

Mitigating Civilian and Military Bureaucratic Tensions

Written by Lim Ziwei Paul

This PDF is auto-generated for reference only. As such, it may contain some conversion errors and/or missing information. For all formal use please refer to the official version on the website, as linked below.

Mitigating Civilian and Military Bureaucratic Tensions

<https://www.e-ir.info/2013/11/20/mitigating-civilian-and-military-bureaucratic-tensions/>

LIM ZIWEI PAUL, NOV 20 2013

1. Introduction

With a proliferation of security issues that cross transnational boundaries, civilian and military bureaucrats need to work together on an unprecedented level as these complex problems cannot be easily solved by either side. These security issues refer to not just traditional warfare and conflict, but also non-traditional security issues like humanitarian assistance, regional pollution, international terrorism and organised crime. More often than not, the aftermath of some of these non-traditional security issues will involve post-conflict reconstruction and economic reform. Coupled with increasingly diverse ancillary tasks for both military and civilian organisations, neither military or civilian bureaucrats are the sole answer in solving issues outside of sovereign boundaries. Hence, the traditional answer of 'boots on the ground' can no longer be the sole solution when tackling the security of the nation-state. The complicated objectives of these missions require a much more integrated and coordinated response from a multitude of civilian and military actors, who must actively debate and shape their aims and policies into a single, coherent strategy that encompasses both strategic and tactical aims.

I argue that the increasingly intertwining roles of civilian and military bureaucrats, especially in espousing the security of the nation-state in the contemporary security context, makes cooperation ever more rivalrous, especially with the large numbers of civilian and military actors in theatre and the blurring boundaries between them. It would be vital to state now that both military and civilians are crucial to their respective missions and each has abilities and weaknesses in different areas. However, some theorists have often made the mistake of assuming that cooperation will bring about positive results, while disregarding the fact that cooperation inevitably incur rivalries, or misunderstandings when working together, be it in institutional domain and parameters, leadership, organization, behaviours or priorities.

The first part of the article defines civilian and military bureaucrats, and explains why classic definitions are no longer applicable as the perimeters between these two types of bureaucrats have been continually eroded when examining contemporary conflicts. I also use a dimensional model to clarify the relationship between them as the complex nature of contemporary operations have shown that there is an increasing number of variants of the terms 'military' and 'civilian' bureaucrats, which also need to be examined in order to elucidate civil-military relations. Here, I focus on both military-civil relations at both the tactical and strategic levels in the operational environment and in the domestic sphere. The second part of the essay tries to understand civil-military relations using early scholarly research and literature on civil-military relations, such as Samuel P. Huntington's 'The soldier and the state' and Morris Janowitz's 'The professional soldier', which were developed in the aftermath of wars and large-scale conflicts such as World War II. But the changing nature of contemporary conflicts – starting with the Vietnam War – as well as the increased involvement of armed forces in humanitarian aid and post-conflict reconstruction missions, mean that civil-military relations scholars need to revisit the basic research fundamentals of definition, theories and application and in the process, produce fresh scholarly theories.

Next, I argue that there are structural factors embedded in organisations which cause tensions between civilian and military bureaucrats and attempt to pin down these factors by examining as widely as possible all facets of the organisation. Further, what more can be done to reconcile these tensions? This is a relatively unexplored field of study where there is little previous scholarly work available. My contribution to new work in the field of civil-military

Mitigating Civilian and Military Bureaucratic Tensions

Written by Lim Ziwei Paul

relations will be to sketch out some potential ways in which rivalries between civil and military bureaucrats can be mitigated. The examples in this article will consider civil-military relations in various countries as well as the ongoing Global War on Terror in Afghanistan.

2. Whither Civilian and Military Bureaucrats?

Bureaucrats have traditionally been defined in the classical Weberian school of thought as those who work in an official organisation whose functions are bound by rules and laid down by laws, administrative regulations or per clientele. Their roles can also be defined by the nature of the work process. Bureaucrats often follow an order of hierarchy and are separated from ownership of the administration. In this organisation, there are technical rules which regulate their conduct, and acts and decisions are rigorously minuted down. Their power is in their bureaucratic knowledge of rules and regulations and the execution of tightly-monitored procedures. Hence, most defer to them in their areas of specialisation. They also have a hand in shaping and forming policies, and leading their implementation. Bureaucrats have long been criticized for overwhelming rigidity, and adherence to rules and procedures. They have also been seen as non-innovative and resistant to change, as well as having their own agendas and personal interests at heart, which may ultimately override the national interest, or be divergent from political leaders' aims.

Civilian bureaucrats are officials who do not work in a national armed force, or are part of any official armed party. Their work range from a wide spectrum of non-military specialisations, such as foreign affairs, economics and finance, social development, science and technology, agriculture and food, as well as environmental resources. Military bureaucrats are those who are part of a national armed force whose mandate is dictated by the national security interest of the nation-state they work for. They typically rank from the frontline foot soldier to commanding generals of armies, navies and air forces.

However, contemporary conflicts like Mali, Afghanistan or Iraq have shown that there is so much more than these traditional meanings. Complex operations, especially those focusing on post-conflict reconstruction and humanitarian and disaster relief, have shown that both civilian and military bureaucrats are often drawn into each other's roles, be it by urgent necessity during times of armed conflict, or by instructions from higher authorities who want results. General Krulak's idea of the 'strategic corporal'¹, which showed how a junior officer often has to fight the enemy, keep warring factions apart, while handing out supplies and feeding a war-torn population, all within a geographical area of 'three blocks' summarizes how relationships between civil and military bureaucrats are increasingly blurred (Krulak, 1999). We must also recognize that some operations need multiple civilian actors when resolving tactical and strategic issues that transcend national boundaries.

Hence, as wars and conflicts get even more complex, binarily dichotomous and straightforward definitions of civilian and military bureaucrats as simply 'government official' or 'soldier' are increasingly unusable. I posit that there has been an increase in the number of variants of 'civilian' and 'military' bureaucrats. The examples most commonly used are in the Afghanistan context. In the war-torn country, representatives from various civilian governments and agencies who are part of the coalition effort are present, as well as workers from non-governmental organisation workers like the Red Cross and observers from multilateral organisations like the United Nations. Other than 'ministry officials', the definition of 'civilian bureaucrat' is further deepened by the involvement of the host country's indigenous officials, such as ministers or politicians on official governmental payrolls, as well as tribal and village leaders who head their own areas and villages.

The boundaries between civilian and military bureaucrats are even more blurred when considering the quasi-militarization of civilians. Some civilians take up arms, such as the tribal and village leaders who are not part of a national defense force, but are in fact 'warlords' who command their own private armies for their personal agendas. Then, there is also the example of civilian bureaucrats whose tactics and equipment mirror those of soldiers. For example, policemen from tactical units² used military-grade equipment like Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicles (MRAPs) and automatic weapons in the manhunt for Boston bombing suspects. The United States' Drug Enforcement Agency's Foreign-Deployed Advisory and Support Teams (FAST) were sent to Afghanistan to assist in drug interdiction operations. On a cursory look, these civilian bureaucrats behave and function like military

Mitigating Civilian and Military Bureaucratic Tensions

Written by Lim Ziwei Paul

units. There is also the example of private armed security contractors whose tactics mirror those of soldiers and are often former soldiers, but work for private clients in protection and escort duties, as well as industrial intelligence and espionage. Then, there are practices in countries like Singapore and Israel, where military officers sometimes join the upper echelons of political leaders or civil servants after leaving the armed forces. There are also civilians who are put in charge of the armed forces, or part of it, due to political reasons.

Likewise, military bureaucrats do not solely mean armed soldiers. There are also armed forces personnel who do not take up arms on a daily basis e.g. skilled technicians who specialise in technical operations or intelligence analysis. There are also civilians hired by the military in an armed capacity. For example, intelligence operatives from national security agencies are often seconded to the military in an official capacity to bolster intelligence gathering efforts. The level of involvement by civilian and military bureaucrats who take up arms can be clearly differentiated. Categorisation in this manner is critical to delineate the blurred definitions of civilian and military bureaucrats. It also helps to let one understand the wider range of relationships that may develop out of these blurred definitions.

As we can see, there are even more categories of military-civilian relationships, which supports my argument of increasingly blurred boundaries between military and civilian bureaucrats. Civil-military relations are now even more complex due to the presence of these varieties. This also means that there is a deeper and longer-term engagement between them. This engagement comes about not just at the tail-end of a conflict during the reconstruction or mopping-up period, as was typically expected in conflicts like World War II, but can start even as relief efforts start. Finally, the relationships between civilian and military bureaucrats are never fixed or static, but always fluid according to situational changes. At the heart of these relationships are embedded structures and patterns in their organisations which may in some part, if not most, cause rivalrous tensions between civilian and military bureaucrats, as both work to advance their own private agenda and that of their mission as a whole. However, before we move forward to examine these structural factors, we must first understand deeper the relationships between civilian and military bureaucrats in the contemporary context.

3. Applying Civil-Military Theories to Contemporary Complex Operations

Samuel P. Huntington's 'The Soldier and the State' (Huntington, 1957) and Morris Janowitz's 'The Professional Soldier' (Janowitz, 1960) have long been the two pillars for civil-military relations scholars. They provide strong starting points to unlock and explain the complexities of civil-military relations. These works focus on why civilian elites should control the military and some scholars have been content to continue in this line of thought in their work. However, an update is in order given the increasingly sophisticated nature of contemporary complex operations. In this part of the article, I argue that this normative discussion of civilian control over the military should no longer be the focus of contemporary scholars as it has already seen enough debate and that new works should instead focus on improving civil-military relations. Continuing the debate breaks little new ground, especially in the cases of mature democratic countries. While it is still applicable in countries where the military can be seen to have a 'guardian' function to counter the powers of corrupt or self-serving politicians, focusing on it leads to little improvements in civil-military relations, and instead may serve to aggravate it. Instead, scholars should continue with third-generation theorists' work that lines between civilian and military bureaucrats are increasing blurred and find ways to mitigate the tensions between them in the operational and domestic theatres.

Huntington's stand that civilians have absolute control of the military is still one of the core guiding principles when producing new work on civil-military relations. It is agreeable that civilian supremacy should be seen as the ultimate 'objective control' over a lethal weapon, the military, which is strong enough to usurp the power of the elected state. If there is no control over the military, it can choose to act according to its own accord and pursue its own objectives which are divergent from the state's. This is no different than a mercenary army which has had its equipment and technology purchased from sovereign funds. Civilian control of the military will also avoid casting the military as a political actor in national affairs and gives it clear, objective aims to accomplish without diluting its main mission of war fighting. While these principles serve as an overarching guide when setting the tone for civil-military matters in the domestic sphere, it becomes murkier when we examine the strategic, operational and tactical levels in overseas contemporary complex operations like post-conflict reconstruction or humanitarian aid and disaster relief. It becomes increasingly murkier when we examine interactions between civilian and military bureaucrats further down the chain

Mitigating Civilian and Military Bureaucratic Tensions

Written by Lim Ziwei Paul

of command. I argue that there should not be any dichotomous rules which place civilians in absolute control of the military, and that there should be flexibility for control to be passed between civilian and military bureaucrats, according to the situational and temporal factors.

Other scholars have sketched out other ways to map out this relationship. Angstrom said civilian and military bureaucrats should not be fixed categories, but instead should be seen as 'malleable norms' where collective expectations dictate the actions of actors who have been given identities. Colleta used economic principal-agent theory to describe how agents like the military can exploit differences within the principal, the civilian government, to mold policies into what they want instead or cause high friction between civilians and military bureaucrats instead of obeying what could be politically-compromised wishes of their political masters (Colleta, 2012, p.310). Moving on from this discussion, Feaver used Huntington and Janowitz's works to point out that their works merely described how civil-military relations should work and that they only touched the surface of civilian control measures and did not address the delegation and control dynamic of civil-military relations. He also argued that there is a need for a new theory which best explains how factors shape civilians' control over the military (Feaver, 1996, p.167). The closest previous scholarly research which have made attempts to firm up this dynamic would be Angstrom's 'Type 4: Intertwining of civil and military', where he said decision making involving the military and civilian, while both are separate, is organised so that their respective competence are fully utilized when making decisions. This institutionalizes the interaction between civil and military bureaucrats so that goal-setting and strategy formulation is consistently debated between them (Angstrom, 2013, p. 231). This concept is similar to what Egnell proposes when he suggests that actors should focus on their core competencies and not dabble in others (Egnell, 2013, p.252).

However, I suggest here that it is still too delineated and still separates civil and military entities as two opposite factions interacting with one another. I argue now that civil and military bureaucrats should be as 'one', even if they maintain their own institutional identities, if we want to reduce tensions between them. Further, Angstrom³ is incorrect to say that mutual exclusivity is essential because there are in fact civil and military actors who can end up in similar categories. This argument follows the Janowitzian 'pragmatic professionalism' school of thought. Because there is an inherent tension between civilian and military bureaucrats, I argue that encouraging civic participation in military matters, and vice-versa, is a more agile and nimble policy to mitigate these tensions. Not only does such a policy broaden the worldview of both civilian and military bureaucrats, it also prevents dangerously narrow mindsets which hamper the understanding of wider goals and strategies. This is also my attempt to reconcile civil-military relations and we will explore in a later section some ways to reduce the rivalry between them.

4. Examining Embedded Factors

While the previous sections sought to define civil military relations and put into context their intertwining relationships, as well as make more sense of the increasingly blurred boundaries between variants of civil and military bureaucrats, this section attempts to define the embedded structural factors which may increase rivalrous tensions between them. Civil-military relations scholars have previously tried to narrow down the definitions of these tensions by using the term 'gaps' to describe what separates civilian and military relations. Rahbek-Clemmensen et al mapped out four dimensions to this gap, including cultural, demographics, policy preference and institutional gap, in an attempt to explain what may undermine or promote the health of this relationship (2013, p.673). My work is similar, but probes deeper into the exact factors which may undermine civil-military unity. So what are some of the structural factors that can exist in such a relationship?

In the realist school of thought, rational actors are those who try to achieve goals which are most beneficial to themselves. Hence, when the 'rational' goals of military or civilian bureaucrats – believed by themselves to be in their own best interests – diverge, this can cause problems at both the tactical and strategic levels. This may be in part caused by a lack of clear goals from political leaders, who intentionally shy away from setting clearly-defined quantitative targets so as to prevent political backlash when they aren't achieved and allow themselves to be re-elected during elections. Instead, political goals are often based on wide-ranging political aims and constructed using theories and frameworks, which may not be easily translated into tactical objectives.

Further, political leaders often set aims which have to cater to both domestic and international spheres. Putnam in

Mitigating Civilian and Military Bureaucratic Tensions

Written by Lim Ziwei Paul

“Two-level games” explained how leaders aspire to achieve a ‘win-set’ that has an outcome which reflects the interests of all relevant actors, as well as satisfies the domestic environment (Putnam, 1988). Translating this into reality, national interest in the form of political goals created by politicians to satisfy the international community and garner support from the domestic population, can sometimes diverge radically from pragmatic military solutions and needs, causing deaths to soldiers at the operational level. For example, the newly-elected prime minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, is treading a thin line between placating the Pakistani people and keeping an eye out for a military which had ousted him once in 1999, and at the same time, rebuilding Pakistan’s reputation in the eyes of the suspicious international community. In media interviews, Sharif constantly professed goodwill towards India, in the hopes of rebuilding economic relations and garner the backing of the business community. However, the military watches civilian rapprochement efforts with India very closely (Grare, 2013).

This can also be seen in the tactical level in Afghanistan. ISAF soldiers are trained to look out for and neutralise security threats. Soldiers regard the safety of their own numbers and the termination of the enemy as the highest priorities, while civilian bureaucrats focus on the reconstruction and development aspects of the operation. Civilian attempts to foster grassroots relations and cultivate ties may be seen by the military as unnecessary security threats which expose their forces to the enemy. For example, civilian bureaucrats who wish to cultivate relations with local tribal leaders may organize a shura, where a congregation of so many indigenous leaders could mean potential cover for Taliban informants. Conducting security screenings will only prove to these local leaders that the ‘foreigners’ don’t trust them. This can in part be offset by a common political goal which can act as a compass to guide the operational policies which are debated and agreed on by both civil and military bureaucrats. In South Korea and Taiwan⁴, the constant menace of North Korean attacks (Moon and Rhyu, 2011, p260) and Chinese threats serves as a common goal for both the civilians and the military to focus their efforts on national defense. Both the South Korean and Taiwanese military works feverishly to maintain a constant state of defense readiness without looking to undermine the social, economic and political controls which are firmly in civilians hands (Croissant, Kuehn & Lorenz, 2012).

Even if a single political goal is clearly present, civilian and military bureaucrats can still pursue their own goals while keeping the political goal in sight, but at the same time run the risk of losing sight of it. Rivalry could be incurred by either civil or military organisations pursuing self-serving selective strategies to gain a foothold in political power and make themselves look better than the others. In the mid-1990s, an investigative directorate of Russian intelligence agency FSB accused a communications agency’s financial chief of corruption, even when both agencies had the clear political goal of maintaining security in Russia. Boris Yeltsin, then-president of the Russian Federation, sided with the communications agency so that he could retain access to the electronic vote-counting system controlled by the agency. (Soldatov, Borogan, 2011) Such practices can create an environment of deep mistrust and suspicion when civil and military bureaucrats think that one is making use of the other to look good in front of political leaders.

Two more factors complicate civil-military relations when bureaucrats pursue political goals. The difficulties in measuring success and a lack of consensus in defining how policies can be judged to be successful complicate this structural factor. How would a civilian or military organization’s policies be deemed successful? The time frame allowed for achieving success is also crucial to understanding rivalrous tensions. A short time frame allows for the achievement of short-term goals for military bureaucrats e.g. reducing the number of insurgents in a particular province, while civilian bureaucrats like economic advisors would find it hard to build a credible economy in the host country. Vice-versa, a longer time frame may see little military success in stemming the tide of insurgent attacks, while civilian bureaucrats could claim success in their economic policies when local small businesses start operating again.

Traditional institutionalized legacies of the civil and military actors have a large part to play too. Countries which are deeply entrenched in the mindset where the military is strongly seen as the protector of sovereignty, or the ultimate ‘guardian’ will see more rivalrous tensions between civil and military bureaucrats, as the civilians will have less authority to dictate national politics and delegate powers to make decisions. The military will have a louder political voice to affect national affairs, especially when they are related to national defense and internal security; civilians will no longer have exclusive autonomy on these issues and direct the military on how to do it. For a long time under Suharto in the 1970s, the Indonesian national armed forces enjoyed much autonomy over defense policies as it had been seen as having played a large role in the struggle against Dutch colonialism. It was only two decades later when

Mitigating Civilian and Military Bureaucratic Tensions

Written by Lim Ziwei Paul

Suharto resigned that they slowly lost influence (Croissant et al, p.14).

The decision making processes also have large impacts on the direction of policies being pursued by civilian and military bureaucrats. Tactical decisions made on the ground are often an extension of strategic political goals and national interest (Chiara, Dandeker & Vennesson, 2013, p.323). Tensions can arise when tactical and strategic decisions set out by civilian and military bureaucrats are not in line with each other. With the multiplicity of civilian and military actors in an environment, decision-making abilities are often dispersed down the chain of command and independent of each other when tasks are delineated, causing either side to make decisions which have narrow view points that don't consider the opposition's worldview. For example, soldiers can decide whether or not to provide security for welfare workers or obey civilian directives on cultivating relations with the local populace. Further, decisions made on the ground by one organization can seriously erode the efforts achieved by other. For example, civilian bureaucrats' efforts to brand US soldiers as credible defenders of democracy and legitimate harbingers of peace were thoroughly eroded when a soldier massacred Afghan villagers or when videos of US Marine scout-snipers urinating on Taliban corpses⁵, were leaked to the media. One solution is for bureaucrats to see how different situations need different leaders to collaborate and decide on which actions to take. There must also be flexibility use the best decision making process at one time, or even two or three processes simultaneously.

Civilian and military bureaucrats may also attempt to make decisions which are first beneficial to themselves instead of the overall mission. Such competitive self-interest leads to bad decisions which may override the national interest and political goals. Some issues, while unimportant, may be attended to first, while others, which could be more important, may be ignored. Bureaucrats can end up spending too much time bargaining with each other, or forming needless coalitions, to advance their own agendas. This can be in part caused by unqualified leaders who have incompatible training, or are pursuing private agendas, and make bad decisions. Toxic or destructive leadership can have detrimental effects on the organization as a whole.

Reed and Bullis said toxic leadership can manifest in a lack of concern for subordinates' well-beings, a personality and interpersonal style that negatively affects organizational climate, as well as harboring a primary motivation of self-interest. Here, I will focus on the self-serving interest of leaders, which may create tensions in civil-military relations. Their study found that leaders who detract from organizational goals and instead pursue self-serving agendas, while also protecting their own turfs, can affect subordinates negatively. This resulted in less satisfaction with the job and manifested in tensions in and beyond work relationships (Reed & Bullis, 2009, p.13). This can undermine civil-military relations when bureaucratic leaders on both sides do not work together in a seamless manner.

An example can be seen in the fall of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra⁶ in Sept 2006, when he was ousted in a military putsch while out of country. In his attempt to consolidate power and bend Thai politics to his will, Thaksin sought to exert political influence over the military by building up a pro-Thaksin group in the armed forces. According to, he did this by 'giving retired soldiers prestigious positions, extolled the virtues of the military, and granted autonomy to soldiers in internal security'. He also had a hand in military and defense ministry appointments, appointing loyal subordinates to prestigious posts, and removing opponents to lower positions. Thaksin also built up the police. Civil-military tensions between Thaksin and the military came to a head when he reduced the armed forces' budget and seemingly wanted to privatize military assets. The military then led a coup to remove him from power (Heiduk, 2011, p.265).

Differences in organisational structure can complicate civil and military relations. Contrary to the common normative thought that clear roles and positions defined according to a bureaucratic organisation's standard operation procedures and which draws out the official duties of bureaucrats can improve organisation abilities, it can in fact hamper them. This is especially crucial when studying civil-military relations. Cleanly-defined roles work well only when the organizational culture and mission is suitable for it. Military bureaucrats often work from top-down hierarchical structures with clearly delineated lines of authority due to the nature of their war fighting mission, while civilian bureaucrats can work in flatter structures with lesser layers and less-defined boundaries of authority, instead relying on informal and personal relationships, and the expertise of individuals to lead the task at hand. Due to this non-consensus in culture and structures, coordinating or collaborating with each other can result in confusion for

Mitigating Civilian and Military Bureaucratic Tensions

Written by Lim Ziwei Paul

the civilian bureaucrats as they may face long delays and organizational red-tape when working with their military counterparts due to the many layers of clearance they must go through. On the other hand, the military bureaucrat may have difficulties when they need to deal with different individuals all the time on the basis of subject expertise, instead of a single access point of leadership. These differences may result in operational micro mismanagement difficulties when civilian and military bureaucrats work together in the field.

Closely linked to organization structure, and in part caused by it, are the differences in organisational behaviour and culture. Here, we must consider carefully the the relative power of each individual and unit. There have been many models which have tried to explain how bureaucracies work. Some of the more notable models are Graham Allison's Organisational Process Model and Bureaucratic Politics Model (Allison, 1971). Although these models have their share of criticisms, which were pointed out by behavioral scientists and international relations scholars, they are still useful as access points to explain bureaucratic behaviors.

The Organisational Process Model is useful since institutionalized procedures and routines can affect decisions made when constructing policies while the Bureaucratic Politics Model allows for human agency when understanding policy construction. However, while the Organisational Process model is worth studying for its implication that bureaucratic work processes are critical to understand policies, it does not explain how a bureaucracy innovates and is flexible.

Here, the Bureaucratic Politics Model is a much better model for understanding why there is more to how bureaucrats work and that they are not merely mindless instruments of institutionalized processes. Its portrayal of politics as an arena for individuals with competing interests to 'pull and haul' policies to suit their personal agendas is a better explanation for this article. It explains why civilian and military bureaucrats exhibit human agency characteristics when coordinating, collaborating and cooperating with each other. Their 'pulling and hauling' can create tensions when they try to manufacture outputs to shape policies the way they think is appropriate, or try to undermine each other's arguments, as well as working to reach a consensus when debating or operating together. More powerful individuals or coalitions within bureaucracies will find it easier to manipulate policies in the direction that corresponds to their own interests, which may ultimately be divergent from the national interest or overarching political goal.

But it is not appropriate to discount the Organisational Process Model totally, as it is still relevant for showing how bureaucratic processes in themselves can affect policy decisions. It is my argument that both models of bureaucratic behaviour operate together at any point of time and each model can precede the other in bureaucratic processes. We must also not forget that bureaucrats' behaviours are not solely dictated by these two models; they are also influenced by the political leaders whom they work for. Political leaders have the power to dictate and influence how bureaucrats work. The support of a strong political leader can help advance the interests of bureaucrats, regardless of whether they are in line with national interest or political goals. The politicking and 'pulling and hauling' can cause huge failures in join complex operations when actors focus on looking out for different things, leading to a lack of synchronization in actions. One way to reduce this tension is to cultivate a shared sense of identity and purpose among all organisations.

The asymmetric wielding of information can also lead to rivalrous tensions between civil and military bureaucrats when actors involved do not disclose relevant information to each other, on the basis that information is power i.e. whoever knows the most has the upper hand. There is also the fear of information leaks, when an actor fears that its hard-won work can be usurped by leaks in the opposite organization. Hence, these factors can lead to organisations withholding information, and simply not communicating with each other or not keeping each other informed. When they do, then there is no synchronization of efforts, with each having limited awareness of each other's abilities and efforts. One of the most common failures in this was in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks⁷ on the World Trade Centre in the United States of America, when it was revealed that investigation and intelligence agencies such as the FBI, CIA and NSA failed to prevent the terror attacks as they did not share information about the hijackers with each other on fears of security lapses.

Competition for resources can also cause tensions between military and civil bureaucrats. In complex operations where resources may not be easily available, it is only logical that in an operational theatre, there are limited

Mitigating Civilian and Military Bureaucratic Tensions

Written by Lim Ziwei Paul

resources that have to be distributed among needs that almost always exceed availability. Both military and civil bureaucrats will do their best to obtain resources for their own purposes and missions, be it funds, manpower, logistical supplies etc. Take for example the allocation of pecuniary resources. In the Dutch contingent deployed to Uruzgan province, Task Force Uruzgan (TFU), soldiers which made up 99% of the contingent had very little access to funds that were provided to TFU as they were marked for development and reconstruction efforts. This imbalance sometimes created severe tensions when military and civilians pursued different goals or had different ways of achieving them (Rietjens, Soeters, van Fenema, 2013, p.261).

The need for civilian bureaucrats to maintain their neutrality status while facing the need for security services provided by military bureaucrats is another factor that can undermine civil-military relations. Civilians such as humanitarian aid workers typically don't want their work to be seen as having political aims; they want to adhere to the main guiding principles of their work, which are independence, neutrality and impartiality (Anders, 2013, p.279). They fear that associating with armed soldiers may cast them in a non-neutral light with the local populace, who may be more wary of the aid they supply, or associate humanitarian aid with armed soldiers and confuse themselves when approaching them for aid. These fears are well-grounded. In Afghanistan, armed insurgents attack aid workers despite their neutrality as 'classic insurgency-prevent development' to strike fear into the hearts of aid workers and the populace. Aid workers are also sometimes perceived to be a part of the 'invasion force'. Hence, they still require the security of armed soldiers to ensure their own safety. Soldiers who regularly patrol may also have better sources of information for aid workers on which sector needs more help. This in itself is counter to NGOs' rules of independence and neutrality as they are relying on military security data to carry out their tasks (Yalcinkaya, 2012, p.492-495).

Fundamental differences in training and prescribed routines can cause polarised behaviours from civil and military bureaucrats in a similar situation. This is due to differences in missions and training, which causes differences in the interpretation of a situation. For example, humanitarian workers are trained to reduce pain and suffering, and ensure conflict victims have adequate food and water, while soldiers are trained to detect and neutralise security threats. When a prisoner-of-war or suspected insurgent is detained, there will be differences between soldiers and civilian humanitarian workers on how they are treated. Soldiers and military intelligence analysts may be more prone to using restrained violence to extract information from the prisoner, while the aid worker would insist on attending to the prisoner's welfare first. It is vital to ensure that the military, more than the civilian bureaucrat, is not confused with its mission. The military bureaucrat's main mission is still war-fighting, but it must acknowledge that there is a need to be involved in advancing reconstruction efforts. Military officers must be trained primarily in the art of war, but the training syllabus must be modified to include knowledge on handling reconstruction efforts and aiding the civilian bureaucrat in dispensing humanitarian aid. What should be set clearly is who should have the final say depending on the situation, which can only be brought about by consistent discussion and debate by civil and military bureaucrats.

5. Conclusion – Tension Mitigation Can Lead to More Seamless Relations

Hence, how can political leaders and executive overseers reduce this rivalry in the hope of achieving more seamless civil-military cooperation? Civilian and military bureaucrats must be able to interact on regular basis, and understand each other's roles and duties, as well as the constraints they face, so that they can work together to overcome structural tensions. Before these can happen, there must be clear political goals which are then cleanly delineated into civil and military tactical objectives which are specific and achievable. I would suggest that care must be taken to keep civilian bureaucrats in their original roles and for continued dominance over the military.

However, civilians must also be mindful and take into account the military's roles when crafting policies. At the same time, military leaders should be exposed to some form of bureaucratic management experience. Choices each one makes must be made after interacting with each other to understand each other's view and taking them into account – decide together which is reinforced and which is marginalized. Some practical ways to achieve civil-military coherence would be to expose civilian officers to military roles, such as civic participation in national exercises, and cross-training military officers in civilian bureaucratic roles, such as reconstruction management and humanitarian relief. There could also be liaison officers attached to each other, or exchange programs for bureaucrats to be attached to partner agencies for an extended period of time to learn more about each other. There can also be inter-

Mitigating Civilian and Military Bureaucratic Tensions

Written by Lim Ziwei Paul

agency workshops or forums for bureaucrats to sound out each other's' views on ongoing issues and lay out a framework on which workable policies can be pursued. Regular meetings between leaders of organisations are also essential so that decision making processes and organizational culture is better understood. I will stop short of suggesting that civilians be trained in military skills as this would dilute their fundamental roles.

When translating this into the real world, civilians can be the directors of reconstruction or humanitarian aid missions, and take into account the multiple facets critical to the mission, especially those which military commanders are not trained to look out for so that these issues not marginalized. This civilian commander must take as his subordinate, or at least a close high-level advisor, a military bureaucrat who can advise on military matters. However, civilian functions must be subordinated to military commanders when the situation calls for it. For example, if a humanitarian base is under assault by armed elements, civilians must be under the control of military commanders so as not to complicate the coordination and deployment of defense resources. Rather than setting this in rigidity, we must also note that the above descriptions are not static and can change depending on the overall stage of the mission. Overall command must be fluid and able to be passed over to the other commander. For example, the urgent deployment of humanitarian aid via airlift can be under the command of the military bureaucrat, even though there is no situation of armed conflict, as the military bureaucrat will have the knowledge to expedite the deployment process.

Debates about civil-military relations are ongoing and spark increasingly diverse views and literature, especially when considering contemporary complex operations and the increased involvement of variants of military and civil bureaucrats. It can be seen that classic civil-military relations are changing rapidly and hence, there is a need to advance the basic conceptions of civil-military relation definitions and theories so that these relations can be understood and studied better especially in relation to contemporary operations. Such an approach will allow scholars to use it as a springboard to examine the contemporary and fluid structural factors which permeate bureaucratic organisations. These factors can cause problems if they are not addressed. Bureaucratic organisations must be aware of these tensions and address them if they wish to carry out their functions successfully. There is a need to reduce tensions between civilian and military bureaucrats; political overseers must maintain a healthy working relationship between civilians and the military if they are to successfully carry out joint operations in accordance to national interest and foreign policy goals. Highly-increased communications and empathy between both sides would undoubtedly reduce the tensions between them.

My suggested methods are just the tip of the iceberg to reduce these tensions. Hopefully, more scholarly works follow in their wake. On their part, politicians must realize that they wield powerful sticks with which to guide civilian and military bureaucrats and that there must be clear, objective political goals for these bureaucrats to achieve. Politicians must also ensure that bureaucratic leaders are chosen carefully so that structural factors embedded in bureaucracies do not undermine civil-military relations or diverge their attention from what they're supposed to do. Further, bureaucrats on both sides should be given sufficient opportunities to learn more about the other through continuous knowledge exchange. These factors will significantly reduce the tensions between them.

Notes

1. General Krulak's idea of the 'strategic corporal' is now a concept widely used by military leaders and scholars. However, given the nature of contemporary complex operations, should we also start to examine the idea of a 'tactical official'?
2. Examples of civilians using military-grade equipment for policing or law-enforcement duties have been regarded as unnecessary by politicians and the public. However, they are now more common than ever and are fertile ground for studies to be done.
3. Angstrom has created useful sets of civil-military relations which serve as strong foundations for the building of more . However, it is my opinion that his ideas of mutual-exclusiveness and clear boundaries do not take into account the increased number of 'variants' of civilian and military bureaucrats.
4. South Korea and Taiwan are two East Asian countries where the military have stayed subordinate to political

Mitigating Civilian and Military Bureaucratic Tensions

Written by Lim Ziwei Paul

leaders, despite two major coups in the former, and a strong military legacy in the latter.

5. History is rife with examples of 'liberating soldiers' who desecrate host countries' monuments or treat prisoners-of-war or soldiers' corpses with disrespect. One instance would be US military policemen abusing Iraqi detainees in Abu Ghraib prison.

6. Incumbent Thai prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra surprised observers who predicted that she would not keep her post for long when she was elected. In time, it became clear that she has kept her post only by promising military leaders that she will not meddle in their affairs.

7. The revelations that US intelligence agencies were not sharing information led to a flurry of intelligence-sharing initiatives which were mimicked by national intelligence organisations around the world.

References

Allison, Graham T., *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1971), 143 –195, 255-324

Anders, Birthe. "Tree-huggers and baby-killers: The relationship between NGOs and PMSCs and its impact on coordinating actors in complex operations." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24, No. 2 (May 2013): 278-294

Angstrom, Jan. "The Changing Norms of Civil and Military and Civil-Military Relations Theory." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 24, No. 2 (May 2013): 223–235

Chambers, Paul. "Where Agency Meets Structure: Understanding Civil-Military Relations in Contemporary Thailand." *Asian Journal of Political Science* 19, No. 3 (Dec 2011): 290 – 304

Coletta, Damon "Principal-agent theory in complex operations" *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24, No. 2 (2012): 306-321

Croissant, Aurel, David Kuehn and Philip Lorenz "Breaking With the Past? Civil-Military Relations in the Emerging Democracies of East Asia." *Policy Studies* 63.

Feaver, Peter. 'The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control.' *Armed Forces and Society* 23, No.2 (1996): 149-178

Grare, Frederic. "Pakistan's foreign and security policies after the 2013 general election: the judge, the politician and the military" *International Affairs* 89 No. 4 (2013): 987 – 1001

Heiduk, Felix. "From guardians to democrats? Attempts to explain change and continuity in the civil-military relations of post-authoritarian Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines." *The Pacific Review*, 24 No. 2 (2011) 249–271

Krulak, Charles C. "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War." *Marine Corps Gazette* 83, No. 5 (1999): 18–22

Moon, Chung-in and Rhyu, Sang-young. "Transition, Persistent Civilian Control over the Military, and the South Korean Anomaly." *Asian Journal of Political Science* 19, No. 3 (2011): 250-269

Putnam, Robert. 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two Level Games.' *International Organisation* 42, No.3 (1988): 27-460

Rahbek-Clemmensen, Jon., Emerald M. Archer, John Barr, Aaron Belkin, Mario Guerrero, Cameron Hall and Katie E. O. Swain. "Conceptualizing the Civil–Military Gap: A Research Note." *Armed Forces & Society* 38, No. 4 (2012):

Mitigating Civilian and Military Bureaucratic Tensions

Written by Lim Ziwei Paul

669-678

Reed, George E. and Bullis, R. Craig. "The Impact of Destructive Leadership on Senior Military Officers and Civilian Employees." *Armed Forces & Society* 36, No. 5 (2009): 5-18

Rietjens, Sebastiaan, Joseph Soeters and Paul C. van Fenemaa. "Learning from Afghanistan: Towards a compass for civil-military coordination." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24, No. 2 (2013): 257-277

Ruffa, Chiara, Christopher Dandeker and Pascal Vennesson "Soldiers drawn into politics? The influence of tactics in civil-military relations." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24 No. 2 (2013): 322-334

Soldatov, Andrei and Irina Borogan "The New Nobility: The Restoration of Russia's Security State and the Enduring Legacy of the KGB" (New York: Public Affairs, 2011)

Yalçinkaya, Haldun. "The Nongovernmental Organizations-Military Security Collaboration Mechanism: Afghanistan NGO Safety Office." *Armed Forces & Society* 39, No. 3 (2013): 489-510

—
Written by: Lim Ziwei Paul
Written at: Nanyang Technological University
Written for: Professor Alan Chong
Date written: September 2013