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ARTICLES

Explaining US and British Performance in Complex Expeditionary Operations: The Civil-Military Dimension

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ABSTRACT A nation's structure and culture of civil-military relations are important and largely overlooked factors in explaining the performance of armed forces involved in complex expeditionary operations. The US model of 'Huntingtonian', divided civil-military structures and poor interagency cooperation, makes the US military less suited for complex expeditionary operations. British civil-military relations involve a Defence Ministry that conscientiously integrates military and civilian personnel, as well as extensive interagency cooperation and coordination. This 'Janowitzean', integrated form of civil-military relations makes the British military more likely to provide for the planning and implementation of comprehensive campaigns that employ and coordinate all instruments of power available to the state, as well as troops in the field displaying the flexibility and cultural and political understanding that are necessary in complex expeditionary operations.

KEY WORDS: Civil-military relations, military effectiveness, expeditionary operations, Iraq, irregular warfare, American way of war, counter-insurgency, interagency cooperation

The changes in the strategic context since the end of the Cold War and 9/11 imply that different forms of complex expeditionary operations will be the most prevalent and the most important military operations in the near future.[1] However, the results of these types of

[1]Included in the concept of Complex Expeditionary Operations are different forms of peace operations, counter-insurgency, small wars, low-intensity conflict, and humanitarian interventions. The complexity aspect of the concept refers to the multitude and

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operations during the 1990s, and more recently in Afghanistan and Iraq, have been mixed at best. Powerful actors have failed to achieve their objectives against weaker opponents, and at the operational and tactical levels of war, the military has found it difficult to adjust. Military strategists, and scholars alike, have sought an explanation to this phenomenon and come up with a plethora of competing theories, such as asymmetry of interest, balance of tolerance for violence, and strategic interaction.

This article helps increase the understanding of effectiveness in complex expeditionary operations by adding the important factor of civil-military relations – in this article referring to the culture and structure of the civil-military interface at the national strategic level. By comparing the nature of British and American civil-military relations, as well as their respective operational performance in Iraq from 2003, the article aims to explore how the structure and culture of a nation's civil-military relations influences the performance of a state's armed forces in complex expeditionary operations. The article also seeks to establish what type of civil-military relations are likely to create operational effectiveness.

The main argument of the article is that the nature of civil-military relations is indeed an important variable for explaining military performance in complex expeditionary operations. It explains effectiveness in at least two important ways; *directly*, as the level in the chain of command where strategic aims are created and translated into operational plans and activities, thereby affecting the planning and implementation of operations, and; *indirectly*, by being the arena in which funding, doctrine and direction for the military organization is decided. In order to achieve expeditionary operational effectiveness, the civil-military interface must therefore not only serve as an effective level in the chain of command, but also provide the funds, as well as the physical and conceptual directions that are necessary to create an organization ready to implement the decisions of the political leadership – an organization 'fit for purpose'.

The analysis is introduced by a discussion that connects the theories of civil-military relations to military effectiveness in the contemporary strategic context. This is followed by two sections analyzing the culture and structure of civil-military relations in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US). A study of the American and British approaches to expeditionary operations, as well as their operational performance in Iraq, thereafter provides the empirical foundation of the

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diversity of tasks and actors involved in these operations, as well as the limited but far-reaching political aims of democracy, stability and economic development.

article. The article concludes with a summary of the main arguments and a number of policy implications.

Theories of Civil-Military Relations Related to Military Effectiveness in the Contemporary Strategic Context

The starting point of this article is the recognition of important changes in the strategic context. Long gone is the hostile but stable and comprehensible Cold War environment. The conflicts of the new millennium seem ever more bewildering, complex and asymmetric. The greatest security challenges of today and the near future consist of failing states, rouge states, as well as regional insecurity with global repercussions, and the rise of global terrorism, which thrives in areas lacking political control. The military might of the US, and the relative political stability of the post-Cold War environment, make large scale interstate warfare less probable. Sir Lawrence Freedman makes the sobering argument, that while it is impossible to announce the end of major warfare, and the corresponding need to continue preparing for it, it remains clear that 'for the moment, the most perplexing problems of security policy surround irregular rather than regular war'.[2] Christopher Dandeker and James Gow equally argue that the most likely, if not also the most important, military operations in the near future will be different forms of peace operations.[3]

As this article tests how the culture and structure of civil-military relations influence military performance in the context of what this article calls complex expeditionary operations, a review of the existing theory is necessary in order to operationalize this factor. The article uses the theories of civil-military relations as the primary tools to do so, but starts by reviewing the current debate that seeks to explain military performance and outcome in complex expeditionary operations.

There is a very rich body of literature trying to explain military capability in relation to the often paradoxical outcomes in small wars, counter-insurgency operations and different forms of peace operations.[4] Military theorists often describe military capability as a

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[2]Lawrence Freedman, *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs*, Adelphi Paper No. 379 (London: Routledge for IISS, March 2006), 7.

[3]Christopher Dandeker and James Gow, 'Military Culture and Strategic Peacekeeping', in Erwin A. Schmidl (ed.), *Peace Operations Between War and Peace* (London/Portland, OR: Frank Cass 2000), 58.

[4]Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton UP 2004); Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam* (New York: Cambridge UP 2003); Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win*

combination of physical factors (the size and materiel of the organization), conceptual factors (doctrine or the application of the means), and moral factors (the will of the political leadership, as well as of the soldiers).[5]

While most theorists agree upon these factors, they tend to emphasize different factors. Creating the following formula: Capability = Means × Way^2 × Will^3, General Sir Rupert Smith gives greater importance to the moral and conceptual factors.[6] Nevertheless, traditional theories on military capability have often been too heavily focused on the physical factor: Numbers of troops and the quality of equipment, while paying less attention to the more intangible factors that influence state capacity to use their material resources effectively.[7] Stephen Biddle, therefore, argues that the cases where numerically and technologically weak win battles and campaigns, suggest that traditional explanations of military capability are misleading. Similarly, Risa Brooks notes that if the explanations to military capability that emphasize non-material factors are right, they may warrant 'major corrections in how policy analysts measure military power'. The academic and practical stakes are therefore high.[8]

The paradoxical outcomes in some small wars and counter-insurgency operations are sometimes explained by focusing on the nature of the involved actors. The most common problem discussed within this school of thought, concerns the effectiveness of democracies in war. Gil Merom argues that modern democracies fail in small wars, because of inherent restrictions in their domestic structure. This means that democracies 'find it extremely difficult to escalate the level of violence and brutality to that which can secure victory'.[9] In other words, the nature of the democratic system weakens the moral factor of military capability. This explanation of military capability nevertheless fails to explain why authoritarian states also fail in small wars, or why democracies sometimes win.[10]

Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict (New York : Cambridge UP 2005); Jan Angstrom and Isabelle Duyvesteyn (eds.), *Understanding Victory and Defeat in Contemporary War* (London: Routledge 2007).

[5]For a good summary, see: Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books 2005), 240–3.

[6]Ibid., 242.

[7]Risa A. Brooks, 'Making Military Might: Why Do States Fail and Succeed?', *International Security* 28/2 (Fall 2003), 151; Biddle, *Military Power*.

[8]Brooks, 'Making Military Might', 151.

[9]Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*, 15.

[10]Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars*, 8–9.

A related explanation is that of interest asymmetry. According to this line of thought, motivation derives from what is at stake, and in expeditionary operations the insurgent, it is argued, has more at stake and therefore summons more motivation and readiness for sacrifice, while the soldiers of the intervening power have little at stake beyond their personal safety.[11] It should be noted that the historical record of motivated but weak forces is actually abysmal, and that their occasional victories, based on asymmetric interest, do not alone provide a sufficient explanation for military capability.[12]

Stephen Biddle and Ivan Arreguin-Toft separately seek to create more comprehensive theories that address both the moral and conceptual factors. Based on Waltz's theory of socialization and the idea that the weak imitate the successful policies of the strong, while avoiding failed policies, Arreguin-Toft creates a theory of asymmetric conflict that emphasizes strategic interaction. His central thesis is that when actors employ opposite strategic approaches, weak actors are more likely to win.[13] Not only does asymmetry strengthen the weak in moral terms, it also gives them a conceptual edge in faster learning and adjustment of doctrine and tactics. Biddle argues that the non-material variable of force employment – the doctrine or tactics by which forces are actually used in combat – shapes the role of material factors and thus predetermines winners and losers.[14] Biddle's theory has the advantage of showing how the conceptual and moral factors of military capability are related to the physical factor, thus creating the most comprehensive theory of small- war military capability to this date.

The theories above are all helpful in understanding the factors that determine military capability in small wars, but they often fail to provide an explanation *how* and *why* these come to effect. Consequentially, there is a corresponding lack of remedies for the phenomenon of failure in small wars. This article therefore adds an important factor that helps fill this void. Operating on a slightly different level than the explanations above, the nature of civil-military relations has the potential to influence all three factors of military capability. The material factor is affected as the civil-military interface is the arena in which decisions regarding the size, organization and materiel of the military are made. This is also true regarding the conceptual factors. While doctrine and military culture is more of an internal military

[11]See, for example, Andrew J.R. Mack, 'Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict', *World Politics* 27/2 (1975), 175–200, and Richard Betts, 'Comments on Mueller', *International Studies Quarterly* 24/4 (1980), 520–4.
[12]Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*, 11, 14.
[13]Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars*, 18.
[14]Biddle, *Military Power,* ix.

affair, one cannot escape from the fact that the political leadership and the external security concerns also influence doctrine.[15] As operations are conducted, the civil-military interface is again of importance in the creation and implementation of comprehensive campaign plans that include all instruments of national power. Finally, the importance of civil-military relations to the moral factor of military capability was displayed in the Vietnam War as US morale broke down in the field of operations, as well as within civil society at the home front.

The central problem discussed in civil-military relations theory is the need to maximize the protective value that the armed forces can provide, and the need to minimize the domestic coercive powers that the same forces will inevitably possess, thus creating *effective armed forces under democratic civilian control*. While this balance is of great importance, this article emphasizes the factor of effectiveness, namely, what types of institutional and cultural arrangements are most beneficial in creating military organizations and strategies that are effective in the field of operations?

A central theme in the literature on civil-military relations is the idea of the military professional. While the literature is essentially divided regarding the nature of military professionalism, Anthony Forster provides a useful starting point by arguing that the purpose of professionalization is the creation of a military 'fit for purpose'. Professional, and thus effective, military organizations are, according to Forster, characterized by four core factors: 'roles clearly defined by a government and widely accepted by the armed forces and their societies; development of the expertise necessary to fulfil these functions effectively and efficiently; clear rules governing the responsibilities of the military as an institution and the responsibilities of individual soldiers; and promotion based on merit'.[16] Whatever the political leadership defines as the important tasks and operations of the day is the functional imperative to which the armed forces must be adjusted.

The question that is the centrepiece of this study is consequentially the extent to which the structure and culture of civil-military relations affects the maintenance of military organizations 'fit for purpose' in the contemporary strategic context of complex expeditionary operations. Moreover, what type of civil-military relations is likely to create operational effectiveness? The most influential work on this matter is Samuel Huntington's *The Soldier and the State*, which has become

[15]Barry Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1986).

[16]Anthony Forster, *Armed Forces in Europe* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan 2006), 43.

known as the 'normal' theory of civil-military relations.[17] For Huntington, professional armed forces are a precondition for military effectiveness. The most important feature of the military professional is that he or she is an objective and apolitical servant of the state, and therefore by definition subordinate to the political leadership.[18]

However, Huntington's conception of military professionalism assumes that it is possible to segregate an autonomous area of military science from political purpose. Military science is, in this view, purely based on the functional imperative – to fight and win the nation's wars – as a structural given. The quality of the military can therefore, according to normal theory, only be evaluated in terms of independent military standards defined by the functional imperative, and should not be related to the political end for which it fights.[19] As Huntington separates military means from political ends, the ideal purpose and identity of the armed forces becomes universal. The purpose of the military is national defence and its identity will, without interference from the societal imperatives, automatically be adjusted to fit this purpose through the development of military professionalism.

Huntington's suggestion of how to achieve civilian control of the armed forces in democracies is therefore, unsurprisingly, through civilian recognition and support of military professionalism and expertise, meaning no political interference in the military sphere.[20] The Harvard professor calls this 'objective civilian control', which in practice means a sharp division of labour between political decision-making and military implementation, as well as the idea that the military should be physically and ideologically separated from political institutions.[21] A military organization well separated from the political leadership will thus always be 'fit for purpose'.

However, the failure of the US armed forces to effectively adjust to the contemporary strategic context shows that the hands-off approach to civilian control will not automatically adjust the armed forces to changing functional imperatives. The traditional functional imperative of fighting and winning the nation's wars is still relevant to a more

[17]Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: The Free Press 2002); and Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 2003).
[18]Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard UP 1957), 79.
[19]Ibid., 56.
[20]Ibid., 83.
[21]Rebecca Schiff, 'Civil-Military Relations Reconsidered: A Theory of Concordance', *Armed Forces & Society* 22/1 (Fall 1995), 7.

limited extent, but the large number of new tasks that are asked of the military imply that in order to maintain effectiveness, the military has to adjust its structure and professional culture, as well as the structure of civil-military relations.

A contrasting view of military professionalism is presented by the sociological school of civil-military relations, created by Morris Janowitz. Janowitz presents the 'constabulary' view of the military professional, and thereby adds a political dimension to the profession. He argues that the military professional must be 'sensitive to the political and social impact of the military establishment on international security affairs'.[22] Civilian control cannot be achieved because of the rule of law and a professional tradition not to intervene in politics, but must instead come from 'self-imposed professional standards and meaningful integration with civilian values'.[23] While Huntington saw military professionalism and political objectivity as a natural result of the functional imperative, Janowitz argued that such professionalism could only be accomplished by political integration and education of the officer corps. The practical solution to creating a military organization fit for purpose is thus the opposite to that of Huntington; the military should be integrated with the political leadership in order to develop increased political understanding and sensitivity.

Douglas Bland also emphasizes the importance of civil-military integration by arguing that a formal governmental and/or ministerial committee system should be used to support the consensus-building procedure among the civil authorities, military leaders, and senior public servants, that is the main mechanism by which complex defence decisions are made. Such an interagency system should ideally permit military and civilian leaders to develop coordinated advice for ministers. In the end, such coordinated advice produces policies, that better commands military support and loyalty, and thus simplifies policy implementation.[24]

In sum, theories of civil-military relations thus propose two very different solutions to the structure and culture of civil-military relations that will create military organizations fit for purpose and thus capable of performing effectively in military operations. The Huntingtonian approach advocates a clear divide between the civilian and military leaderships and a societal ideology that supports objective control of the military, allowing the military to develop its own skill set based on

[22]Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (New York: The Free Press 1960), 420.
[23]Ibid.
[24]Douglas L. Bland, 'Patterns in Liberal Democratic Civil-Military Relations', *Armed Forces & Society* 27/4 (Summer 2001), 535–6.

its own view of the functional imperative. The Janowitzean approach instead argues that the contemporary context requires a politically attuned military and therefore advocates civil-military integration in order to create coordinated advice, and to develop increased mutual understanding and trust between the actors of the civil-military interface. The following comparisons of British and US civil-military relations, as well as their approaches to expeditionary operations and performance in Iraq, are intended to test these two alternatives in the era of complex expeditionary operations.

Civil-Military Relations in the United States

The US political structures are as old as the nation itself. Upon liberation from the British Empire, the framers of the Constitution feared that the military might move to take power, or that a government facing electoral defeat might use the military to hold power by force. The framers of the US Constitution, therefore, not only sought to control the power of the military, but also tried to limit the opportunities of political leaders to exploit military power. The solution was a system of checks and balances, which institutionalized divisions within the political leadership and induced the executive and the legislature to monitoring one another as well as the military.[25] The constitution was thus crafted as a compromise between military effectiveness and political control. The basic elements of the new political system, that were also used to control the military, were balance and the diffusion of power, as well as shared responsibility. The American Constitution assigned the President the role of Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. But it also reserved for the Congress the power to declare war and the power to raise and equip armed forces. Financial appropriations for the Army were limited to two years. Finally, the Constitution mandated state militias that were to provide an insurance against the power of the standing army.[26]

The political system of checks and balances has, however, not been conducive to interagency cooperation and cross government coordination. Martin Gorman and Alexander Krongard argue that the while the US government confronts problems that are beyond the capacity of any single department or agency to deal with, it rarely develops

[25]Deborah Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons from Peripheral Wars* (London: Cornell UP 1995), 21.

[26]Douglas Johnson and Steven Metz, 'American Civil-Military Relations: New Issues, Enduring Problems', Strategic Studies Institute Report, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, April 1995, available at <www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/research_pubs/amcivil.pdf>, accessed Feb. 2005, 3.

comprehensive policies that span across the whole spectrum of government.[27] Instead, the US government is structured to divide knowledge and expertise into component parts by deconstructing national security issues and then parcelling the parts to different departments and agencies. They call this stovepiped decision-making and argue that it results in piecemeal US responses to most international issues. The independent solutions of the different departments and agencies vary greatly, and sometimes even conflict. Nevertheless, after going through the intradepartmental process, the separate solutions enter the interagency process and eventually end up at the highest levels of government. This means that only at the very highest levels of government do integration, coordination and synchronization take place.[28]

The National Security Act of 1947, created what is today called the Department of Defense (DoD), and established a clear division of responsibilities between the civilian and military leaderships. While the civilian leadership creates policy and objectives, the military commanders are supposed to use their professional judgment 'to execute the policy through the most effective and efficient means possible'.[29] This divide, developed out of fear of military intervention in politics and the politicization of the armed forces, has also in practical terms created a clear divide between the civilian and military sides of the Department of Defense. While the British emphasize civil-military interaction and integration on all levels of the ministerial hierarchy, the divide between the civilian and military sides of the US DoD creates more limited areas of meaningful interaction. Arguably the most important interface of the American civil-military relations is that between the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Johnson and Metz go as far as to argue that, 'Whether he [the Secretary of Defense] is seen as pro- or anti-military sets the tenor for all of civil-military relations.'[30]

The absence of serious civil-military interaction before the highest levels of the department creates few buffer zones in which to mediate differences of opinion. It also creates an exaggerated reliance on individuals at the top levels of power. As political appointees dominate

[27]Martin J. Gorman and Alexander Krongard, 'A Goldwater-Nichols Act for the U.S. Government: Institutionalizing the Interagency Process', *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 39 (4th Quarter 2005), 52.
[28]Ibid., 53–4.
[29]Lewis Libby, 'American Perspectives on Civil-Military Relations and Democracy', Heritage Lecture #433, Feb. 1993, available at <www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/HL433.cfm>, accessed Feb. 2005.
[30]Johnson and Metz, 'American Civil-Military Relations', 18.

at this level there are few career civil servants who, with their extensive knowledge of both military and political matters, can function as a buffer in the civil-military interface.

Deborah Avant argues that the system of checks and balances has also made the civilian leadership weak in relation to a comparatively unified military. Because the political system creates tensions and conflict between the different branches of government, it gives the military a chance to play them against each other on different policy issues.[31] This has made the cost of political monitoring of the military high and the possibilities for military shirking greater. This was exacerbated with the introduction of the Goldwater-Nichols Act in 1986, which gave the Joint Chiefs a stronger and more unified voice in national policy-making.

Although the US has never come close to a military coup, Russell Weigley has argued that misunderstandings and distrust have been prevalent in American civil-military relations from the beginning, and have further deteriorated since the end of the Cold War.[32] The relative harmony of US civil-military relations, and of civilian control, is therefore misleading in that they have been based on an adherence to constitutional duties instead of mutual trust between soldiers and civilians. This has led Weigley to argue that 'the anti-military attitudes of civilian Americans, and the military's resistance to them, meant that apparent civil-military accord rested on a precarious foundation of incomplete understanding and even of distrust'.[33]

The US case is to a large extent the practical embodiment of the theories of Samuel Huntington. The intention in US civil-military relations has been to create the division between the political leadership and the military that Huntington argued would lead to military professionalism and effectiveness. It should nevertheless be noted that, in practice, this division is not quite as sharp as intended. Allegations of political micro-management in military affairs are common in the US. It has generated areas of heated debate regarding the operations in Kosovo in 1999, and more recently in relation with the planning of the operations in Iraq.[34] Equally, there are continuous fears of increased politicization of the US military.[35]

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[31]Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change*, 134–5.

[32]Russell F. Weigley, 'The American Civil-Military Cultural Gap: A Historical Perspective, Colonial Times to the Present', in Peter D. Feaver and Richard H. Kohn, *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2001), 246.

[33]Weigley, 'The American Civil-Military Cultural Gap', 227.

[34]On Kosovo, see, Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War: Bosnia, Kosovo and the Future of Combat* (New York: Public Affairs 2001); During spring 2006 a number of

Civil-Military Relations in the United Kingdom

In the British system, ultimate responsibility for policy lies in the Cabinet. The necessary coordination of the various government departments is centralized in the Cabinet Office, which is a government department that serves the government as a whole, and not just the Prime Minister. Below the Cabinet is a structure of ministerial and official committees that helps to achieve coherence across the government. Within the Cabinet committee structure there is a senior ministerial committee for defence and overseas matters. In principle, this committee deals with defence policy. However, in practice the more important defence policy issues are dealt with in trilateral correspondence between the Foreign Secretary, the Defence Secretary and the Prime Minister. How business is handled at this level is much the responsibility of the Prime Minister.[36] The British political system is highly centralized, which provides clear leadership and, in Peter Feaver's terms, 'low-cost monitoring' of the armed forces.[37] Because of the low political cost of monitoring the armed forces, the military officers, if mindful of their careers, have always had to stay in tune with the wishes of the political leaders.

The British system allows the government departments to work together to create national policies and not simply for departmental advantage. There seems to be little of the inter-departmental friction, which hampers the work in Washington.[38] This is confirmed by

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retired, high-level officers criticized Rumsfeld for his micro-management of the campaign in Iraq and partially blamed his involvement in the planning for the dismal results in Iraq. For an example of this discussion see Thomas E. Ricks, 'Rumsfeld Rebuked by Retired Generals: Ex-Iraq Commander Calls for Resignation', *Washington Post*, 13 April 2006. A good description of Secretary Rumsfeld's continuous input into the operational plans of Operation 'Iraqi Freedom' is well described in Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster 2004).

[35]For a useful discussion on this matter see, Eliot A. Cohen, 'Civil-Military Relations: Are U.S. Forces Overstretched?', *Orbis* 42/2 (Spring 1997), 177–86.

[36]William Hopkinson, *The Making of British Defence Policy* (Norwich, UK: The Stationery Office 2000) 24.

[37]Peter Feaver has arguably provided the most important recent contribution to the field of civil-military relations in the application of principal agency theory to the field of civil-military relations. His description of civil-military relations as an ongoing game of strategic interaction between civilian leaders and military agents, in which civilians control the military through monitoring and punishment, and in which the military either 'works or shirks' based on its expectations of punishment. Civil-military relations are about bargaining, monitoring, and strategic calculations over whether to work or shirk. See Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 2003).

Defence Ministry officials who argue that in terms of defence policy, the cooperation and communication between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) is very close.[39] The British administrative practice at its best thus comprises close informal relationships between officials at different departments regardless of which government is in power. The importance of informal relationships and their resulting interpersonal trust building and mutual understanding should be emphasized, as they are easily overlooked in a study of the formal procedures of organizations.

One of the main features of the British Ministry of Defence is the close relationship between military and civilian personnel. Ministers are supported by the top management of the MoD, headed jointly by the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and the Permanent Under Secretary of State for Defence (PUS). They share responsibility for much of the Department's business and in the words of the MoD, 'their roles reflect the importance of both military and civilian advice on political, financial, administrative and operational matters'.[40] The principal military adviser, the CDS, is the military adviser to the Defence Secretary and the Government, as well as the professional head of the armed forces. The chain of command for planning and conduct of military operations flows from him through the Permanent Joint Head Quarters (PJHQ) to the different operational commanders.[41]

The functions of the department are thereby carried out as one organization as opposed to the Pentagon, which sharply distinguishes between the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the staff of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In the central areas of the British ministry there is widespread civil-military mixed management of the different divisions. Where the head is a military officer the deputy is often civilian and vice versa.[42] As a high-ranking military official within the MoD argued, the integrated organization of the MoD leads to greater civilian advice on political matters and civilian understanding of military matters, as well as a better understanding of political concerns within the military.[43] This generates mutual trust and understanding,

[38]Hopkinson, *Making of British Defence Policy*, 25.
[39]Interviews with Brig. Simon Mayall, MoD (Nov. 2004), Lt. Col. Tim Russell and Ben Palmer both MoD (April 2005).
[40]'About the MoD', MoD website, available at <www.mod.uk/aboutus/modorg/index.html> accessed Feb. 2005.
[41]Hopkinson, *Making of British Defence Policy,* 34.
[42]Ibid., 33.
[43]Interview with Brig. Simon Mayall, MoD (Nov. 2004).

which is a precondition for effective civil-military leadership during operations. The civilian elements of the ministry add not only a better grounding in public finance and diplomacy, but perhaps even more importantly, an ability to work closely with officials from the other government departments.[44] Another important aspect of the MoD structure is the strong and highly professional civil service. It not only provides consistency of policy within the ministry, but also acts as a buffer between the political and military aspects of issues.[45]

Another enabler of smooth civil-military relations in the British case is the fact that the civilian and military leaderships have historically been recruited from the same social group. The two groups received the same schooling and were taught the same values.[46] Rod Thornton argues, that although British officers, as well as civil-servants, are today recruited from a slightly broader social background, the socialization in to a common belief system among political and military leaders is a tradition has largely been maintained until today.[47] The common background of officers and civil servants means that the problem of a civil-military cultural gap is more limited than in the US case. Thus, civilians and servicemen are deeply integrated both structurally and culturally within MoD, just as the ministry is integrated into the government administration as a whole.[48]

On the whole the British culture and structure of civil-military relations resemble the Janowitzean notion of civil-military integration and mutual understanding. Or to use Bland's terminology, there is more of shared responsibility in the British case. Interestingly the British Armed Forces also resemble the constabulary force concept that Janowitz introduced in the 1960s.

After establishing that the two countries have very different forms of civil-military relations, both culturally and structurally, let us look at their approaches to expeditionary operations, and their respective campaigns in Iraq. Should civil-military relations be able to explain military performance, it can be expected that the US and British Armed Forces have different approaches to complex expeditionary operations, and that they conduct such operations in different ways with different levels of effectiveness.

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[44]Hopkinson, *Making of British Defence Policy,* 37.

[45]Interview with Brig. Simon Mayall, MoD (Nov. 2004).

[46]Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change,* 13.

[47]Rod Thornton, 'A Welcome "Revolution"? The British Army and the Changes of the Strategic Defence Review', *Defence Studies* 3/3 (Autumn 2003), 54–5.

[48]William Hopkinson, 'The Making of British Defence Policy', *RUSI Journal* 145/5 (Oct. 2000), 22.

The US Approach to Complex Expeditionary Operations

'We fight the wars but we don't do peacekeeping', is a George W. Bush phrase that continues to bewilder scholars around the world. It is moreover commonly supported and expressed within the US military.[49] The latter is notorious for its dislike of operations other than war, and the current US administration is certainly supporting that position. Regarding the tasks of nation building, Bush argued during the presidential campaign in 2000, that 'I would be very careful about using our troops as nation builders. I believe the role of the military is to fight and win war and, therefore, prevent war from happening in the first place.'[50] Moreover, the then National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice declared that the US military, as the world's stabilizing force, was meant only for war-fighting: it is 'lethal', she said, 'It is not a civilian police force. It is not a political referee. And it is most certainly not designed to build a civilian society.'[51] At first glance the US approach to complex expeditionary operations therefore seems to be, 'we don't do it'. This is obviously perplexing since different forms of expeditionary peace operations and nation building are precisely what the US armed forces have increasingly been doing since the fall of the Berlin Wall, an argument well made by Max Boot.[52]

It should be noted, that the attitudes of the US administration changed somewhat after 11 September, 2001, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The changes are reflected in the 2006 Quadrennial Defence Review and National Security Directive, but reflect a change in degree rather than nature.[53] The changes had, more importantly for this article, little impact before the start of the campaign in Iraq, 2003. Before looking closer at the US approaches to

[49]The author acknowledges that speaking in terms of 'the US military', implies great generalizations. There is a need to continue this research by breaking down the US armed forces into smaller units of observation starting with the five main armed services.

[50]Bush cited in Douglas Holt, 'Army institute to be shut down: Critics hit loss of training center for peacekeeping', *Chicago Tribune*, 15 April 2003, available at <www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi0304150249apr15,1,533388.story?ctrack=2&cset=true>, accessed Feb. 2005.

[51]Condoleezza Rice quoted in Michael Hirsh, 'Our New Civil War: Freeing a nation is one thing; resurrecting it another', *Newsweek*, 12 May 2003 edition, available at <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/3068556/>, accessed Jan. 2005.

[52]Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books 2002).

[53]See, for a useful discussion, Benjamin Schreer, 'Dead Upon Arrival? The Quadrennial Defence Review Report 2006', *RUSI Journal* 151/2 (April 2006), 34–7.

expeditionary operations, it is important to understand what the US military thinks it *should* be doing.

The traditional characteristics of the American way of war is often linked to Russell Weigley's work, in which he argues that the American way of war has favoured wars of annihilation through the lavish use of firepower. Some further characteristics are aggressiveness at all levels, a quest for decisive battles, and a desire to employ maximum effort.[54] Thomas Mahnken adds that the US preference to fight wars for far-reaching political objectives, or annihilation, means that the US military has been uncomfortable with limited political aims. Also related to the preference for far-reaching political aims is a tendency to demonize America's adversaries.[55] More recent tendencies have been to rely on high technology weapons, as well as a strong preference for air power over troops on the ground. Another tendency is the reluctance to incur casualties.[56] The current US force transformation reinforces the reliance on technology, firepower, and air power. Its hallmarks are speed, manoeuvre, flexibility, and surprise, being heavily reliant on precision firepower, special forces, and psychological operations. The goal is to increase the lethality of the US military forces by 'harnessing technological advances of the information age to gain a qualitative advantage over any potential foe'.[57]

Where does this approach come from? US military professionalism was developed in a state of isolation after the Civil War. The size of the Army was kept small and as long as it did not ask for an increased budget, Congress left the Army relatively free to set its own standards for training, promotion and evaluation, and in the end its own functional imperative. Moreover, presidents – at the time free from any pressing external threats – left the Army to develop its professional standards free from civilian influence.[58] The resulting professional mindset was, according to Avant, a result of an admiration and misreading of the Prussian military theorists of the nineteenth century, and heavily reliant on the notion of a science of war. An important development was the idea that the Army must always be governed by classic military principles. The officers' training therefore came to emphasize military history in order to teach the principles of war and to

[54]Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP 1973).
[55]Thomas G. Mahnken, 'The American Way of War in the Twenty-first Century', in Efraim Inbar, (ed.), *Democracies and Small Wars* (London/Portland, OR: Frank Cass 2003), 74–5.
[56]Mahnken, 'The American Way of War in the Twenty-First Century', 78–81.
[57]Max Boot, 'The New American Way of War', *Foreign Affairs* 82/4 (July/Aug. 2003).
[58]Huntington, *Soldier and the State,* 226–37.

cultivate uniformity of thought and procedure. Avant argues that this led to a rigid and inflexible understanding of the conduct of warfare.[59]

The emphasis on the science of war also led to a strong bias against individual initiative. By rewarding and promoting officers who always adhered to regulations and the principles of war, the idea of safe leadership, meaning that officers who adhere to the principles and regulations of the Army, took hold.[60] While the British at the time developed a system that relied perhaps too heavily on individual competence and adaptability, the US system instead emphasized timeless principles of war in order to avoid reliance on individuals. Again, inflexibility was the result.

With strong civilian control, the military should ideally perform any task that the political leadership designs for them with equal professionalism. The government decides the roles for which the armed forces should be 'fit and ready'. However, despite the challenges of the post-Cold War environment, several failures during the 1990s, and more recently in Iraq, the US armed forces have to a very limited extent adjusted their structure or culture to accommodate the special needs of peace operations or counter-insurgency. Eliot Cohen argued in 2000 that despite a plethora of 'bottom-up reviews' by official commissions, the structure and ethos of the US armed forces were essentially similar to that of the Cold War, just 'upgraded a bit and reduced in size by 40 percent'.[61]

Moreover, surveys made by the Triangle Institute for Security Studies for a study on the cultural gap in civil-military relations, point towards a military dislike for operations other than war. In 1998–99 only one percent of US military leaders saw expeditionary interventions like the ones in Bosnia and Somalia as 'very important' roles for the military. This can be contrasted with 99 percent support of the role 'to fight and win our country's wars'.[62]

Many commentators therefore argue that the current US defence transformation is also based on traditional notions of warfare and therefore essentially flawed and inadequate in several respects. Anthony Cordesman maintains that the transformation does not include preparation for low intensity combat, that jointness cannot only be a military concept and should include the civil side of government, and that the transformation only creates possibilities for 'winning half the

[59]Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change,* 26–7.
[60]Ibid. 28.
[61]Cohen, *Armed Servants*, 45.
[62]Ole R. Holsti, 'Of Chasms and Convergences: Attitudes and Beliefs of Civilian and Military Elites at the Start of a New Millennium', in Feaver and Kohn, *Soldiers and Civilians,* 46.

war: Winning the combat but not the peace.'[63] The last argument is further developed by Antulio Echevarria, who argues that the American concept of war rarely extends beyond winning battles and campaigns, and should therefore be called a 'way of battle' instead of a way of war.[64] This argument is made to highlight the notion that America is not very good at turning military victories into strategic success, or even understanding how the two are connected.

John Mackinlay argues that the US military culture is strong and resistant to change, especially in relation to counter-insurgency operations. He argues that the lessons from the failures of Vietnam and Somalia have not been learned and that the US approach to war remains industrial in scale and still relies on mass and the use of decisive force.[65] The problem is that the US military culture is fixed on what it sees as its core task – defeating conventional enemies that threaten the freedom of the American people. This unshakable belief in the essence of the organization has according to John Nagl precluded any organizational learning and adjustment to unconventional wars or operations other than war.[66]

Interestingly, US doctrine does not, at a first glance, reflect the cultural bias toward regular large-scale warfare. The US Army Field Manual on counter- insurgency operations emphasizes that '[i]n planning counterinsurgency operations, it is imperative that leaders and Soldiers understand that military force is not an end in itself, but is just one of the instruments of national power employed by the political leadership to achieve its broader objectives'.[67] The US joint doctrine on Military Operations Other than War (MOOTW) has also defined principles for success that are very useful but traditionally un-American. They include principles such as restraint in the application of force, the importance of legitimacy of the mission, and perseverance for protracted operations.[68]

While doctrine is very up-to-date with the latest lessons learned from expeditionary operations, the US military does not seem to have taken

[63]Anthony H. Cordesman, 'Iraq: Too Uncertain To Call', Center for Strategic and International Studies paper, Nov. 2003, available at <www.csis.org/features/031114tooucertain.pdf>, accessed Jan. 2005, 12.

[64]Antulio Echevarria, 'Towards an American Way of War', a Strategic Studies Institute Report, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, March 2004, available at <www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/pubs/display.cfm/hurl/PubID=374>, accessed Jan. 2005.

[65]John Mackinlay, 'Casualties of the US-UK Military Alliance', *World Today* (Dec. 2004).

[66]John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Westport, CT: Praeger 2002), 205.

[67]US Army HQ, *FMI 3-07.22 Counterinsurgency Operations* (2004), 2–14.

[68]US JCS, *JP3.07 Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War* (2005), viii.

this to heart. This is significant for a military that places such importance in military principles and the importance of doctrine. The problem is twofold: first, the US military culture does not have high enough regard for expeditionary operations and therefore do not train according to these doctrines: second, the conflicts in question have often not been interpreted as peace operations, and the doctrines have therefore never been applied. The latter problem is obvious in the case of Iraq where US troops were, initially at least, operating within the framework of traditional warfare.

Moreover, no doctrine will perfectly fit the complex and unpredictable situation on the ground, and as the operations in Iraq have shown, a large number of doctrines may have to be applied within the matter of hours. This problem is best described by US Marine Corps General Charles Kulak's 'Three Block War'. Within limited time and space, troops can be involved in high-intensity combat, low-intensity peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance.[69] With a rigid military mindset like the US, writing doctrines for every possible type of operation might even be counter-productive. Preparing for an operation using only one or two doctrines and field manuals will probably not be enough to prepare the soldiers and officers properly for the wide range of tasks and situations they are likely to face. Training them according to all possible doctrines still means that the soldiers and officers have to be able to apply the appropriate doctrine for each situation. This is expecting too much. It can be argued that instead of several doctrines, a flexible mindset that originates in a solid understanding of the situation on the ground, as well as good judgement, is what leads to sound decision-making.

Studies of actual US military performance during peace operations show just how problematic these issues are, as they paint a completely different picture than the contents of doctrine. Despite the US military's successes and evident professionalism and effectiveness in many military operations, it has been heavily criticized in recent peace operations such as Bosnia, Somalia and Kosovo. Inflexibility, over-emphasis on force protection, and an indifference to mission success, are commonly stated complaints. In the words of Thomas Mockaitis: 'Nothing underscores American discomfort with peace operations more than the emphasis on force protection at the expense even of mission success.'[70] While the US military has moved beyond the traditional abhorrence of unconventional wars and have developed strong joint

[69]Charles C. Krulak, 'The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War', *Marines Magazine* 28/1 (Jan. 1999).

[70]Thomas R. Mockaitis, 'Civil-Military Cooperation in Peace Operations: The Case of Kosovo', a Strategic Studies Institute Report, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, Oct.

doctrines for MOOTW, the attitudes, and the military culture that emphasizes large- scale warfare of mass and firepower, have not changed with new doctrine.[71] There is in other words a large discrepancy between doctrine and actual behaviour during peace operations.

The US approach to complex expeditionary operations is based on the preferred way of war, which involves large wars of annihilation, fought quickly at minimum cost. It also involves the maximum use of force, and the application of high technology to maximize firepower. The same principles apply when US troops are involved in complex expeditionary operations. However, the limited, or complex, political aims of such operations mean that a low tolerance for casualties is added to the list as an American way of peacekeeping.

Although US doctrine on stability and support operations include approaches more suitable for complex operations in the contemporary context, US military culture is too fixed on traditional warfare to seriously include it in the training and preparation of such operations. US troops train and prepare for a specific context and a corresponding way of fighting, and then find themselves in a much more complex situation, where they are forced to improvise, show flexibility, and quickly adapt to changing environments and threats. For this, American troops are not prepared. British Brigadier Nigel Aylwin-Foster argues that, rather than describing the US Army as 'simply inflexible and incompetent', a better explanation for US tardiness in adapting to post-conflict type operations is that it is the victim of its own successful development into 'the ultimate warfighting machine'. The fact that the US Army sees itself as an instrument of national survival has created an uncompromising focus on conventional warfighting that has left it ill-prepared for post-conflict type operations, and discouraged quick adaptation to these types of operations.[72]

US Operations in Iraq

The US conduct of operations in Iraq has largely confirmed the traditional notions of American warfare. It is clear that the most influential planners saw the war in conventional terms, despite several warnings about potential insurgencies, and the consequences thereof, from government agencies and research institutes, as well as from

2004, available at <www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/pubs/display.cfm/hurl/PubID=583>, accessed Jan. 2005, 14.

[71]Mockaitis, 'Civil-Military Cooperation in Peace Operations', 13.

[72]Nigel Aylwin-Foster, 'Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations', *Military Review* 85/6 (Nov.–Dec. 2005), 14.

within the US military itself. Operation 'Iraqi Freedom' was planned as a military campaign to defeat enemy forces. The US military had thereby made its choice regarding which doctrine and training to pursue.

Studied as a purely military invasion campaign, Operation 'Iraqi Freedom' was one of the most impressive victories ever seen. The invasion campaign not only displayed a known technological superiority of the American military, but also an operational flexibility and effectiveness that took the world by surprise. Instead of the expected 'shock and awe' involving heavy bombardment and a massive frontal attack, the US troops created a shock in its surprise tactics, and awe in its speed and effectiveness. The drive for Baghdad displayed a logistics operation that is unprecedented in military history and the fall of Baghdad was forced with speed and accuracy. Boot rightly observes that 'U.S. troops as a whole displayed remarkable skills in Iraq. They were able to fight effectively for long stretches at a time, react quickly to events, and avoid most of the traps the Iraqis had laid for them.'[73]

However, an old lesson obviously not yet learned, is that battle victories cannot alone win wars. A British battalion commander argued that the very day President Bush declared the end of major combat operations after 42 days, the real war started.[74] The post-war period, or Phase IV, as it has been called, has despite relatively successful elections and the capture of Saddam Hussein, been ineffective. Or in Michael O'Hanlon words: 'one of the most brilliant invasion successes in modern military history was followed almost immediately by one of the most incompetently planned occupations'.[75] As soon as Saddam Hussein's regime fell, a power vacuum of anarchic disorder, involving widespread looting and the first signs of a growing insurgency, took its place. While the military strategists were patting each others' backs for a job well done, the reconstruction of Iraq and the introduction of security and democracy were issues still on the planning table. There was a great disconnect between the State Department and the Pentagon regarding the planning of the post-conflict phase of the campaign.

According to O'Hanlon, the biggest mistake in Iraq was to go to war without a complete Phase IV plan (stabilization and reconstruction). 'Invading another country with the intention of destroying its existing government yet without a serious strategy for providing security

[73]Boot, 'The New American Way of War'.

[74]Interview with Lt. Col. Matthew Lowe (May 2004).

[75]Michael O'Hanlon, 'Iraq Without a Plan', *Policy Review*, No. 128, Dec. 2004, available at <www.policyreview.org/dec04/ohanlon.html>, accessed Jan. 2005.

thereafter defies logic and falls short of proper professional military standards of competence.'[76] While many of the critical tasks to stabilize Iraq were essentially civilian and thus the State Department's responsibility, the interagency squabbles meant that the State Department was effectively cut out of the planning process, and was therefore not ready when its competencies were suddenly needed. The lack of planning for the stabilization phase, or a possible insurgency, also meant that the coalition troops were not sufficient in numbers or effectively trained to accomplish the difficult tasks of stabilization and security.

However, while many commentators, including Ambassador Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, have argued that increasing the number of troops from the beginning would have been the most important change, this articler argues that it was more a problem of military culture and civil-military relations. In counter-insurgency campaigns the most important factor is not the number of boots on the ground, but what you do with the boots you have. The military, which arguably was the only institution with enough resources to actually address the deteriorating situation after the fall of the Iraqi regime, fell back into its old peacekeeping mindset. In a critique of US behaviour in Iraq, Brigadier Nigel Aylwin-Foster argued that many US personnel struggled to understand the nuances of the post-conflict environment, and 'at times their cultural insensitivity, almost certainly inadvertent, arguably amounted to institutional racism'.[77] The similarities with previous US operations in Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo are easily recognized.

First, US preoccupation with force protection meant that they quickly moved into large camps outside the cities, thereby alienating themselves from the local population. The process was exacerbated by the conduct of patrols, which were most often done in armed vehicles, with the usual offensive posture of pointing guns at those who happened to pass by. Second, the US forces did not understand that the very reason they were in Iraq was to create a political transition. A remarkable display of bad leadership and lack of understanding was provided by Captain Dave Gray of the US 4th Infantry Division who complained about the post-war transition job. 'I don't like it, but I'll do it. There is no NATO, so we're doing the NATO thing now. But it's kinda f-ked: to take a bunch of infantry who're trained to kill, not mediate who ran over somebody's dog.'[78]

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[76]O'Hanlon, 'Iraq Without a Plan'.

[77]Aylwin-Foster, 'Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations', 3.

[78]Michael Hirsh, 'Our New Civil War', *Newsweek*, 12 May 2003, available at <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/3068556/>, accessed April 2005.

The US Joint doctrine on military operations other than war (MOOTW) concludes that 'all military personnel should understand the political objective and the potential impact of inappropriate actions'.[79] In peace operations with limited but complex political aims and with global media following every step, the smallest event may have strategic consequences. On numerous occasions US troops nevertheless displayed that this part of doctrine has not been a priority during pre-deployment training. The most obvious example is the systematic abuse of prisoners contained in the Abu Ghraib prison. Regardless of whether the incidents of abuse, as many commentators believe, are part of a larger institutional problem, or simply the result of a few 'rotten apples' that comes with every army, these events displayed a lack of understanding of the political role that the US Armed Forces are playing in Iraq. The consequences of such cases are difficult to measure, but Sir Lawrence Freedman argues that the context of irregular wars requires not only purpose, but also practice, of Western forces to be governed by liberal values in order to be credible.[80] The cases of abuse in Iraq, as well as the treatment of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, therefore, mean a loss of credibility for the US as a promoter of democracy, and as a promoter of democracy and respect for human rights.

In short, the American military in Iraq have behaved in accordance with its doctrine on traditional operations throughout the campaign, including the post-conflict phase. The US military repeated its display of complete superiority in terms of technology and organization during the initial invasion. However, during the planning stage the US administration failed to work in an orchestrated fashion leading to missed information and stovepipe planning. The civilian and military aspects of the operation were not coordinated and the command and control structures also failed to reflect the need for close cooperation and coordination of all instruments of power. The tactical behaviour of US troops in Iraq reveals that they have neither been trained, nor mentally prepared for post-conflict type operations. Instead, the US military resorted to mixture between traditional warfare tactics based on firepower and technology, and ineffective peacekeeping tactics with overemphasis on force protection displayed several times during the 1990s. US forces also displayed a lack of cultural sensitivity and understanding of how the political aims of the operation must be reflected in their behaviour on the ground.

[79]US JCS, *JP3.07 Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War* (1995), vii.
[80]Freedman, 'The Transformation of Strategic Affairs', 8.

The British Approach to Complex Expeditionary Operations

In 1932, British strategist B. H. Liddell Hart described the British way of war as that of the indirect approach, which in its ideal form 'creates conditions in which the enemy is forced to the inescapable conclusion that defeat has become inevitable before battle has been joined'.[81] He arrived at this conclusion, or normative argument rather, from a disdain for the massive and suicidal frontal attacks of the Great War, and a romantic view of Britain's businesslike colonial tradition of war, which had at its heart, 'economic pressure exercised through sea-power'.[82] However, Freedman has convincingly argued that the British way in war has always been greatly influenced by her allies, and that since World War II, British strategy depends upon the participation of the US as an ally.[83] Rod Thornton argues with confidence that the British Army is primarily a counter-insurgency army, and that 'since its very formation and for the greater part of its history, this army's principal mission was to acquire and then to police imperial possessions'.[84] Thus, in the search for a British approach to expeditionary operations, that is where we shall place our focus.

Robert Cassidy argues that the imperial policing, intrastate security, and counter-insurgency operations, which have dominated British military experience, have created a pragmatic and indirect approach to strategy with limited reliance on technology and low casualty averseness.[85] John Nagl adds that British counter-insurgency tactics have often involved close civil-military cooperation, great flexibility and the principle of the minimum use of force.[86] Another interesting feature, that Nagl highlights, is the informal and improvised approach to all operations, and the idea that each operation and theatre is so different that it requires its own doctrine and policy. This creates greater flexibility and adaptability in the theatre.[87]

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[81]Lawrence Freedman, 'The Gulf Conflict and the British Way in Warfare', Annual Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives Lecture, Jan. 2003, available at <www.kcl.ac.uk/lhcma/info/lec93.htm>, accessed Feb. 2005.

[82]Liddell Hart cited in Freedman, 'The Gulf Conflict and the British Way in Warfare'.

[83]Freedman, 'The Gulf Conflict and the British Way in Warfare'.

[84]Rod Thornton, 'Historical Origins of the British Army's Counter-insurgency and Counter-terrorist Techniques', Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces Conference paper, (2004), available at <www.dcaf.ch/news/PfP_7thConf_Bucharest/Baxter.pdf>, accessed Nov. 2004, 1.

[85]Robert M. Cassidy, *Peacekeeping in the Abyss: British and American Peacekeeping Doctrine and Practice after the Cold War* (Westport, CT: Praeger 2004), 76.

[86]Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, 51, 204–5.

[87]Ibid. 192, 204.

Thornton argues that beyond the pragmatic lessons of imperial policing, these principles are also a result of the Victorian values that permeated British society during the second half of the nineteenth century.[88] Regarding the minimum use of force Mockaitis uses a quote from a 1923 British Army manual, *Duties in Aid of Civil Power*, to point out that British soldiers have constantly been reminded that what is important is 'not the annihilation of an enemy but the suppression of a temporary disorder, and therefore the degree of force to be employed must be directed to that which is necessary to restore order and must never exceed it'.[89]

While US professionalism and military culture was formed in relative isolation, the British military culture was formed out of working towards political goals in the colonies. That military culture emerged out of a combination of pragmatic lessons from colonial policing, including the importance of working closely with the civilian administration, operating close to the population in smaller units to gain information and trust on the one hand, and on the other the 'Victorian values' of the nineteenth century, which involved Christian values, medieval chivalry, and an idea of duty to the law.[90]

British officers are, despite the obvious emphasis on expeditionary operations, keen to express the fact that conventional warfare is the foundation of their military training and culture. In any case, on top of that foundation, much training goes into, and great pride is taken in, building a capacity for the wars that the armed forces are more likely to fight – peace operations and counter-insurgency.[91] This also means acknowledging that expeditionary operations are no less important, or less demanding, than conventional warfare. As then CDS General Sir Charles Guthrie expressed it, 'Being a "force for good" is not about helping little old ladies across the road. It is about maintaining international stability through a willingness to deploy rapidly, anywhere in the world, credible combat forces capable of making a real difference.'[92]

Significantly, the cultural features of flexibility and political sensitivity have been well maintained and further developed in the

[88]Rod Thornton, 'The British Army and the Origins of its Minimum Force Philosophy', *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 15/1 (Spring 2004), 86.
[89]Cited in Thomas R. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919–1960* (New York: St. Martin's Press 1990), 18.
[90]Thornton, 'The British Army and the Origins of its Minimum Force Philosophy', 99.
[91]Interview with Brig. Simon Mayall (Nov. 2004).
[92]Charles Guthrie, 'The New British Way in Warfare', Annual Liddell Hart Centre for Military archives Lecture, Feb. 2001, available at <www.kcl.ac.uk/lhcma/info/lec01.htm>, accessed Feb. 2005.

contemporary military culture. During over 30 years of counter-insurgency in Northern Ireland, British troops have not only reinforced the understanding of minimum force, civil-military cooperation, and flexibility, they have also learned to work under the close scrutiny of the law and of the media. Working closely with the political leadership is also a tradition that remains in the British case and that is seen as a requirement in all operations. According to Brigadier Simon Mayall, former commander of the British led multinational brigade in Kosovo, political oversight and leadership is not a problem within the British chain of command. There are political advisers for all commanders, normally down to brigade level, who keep a line open to London on the political-military side, and who ensure that the commanders understand the background of the operation. This is not perceived as political meddling as the advisers are considered a resource for the commanders and not as tools for control. The British commanders are normally left to do their job as they please and instead refer back to London if they feel the need for further political guidance.[93]

The British culture of flexibility and 'muddling through' also has some negative aspects. One such aspect is that the lessons of past operations have not always been remembered to a large enough extent. World War II, not surprisingly, created a bias towards conventional large-scale warfare, and it took about a decade, a failure in Palestine, and a very shaky start to the counter-insurgency operations in Malaya, before the British would readjust their strategic culture to effectively deal with counter-insurgency contexts.[94] Equally, Hew Strachan argues that in the wake of the World Wars, the operations in India in 1919 and again in Palestine in 1946–48 were failures because the Army had been insufficiently politicized. It had lost its sense of understanding of the political objectives and the importance to work with civilian agencies. In military terms, the Army failed to recognize that 'as an agent of policy its tools were not necessarily restricted to force'.[95]

It should also be emphasized that the British military culture has not been a guarantor for minimum use of force. There are numerous examples in British colonial history of severe brutality in the application of tactics. The Boer War, the Amritsar massacre and the response to the Mau-Mau rebellion in Kenya are but a few examples.

Negatively described, the British way of war is about muddling through each operation as it comes and often failing to use the gained

[93]Interview with Brig. Simon Mayall (Nov. 2004).

[94]Bruce Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq*, RAND occasional paper (Santa Monica, CA: RAND 2004), available at <www.rand.org/publications/OP/OP127/>, accessed Jan. 2005.

[95]Hew Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (London: OUP 1997), 171.

lessons learned by producing doctrine. The counter-insurgency operations in the aftermath of World War II, as well as in Malaya and Northern Ireland, all took off in a troubling manner because of the lack of a counter-insurgency doctrine. However, positively described, the British way of war is about flexibility and adaptability. By producing soldiers and officers with flexible and adaptable mindsets, and by nurturing sound civil-military relations, the British have a remarkable capability of adjusting to every level of conflict as they go along. The colonial history, the operational experience from Northern Ireland, and the nature of the civil-military relations, mean that the British military has developed an operational culture and mindset that is flexible and adjustable to the context in which it finds itself. Or as the Assistant Under Secretary (Programmes) said to the Defence Select Committee in the House of Commons in 1991: 'We have structured our forces precisely to deal with the unexpected.'[96]

British Operations in Iraq

The most obvious observation is the quick transition that the British troops made from war fighting to stabilization. Within hours of the conquest of Basra in April 2003, the British started foot patrolling the city in a 'firm but friendly manner'. This is a familiar picture from British operations in the Balkans and Sierra Leone, and the more striking aspect of British operations was perhaps its conduct during the initial war phase. Like the Americans, the British troops faced very limited resistance during the early days of the invasion, and they therefore advanced with impressive speed. The real test came from the city of Basra, where the British faced heavy resistance.

With a typical indirect approach the British did not haste to crack the nut, but instead began a siege by creating a loosely formed cordon around the city.[97] Between 23 and 31 March, 2003 the siege of Basra almost took the form of a stand-off. The British waited and watched, gathered information and infiltrated the city with small units of Special Forces.[98] After 31 March, the British commander thought he had a clear enough intelligence picture to start infiltrating larger units into Basra. During the first few days of April the British raided Basra with Warrior infantry fighting vehicles, very much like what the American troops were doing in Baghdad with tanks. They destroyed Baathist

[96]House of Commons Session 1991–92, Third Report, question 1190, 16, quoted in Nagl *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam.*

[97]Williamson Murray and Robert H. Scales, *The Iraq War: A Military History* (London: Belknap Press 2003), 147.

[98]John Keegan, *The Iraq War* (London: Hutchinson 2004), 178.

positions, added to the division's stock of intelligence, and managed to infiltrate more sniper teams into the city.[99]

Finally, on 6 April, after 15 days of siege and information gathering, the British launched a full-scale assault on Basra from essentially every direction. By utilizing 'battle groups', smaller improvised formations of troops suited for the particular task, the British made their presence known all over the city. By the evening of 6 April, the British were largely in control of the city. The following day the remnants of the Baathist regime in Basra, as well as the remaining Fedayeen were chased out of the area by employing a battalion from the Parachute Regiment.[100] During this day an interesting and indicative episode took place. As the Parachute Regiment withdrew from the city, Shia crowds began throwing rocks at British tanks and armoured personnel carriers. Instead of withdrawing to safety or firing warning shots, a British battle group commander ordered the armoured personnel carrier crews, as well as the infantry, to 'get out of the vehicles, take off their helmets, stow most of their weapons on their vehicles and walk out into the agitated crowd'.[101] This first 'social patrol' was conducted in a firm but friendly manner that clearly signalled to the people in Basra that the British were there to stay, and that the Shiite population would not be abandoned like in 1991. The foot patrolling and other confidence-building measures that were initiated almost immediately after Basra was under control, also helped to limit the extent of looting and disorder after the fall of the Baathist rule in the port city.

A contrasting view is nevertheless presented by the Human Rights Watch, which has revealed that extensive looting and civil unrest took place in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Basra. The Human Rights Watch Reports argued that 'the extent of looting in the first week, and British failure to respond to it, convinced many residents of Basra that their security was not a priority for British forces'.[102] The report is, according to Alice Hills, significant, as it implies that what the British considered an acceptable level of disorder and violence in the aftermath of the fall of Basra, was in the eyes of the local population not enough to provide the sense of individual security that was necessary to create or maintain support for the occupation.[103]

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[99]Murray and Scales, *The Iraq War*, 149.
[100]Keegan, *The Iraq War,* 180–2.
[101]Murray and Scales, *The Iraq War,* 152.
[102]Human Rights Watch, *Basra: Crime and Insecurity under British Occupation* (2003), available at <www.hrw.org/reports/2003>, accessed April 2006, 8.
[103]Alice Hills, 'Basra and the Referent Points of Twofold War', *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 14/3(Autumn 2003), 38–9.

In other words, the 'softly-softly approach' was in this case too soft as it was based on the tactical needs and safety of British troops, rather than the security of the local population, which interpreted the situation differently. As previously argued, the British culture of minimum use of force and political sensitivity, also does not provide a guarantee against abuse. The case in which three British soldiers were charged and later jailed and dismissed from the Army in disgrace over the abuse of Iraqi detainees in Basra highlights this fact.[104]

In the final analysis, the siege and fall of Basra is here interpreted as an example of the well-developed political understanding of the British armed forces. The use of what Christopher Dandeker more accurately calls 'measured use of force',[105] meant that not only did they win an overwhelming military victory, they also did it with the political objectives of reconstruction and democracy in mind. Instead of rushing to victory, the British troops waited until they felt they had good enough intelligence to take control of the city. As they launched the final assault, they created a complete presence in the city, which not only confused the resistance but also established a sense of security and control when the battles were over. Collateral damage and civilian casualties were also limited through the conservative use of air support. Thus, not only were the British troops professional in the application of post-war peacekeeping activities, they also showed that it is possible to fight battles with the political objective in mind. Through the application of patience, extensive intelligence gathering, and a carefully executed decisive attack using improvised battle groups, the British forces again managed to adhere to their counter-insurgency principles of minimum force, flexibility, and good civil-military relations.

Before concluding, the relevance and comparability of US and British operations in Iraq as support for the argument in this article should be discussed. The operations in Iraq are problematic for at least two reasons. First, the British and American troops operated within quite different contexts in Iraq. The Shia dominated British area of responsibility (AOR), in the south of the country, has been considered 'friendlier' than the Sunni dominated areas in the American AOR. Can the different performances in Iraq be a result of contextual differences rather than civil/military relations?

It is certainly possible, but a review of the existing literature on the performance of US and British troops in complex expeditionary operations supports the argument of this article. US troops, whether

[104]See 'Iraq abuse case soldiers jailed', *BBC News*, 25 Feb. 2006, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4296511.stm>, accessed April 2006.
[105]Dandeker, Christopher, email correspondence with the author, March 2005.

in the difficult conditions of Vietnam and Somalia, or the more benign contexts of Bosnia and Kosovo, have operated in a similar manner, as that exhibited in Iraq. Equally, the British display of political understanding, minimum use of force and flexibility is a familiar phenomenon from the different contexts of Malaya, Northern Ireland, Kosovo and Sierra Leone. The studies of British and US performance in these disparate cases imply that the findings of this article cannot be explained by the different contexts in which the troops were operating. The US and British armed forces seem to operate according to their respective approaches, despite great difference in contextual variables.[106]

The second problem is the fact that the British military operated in Iraq as the junior partner in an American-led coalition. It is therefore difficult to analyze British strategic thinking in the context of Iraq. An example is the intriguing question if the planning and execution of the post-conflict phase would have been more comprehensive and effective if it had been a British-led operation. Although that question will never be answered, the effective and well coordinated British operations in Malaya and Sierra Leone would suggest such a possibility. This suggestion is further supported by the fact that the British, despite being the junior partners in the coalition, not only went further than the Americans did in the planning of post-conflict operations by creating a list of post-conflict objectives. The British also expressed concern about the limitations of US planning for the post-conflict phase.

Conclusion

This article has tested the culture and structure of civil-military relations as a factor that influences military performance in expeditionary operations. A comparative study of British and American civil-military relations, their approaches to expeditionary operations, as well as their conduct of operations in Iraq from 2003, has led to the conclusion that this is indeed an important factor. The nature of civil-military relations affects military operational performance in at least two important ways: *directly*, by providing the highest levels in the chain of command – the level where strategic aims are set and

[106]The cases of Vietnam and Malaya are well covered by Nagl, *Learning to Ear Soup with a Knife*, and Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change*. Cassidy, *Peacekeeping in the Abyss,* covers the cases of US operations in Somalia and the British in Bosnia. An example of the rich literature on Northern Ireland is Colin McInnes, *Hot War, Cold War: the British Army's Way in Warfare 1945–1995* (Washington DC: Brassey's 1996). A useful study of the British Operation 'Palliser' in Sierra Leone (2000) is provided by Gwyn Prins, *The Heart of War: On Power, Conflict and Obligation in the 21st Century* (London: Routledge 2002).

operational plans made, and: *indirectly* by being the arena in which decisions on size, funding and doctrine of the armed forces are made. Without well functioning civil-military relations, structures as well as culture, effectiveness in complex expeditionary operations is likely to decrease.

The article has also sought to answer what type of culture and structure of civil-military relations will provide for military organizations 'fit for purpose'. In the US case, a divided structure of civil-military relations, combined with a competitive and distrustful culture lead to problems in the field of operations, as the organization struggles to adjust to the contemporary context of complex expeditionary operations. The approach to expeditionary operations does not include a sense of importance regarding such operations. Instead, the US military has until recently continued to organize and train at the divisional level, although now more and more at the brigade level, but still with doctrinal emphasis on regular warfare.

The case of Iraq highlights how the divided and competitive civil-military interface led to underdeveloped planning of the stabilization and reconstruction phases of the operation. Troops in the field also displayed acute difficulties in the transition from the combat phase to the reconstruction phase. This was exacerbated by a lack of political sensitivity and flexibility that is necessary in post-conflict reconstruction type operations.

In the British case, a structure of close civil-military integration at the ministerial level, as well as close interagency cooperation has instead led to an approach to expeditionary operations that emphasizes flexibility, minimum use of force, and civil-military cooperation. This was also confirmed in the case of Iraq where British troops displayed the political sensitivity and minimum use of force at the operational and tactical levels that have previously been displayed in Kosovo and Sierra Leone. Unfortunately, the case of Iraq failed to create a comparable body for strategic-level operational planning by the British as they were the junior partners in a coalition. However, a sense of contrast is provided by the fact that the British MoD published post-conflict aims, despite the fact that the coalition as a whole lacked such aims. More research into different cases is necessary in order to establish that impression.

The findings of the article help explain why the US performed exceptionally during the combat phases of the war, while underperforming during the post-conflict phases. In expeditionary operations, the Janowitzean form of civil-military structure and culture, exemplified by the British case, outperforms the Huntingtonian structures of the US case, which, nevertheless, seem to be effective in the conduct of large-scale regular warfare. The fact that the structure and culture of civil-military relations influence military performance to

the extent this article implies, makes it an important factor when discussing operational effectiveness and military performance, and needs more attention in this debate. The civil-military dimension particularly helps explain how the conceptual and moral factors influence military capability.

Given the contemporary strategic context, which requires unprecedented civil-military coordination and cooperation in the planning and execution of expeditionary operations, these findings are also of great importance for policy-makers. In order to ensure effective expeditionary operations there is a need to adjust not just the armed forces, but perhaps even more importantly, the structure and culture of civil-military relations, especially in the US case. The strategic level divide between high level officers and politicians must not translate into a reluctance on the part of the military to develop increased understanding of politics and political objectives. Instead, there is in the US case a need for increased civil-military integration and cooperation both formally and informally, in order to develop the mutual understanding and trust that is necessary for the development of comprehensive strategies that include all the state's instruments of power. This includes increased interagency cooperation between the Departments of State and Defense for a start, as well as increased civil-military integration within the Pentagon.

At the operational level, British counter-insurgency operations have demonstrated the importance of unified command structures that include the civilian as well as the military components of operations. This creates the necessary comprehensive campaign plan and civil-military coordination. It also creates a more insightful translation of political aims into military implementation. This is a lesson that needs to be better implemented in the current command structures on both sides of the Atlantic.

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