

Chapter 5

The failure of political-military integration during the Vietnam War: are they two divergent types of leadership?

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Abstract: There has traditionally been considerable friction between political and military leaders over how best to integrate the Armed Forces in the national security decision-making process during peacetime and wartime. Consequently, one of the main challenges that States seem to face is political-military integration (PMI), or the ability to closely link military strategy to political objectives. Understanding the characteristics of the PMI is important for both academics and strategists, because in order to better explain why wars developed and ended as they did, it is necessary to understand the factors that affect coordination between political objectives and military missions.

Keywords: political-military integration, Vietnam War, civil-military relations, national security.

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THEORETICAL APPROACH TO THE NOTIONS OF WAR AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

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Introduction

One of the main challenges that states seem to face in times of war is PMI (political-military integration), or the ability to closely link military strategy to political objectives, as the PMI determines whether or not a state can achieve its strategic objectives in war. Alternatively, if it becomes clear to leaders that achieving their initial war goals is impossible, or that such goals can only be achieved by paying much higher costs than initially anticipated, then strategic reviews will occur only when the Armed Forces of the State will be sensitive to political direction.

Understanding the characteristics of the PMI is important for both academics and strategists, because in order to better explain why wars developed and ended as they did, it is necessary to understand the factors that affect coordination between political objectives and military missions. For their part, state leaders need to know when are more or less likely that the Armed Forces under their command respond appropriately to their strategic orientation and, if necessary, how to better structure civil-military relations.

Within the literature on civil-military relations in wartime, Cohen (2002) offers the most influential explanation of the origins of PMI. According to Cohen, PMI is the product of the leadership qualities of senior civilian officials; specifically, when they exercise management of their military organizations. In their view, effective civilian leaders investigate and incite their generals - and, if necessary, fire them - to ensure that the war being waged has the best chance of achieving the political objectives they have set themselves at an acceptable cost. Such an approach recognizes that while military officers may come to have extensive experience in the matters of the application of military force, their advice may not translate into effective strategy at the highest level. In this regard, responsible civilian leaders

must engage their military in an ongoing, but uneven, strategic dialogue to align military behavior with political objectives (Cohen, 2022).

Well, the American political system is that of a liberal democracy and, therefore, there is an inherent distrust of the American people towards the relevance of a large standing army (Lindell, 1995). Consequently, there has traditionally been considerable friction between political leaders and the military over how best to integrate the AA.) in the national security decision-making process during peacetime and wartime. Before World War II, in the interwar period, the issue was resolved by not having a large standing army. Then, during World War II, a successful balance was achieved that integrated political and military views to form a national security policy. Nonetheless, the Cold War upset the balance as the political view expanded and stifled the military view of the national security policymaking process. And this political expansion resulted in an army separate from the national security decision-making process during the Vietnam War. The result was a failure of the PMI that generated the political and military debacle of the United States in Vietnam.

The Vietnam War

The Vietnam War (1955-1975) is considered one of the main conflicts of the Cold War, as it tested American military power as no previous war fought by that country had done, except for the Korean War (1950-1953). The United States had been clearly victorious in the great conflicts of the first half of the twentieth century, such as the two world wars. Álvarez et al. (2017) point out that “during the two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century, the United States assumed a position of preeminent power in the world, by demonstrating its ability to project its military capabilities simultaneously in several theaters of operations” (p. 169).

This capability of speed, freedom of maneuver and logistics wielded by the northern titan in the theater of operations of Europe and the Pacific during World War II was the product of a military structure configured for third-generation wars. But the Vietnam War was a fourth-generation warfare, with a logic and dynamics very different from those of previous military conflicts, and that the American strategic culture in security and defense of the time had a hard time understanding (Daddis, 2014). Indeed, the Vietnam War was a limited war for the United States, characterized by the *limited* nature of its objectives. It means that it was limited from the American point of view, because although North Vietnam presented itself

as a threat to international stability. It did not represent an existential threat to the survival of the northern colossus.

Limited or unlimited objectives in war depend on the perceived threat of the adversary you are going to face. If the adversary is perceived as an existential threat, the objectives will be unlimited and the conduct of the war will be total. If, on the other hand, the adversary to be faced is not perceived as an existential threat to one's survival, the objectives in war will be limited, with the limited use of military capabilities. *Limited objectives* are understood to weaken the enemy politically, economically and militarily to force them to negotiate. On the contrary, unlimited objectives seek the political, economic and military annihilation of the adversary, to impose on him the terms of surrender that please the victor. During World War II, Imperial Japan posed an existential threat to the United States, so the objectives were unlimited, and consequently, the use of means by the United States was unlimited. In contrast, North Vietnam did not pose an existential threat to the United States. Therefore, "the war was aimed at considerably less grandiose objectives, so North American political and military leaders found it very difficult to design effective national and operational strategies to obtain those objectives" (Álvarez et al., 2017, p. 170).

Background to the Vietnam War

In the 19th century, France conquered Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, where it created the colony of French Indochina and divided Vietnam into three parts: Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina. By suppressing nationalist revolts, France maintained colonial rule in those territories until World War II, when Indochina was occupied by the Japanese. At the end of that conflict, the communist-led Viet Minh declared independence from Vietnam, but France struggled to regain control of its colonies. After prolonged fighting, Viet Minh guerrillas defeated the French in the First Indochina War. After the Geneva Conference, Vietnam became independent in two States: North Vietnam, under a communist regime, and South Vietnam, under the orbit and protection of the United States.

But starting in 1959, North Vietnamese leaders decided to support a subversive uprising among the rural population of South Vietnam. Since, while in the late 1950s South Vietnam appeared to be prosperous and stable, thanks to more than

200 million dollars in military and economic assistance from the United States each¹ year. Little or nothing was done in practice to improve conditions in rural South Vietnam, where 90% of the population lived (Bradley, 2009). In December 1960, the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF) was founded; its military wing, known as the Vietcong, was divided into three operational forces; the main one, composed of full-time regulars. This was also divided into battalions and regiments and, as of 1965, divisions, which had an operational force of 7,350 men (Adams, 1994). There were also full-time regional forces under provincial command and part-time guerrilla units, which were mainly used for village defense².

The NLF aimed to overthrow the South Vietnamese government and reintegrate it into North Vietnam. By then, the insurgents dominated large areas of the Mekong Delta, the central highlands, and the coastal plains. Its combat strength had grown to an estimated 25,000 guerrillas, while the political wing of the NFL had as many as 200,000 active sympathizers (Adams, 1994). When it appeared that Vietcong guerrillas and the North Vietnamese army might become a serious threat. The United States sent aid, weapons, and training to South Vietnam to shore up Diem's faltering government. In 1963, when Diem's regime lost the guerrilla war and faced protests from Vietnamese Buddhists and chaos in the streets, the United States backed a military coup in which Diem was killed. The following year, the Gulf of Tonkin incident, which was a naval confrontation with North Vietnam, led the U.S. Congress to authorize an indefinite escalation of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam.

Between 1964 and 1968, the United States conducted an air war over North Vietnam and a land war in South Vietnam in an attempt to preserve an independent South Vietnam free of communist interference. American air power was employed in an attempt to coerce Hanoi to stop supporting the southern insurgency and prevent Chinese intervention in the war. While American land power, represented in the Army and Marine Corps, was employed to break the insurgency in the south, and thus prevent the prolongation of the conflict. However, in terms of PMI, air and land wars were worlds apart. According to Summers (1982), politically, the United States wanted to coerce Hanoi from the air, demand restraint from the Chinese, and stabilize the South Vietnamese government. From the point of view of military strategy, it employed massive, albeit restricted, doses of air power against the north and sent hundreds of thousands of troops south, but with clear geographical limitations in its use.

¹ By 1960, such aid represented up to 70% of the country's total budget (Bradley, 2009).

² The insurgents attacked local officials who had the power to imprison for life or execute any communist opponent of the regime. By the end of 1960, more than 1,400 government officials had been killed (Adams, 1994).

The Air War in Vietnam

From August 1964 to July 1965, the United States waged air war against North Vietnam in three discernible phases. First, according to Kaiser (2000), Lyndon Johnson ordered, following the Gulf of Tonkin incident, retaliatory strikes against targets in the north and, shortly thereafter, bolstered American air power in South Vietnam. Second, in response to the massive mortar attack on Pleiku airfield in February 1965, Washington again responded with heavy retaliatory attacks on the north, followed shortly thereafter by the protracted bombing campaign known as the *Rolling Thunder* (Clodfelter, 1989). Third, in early April 1965, VanDeMark (1991) notes that the United States modified its strategy by leveling the intensity of *Rolling Thunder* operations and opting instead to focus on fighting the land war in the south.

Faced with the escalation of military operations in Indochina, the threat perception of the People's Republic of China increased significantly following the Gulf of Tonkin incident. At this point, Mao Zedong no longer considered his southern border secure, as the United States had increased its power projection capacity to attack the heart of China from the air (Zhai, 2000). In response, Beijing initiated an intensive military mobilization program in southern China by engaging MIG fighter pilots with the North Vietnamese government. It also increased its diplomatic offensive denouncing "US imperialism," began an internal mobilization campaign that would prepare the Chinese people for war, and undertook a massive industrial relocation program that transferred a considerable amount of China's economic assets from the borders to the interior of the country (Jian, 2001). Washington's launch of Operation Rolling Thunder presented China with a major security challenge. Beginning in April 1965, the People's Republic of China and North Vietnam reached a series of agreements, such as sending anti-aircraft artillery and mine-sweeping units to North Vietnam. This was the beginning of a three-year period of extensive military support, during which the People's Republic of China deployed more than 320,000 troops in North Vietnam (Zhai, 2000).

In the summer of 1965, the United States made the decision to move to an offensive-oriented land strategy in the south. The limited effects the bombing campaign appeared to have on Hanoi's leaders, along with new information about the Vietcong's strength in the south, combined to create a sense of deep frustration among Johnson and his top advisers (Nalty, 2001), most notably Robert McNamara³.

³ Robert S. McNamara (1916-2009) was one of the most important Secretaries of Defense in American history (Shapley, 1993). He is considered the "father" of strategic planning in the United States federal government.

Given concerns about the lack of progress in the air campaign, it was decided to move to an offensive “counterinsurgency” strategy, in order to increase the size and capabilities of U.S. land forces in the south, and “stabilize” Rolling Thunder’s tempo. Based on their understanding of Chinese intentions, it was clear to leading policy-makers that the only aspect of U.S. strategy in Vietnam that was open to alteration was the intensity of the land effort in the south.

The main focus itself was the deployment of more troops in South Vietnam; the Johnson administration announced on July 6, 1965, a commitment of 55,000 additional troops, but gave up calling up reserves. The reason, McNamara asserted, was to minimize “actions that might induce communist China or the Soviet Union to take initiatives that they might not otherwise undertake” (Kaiser, 2000, p. 478), attempting to reduce the likelihood of provoking reactions from any of the communist powers. But on July 28, 1965 Johnson announced that he had decided to increase the American force in South Vietnam to 125,000 men (Kaiser, 2000). No mention was made of the air campaign, because there had been no fundamental change in strategy. Ultimately, the air war failed militarily, first, because the amount of coercive pressure applied against North Vietnam was never enough to change Hanoi’s behavior. And second, because the strategic concept applied by Washington (gradualism accompanied by frequent pauses in bombing) convinced Hanoi that it could survive the war against the United States (Nalty, 2001).

Despite its inherent limitations, this approach was adopted because it was the only one available, given the overriding goal of avoiding Chinese intervention. Officials in Washington understood, correctly, that too strong an application of air power could lead the People’s Republic of China to war, and the air strategy adopted was a direct result of such concern. In short, the air war against North Vietnam failed because of a compromise between the objectives of coercing Hanoi and avoiding direct Chinese intervention. Because political objectives and military operations were closely integrated, Washington was in a position to modify the air war from the outset to avoid the very real possibility of Chinese intervention against US forces.

The Land Warfare in Vietnam

While the continuation of the air war against North Vietnam was strongly influenced by changes in the strategic environment. The United States fought a land war in South Vietnam from 1965 to 1968, because of the threat posed to the South Vietnamese government by the activities of a communist insurgency waged in that

territory by the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese Army. According to Krepinevich (1986), the Vietnamese insurgency was moving away in July 1965, from guerrilla operations of the second phase of protracted people's war theory (strategic equilibrium), towards large-scale conventional operations, as was arranged in the third phase of protracted people's war (strategic offensive).

But with the introduction of American land forces in mid-1965, the balance of power quickly turned against the Vietcong. Moreover, the main way the United States waged war in the south (large-scale formations employing large doses of firepower exploiting technologically advanced weapons systems) had a good chance of defeating South Vietnam's opponents. If the insurgents had been remained committed to third-phase-style operations, it is likely that the United States would have been able to secure its political objectives in the war, as a conventional standoff would have ensured the destruction of North Vietnamese forces. However, in a relatively short time, the insurgents returned to the fighting style of the second phase, once it was clear that they could not compete with the technology or firepower of the United States (Krepinevich, 1986).

This strategic adaptation by the Vietcong was not matched by the US military. Rather, the Military Assistance Command continued to conduct land warfare, adhering to the lines of conventional U.S. Army doctrine suitable for a third-generation war, but not a fourth-generation one. The effect of such strategic rigidity would have profoundly negative effects on the US ability to achieve its military and political objectives in war (Nagl, 2005). The insurgency's goal in returning to guerrilla warfare was to expand its base of support among the population by attacking local government leaders and gaining control over the population, as cultivating links between the insurgency and the population was seen as critical, given the introduction of US troops. Through coercion and persuasion of the population, guerrilla forces attempted to protect and supply themselves, as well as demonstrate the inability of the South Vietnamese government to stem the tide of revolution.

In order to effectively combat the second-phase insurgency, South Vietnam and the United States had to have the security of the population as their primary objective. Only by severing the links between the guerrillas and the population could both actors deny the North Vietnamese insurgency its main source of strength. Larger-scale search and destruction operations, of the type employed by the United States, were not simply unproductive in the fight against the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese Army but were counterproductive. Relying so heavily on firepower provided an early warning to the guerrillas that attacks were coming, and they ran

substantial risks of alienating the population. Moreover, this type of operation could not guarantee the safety of the population, as villagers continued to be susceptible to coercion and indoctrination actions by guerrilla forces (Krepinevich, 1986).

The U.S. Army employed a strategy of attrition against the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese Army, intending to reach a point where the enemy's losses outweighed their ability to replace them with new forces. As explained by William Westmoreland, commanding general of the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam,

[...] I do not see any practical alternative, apart from nuclear war, to continue as we are, preparing for the long term by building our forces and facilities in order to gain a qualitative advantage and quantitative margin over the enemy that will wear it down. (Daddis, 2014, p. 239)

General Westmoreland's plan to achieve victory would unfold in three steps (Westmoreland, 1989): 1). The United States would seek stabilization of the war by the end of 1965, using the commitment of 44 battalions that Johnson agreed to in July of that year. 2) In 1966, an additional 24 battalions would be employed to resume the offensive against enemy forces. 3). Clearance operations would be conducted with the aim of destroying the remaining insurgent forces in the South.

Critical to the success of this plan was the ability of the United States to force the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese Army to fight pitched battles. In doing so, American firepower could wear down enemy forces at a faster rate than they could be replaced. According to Tomes (2007), the main metric by which this approach would be judged was the "body count", which focused on the number of enemy soldiers killed in action, and which would lead the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam to give more importance to the body count than to the safety of the population. However, the defection strategy failed to reach the required tipping point or provide Army commanders with the incentive to accurately report progress.

On the one hand, the use of great firepower gave the guerrilla forces advance notice of the Army's intentions; as such, the insurgents retained the ability to dictate the timing and intensity of battles. And although the Army killed many insurgent forces, the dominant American strategy failed to decouple the population from the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese Army, so the insurgency was able to continually increase its numbers. On the other hand, by relying on body counts as a key measure of success, commanders were given an incentive to inflate the number of enemy soldiers killed. Such altered statistics were easily achieved due to the

inherent difficulty of differentiating between an insurgent and a villager. Moreover, "increasing the count often provided an elegant explanation for why a particular American unit suffered many casualties in a confrontation" (Krepinevich, 1986, p. 202).

As time went on, American officials became increasingly concerned about the viability of the Military Assistance Command's wartime approach in Vietnam. Nevertheless, Schandler (1999) explains that, although many in the Office of the Secretary of Defense were convinced that the strategy of attrition would not lead to military victory, this remained. The strategic continuity was largely due to the fact that the Army had not suffered a substantial defeat on the battlefield, but for the Johnson administration, that "defeat" came with the Tet Offensive, in early 1968. Although U.S. forces were able to withstand the offensive and deal a substantial blow to the insurgency, the Tet Offensive clearly demonstrated the limits of U.S. strategy; to respond to the attack, Westmoreland requested the dispatch of an additional 10,500 troops (Daddis, 2014).

At the same time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff urged Johnson to take a step that the president had so far rejected: the call-up of the reserves of the Military Forces. In his view, the ability of the United States to meet the challenges posed by the Tet Offensive, and in order to ensure that the United States possessed a minimum level of preparedness to face additional contingencies, was in doubt if the president refused to mobilize reserves (Herring, 2002). Astonished by the capabilities of the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese Army to launch the offensive, the US president finally realized that victory in Vietnam was not a possibility. Consequently, the Army's approach had lost all credibility with the president and his main advisers (Schulzinger, 1997). So it was necessary to design a withdrawal plan that would lead to the Paris Agreements and the end of the Vietnam War.

As the United States staggered away from failure in Vietnam, the tragic toll was staggering. Nearly 58,000 U.S. military personnel and more than 700,000 North Vietnamese dead. And unsurprisingly, American military leaders began looking for an explanation for what went wrong. In particular, American airpower leaders declared that politicians had prevented the military from accomplishing its mission. They stated that the gradual use of air power and overly restrictive rules of engagement, imposed by political prohibitions, led to wasting air power in a senseless war of attrition. Leaders of air power claimed that political constraints prevented air power from gaining victory in Vietnam. And they cited the 1972 eleven-day bombing offensive, Linebacker U, as a demonstration that air power can win limited wars if

not hampered by uncomfortable political controls. Admiral Grant Sharp, operational commander of Pacific Command during the Rolling Thunder, stated, “our air power did not fail us; it was the decision makers who failed” (Kearns, 1976, p. 208).

Analysis of the failure of politico-military integration in the Vietnam War

As already explained, the result of the air war was that of a timely rational compensation between competing objectives. Although the United States could not coerce Hanoi, it could prevent Chinese intervention in the war, and thus prevented the limited war in Vietnam from escalating into an unlimited war of dire consequences for international security. Leading policymakers in Washington were able to confront this dilemma directly because political ends and military means were closely integrated. On the contrary, the land war failed because of the adoption of an inappropriate strategy by an isolated organization immune to the direction of its superiors in Washington. From 1965 to 1968, the United States employed land power to achieve an illusory goal, and the end result was a strategic defeat, because the political ends were poorly matched with the strategy adopted by the Army.

But what explains these divergent results? One explanation focuses on the nature of Armed Forces’ strategic cultures and the defense community as a whole⁴. Indeed, numerous studies (Snyder, 1977; Wendt, 1995; Desch, 1998; Hudson, 1999; Bloomfield, 2012; Haglund, 2014) have agreed that the organizational cultures of defense communities have a profound impact on the way states employ their Armed Forces and when they do it. According to Gray (1981), a *strategic culture* consists of a set of beliefs influenced by national characteristics that are unique to an actor; these characteristics will include geography, economic development, political philosophy and traditions, national history, and the self-characterization of its own citizenship. Thus, the concept of *strategic culture* is often used to analyze national policymaking, as it suggests that different security communities think and behave differently about strategic issues.

⁴ The *defense community* of a state comprises the political and military leadership of a state, as well as the institutions that are responsible for shaping security policy and military transformation processes. Based on this, a strategic community is made up of the Armed Forces, intelligence agencies, and executive and legislative elements of government dealing with foreign affairs and external and internal security, as well as the defense industrial complex and associated think tanks (academic community).

Therefore, organizational culture - that is, the pattern of assumptions, ideas, and beliefs that prescribe how a group should adapt to its external environment and manage its internal affairs - plays a fundamental role in determining Armed Forces' priorities and behaviors both in times of war and in times of peace. Well, most of what the military does on a daily basis happens during peacetime, and internally derived standards tend, necessarily, to focus on modes of conduct. In doing so, military organizations are likely to focus not on the objectives that might be assigned to them, but, rather, on the means by which they should act. This approach has a direct impact on the behavior of the state in times of war.

According to Legro (1995), the preferences and objectives of military organizations become more prominent than those of other state organizations during the war. Because the military is organized hierarchically, with a uniform set of beliefs. And because it possesses a monopoly of expertise in a complex subject area, and because the time frame for action is very short. Under these conditions, civilian leaders turn to the military more voluntarily and less critically than they would in peacetime. In the case of Vietnam, the organizational culture approach expects a significant mismatch between the political objectives pursued and the military means employed to achieve those ends in both land warfare and air warfare. The vast majority of uniformed officers believed that limited wars such as Vietnam, fought on the periphery of the main strategic theater of the Cold War. And they were a fundamental distraction from the strategy of containment against the Soviet Union.

Those preferences were, moreover, doctrinally codified. For example, the U.S. Army's approach to warfare was based on medium-intensity conflict, with a strong penchant for the massive use of firepower to destroy the enemy and mitigate American casualties. For the Army, the wars of the recent past confirmed that approach, as, in both World War II and the Korean War, the Army employed massive firepower in an attempt to substitute materiel for combat forces. In terms of the opponent in a future war, the U.S. Army focused almost exclusively on the Soviet Union and planned extensively for a general war in Europe. The predominance of the Soviet threat meant that in peacetime the Army constantly based its planning on worst-case scenarios. Over time, such an approach translated into a preference for threat. Army officers considered planning for war with the Soviet Union to be the goal of their careers. So little attention was paid to other potential opponents and, more seriously, to consideration of other modes of warfare (Long, 2008). While the Korean War vindicated the Army's preferred approach to waging war, the scale and scope of military operations imposed by the civilian leadership were deemed

unacceptable. And in the aftermath of Chinese intervention in the Korean War, civilian leaders imposed limitations on the conduct of military leaders. This attitude meant that, in the future, Army officers would do their best to avoid being placed in a position to wage wars without a significant degree of autonomy.

The military's detachment from national security decisions began at the top of the Johnson administration. President Johnson clearly did not trust the military, and relied less on military advice than any American president since Woodrow Wilson (Karnow, 1984). The root of this mistrust stemmed from the experience of the Korean War, when General MacArthur, during the Allied offensive in North Korea, not only encouraged China's entry into the war with his reckless actions, but also recommended using nuclear weapons in the conflict once China and North Korea forced the Allied forces to retreat. However, the critical action that alienated the military leaders from the political leadership - and thus from the political-military balance - was not the rejection of advice about the escalation of the war, but the tight political control exercised by the Johnson administration.

President Johnson also ordered political restrictions that limited, even more, air operations. There were many bombing arrests-the longest of which lasted more than 37 days, under the guise of increasing the propaganda effort and, at other times, to commemorate Buddha's birthday (Herring, 2002). Johnson's emphasis on preferentially addressing his internal agenda also disconnected the Armed Forces of domestic state policy; according to Kearns (1976), President Johnson's *Great Society* program was the centerpiece of his national agenda that promoted the most radical social reforms since Franklin D. Roosevelt's *New Deal* program. For his part, Johnson saw that the *New Deal* had been stifled by World War II, and he was determined not to let the Vietnam issue take center stage in American politics.

Robert McNamara, Johnson's defense secretary, also played an important role in moving the military away from the politico-military decision-making process. McNamara elevated individual the Armed Forces' strategic planning. at the departmental level by assigning it to units of systems analysis and financial management (Halberstam, 1992). Secretary McNamara considered that the Pentagon's strategic planning should have a quantitative orientation. In order to produce efficiencies in the military system and options that integrated all forces to achieve this objective. This would generate a fierce resentment among the forces, whose precious autonomy was now besieged by civilian technologists. According to Tarpgaard (1995), in the years following the establishment of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the holder of such a portfolio was more of an arbiter than the actual leader.

McNamara's predecessors, from James V. Forrestal in 1947 to Thomas S. Gates, acted as referees in the continuing struggles between the Army, Navy, and newly created Air Force for missions and budget share. And before McNamara, the U.S. Secretary of Defense did not have the personnel or resources to make informed, independent decisions.

Now, if *analysis* is understood as the collection and processing of information relevant to rational and informed decision-making, then analysis in U.S. defense planning predates the McNamara era. But what would change with McNamara would be the institutionalization of analysis within the US Department of Defense, as well as its active use to impose managerial control over the Armed Forces' individual services, which, for obvious reasons, generated discontent among the American military leadership. McNamara's first major reform was to review the Department of Defense's budget to reflect the military missions for which he was responsible. McNamara considered that what the United States needed was a flexible response strategy, "capable of facing all levels of conflict, from the Cold War, through *limited war*, to *total war*". Consequently, the three military services would be reorganized similarly to operational commands, while the three service departments would be organized to mobilize, train, and support them (Halberstam, 1992).

But given the flexibility demanded in the reforms implemented by McNamara and his civilian subordinates, operational decisions were routinely made without military advice. This not only tended to alienate the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from McNamara, but further complicated an already antagonistic relationship that existed between the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and his civilian chief. And while the Army was "politically" separated during the early years in Vietnam, military leaders also demonstrated a lack of political awareness by making strategic recommendations to the civilian government. As military leaders repeatedly presented President Johnson and McNamara with proposals that were out of step with the policy of the incumbent government. It fueled this political distrust until the end of the Vietnam War, the revelation in 1972 that senior military officers falsified mission reports.

Conclusions

When Clausewitz (1899) stated that war is a continuation of politics by other means, he posed the following question:

[...] the only question, therefore, is whether, when war is planned, the political point of view should give way to the purely military (if a purely military point of view is conceivable). That is, should it disappear altogether or be subordinated, or should the political point of view remain dominant and the military be subordinated to it? (p. 76)

This is a question that all governments - and certainly democratic governments - have had to answer. In the American experience, political and military viewpoints are rarely balanced in the national security policymaking process. From revolutionary beginnings, the peacetime military point of view had little influence on national security policy. During the war, the military point of view gained considerable credibility and became an important part of national security policy.

The Cold War changed this traditional pattern, and when the United States went to war in Vietnam, the military point of view did not balance the political point of view. However, after the failure of Vietnam, corrections were applied to the PMI process. Balanced political and military views are the key to more effective decision-making in national security policy. And in the two decades following the Vietnam War, both political and military views in the United States struck a balance during the Gulf War, in 1991, through various political and military corrections to make sure there was "never again" another Vietnam.

When civilian and military leaders have access to multiple institutional sources of information, and when information flows freely between national security organizations at the lowest levels, civilian and military leaders are more likely to dominate the strategic policymaking process. Under such conditions, civilian leaders can better understand the strategic environment, design and execute complex security and defense policies, and be less vulnerable to the military's culturally determined strategic preferences. Conversely, when civilian leaders receive vital information only from the Armed Forces, and when little information is shared among the organizations that make up the advocacy community, Armed Forces are likely to have a supreme influence on the strategic decision-making process. In this case, the Armed Forces' organizational culture will determine the preferences of the State and the approach to war.

But as an explanation of PMI's sources, Cohen's (2002) argument from civilian *supreme command* contains two important limitations. First, because of its focus on individual leadership, it devotes little analytical attention to the institutional environment in which leadership is exercised. And to the ability of leaders to overcome powerful structural impediments to political-military coordination. While Cohen

(2002) acknowledges that professional militaries possess distinctive characteristics that incline them to seek autonomy, his focus is squarely on the capabilities of leaders to force PMI. However, as scholars of organizational cultures have long recognized, the military often resists intentional direction, even by the most gifted civilian leaders. Thus, the critical question remains: *Under what conditions can leaders break military cultures to effectively align military behavior with political objectives in warfare?*

Secondly, the supreme command argument does not offer a satisfactory explanation for the variation of the PMI in a critical case: the Vietnam War, from 1964 to 1968. Cohen's (2002) description of this pattern is concise and accurate. President Lyndon B. Johnson restricted bombing targets in North Vietnam for the sensible reason that he did not want to involve China or Russia in a larger conflict. The campaign in the south, which included massive bombings and search and destroy missions, was the product of a conventional army that understood war primarily in terms of killing the enemy, not fighting an insurgency. Cohen's (2002) explanation of this pattern, however, is incomplete, for his argument fails to acknowledge that just as Army officers fought to maintain control over land strategy in the south, so did Air Force officers in the North Vietnam War. Both the U.S. Army and Air Force possessed powerful organizational cultures, neither of which provided a strategic approach that matched political objectives, but only one directly determined the strategic choice. On the other hand, Cohen's treatment of the president and his top advisers suggests that, while Johnson did not achieve political-military integration in land warfare, his performance was far superior in air warfare.

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