
CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS THEORY AND MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS

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Abstract

The development of theory to guide the study of civil-military relations has focused heavily on the issue of civilian control. In some contexts, this may not be the most important aspect of civil-military relationships. After reviewing extant literature on civil-military relations, this article concludes by arguing that the impact that civil-military relations can have on military effectiveness deserves a closer look.

Introduction

The state of civil-military relations in the United States resurfaced as a notable focus of concern in the 1990s. In the early years of the decade, many saw a potential crisis brewing in civilian control (see Kohn, 1994; Weigley, 1993; and Bacevich, 1997). Some observers attributed this to the fact that President Bill Clinton's administration, which suffered from a lack of credibility in military affairs, came into office at the same time that the Joint Chiefs had a popular and activist Chairman in the person of General Colin Powell (Cohen, 1995). Another factor that some saw at work was the new authority of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 (Luttwak, 1994). However, consensus about the scale of the problem was never reached, with some arguing that claims of a crisis were exaggerated (see Kohn, 1994: p. 29; Avant, 1998; and Burk, 1998). Even during the Clinton administration, at least one observer saw the balance being restored during the tenures of successive Chairmen of the Joint Staff (see Goldstein, 2000).

Alongside the popular debate described above, there have been new and more explicitly theoretical attempts to examine post-Cold War civil-military relations in the United States. In fact, Peter Feaver

characterizes the renewed attention to this problem in the 1990s as an “American Renaissance” (Feaver, 1999: pp. 230-233). At least three approaches, those by Michael Desch, Deborah Avant, and Peter Feaver, are particularly valuable in that their theoretical perspectives are (or could be) applied to civil-military relationships in comparative perspective as well as to the American case. In *Civilian Control of the Military* (1999), Desch formulates a structural theory of civil-military relations that makes predictions about the strength of civilian control based on the degree of internal and external threat faced by a given society (Desch, 1999). Taking a different approach, Deborah Avant and Peter Feaver have applied adaptations of the principal-agent framework to explain the state of civilian control and military responsiveness in the United States (see Avant, 1996/1997; and Feaver, 2003). Although these analyses differ in their focus and in their findings, they have in common an emphasis on civilian control as the central concern.

This focus on civilian control has two noteworthy aspects. First, it is a bit surprising given that those writing about civil-military relations in the United States generally are not concerned about overt disobedience of orders—let alone a military coup. For example, in the book cited above Desch points out that even in what he sees as the post-Cold War environment of lessening civilian control, “there is little danger that the U.S. military will launch a coup d’état and seize power. Nor is it likely to become openly insubordinate and disobey direct orders” (Desch, 1999: p. 30). The same basic presumptions underlie the work of Avant and Feaver. In fact, Feaver’s use of the principal agent framework implicitly assumes “that the military conceives of itself as a servant of the government.” He goes on to point out that, “The model works best in democracies which, by definition, identify the government as the rightful principal with the authority to delegate (and *not* to delegate) responsibility” (Feaver, 1998: p. 421). This presumption of lack of direct military insubordination does not make the question of quality of civilian control in the United States unimportant or uninteresting. However, since extreme problems of loss of control are ruled out it does leave room for analyzing other aspects of the civil-military relationship. This leads to the second noteworthy aspect of the focus on civilian control, which is that this concern has tended to overshadow the exploration of other important outcomes.

The purpose of this article is to explore the issues associated with examining one of the other potentially significant ramifications of civil-military relationships—their impact on military effectiveness. My

underlying premise is that military effectiveness rivals civilian control as a legitimate central concern in the study of civil-military relations. Though I will not provide evidence for this claim here, I will attempt to put it into perspective and raise some of the issues associated with doing research along these lines. The discussion below is therefore organized into three sections. In the first, I will review existing civil-military relations literature as it relates to the problem of military effectiveness. In the second, I will mention some of the concerns that scholars working in this area will have to address. Finally, in the third section I will provide some concluding thoughts.

Civil-Military Relations and Military Effectiveness

I argued above that existing works, especially studies of the civil-military relationship in the United States, focus most heavily on the question of civilian control. In this section, I will briefly review some of the founding works in this area, and then discuss more recent contributions. Though military effectiveness has been addressed by a number of authors in a variety of ways, it remains a profitable area for further research.

The Classics

It is important to start by acknowledging that the two classic works of American civil-military relations, Samuel Huntington's *The Soldier and the State* (1957) and Morris Janowitz's *The Professional Soldier* (1960), address both military effectiveness and civilian control. Huntington discusses civil-military relations as an explanatory variable, and argues that their nature has an important impact on military effectiveness. However, the manner in which he formulates this relationship is problematic. Janowitz also discusses military effectiveness but it is not clear in his discussion that civil-military relations serves as an explanatory variable for his assessment of what would constitute an effective military. Instead, he bases his argument for a constabulary force on his assessment of the military needs of the United States in the Cold War, and then argues that acceptance of such a role by the military would also have a beneficial impact on the character of civil-military relations and civilian control. I will address each of these works in turn.

In *The Soldier and the State*, one of Huntington's basic methodological assumptions is that it is possible to define an equilibrium called "objective civilian control" that ensures civilian control and maximizes security at the same time. (Huntington, 1957: p. viii) He argues that "In practice, officership is strongest and most effective when it most closely approaches the professional ideal; it is weakest and most defective when it falls short of that ideal" (Huntington, 1957: p. 11). An officer corps is professional to the extent it exhibits the qualities of expertise, responsibility, and corporateness. In addition to enhancing effectiveness, these traits also enhance civilian control because a professional military seeks to distance itself from politics (Huntington, 1957: p. 84).⁽¹⁾ In the American context, however, military professionalism is difficult to maintain because liberalism is inherently hostile to the military function and military institutions. The classic liberal approaches to military affairs are extirpation (reduce the military to the lowest possible level) or transmutation (to civilianize it) (Huntington, 1957: p. 155). Huntington later lists a third option: "The prevailing societal values can shift away from traditional liberalism in the direction of conservatism, society thereby adopting a policy of *toleration* with respect to the military" (Huntington, 1977: p. 7). This seems to be the option Huntington advocates in *The Soldier and the State*.

If obtaining a shift in the values of an entire society is not possible, the only way to maintain military professionalism in a liberal context is to ensure that the military has minimal political power. Therefore, Huntington argues that the achievement of objective civilian control in the United States requires allowing military professionals autonomy within their own realm, while "rendering them politically sterile and neutral" (Huntington, 1957: p. 84). Firm civilian control and military security are complementary and mutually supporting goals.

As mentioned above, though civilian control is a central concern, Huntington also sought a pattern of civil-military relations that would promote military professionalism and hence military effectiveness. As he later acknowledged, he was concerned at the time of the book's writing that the United States, given its liberal ideology, would be disadvantaged in a prolonged competition with the Soviet Union in the Cold War (Powell, et. al., 1994: p. 29). However, "professionalism" as Huntington defines it is problematic as an adequate indicator of effectiveness. This comes through clearly in Huntington's interpretation of military theorist Carl von Clausewitz. Huntington argues that "The fact that war has its

own grammar requires that the military professionals be permitted to develop their expertise at this grammar without extraneous influence . . . The inherent quality of a military body can only be evaluated in terms of independent military standards” (Huntington, 1957: p. 57). This extension of Clausewitz’s thought is problematic because it implies that there exists a set of “independent military standards” that is valid across time and place. This is unlikely, since the characteristics of effective armed forces will vary with factors such as the resources they have, the missions they must accomplish, and other aspects of their environments. In addition, reliance on “independent military standards” is also problematic given that the effectiveness of military means can only be evaluated in relation to the political ends that these means are to serve.

To say this is not to deny one of the major contributions that Huntington makes in *Soldier and the State* when he argues that military organizations are shaped by both functional and societal imperatives. Functional imperatives are special characteristics of military organizations driven by their need to be capable of defending the state against external threats, and societal imperatives arise from “the social forces, ideologies, and institutions dominant within society” (Huntington, 1957: p. 2). When attempting to understand the characteristics of a given country’s military institutions, thinking about how they may be affected by these two imperatives is helpful. To the extent that a country’s military does not share the attributes of the society as a whole, a useful starting proposition is that these differences are due to what the military believes to be required for success in war.(2) However, it is not true that there is a set of universally valid functional imperatives and that societal imperatives merely weaken military organizations (or have a neutral impact). This is clearly what Huntington is implying when he argues that “The peculiar skill of the military officer is universal in the sense that its essence is not affected by changes in time or location” (Huntington, 1957: p. 13).

In making this claim Huntington runs counter to Clausewitz—a thinker with whom he claims to be in agreement. These authors’ differing assessments of reserve forces provides a useful example of this divergence. Huntington has a negative view of reservists since they are not fully professional, while Clausewitz has positive words to say about people’s war (war by non-professional forces) and reserve forces under certain circumstances (Huntington, 1957: p. 13; Clausewitz, 1976; 187-189 and 479-483). What is required for military forces to be effective is context dependent.

This context dependence is relevant not just to thinking about valuable characteristics of individual soldiers and officers, but also to thinking about organizational structures, equipment, technology, training techniques, and a whole host of other factors. There is nothing to guarantee that evaluation by “independent military standards” will alone ensure integration of all these in a way that maximizes the effectiveness of the military organization in a dynamic societal and international context. In fact, Barry Posen argues that military organizations will stagnate without civilian involvement and will be ill-suited to meet the requirements of their political leaders’ grand strategy (Posen, 1984: p. 80). Without accepting the power of this prediction from organization theory that organizations never adapt on their own—indeed it has been convincingly argued against—Posen is correct in emphasizing the point that military organizations may need to change over time to remain relevant and effective (see Rosen, 1991: pp. 1-8; Posen, 1984: pp. 24-29).

In sum, while Huntington does discuss military effectiveness as a product of civil-military relations, the manner in which he does so is problematic. His basic formulation seems to be that the pattern of civil-military relations which produces the most effective militaries is that which impinges least on their ability to operate according to a constant and universal functional imperative. The difficulty is that the superiority of this “professional military” ideal type regardless of context is doubtful. There is not one type of military organization that is most effective across time and space, regardless of adversary or strategic context. A second point arising from the above discussion is that the maintenance of military effectiveness may require change over time—a point that Huntington does not address.

The focus of Janowitz’s *Professional Soldier* overlaps significantly with the concerns of *Soldier and the State*. Janowitz is similarly concerned with both civilian control and the military’s ability to fulfill its responsibilities in meeting the security needs of the state (Janowitz, 1964: p. lviii). However in contrast to Huntington, Janowitz argues that relying on the creation of an apolitical military in order to ensure civilian control is an unrealistic approach. “In the United States, where political leadership is diffuse, civilian politicians have come to assume that the military will be an active ingredient in decision-making about national security” (Janowitz, 1964: p. 342). Janowitz argues that it is inevitable that the military will come to resemble a political pressure group, and this is not necessarily a problem as long as its activities

remain “responsible, circumscribed, and responsive to civilian authority” (Janowitz, 1964: p. 343). One strong guarantee of the maintenance of civilian control is the military’s “meaningful integration with civilian values” (Janowitz, 1964: p. 420). Janowitz also advocates other measures for enhancing civilian control, such as increasing legislative oversight, extending civilian control into lower levels of military organizations, and increasing civilian involvement in officer professional education (Janowitz, 1964: p. 439). Yet, as Feaver points out, in the end Janowitz is similar to Huntington in relying on the professional military ethic as the fundamental means for ensuring control (Feaver. 1996b: p. 166).

On the question of effectiveness, however, Janowitz and Huntington differ. Janowitz argues for the constabulary concept:

The military establishment becomes a constabulary force when it is continuously prepared to act, committed to the minimum use of force, and seeks viable international relations, rather than victory, because it has incorporated a protective military posture. The constabulary outlook is grounded in, and extends, pragmatic doctrine (Janowitz, 1964: p. 418).

Janowitz does not entirely separate professionalism and effectiveness, and so his disagreement with Huntington is not complete on this point. Janowitz writes, “The constabulary officer performs his duties, which include fighting, because he is a professional with a sense of self-esteem and moral worth” (Janowitz, 1964: p. 440). However, Janowitz does part ways with Huntington in his assertion that effectiveness is very context dependent. In Janowitz’s view, the “no-war—no-peace’ period” of the Cold War demands a military that is aware of the international political consequences of military action (Janowitz, 1964: p. 342). A constabulary force would have this awareness, and it would understand the primacy of political objectives and the occasional need for limited applications of force (Janowitz, 1964: pp. 257-279). Janowitz sees these as essential attributes of an effective American military during the Cold War. In sum, though Janowitz’s work is similar to Huntington’s in that he discusses both professionalism and civilian control, Janowitz argues that evaluating effectiveness may rely on an appreciation of the military’s changing environment.

A point that must be highlighted, however, is that when Janowitz discusses military effectiveness he seems to base his prescriptions on his

assessment of the international environment. He does not set up a causal argument that a certain pattern or type of civil-military relations will produce a military with a given amount of effectiveness. To point this out is not to criticize Janowitz's work; it is merely to recognize that such an argument is beyond the scope of *The Professional Soldier*. Janowitz's primary aim in that book was to describe the current state of the military profession (Janowitz, 1964: p. vii). The five hypotheses that Janowitz set forth focused on how broader societal trends would manifest themselves in the military, and how the military would respond (Janowitz, 1964: pp. 7-16). Some of these trends had implications for military effectiveness, but these implications were not the central focus of Janowitz's analysis.

Dependent Variables of the Civil-Military Relations Literature

Although both effectiveness and control are addressed in the classics of American civil-military relations, only Huntington's work attempts to use civil-military relations as an explanatory variable to explain military effectiveness and his approach is problematic. What work has been done in this area since *The Soldier and the State* and *The Professional Soldier*? Without claiming to mention all relevant literature, this section will review the focus of other authors working in the field of civil-military relations and highlight significant representative works.⁽³⁾ In addition to not being comprehensive, the review below is limited in another sense. Janowitz is commonly identified as the founder of military sociology in the United States, and his *The Professional Soldier* has inspired a large body of sociological research into military organizations in modern democratic societies (Burk, 1993). This review does not adequately capture the contributions of this literature, but instead focuses on works in the political science portion of an inherently multidisciplinary field. This scope is sufficient to suggest that it would be valuable for political scientists to more fully explore the impact of civil-military relations on military effectiveness.

Although I argued above that the issue of civilian control has tended to dominate the literature, its predominance is not absolute and even scholars who examine it may look at slightly different dimensions of the problem. Because of this, a useful way to sort the work in this field is according to the authors' differing dependent variables. This is the approach I will adopt here, adapting and borrowing heavily from similar surveys provided by Desch and Feaver (Desch, 1999: pp. 3-4; Feaver, 1999: pp. 217-222). Possible dependent variables include the following:

coups, military influence, civil-military friction, military compliance, and effectiveness.(4) The first four of these, as will be discussed further below, are closely related to the issue of civilian control. I will briefly discuss each of these dependent variables before turning to the issue of effectiveness in the next section.

The first dependent variable, coups, may be a significant concern in comparative context, but it does not capture the important aspects of the American case.(5) Despite the provocative and much-cited piece written by an American Air Force officer in 1992 about a coup in the United States in the year 2012, most analysts would argue that there is no serious possibility of a military takeover in the United States (Dunlap, 1992-1993). However, as Feaver points out, even in a comparative context the danger of focusing on coups is that it may cause analysts to miss other important ways in which a military exercises influence over political leaders (Feaver, 1999: p. 218). In other words, such a focus may cause analysts to understate problems with civilian control. Though a coup constitutes perhaps the strongest dysfunction possible, its likelihood is not the only significant issue—or even a significant issue—in some civil-military relationships.

A second possible dependent variable is military influence. The foremost work in the American context on this subject is Richard Betts' *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises* (1977). This book is an examination of the record of civil-military interactions in the context of use of force decision-making during the early phase of the Cold War. In a summary of his findings, Betts concludes "The diversity of military recommendations and the extent of consonance with civilian opinion indicate that military professionals rarely have dominated decisions on the use of force," though influence was greatest when military leaders argued against its use (Betts, 1991: p. 5). Betts updates these findings in the preface to a 1991 edition, though his core conclusions remain remarkably consistent with his earlier work. Overall, he paints a mixed picture of military influence. Military leaders did not control use-of-force decision-making, but their input had especially significant weight when they opposed the use of force (Betts, 1991: p. x; see also Petraeus, 1989).

The dependent variable of military influence has its own difficulties. As Betts points out, judging whether military influence on decision-making has been "good" or "bad" is problematic, and even one's views on its appropriate level are likely to vary with political

identifications (Betts, 1991: p. xv). Nevertheless, it should be possible to trace change over time. In addition, though measurement may be more difficult than in the case of military coups, this variable captures dynamics more relevant to the American case.

A third possible dependent variable is civil-military friction. This dependent variable has the advantage of being easily observable and measurable if defined as “the degree to which the military is willing to display public opposition to announced civilian policy” (Feaver, 1999: p. 220). One analysis that focuses here is Peter Feaver’s article “Crisis as Shirking: An Agency Theory Explanation of the Souring of American Civil-Military Relations” (Feaver, 1998).⁽⁶⁾ He argues that friction is predictable based on the relationship between the incentives that the civilian has to intrusively monitor military work, and the incentives that the military has to avoid perfect compliance (“shirk”). For Feaver, shirking occurs when the military either fails to diligently and skillfully do what the civilian asks, or does what the civilian asks in a manner which undercuts the civilian’s position of greater authority. In other words, shirking occurs when military leaders fail to respect either the functional or the relational goals of their civilian leaders (Feaver, 1998: p. 409).

As Deborah Avant points out, one difficulty with this approach is that a focus on friction can obscure the matter of civilian control. There may be a lack of friction because civilian leaders are securely in charge, or because they are following the military’s lead (Avant, 1998: pp. 382-383). It is also not clear that all civil-military friction is bad, either in a normative or in a policy sense.

A fourth dependent variable is military compliance. An advantage of the term “military compliance” is that it makes clear that even in a context in which coups are unlikely (i.e., total civilian loss of control is unlikely), subtler issues of control may still be an issue. Recent work has continued to highlight military compliance as a key concern in the American civil-military relationship (Kohn, 2002). Some of this may have been motivated by the debate—discussed in the introduction to this article—over the existence of a “crisis” in civilian control in the early 1990s. One example of a scholar who has contributed in this area is Christopher Gibson. Gibson argues that the key to ensuring continued civilian supremacy in the American civil-military relationship is the enhancement of the national security education and credentials of senior civilian officials (Gibson, 1998).

As mentioned in the introduction, two authors who have recently applied the principal agent-framework to this concern are Deborah Avant and Peter Feaver. Avant uses the principal-agent framework to gain insight into military reluctance to get involved in small-scale contingency operations. Her post-Cold War cases bear out the prediction that, in the face of a divided principal that disagrees over goals and strategy (in this case the President and Congress), the agent is likely to pursue cautious policies (Avant, 1996/1997). Her answer as to whether the “reluctant warriors” are out of control is “not quite.” She argues that their behavior is an expected outcome due to prior lack of agreement among civilians across divided institutions (Avant, 1996/1997: p. 52).

Although Feaver also uses the principal-agent framework, he focuses on the forms of delegation and monitoring civilian leaders are likely to embrace rather than on the issue of a divided principal. Above it was mentioned that Feaver developed a game theoretic model and used it to explain the 1990s “crisis” through its predictions about friction. That same model also makes predictions about military compliance, which is in fact the focus Feaver himself ascribes to the article (Feaver, 1999: p. 221). He further develops, in later work, his argument about the importance of delegation and monitoring mechanisms, and the understanding they provide about the state of American civil-military relations and civilian control. (Feaver, 2003)

As the title makes clear, the issue of military compliance is also central to Michael Desch’s *Civilian Control of the Military* (1999). He argues that “The best indicator of the state of civilian control is who prevails when civilian and military preferences diverge. If the military does, there is a problem; if the civilians do, there is not” (Desch, 1999: pp. 4-5). The central argument of his structural theory of civil-military relations is that the particular combination of internal and external threats faced by a state (independent variables) determines the quality of civilian control (the dependent variable). Civilian control should be best in times of high external threat and low internal threat, worst in times of low external threat and high internal threat, and indeterminate in the other two cases. Finding support for his hypothesis when applying it to the United States, Desch finds relatively firm civilian control during the Cold War (high external and low internal threat), and mixed in the post-Cold War period (low external and low internal threats). His conclusion about the United States in this period is that “Clearly, the less challenging international threat environment of the post-Cold War

period has weakened civilian control of the U.S. military” (Desch, 1999: p. 36).

Though Desch’s argument may be useful in comparative perspective, its utility in the case of the United States is rather limited. Even after suggesting that civilian control in the United States has deteriorated since the end of the Cold War, he does not argue that the military will disobey direct orders or engage in a military coup (Desch, 1999: p. 30). Given that civilian control is not fundamentally at risk, it seems valuable to examine other possible aspects of the civil-military relationship. Paul Bracken’s comments are salient on this point:

The central role that civilian control has played in [American] civil-military relations is understandable. But in its raw form it is a trivial problem because under nearly any conceivable set of arrangements civilian control is assured. To overconcentrate on it when it is inappropriate to do so will only elevate a host of ordinary misunderstandings and differences into a high political arena where they do not belong. Moreover, it will distract attention from other important dimensions that characterize the relationship of the military to the state (Bracken, 1995: p. 163).

One way of interpreting Bracken’s comments would be to argue that “civilian control” is still an important concern, but needs to be reconceptualized to have greater significance in the U.S. case. For example, can American political leaders responsible for national security policy control the military in the sense of shaping it to meet the country’s security needs? A second interesting question is whether this can be done at a reasonable cost in terms of other values being pursued.(7)

Before moving on to discuss the dependent variable of effectiveness, an additional literature that should be mentioned is the extensive amount of work done in the last decade on the existence of a “gap” between civilians and members of the military in the United States. Although there is a wide variance within the literature on a gap, it is mentioned in this section on military compliance because a common strong concern seems to be the implications of a gap for civilian control (Feaver and Kohn, 2000: p. 36; Cohen, 2000: p. 46). Some authors focus on a growing cultural divide, and others find a growing divide in ideological identifications and policy preferences (Ricks, 1996; Holsti, 1998-1999). A multi-year project by the Triangle Institute of Security Studies, involving approximately two dozen scholars, was recently

devoted to determining the sources of the civil-military gap, more specifically defining its nature, and determining its possible implications (Feaver and Kohn, 2000: p. 1).

Many of the project's findings have been recently published in *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (2001). This book is a rich contribution to the civil-military relations literature, and constructively enters a long-standing debate. At the heart of the debate, as key participants in the study have acknowledged, are differing assessments as to whether a civil-military gap is even problematic. Differences of opinion on this have their roots in the founding works of Huntington and Janowitz (Feaver and Kohn, 2000: pp. 30-31). These disagreements apply to the ramifications of a gap for civilian control, as well as its ramifications for military effectiveness. As discussed above, Huntington saw a degree of separateness as enhancing both civilian control and effectiveness. Some authors writing more recently have implicitly agreed by pointing out the differences between some core American values, such as the priority placed on individualism, and the functional needs of the military (Snider, 1999: pp. 14-19). On the other hand, Janowitz argued for greater military integration with civilian values and believed that this would not necessarily harm military effectiveness. *Soldiers and Civilians* is a contribution to the debate that argues that the gap matters, and explores its implications for both military compliance and military effectiveness.

Military Effectiveness

This discussion leads to the final dependent variable mentioned above—effectiveness. Some authors working in civil-military relations avoid highlighting this issue. Desch, for example, dismisses this focus mainly by labeling it inadequate (Desch, 1999: p. 4). However, while effectiveness does not tell us everything we want to know about a civil-military relationship, neither does degree of civilian control—especially in the American context. Feaver takes a slightly different approach, arguing that this outcome is deserving of further research (Feaver, 1999: p. 234). In his discussion he primarily focuses on use of force issues and recommends testing propositions such as whether civilian involvement at the operational and tactical levels does or does not lead to better outcomes.(8)

In any event, the literature that uses civil-military relations as an explanatory variable for military effectiveness is sparse. One important

exception is Stephen Biddle and Robert Zirkle's work on civil-military relations and technology assimilation in Iraq and Vietnam (Biddle and Zirkle, 1996). Using the degree to which civil-military relations are marked by conflict as the explanatory variable, they explain the two states' differing abilities to take advantage of the complex air defense technology they possessed. Biddle and Zirkle argue that Iraq's radically conflictual civil-military relations help to explain its inability to exploit its advanced air defense technology in the Persian Gulf War. They compare this with the Vietnam War, and argue that North Vietnam's harmonious civil-military relations help to explain its significant success in using its technology to good effect against the United States in that conflict.

Other authors who examine the nexus between civil-military relations and military effectiveness turn their attention to characteristics of the societies from which armed forces stem or the nature of their governments. One example is Stephen Rosen's work on societal structures. Rosen's independent variables are the dominant social structures of a country and the degree to which military organizations divorce themselves from society, and he argues that these affect the national military strength a country can obtain from a given amount of material resources (Rosen, 1995; Rosen, 1996). Dan Reiter and Allan Stam, with a slightly different focus, seek to establish a relationship between regime type and battlefield effectiveness. In their statistical work, they find support for the idea that "soldiers emerging from democratic societies enjoy better leadership and fight with more initiative" (Reiter and Stam, 1998). A third example of work along these lines is Risa Brooks' look at the negative impact that the political control mechanisms chosen by Arab regimes have on their armies' military effectiveness (Brooks, 1998: pp. 45-53). She finds that highly centralized and rigid command structures, the squelching of initiative at lower levels, and tinkering with chains of command for political reasons significantly inhibit the effectiveness of Arab armies (Brooks, 1998: p. 46).

In addition, some of the work on military doctrine speaks to the relationship between civil-military relations and military effectiveness, if only indirectly.⁽⁹⁾ For example, Jack Snyder argues that in the period before 1914, "military doctrine and war planning were left almost entirely in the hands of military professionals, who usually incline toward the offensive but rarely have so free a rein to indulge their inclination" (Snyder, 1984: p. 199). A clear implication of this analysis is

that a civil-military relationship characterized by greater involvement of rational civilians (not captured by military organizational bias favoring the offense) could have led to an avoidance of some of the disasters of 1914. Deborah Avant makes a similar argument that the involvement of civilians is important to the military's adoption of an effective doctrine, but relies on the characteristics of domestic institutions and their historical development to explain both the relative necessity of this involvement and its likely success (Avant, 1994). Posen's argument that military organizations, left to their own devices, will tend to stagnate and become disintegrated with a country's grand strategy has similar implications (Posen, 1984: p. 80).

A fourth example is Elizabeth Kier's work on the role of culture in shaping military doctrine. In what could be characterized as different civil-military dynamics, Kier argues that the extent to which civilian policy makers agree about the domestic role of the military will shape whether or not international considerations will drive their military policy (Kier, 1997: p. 27). She also argues that "the greater the hostility in the organization's external environment, the greater the potential for organizational dogmatism" (Kier, 1997: p. 32). This is clearly another proposition about the impact of civil-military relations that has ramifications for military effectiveness. Although Kier argues that the formulation of military doctrine is primarily the purview of military leaders, civilian leaders create constraints that shape the choices that these military leaders make. (Kier, 1997: pp. 12-14)

It is interesting that despite the different approaches of the authors above, these works have several points of agreement. First, the authors seem to generally agree that conflict-laden relations between political and military leaders will harm a country's national security. These authors find that relatively cooperative relationships between senior military and political leaders, on the other hand, facilitate a number of desirable developments: the integration of advanced technologies into military capabilities (Biddle and Zirkle, 1996); the capable employment of force (Brooks, 1998); the development of a military doctrine that is supportive of political ends (Avant, 1994; Snyder, 1984; Posen, 1984); and the retention of flexibility in military organizations (Kier, 1997). A second point of agreement is that societal characteristics may be reflected in the ability of a country to create military power (Rosen, 1995; Rosen, 1996), or in battlefield effectiveness (Reiter and Stam, 1998). A challenge on this latter point is that military organizations often have very strong socialization processes, and

therefore may not entirely reflect the societies from which they stem. At a minimum, this socialization is a consideration that must be taken into account.(10)

The authors listed above have begun to shape a research agenda for those interested in attempting to evaluate the impact of civil-military relations on military effectiveness. However, there are characteristics of the problem that make it a tough one to tackle. The next section discusses some of the reasons why this is the case.

Challenges

Scholars who seek to evaluate the impact of civil-military relations on military effectiveness face several major challenges. Here I will address three of these: defining effectiveness; defining civil-military relations; and attempting to characterize the independent impact of civil-military relations as compared to other factors which may shape military effectiveness. I will briefly discuss each of these below.

Addressing the first challenge—defining and operationalizing military effectiveness—would seem at first to be a simple matter. Effective militaries are those that achieve the objectives assigned to them or are victorious in war (Korb, 1984: p. 42). However, as Allan Millett, Williamson Murray, and Kenneth Watman point out, “Victory is not a characteristic of an organization but rather a result of organizational activity. Judgments of effectiveness should thus retain some sense of proportional cost and organizational process” (Millett, Murray, Watman, 1987: p. 3). One example that they give is that although Soviet forces defeated the Finns during the “Winter War” of 1939-1940, a detailed look at the manner in which the conflict was fought makes it implausible to argue that the Soviets had the more “effective” military.

In addressing this challenge, it may be useful to keep in mind Millett, Murray, and Watman’s argument that a comprehensive framework for measuring military effectiveness is required. Military activity occurs at multiple levels: political, strategic, operational, and tactical (Millett, Murray, Watman, 1987: p. 3). Because effectiveness implies different characteristics at each of these levels, multiple measures of effectiveness are needed. Some projects may benefit by narrowing their claims in such a way that they are addressing

effectiveness at only one or two of these levels. In any event, it is important to acknowledge different aspects of military effectiveness and be clear about the claims being made.

The second challenge mentioned above is that of carefully defining the term “civil-military relations.” As Paul Bracken has suggested, in order to assess the full impact of civil-military relations it might be helpful to move down a level of analysis and disaggregate civil-military relations into its various dimensions (Bracken, 1995). Although most work in American civil-military relations focuses on the interactions between senior members of the executive branch and military leaders, the military also interacts with Congress, the industrial base, and society (see Bracken, 1995: pp. 155-162). Each of these relationships, as well as the combined effects of them, can impact on military effectiveness. Looking at the problem in this way may be especially helpful to investigations that examine institutional questions concerning the development and shaping of military capabilities, but could also be helpful when the concern is the use of force.

A third major challenge is that the effectiveness of a military organization, at whatever level being discussed, is likely to stem from a number of factors. How much do civil-military relationships matter? In many cases, there will be internal organizational factors that impact on effectiveness as well as changes in the security challenges a particular country faces (see Goldman, 1997: pp. 43). Since the relative importance of internal organizational developments and civil-military dynamics will vary depending on the particular research problem being investigated, this will remain an issue for empirical research in each case.

Conclusion

As developed by Peter Feaver, the civil-military “problematique” is the challenge of reconciling “a military strong enough to do anything the civilians ask them to do with a military subordinate enough to do only what civilians authorize them to do” (Feaver, 1996b: p. 149). It is worthwhile to note that this formulation seems to imply a tension between the two concerns—control and effectiveness—that at least theoretically does not have to exist. A nation’s armed forces could become more effective without any loss of civilian control. In fact, when thinking about trying to develop a coherent relationship between military means

and political ends, civilian control becomes essential to military effectiveness.

However, like the founding works of Huntington and Janowitz, Feaver's formulation helpfully puts both effectiveness and control at the center of the civil-military relations research agenda. To this point, the problem of civilian control has drawn more attention. The impact of civil-military relations on military effectiveness deserves a closer look.

Notes

(1) Not all analysts have agreed with Huntington that professional militaries are by their very nature apolitical (see *Finer, 1962*).

(2) The functional imperatives associated with accomplishment of military missions may often require these institutions to have characteristics that distinguish them from the society from which they stem (see *Boëne, 1990*).

(3) In a 1999 review, Peter Feaver focuses on the political science works in the literature on civil-military relations, but the sociological dimension of the field is also briefly discussed (see *Feaver, 1999*).

(4) This list adopts Feaver's labels for these dependent variables (*Feaver, 1999*).

(5) Feaver argues that "modern American civil-military relations are about the conflict that remains *after* the basic principle of civilian control is accepted" (*Feaver, 1996a: p. 159*).

(6) Rebecca L. Schiff, in a different article, also focuses on level of consensus (lack of friction) between the military, political elites, and citizenry on key issues as a significant concern. However, the presence or absence of friction serves more as an explanatory variable than as a dependent variable in her work. Her dependent variable is military intervention into politics (*Schiff, 1995*).

(7) As Amy Zegart argues in *Flawed By Design* (1999), factors impinging on the effectiveness of national security institutions can be based in the nature of political institutions as well as in the relationships between the leaders of these institutions and the federal bureaucracy. She makes this argument in her explanation of why the development and functioning of the Central Intelligence Agency, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and National Security Council have been sub-optimal from a national perspective (*Zegart, 1999*).

(8) Eliot Cohen has recently written a book that addresses this concern (see *Cohen, 2002*).

(9) I wish to thank Dr. Stephen Biddle for pointing out to me this

implication of the military doctrine literature.

(10) In his analysis, Rosen takes this into account by analyzing the degree to which a military has divorced itself from society.

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