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Obama's Surge: A Bureaucratic Politics Analysis of the Decision to Order a Troop Surge in the Afghanistan War

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This study examines the decision-making process leading to President Barack Obama's decision to order a troop surge in Afghanistan in December 2009. I analyze the decision-making process according to the precepts of the bureaucratic politics model and conclude that the bureaucratic politics model provides a compelling and descriptively accurate account of the Afghanistan surge decision-making process. Actors' policy preferences were influenced by consideration of bureaucratic role and position within government, significant examples of political activity occurred throughout the strategy review, and the ultimate decision was a political compromise.

On December 1, 2009, President Barack Obama announced in a nationally televised address at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York that he was ordering 30,000 additional US combat troops to deploy to Afghanistan. The Afghanistan War, launched in October 2001, had deteriorated into a full-blown maelstrom of insurgency and paralyzing sectarian violence with the Taliban reclaiming control over significant sections of the country. The Bush administration had de-emphasized the Afghanistan War in favor of Iraq and consistently under-resourced the campaign through a combination of low troop numbers and lack of attention. By 2008, commanders in Afghanistan were requesting some 30,000 additional troops to combat the escalating insurgency (Vanden Brook 2008).

Operation Enduring Freedom had reached a crossroads as Obama entered office, with senior US officials, including Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen, declaring throughout 2008 and 2009 that the United States was not winning the war (Youssef 2008). The president had campaigned during the 2008 election promising to renew US efforts in what he termed to be the "right war," and the troop surge decision in part fulfilled Obama's pledge (Cornwell 2009). In a campaign speech on July 15, 2008, then-presidential candidate Obama expressed his intention to win in Afghanistan:

> Our troops and our NATO allies are performing heroically in Afghanistan, but I have argued for years that we lack the resources to finish the job because of our commitment to Iraq. That's what the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said earlier this month. And that's why, as President, I will make the fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban the top priority that it should be. This is a war that we have to win (Obama 2008).

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The Afghanistan War became "Obama's War" with the new president's commitment of additional resources and attention to the conflict. As a result, Obama's foreign policy legacy thus largely depended upon the outcome of the Afghanistan War. That outcome looked increasingly ominous as 2009 came to a close.

President Obama's decision to order a troop surge followed an acrimonious administration strategy review featuring public squabbling between military and civilian officials, strategic leaks and courting of the media, and open lobbying by military commanders in pursuit of the surge (Baker 2009). The decision to surge in Afghanistan was also met with skepticism and reluctance in Congress and tepid support from the American public (Saine 2009; Nichols 2010). The Afghanistan troop surge decision is one of the signature decisions of post-9/11 US foreign policy and therefore presents scholars with a significant opportunity to analyze the foreign policy decision-making process of President Obama.

While scholars have analyzed the decision-making process leading to the Iraq surge (Dyson 2010–11; Feaver 2011; Marsh 2012), the Afghanistan surge has received limited treatment in foreign policy analysis. Although recent works (Bapat 2010; Pfiffner 2011; and Wayne 2011) have examined aspects of the Afghanistan surge, the decision to surge has not been analyzed according to formal models of foreign policy decision making. Foreign policy analysis is therefore confronted with a pressing research gap regarding the Afghanistan surge decision-making process.

I argue that the Afghanistan surge is a compelling case that can be employed to analyze and test the descriptive accuracy and explanatory power of the bureaucratic politics model. The Afghanistan surge decision, mirroring its counterpart in the Iraq War, was highly controversial and followed a month-long strategy review. The review received widespread media coverage, revealing the key players and their associated policy preferences, as well as the often rancorous and highly political nature of the debate. It was clear that the administration was divided over what course to pursue in Afghanistan, and that sharp, often acutely personal disagreements and political maneuvering were transpiring. The Afghanistan surge decision thus provides scholars with a particularly "hot" and relevant case to examine the utility of the bureaucratic politics model to provide descriptively accurate analyses of contemporary US foreign policy decisions.

This study proceeds as follows. First, I examine the key elements and propositions of the bureaucratic politics model and then discuss examples of literature that utilize the model as well as examples of prominent critiques of bureaucratic politics. Second, I establish a question set based on the core hypotheses of the model to analyze the events of the case from the theoretical framework of bureaucratic politics. Third, I assiduously review and examine the key players and events of the Afghanistan surge decision-making process according to this question set. The study concludes with analysis of the descriptive accuracy and explanatory power of the bureaucratic politics model regarding the Afghanistan surge decision-making process. Finally, I propose areas for potential refinement and improvement of the bureaucratic politics model based on my findings in the case.

The Bureaucratic Politics Model

The bureaucratic politics model was first developed by Graham Allison in a 1969 article entitled "Conceptual Models of Foreign Policy and the Cuban Missile Crisis", expanded in his seminal book *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (1971) and then refined in subsequent studies, including a second edition of the book coauthored with Philip Zelikow and published in 1999. The 1999 revision received criticism (see Rosati 2001) over its bureaucratic politics revisions and I will employ the 1971 edition in my analysis. Allison developed

three models of analysis for understanding foreign policy decision making. Model I, otherwise known as the Rational Actor Model, stemmed from classic rational choice theory and described foreign policy decisions as the resultants of unitary states conducting objective cost-benefit analyses. The rational actor model predicts that governments are unitary, identify the problem, search for and discuss policy options and alternatives, perform objective cost-benefit analyses of the options, and then proceed to select the option which is determined to best maximize the utility of the state (Allison 1971). Model II, the Organizational Process Model, placed particular emphasis on the role and influence of organizational mission and essence, as well as standard operating procedures, on foreign policymaking. Organizational essence and standard operating procedures constitute the range of available options, how the government approaches the problem and provides the structure and constraints within which leaders make decisions (Allison 1971).

Model III, known as the governmental or bureaucratic politics model, introduced the concepts of bureaucratic role, position, and organizational mission and essence into the calculus of decision making. Actors can be expected to favor policy options that fulfill their bureaucratic role and augment their power and influence in the foreign policy decision-making process. Actors' policy positions are determined largely, but not exclusively, by their position within government and associated bureaucratic role (Jones 2010). Allison applied Miles' Law of "where you stand depends upon where you sit" to describe the relationship between bureaucratic role and policy preferences (Miles 1978:399–403; Jones 2010).

Government actions are political and not the product of cost-benefit analyses. Allison (1969) described the nature of the political competition at the heart of bureaucratic politics:

> The decisions and actions of governments are essentially intranational political outcomes: outcomes in the sense that what happens is not chosen as a solution but rather results from compromise, coalition, competition, and confusion among government officials who see different faces of an issue; political in the sense that the activity from which the outcomes emerge is best described as bargaining. (Allison 1969:708)

Therefore, political competition is crucial to bureaucratic politics. Allison (1971) describes how government decisions are the products of politics and what he terms "pulling and hauling" between actors. "Each player pulls and hauls with the power at his discretion for outcomes that will advance his conception of national, organizational, group, and personal interests" (Allison 1971:171).

Examples of pulling and hauling among actors include political activities such as coalition building, logrolling, the final decision reflecting political compromise, and employment of bargaining advantages by actors. As Jones (2008:286) states: "then the policy stands of the various actors within the decision-making process will be aggregated politically through such means as bargaining, coalition building, logrolling and compromise." Coalition building is an important element of pulling and hauling as actors often divide into opposing coalitions in pursuit of their policy preferences. Coalitions are the natural result of actors attempting to use various maneuvers to achieve their desired results (Allison and Halperin 1972). Coalition building is also an important example of actors' attempting to maximize their individual bargaining advantages in decision games.

Logrolling refers to political *quid pro quos* where actors exchange favors or promises to secure support for a policy. Actors, as part of the pulling and hauling at the center of bureaucratic politics, may employ logrolling to secure support for their

policy preference. Logrolling can include activities such as vote-trading, pork barrel spending, or insistence on amendments or modifications of policy proposals.

The final decision as compromise reflects the impact of political pulling and hauling. Allison and Halperin (1972) argued that "decisions typically reflect considerable compromise. Compromise results from a need to gain adherence, a need to avoid harming strongly felt interests (including organizational interests), and the need to hedge against the dire predictions of other participants." Compromise decisions are often unintended political resultants that do not reflect what any one actor would select independently (Jones 2010). Compromises are also inherently political and underscore the maneuvering and competition between actors in the decision-making process.

Bargaining advantages are the final and most important element of pulling and hauling and merit additional examination. Allison and Halperin (1972) defined bargaining advantages as:

> Each player's probability of success depends upon at least three elements: bargaining advantages, skill and will in using bargaining advantages, and other players' perceptions of the first two ingredients. Bargaining advantages stem from control of implementation, control over information that enables one to define the problem and identify the available options, persuasiveness with other players (including players outside the bureaucracy), and the ability to affect other players' objectives in other games, including domestic political games.

Bargaining advantages are critical to bureaucratic politics as these help to frame the political behavior between actors. Actors are expected to compete against each other and maneuver to achieve the selection of their policy preference.

Finally, government action is taken through action channels, which are regularized sets of procedures for producing government action (Allison 1969, 1971; Allison and Halperin 1972). Action channels may be formal, regular means for producing government action, such as National Security Council (NSC) meetings, or informal, when *ad hoc* participants and procedures may be employed as part of the overall decision-making process (Allison 1969, 1971; Allison and Halperin 1972). Allison and Halperin (1972) placed particular emphasis on the importance of action channels in bureaucratic politics, arguing that "action channels determine, in large part, which players enter what games, with what advantages, and handicaps." Action channels also establish the forum for pulling and hauling among actors to unfold. Action channels are particularly important to bureaucratic politics as these determine who plays, activate bargaining advantages, and establish the rules of the decision-making process (Jones 2010).

The bureaucratic politics model has engendered numerous case study analyses testing its descriptive accuracy and explanatory power. Jones (2012) lists several examples of these case studies, including (Halperin 1972, 1974; Valenta 1979; Smith 1985; Hicks 1990; Spear 1993; Jones 1994, 1999; Jones 2001; Holland 1999; Tayfur and Goymen 2002; Zhang 2006). These studies find evidence for bureaucratic politics as an important determinant of the foreign policy decision-making process.

The bureaucratic politics model inspired a myriad of critiques and criticisms from various scholars. Art (1973) concluded that the bureaucratic politics model is "too sloppy, vague, and imprecise as presently constituted to make its use worthwhile." Additional scholars then rejected the model's apparent de-emphasis of the role of the president. Krasner (1972) argued that bureaucratic politics cannot be the determinant of political action in foreign policy because the president sets the rules of the game and selects the players. Perlmutter (1974) maintained that bureaucrats' power and influence are grossly overstated by the bureaucratic politics model. While actors may squabble for bureaucratic position,

the president remains a level above the fray and continues to enjoy the final authority in foreign policy. Rosati (1981) concluded that presidential dominance is prevalent when presidential involvement is high, and that bureaucratic dominance is prevalent when individual/organization involvement is high. Furthermore, more critical issues can expect to see presidential dominance while more routine issues in foreign policy will likely evoke bureaucratic dominance. One would therefore predict presidential dominance in major national security decisions as these issues are of critical importance.

I maintain that the bureaucratic politics model is relevant and possesses a considerable degree of theoretical utility. The bureaucratic politics model provides scholars with a research tool with which to analyze and examine the inner-workings of a state's foreign policy decision-making apparatus and determine the *politics* involved in the decision-making process. While the president is objectively the single most important and powerful actor in the US foreign policy decision-making process, to claim the US foreign policy-making process is effectively dominated by the president effectively dismisses substantial evidence to the contrary. Scholars should not then assume that presidential decisions are not shaped, guided, and influenced by politics and actors within the administration. The president does not simply issue foreign policy diktats that are then faithfully implemented by the foreign policy community. Domestic politics, bureaucratic interests, and political maneuvering and competition frame much of the US foreign policy-making process and thus necessitate additional examination by scholars.

The core elements of the bureaucratic politics model can be extended to create a set of hypotheses regarding expected behavior and decision outcomes in foreign policy decision making. These hypotheses are based on Jones' (2012) summary of the central propositions of the model as well as the 1971 edition of *Essence of Decision.*

Hypothesis 1: *Actors' policy preferences can be predicted from their position within government.*

Hypothesis 2: *The stronger the actor's bargaining advantages, the greater the degree of his/her influence in the foreign policy-making process.*

> (a) Bargaining advantages are activated through action channels, which provide the forum for government action and decision in foreign policy.

Hypothesis 3: *The greater the prevalence of political pulling and hauling among actors, the greater the likelihood of the final decision outcome being an example of a political resultant or compromise.*

The first hypothesis is designed to test one of the key propositions of the bureaucratic politics model and determine whether policy preferences of the actors in the cases correlated with their position within government. For example, bureaucratic politics predicts that the military and secretary of defense would favor a troop surge while the secretary of state, diplomats, and other civilian officials would be presumed to oppose the strategy. The NSC and White House Office (WHO) are predicted to seek flexibility and political protection for the president. The second hypothesis merits additional explanation regarding the operationalization of "bargaining advantages" and "influence". I employ Allison and Halperin's (1972) definition of bargaining advantages in my analysis that I have discussed in detail previously in this section. Halperin and Clapp (2006) provides a useful summation of the definition of influence:

> What personal characteristics enable some of them consistently to influence decisions more than the rest? In brief, the list reads as follows: they have the ability

> to gain the confidence of the president. They are willing to assume responsibility. They exercise finesse in threatening to leak information or to resign. Their staff is skilled in performing the functions of the bureaucracy. They have an aptitude for mobilizing support outside the bureaucracy.

I will examine these elements of actors' influence in my analysis of their possession and employment of bargaining advantages throughout the strategy review. Finally, the third hypothesis tests the degree of political pulling and hauling among actors and whether the final decision in the case was a political resultant or compromise and not the result of objective cost-benefit analyses.

I employ the following question set to test the hypotheses. This question set is based on the propositions established by Allison (1971) and Jones's (2012) summary of the key elements of bureaucratic politics.

1. Who were the relevant actors in the decision-making process, and what were their associated bureaucratic roles?
2. What were the policy preferences of these actors?
3. Were actors' policy preferences influenced by their bureaucratic role?
4. Did actors employ bargaining advantages, and did these bargaining advantages augment the actors' influence in the decision-making process?
5. Was government action taken through action channels?
6. Did political pulling and hauling produce a final decision outcome that was a political resultant or compromise?

This question set is intended to be replicable and applied to analyze other cases of potential bureaucratic politics in foreign policymaking.

Bureaucratic Politics and the Afghanistan Surge

Who were the Relevant Actors in the Decision-making Process and what were Their Associated Bureaucratic Roles?

Surge advocates included Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, commander of US forces in Afghanistan General Stanley McChrystal, commander of Central Command (CENTCOM) General David Petraeus, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen. Surge opponents included Vice President Joseph Biden, Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry, White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, and the senior advisers at the NSC, including National Security Adviser James Jones and his deputies Thomas Donilon and Douglas Lute. These actors, along with President Obama, served as the key players in the case. In this study, I will focus primarily on actors' institutional roles, while also providing consideration of actors' bureaucratic self-interest.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense

The Secretary of Defense, formally represented within the Department of Defense as the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) is responsible for managing the Pentagon bureaucracy as well as administering the military. OSD must ensure that the armed forces of the United States are capable of fulfilling the missions asked of them by the president.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, as the senior military leadership and principal military advisory body to the president, are tasked with providing military advice to the president and NSC, as well as ensuring that the armed forces are capable of

carrying out the orders of the national command authority. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, according to the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act, is formally designated as the president's personal military adviser and acts as the senior representative of the armed forces.

Central Command
US Central Command manages the defense of US national security interests in the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia. CENTCOM directs the US campaign in Afghanistan and the CENTCOM commander works closely with the commander of US forces in Afghanistan. In addition, CENTCOM provides the forces and support for the US component of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

The National Security Council
The NSC's bureaucratic role dictates that it seek to develop multiple policy options, provide advice and information to the president, and manage the interagency process. The NSC, and by extension, national security adviser, also has a bureaucratic interest in preserving flexibility for the president and ensuring that his or her foreign policy preferences are implemented.

The State Department
The State Department coordinates and directs the civilian diplomacy of the United States and has also played an important role in nation-building and stabilization missions. Additionally, the State Department works with ambassadors to implement diplomacy and provide advice and recommendations to the president on foreign policy issues.

The White House Office
The White House Office (WHO) is an important component of the Executive Office of the President and includes the Office of the Vice President and the Chief of Staff. "These are the people who act as the eyes and ears of the president and who are preoccupied with protecting and promoting his professional reputation, public prestige, and presidential choices" (Rosati and Scott 2007:110). The Chief of Staff is the head of the WHO, usually the president's closest personal adviser, and often attends NSC meetings.

The Vice President has little formal role other than serving as the next-in-line to succeed the president and serve as the president of the Senate and vote to break ties and has no official bureaucratic constituency. However, a vice president, if so empowered by the president, can become influential in foreign policy decision making. Vice presidents have grown in importance and influence in foreign policy during the past two decades as Vice Presidents Al Gore and Richard Cheney each formed their own personal national security/foreign policy staffs and served as prominent foreign policy advisers to Presidents Clinton and George W. Bush (Halperin and Clapp 2006). Vice President Joe Biden, as I will illustrate throughout this study, continued the recent trend of significant vice presidential foreign policy influence.

What were the Policy Preferences of these Actors?

Surge Advocates
General Stanley McChrystal
General McChrystal was the principal advocate of the proposed Afghanistan troop surge. McChrystal arrived in Afghanistan in the late spring of 2009 after replacing the fired General David McKiernan. McChrystal had previously served as the head of the Special Operations Command and was credited with conduct-

ing successful counterterrorism operations in Iraq. While not one of the initial advocates or progenitors of counterinsurgency (COIN), McChrystal pursued the adoption of the doctrine with the zeal of a new convert once he assumed command of ISAF (Hastings 2012). McChrystal assessed the challenges facing his new command in Afghanistan throughout the summer of 2009 as he prepared the interim assessment report mandated by Secretary of Defense Gates. The new Afghanistan commander discovered to his chagrin and dismay that the war effort had been chronically under-resourced, the Afghan security forces were unreliable, the Karzai government was patently corrupt, and the Taliban had seized control of much of the country outside of Kabul.

McChrystal intended to shift US strategy from counterterrorism missions aimed at killing terrorists and insurgents to a nationwide COIN campaign designed to provide population security. The commander's summary of the McChrystal report stated "this is a different kind of fight. We must conduct classic COIN operations in an environment that is uniquely complex…Success demands a comprehensive COIN campaign" (McChrystal 2009:1). McChrystal, in his Senate confirmation hearing on June 2, 2009, said the following: "The measure of effectiveness will not be enemy killed. It will be the number of Afghans shielded from violence" (McChrystal 2009:11). McChrystal endorsed the central COIN argument that provision of population security was essential to defeating insurgencies.

McChrystal's interim assessment report bluntly stated the need for more troops and resources for the United States to prevail in Afghanistan. McChrystal (2009:20) wrote, "Proper resourcing will be critical. The campaign in Afghanistan has been historically under-resourced and remains so today—ISAF is operating in a culture of poverty. Consequently, ISAF requires more forces." McChrystal clearly and unequivocally demanded additional troops and introduction of COIN strategy in Afghanistan. The interim assessment report painted a grim picture of the war and effectively concluded that the Taliban were on the cusp of toppling the Karzai regime (Tyson 2009).

McChrystal discussed the need for additional troops with Gates in August 2009, reportedly telling the defense secretary that he intended to formally request 40,000 troops (Woodward 2010). The Afghanistan commander then issued his official request for additional forces in a secret memo addressed to Gates on September 24, 2009 and entitled "Resourcing the ISAF Implementation Strategy" (Woodward 2010). The request had three options, including 10,000–11,000 troops to train and support Afghan forces, 40,000 for COIN, and 85,000 for robust COIN (Woodward 2010). McChrystal favored the 40,000 troop option and would press for its adoption during the fall strategy review.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff

The Joint Chiefs, with the exception of Vice Chairman General James Cartwright, endorsed the McChrystal plan. Cartwright favored a more limited surge of 20,000 troops, but would eventually be overruled by Mullen (Broadwell and Loeb 2012:119). Mullen testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee at his reconfirmation hearings on September 15, 2009 and endorsed McChrystal's request for a troop surge (Lubold 2009a,b). Mullen stated that "a properly resourced COIN probably means more forces—and without question, more time and more commitment to the protection of the Afghan people and to the development of good governance" (US Congress, Senate Committee on Armed Services 2009).

General Petraeus and CENTCOM

Petraeus referred to the McChrystal plan as a "fully resourced, comprehensive COIN campaign" in a September 4, 2009 column in *The Washington Post* (Gerson

2009:1). Petraeus also stated "the Taliban have sanctuaries in Afghanistan. You can't take out sanctuaries with Predator strikes" (Gerson 2009:1). In addition, the architect of the Iraq surge said "I don't think that anyone can guarantee that it will work out even if we apply a lot more resources. But it won't work out if we don't" (Gerson 2009:1). The CENTCOM commander participated in the administration's strategy review sessions during the fall of 2009 and repeatedly advised the president to endorse McChrystal's troop request (Kornblut, Wilson and DeYoung 2009:A1). Petraeus advocated the adoption of the full 40,000-strong troop surge requested by McChrystal. As Woodward (2010) recounts, Petraeus advised the president that: "You've got one bite at this apple. It ought to be a decisive one." Petraeus also went on record supporting the surge as Obama directly asked his advisers at a NSC meeting on November 29, 2009 whether they supported his decision to send 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan and begin phased withdrawals in July 2011 (Woodward 2010). Admiral Mullen said that he fully supported the decision, and Petraeus signaled his support with the one-word answer of "ditto" (Baker 2009).

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates

Gates supported a troop surge and believed that the United States had to prevent the Taliban from overthrowing Karzai. Gates also maintained that COIN operations against the Taliban were necessary to permit the United States to transfer security provision to Afghan government forces. Gates contended that al Qaeda would benefit from a Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, and therefore, the Taliban needed to be prevented from seizing control of large areas of Afghanistan and toppling the Karzai government (Parsons and Richter 2009). Gates was persuaded that a surge and COIN were necessary following conversations with McChrystal in early August 2009 according to Woodward (2010):

> After long discussions, Gates found the argument very compelling. 'I'll get you as many troops as I can for as long as I can,' the secretary told McChrystal. 'And you've got battle space over there, and I've got battle space over here.' He would have to fight in Washington to get the troops, but he made it clear he would support McChrystal's request for 40,000. (Woodward 2010:156)

Throughout the surge decision-making process, Gates argued that the Taliban threatened US national security interests and that a counterterrorism strategy directed against al Qaeda was too limited in scope. Gates eventually settled on a position advocating the disruption of the Taliban through the deployment of a surge of around 30,000 US troops. According to Woodward (2010:260), Gates wrote a memo to President Obama saying: "Implementing this alternative mission will require an extended surge of three US combat brigades plus enablers."

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

Clinton signaled her support for a troop surge fairly early during the fall 2009 strategy review. In an October 16, 2009 interview with Jill Dougherty of CNN, Clinton stated that "Afghanistan has been under-resourced from the beginning…The attention was shifted to Iraq; everybody knows that. We've never had the kind of military or civilian commitment that our mission had been really needing" (CNN 2009). The secretary of state also argued that strong links remained between the Taliban and al Qaeda, thus refuting Vice President Biden's conclusions that al Qaeda, and not the Taliban, presented the true threat to US national security interests in Afghanistan (Baker 2009). Clinton remained dubious about the prospects for continued civilian reconstruction efforts without deploying a troop surge. Clinton's expressed backing for a troop surge and inclination to treat the Taliban as a serious threat to US national

security led the secretary of state to align herself with Gates and Mullen and form a coalition in favor of a troop surge close to McChrystal's initial request (Bumiller and Sanger 2009). Clinton continued to promote the surge option throughout the fall 2009 review, arguing forcefully at the October 26 meeting with the president that the president should order at least a three-brigade surge and that the civilian side of the policy needed to be realistic (Woodward 2010).

Surge Opponents

Vice President Joe Biden

The Vice President led the antisurge coalition within the administration. Throughout the Afghanistan surge decision-making process, Vice President Biden pressed for the adoption of a counterterrorism strategy for Afghanistan requiring a small infusion of at most 5–10,000 additional US troops. This strategy eventually acquired the moniker of "counterterrorism plus" and was also supported by the NSC, including Jones, Lute, and Donilon (Woodward 2010). Biden favored increased Predator drone attacks and use of Special Forces to attack al Qaeda targets, and explicitly rejected plans to increase US troop totals past 68,000 personnel (Wilson and Kornblut 2009). The vice president dismissed the notion that the Taliban presented a threat to US national security. Biden instead supported a focused counterterrorism strategy targeting al Qaeda, which he perceived to pose the actual threat to US national security interests (Alter 2010:372). Biden's "counterterrorism plus" strategy focused on killing Al Qaeda leaders and deterring the terrorist organization from returning in force to Afghanistan without the expense of COIN operations against the Taliban (Woodward 2010).

US Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry

Eikenberry argued in his leaked cables that a troop surge and commensurate COIN strategy would fail to produce Afghan security and political institutions capable of standing on their own. "Rather than reducing Afghan dependence, sending more troops, therefore, is likely to deepen it, at least in the short term. That would further delay our goal of shifting the combat burden to the Afghans" (Eikenberry 2009:5). The ambassador also contended that while conditions on the ground had worsened in Afghanistan, the situation was not so dire as to merit the immediate infusion of tens of thousands of additional US troops to implement nationwide COIN operations (Eikenberry 2009:7). Eikenberry's cables directly challenged the applicability of COIN for Afghanistan, thus also directly challenging the strategic vision and policy preferences of McChrystal, Petraeus, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Schmitt 2010:A1).

The National Security Council

Jones and his NSC deputies leaned toward Biden's position that US strategy in Afghanistan should focus on disrupting al Qaeda, and not massive COIN against the Taliban (Baker, Bumiller, and Shanker 2009). During an interview on CBS' *Face the Nation* from October 4, 2009, Jones downplayed the risk of the Taliban retaking control of Afghanistan, and also asserted that al Qaeda only had around 100 fighters in the country, thus underscoring the notion that even the threat from al Qaeda in Afghanistan was being overblown by surge advocates (Berger 2009). Jones doubted the ability of additional US troops to help establish an effective Afghan government and security forces (*Der Spiegel* 2009). In addition to Jones, Lute and Donilon favored a more limited focus of the US mission in Afghanistan and disputed the Gates-Clinton-McChrystal assertion that defeat of the Taliban was necessary for the United States to win in Afghanistan. Lute believed that the McChrystal plan would fail to protect large sectors of the population even with the full requested 40,000 troops, and he and Donilon were convinced that the McChrystal strategy was fundamentally flawed (Woodward 2010).

Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel
Emanuel doubted the prospects for an Afghanistan surge in part due to his concern about the unreliability of the Karzai government. In an interview with CNN's *State of the Union*, Emanuel said that "it would be reckless to make a decision on US troop levels if in fact you haven't done a thorough analysis of whether in fact there's an Afghan partner ready to fill the space that US troops would create and become a true partner in governing" (Romm 2009). The Chief of Staff was also concerned with the domestic political implications for the president if he ordered the surge. Woodward (2010:303–304) recounted how Obama reflected on Emanuel's concern for domestic politics and freedom of action for the president: "Rahm would tell me it'd be much easier to do what I want to do by saying no." Refusing to escalate in Afghanistan and cement the war as Obama's would also provide greater freedom of action for the president to pursue his domestic policy agenda, most principally healthcare reform (Woodward 2010). The Chief of Staff also joined the NSC staff in resenting what they felt to be efforts by surge advocates to pressure the president into adopting a troop surge (Broadwell and Loeb 2012).

Were Actors' Policy Preferences Influenced by Their Bureaucratic Role?

Surge Advocates
General Stanley McChrystal
McChrystal, and as this study will demonstrate, General Petraeus, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff confirmed Allison and Halperin (1972)'s appraisal of how organizational interests affect policy preferences. Allison and Halperin (1972:10) argued that "the health of the organization, in turn, is seen to depend on maintaining influence, fulfilling its mission, and securing the necessary capabilities." The general was charged with accomplishing US military objectives in Afghanistan, which included disruption of the Taliban insurgency, pursuit and elimination of al Qaeda elements, and protection of the Afghan civilian population. As field commander, McChrystal thus maintained a prominent bureaucratic interest in ensuring that he commanded a force sufficient to secure these objectives.

McChrystal's bleak appraisal of the state of the war in his interim assessment report led to his formal request for 40,000 more troops. McChrystal could not, in his estimation, achieve the national security goals of the United States in Afghanistan, and by extension, fulfill the demands of his bureaucratic role, without a troop surge. In his official memo detailing the rationale for his troop request, McChrystal wrote: "Thus after careful military analysis of the current situation, I recommend the addition of four combat brigades with enablers" (McChrystal 2009; Woodward 2010:192). McChrystal's desire to secure the resources necessary to accomplish his mission contributed to his aggressive public pursuit of the troop surge and COIN strategy in Afghanistan. He bluntly rejected Biden's "counterterrorism plus" strategy, while delivering a speech in London in October 2009, labeling it a "short-sided" strategy (Pfiffner (2011:13). McChrystal genuinely believed that the troop surge presented his only option for achieving victory in Afghanistan and therefore satisfy the requirements of his bureaucratic role, thus underscoring the influence of bureaucratic role on actors' policy preferences.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff
Admiral Mullen, as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, maintained a powerful bureaucratic interest in pursuing the troop surge in Afghanistan. Mullen was responsible for providing the president with military advice and generating various options for strategy, and also accountable for ensuring that the military was capable of satisfying the demands placed upon it by the administration. Defeat

in Afghanistan presented a serious threat to the bureaucratic role and interests of the armed forces as the prestige and perceived effectiveness of the Army and Marine Corps were particularly imperiled. As Lubold (2009a,b:2) reported, "some of them fear that a loss in Afghanistan would demoralize the military in the long term." The surge provided Mullen with a compelling policy option to both secure US objectives in Afghanistan and protect the morale and reputation of the hard-pressed Army and Marine Corps.

Army Chief of Staff General George Casey, the former Iraq field commander and noted opponent of that surge, also supported the McChrystal plan. As in Iraq, the Army would have to bear the brunt of implementing the proposed Afghanistan troop surge. Casey, while still reticent about the wisdom of troop surges and COIN, nonetheless asserted that the Army could implement the surge without undue burden on its capability to respond to additional crises (Woodward 2010:259). The chief of naval operations and the Air Force chief of staff deferred and stated that their services would be largely unaffected by the surge (Woodward 2010). The Iraq troop withdrawal initiated by President Obama had eased the burden on the Army and Marine Corps, thereby ameliorating the Chiefs' potential concerns regarding the impact of the proposed Afghanistan surge on force capabilities and readiness.

General David Petraeus

Petraeus' support for the Afghanistan surge was also influenced by his bureaucratic role. The CENTCOM commander would be judged and held accountable for the outcome of the war and therefore intrinsically maintained a powerful bureaucratic interest in accruing sufficient resources to allow McChrystal to implement his proposed strategy. McChrystal's plan mirrored the Iraq surge, presenting Petraeus with an additional opportunity to prove the merits of COIN strategy and further challenge traditional Army biases against COIN. Petraeus believed that the surge and COIN strategy could be applied to Afghanistan and succeed (*The Australian* 2009:10).

An Afghanistan surge would likely also enhance Petraeus' influence and bureaucratic power within the Obama administration. Petraeus did not enjoy the same personal relationship with President Obama as he had with President Bush. Furthermore, according to Broadwell and Loeb (2012:5), senior advisers to the president, including Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel and David Axelrod were leery of Petraeus and suspicious of his relationship with former President Bush. A successful surge and COIN campaign would silence administration critics of Petraeus and further solidify his personal prestige and reputation as one of the most important actors in US defense strategy.

Secretaries Gates and Clinton

Secretary of Defense Gates possessed a clear bureaucratic interest in winning the war in Afghanistan and was guided in large part by consideration of bureaucratic role and interests during the strategy review. The role of the secretary of defense dictated that the secretary manage the armed forces and ensure that the military was capable of securing and defending US national security interests. Gates believed that a troop surge and COIN strategy provided the best chance for the military to achieve the goals set forth by the administration for Afghanistan.

In an interview with Bob Woodward, Obama acknowledged Gates' interest in serving as an advocate for the Department of Defense. "The president said that he understood that Gates had to be a voice for the military. "Now, he has a different job than I do. And part of the job of secretary of defense is tending to a particular constituency within the Pentagon" (Woodward 2010:290). In addition, as defense secretary, Gates joined McChrystal and Petraeus in answerability for the outcome of the war in Afghanistan. The difficulties encountered by the

United States in Iraq had largely doomed Donald Rumsfeld's tenure as secretary of defense and also perhaps irreparably damaged his historical legacy. Defeat in Afghanistan would likely similarly imperil Gates' historical legacy and reputation.

Secretary of State Clinton, one of the more vehement "hawks" in the Afghan surge, is a fascinating example of an actor's policy preferences contradicting their expected position. As secretary of state, Clinton stood perhaps to gain the most from a reduction of US troops in Afghanistan and commensurate reinvestment of resources into political reconstruction efforts spearheaded by the State Department. A troop surge would also extend the dominance of the Pentagon in US national security and foreign policymaking. However, Clinton fully supported the McChrystal plan and formed a unified front with Gates, Mullen, Petraeus, and McChrystal in promotion of the surge. Clinton even doubted the effectiveness of her own department's efforts, acknowledging that State's initiatives had failed so far to produce security, stability, and effective governance in Afghanistan. Clinton also was reportedly influenced by her close relationship with former Army vice chief of staff and principal advocate of the Iraq surge retired General Jack Keane (Broadwell and Loeb 2012). Finally, according to Alter (2010), the secretary of state believed that a surge would help protect State Department personnel deployed to Afghanistan, and also supported the surge due to her pronounced hawkishness on issues involving military strategy.

Clinton's support for the surge contradicts the predictions of the bureaucratic politics model and challenges Miles' law. The expectation for a secretary of state is to favor policy options emphasizing diplomacy and enhancing the role, prestige, and power of the State Department. Clinton presents an interesting dilemma for the bureaucratic politics model as the question arises as to whether she should be considered an anomaly or if her support for a surge may represent a potentially serious flaw in bureaucratic politics and Miles' law. I will address this issue in additional detail in the conclusion.

Surge Opponents

Vice President Biden

Vice President Biden opposed the surge strategy for bureaucratic reasons as well as his personal belief that the strategy would not work. As vice president, Biden maintained an important bureaucratic role as a presidential adviser and was charged with promoting his "counterterrorism plus" option by the president in an effort to balance the military's promotion of the surge and COIN (Pfiffner 2011). According to Woodward (2010:160), Obama told Biden that "I want you to say exactly what you think. And I want you to ask the toughest questions you can think of." In addition, Biden, like the NSC and Emanuel, believed that surge advocates were attempting to force the president's hand and manipulate the decision-making process (Broadwell and Loeb 2012). Biden genuinely believed that the surge and COIN strategy was doomed to fail, and he also sought to preserve the president's freedom of action and counterbalance the political machinations of the pro-surge coalition.

Ambassador Eikenberry

Eikenberry's opposition to the surge was also influenced by his bureaucratic role. First, as Ambassador to Afghanistan, Eikenberry served at the pleasure of the president and, in effect, acted as the president's chief civilian representative in that country. Second, Eikenberry was also part of the larger State Department bureaucracy and as such shared in the department's bureaucratic mission of managing diplomatic efforts in Afghanistan. The surge represented a clear challenge to the influence and role of the State Department in administering US efforts in Afghanistan, and the ambassador was also influenced by his desire to counteract the political activities of the pro-surge coalition. In addition,

Eikenberry wanted to air his concerns regarding the surge strategy and ensure that the president heard alternative views (Woodward 2010).

The NSC

Jones, Lute, and Donilon resented the political activities of the senior military leadership in the surge decision-making process and believed the military was attempting to box the president into a corner over policy options for Afghanistan. "Lute felt that the military establishment was really rolling the president, though he didn't want to assign motives" (Woodward 2010:322). Lute and Donilon also believed that Gates had been too deferential to the military and failed to assert civilian control and protect the president (Woodward 2010). The president also suspected that the military was attempting to manipulate him into selecting the McChrystal plan by deliberately restricting the menu of policy options under consideration. Obama said: "So let me get this straight, okay? You guys just presented me four options, two of which are not realistic. That's not good enough" (Woodward 2010:278). In response to the military's perceived attempts at manipulation, the NSC strove to assert its bureaucratic role as the referee of the interagency process and ensure that alternative options and views were presented to the president.

The NSC was also concerned with the ramifications of the surge for the president's foreign policy and domestic political standing. Lute and Donilon opposed the surge in large part due to their concerns over the president's domestic political position and freedom of action in foreign policy. In this regard, the NSC fulfilled Halperin's conception of presidential advisers who define their role in terms of loyalty to the president (Halperin and Clapp 2006). President Obama was potentially placing his re-election at risk by committing to escalation in Afghanistan, while Mullen, Petraeus, and McChrystal were insulated from domestic politics and would likely be retired or in other positions by 2012. Lute said, "So, the bottom line is, you're left with the president standing here, owning this thing that these guys sold to him but who have since exited stage right. Everybody else is going to have their White House commission hanging in their den" (Woodward 2010:318–319). Donilon also expressed concern about the effect of the surge on the president's reelection strategy and worried that Obama, and not Petraeus, McChrystal, Mullen, or Gates, would be held responsible for the outcome (Woodward 2010).

Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel

Emanuel's opposition to the strategy emanated most acutely from his bureaucratic role as Chief of Staff. Halperin and Clapp (2006) argued that "in calculating interests in a foreign policy decision, the president and his advisers consider how the president's stand on a particular issue may affect his ability to accomplish other goals". A Chief of Staff must, above all else, work to ensure that the president's policy preferences are implemented, and that the president is protected politically. The Chief of Staff was concerned with the domestic political impact of escalation in Afghanistan. "Emanuel worried about devoting too much money and attention to Afghanistan; as chief of staff, he had to pay attention to competing domestic issues such as healthcare" (Mann 2012:135). The surge represented a significant risk to Obama's popularity and also threatened support for signature domestic policy initiatives such as healthcare reform.

Did Actors Employ Bargaining Advantages, and Did Bargaining Advantages Augment Their Influence in the Decision-making Process?

The partnership between Gates and Clinton strengthened the bargaining advantages of the pro-surge coalition and placed additional political pressure on the

president to adopt the strategy. Mann (2012:136) argued that "the Clinton-Gates combine helped to win over the president to sending more troops…the president was not prepared to override the recommendations of the secretaries of state and defense, the two departments primarily responsible for foreign affairs." Gates was in a unique position as the lone Republican in the cabinet and enjoyed a high degree of individual bureaucratic power and personal acclaim. Hastings (2012:36) argued: "Gates carries a big stick. He's the most important holdover from the Bush administration, the man Obama has come to heavily rely on for advice in foreign affairs." Gates, who commanded widespread, bipartisan support from the Congress and American public, felt secure in directly petitioning the president in favor of the surge. Obama valued Gates and acknowledged the importance of retaining the secretary of defense. The president was almost deferential to Gates and was loath to break with the defense secretary Woodward (2010:249).

Initially, a serious political rival of the president, Clinton developed a markedly effective bargaining position within the administration. Clinton represented a large sector of the Democratic Party that Obama was loath to antagonize, and administration insiders were wary of the secretary of state's political ambition (Woodward 2010:254). Clinton's membership in the pro-surge coalition further pressured Obama to strongly consider the McChrystal option (Woodward 2010:254). The secretary of state had maneuvered herself into becoming a central player in the surge decision-making process, and indeed, within the foreign policymaking of the administration as a whole (Baker 2009:A1). Hillary Clinton had accrued a high level of power within the Obama administration's foreign policy team. "It didn't escape notice that Clinton was the second most powerful Democrat in the room" (Alter 2010:383).

The military also employed significant bargaining advantages as Petraeus, McChrystal, and Mullen united in support of the surge. Petraeus also basked in the acclaim that he received for his management of the Iraq surge in 2007–2008. The military leadership parlayed its political advantages into a superior bargaining position so apparent that the president and surge opponents felt that these officers were in effect attempting to force the president into adopting the McChrystal strategy (Broadwell and Loeb 2012; Hastings 2012). Obama also confronted and criticized Petraeus, McChrystal, and Mullen during the strategy review over the leaks (Alter 2010; Mann 2012). McChrystal's presentation of three options for a troop surge also was suspected by some in the administration as a transparent attempt to manipulate the president into having no real option except the 40,000-strong middle option preferred by the military (Broadwell and Loeb 2012:119). Woodward (2010:195) discussed the impact of the military's bargaining advantage on the president:

> Facing an unexpected and stunning strategic request was not where Obama had planned to be in the fall of the first year of his presidency. On top of that, the military was out campaigning, closing off his choices, and the White House was losing control of the public narrative.

The military actively engaged the media to outmaneuver surge opponents and increase their influence in the decision-making process. McChrystal, as this study has reviewed, gave an address at the Institute for Strategic Studies in London where he publicly and bluntly disagreed with the Biden strategy. McChrystal also cultivated support for his strategy by engaging with noted foreign policy and strategic commentators, including Stephen Biddle and Anthony Cordesman, who then wrote articles endorsing the proposed surge (Hastings 2012:132). Mullen reportedly invited the bureau chiefs of the five television networks for a background lunch and told them that the McChrystal Plan had to be adopted in full

or the United States faced defeat in Afghanistan (Alter 2010). The president and surge opponents were particularly offended by what they perceived to be a concerted PR campaign by the military and suspected Petraeus and Mullen to be the sources of the repeated leaks during the strategy review (Mann 2012).

Surge opponents possessed one clear bargaining advantage in the case: access and proximity to the president. Biden was able to meet regularly with the president and advocate his "counterterrorism plus" strategy. According to Dreyfuss (2009:4) an administration official said that "Biden is playing a very inside game. He's in every meeting." Obama solicited Biden's opinion and advice in foreign policy and national security matters (Pfiffner 2011:15). Biden also exploited this bargaining advantage to work with other surge opponents in an effort to counter the activities of the surge supporters. Biden's influential role in the strategy review illustrates the recent trend of powerful vice presidents serving as principal presidential foreign policy advisers. Biden also supports the predictions of the bureaucratic politics model regarding the role of bargaining advantages in burnishing the influence of actors in the decision-making process.

The national security adviser and NSC staff enjoyed the bargaining advantages of access and proximity as well. Jones, Lute, and Donilon utilized their access to the president in an effort to ensure that the pro-surge coalition did not restrict the options available to Obama. Lute and Donilon met with the president on November 28th in one last attempt to dissuade him from ordering the surge. While Lute and Donilon were unsuccessful in changing Obama's mind, the two NSC deputies were able to exploit their access and proximity to the president and meet with him without the NSC principals in attendance.

However, proximity to the president was not powerful enough to overcome the myriad of bargaining advantages enjoyed by surge advocates. A unified and politically active military and the two most powerful cabinet secretaries outweighed the vice president, NSC, and Chief of Staff. Surge advocates represented three powerful bureaucratic constituencies in the military, Department of Defense, and State Department. Surge opponents, while significant presidential advisers, lost the debate as the president selected an option most closely aligned with surge advocates.

The events of the Afghanistan strategy review support the importance of bargaining advantages in the bureaucratic politics decision-making process. Surge advocates expertly parlayed their superior bargaining advantages into dramatically increased influence in the decision to adopt the surge, fulfilling the tenets of Halperin and Clapp's (2006) description of how actors attain influence. The president found his two most powerful foreign policy cabinet members in strong support of the McChrystal plan, while the military assiduously and effectively cultivated support for the surge both within and outside of the administration. The military's bargaining advantages were further translated into influence through rumors that Petraeus and McChrystal planned on resigning if the surge was not adopted (Hastings 2012). In sum, the pro-surge coalition thoroughly outplayed their opponents.

Was Government Action Taken Through Action Channels?

The Obama administration's fall 2009 interagency strategy review process is an apt example of a formal action channel. This NSC-led strategy review provided the forum for the president to gather and review information, for actors to lobby in favor of their associated policy preferences, and ultimately, for the president to issue his final decision ordering the troop surge. Most importantly, the NSC strategy review established the playing field for political games to unfold and eventually dominate the administration's decision-making process. This action channel is critical to understanding the influence of bureaucratic politics on the decision to adopt the surge.

Furthermore, the action channel in this case provides scholars with important insights into President Obama's management style. President Obama chaired the vast majority of the NSC meetings during the strategy review, essentially acting as his own national security adviser. "In the deliberations over Afghanistan policy, Obama acted as his own honest broker" (Pfiffner 2011:259). The president was directly and actively involved in managing the strategy review and would go so far as to personally draft the final orders for the surge. Obama also carefully weighed the various policy options presented to him and encouraged debate and frank conversations among his advisers, while insisting that consensus emerge once he made his final decision (Pfiffner 2011). The president's management style was direct, involved, and encouraged open deliberation and careful consideration of various policy options. Obama's direct management and detail-oriented style during the NSC strategy review have potential implications for bureaucratic politics and presidential governance that will be addressed in the conclusion of this study.

Following discussions between Jones and Gates regarding the status of the war in early June 2009, McChrystal was asked by the secretary of defense to prepare a formal assessment of the war on June 26 (Woodward 2010; Hastings 2012). Jones reportedly was displeased with chatter and rumors stating that McChrystal was already campaigning for more troops. According to Woodward (2010), "Jones pitched Gates on a way to defuse the tension. Let McChrystal have 2 months—60 days—to deliver a commander's assessment of Afghanistan, rather than campaign for more troops behind the president's back." McChrystal then submitted his assessment to Gates on August 30, 2009. The president initiated a new Afghanistan strategy review at the NSC to consider the findings of the assessment, with the first NSC strategy review meeting occurring on September 13, 2009. The president and his advisers reviewed McChrystal's interim assessment report and the implications of the request for some 40,000 additional troops. This meeting also saw the president discuss the basic strategic goals and interests of the United States in Afghanistan, and the debate began over whether the Taliban or al Qaeda was the true threat to US national security objectives. Biden also advocated his preferred "counterterrorism plus" strategy at this meeting (Woodward 2010).

The second NSC meeting on September 30, 2009 was important as President Obama explicitly rejected the option of unilateral US withdrawal from Afghanistan and also reviewed the formal troop request memo from McChrystal at this meeting (Baker 2009). The second meeting also occurred following the leak of the McChrystal report to *The Washington Post* and an article by Bob Woodward describing the report on September 21 (Baker 2009). Obama's refusal to withdraw from Afghanistan contributed to the framing of the policy options discussed during the review and also led to a notable example of logrolling in the case.

The October 9 meeting further illustrates the significance of the NSC review serving as the formal action channel in the case. At this meeting, the NSC reviewed again the counterterrorism and COIN strategy options as well as McChrystal's request for 40,000 additional troops (Baker 2009). The president, quite significantly, decided to adopt the strategy of "disrupting" as opposed to "defeating" the Taliban at this meeting (Pfiffner 2011). Obama, while growing more open to a troop surge, resisted the expansion war goals to include full-scale COIN and nation-building in Afghanistan (Mann 2012). Clinton also presented her case for a surge, arguing that population security was essential to political development in Afghanistan (Woodward 2010:223). Obama heard the views of Biden, the NSC staff, McChrystal, and other advisers at this meeting, but still did not announce a decision.

Obama then met with Gates and Clinton directly on October 26 to again solicit their recommendations, and met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on October

30. The president wanted the Chiefs to provide with him a third option for a surge that would strike a balance between the Biden "counter-terrorism plus" strategy and the full McChrystal proposal (Woodward 2010). By this time, Obama had also tentatively committed to some form of a troop surge, although he continued to wrestle with the form and duration of any such deployment (Pfiffner 2011). These meetings are important as the president indicated that he would pursue some sort of compromise policy option.

The NSC met again on November 9 and November 11 to continue discussing the McChrystal plan. The president and the NSC reviewed the various troop options, with McChrystal, Mullen, and Petraeus continuing to lobby for the 40,000-troop option. Force Option 2A, which was a compromise option of a surge of 30,000 troops, came under serious consideration at this meeting (Woodward 2010). Gates had developed this option in response to Obama's insistence that a middle-ground strategy be developed to maximize flexibility.

On November 23, Obama met with his national security team and reviewed the available options for a troop surge. The president circulated a document that called for "max leverage" to be placed on the Taliban and al Qaeda (Alter 2010). "Max leverage" referred to a troop surge short of the full 40,000 personnel requested by McChrystal and also attached a withdrawal timetable to the strategy. This option represented a compromise between the full McChrystal plan and the Biden strategy. "The McChrystal team had won on troop strength, but Obama and Biden won on narrowing the mission" (Alter 2010:388). Obama solicited the input of his advisers and did not reveal that he had made the decision to adopt the 30,000-troop surge option (Alter 2010).

President Obama called his national security team into the White House on November 25 and announced that he had decided to order the 30,000-troop option (Woodward 2010). Obama announced to his NSC staff that he expected all of the principals, including Gates, McChrystal, Petraeus, Mullen, Clinton, and Eikenberry to officially sign on to the strategy (Woodward 2010). The president then met with his advisers on November 26 to fine-tune the decision and perform one final review of the policy options (Alter 2010). Over the next 2 days, Obama continued to meet with his national security team and again listened to last-ditch lobbying by surge advocates and opponents. The president also wrestled with his preliminary decision to adopt the troop surge. After a final review session with his NSC staff, Obama confirmed his decision and requested that the full national security team, including all of the principals should come to the Oval Office on November 29 so that he could inform them of his final decision (Woodward 2010).

At this Oval Office meeting, President Obama announced that he was ordering a troop surge of 30,000 troops coupled with a withdrawal timetable to begin in July 2011. Obama then literally went around the room and directly asked each of his advisers, including Biden, Petraeus, Mullen, Gates, and Clinton whether they supported the strategy. Each of them offered their assent, and the president then announced the decision to McChrystal and Eikenberry via a secure videoconference (Woodward 2010). President Obama then officially announced the new strategy at his West Point address on December 1.

Did Political Pulling and Hauling Produce a Final Decision Outcome that was a Political Resultant or Compromise?

Significant political pulling and hauling occurred throughout the decision-making process and produced a decision outcome that was a political compromise. First, surge advocates and opponents each formed coalitions in an effort to convince the president to select their preferred option. These coalitions engaged in bureaucratic combat with one another in a manner highly representative of

that predicted by the bureaucratic politics model. Second, a notable example of logrolling occurred as the president insisted on the imposition of a withdrawal timeline in an effort to maintain support from congressional Democrats. Third, the ultimate decision in the case was a compromise and the direct result of political pulling and hauling.

Coalition Building

The pro-surge coalition was acutely powerful in the case. As Baker (2009) reported: "With Mr. Biden leading the skeptics, Mrs. Clinton, Mr. Gates, and Admiral Mullen increasingly aligned behind a more robust force." Unlike during the Iraq surge review, the military united in full support of a troop surge for Afghanistan. McChrystal was fully supported by Petraeus at CENTCOM as well as the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Mullen, Petraeus, and McChrystal took advantage of this unity to effectively promote their preferred strategy. Mullen protected McChrystal and insulated him from the antisurge coalition, while Petraeus also fully supported the Afghanistan commander. The three officers then quite wisely aligned themselves with the two most powerful and influential civilians in Obama's foreign policy team, Secretaries Gates and Clinton (Landler and Shanker 2009). Furthermore, the united front presented by McChrystal, Petraeus, and Mullen placed tremendous political pressure on the president. According to Broadwell and Loeb (2012:118), "they saw this as providing forthright military advice, but all recognized that public statements early on, before they understood the implications of the policy review, had created tension between those in the White House and those in uniform." Obama, a young, untested president with no military experience, faced a military determined to engage in various forms of political behavior to secure the adoption of the McChrystal plan.

Clinton also enjoyed a close working relationship and personal friendship with Gates that helped to ameliorate much of the traditional bureaucratic conflict between State and the Pentagon (Landler and Shanker 2009:A8). The Clinton-Gates alliance also illustrates Halperin and Clapp (2006) conception of how actors become influential through gaining the support of the president. Halperin and Clapp (2006) described this effect as "a participant who has the president's ear quickly acquires a reputation for being able to win." Gates and Clinton were powerful bureaucratic actors not only by virtue of their positions and acumen, but also because they were successful in gaining the support and attention of the president.

Surge opponents found it necessary to form a coalition to counter the actions of the surge advocates. These actors were opposed to the surge on strategic grounds and also resented how the pro-surge coalition had attempted to seize control of the strategy review and pressure the president into adopting the strategy. Surge opponents endeavored to preserve freedom of action for the president and ensure that Obama heard alternative options to the McChrystal plan. The antisurge coalition also sought to limit the influence of the military in policymaking. Biden, the NSC, and the WHO believed that the military was overstepping its advisory role and attempting to control the decision-making process (Broadwell and Loeb 2012). Finally, in a notable example of the antisurge coalition's political actions, Eikenberry's memos were leaked to the media, revealing the intense disagreement within the administration over the surge strategy.

Logrolling

In a notable example of logrolling, the president insisted on a withdrawal timetable to limit the duration of the surge and somewhat assuage the concerns of surge opponents who feared entangling the United States in an unwinnable, endless war in Afghanistan. Dreyfuss (2009:3) claimed: "The White House knew that if Obama were to 'fully resource' the military campaign, he would be going

to war without his own political base, which has turned strongly against the Afghan war." Obama's insistence on the imposition of a phased withdrawal timeline for the Afghanistan surge bore the hallmarks of domestic political calculations. Obama could ill-afford to alienate his liberal base within the Democratic Party in 2009, particularly as difficult votes loomed for the centerpiece of the president's domestic policy agenda, healthcare reform. The imposition of a timeline and narrowing of goals from the defeat to disruption of the Taliban were also concessions to surge opponents as these elements of the eventual strategy attempted to somewhat restrict the scope of the Afghanistan surge.

Final Decision as Compromise

In sum, the final outcome in the Afghanistan surge case was an example of a political compromise and the product of political pulling and hauling. The surge was 30,000, not 40,000 troops, and the withdrawal timetable was a nod to concerns over how to disentangle the United States from an intractable war. "Obama had rendered a lawyerly solution, a compromise that gave McChrystal and the Pentagon most of the additional troops they sought, but seemingly for a limited time period…Obama had also ordered the military to speed up the schedule of troop deployments: faster in, faster out" (Mann 2012:138). In addition, Obama ordered the military to accept a secret six-page terms sheet declaring the new strategy to not be full COIN or nation-building and that the ultimate goal of the war was to prevent the reemergence of Al Qaeda safe havens in Afghanistan (Broadwell and Loeb 2012).

However, the final strategy represented a lopsided compromise as the president's new strategy far more resembled the policy preferences of surge advocates than those of surge opponents. Hastings (2012:135) argued:

> In the end, Obama attempts to split the difference—he gives the military the troops they want, but tells them they need to leave sooner than they'd like to. He thinks this asserts his authority and proves that he hasn't caved. The Pentagon reads it another way: he gave us what we wanted.

By escalating the war in Afghanistan, and implementing a ramped-up (albeit, not fully nationwide) COIN strategy, President Obama tacitly rejected the Biden option. US troops would continue to mount anti-Taliban operations, attempt to secure the Afghan population, and establish security and stability in the country. McChrystal and Petraeus would each get the chance to implement the surge and COIN strategy in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

The Afghanistan surge decision confirmed the central hypotheses of the bureaucratic politics model. Even in a case with substantial national security implications, actors engaged in political combat with one another. The policy preferences of both surge advocates and opponents were strongly influenced by consideration of bureaucratic role and interests. The president, while the most important actor in the process, found himself under political pressure from surge advocates who sought, through various political strategies including the employment of substantial bargaining advantages, to ensure the adoption of a troop surge in Afghanistan. The final outcome in the case was a compromise arising from protracted political pulling and hauling among actors occurring in the forum provided by the formal action channel of the NSC strategy review.

As previously discussed in this study, Clinton's support of the surge contradicts the predictions of the bureaucratic politics model. The failure of Clinton to conform to Miles' law presents scholars with an opportunity to refine and perhaps

even revise the model. Clinton may simply be an anomaly as the bureaucratic politics model accurately predicted the policy preferences of the other actors involved in the case. However, her support for a surge may indicate that scholars should pay closer attention to possible disjunctions between institutional and individual bureaucratic interests of actors. Also, additional research may be necessary to examine the nature of potential conflict between institutional and individual bureaucratic interests, and under what conditions should scholars expect to see the dominance of institutional or individual bureaucratic interests in a foreign policy decision-making process.

One of the most important implications of the case is that the events seemingly reject Rosati's thesis regarding the correlation between level of presidential involvement in a decision-making process and the influence of bureaucratic politics. President Obama was highly involved in the decision-making process at many levels and personally directed the NSC strategy review and ultimately even typed the final surge orders himself. Yet, despite his considerable level of direct involvement and imposition of a timetable for withdrawal and a smaller surge of 30,000 troops, Obama found himself largely ordering what the military and other pro-surge advocates had pressured him to do. The final decision, while a political compromise, closely reflected the preferences of surge advocates. The president was cajoled and pressured by surge advocates who expertly manipulated significant bargaining advantages and outwitted, outplayed, and outlasted their surge opponent rivals. Obama made the final decision, but his decision was constrained by the menu of choices presented to him by his advisers. This menu of choices was in itself the product of bureaucratic politics. The Afghanistan surge decision, then, further confirms the importance of bureaucratic politics in shaping and developing the policy options available to the president in a given foreign policy situation.

In conclusion, the Afghanistan surge decision-making process underscores the continued utility of the bureaucratic politics model to provide descriptive accuracy and explanatory power for analysis of specific cases of US foreign policy. The model retains significant explanatory power and continues to provide scholars with a valuable research tool to analyze and examine foreign policy decision making.

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