed to speak up when they disagreed.<sup>795</sup> In order to be successful war leaders, civilian decision-makers should not be afraid to challenge the judgment of their generals. “The finest democratic war statesmen of the past ... prodded, nagged, questioned, and harassed subordinates, although they rarely issued direct orders or overruled them.”<sup>796</sup> Correctly and quite in line with Cohen’s recommendations for assertive civilian leadership<sup>797</sup>, Rumsfeld was pressing and pushing the military, requiring them to question their own assumptions and not allowing them to be guided by outdated concepts or rigid beliefs. Many analysts give Rumsfeld credit for instilling more flexibility in the military and fundamentally changing the way commanders plan for conflict, first exemplified by the war on Afghanistan and

<sup>795</sup> See, for example, Lt. Col. Paul Yingling, “General Failure,” *Armed Forces Journal*, April 27, 2007. Available at: <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com>.

<sup>796</sup> Eliot Cohen, “Supreme Command in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Joint Force Quarterly* (Summer 2002), pp. 48-54.

<sup>797</sup> See, for example, Eliot Cohen (2002), *op. cit.*

later Iraq.<sup>798</sup> At the same time, they are puzzled by how someone like him, always insisting on “thinking outside the box” and willing to question the military on everything, would not be as willing to listen to challenges to his own assumptions, ideas, and beliefs. By analyzing the civil-military relationship under Rumsfeld (and especially the high level of preference divergence) we can provide another explanation as to why at key junctures in the decision process the Defense Secretary was not convinced by military advice. While civilian leaders were right to question their military commanders, challenge their assumptions, and even overrule them when they thought this was needed<sup>799</sup>, high levels of civil-military preference divergence (combined with civilian dominance) led to a deficient process of deliberation and assessment at the top, whereby the views of civilian officials, who dominated at the end, were not scrutinized as tightly as they should have been and there was little chance to correct flawed assumptions and evaluate alternatives.

This case is a good reminder that civilian dominance and assertive civilian leadership do not automatically translate into a high-quality decision-making process and do not always produce good strategy. This case further shows why scholars should take into account not only the civil-military balance of power (or who is in control) but also the level of preference divergence between political and military leaders. If assertive civilian dominance is combined with high levels of preference divergence on most of the

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<sup>798</sup> Michael O’Hanlon, for example, describes Rumsfeld as “... one of the three or four most gifted secretaries of defense to hold the job since it was created...” In: Michael O’Hanlon, “Secretary on the Defensive,” *Newsday*, May 7, 2004. Available at: <http://www.brookings.edu/views/op-ed/ohanlon/20040507.htm>.

<sup>799</sup> After all, this is part of the definition of civilian control or, as Peter Feaver put it: “Civilians have the right to be wrong.”

key issues regarding the use of force, the decision-making process would most probably be plagued with problems similar to the ones discussed in this chapter.<sup>800</sup>

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<sup>800</sup> How could have things been different? Should we always expect poor quality of decision-making under conditions of civilian dominance combined with high preference divergence? At least in theory, the strong civilian dominance at the Pentagon could have been counterbalanced to a certain extent by civilian officials from the State Department like Colin Powell whose preferences were closer to the military ones. In this case, this did not happen since President Bush put the Pentagon in charge of everything related to the Iraq war and, hence, opposition from State and other departments was not difficult to ignore. Congress and the media could have also played a stronger role in checking and balancing the Executive. Why the system of checks and balances did not quite work in this case is an extremely interesting question, which, however, goes beyond the scope of this chapter.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

By examining different patterns of civil-military relations, this dissertation sheds light on questions, such as: How do political and military leaders make decisions on war and peace? How are we to explain the variance in the effectiveness of decision-making on the use of force? Under what circumstances are decision-makers more likely to miscalculate while making decisions on the use of force, to misjudge their strategic environments and design ineffective military strategies, and thereby, endanger their own security and the wellbeing of others? This study shows that civil-military relations affect directly and significantly the decision-making process on the use of force. A good-quality decision-making process includes: having a continuous and vigorous dialogue between top civilian and military officials - free and open communication and exchange of information and ideas, which bring multiple perspectives on issues<sup>801</sup>, and smooth coordination, interaction and cooperation between them. A healthy civil-military relationship significantly increases the ability of the United States government to design a coherent strategy, successfully integrating political and military considerations.

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<sup>801</sup> The best way to assure this, according to Alexander George, is the system of “multiple advocacy.” In: Alexander George, *Presidential Decision-Making in Foreign Policy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980). For more recent interpretations, see James Pfiffner, “Policy Making in the Bush White House,” *Issues in Governance Studies* No. 21, October 2008, p. 4.



This dissertation shows that firm civilian control, while necessary, is not a sufficient condition and does not automatically translate into effective national security decision-making or victorious military strategies. We need to shift focus away from traditional conceptions of civilian control and focus instead on the way the relations between top civilian and military officials affect the process by which states decide to use or threaten military force. Civilian control, traditionally understood as the ability to prevent a military coup, has been overemphasized as a dependent variable at the expense of other variables, which are at least as important and much more interesting in cases like the U.S. and other mature democracies, where civilian control is not in question and where a military coup is highly unlikely. Traditional notions of civilian control do not address adequately many of the fundamental issues involved in strategy and policy-making.<sup>802</sup> That is why the firmness of civilian control (or the balance of power between civilian and military officials) needs to be examined in the context of other important factors, such as the level of preference divergence between top civilian and military officials, as this study does.

This dissertation shows that the effectiveness of a state's decision-making process on issues related to the use of military force depends primarily on the quality of the civil-military dialogue, which, in turn, depends on two key variables of the civil-military relationship: (1) the level of divergence between civilian and military preferences (views, ideas, beliefs) on issues related to foreign policy and national security, and (2) the "balance of power" between civilian and military officials (defined as the relative power of top civilian and military officials over decision-making). Combinations of these two

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<sup>802</sup> John Garofano, "Deciding on Military Intervention: What is the Role of Senior Military Leaders?," *Naval War College Review* 53, no. 2 (Spring 2000), pp. 40-64.

variables create distinct patterns of civil-military relations which affect the quality of the decision-making process or a state's ability to design effective military strategies and to achieve its political objectives. In general, preference divergence held constant, *assertive* civilian dominance is preferable. Regarding the differences in views and ideas between civilian and military officials, low levels of preference divergence is associated with a more effective decision-making process, while high levels of preference divergence usually lead to poor civil-military communication and coordination and inability to integrate political and military considerations into the strategies and policies.

More specifically, the case studies confirm the expectations of my theoretical framework about the variance in the effectiveness of the decision process as a result of the different patterns of civil-military relations.

Under conditions of civilian dominance and intense preference divergence between statesmen and soldiers (Quadrant 1), the high preference divergence (even when combined with strong civilian dominance) creates dynamics that affect negatively all aspects of the policy-making and implementation processes. Intense civil-military preference divergence usually leads to significant problems with the exchange of information as well as with coordination and cooperation between civilian and military leaders. As shown, the dominant side (in Quadrant 1 - the civilians) may try to marginalize opposing views by excluding some military leaders from policy debates or discounting the merits of their judgment. Excluding the military from many of the debates at the highest levels and ignoring or disregarding their advice leads to a dysfunctional analysis of alternative options for military action and, ultimately, undermines strategy and policy. Strong civil-military preference divergence undermines the coordination and collaboration among leaders at the top because each side prefers a

different outcome. This often leads to a failure to fully integrate military views with political and diplomatic policy. As in the case of the 2003 Iraq war, intense differences in civilian and military preferences also led to lack of trust. Distrust then caused civilian micromanagement of the military, which further intensified civil-military conflicts.

Cases in Quadrant 2, characterized by military dominance and high civil-military preferences divergence, are the worst possibility from the stand-point of decision-making. In its attempts to protect its own preferences, each side tries to distort the decision-making process by undermining effective information gathering and analysis, as well as coordination and cooperation. Because of the high level of preference divergence, there rarely is a free flow of information or an extensive analysis of alternative options. Each side has incentives to manipulate or withhold information. High preference divergence also leads to the use of leaks, foot-dragging, and other tactics for blocking the preferred option of the other side. Also, because of military dominance, civilians would not necessarily get what they want; the political and diplomatic perspectives may not necessarily be included in the analysis of options. The implementation process would often be characterized by lack of integration between political objectives and military means. At the same time, in order to restore the balance of power, civilians may be tempted to use intrusive monitoring, which may intensify the conflict with the military. Such dynamics, characteristic for decision-making processes in Quadrant 2, are illustrated by my case study on the first Clinton Administration and the conflict in Bosnia.

Civilian dominance and low civil-military preference divergence (cases in Quadrant 3) seems to be the best of all worlds from the point of view of the quality of the decision-making process. Civilian and military leaders are in agreement and, hence, neither side has an incentive to withhold or manipulate information. Both sides are likely

to share private information since they have an incentive to ensure that their mutually preferred outcome is realized in the best possible way. The political leadership benefits from a more complete analysis and evaluation of the military aspects of the situation since military advisors feel free to speak their mind. The military also benefits from a more open and frank discussion of the political constraints as seen by the civilian leadership and this increases their mutual understanding and facilitate coordination. Because of civilian dominance, assertive civilian control becomes an option. Assertive control, however, would not deteriorate into micromanagement in such cases (unlike in Quadrant 1) because of the commonalities in civilian and military perspectives. Civilians would not feel the need to employ intrusive mechanisms of control because they would expect the military to carry out their orders without foot-dragging and in accordance with civilian preferences (which happen to be military preferences too). We can expect a good integration of political objectives and military means. My case study on the 1991 Gulf War illustrates such dynamics.

One caveat is in order here. While low levels of preference divergence usually lead to a more effective decision-making process, an almost total convergence of civilian and military preferences could have some negative consequences as well. Too much agreement between political and military officials could lead civilians to relax their oversight of the soldiers. As an extreme in such situations civilians could abdicate authority and this could lead subsequently to the inability of the state to achieve its political objectives (since the military would be satisfied with the achievement of military victory and would expect the political leadership to take care of the foreign-policy objectives). For example, as my 1991 Gulf War case shows, civilian abdication at the end of the war, which was in part due to very high civil-military preference convergence,

led to inability to turn the military triumph into a political victory. Key decisions as to the timing of war termination, for which the civilian leadership deferred to the military, and mainly to Colin Powell, as well as the preparation for the armistice talks at Safwan, were made without much civilian guidance from Washington and with insufficient civilian assertiveness and this led to the failure to integrate military strategy and political policy. Excessive civil-military preference convergence could be as debilitating for the decision-making process as excessive divergence between civilian and military views.

The quality of the decision-making process in cases falling in Quadrant 4 (military dominance and low level of civil-military preference divergence) is “mixed.” On the one hand, decision-making benefits from the low level of divergence between civilian and military preferences; on the other, however, military dominance may lead to difficulties in integrating the military instrument with the political view. As one of my case studies shows (in the final stages of the 1991 Gulf War, when civilian leaders abdicated control), even though military victory was achieved, the political objectives were not fully achieved because such integration was lacking. The armistice talks at Safwan, which Schwarzkopf had to conduct almost entirely on his own illustrate this point. The insufficient civilian involvement at the end of the 1991 Gulf War led to the failure to integrate military and political policies and ultimately, caused the inability of the U.S. to turn a big military victory into a political one as well. In this case, civilian leaders failed to ensure that their ground commander, Gen. Schwarzkopf, would take into account not only the purely military but the wider political and diplomatic implications of a tactical issue such as the Iraqi negotiators’ request to be allowed to use armed helicopters. Schwarzkopf agreed to that request after making sure that the helicopters would not endanger in any way the security of U.S. and coalition forces. As it turned out,

however, this decision had much broader (and tragic) consequences -- Saddam Hussein used the helicopters to brutally suppress the Shiite uprising and keep himself in power. Such developments could have most probably been prevented had civilian leaders intervened in time to explain to the military commander the political implications of the Iraqi domestic situation and the importance of this decision for the overall success of US political objectives in the war.

Contrary to Samuel Huntington's dominant "objective control" model, the findings in this dissertation firmly support a model of assertive civilian control. Huntington's model is found deficient both descriptively and prescriptively. There are no "purely" military opinion and advice that could be helpful to policy-makers while making decisions on the use of force.<sup>803</sup> Cases of effective decision-making show that in order to be useful, military advice should be politically informed. Such is the case of then Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Matthew Ridgeway, for example, who violated the prescriptions to stay within the purely military realm and provided policy-makers with a more thorough assessment of what it would mean to commit U.S. forces in Indochina when President Eisenhower was considering the issue in 1953-54.

This dissertation provides additional new evidence in support for Eliot Cohen's argument that a constant exchange of ideas between statesmen and soldiers and *assertive* civilian control lead to a more effective decision-making and conduct of wars although I

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<sup>803</sup> For a similar argument, and also for a detailed analysis as to how and why American civil-military relations have *not* conformed to Huntington's "objective control" theory, see Peter Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control," *Armed Forces and Society* (Winter 1997), pp. 149-178. See also Peter Feaver, *Guarding the Guardians*; Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, Chapters 1, 7, and Appendix ("The Theory of Civilian Control"); John Garofano, "Effective Advice in Decisions for War: Beyond Objective Control," *Orbis* (Spring 2008); Matthew Moten, "A Broken Dialogue," in *American Civil-Military Relations, the Soldier, and the State in a New Era*, Suzanne C. Nielsen and Don Snider, eds., (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

find some deficiencies in his model as well, as discussed earlier.<sup>804</sup> In Cohen's "unequal dialogue," civilian leaders, rather than sitting back, are querying, probing, and prodding, but without "dictating in detail" what the military should do.<sup>805</sup> My case studies show why Cohen is correct in emphasizing the importance of an on-going, uninterrupted dialogue between civilian and military leaders during the planning and the conduct of a war. Such a vigorous civil-military dialogue is needed in order to make military force serve the political objectives of a state. It is crucial for an effective policy-making process. For example, my analysis of the decision-making in the lead-up to the 1991 Gulf War shows that assertive civilian control and civilian involvement in operational matters actually enhanced the effectiveness of the strategy- and policy-making process in several ways: by expanding the number of alternative strategies considered by decision-makers, by stimulating more creativity and novel ideas from both the civilian and the military sides, by "keeping the military honest" and thus providing more accurate information during the policy discussions, and ultimately, by helping to match better military means and political ends.

At the same time, my 2003 Iraq war case study shows that Cohen's model also falls short because it does not convincingly draw a line between assertive civilian control and civilian micromanagement and does not explain when assertive control can contribute to a more effective decision-making process rather than turn into civilian meddling. Assertive civilian control is insufficient for effective decision-making. Based

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<sup>804</sup> As explained in previous chapters, I use Peter Feaver's concept of "assertive" civilian control, which overcomes many of the problems of Huntington's typology of "objective" and "subjective" forms of control, developed in *The Soldier and the State*. Assertive civilian control is a more pro-active form of control than "objective" control, and allows "direct civilian supervision over the military, particularly over military operations." See Peter Feaver, *Guarding the Guardians: Civilian Control of Nuclear Weapons in the United States* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 9.

<sup>805</sup> The dialogue is "unequal" because by definition civilians have the last word.

on Cohen's model alone, it is very difficult to define the parameters of a civil-military relationship that would be conducive to effective strategy- and policy-making and implementation. My theoretical framework goes a step further by specifying some of the problems with Cohen's model and the circumstances under which assertive civilian control would be likely to turn into civilian micromanagement of the military and would have negative consequences for decision-making and policy implementation (i.e., when assertive control is combined with intense civil-military preference divergence, as we observed, for example, in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war and in the Clinton Administration).

Some of the problems with assertive civilian control (and with Cohen's model more generally) could *not* be easily seen if assertive control is analyzed out of a broader context, including variables such as preference divergence. Assertive civilian control, when combined with *high* civil-military preference divergence, brings incentives to limit delegation of authority and to monitor the military very intrusively. That is why, this study contends, contrary to both Samuel Huntington and Eliot Cohen, that we cannot define the kind of the civil-military relationship that would best serve the decision-making and implementation process based *solely* on the type of civilian control (e.g., assertive or delegative) or lack of it, and whether civilians or the military interfere or stay out of each other's domain. We also need to take into account another key variable, namely, the intensity of preference divergence between civilian and military officials.

This approach is also useful in highlighting the importance of studying the preferences of policy-makers on issues of war and peace and their impact on the decision-making process (in addition to systemic variables). If we study the preferences of top political and military leaders on when and how to use or threaten force, we could predict



the type of action they would recommend in a given situation. The civil-military balance of power tells us whose preferences (civilian or military) are likely to dominate in the final decision. If, in addition, we examine the *level of divergence* in the views of statesmen and soldiers, we could anticipate how effectively they would share and analyze information, and how well they are likely to interact and coordinate with each other in the process of strategy-making and implementation. For example, *high* levels of preference divergence affect negatively decision-makers' processing of information and advice – top political leaders are more likely to discount advice (or not seek it at all) from military advisors with whom they disagree strongly. Also, policy-makers would be less likely to share information with such advisors. Furthermore, intense civil-military preference divergence leads civilian leaders to attempt to monitor the military very closely in order to make sure that the final decisions (and their implementation) reflect their preferences, and not the highly diverging preferences of the military.<sup>806</sup> Such overly close monitoring often turns into micromanagement of the military with very negative consequences. High preference divergence very often produces alienation between political and military leaders and a rupture in the civil-military dialogue, which is indispensable for a healthy decision-making process. Hence, in order to have an effective decision-making process, it is important that the divergence between civilian and military preferences on the main issues is not so intense as to provide incentives to civilian and military leaders to distort the decision-making process in the ways described above.<sup>807</sup>

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<sup>806</sup> For the relationship between preference divergence and delegation of authority see, for example, Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>807</sup> For a similar argument, see Risa Brooks, *Shaping Strategy: The Civil-Military Politics of Strategic Assessment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 270.

Focusing on the level of preference divergence also allows us to integrate findings from communication and persuasion theory, which further demonstrate the central role the relationship between decision-makers and military advisors plays in the foreign policy decision-making process. The dynamics created by this relationship affect directly the quality of decision-making. For example, the persuasiveness of information and advice depends, to a large degree, on what decision-makers think of the *source* of the information and not only of its *content*. They are more easily persuaded by information coming from advisors who they believe share their interests and values, whom they trust, and consider knowledgeable on the issues in question.<sup>808</sup> Decision-makers are more receptive to advice when they perceive there is only a *low* level of preference divergence between them and their advisors.

Examining the advisory process at the pinnacle of government through my theoretical framework leads to some counter-intuitive findings as well. For example, my research shows that the so-called “yes-men” (here defined as the advisors who share the preferences of top decision-makers without the pejorative connotation this term usually carries) could enhance rather than diminish the effectiveness of the decision-making process. Conventional wisdom has it that it is harmful for decision-makers to surround themselves with “yes-men.” In this view, the lack of vigorous dissent would lead to a failure to consider the full range of alternative options and, as a result, the policy choice would be sub-optimal. However, by focusing on the effects of high preference

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<sup>808</sup> See, for example, Carl Hovland, Irving Janis, and Harold Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion: Psychological Studies of Opinion Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), especially Chapter 2, “Credibility of the Communicator;” Arthur Lupia, Mathew D. McCubbins, and Samuel L. Popkin, eds., *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice, and the Bounds of Rationality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Arthur Lupia, “Who Can Persuade Whom? Implications from the Nexus of Psychology and Rational Choice Theory,” In James H. Kuklinski, ed., *Thinking About Political Psychology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 51-88.

divergence on the ways decision-makers search for and process information, my research reveals a more complicated picture. Actually, at times, these “yes-men” are the only possibility for transmitting of dissenting views rather than being a barrier to alternatives.<sup>809</sup> As shown, decision-makers often disregard advice and information coming from a person whose views, ideas, and interests are highly divergent from their own. If a decision-maker receives a dissenting opinion from someone with whom she disagrees on almost everything, this dissent would be discounted because it could be attributed to the “bias” of the “adversarial” source. If, however, the contrary opinion comes from an advisor whose views and ideas have been similar to hers most of the time (i.e., a “yes-man”), the decision-maker is more likely to take such advise seriously and may even reconsider her position.

For example, in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war, without necessarily being guided by academic theories of preference divergence, some military leaders instinctively realized this. When they understood that their views and opinions were not getting through to Rumsfeld, they decided to find someone Rumsfeld listened to in order to convey their concerns. Being perturbed about the Secretary’s frequent interference in military planning they complained to none other than Newt Gingrich. At the time, Gingrich was a member of the Defense Policy Board, advising Rumsfeld, and was known for sharing many of Rumsfeld’s preferences on key issues and having the Secretary’s trust and respect. The former Speaker of the House agreed to “press the secretary to stop messing around with tactical-level decisions.”<sup>810</sup> We do not know exactly how

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<sup>809</sup> For somewhat similar reasoning, see Randall Calvert, “The Value of Biased Information: A Rational Choice Model of Political Advice,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (June 1985), pp. 530-555.

<sup>810</sup> Michael R. Gordon, “The Strategy to Secure Iraq Did Not Foresee a 2<sup>nd</sup> War,” *New York Times*, October 19, 2004, p. 1.

successful Gingrich's intervention was; it may be the case that the Secretary of Defense did not change his approach all that much. But the point here is that Gingrich had much more of a chance to successfully bring this dissenting view to Rumsfeld and be heard than, for example, Gen. Shinseki or some of the other top military leaders whose preferences on key issues diverged significantly from Rumsfeld's views and whose advice he did not trust.

By studying the preferences of top civilian and military leaders, we can also see other trends that may look counter-intuitive. For example, especially after the Vietnam war, in US foreign policy and national security strategy debates, civilian leaders have been the ones more often pushing for the use of force, while military leaders have been more dovish, often resisting the use of the military instrument and pushing for other means, such as diplomacy and economic sanctions. Hence, to the extent that we observe a militarization of U.S. Foreign policy, it has been a civilian militarization – i.e., brought about by the more hawkish preferences of civilian leaders.<sup>811</sup> In this connection, in their study of the differences in civilian and military preferences on the use of force, Peter Feaver and Christopher Gelpi find that as the percentage of veterans serving in the executive and the legislative branches of the government increases, the probability that the United States will initiate militarized disputes declines.<sup>812</sup>

In addition, by analyzing the impact of different patterns of civil-military relations on decision-making, we can challenge a thesis taken for granted by scholars steeped in

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<sup>811</sup> Michael Desch, "Civil-Militarism: The Civilian Origins of the New American Militarism", *Orbis* 50, No. 3 (Summer 2006), pp. 573-583.

<sup>812</sup> Peter Feaver and Christopher Gelpi, "Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick? Veterans in the Political Elite on the American Use of Force," *American Political Science Review* 96, No. 4 (December 2002).

the Democratic Peace literature, namely that democracies make better decisions on war and peace. This study shows that a democratic form of government is not sufficient for explaining the variance in the effectiveness of the decision-making process. As this study shows, democracies are not immune from making poor decisions on war and peace. A democratic government which is characterized by high levels of civil-military preference divergence could be prone to ineffective decision-making. Even with firm civilian control, such a state would be more likely to misjudge its strategic environment, to be unable to develop adequate understanding of its own capabilities and/or the capabilities of its adversaries, to have problems in designing effective strategies and coordinating military policy with political objectives, and, hence, would likely be more dangerous to international security. Based on my theoretical framework, which allows exploring variation *within* regime type, one could make a classification of “better” or “worse” democracies, depending on which of those would be more prone to ineffective decision-making and miscalculations, and, hence - more dangerous to international security. That would be a government characterized by military dominance (even though under civilian control) and a high level of civil-military preference divergence.

What could be done to improve the quality of decision-making? As this study shows, the quality of the civil-military dialogue is the best determinant of the effectiveness of the decision-making process. Both the civilian and military sides must participate actively in this dialogue in order to analyze and evaluate critically the situation at hand and to be able to expose flawed assumptions, mistaken beliefs, etc. One of the best examples of healthy civil-military relations that resulted in continuous dialogue that helped the decision-making process is the relationship of FDR and the military. The civil-military conversations at the top were combative, at times, even

rancorous. But they were very important because “they brought to light multiple perspectives; they forced ongoing analyses of the relationship between ends and means, and they demanded that ideas be supported by logic, evidence, and rigorous argumentation.”<sup>813</sup> The quality of policy-making cannot be improved without focusing on the factors on which the civil-military dialogue depends. One should not focus on the military side of the equation alone as has often been the case. While menace to civilian control and national security policy-making can certainly come from the military, it can also come from the civilian leadership itself and that latter possibility should not be overlooked. Often we ask “who’s to guard the guardians?” without asking who’s to guard the military from incompetent civilians. Civilian leaders’ lack of understanding of the military institution and the uses and, most of all, limitations of force as a tool of foreign policy can lead to disasters. Civilians’ limited knowledge and expertise in national security can cause problems in either of two ways. First, ignorant *and* assertive statesmen could mismanage the military, committing it to imprudent missions or interfering with or micromanaging its every action. Alternatively, civilian ignorance could also manifest itself as uncritical deference to military judgment, either because politicians cannot exercise the necessary oversight or because they lack the authority to oppose military leaders. In both cases, national security policy is in danger.<sup>814</sup> In the past, some initiatives have been taken to improve civilian understanding of military affairs but efforts in this direction should continue. There are other programs that try to include broader parts of the civilian society, which has been alienated from the military ever

<sup>813</sup> Tami Biddle, “Leveraging Strength: The Pillars of American Grand Strategy in World War II,” *Orbis* (Winter 2011), p. 15. See also Major Bradley J. Harms, “The American Civil-Military Relationship: A Delicate Balance,” Master’s Thesis, United States Marine Corps, Command and Staff College, 2007/08.

<sup>814</sup> Eliot Cohen, “Civil-Military Relations,” in *America the Vulnerable*, pp. 93-5.

since the end of the draft. The Defense Department Public Outreach Initiative, for example, aims at increasing the understanding and trust between the military and the American public. The Marine Corps' One Year Out Program also has the purpose of bridging the gap between the military and civilian society and increasing the mutual understanding between the military and civilians. For this purposes, the program places some of the best officers in civilian work places for one year. The ROTC has been expanding as well. We should not focus improvement of quality of education and training only on one side – the civilian or the military, since we saw that if the balance of power is too much in favor of one side, this affects negatively the decision-making process because the stronger side can easily dominate over the weaker and could dismiss its views. We do have more responsibility, however, to improve the quality of civilian decision-makers since the principle of civilian control puts the heavier burden on them; ultimately, the civilians are responsible not only for the quality of the civil-military relationship, but and for the national security decision-making process as well.

Because national security decision-making depends so heavily on the quality of the professional and personal relationships among top civilian and military leaders, it has been recommended that future administrations institutionalize procedures for team-building between top political and military leaders.<sup>815</sup> Civil-military team building exercises and procedures could be helpful in enhancing the understanding of both sides about their cultural and organizational differences although of course they are not going to make such differences disappear completely.<sup>816</sup> While it is true that the selection and

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<sup>815</sup> See, for example, Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).p. 472.

<sup>816</sup> Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn, "The Gap," p. 37.

education process for senior military leaders could be significantly improved by focusing professional military education on more of the areas that are relevant to the conduct of “new wars,”<sup>817</sup> such changes will not be sufficient if they are not accompanied by changes in the civilian realm.

Some legal and institutional reforms are also very tempting on the surface but caution should be in order here. As the chapter on the Goldwater-Nichols Act (GNA) shows, such reforms may have unintended negative consequences which outweigh the benefits. Many experts have proposed a radical reform of the Goldwater-Nichols legislation. They argue, correctly, just as I show in the chapter on the GNA, that contrary to its intent, it has weakened civilian control and increased the influence of the military. Civilian control was reduced because of the strengthening of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Chairman at the expense of the individual services. By creating a unified military position and centralized military power in the hands of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, who became the primary military advisor of the Secretary of Defense and the President, the Goldwater-Nichols Act increased the unity of the military and this decreased the power of the civilian leadership because it became more difficult for political leaders to play the services off one another. Hence, some have recommended legislative changes to decrease the power of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and increase the power of the Service Chiefs. In this case, it is argued, political leaders will be presented with a multiplicity of military views from which they could choose.

However, while it is true that the Goldwater-Nichols Act strengthened significantly the voice of the Chairman as the nation’s highest ranking and most powerful

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<sup>817</sup> For example, area studies, ethnic conflicts, terrorist and criminal organizations, international legal and moral norms related to the conduct of war, and others.



officer, this study shows that such legislative/institutional reforms are not determinative – i.e., this act in and of itself does not guarantee that military advice will be dominant. As my case study on the 2003 Iraq war and the relations between Secretary Rumsfeld and CJCS Gen. Myers show, and as my comparison between the ways Generals Powell and Myers fulfilled their duties as Chairmen, this legislation gives top military leaders the right to be heard, but not heeded. Furthermore, we cannot rely only on such legislative reforms to improve the effectiveness of the decision-making process. They may not work because they do not take into account the psychological and political aspects of the process, discussed earlier. The President and the Secretary of Defense can have multiplicity of views available but this is no guarantee that these views will be taken into account because this depends, to a great extent, on the relationship between top decision-makers and their military advisors.

This study also leads to some ideas on the reform of the system of professional military education, which still pays little attention to problems of civil-military relations. This professional military education is the primary means of shaping the professional values and norms of the officers. Hence, it should address the main aspects of the civil-military relationship in more depth. The subject of civil-military relations needs a more thorough coverage at every level. Recent studies find that the curricula at war colleges and military academies are not very effective in providing officers with “a coherent understanding of American society, its culture, and the tradition of American civil-military relations. In some cases military education accentuates civil-military differences.”<sup>818</sup> Even the most senior officers seem to have had little preparation for

<sup>818</sup> Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn, “The Gap: Soldiers, Civilians and Their Mutual Misunderstandings,” *The National Interest*, No. 61 (Fall 2000), p. 32. See also Don M. Snider et al., “The Influence of Professional Military Education,” TISS Project Paper.

dealing with their civilian bosses. In his memoirs, Gen. Richard Myers admits as much when he discusses his reflections on civil-military relations: “Fortunately, I had met Dr. Dick Kohn... He sent me a couple chapters of Eliot Cohen’s book *Supreme Command*.” As Eliot Cohen argues, to further improve military education the material that deals with civilian control needs to be thoroughly reviewed. “The clichéd notion that civilian control consists of giving the military unambiguous (and unchanging) goals, providing resources, and stepping aside—a notion particularly prevalent following the Persian Gulf War—needs to be replaced with a more discriminating, if less comfortable, view.”<sup>819</sup> The whole Huntington’s concept of separate and distinct civilian and military realms needs to be reconsidered. The idea that civilian and military leaders “can question the professional expertise of the other realm” should not be considered anathema but should be encouraged.<sup>820</sup>

Improving the quality of the civilian leadership, however, should take precedence, especially since the GNA resulted in increased competence and enhanced experience of top military staffers, which in some cases led to enhanced military power at the expense of civilian influence. Some scholars have proposed ways to change this, emphasizing the importance of providing incentives for DOD civilians to pursue professional development through education, training, or interdepartmental and interagency rotations. The goal would be to better educate civilians about the military institution, military culture and preferences, the changing nature of warfare, and others. This would increase the competence of civilians to better participate in debates on a variety of defense and

<sup>819</sup> Eliot Cohen, *America the Vulnerable*, p. 91. For a similar argument, see John Garofano, “Effective Advice in Decisions for War,” p. 248.

<sup>820</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

national security matters. For example, the Beyond Goldwater–Nichols study recommends that “Congress establish a new Defense Professional Corps to attract the best and brightest civilians to DOD and to expand opportunities for professional development and career advancement.”<sup>821</sup> More specifically, Eliot Cohen and others have proposed (and already designed) some programs for legislators, journalists and others, including: “lectures on the organization and function of the DOD; visits to a variety of facilities, such as training installations; participation in simulations and exercises; and academic work through case studies, seminars, and cite visits in the field of military history.”<sup>822</sup> After the debacle in Iraq, many experts have stressed the importance of improving interagency planning, which would necessitate top officials to gain more experience in the interagency world. In order to avoid inexperienced staffers to occupy positions in NSC staff directorates, Joseph Collins recommends that “every executive department should insist on interagency experience for its most senior civilians and make it mandatory for promotion to the Senior Executive Service or Senior Foreign Service. Interagency experience should count as the equivalent of joint experience for military officers. Too often, the best and brightest avoid interagency assignments, where the hours are terrible and the rewards are less than those at the home agency.”<sup>823</sup>

Ultimately, the case studies show that improving national security decision-making is *not* a question of *either* enhancing the quality of the *people* in top positions *or* improving the quality of the *process* but of both – people *and* process. In the words of

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<sup>821</sup> Clark Murdock, Richard Weitz, “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: New Proposals for Defense Reform,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, No. 34, p. 7.

<sup>822</sup> Eliot Cohen, *America the Vulnerable*, p. 92.

<sup>823</sup> Joseph Collins, “Choosing War: The Decision to Invade Iraq and Its Aftermath,” Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University (April 2008), p. 35.

Joseph Collins, “...no matter how the decision-making process is designed, it will be strongly affected by the beliefs and experience of the officials involved, especially the President who will set the tone for his or her administration. Sound national security decisions will require great people and effective and efficient processes. Both of these will require an engaged President attuned to both policy and process.”<sup>824</sup>

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<sup>824</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

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