Full Length Research

Principal-Agent Problems: Why War Strategy Doesn't Always Match Policy Aims[1]

Bryan Groves

201 Science Drive, Durham, NC 27708. E-mail: bryan.groves@duke.edu

Policy-strategy alignment in war gives the military the best chance of accomplishing national objectives without wasting lives. Thus, ensuring military endeavors are synchronized within the nation's broader political goals—not working at cross purposes—is vital. However, mismatches between American policy and strategy have occurred, sometimes due to principal-agent problems. This paper demonstrates that in the most important Post-Cold War cases, when the principal (the president) failed to control the agent (the military), the country failed to align its military strategy with its policy objectives. More importantly, this failure appears to correspond with less successful war outcomes. The unique contribution of this paper is two-fold. First, it provides a critical cross case comparison of policy-strategy linkage through the lens of principal-agent theory, and its impact on war outcomes. Second, it offers a menu of possible policy prescriptions to address principal-agent problems to include biannual congressional hearings, multiple advocacy, and increased civil-military interactions. Implementation of these recommendations will: (1) improve the civil-military principal-agent relationship, (2) facilitate the connection of wartime strategy with its corresponding policy, and (3) provide the best opportunity for successful war outcomes.

Key Words: United States foreign policy, military strategy, principal-agent problems, policy-strategy matches and mismatches

---

[1] The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the U.S. Department of Defense, the Department of the Army, the Combined Arms Center or the School of Advanced Military Studies at Fort Leavenworth, or Duke University.

INTRODUCTION

The broad phenomenon this paper explores is the ability of some U.S. presidents to link policy objectives and corresponding strategy during war, and the failure of others to do so. This paper investigates the causes of policy-strategy matches and mismatches across several case studies in the Post-Cold War world. The research questions this paper addresses include: What causes disconnects between American policy aims and strategy in wars? Why has there been a coherent strategic link between policy and strategy in some situations and not in others? What are the implications? To answer these questions, I analyze two sets of case studies. First I look at two cases where the strategy was a logical fit for achieving the related political aims. The Persian Gulf War and the Iraq War post 2007 are the two case studies I employ. Second I investigate the Iraq War in 2004-2006 and Afghanistan post 2009 as two cases in which the strategies utilized did not match the political objectives they were intended to accomplish. This case study selection provides variation on my dependent variable: policy-strategy match or mismatch.

The ability or inability of American presidents to link policy and strategy is an interesting question that deserves exploration for numerous reasons. Success or failure in this area has direct consequences on prospects for victory in war. It also impacts the allocation of the nation's treasure—money, lives, industry, and time. It determines whether that treasure is spent efficiently in a fruitful pursuit or wasted. Further, the challenge is a bipartisan one. Republican and democratic presidents alike have struggled to decide upon and execute a war strategy consistent with their policy goals.[2] Likewise, other Republican and Democratic presidents have succeeded. Is the difference attributable to differences in personality or leadership? What roles do the president, his administration, and the military play? Does success or failure in war retroactively determine whether there was a logical connection between policy and strategy? These questions are important aspects of the topic which this paper explores.

I argue that mismatches between policy and strategy are essentially principal-agent problems in which the principal, the president, fails to control the agent, the military. Factors related to the relative experience levels on both sides can contribute to the problem, as can different objectives and general failures of civil-military relations. At its core, however, these case studies suggest that the ability or inability of presidents to obtain compliance from the military is the primary non-accidental determinant in whether the U.S. achieves a match between stated policy aims and wartime strategy.

Definitions

It is important upfront to establish a common understanding of terminology that I will be using throughout the paper. Four main terms are foundational: policy aims, strategy, policy-strategy match, and policy-strategy mismatch. Policy aims are the stated political objectives of the president and his administration. Strategy is the matching of policy goals with means of achieving them[3] (Betts 2000 and 2012). My dependent variable will be whether there is a policy-strategy match or mismatch. A policy-strategy match occurs when the strategy fits logically with the policy and has a chance for successful achievement of the intended political objectives. A country may implement a good strategy to accomplish regime change, but if the nation only wants to conduct a limited, punitive strike, the strategy is ill suited for the task. In such a situation, a policy-strategy disconnect occurs. The problem when there is no linkage between the stated policy and the strategy employed may be that the policy is bad. In that case, changing the political outcome desired may be the best fix (Betts, 2000, 2012). That is a decision for the president, however. And because of the policy-strategy hierarchy, the strategy will often need to change—in addition to or instead of the policy. Finally, it must be said that disconnects between policy and strategy are bad because they result in wasted resources, both human capital and financial. When lives are on the line, it is imperative that the country get it right. Having laid the conceptual understanding of policy-strategy linkage and disconnects, I will next discuss the relevant literature that will provide the basis for analyzing the case studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The pertinent literature deals with how political leadership should craft wartime goals, how strategy should nest with policy, and how civilian politicians interact with military leaders. Carl von Clausewitz's classic strategy piece, *On War,* is very relevant to the discussion of these first two topics. Clausewitz famously argued that "war is…a true

---

[2] Although not included in this paper, World War II is an example where a democratic president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, controlled his military agents and achieved a match between his political goals and wartime strategy.

[3] Dr. John Lewis Gaddis, renowned Yale historian, uses this definition.

political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means. The political object is the goal, war is the means of achieving it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose." (Clausewitz, 1976:87). Furthermore, "the first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature" (Clausewitz, 1976:88). Clausewitz's statements foreshadow the challenges political leaders will experience if they do not heed his advice.

Many heads of state have decided to embark on a military undertaking without clear articulation of the objectives he wishes to accomplish. Failing to do so set both the state and the military up for escalation of the conflict when his whims change. Alternatively, if his military commanders experience unexpected success, he or they may seek an expansion of the war. It may initially appear wise to advance deeper within enemy territory or to broaden the war to take on another country. Later, however, the analysis can clearly indicate that the state or empire overreached. Rome, Napoleon, Hitler, and the Soviet Union all fell into this trap and suffered its consequences.

Clausewitz's second contention is that without serious, comprehensive consideration of the type of war a state seeks, it opens itself for policy and strategy drift. Very much related to the first failure, this mistake can have far ranging and adverse ramifications. A state's failure to determine whether it intends to wage a limited or total war, conventional or unconventional conflict, symmetric or asymmetric warfare, or a campaign of short or lengthy duration can lead to unwanted outcomes including a more costly undertaking and a lost war (McNamara and Van De Mark, 1995:320-22).[4]

Samuel Huntington wrote the classic work on civil-military relations in 1957: *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations.* Huntington's prime contribution was to define civilian control. He indicated that two types of civilian control exist: subjective, which had been the default position for many countries, and objective, which is only possible with a professional and a political officer corps (Huntington, 1957:81). Subjective civilian control maximizes civilian power in relation to the military, while the objective approach maintains civilian control by maximizing military professionalism (Huntington, 1957:80-85). The former is the only type of civilian control possible in the absence

of a professional, a political officer corps. When a professional and non political officer corps exists in a democracy, however, objective civilian control is the better method because "the large number, varied character, and conflicting interests of civilian groups make it impossible to maximize their power as a whole with respect to the military" (Huntington, 1957:80).

Eliot Cohen offers an additional way of understanding civil-military relations. Cohen advances a concept of the "unequal dialogue" between the civilian politicians and senior military leaders as a way to understand the general concept of civil-military relations (Cohen, 2002). Others refer to it as an "equal dialogue among unequals.[5]" The idea of these characterizations is that civil-military interaction should not be a one way conversation. Rather it should involve regular, professional, two way dialogue between the country's civilian and military leadership, recognizing that the former have greater authority and are the ultimate decision makers. The other major contention of Cohen's book, *Supreme Command*, is that military endeavors are more successful when there is effective civilian control.

Most important to my case study analysis is Peter Feaver's agency theory of civil-military relations. "Agency theory treats day-to-day civil-military relations as an ongoing game of strategic interaction, in which civilian principals vary the intrusiveness of their monitoring of military agents and military agents vary their compliance with civilian preferences" (Feaver, 2003:282). According to Feaver's read of American civil-military relations, despite the military's "yes, sir" culture, its top level leadership does not always exhibit the same degree of "salute and move out" execution as it expects of its junior members. Although the U.S. military has not resorted to coups, the Pentagon has slow rolled and varied its level of compliance to civilian guidance based on its expectations of punishment (Feaver, 2003).

The unique contribution of this paper is two-fold. First, it provides a critical cross case comparison of policy-strategy linkage through the lens of principal-agent theory, and its impact on war outcomes. Second, it offers a menu of possible policy prescriptions to address principal-agent problems to include biannual congressional hearings, multiple advocacy, and increased civil-military interactions. Implementation of these recommendations will: (1) improve the civil-military principal-agent relationship, (2) facilitate the connection of wartime strategy with its corresponding policy, and (3) provide the best opportunity for successful war outcomes.

---

[4] In the United States, these failures have come from "misjudgments of friend and foe alike," involving mission creep, and lost wars. Vietnam is the quintessential example. More recently, American military endeavors in Iraq and Afghanistan have exhibited elements of these Clausewitzian failures.

[5] Lieutenant Colonel Michael Shekleton described civil-military relations in these terms during the Army Strategist Course at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania during the spring of 2013.

Case Study Selection Rationale, Models, & a Roadmap

The case studies I selected share many similarities which control for a number of factors that could otherwise interfere with the ability to determine the key factor(s) driving the U.S. ability to match strategy with policy in some situations and not in others. All four of the cases involve a large military effort comprised predominantly of U.S. forces and were American led. All occurred after the end of the Cold War and were in either Iraq or Afghanistan. Three of the four were post 9/11 and part of the war on terrorism. Many of the major military actors were the same individuals in these last three cases, including Generals David Petraeus and Stanley McChrystal. The president and other key civilian players were the same in the two post 9/11 Iraq cases. In addition, the president during the two recent Iraq War cases, President George W. Bush, was the son of the president during the Persian Gulf War. The Vice President, Dick Cheney, had been the Secretary of Defense during the Persian Gulf War. The Secretary of State during Iraq '04-'06, Colin Powell, had been the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs during the Persian Gulf War.

The Secretary of Defense who presided over the surge, Robert Gates, had been the Deputy National Security Advisor (NSA) during the Persian Gulf War. Examination of these case studies and the civil-military relationships during each therefore controls as much as possible for variance across case studies and provides insights into what causes policy-strategy matches and mismatches. The caveat is that with a limited number of case studies, one must be careful not to draw too sweeping of conclusions (Flyvbjerg in Denzin and Lincoln, 2011:301-16). Having done a thorough analysis of the major post-Cold War military operations on which the U.S. has embarked does provide a basis, though, for assessment and appropriate adjustment, which I address in the recommendation section at the end of this paper.

There are a number of possible models to explain why policy-strategy mismatches occur during some periods of conflict and not during others. One paradigm is that a lack of experience on the civilian side leads to unrealistic policy objectives. A second is that a lack of experience on the military side and a failure to understand the political demands of civilian leaders leads to a strategy not linked to its corresponding policy aims. A related third model is that inappropriately applied experiences on the military side results in rigidity, misunderstanding of the true problem, or a failure to generate diverse options. Fourth is that a poor planning process, with a lack of multiple views, leads to mismatched policy and strategy. The most convincing argument, however, runs in accord with Feaver's agency theory. It argues that the root of the problem, while sometimes influenced by the dynamics suggested by these other models, is a

principal-agent problem.[6] The analysis across these four case studies bears this out. When presidents picked and controlled the relevant military leaders properly, the U.S. achieved a match between its policy and war strategy. When the president failed in this endeavor due to monitoring challenges and/or a failure to put the right person in charge in the first place—someone who shared similar objectives and had the capability to carry it out—the nation experienced a mismatch between its aims and strategy.

In the case studies that follow I will test these notions about civil-military relations. First I determine what each administration's policy was, as well as its corresponding military strategy. Second, I will assess whether the two were connected. Third, if there was a mismatch, I will evaluate which of these models holds the most explanatory power. Fourth, I will analyze the factors which led to successful linkage of policy ends and strategic ways, contrasting them with the dynamics present in cases of mismatched policy and strategy. Finally, I address the resulting policy ramifications and recommend several policy interventions to address principal-agent problems in civil-military relations.

Matches: How did the U.S. get it right?

The Persian Gulf War in 1991 and the Iraq War from 2007 to 2011 are two examples were the United States got it right. In both situations the implemented military strategy was congruent with the stated political objectives. Although deep experience bases for both the civilian and military contingents facilitated the linkages, they are primarily attributable to the presidents' proper control of the military. There was no principal-agent problem, unlike in the other two case studies. The respective Bush presidents had the military men they wanted at the helm, had developed strong relationships with them, shared similar worldviews, and set the course for the wars as well as the parameters within which they expected them to be executed. Meanwhile, the military leadership followed presidential directives without overstepping their bounds and made any contrary recommendations in private, unlike in the cases of mismatches. Furthermore, in the first two cases the military properly applied the lessons it had learned in training (Persian Gulf) and in previous stages of the war (Iraq '07-'11). This again differed from what happened during the cases of mismatch (Iraq '04-'06 and Afghanistan '09-'14). In those situations the military forgot lessons from Vietnam, kept its head buried in the sand, and tried inappropriately to convert lessons from Iraq to Afghanistan.

---

[6] Dr. Frederick Mayer, professor of public policy at Duke University, recommended these models to me, largely as stated in this paragraph.

The Persian Gulf War: 1991

On August 2, 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Iraq had a long standing claim to Kuwait and argued that the British arbitrarily and incorrectly determined Middle East country boundaries after World War II. Saddam had tested the waters prior to the invasion to ascertain the probable U.S. reaction. On July 25th he summoned the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, and asked her what the American opinion of conflicts between Arab states was. Ambassador Glaspie said that "we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait. All that we hope is that these issues are solved quickly" (New York Times International 1990). Some critics believe that Saddam saw Glaspie's comments as a green light to invade Kuwait because the U.S. would not respond with force.

This turned out not to be the case. The U.S. responded forcefully along with a large international coalition. Moreover, President Bush was adamant that the first large scale military operation since Vietnam would be successful. He determined not to fall prey to the same deficiencies presidents during Vietnam had. He would build a strong international coalition, clearly define the political goal, and direct as well as support his military commanders, but not do their job for them. Bush determined that the political objective would be the removal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. The coalition would not seek regime change. Though it was discussed, the prevailing opinion of Bush and his administration was that a military campaign to overthrow Hussein might lose international support and would open a Pandora's Box that they would rather keep shut. A drive to Baghdad might be successful in ousting Hussein; yet by removing the strong man, it would likely have the unintended consequence of opening the door to significant civil strife between Iraq's three main sectarian factions including Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish elements. Officials within the Bush administration recognized that Saddam, a member of the minority Sunni sect, had kept the lid on what might otherwise have been an ugly civil war. While his vicious security practices, which had included using chemical weapons on Iraqi Kurdish communities, were extremely repugnant to Americans, the main thing was to push Saddam back into Iraq. Doing so would enforce the international norm of territorial sovereignty, as well as protect Kuwait's oil fields and global oil prices.

The coalition's military presence numbered over half a million strong. American forces were equipped with state of the art technology, including smart bombs and combined arms formations ideal for desert warfare. In the decade preceding the Gulf War, the military had adopted the Air Land Battle concept and benefited from the tremendous influx of Reagan era defense spending. They had trained rigorously for combat using Cold War order of battle configurations in large force-on-force conventional battles, including at new combined maneuver training centers, such as the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California. The arid, flat desert landscape closely resembled the Iraqi terrain. The Persian Gulf War provided an opportunity to test Air Land Battle as a concept, and to test the military's new equipment, as well as their training. Following the military build-up, international coalition building, and United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 678 that authorized all means necessary to compel Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, the war lasted only six weeks.[7]

The strategy the U.S. employed during the Persian Gulf War nested closely with its policy goals and reflected proper alignment of the principal-agent relationship. The robust international support, size of the force, focus on the conventional fight, and General Schwarzkopf's Marine feint in the Gulf, along with deft maneuvering of ground forces following a sustained and degrading air campaign, were a solid match for the threat faced and to accomplish the aim of pushing the Iraqi military out of Kuwait. There was also proper alignment of the principal-agent relationship during the Gulf War. The high level of foreign policy experience with which George H.W. Bush entered office, as well as the high degree of political exposure that Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell had in the Reagan administration facilitated an "equal dialogue among unequals.[8]" Yet the experience was not the key factor. As we will see in the Afghanistan '09-'13 case study, either side can misapply the lessons and experiences of history (Houghton, 2013; Janis, 1982; Neustadt and May, 1986). What was important was George H.W. Bush's control of the military. It was not micromanagement like Lyndon Johnson during the Vietnam War, nor was it too hands-off like George W. Bush's approach in Iraq '04-'06.

---

[7] The military's focus on conventional conflict, readiness, and modernization efforts for the decade prior bore fruit, ensuring tactical and operational competence. Those are not the levels at which war is normally won, however. The strategic level and the political-military interface is historically the most crucial. Apart from the correct inputs at that level, readiness at the lower two levels, while necessary, is insufficient for victory.

[8] George H.W. Bush entered office in 1988 as an experienced statesman. He had already served eight years as Reagan's Vice President, in addition to previous assignments as the Director of Central Intelligence and the U.S. Envoy to China. Further, the Persian Gulf War occurred in the middle of his term, not at the beginning. This meant he had already had a couple years as Commander-in-Chief to assess the Post Cold War's changing geopolitical environment, establish and assess his administration, and determine how best to engage the Post-Cold War world. Meanwhile, in addition to working for Secretary Weinberger, General Powell had been the National Security Advisor (NSA) under Reagan. Powell had advised Reagan on Grenada, Libya strikes, and in the wake of the Iran-Contra scandal. These opportunities gave Powell political experience that provided insight into how to aptly navigate civil-military relationships and to better understand political concerns.

George H.W. Bush's realistic assessment of the situation and U.S. interests, as well as providing requisite support to the military through international channels and the provision of sufficient U.S. forces were all important demonstrations of proper presidential control. So too was his clear delineation of the political objective and refusal to expand it once the military experienced rapid and unexpected levels of success. He held firmly to the sound assumptions that underpinned the endeavor and objective from the start. Doing so required a lot of confidence, since there was significant pressure to exploit success by continuing to Baghdad to "finish the job now." George H.W. Bush held firm though, realizing that sometimes sound strategy requires taking an appetite suppressant.

On the military side, Powell adhered to the need for a clear objective, for comprehensive cost-benefit calculations and risk evaluation, for an exit strategy, for force to be a last resort, and for broad support domestically and internationally (Weinberger, 1984). Thus the Powell Doctrine was in close alignment with George H.W. Bush's Gulf War objective and parameters, easing the burden of presidential leadership. Yet this surely was no accident. George H.W. Bush had been the Vice President during Powell's time as the NSA. It was no coincidence that during his first year as president he picked Powell to be his chief military advisor—a reflection of proactive presidential control of the military.

During the discussions about war objectives and strategy, the two leaders' relationship mattered. Unlike the dysfunction that characterized the Kennedy administration during the Bay of Pigs fiasco, George H.W. Bush's administration was neither racked by groupthink, intelligence failures, improper assumptions, inadequate force structure, or other misalignments of policy and strategy (Houghton, 2013; Janis, 1982). George H.W. Bush could better steer the military through Powell than would have been true had the president picked a general that did not share his analytical framework for waging war. Such a general would have been more likely to oppose Bush's limits on the war, whether publically, through uneven compliance, slow rolling in passing on presidential directions, or by resigning if he strongly wanted to continue the war until Saddam had been captured or killed.

Once George H.W. Bush had declared the political objective, Powell and the rest of the military followed suit. There was no subtle rebellion among the military brass, no balking at the hard work of building a coalition instead of conducting a unilateral operation, no "accidental" bombings in an attempt to broaden the war's objective, and no public renunciation of the presidential limit of advance or arguing to go all the way to Baghdad. Such an occurrence is not implausible. President Harry S. Truman fired General Douglas MacArthur for publically questioning his civilian leadership and the constraints he placed on the military during the Korean War, which aimed at preventing Chinese and Soviet entrance into the war. No equivalent military backlash occurred during the Persian Gulf War despite the military's predilection for "finishing the job." Generals Powell or Schwarzkopf could easily have argued with President Bush about the need to take Saddam out. They would have reason to make this case given the lead time, cost, and human investment required in conducting the massive troop buildup from August 1990 to January 1991. In fact, they might have done so, but importantly, did not do it publically. George H.W. Bush kept them in line, partially by stacking the deck in his favor by a wise appointment of Powell in the first place.

Iraq 2007-2011

The Iraq War from 2007 to 2011 provides another case study in getting it right as a result of highly functional presidential control of the military. In this case as in the last the president hand-picked the key general he wanted to lead the war effort. Like with George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush found his man, shared a similar perspective on the proper approach to the war, determined the political objective, and set the guidelines within which the military would have to operate. President George W. Bush held General David Petraeus responsible for implementing the vision Bush wanted. Toward this end Bush engaged him more regularly than he had previous commanders in Iraq, holding weekly video teleconferences (VTCs), whereas he had inappropriately been detached during the first several years of the war. Bush also effectively resourced the war and better synchronized political and military efforts. These measures were all reflections of Bush's astute control of the military.

Bush's increased monitoring of the military in late 2006 proved a significant turning point in the Iraq War and the critical determinant behind correcting the gap between policy and strategy. Bush conducted an internal reevaluation of U.S. interests and war strategy in the fall of 2006. Out of this he determined that the only course that offered potential prospects of success was to change strategy, place new leadership in charge, and conduct a "surge" of resources, namely the infusion of five additional combat brigades.[9] He appointed General Petraeus as the new commander in Iraq and charged him

---

[9] Meghan O'Sullivan, the Deputy National Security Advisor at the time of the "Surge" decision indicated in the spring of 2008 that the team advising the president on the decision could not guarantee Bush that it would work. Yet they concluded, and he agreed, that it was the only option that had a chance of turning the tide of the conflict in the direction that the U.S. wanted.

with improving the security situation to buy time for political progress.[10]

Petraeus implemented the new population centric counter insurgency strategy approved by Bush upon arriving in Baghdad. It aimed at protecting the Iraqi people instead of just killing the enemy. The theory was that if the people felt safe, it would be a political win for the Iraqi administration of Prime Minister Nuri-al-Maliki. It would also increase the likelihood of people providing intelligence about the enemy to coalition and Iraqi Security Forces. Once the inertia was headed in the right direction, there might be a *tipping point* (Schelling, 2006) at which the collective action problem of security provision would be met, people's perceptions would shift in favor of siding with the American led coalition and, if U.S. forces buttressed the Iraqis sufficiently, in favor of the Iraqi government. The theory began to work. Although violence initially increased as measured through the number of security related attacks per month, it gradually decreased and held through the departure of U.S. troops in December 2011.[11] The influx of troops and their positioning in smaller elements and more integrated

---

[10]Petraeus had already served twice in Iraq, as the commander of the 101st Air Assault Division during the invasion and as the commander of the Multinational Security Transition Command – Iraq (MNSTC-I). During his time atop the 101st and following the fall of Baghdad, he was responsible for securing Mosul. He utilized tactics there in securing the population, empowering the local sheiks, and cutting shrewd deals politically and economically that would become hallmarks of his later counterinsurgency strategy as the overall commander. During Petraeus' assignment as the MNSTC-I commander, he led the training of Iraqi Security Forces, to include Iraqi Army and Police forces. As the newly appointed Iraq commander, he had the requisite experience, political top cover, and military resources. He also had benefited from time reflecting on and codifying lessons learned from institutional failure during the first four years of the Iraq War. Finally, his Princeton dissertation exploring the lessons of the Vietnam War and implications for future American use of force had also well prepared him for his task in Iraq.

[11] The security situation continued in a favorable situation even through most of 2012. In 2013, however, the deterioration of the situation in neighboring Syria, the inflow of Syrian refugees, the resurgence of Al Qaeda in Iraq, and the absence of U.S. troops began to overwhelm the Iraqi government's ability to handle the situation. As a result, violence and deaths increased to levels not seen since 2008. The final chapter remains to be written regarding Iraq's resilience to overcome these challenges and renewed sectarian violence that also resurfaced in 2013. This violence continued in even larger and more tragic ways in 2014 with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria' (ISIS) rise in Iraq. ISIS seized major portions of northern and western Iraq and declared an Islamic Caliphate as elements of the Iraqi Army fled their security positions. In a fall 2013 visit to the White House, and in what would prove a telling opinion editorial, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki asked the U.S. for counterterrorism resources and patience as it deals with these problems (http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/30/opinion/international/have-patience-with-us.html?_r=0).

among the people both put them in more vulnerable positions initially, but also facilitated the intended strategy in the mid to long term.

Bush had found his man. Similar to Lincoln a hundred and fifty years before him, it took a while, but Bush found in Petraeus a man who had the experience, political savvy, appropriate strategy, willingness to take risks, confidence, and ability to deliver. Bush actually wrote in his memoirs, "Lincoln discovered Generals Grant and Sherman. Roosevelt had Eisenhower and Bradley. I found David Petraeus and Ray Odierno" (Bush, 2010:389). Bush had been very reluctant to give up on Iraq, wanting it to become a solidly democratic and stable country, a beacon of democracy and freedom to other Middle Eastern states, and an ally in the war on terror. The counter insurgency strategy, combined with more resources, and new leadership worked toward these ends, albeit slowly.

The strategy helped achieve the process of clearing ground held by enemy elements, holding it secure from future threats, and building Iraqi Security Forces capable of standing on their own. It also provided time for Iraq's political capacity to grow—and some progress was seen in 2008. In the spring, Prime Minister Maliki, a Shiite, led Iraqi Security Forces in quelling a Shia uprising in the south. This was significant because it demonstrated that he could be a leader for all the people, not just one controlled by the Shia community both inside Iraq, and as a puppet of Iran and its powerful Shia actors.

It was not just these factors that made this progress possible, however. The Sunni Awakening had begun just prior to the surge and was critical to its success. It was the Sunni response, primarily throughout Al Anbar province in Western Iraq, to Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)'s deadly rampage. Sunni Sheiks determined that it was no longer in their best interests to side, whether in an explicit or complicit manner, with AQI. It was not worth the indiscriminate Shia reprisals that followed AQI's attacks. Thus, following the bombing of Samarra's Golden Mosque in 2006, Sunni Sheiks decided to employ their own security, siding with the Iraqi government and the U.S. against AQI. Petraeus capitalized on these dynamics and controversially funded the Sunni "Sons of Iraq" militias, reducing the amount of ground necessary for the American military to secure.

Petraeus also worked closely with the U.S. Ambassador, Ryan Crocker, to ensure a united American front in negotiating policy and security arrangements with the Iraqis. This unity extended to biannual congressional testimony, starting in September 2007, where the two appeared side by side and argued that the strategy was working. They used digital charts to demonstrate the main elements of the strategy and eventually to show the reduction in violence over time. Ultimately they proved successful in "putting more time back on the Washington

clock.[12]"

Yet even more than Petraeus and Crocker, it was Bush that was responsible for putting time back on the Washington clock, and that of the country as a whole. Bush's actions and corresponding increased prospects for success turned low public opinion *thermostats* (Schelling, 2006: chapter 3) to tilt upward as positive impact of his changes were seen (Eichenberg, 2005; Feaver, 2006). Most scholars and pundits did not think that a lengthened war effort would be able to sustain sufficient public opinion, both because of the greater time horizon and the prospects for more casualties (Mueller, 1973). Bush took a calculated risk and acted in a manner commiserate with his role as Commander-in-Chief (Woodward, 2008; Ricks, 2009). His bold steps maintained the policy aim of facilitating a stable and democratic Iraq, but changed the military strategy, the general in charge as well as the Secretary of Defense, the timeline for success, increased his personal involvement, and emphasized greater political-military coordination on both the U.S. and Iraqi side.

Sound civil-military relations and high levels of experience on both the civilian and military were again present. Planning assumptions and corresponding doctrine had also been rewritten. Scholars could point to these three models as holding explanatory power as to why the U.S. matched its military strategy with its political goals. There is some credence to this line of reasoning. Bush and the military had both learned tough lessons from the rough early years of the Iraq War. Petraeus had spent a year crafting a new joint counterinsurgency doctrine for the Army and Marine Corps while he was the Combined Arms Center commander at Fort Leavenworth.[13] Ultimately though, as with the Persian Gulf War, these arguments are less than convincing as definitive explanations.

One would expect that if experienced presidents and commanders or robust planning were the necessary and sufficient determinants of policy-strategy linkage than there should not be cases to the contrary and other factors would not matter. Yet both of these expectations fall short in reality. Iraq '04-'06 and Afghanistan '09-'14 failed to match strategy and policy despite moderate military and civilian experience and planning in the first case and significant experience and intense planning in the second. Further, the quality of presidential control exerted, the level of military compliance, and the military strategy used all matter substantially in the four cases this paper explores.

One reaches the logical conclusion then that the Commander-in-Chief has the mandate to shape military action, bringing it in line with his vision. If he fails to do so, the military may be partially responsible if it is the culprit in a lack of compliance. But the majority of the blame rests on the president's shoulders since he has the greatest authority. He can determine the type, frequency, and degree of monitoring's intrusiveness. He can do so through phone calls, VTCs, personal visits, sending civilian emissaries on his behalf, or through developing redundant checks as President John F. Kennedy did during the Cuban Missile Crisis. He retains the prerogative to replace commanders and direct the implementation of new strategies or scaled back objectives.

Given these dynamics, I conclude that it was the presidents' adequate control of the military that offers the most fitting explanatory model as to why the U.S. matched policy and strategy in these two case studies. I now look at what the U.S. did wrong in two instances where its war strategy did not match its policy goals. I find that it in these time periods it was the presidents' inability to control the military that conversely led to the mismatches between policy and strategy.

Mismatches: How did the U.S. get it wrong?

The first four years during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and the last five years of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan represent two cases in which the U.S. got it wrong. Both these case studies are examples of policy-strategy disconnects as the result of principal-agent problems. Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama failed to control the military during these timeframes. OIF '04-'06 was replete was bad decisions by the administration, its Iraqi administrator, and the general in charge. During it all Bush failed to provide the guidance, require the centralized approval process for strategic matters necessary to synchronize such a huge undertaking, and to interject himself into the fray quickly when things went badly. OEF '09-'14 is another case of presidential failure, but in that situation it was because Obama failed to require the military to present a valid array of options. He then subsequently chose the one, ill-advised strategy the military offered and that his top cabinet members unadvisedly supported. The result in both cases was an imbalance between the stated political objectives and the military strategy employed.

Iraq 2004-2006

Following the 9/11 attacks, President Bush and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld directed the commander of Central Command, General Tommy Franks, to update

---

[12] General (ret.) David Petraeus mentioned this phrase, and that it was part of his strategy, at a Duke University talk on September 11, 2013.
[13] Petraeus developed broad stakeholder support for the new doctrine across the military, academic circles and think tanks, the press, and clearly the administration.

war plans for invading Iraq (Franks, 2004; Hamilton, 2004; Woodward, 2004; Bush, 2010: 234-35). But Bush and key players throughout his administration did not recognize the challenges that could follow an invasion of Iraq. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, and Vice President Dick Cheney thought the U.S. would be greeted as liberators, so there was not much need to develop robust post invasion plans (Packer, 2005: chapter 2). The Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance was created within the Department of Defense (DOD) instead of at State, and a retired three star, Jay Garner, was hurriedly and belatedly placed in charge of post invasion operations. His experience following the Persian Gulf War led him to focus on the humanitarian assistance effort, largely ignoring political and economic reconstruction. For his bungled efforts, he was quickly removed and replaced by Paul Bremer and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) (Packer, 2005: chapter 4).

Bremer's decision to disband the four hundred thousand strong Iraqi Army and purge the Ba'ath party from the ranks of Iraq's political class, made things considerably worse. The first move left the country with no army to help with security, which would have been especially helpful given the limited number of troops the Americans had at their disposal. It also created nearly half a million new unemployed, unhappy Iraqis. The second decision exacerbated matters by stripping Iraq of its experienced political bureaucracy, technocrats that made the government—and the country—run. It also created more enemies for the CPA, the U.S. military, its few partners, and the eventual Iraqi government. Yet Bush still did not understand that the situation was deteriorating rapidly, transitioning from mere looting to sowing the seeds for sectarian violence.

For the military's part, Franks did not ask the right questions, nor did he think politically for his civilian masters. He too readily accepted Rumsfeld's troop limitations despite General Shinseki's advice to the contrary and he left the post invasion war planning to Wolfowitz (Packer, 2005:118-20). He did not acknowledge any responsibility for what should have been the whole point of the operation: winning the peace that follows the war (Hart, 1967; Clausewitz, 1976; Allawi, 2007). Instead he was very content to leave that entirely to the civilians—civilians who would not be in charge of the military elements capable of bringing peace, restoring order, and providing security for political and economic reconstruction to occur (Packer, 2005: 120).

After the initial invasion's success, and in what later proved to be a bad move on many levels, Franks convinced President Bush to issue a declaration on May 1, 2004 as an indication of significant progress made thus far (Franks, 2004). The infamous "mission accomplished" banner that appeared behind Bush when he made the speech aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln haunted the administration and the military for years. A second blunder was the military's slow reaction to Bremer's dismissal of the Iraqi Army. It took too long to shift resources and make training new Iraqi Army and Police forces a priority. While Petraeus took the helm of the training command in June 2004, its efforts did not produce tangible results on a large scale until the surge three years later. Third, Iraq commanders did not ask for additional troops until the surge because they thought that more U.S. soldiers would simply translate into more targets for the multi-faced enemy that had emerged, including foreign fighters, terrorists, former regime elements, and sectarian militias. Fourth, the majority of military forces lived on a few huge and well-fortified bases, not among the people on whose security prospects for success and the future of the country depended. Finally, for such an ambitious political vision—regime change, securing any weapons of mass destruction, and transformation of Iraq into a model democracy—the military was continually allotted only 160,000 soldiers, airmen, sailors, and marines for a country of twenty six million. These shortcomings reflect Bush's failure to control his military and civilian agents. This got not only the principal, George W. Bush, in trouble, but imperiled Iraq and the outcome of the American effort there.

The alternative models do not hold up to scrutiny in this case study either. Inexperienced combat leaders on both the military and civilian side were not the real issue causing the mismatch between policy and strategy. There were many on both sides that had seen combat or led military forces before. As mentioned earlier, that included Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Powell, and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, the first two of whom had been involved in the Persian Gulf War. General Franks had served in Vietnam early in his career and then led the Afghanistan operation following 9/11. A lack of planning was not the fundamental problem either. Franks did immense planning for the invasion with his staff for more than a year (Franks, 2004; Bush, 2010: 234-35). And there were those in the U.S. government who had done the requisite planning for post invasion Iraq; the State Department's State of Iraq report was just ignored (Walt, 2012). Nor was the root problem military rigidity. The military was slow to respond to Bremer's dismissal of the Iraqi Army, but had demonstrated agility by adapting to Turkey's refusal to allow troops to attack northern Iraq from its soil. If anything it was civilian inflexibility that was problematic (Packer, 2005: chapter 2). The number of troops allowed, for instance, was a one way conversation to General Franks from a deaf Secretary of Defense transfixed with "shock and awe" campaigns, undergirded by the assumption that modern technology circumvented the need for more soldiers and marines. Without the necessary dialogue and presidential

shaping of conditions to facilitate success, developing a coherent military strategy was very challenging, especially after Bremer's deba'athification and disbanding decisions. Those two events were the tipping point at which the situation gradually became unrecoverable until the Sunni (and Bush's) Awakening.

The failure to match policy and strategy, as well as the responsibility for the administration and the military's major mistakes, stemmed more than anything from Bush's failure to monitor his generals and the civilian administrators leading the American enterprise in Iraq. On Bush's watch his administration and the general in charge made one mistake after another. Bush was either asleep at the switch or inexplicably chose against intervening to more closely monitor events and right the quickly sinking ship from May 2004 onward. The two wake-up calls, however, resulted in a native and reliable Iraqi security force, as well as the implementation of the surge, new strategy, and new leadership. That meant finally realizing alignment between the ambitious goal and the war strategy.

Afghanistan 2009-2014

In Afghanistan the last five years tells a similar story, but the source of the failure, while still attributable to a principal-agent problem, differs from the Iraq one. In Afghanistan the military was experienced, having eight years of combat under its belt. The administration was new, and the military took advantage of it. An astute observer could surmise that Peter Feaver's agency theory was again at work. The interaction between Generals Petraeus, McChrystal, Admiral Mullen and the Obama administration in the summer and fall of 2009 suggest that an "ongoing game of strategic interaction, in which military agents vary their compliance with civilian preferences" (Feaver, 2003:282) was afoot.

During the summer of 2009, General Stanley McChrystal took over as the head of all forces in Afghanistan. Obama tagged McChrystal to turn around what Obama had called the "good war" on the campaign trail. McChrystal brought an unconventional mindset to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). He recognized that the status quo was not working, saw a need to try different approaches, and implemented a counterinsurgency strategy. The upshot was that it officially recognized that the problem *Afghanistan* was facing was an insurgency, not just an Al Qaeda threat. On the other hand, the move meant that the *U.S.* was now conducting a *counterinsurgency* strategy to accomplish *counterterrorism* goals. This was a clear disconnect between the political objectives both Presidents Bush and Obama had articulated and the war strategy the military was using to accomplish those goals.

By changing the strategy to a more ambitious one,

McChrystal was committing the U.S. to a more sweeping set of objectives. The problem was that was the president's call—not his. The decision passed under the radar, though. An inexperienced Obama did not appear to notice that McChrystal had just made a Clausewitzian move to change the objective of the war upon which the nation was embarked, if not its nature (Clausewitz 1976, p. 88). McChrystal had some top cover for so doing. Petraeus was his boss as the commander of Central Command. He supported the change in strategy, as did the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mullen. The military leadership was not alone. Secretary of Defense Bob Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also supported the move. Moreover, this same civilian and military cast was in favor of an additional surge of troops, which McChrystal officially asked for in the fall following his initial assessment.

The surge was to be in addition to the mini-surge of troops Bush had sent to Afghanistan at the eleventh hour of his presidency, and the 21,000 Obama had already approved for deployment in the spring. McChrystal asked for either 80,000 more soldiers and marines to conduct a robust counterinsurgency throughout Afghanistan, 40,000 to conduct counterinsurgency operations in the southern and eastern areas of the country most challenged by enemy fighters, or 10,000 to plus up training efforts of the Afghan security forces (McChrystal, 2009; Gates, 2014: chapter 10). Widely publicized leaks about McChrystal's initial assessment and these options had hurt civil-military relations, demonstrating a lack of presidential control and what some, like Vice President Joseph Biden and Deputy National Security Adviser Thomas Donilon, assessed as poor military compliance (Gates, 2014: chapter 10). Further exacerbating matters was McChrystal's answer to a question after a speech in London. In his answer he indicated that a more limited counterinsurgency approach, similar to the course suggested by Vice President Joseph Biden, would not work (Baker, 2009). Thus, it was clear that the military wanted one of the two larger options. McChrystal erred by stating his view publically before Obama had made a decision. The general also failed to give the president viable alternatives. There was no real difference in strategy type between the options, only a difference in the amount of resources.

A credible dialogue between McChrystal, Petraeus, Mullen, NSA General (Retired) James Jones, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, and President Obama would have included options ranging from waging a robust counterinsurgency to reshape Afghanistan, to a limited counterterrorism strategy to defeat, disrupt, and dismantle Al Qaeda affiliated terrorists, to a drawdown strategy. It had become clear in the early fall of 2009 that that was what the White House wanted (Baker, 2009). But, even if not intentional, the president's perception that the military was not interested in having that dialogue,

poisoned the well (Gates 2014, chapter 10). Instead, Obama believed the military was leveraging asymmetries of information to engage in strategic principal-agent games of its own, taking actions and building a coalition among the top brass and relevant, experienced civilian administration officials that would facilitate its agenda (Epstein and Mealem, 2013; Owen and Yawson, 2013; Woodward, 2010).

The support from Gates and Clinton further increased the military's prospects of getting its way. The primary voice opposing the troop surge was that of the vice president. Biden argued for a lighter footprint that utilized special operations forces and drones to focus on the counterterrorism mission that was the reason the U.S. got involved in Afghanistan after 9/11. It was the reason America was still there, and all that the U.S. should expect to achieve according to Biden (Woodward, 2010). In the fall of 2009 Obama could have gone against his generals, but he would have also been going against his Secretaries of State and Defense in so doing, and would be seen as failing to deliver what was necessary— according to his hand-picked general—to have the best chance for victory in what candidate Obama had cast as the "good war." Obama's prime foreign and defense policy advisors were more experienced than he and concurred with the military, making it extremely tough for a young president to buck their collective advice.

Furthermore, there was a recent model of success for a surge. The surge in Iraq had at least been correlated with a remarkable reduction in the violence there, if not directly responsible for it. This paradigm was easily recalled by both the civilian and military actors involved in the Afghanistan dialogue. And the military was fully bought into the counterinsurgency strategy that had accompanied the Iraq surge. Having what it believed were some hard fought lessons gleaned from the early years in Iraq, the military was proud of the Iraq turnaround. While some within the military were tired of war or leery of trying a counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, Petraeus was seen as a "savior general" who rediscovered counterinsurgency (Gentile, 2013: 5-6, 17, 29, 63, 95, and especially 127; Gentile, 2014). Petraeus recognized that "Afghanistan did not equal Iraq," but pushed for a similar formula to give it one more good 'ole college try.[14]

Thus, behind the Petraeus-McChrystal lead, and with critical "big gun" support in Washington, the military was entrenched behind its winning recipe. When Obama announced his decision at West Point on December first he said that the U.S. would conduct an additional surge of 30,000 troops in Afghanistan and seek commitments of another 10,000 from NATO partners. He had capitulated

to the military's efforts to stack the deck in its favor for another chance to win the war.

My main concern here is with the mismatch between policy and strategy. That gap has not changed despite what some politicians and some in the military would actually categorize as "victory:" Bin Laden is dead, the responsibility for security is transitioned to the Afghans, the surge is complete, and the U.S. has withdrawn most of its forces. Those factors *are* true, but they do *not* change the fact that President Obama's goals, even as stated in the December 1, 2009 surge announcement and since, are limited counterterrorism aims related to Al Qaeda (Obama, 2009). But for the last five years the U.S. has utilized a robust counterinsurgency war strategy to achieve those limited ends. For that, the U.S. can thank the military's infatuation with counterinsurgency, inability to adapt to a different strategic context in Afghanistan than in Iraq, and most of all, Obama's unwillingness to stop it even when his better judgment led him to deeply question the flawed assumptions and proffered "options" (Woodward, 2010).

A Potential Critique and My Counter Argument

Some scholars could contend that confirmation bias discredits my central argument. [15]They might point out that the policy-strategy matches in my case studies are portrayed as political and military victories, while the mismatches are reflected as defeats. This reasoning is perceptive in that it accurately recognizes certain elements of my analysis, namely that policy-strategy matches are more likely to lead to successful outcomes. It also draws upon political and social science methodological approaches to critique my case study selection and the corresponding results. Yet it misses the bigger foreign policy and use of force debates as it relates to these case studies. The truth is that many respected academics and policy makers evaluate some of these case studies as successes while others assess them as defeats, draws, outcomes yet to be determined, or having disparate results tactically and strategically.

For instance, the U.S. accomplished its Persian Gulf War objective of removing Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, doing so with a policy-strategy match. Some have argued, however, that the war failed strategically because it did not remove him from power (Record, 1993). This facilitated Saddam's continued harassment of his own people, twelve more years of Iraqi violations of UN

---

[14] General (ret.) David Petraeus mentioned that he realized Iraq and Afghanistan had many differences during his September 11, 2013 talk at Duke University.

[15] Some would criticize my case study selection as exhibiting confirmation bias. That is, they would see a categorization of the policy-strategy matches as victories and the policy-strategy mismatches as losses. Further, they might argue that I have deliberately selected wins as matches and losses as mismatches. The point in this section is to call this line of reasoning into question.

sanctions, and eventually to another war that finally ousted him (Divine, 2000; Wawro, 2011). Similarly, the surge in Iraq '07-'11, another policy-strategy match, is seen by some as operationally successful in that it seized the initiative from the enemy, but as a failure strategically. Their rationale is that the U.S. did not capitalize on that momentum politically by attaching tangible incentives to leverage Maliki and Iraqi factions to get serious about reconciliation and negotiating the most contentious but most important agreements (Hoffman, 2013; Ricks, 2009). More scholars and politicians make this case now since the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria made significant advances in Syria and Iraq in 2014. The argument of people in this camp, like Senator McCain, is strengthened the longer that ISIS' territorial gains stand. Although U.S. led strikes have halted ISIS' advance for now, the terrorist groups' gains have yet to be overturned.

There are alternative views on the mismatches as well. Some regard the Iraq War '04-'06 as successful despite the post invasion challenges because it removed a brutal dictator, put the U.S. on the offensive in the war on terrorism, and provided Iraq an opportunity to shape a democracy in the heart of the Middle East (Bush, 2010; Munoz, 2013; Petraeus, 2013; Simons, 2013; Walt, 2012). Likewise, there are those who see Afghanistan'09-'14 as at least a draw, who have long felt that success was both necessary and still possible, and have tirelessly argued for greater and longer U.S. involvement. Their reasoning is that the threat is high and vital to U.S. national security interests (Kagan and Kagan, 2011, 2013a, and 2013b). Furthermore, there are those who see the Afghan war '09-'14 as a victory. They argue that during this period the U.S. recognized that the enemy constituted an insurgency, properly resourced the war, simultaneously took the fight to and pursued reconciliation with the Taliban, built up the ANSF, and killed Osama bin Laden.

However, it is not my purpose to argue, much less to prove, whether each of these case studies is an example of a military or political success. My purpose is to make the case that the first two case studies are examples of matches between policy and strategy, while the latter two are examples of mismatches. Further, it is my contention that the problem causing the mismatches is a principal-agent problem between the president and the applicable military leadership, (as well as the civilian administrators in the case of Iraq '04-'06). The underlying assumption, as indicated in the introduction, is that mismatches are often bad for the country because they can lead to inefficient endeavors. In war that means lives, money, and national prestige wasted. Although more unusual in the case of a great power like the U.S., policy-strategy matches can also end in ineffective or failed endeavors, and mismatches can end in success. As indicated already, each of the case studies included here can be seen both as successful and as a draw or failure.

My point in this section is that those who would critique my case study selection as subjective to confirmation bias miss the mark. Having done my best to present a convincing case regarding the principal-agent problem as applied to these cases and to anticipate and counter criticism of my argument, I turn now to a menu of policy recommendations that address the root principal-agent problem sometimes evident in America's decisions for force.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the appropriate policy interventions to address a history of strategic gaps between policy aims and war strategy is to require a formalized biannual review of all ongoing conflicts by the House and Senate Armed Services Committees (HASC and SASC). Each review would require an accompanying presidential report. The idea would be to give an opportunity for the administration to make its case for the current and proposed strategy (if different), and for Congress to seek testimony and ask questions, fulfilling its broad advise and consent role. By requiring it to be done biannually, the U.S. could catch itself before going down the wrong path for too long. Although some sessions could be closed door to allow for classified discussions, this mechanism would provide a transparent process in which the media and the American public could play their respective roles. General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker's Congressional testimony about the Iraq surge, new counterinsurgency strategy, and their related progress reports could serve as a model for this biannual review.

This paradigm would be particularly helpful given the problem outlined in this paper: principal-agent problems leading to mismatches between policy and strategy. Having the top general responsible for the war strategy and the top diplomat charged with in-country implementation of American policy appear before the HASC and SASC would be a forcing function to produce a unified civil-military effort. The hearings would afford the president additional means by which to control his general and his civilian administrator/diplomat. The hearings would *incentivize* these individuals (both general/diplomat *and* the president) to coordinate the testimony with the presidential report, as opposed to allowing structural conditions to persist that facilitate the subordinate leaders feigning compliance. The hearings would thereby *lessen* the presidential cost of monitoring and enforcement.

Collectively the president (through his report), the commanding general, and the ambassador would have to convince the Congress, the press, and the American public that the endeavor was worthwhile, success was possible, and that the strategy was the appropriate one to

achieve the intended goal (Feaver, 2006). A mismatched policy-strategy combination is less likely to survive regular scrutiny of this manner.[16]The more *real,* not simply pro forma the hearings were, the more helpful a function they would serve the president. Indeed, these type of hearings served a very valuable purpose during the successful policy-strategy match of Iraq'07-11, and the other policy-strategy match, the Persian Gulf War, was over too quickly to implement and test this policy prescription.   The hearings were not regularly and consistently in place during the two mismatched cases, especially in Iraq. It is likely, though, that they would have well served the president and the country during some dark days in Iraq'04-'06 and Afghanistan'09-'14. Given that the American public is "pretty prudent" and supports military endeavors against foreign military aggression more so than those that seek internal political change abroad, implementing this policy during these two cases might have led to different outcomes sooner than was experienced since both were oriented in reshaping the domestic nature of foreign states (Jentleson 1992 and 1998).

A second policy could address the sometimes poor decision making cycle of the civil-military dialogue. A solution on this front could be to institutionalize roles for multiple advocacy, dissenting views, and the generation of creative, even non-military solutions (George, 1972). It would be important for administrations to include these as regular parts of both the formal NSC and informal presidential-pentagon decision processes. The National Security Advisor could be the honest broker or enforcer, as he or she typically sets the parameters on many of these interactions.[17]A presidential decision making process that formally incorporated multiple advocacy and considered all elements of national power may have led to better decisions, a synched policy and strategy, and better outcomes with regard to the Iraq War'04-'06 (George 1972, Graham 1999, Graham 2013, Houghton 2013, and Janis 1983).

For instance, Bush's initial judgment was based on heuristics of what was necessary in a post-9/11 world to protect the U.S.—namely preemptive strikes. Perhaps through better decision making processes Powell and others could have persuaded him not to invade Iraq in the first place, leveraging the threat of American military action to build greater international pressure for a diplomatic solution similar to the Russia-U.S. brokered accord on Syria (Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky 1974).

---

[16] Further, a policy-strategy that does survive is more likely to have greater popular support as a result of the occasion to make the case in a formal setting for the policy aim and the strategic approach.

[17]In a non-for-attribution conference in New York City in November 2013, a former National Security Advisor (NSA) described doing something similar, modeled after NSA Brent Scowcroft's NSC system.

Perhaps if the invasion went forward, more troops could have been apportioned up front. A thorough dialogue might have overcome personal agendas to better incorporate the State Department's post invasion planning, including deliberating about how nuanced deba'athification and disbanding processes could have culled only the true Hussein cronies. Counterfactuals are impossible to prove, but the contextual history suggests different, and likely better outcomes were possible. At a minimum, it was within America's grasp to connect its policy aims with its war strategy if Bush had better led and controlled his military and civilian agents. A multiple advocacy style decision making process would have aided Bush in doing this by requiring him to hear more than one side of an issue and more than one way to "skin the cat."This would likely have spurred his thinking enough to cause an earlier "awakening" and intervention to head off or abruptly correct big blunders by subordinates, such as the deba'athification and disbanding decisions.

Another set of paths by which the U.S. could help incoming and potential future presidents identify like-minded generals proactively instead of after years of war, would be by providing greater opportunities for civil-military interactions. One way would be by introducing top and rising military brass to the president elect during his transition period. Another would be by extending regular congressional invitations to generals to cocktail parties, not just committee hearings. Informal relationship building reinforces and often goes farther than formal interactions to solidifying bonds of trust and to learning what each other's strengths and weaknesses are. Thus this would be very helpful should an ambitious congressman or senator find him or herself as president one day. He or she would be better equipped to select a general based not solely on his reputation but on personal knowledge.

A third way would be to increase the civil-military exchanges in which officers and career politicians/diplomats have opportunities to participate. These have begun to increase in the last few years. Yet they are more encouraged for military officers than for civilians. Two way exposure and learning is necessary and will help future leaders understand the language and culture of the other side. Pegging these to *promotion, choice assignments, or congressional leadership* is another way in which to incentivize participation, similar to how the 1986 Goldwater Nichols Act requires a three year joint assignment for promotion to general officer or flag rank. Broad, deep, varied, and repeated civil-military interactions will facilitate the accumulation of the requisite political savviness necessary for future military leaders, while inculcating civilians with a better understanding of the military's role and its limits.

Had Obama had the right mix of these interactions with the military, perhaps he would have had a greater reservoir of relationships from which to pick his general

for Afghanistan. If so, he may have chosen differently, and that might have made a critical difference in preventing the principal-agent problems he later faced. Alternatively, perhaps Obama would have resolved not to go along with the military's scheme for a surge and counterinsurgency strategy had he interacted with some rising military officers who saw Afghanistan in a different light than those whose legacies were riding on achieving military victory at any cost. If Obama had had these types of exposure repeatedly and early enough in his political career, he might have had a more realistic impression of the reality on the ground and avoided casting Afghanistan as "the good war" during the 2008 presidential campaign. As it was, doing so opened the door for the military to leverage him for its preferred option. Of course these are counterfactuals and we will never know what might have happened "if only." Given the consequences, however, it is worth considering these as among a menu of appropriate policy interventions.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the Persian Gulf, Iraq, and Afghanistan case studies, I have tested notions about civil-military relations and their impact on the linkage of war strategy and political aims. I first determined what drove each administration's policy and the corresponding military strategy. Second, I assessed whether the two were connected. Third, if there was a mismatch I determined its primary cause. I found that in the two mismatches (Iraq 2004-2006 and Afghanistan 2009-2014) there was a principal-agent problem in which the presidents did not control their military agents. In the incidents of policy-strategy linkage (the Persian Gulf War and Iraq 2007-2011), this problem was not evident. In fact, it was because of sufficient presidential control that the military complied and that the U.S. matched its war strategy with its policy goals. Now, I turn to the resulting policy ramifications.

Getting the policy-strategy linkage correct is important for utilizing the nation's resources in the most efficient and effective ways possible. Getting it wrong can lead to unnecessary mission creep and adversely impact the national debt and public opinion, souring them for future uses of force that might be more important. Most fundamentally, policy-strategy linkage in war gives the military the best chance for accomplishing that which the country wants done without wasting lives. Thus, it is vital for the country to ensure its military endeavors are nested properly within the nation's broader political goals—not working at cross purposes. As the case studies this paper examines point out, principal-agent problems between the president and his key military and civilian leaders significantly impact this process and its outcomes.

To mitigate these concerns, the country should implement a mix of policy prescriptions. First, during military conflicts, Congress should conduct biannual hearings to evaluate progress by assessing implementation of the policy objective, the military strategy, and the linkage between the two. The president and Congress should also gauge evolving national interests, public support, and prospects for success. Second, the president should make adjustments to his policy or strategy throughout military operations, based in part, on the hearings' findings. The president should also direct his NSA to use a multiple advocacy approach. This structured approach will help ensure the president makes critical decisions with an accurate picture of the related tradeoffs. Third, increased civil-military interactions should become a regular facet of government. The goal should be to bridge the civil-military gap (Feaver and Kohn, 2001), thereby facilitating greater understanding and trust. Doing so will pay important dividends—even for peacetime defense policies and deterrence. The nation will reap the greatest payoff, however, during wartime. Stronger bonds of confidence between principals and agents results in more effective organizations (Collins 2001), as does the ability to figure out what works, why it works, and implement it (Collins 2011). Implementation of these recommendations will: (1) improve the civil-military principal-agent relationship, (2) facilitate the connection of wartime strategy with its corresponding policy, and (3) provide the best opportunity for successful war outcomes.

REFERENCES

Allawi, Ali A. *The Occupation of Iraq : Winning the War, Losing the Peace*. New Haven Conn. ; London: Yale University Press, 2007.

Betts, Richard K. *American Force : Dangers, Delusions, and Dilemmas in National Security*. A Council on Foreign Relations Book. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

———. "Is Strategy an Illusion?". *International Security* 25, no. 2 (Fall 2000 2000): 45.

Bush, George W. *Decision Points*. 1st ed. New York Enfield: Crown; Publishers Group UK distributor, 2010.

Clausewitz, Carl von, Michael Howard, and Peter Paret. *On War*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Cohen, Eliot A. *Supreme Command : Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime*. New York: Free Press, 2002.

Collins, James C., and Morten T. Hansen. *Great by Choice : Uncertainty, Chaos, and Luck : Why Some Thrive Despite Them All*. 1st ed. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011.

Collins, Jim. *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make*

the Leap & Others Don't. 2001.

Denzin, N. K. and Y. S. Lincoln (2011). The Sage handbook of qualitative research. Thousand Oaks, Calif., Sage.

Divine, R. A. "The Persian Gulf War Revisited: Tactical Victory, Strategic Failure." [In English]. *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 1 (Win 2000): 119-38.

Eichenberg, Richard C. "Victory Has Many Friends: U.S. Public Opinion and the Use of Military Force, 1981-2005." *International Security* 30, no. 1 (Summer 2005 2005): 140-77.

Epstein, G. S., and Y. Mealem. "Who Gains from Information Asymmetry?" [In English]. *Theory and Decision* 75, no. 3 (Sep 2013): 305-37.

Feaver, P. D. "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control." [In English]. *Armed Forces & Society* 23, no. 2 (Win 1996): 149-&.

———. "Civil-Military Relations." [In English]. *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999): 211-41.

Feaver, Peter. *Armed Servants : Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Feaver, Peter D. "The Right to Be Right: Civil-Military Relations and the Iraq Surge Decision." *International Security* 35, no. 4 (2011): 87-125.

Feaver, Peter, and Christopher Gelpi. *Choosing Your Battles : American Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Feaver, Peter, and Richard H. Kohn. *Soldiers and Civilians : The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security.* Bcsia Studies in International Security. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001.

Franks, Tommy. *American Soldier.* 1st ed. New York: ReganBooks, 2004.

Gates, Robert Michael. *Duty : Memoirs of a Secretary at War.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014.

Gentile, Gian. "Coin Is Dead: U.S. Army Must Put Strategy over Tactics." *Small Wars Journal.* http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/coin-is-dead-us-army-must-put-strategy-over-tactics.

Gentile, Gian P. *Wrong Turn : America's Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency.* http://www.duke.eblib.com/EBLWeb/patron/?target=patron&extendedid=P_1001052_0.

George, Alexander L. "The Case for Multiple Advocacy in Foreign Policy." *American Political Science Review* 66, no. No. 3 (Sep., 1972): 751-85.

Graham, Allison. "The Cuban Missile Crisis at 50: Lessons for U.S. Foreign Policy Today ". *Foreign Affairs*, no. July/August (Accessed November 3, 2013 2012): Available at http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137679/graham-allison/the-cuban-missile-crisis-at-50.

Graham, Allison, and Zelikow Philip. "Essence of Decision : Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis." 1999).

Houghton, David Patrick. *The Decision Point : Six Cases in U.S. Foreign Policy Decision Making.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Huntington, Samuel P. *The Soldier and the State; the Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations.* Cambridge,: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957.

Janis, Irving L. *Groupthink : Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes.* 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983.

Jentleson, Bruce W. "The Pretty Prudent Public: Post Post-Vietnam American Opinion on the Use of Military Force." *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1992): 49-73.

Jentleson, Bruce W., and Rebecca L. Britton. "Still Pretty Prudent: Post-Cold War American Public Opinion on the Use of Military Force." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 4 (1998): 395-417.

Jim, Collins. *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap & Others Don't.* 2001.

Kagan, Frederick and Kimberly. "How to Waste a Decade in Afghanistan: Leaving a Bare-Bones U.S. Presence Will Risk a Return of the Taliban—and Civil War.", *The Wall Street Journal* (2013). Published electronically January 8, 2013. http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323482504578228492039111894.

Kagan, Frederick W. Kagan and Kimberly. "The Afghan Endgame." *The Weekly Standard* (2013). Published electronically February 25, 2013. http://www.weeklystandard.com/articles/afghan-endgame_701325.html#.

———. "We Have the Momentum in Afghanistan." *Wall Street Journal and The Institute for the Study of War* (2011). Published electronically June 6, 2011. http://www.understandingwar.org/otherwork/we-have-momentum-afghanistan-wall-street-journal and http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304432304576369333437997072.

Kahneman, Daniel, Paul Slovic, and Amos Tversky. *Judgment under Uncertainty : Heuristics and Biases.* Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Liddell Hart, Basil Henry, and Basil Henry Liddell Hart. *Strategy: The Indirect Approach.* 4th ed. London,: Faber, 1967.

McChrystal, General Stanley. "Isaf Commander's Initial Assessment." Kabul, Afghanistan, 2009.

McNamara, Robert S., and Brian VanDeMark. *In Retrospect : The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam.* 1st ed. New York: Times Books, 1995.

Munoz, Carlos. "Gates: 'Too Soon to Tell' If Iraq War a Success." *The Hill* (March 13, 2013). http://thehill.com/video/in-the-news/288615-gates-too-soon-to-tell-if-iraq-war-was-a-success-.

Neustadt, R. E. and E. R. May (1986). Thinking in time : the uses of history for decision-makers. New York London, Free Press ;Collier Macmillan.

Obama, P. B. (December 1, 2009). Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan. White House.

Owen, S., and A. Yawson. "Information Asymmetry and International Strategic Alliances." [In English]. *Journal of Banking & Finance* 37, no. 10 (Oct 2013): 3890-903.

Packer, George. *The Assassins' Gate : America in Iraq*. 1st ed. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

Petraeus, David A. "How We Won in Iraq: And Why All the Hard-Won Gains of the Surge Are in Grave Danger of Being Lost Today.", *Foreign Policy* (October 30, 2013). http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/10/29/david _petraeus_how_we_won_the_surge_in_iraq#sthash.Zu YBnkRC.dpuf.

Record, Jeffrey. *Hollow Victory : A Contrary View of the Gulf War*. Washington: Brassey's (US), 1993.

Ricks, Thomas E. *Fiasco : The American Military Adventure in Iraq*. New York: Penguin Press, 2006. doi:9781594201035.

———. *The Gamble : General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*. New York: Penguin Press, 2009.

Schelling, Thomas C. *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*. Fels Lectures on Public Policy Analysis. New ed. New York: Norton, 2006.

Simons, Ned. "Tony Blair Stands by Iraq War as 10th Anniversary Approaches." *Huffington Post* (March 19, 2013). http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/03/19/tony-blair-iraq-war_n_2883513.html.

Walt, Stephen M. "Top 10 Lessons of the Iraq War: Now That the War Is Officially over and Most U.S. Forces Have Withdrawn, What Are the Most Important Takeaways?", *Foreign Policy* (March 22, 2012). http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/03/20/top_te n_lessons_of_the_iraq_war#sthash.Fl7cRMpV.dpuf.

Wawro, Geoffrey. "The Sins of the First Gulf War." *The Daily Beast* (January 22, 2011). http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/01/22/first-gulf-wars-mistakes-explain-us-presence-in-iraq.html.

Woodward, Bob. *Obama's Wars*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010.

———. *The War Within : A Secret White House History, 2006-2008*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008.