

A “See You Soon” To Arms:
A Study on Post-War Military Reforms

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Dedication

To Thomas, my beautiful boy.

Abstract

In the world of wars and their lessons, it has been commonly declared that the military always “fights the last war.” That is, states always use lessons from the last war when fighting the next one – sometimes even excessively. The reality, however, is that countries learn and reform their militaries very differently after wars. In some cases, civilians participate extensively in military reforms. In others, the military has complete autonomy to reform itself. How to explain this variation? What are the determinants of civilian participation in post-war military reforms? Existing literature tends to be overly deterministic regarding who, among civilians and the military, is key to military reforms and innovation. Yet there is extensive empirical variation in time and space in civilian participation in reforms. I argue that the balance of political power between civilians and the military determines who gets to lead reforms. In post-war contexts, this balance of power is largely determined by whom the public assigns responsibility for what took place in the war. I also theorize how the public assigns blame or credit to each actor. In the first chapter, I develop a theory of reforms to explain the causal path between war events and military reforms. I argue that 1) both civilians and the military have strong incentives to lead reforms, 2) the relative popularity of civilian leaders and the military affect the balance of political power between them, which, in turn, determines who gets to lead these reforms, and 3) wars affect the popularity of these actors. I then propose a set of prerogatives that are taken to be the responsibility of each of them. For example, civilians are expected to be held accountable for initiating wars and gathering allies, while the military should be held responsible for issues such as desertion rates, war crimes, and battlefield performance.

In the empirical portion of the dissertation, I test my theory on the effects of blame and credit on civilian participation in reforms using original quantitative data on post-war states. The dataset includes military reforms (organizational, doctrinal, recruitment, and force structure), whether civilians or the military enacted them, and whether blame or credit was assigned to civilians or the military by the public for war outcomes. I find strong support for the argument that blame and praise assignment is associated with subsequent levels of civilian participation in reforms, even controlling for previous indicators of civil-military relations and other country- and conflict-specific variables. The sources of responsibility assignment also generally conform to

theoretical expectations. Civilians tend to be blamed or credited for war initiation, and the military is held responsible for what they do in the battlefield. Three case studies on post-Vietnam War U.S., post-Six-Day War Israel, and post-Yom Kippur War Israel trace the causes and mechanisms of civilian levels of participation in reforms, as well as the determinants of blame and credit. They rely on archival work, oral histories, and secondary works from the historical literature.

My findings have important implications for the literature on military reforms and innovation, military effectiveness, civil-military relations, democratic stability, and the domestic consequences of war.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the world of wars and their lessons, it has been commonly declared that the military always "fights the last war."¹ That is, states always use lessons from the last war when fighting the next one – sometimes even excessively. Nonetheless, a more accurate representation of reality is that they only sometimes do so. Egypt, after being defeated and humiliated in the Six-Day War, is an example. The country learned from its mistakes and enacted several reforms in intelligence, civilian control of the military, and military chains of command, among others.² Israel, in contrast, decided not to learn too much from the conflict after its victory. Despite reports indicating failures in readiness and intelligence,³ no significant reforms were enacted.⁴ Egypt's reforms proved effective when the two countries met again on the battlefield in the Yom Kippur War. The country's performance was much better, and the war was seen as a political victory and a morale booster.⁵ Israel made several of the same mistakes again and performed much poorer than expected – the country experienced this conflict as a terrible psychological blow.⁶

Similar contrasts can be found in Europe. After it invaded Ethiopia, Italy enacted reforms that would lead to a colossal failure in World War II: the "Pariani reforms" changed infantry

¹ Ernest R. May, *Lessons of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*, 1 edition (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); Andrew Bennett, *Condemned to Repetition?* (The MIT Press, 1999); Russell J. Leng, "When Will They Ever Learn? Coercive Bargaining in Recurrent Crises," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 27, no. 3 (1983): 379–419; Jack S. Levy, "Learning and Foreign Policy: Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield," *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (1994): 279–312.

² Risa Brooks, "An Autocracy at War: Explaining Egypt's Military Effectiveness, 1967 and 1973," *Security Studies* 15, no. 3 (September 1, 2006): 396–430, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410601028321>.

³ Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Presidio Press, 2003), 311.

⁴ Helen Chapin Metz, "Israel: A Country Study," image (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1990), 260, 268, 285, <https://www.loc.gov/item/90006119/>.

⁵ Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter That Transformed the Middle East*, Reprint edition (New York: Schocken, 2005), 1083–84.

⁶ Rabinovich, 498.

divisions to have a regiment of two battalions instead of three,⁷ and “lessened the fighting power of Italian divisions intended for a Fascist-style mechanized war that was beyond Italy’s economic capabilities to wage.”⁸ Meanwhile, the country failed to tackle glaring problems of interoperability, budget, planning, and procurement. Finland also reformed its armed forces before World War II, after the Russo-Finnish War. However, the country did so successfully and remained an effective military power throughout the following decades.⁹

Similar examples exist even with countries that had to develop armed forces almost from anew. After its defeat in the Armenian–Azerbaijani War, Azerbaijan created a single, unified military with a streamlined military structure, which became a professional force in a few years. Reforms emphasized education, training, and force planning in line with NATO standards and practices, and ranged across several military domains.¹⁰ The results of these efforts were evident in the 2020 clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenia, in which the Azerbaijanis obtained a “crushing defeat that erased Armenia’s victory in the First Karabakh War.”¹¹ Uganda was in a similar position after its defeat against Tanzania. However, the country failed to create a coherent force following the conflict. After erratic reforms, its armed forces showed almost nonexistent professionalism and became a coalition of rebel armies instead of a standing force.¹²

⁷ Ciro Paoletti, *A Military History of Italy*, Illustrated edition (Westport Conn: Praeger, 2007), 170.

⁸ Nicolas G. Virtue, “Mussolini and His Generals: The Armed Forces and Fascist Foreign Policy, 1922-1940,” *Canadian Journal of History* 43, no. 3 (December 22, 2008): 554–57.

⁹ Eric Solsten and Sandra Meditz, *Finland : A Country Study* (Washington, D.C. : Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1990), 295–96, 325–26, <https://www.loc.gov/item/89600315/>.

¹⁰ Elkhan Mehdiyev, “Security Sector Reform in Azerbaijan: Key Milestones and Lessons Learned,” n.d., 45.

¹¹ Michael A. Reynolds, “Confidence and Catastrophe: Armenia and the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War,” *War on the Rocks*, January 11, 2021, <http://warontherocks.com/2021/01/confidence-and-catastrophe-armenia-and-the-second-nagorno-karabakh-war/>. See also Cory Welt and Andrew S Bowen, “Azerbaijan and Armenia: The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict,” n.d., 42.

¹² Amii Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military in Uganda, 1890–1985*, 1987th edition (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987), 168–74; Rita M. Byrnes, “Uganda : A Country Study,” image (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1992), 210, <https://www.loc.gov/item/92000513/>.

In fact, there is even variation within the same country in a short period. The US, for example, refused to perform any military reform that could address its poor performance in counterinsurgency during the Vietnam War. Instead, the Army itself decided it did not wish to fight this kind of war in the future and would completely ignore counterinsurgency in the training and doctrine of the subsequent decades.¹³ This would haunt the country later, when it proved critical to some of the setbacks experienced in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁴ Alternatively, just a few years prior, the country successfully carried out the end of conscription and implemented an effective professional force.

As can be seen, the consequences of these reforms were often drastic for national security, military effectiveness, and defense policy. But what do the successful reforms in Egypt, Finland, Azerbaijan, and the recruitment reform in the US have in common? How about the subpar reforms (or lack thereof) in Israel, Italy, Uganda, and the abandonment of counterinsurgency in the US? The answer is straightforward. In the first group, civilians actively participated and oversaw these changes; in the second, they were left entirely to the military.

In Egypt, the masses poured onto the streets in support of President Nasser, who successfully formed the necessary societal coalitions, asserted control over the military, and directed reforms.¹⁵ President Aliyev's experience in Azerbaijan was the same – when in conflict with military leaders, he demonstrated his popularity and charisma and gathered, on short notice,

¹³ Richard Lock-Pullan, *US Intervention Policy and Army Innovation: From Vietnam to Iraq*, 1 edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005), 35–36.

¹⁴ Michael C. Horowitz and Shira Pindyck, "What Is a Military Innovation? A Proposed Framework," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, December 15, 2019), 34, <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3504246>.

¹⁵ Brooks, "An Autocracy at War."

thousands of supporters in front of the presidential palace.¹⁶ He then oversaw reforms through the newly formed Defense Council and the Defense Ministry. There are, of course, ways of achieving civilian participation in more democratic contexts. In Finland, this took place simply through the creation of a Defense Revision Committee, tasked with carrying out necessary studies and recommending reforms. It was composed of six MPs, most of them from leftist parties, and five military officers.¹⁷ Similarly, the Gates Commission in the US carried out most of the studies and debates that led to the creation of the professional Army. It was also composed of both civilians and members of the military.¹⁸

In contrast, Israel saw an increase in the influence of the military. The press "praised the army's audacity, its ingenuity, and power" for weeks. Dayan (General and Defense Minister) and Rabin (Chief of the General Staff) were now elevated to icon status, and Rabin was given the honor of naming the war.¹⁹ The armed forces became quite influential in the country's defense and foreign policy, and several of its members became politicians.²⁰ The commanders who led the war had become national heroes.²¹ It was precisely the military who rejected the suggestions of intelligence and readiness failures. The armed forces developed a theory called "the concept," contributing to the country's heightened (and mistaken) sense of security leading up to the October

¹⁶ Svante Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, 1st edition (Richmond, Surrey, England: Routledge, 2000), 94.

¹⁷ Pekka Visuri, *Evolution of the Finnish Military Doctrine 1945–1985*, Finnish Defence Studies 1 (Helsinki, Finland: War College, Helsinki, 1990), 30.

¹⁸ Bernard D. Rostker, "I Want You!: The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force" (RAND Corporation, July 17, 2006), <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG265.html>; Richard A Hunt, "Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military, 1969–1973" (Historical Office: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2015); Robert K. Griffith Jr., "The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968–1974" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1997); David R. Henderson, "The Role of Economists in Ending the Draft" 2, no. 2 (August 2005): 362–76.

¹⁹ Oren, *Six Days of War*, 309.

²⁰ Oren, 315–16.

²¹ Metz, "Israel," 259.

War in 1973.²² In Italy, Mussolini deliberately neglected coordinating the armed forces, despite his clear imperial ambitions. Not only Pariani's reforms proved detrimental to the fighting power of the Italian Army, but his optimism also "blinded a willingly gullible Mussolini from realizing the true state of readiness of the army in 1938 and 1939."²³ The situation was different in Uganda regarding the powers of the President vis-à-vis the armed forces. After the war with Tanzania, the armed forces became the most powerful political actors. The military successfully blocked several reform attempts and ousted presidents who attempted changes in their leadership. Ultimately, incumbents were only able to "keep troops happy by making sure that their material interests were met - through high rates of pay, fast promotion, and giving them a free hand to plunder."²⁴ The only reforms were in recruitment - commanders attempted to intensify conscription from their ethnic groups. Finally, in the US, the Army emerged from the war in a position of strength to avoid civilian intervention in operational matters – the decision to neglect counterinsurgency has been described as an attempt to bury a traumatic experience and rescue their identity, which had emerged from World War II.²⁵

These examples should not be surprising to scholars of military studies. They are consistent with the simple fact that military organizations are like any other, in the sense that they have incentives to protect their own organizational interests.²⁶ External oversight is necessary because

²² Metz, 260.

²³ Virtue, "Mussolini and His Generals."

²⁴ Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military in Uganda, 1890–1985*, 171.

²⁵ Lock-Pullan, *US Intervention Policy and Army Innovation*.

²⁶ Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2 edition (New York: Pearson, 1999); Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914*, First Edition edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 58–107, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2538636>; Matthew Evangelista, *Innovation and the Arms Race: How the United States and the Soviet Union Develop New Military Technologies* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ Pr, 1988); Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars*, N/A edition (Ithaca: Cornell University

the armed forces' responses will often be more aligned with their own self-interests than with national interests and military effectiveness. Hence, civilian interventions in military decisions can be argued to be generally beneficial.²⁷ How else can we explain that the US armed forces resisted the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986,²⁸ the Brazilian military opposed the simple creation of the Defense Ministry,²⁹ and the British Army resisted investing in military medicine after the Crimean War, the South African War, and World War I?³⁰ One can also mention the “cult of the offensive” that seems to afflict several armed forces.³¹ These are all due to incentives.

Despite the evident importance of this topic, uncertainty and disagreement still abound in the literature regarding the sources of military reforms. A longstanding theoretical and empirical puzzle in the civil-military relations literature is whether civilians or the armed forces drive innovation and reforms in the military. Classic works by Rosen and Posen arrive at opposite conclusions,³² and more recent works validate either one or the other side of this debate.³³ Nevertheless, as I have demonstrated above, the empirical record shows nothing but variation. And

Press, 1986). See also Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany*, 1 edition (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

²⁷ Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime*, Reprint edition (New York: Anchor, 2003). See also Hull, *Absolute Destruction*.

²⁸ James R. Locher III, *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon*, Revised ed. edition (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004).

²⁹ Érica Winand and Héctor Luis Saint-Pierre, “A fragilidade da condução política da defesa no Brasil,” *História (São Paulo)* 29, no. 2 (December 2010): 3–29, <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0101-90742010000200002>.

³⁰ Mark Harrison, *Medicine and Victory: British Military Medicine in the Second World War*, 1 edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 8–9, 15–17.

³¹ Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive*; Van Evera, “The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War”; Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*.

³² Stephen Peter Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military*, 63799th edition (Ithaca, NY London: Cornell University Press, 1994); Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*.

³³ Benjamin Jensen, *Forging the Sword: Doctrinal Change in the U.S. Army*, 1 edition (Stanford, California: Stanford Security Studies, 2016); Suzanne Nielsen, *An Army Transformed: The U.S. Army's Post-Vietnam Recovery and the Dynamics of Change in Military Organizations* (Independently published, 2019); Suzanne C. Nielsen, “U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1973-1982: A Case Study in Successful Peacetime Military Reform” (ARMY COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLL FORT LEAVENWORTH KS, January 1, 2003), <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA416922>.

there is much more. Why were civilians in post-Grenada US and post-World War II South Africa able to reform the military? Why did the Army in India reform itself after the war against China, only to see civilians drive reforms after the Kargil conflict with Pakistan? How come civilians dictated reforms in Iran after the conflict with Iraq in 1980 but not in Peru after the war with Ecuador in 1995?

Given that almost no one would argue that the source of reforms is not consequential, why haven't the fields of international relations and civil-military relations made more progress on the subject? This is the one of the research questions that this project addresses: what are the determinants of civilian participation in post-war military reforms? In attempting to answer this question, this project not only addresses a longstanding puzzle in this literature, but also has critical global implications for the form that military reforms take around the world. These reforms, in turn, affect military effectiveness, civilian control over the military, and defense policies and budgets, among other important outcomes.

As I develop my argument below, it will become clear the answer to this question can be found in responsibility assignment. In other words, who gets blamed when wars go wrong, and who gets credit when they are successful. My second research question, then, is: what are the determinants of responsibility assignment? To answer this question, I delve into the literature on voting behavior and democratic (and autocratic) accountability. This argument, in turn, has consequences not only for military reforms, but for civil-military relations more broadly.

1.1. THE ARGUMENT IN BRIEF

My argument is that wars affect the popularity and the ability to form societal coalitions of civilian leaders and the military, which then affects who, among these two actors, leads subsequent

military reforms. The explanation I propose here, therefore, has at least three different components: 1) both civilians and the military have incentives to want to control military reforms; 2) popularity and societal coalitions affect the balance of political power between civilians and the military, which affects reforms; 3) wars affect their popularity and societal coalitions, and the public seeks information and assigns responsibility to them.

Throughout my analysis, I assume soft rationalism from civilian leaders, the military, and the population. Moreover, I treat the interaction between civilians and the military as a bargaining process. Finally, my approach in this study is heavily informed by the subfield of comparative politics, which often centers on the social elements shaping civil-military relations. This body of literature includes seminal pieces on the fundamental problems of civil-military relations, as well as more contemporary writings on military regime transitions to democracy and the connections between civil-military relations and armed conflict.

Having established some of the core assumptions of my analysis, the first component of my argument is that civilian and military have incentives to control military reforms. In the case of civilians, their first incentive is programmatic: advances in public policy generate credit to politicians. In this case, the area of public policy affected by military reforms is national security, which has the potential to significantly affect the security and well-being of citizens, especially in post-war contexts. Also, civilian leaders have the incentive to improve national security at the minimal possible cost. After all, they also receive credit for advances welfare, education, health, and economic reform, among others. In addition to programmatic incentives, particularistic incentives also create pressures for civilians to challenge the military's autonomy. These are incentives related to the use of resources to fuel politicians' personal support networks, which can take the form of clientelism, public investment in specific regions or industries, rent seeking, or

corruption. Finally, there is the more general issue of civilian control. Aside from the problem of competition for resources, civilians prefer to avoid the erosion of control over the armed forces more broadly.

Alternatively, the interests of the armed forces are related to the substantive organizational goals that militaries typically have. All else equal, military organizations strive to defend their salaries and budgets, as well as to preserve decision-making autonomy over military matters. In some cases, they also have preferences concerning the broader political, economic, and social order. When it comes to military reforms, the military should seek autonomy precisely because these reforms affect military affairs, as well as their budget and political influence. Furthermore, the armed forces typically sincerely believe they are more suited to enact military reforms, and that they are more competent and deserving of enacting national security policy. Finally, creating the precedent of military autonomy will be in the armed forces' interest, because this will put them in a more advantageous starting point in future bargains.

The second step of my argument is that popularity affects the balance of power between civilians and the military, which, in turn, affects their prospects of influencing reforms. The more popular a given government is, the less likely it should be that military elites will vehemently oppose to civilian attempts to curb military autonomy to enact reforms. This is because popular support increases the ability of politicians to diminish military influence – here, the armed forces incur considerable risks and costs in taking aggressive measures against a government with solid popular backing, and vice-versa. Popularity thus influences each actor's bargaining power to influence military reforms. Here, it is important to note that both politicians and military organizations are averse to reputational damage and material losses, which can be the result of a public confrontation between these actors for the losing side. Moreover, popularity affects each

actor's prospects of forming alliances with key classes or social groups and gain influence within the state, which can determine each actor's likelihood of successfully controlling military reforms. Finally, extreme options such as coups and overt demonstrations of power become more costly – and thus less credible – to the military the more popular the civilian leader is and the less popular the armed forces are. In turn, during serious political crises, the survival of governments often rests on their relationship with the armed forces.

The final step of my argument is the idea that wars affect the popularity of both civilian leaders and the military. This is intuitive, given that wars are highly consequential to societies. They are critical junctures that allow for the balance of power between civilians and the military to change. This happens through a process of responsibility assignment, where the public attempts to make sense of important events. If there is a negative public perception of them, the public assigns blame to one or both actors. If the reaction is positive, the public assigns credit. Having said that, I argue that the public assigns blame or credit to each actor according to their perceived responsibilities. Political leaders are held responsible for initiating (or not) wars, or staying in wars for too long. They are also judged for gathering allies and engage in diplomacy. The military, alternatively, are scrutinized for their battlefield performance, disciplinary issues, and ethical behavior.

In the theory chapter, I also discuss the influence of factors external to wars. First, I contend that expertise matters for military reforms. Therefore, in very specific domains within military science, it is more likely that the armed forces will have a stronger claim to expertise. Second, the pre-war balance of power between civilians and the military should also be a predictor of civilian participation in reforms. Higher military trust or popularity before the war should be associated with military reforms. I also make a prediction about how reforms emerge in the first place,

because, quite obviously, it is possible that no reforms are enacted after a given war. My claim is intuitive: success leads to reform, and vice-versa.

Overall, my argument involves a long causal chain, and many variables. To summarize, I contend that wars affect the balance of political power between civilians and the military, and thus affect which of these actors get to enact reforms. This balance of power generally depends on each actor's influence in society and ties to civil society, including alliances with key classes or social groups and popularity within mass society. Wars impact the factors above by affecting the popularity of the military and the civilian political leader, and changing the costs and benefits for social groups to align with either the military or the civilian leader. This happens largely through a process of responsibility assignment: the public blames or praises civilians or the military for what takes place in a war – its outcome, the country's performance, and costs to society. Therefore, I argue that civilian participation in reforms is more likely when the military is blamed or civilians are praised, and less likely when civilians are blamed, or the military is praised. I then propose a set of prerogatives that are taken to be the responsibility of each of them. For example, civilians are expected to be held accountable for initiating wars and gathering allies, while the military should be held responsible for issues such as discipline, ethical behavior, and battlefield performance. I also expect factors orthogonal to wars to play a role – namely, expertise and the pre-war balance of power – and that the decision to enact reforms in the first place is connected to the perceived success in the war.

Empirically, the reasons for looking at post-war military reforms are twofold. First, post-war contexts should be an abundant source of reforms. Therefore, they are an excellent place to look for them. They should also be a source of significant reforms, which makes understanding these contexts valuable. Second, and most importantly, they have great potential to affect the

balance of power between civilians and the military. After most wars, national debates and narratives arise to make sense of what took place and to investigate what led to the results of the conflict. Wars create culprits and heroes, and civilian leaders and the military are the main actors subject to these characterizations. Examples of this phenomenon abound. Therefore, examining post-war contexts provides us with a good source of reforms, based on actual battlefield experience, and at the same containing meaningful variation of the independent variable: the balance of political power between civilians and the military.

1.2. IMPLICATIONS

My research provides several contributions to the literature on international security and civil-military relations. First, I offer a theoretical contribution to the literature on military innovation and reforms. This body of research currently suffers from the absence of a fine-grained discussion on the contexts in which it should be expected that either civilians or the military carry out innovation. Instead, the arguments are usually about who between these two groups is more important for innovation, and who, ideally, should be responsible for it. The Huntingtonian view, for example, focuses on the professionalization of the armed forces and their identity and expertise.³⁴ Here, because of the specialized knowledge of the military, civilian interventions are usually seen as detrimental – they politicize and hinder the professionalization of the armed forces. This view was somewhat revisited by Rosen, who argues that innovation arises from the military and is easier in peacetime than in wartime.³⁵ A more recent version of the argument was

³⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil–Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957).

³⁵ Rosen, *Winning the Next War*.

formulated by Nielsen,³⁶ as well as Jensen, who argues that doctrinal innovation occurs in doctrinal incubators within the Army and challenges the idea that “professional soldiers as unimaginative bureaucrats trapped in an iron cage.”³⁷

On the other side of this debate are authors who recognize that military organizations are like any other organization, in the sense that they have incentives to protect their own organizational interests.³⁸ This includes maximizing their budget and prestige, cultivating a particular identity, and cultivating their core mission as essential, all while minimizing outside interference. Here, external oversight is necessary because the armed forces’ responses will often be more aligned with their own self-interests than with national interests and military effectiveness. Moreover, if innovation threatens any of these self-interests, they are expected to be blocked by the military.³⁹ For these reasons, civilian interventions in military decisions can be argued to be greatly beneficial.⁴⁰

There are noticeable shortcomings with these traditions. For one, they fail to recognize that innovation can occur in many different contexts. This is evident in Rosen’s differentiation between wartime and peacetime, which are excessively broad categories. Would anyone argue that the imperatives for military innovation and reforms are the same for post-conflict contexts, in comparison to situations of enduring peace? Are the incentives in this regard the same for Brazil

³⁶ Nielsen, “U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1973-1982”; Nielsen, *An Army Transformed*.

³⁷ Jensen, *Forging the Sword*, 15. For a similar argument, see also Nielsen, *An Army Transformed*.

³⁸ Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*; Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive*; Van Evera, “The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War”; Evangelista, *Innovation and the Arms Race*; Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*. See also Hull, *Absolute Destruction*.

³⁹ One example is the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, which tackled the interoperability problem in the US armed forces. Although this was a blatant problem, it took many decades to address, given that increasing interoperability involved reforms that would diminish the power of the service chiefs. There was, therefore, significant resistance within the armed forces. See Locher III, *Victory on the Potomac*.

⁴⁰ Cohen, *Supreme Command*. See also Hull, *Absolute Destruction*.

or Sweden, countries that have or had not been in a war for a very long time, compared to post-Vietnam US, post-Bangladesh War Pakistan, or post-Yom Kippur Israel?

Most importantly, both sides of the civil-military relations debate seem to be overly deterministic regarding who, among civilians and the military, is key to innovation. This, again, is evident in Rosen's work, which argues that innovation is mainly carried out by military officers,⁴¹ and Posen, who credits innovation to the ability of leaders to intervene in the armed forces.⁴² With the two sides of the debate in mind, my goal here is to explain that both can be true, and the circumstances in which each takes place.

Second, I provide another theoretical contribution by suggesting a novel source of military effectiveness. Because civilian and military reforms take different forms, they have important implications for subsequent military performance and national security. There has been considerable debate over the sources of military effectiveness, including command leadership,⁴³ human capital,⁴⁴ economic development,⁴⁵ regime type,⁴⁶ and civil-military relations,⁴⁷ among

⁴¹ Rosen, *Winning the Next War*.

⁴² Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*.

⁴³ Dan Reiter and William A Wagstaff, "Leadership and Military Effectiveness," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 14, no. 4 (October 1, 2018): 490–511, <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orx003>.

⁴⁴ Stephen Biddle and Stephen Long, "Democracy and Military Effectiveness: A Deeper Look," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 4 (August 1, 2004): 525–46, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002704266118>.

⁴⁵ Michael Beckley, "Economic Development and Military Effectiveness," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 1 (February 1, 2010): 43–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402391003603581>.

⁴⁶ Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, *Democracies at War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002); Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, "Democracy and Battlefield Military Effectiveness," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 3 (June 1998): 259–77, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002798042003003>; Biddle and Long, "Democracy and Military Effectiveness"; Michael C. Desch, *Power and Military Effectiveness: The Fallacy of Democratic Triumphalism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

⁴⁷ Brooks, "An Autocracy at War"; Ulrich Pilster and Tobias Böhmelt, "Coups-Proofing and Military Effectiveness in Interstate Wars, 1967–99," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 28, no. 4 (September 1, 2011): 331–50, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894211413062>; Branimir Furlan, "Civilian Control and Military Effectiveness: Slovenian Case," *Armed Forces & Society* 39, no. 3 (July 1, 2013): 434–49, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X12459167>; Caitlin Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes* (Ithaca: New York: Cornell University Press, 2015); Aurel Croissant and David Kuehn, *Reforming Civil-Military Relations in New Democracies: Democratic Control and Military Effectiveness in Comparative Perspectives* (New York: New York: Springer, 2017).

many others. More recently, innovative approaches have focused on issues like inequality⁴⁸ or military medicine.⁴⁹ Here, I offer a novel contribution to this literature.

While my core assertion postulates that civilian participation leads to superior military reforms, it is also important to consider the implications of this research if this hypothesis proves to be inaccurate. Should civilian involvement be found detrimental to military reform efforts, however, the necessity of understanding the determinants of civilian participation in military reforms is not diminished; rather, it remains exactly the same. In the event civilian participation is detrimental, it is still crucial to understand the nature, scope, and mechanisms through which it takes place. In essence, the importance of this study does not solely hinge on proving the assumed positive impacts of civilian participation. This study would only lose its relevance if it were found that civilian participation has absolutely no bearing on the outcomes of military reforms – a claim that seems highly unlikely given the predictably distinct preferences of political and military elites. Therefore, as long as civilian participation exerts some influence, regardless of its nature, this research remains fundamentally important.

Third, I provide an empirical contribution with an original dataset of post-war military reforms and responsibility assignment from 1935-2010. This comprehensive dataset uncovers offers an important description of the aftermath of significant interstate conflicts, capturing the participation of civilians in the implementation of military reforms. Moreover, it tracks the attribution of blame or credit to either civilian leaders or the military for the war and its results. The data points to a wide range of scenarios, from those where civilian leaders took the fall or

⁴⁸ Jason Lyall, *Divided Armies: Inequality and Battlefield Performance in Modern War* (Princeton University Press, 2020).

⁴⁹ Pedro Accorsi and Tanisha M. Fazal, “Military Medicine and Military Effectiveness,” 2020.

were celebrated, to those where the military bore the brunt or was lauded. By providing such insights, this dataset allows for a nuanced understanding of war-time responsibility and post-conflict military transformation, thereby adding to a broader agenda on accountability and reform in the context of warfare.

Fourth, although my research is focused on the causes and mechanisms of civilian participation in military reforms, my data and empirical results have important implications for the understanding of the domestic consequences of war more broadly, including democracy, civil-military relations, and public narratives. They add to the understanding of wide-ranging domestic political processes in the aftermath of warfare.

For example, these findings can aid our understanding of shifts in power dynamics between civilian institutions and the military. It could also highlight how changes occur in public perception of the military and civilian government, which plays a crucial role in shaping civil-military relations. These dynamics are also important for the trajectory of democracy following conflict. The allocation of blame to civilians, in some contexts, could lead to less oversight and transparency in defense policy and erosion of civilian control over the military. In other contexts, the allocation of credit to civilians might strengthen autocrats, and help consolidate their power. Finally, the way credit or blame for the war's outcome is assigned can significantly influence public narratives. These narratives, in turn, can affect national identity, collective memory, and future policymaking. Thus, my research holds considerable potential to illuminate our understanding of the multifaceted domestic implications of warfare.

Fifth, my theory is novel in proposing that military performance can be partially endogenous to the results of conflicts. In other words, I propose that a state's performance in a war can affect variables that, in turn, can affect military effectiveness in a future war. Therefore, my

work allows scholars to explain broad tendencies in warfighting. The theory suggests that states can get "trapped" in a vicious circle in which defeats increase the likelihood of further defeats, with the opposite being true for victories. Figure 1 illustrates this point.

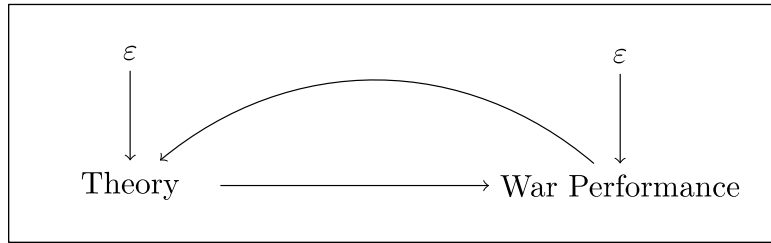
Finally, my work has important policy implications. My dissertation work suggests at least three important implications for grand strategy. First, wars facilitate pushes for reforms. Because military reforms are historically difficult to enact, academics and policymakers should be aware of possible windows of opportunity, and how they affect military power and its application.

Second, public narratives have great potential to affect military reforms, grand strategy, and civil-military relations in general. Thus, it behooves academics and leaders to understand how these narratives affect the public climate and shape possibilities for subsequent strategic choices. Third, these insights provide valuable context for the U.S. when dealing with adversaries. In the case of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, for example, there already are dynamics of blame assignment forming among the Russian public in particular. Here, the US can make inferences about how these dynamics might affect future Russian reforms and military effectiveness, and also leverage these narratives according to its interests without needing to apply military power directly. My research speaks directly to the understanding of military reforms, the politics of strategic decisions, and post-war settings in general. Moreover, it has implications for the prospects of military effectiveness and civil-military relations in the US and other great powers.

1.3. THE PLAN OF THE STUDY

The dissertation unfolds across seven chapters. In chapter 2, I unpack the theory in more detail. As discussed above, I make my argument in three steps. First, I outline the incentives for civilians and the military to control military reforms. Second, I show how popularity affect each

Figure 1. Conflict, Outcomes, and Endogeneity.



actor's prospects of being successful in controlling these reforms. Finally, I examine the relationship between war and popularity. Here, I unpack the variables that determine how blame and praise are allocated to each actor in post-war contexts. In addition to these three steps, I include a discussion on variables orthogonal to war, such as expertise, as well as a discussion what causes reforms to happen in the first place. After delineating the theoretical argument, I propose a research design that combines quantitative analysis with case studies, with the goal of assessing the argument's causal chain. Here, I only describe what form the empirical tests take.

In chapter 3, I use an original quantitative dataset to test whether responsibility assignment affects levels of civilian participation in reforms. I also test how events that unfold during the war affect responsibility assignment. The dataset contains post-war military reforms, including organizational, doctrinal, recruitment, and force structure, and whether they were enacted by civilians or the military. It also contains data on whether civilians or the military were blamed or given credit for war outcomes. The unit of observation is post-war states. Each observation is based on a country report. Other variables include proxies for the pre-war state of civil-military relations, material imbalances in the war, number of allies, desertion rates, war crimes, military spending, casualties, and other country and conflict-specific controls. Using these data, I find support for my argument, with qualifications. Responsibility assignment is strongly associated with subsequent levels of civilian participation in reforms, even controlling for previous indicators of civil-military

relations. The sources of responsibility assignment, however, only confirm some the hypothesis proposed here, such as war initiation, battlefield performance, and indiscipline.

In chapters 4 and 5, I use Israel as a case study. Chapter 4 examines the country in the context of the Six-Day War – it is a case of a successful outcome followed by nonreform. I show that flaws were observed by the military and policymakers, but the decision to forgo reform was threefold. First, Israel's sense of security was heightened, because the country had acquired new strategic borders, and due to the notion that Arab states would be deterred from attacking after being defeated. Second, the Israeli military earned a reputation of a highly effective, formidable force. Third, Israel's quick victory fostered a political climate of elation, bolstered national pride, and instilled a sense of invincibility in the population, thus shaping a political climate inconducive to reforms. Finally, I show that civilians did not received credit because they were perceived as hesitant to initiate the conflict when it was deemed necessary, while the military received high praise for their battlefield performance.

In Chapter 5, I examine the Yom Kippur War. Although this was a victory for Israel, this war was a traumatic experience, which led protests by the population. Here, civilians were again blamed for not initiating the war when necessary, and the military was spared because they performed well in the battlefield. Therefore, in the post-war context, the military was favored in the balance of power and was able to significantly increase their political influence. This led to a torrent of military-made reforms, as well as the successful blocking of civilian initiatives that the armed forces viewed as detrimental to their interests.

In chapter 6, I examine the US in the Vietnam War. In this prolonged war, the military was more extensively blamed in earlier stages, while civilians were assigned blame in the closing of the war. As a result, civilians were able to implement an extremely consequential war when the

balance of power favored them: the end of conscription and the establishment of the all-volunteer force. This reform was enacted despite the opposition of the armed forces, which were not able to block it. In contrast, when the balance of power had shifted in favor the military, they enacted significant reforms in doctrine without civilian participation. Moreover, I show that civilians were blamed for the war initiation and escalation, while the military was judged for disciplinary problems and war crimes.

In the final chapter, I summarize the main findings and propose directions for further research. I also further delve into the impact of this dissertation on different strands of the literature on international conflict and civil-military relations, as well as grand strategy and US national security policy. I also highlight the dissertation's relevance to policymakers striving to affect military reforms and better understand domestic narratives in post-war contexts.

CHAPTER 2: A THEORY OF POST-WAR REFORMS

This chapter attempts to answer when we should expect more or less extensive civilian participation in military reforms. First, it is important to note that civilian participation in military affairs is a difficult task. Not only do the armed forces possess a near-monopoly on military expertise, but it is in their interest to minimize outside interference in their activities and decisions. Moreover, the armed forces are unique in the sense that they are specialists in the administration of force and violence – thus, they often have the ability to impose their will and overthrow governments.

These ideas are not new. They are consistent with most of the literature on civil-military relations, which sees civilian control as challenging, and differentiate between several states of political power emanating from the armed forces.¹ Especially relevant here is the idea that the military often gives up being part of the government but maintains autonomous "bubbles" of political power, not touched by civilian oversight. This logic applies to military reforms. Here, the armed forces can exercise political influence by having their opinions taken into account in policy matters and possessing institutional prerogatives. Stepan defines these prerogatives as areas in

¹ Timothy J. Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics*, First Edition (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1979); Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations*, Revised edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); Samuel Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (New Brunswick, N.J: Routledge, 2002); Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*, Reissue edition (New York: Free Press, 2017); Eric A. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Pearson College Div, 1976); David Pion-Berlin, "Military Autonomy and Emerging Democracies in South America," *Comparative Politics* 25, no. 1 (1992): 83–102, <https://doi.org/10.2307/422098>; Condoleezza Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army, 1948-1983: Uncertain Allegiance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016); Alfred C. Stepan, *The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015); Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1988); Claude Welch, *Painful Choices: A Theory of Foreign Policy Change* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), <https://press.princeton.edu/books/hardcover/9780691123400/painful-choices>; Amos Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times: On Professionals, Praetorians, and Revolutionary Soldiers*, First edition (New Haven: Yale Univ Press, 1977); Brooks, "An Autocracy at War."

which the military, as an organization, assumes the right and privilege of governing.² Thus, they possess autonomous behavior and the institutional capacity to defend their objectives – the government’s capacity for making decisions is limited, especially when it comes to defense policy.

The critical point is that the civilian capacity to lead military reforms entails a high level of civilian control and depends on the balance of power between civilians and the military. This argument was demonstrated with particular clarity by Brooks, who explained how changes in the relative power between the civilian leader and the military, in favor of the former, affected (and improved) defense policy and military effectiveness in Egypt.³ She differentiates between situations of “political dominance” and “shared power.” Other authors have slightly different typologies. Trinkunas, for example, speaks of “civilian dominant, shared authority, and military dominant” contexts.⁴ The main idea, however, is the same: the balance of power between civilians and the military is part of a spectrum, and should affect military reforms. Furthermore, I argue that wars themselves influence this balance of power.

2.1. ASSUMPTIONS AND DEFINITIONS

Recall that my argument is that wars affect the popularity and the ability to form societal coalitions of civilian leaders and the military, which then affects who, among these two actors, leads subsequent military reforms. The explanation I propose here, therefore, has at least three different components: 1) both civilians and the military have incentives to want to control military reforms; 2) popularity and societal coalitions affect the balance of political power between

² Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics*.

³ Brooks, “An Autocracy at War.”

⁴ Harold Trinkunas, “Crafting Civilian Control in Argentina and Venezuela,” in *Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: New Analytical Perspectives*, ed. David Pion-Berlin, 1st Edition (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 165.

civilians and the military, which affects reforms; 3) wars affect their popularity and societal coalitions, and the public seeks information and assigns responsibility to them.

Before moving on to each of these components, it is necessary to clarify which assumptions will be used to develop them into a theory. In general, this analysis is inspired by the literature on rational choice, which focuses on actors and their intentions and examines political action concerning utility maximization, or rational interest calculation. Throughout the chapter, my approach is closer to soft rationalism, meaning simply that each actor has a set of interests that they generally pursue.⁵

I treat the interaction between civilians and the military as a bargaining process. Similar to international politics, bargaining between players in civil-military interactions is based on shared and divergent interests. Cooperation vs. defiance are the two basic types of behavior. The importance that actors assign to each, based on the choices of their adversary, define whether and what kinds of bargains are reached. It is then important to explicitly define the common and

⁵ Strategic interaction among actors maximizing their self-interest is foundational for politics. From this perspective, formal or informal institutions result from these strategic interactions: they are created by actors pursuing their preferences in instrumental ways. Once established, institutions set parameters for further interest calculations, but are always open to subsequent modification. Works in this tradition are countless in the Political Science literature. For rational models on civilians elites and the military, see, for example, Wendy Hunter, "Politicians against Soldiers: Contesting the Military in Postauthorization Brazil," *Comparative Politics* 27, no. 4 (1995): 425–43, <https://doi.org/10.2307/422228>; Wendy Hunter, "Negotiating Civil-Military Relations in Post-Authoritarian Argentina and Chile," *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (June 1, 1998): 295–317, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2478.00083>; Milan W. Svobik, *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); P. Collier and A. Hoeffler, "Grand Extortion: Coup Risk and the Military as a Protection Racket.," 2006, <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:ff727e54-408e-4288-a202-cf46a61d7187>; Naunihal Singh, *Seizing Power: The Strategic Logic of Military Coups*, Reprint edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017); David Pion-Berlin and P. Buchanan, "Civil-Military 'Interaction' and Democratic Consolidation: A Comparative Analysis of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile" (Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., 1988); Jorge Zaverucha, "Do Desafio à Acomodação: Alfonsín e Os Militares Argentinos.," 1994; Youssef Cohen, "The Heresthetics of Coup Making," *Comparative Political Studies* 24, no. 3 (October 1, 1991): 344–64, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414091024003004>; Youssef Cohen, *Radicals, Reformers, and Reactionaries: The Prisoner's Dilemma and the Collapse of Democracy in Latin America*, 1st edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Wendy Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil: Politicians Against Soldiers*, New edition (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

conflicting interests of both the civilian and military actors. Civilian governments typically seek to increase their power by challenging certain privileges and prerogatives that the military – in this case, they seek to participate in and control military reforms to the highest possible extent. The military, on the other hand, wants to protect its autonomy and avoid external oversight and interference. Despite these differing goals, both sides have a shared interest in avoiding severe outcomes, such as a coup or a civil war.⁶

I also treat civilians and the military as unitary actors, at least for the purposes of this chapter. It is important to note that these simple models of strategic interaction may have limitations when applied to real-world crises. These models often assume that the main players are unitary actors, which is not always the case. However, there is still a sufficient level of unity present in civil-military relations to allow for the use of a strategic interaction model, which is manifest through the authorization and empowerment of certain individuals to speak on behalf of their respective groups, as well as the existence of formal hierarchies aimed at promoting internal cohesion. In an institutionalized political system, civil-military affairs are typically the responsibility of specific government officials, making it appropriate to consider these actors as the primary civilian representatives in interactions with the military. The military is also characterized by a well-defined hierarchy, which imbues it with the capability and inclination to maintain a minimal level of unity.

My approach in this research is heavily informed by the subfield of comparative politics, which often centers on the social factors shaping civil-military relations. This literature ranges from classical works on the fundamental problems of civil-military relations to transitions to

⁶ My assumptions are similar to the ones proposed by Hunter. See Hunter, “Negotiating Civil-Military Relations in Post-Authoritarian Argentina and Chile.”

democracy from military regimes and the interactions between civil-military relations and international conflict.

Finally, I use Nielsen's definition of reform. According to the author, reform is "an improvement in or the creation of a significant new program or policy that is intended to correct an identified deficiency. Therefore, reform does not necessarily entail adjustments to an organization's core tasks. It also does not necessarily require the visualization of new ways of warfare, or the development of new measures of effectiveness."⁷ This definition is entirely compatible with the idea of learning, given that it refers to "correct an identified deficiency." Note that it is similar to at least some definitions of innovation. Horowitz and Pindyck, for example, define it as "changes in the conduct of warfare designed to increase the ability of a military organization to convert the components of potential military power into actual military power."⁸

2.2. THE ARGUMENT

Civilian And Military Incentives to Control Military Reforms

As mentioned above, I assume that political leaders are first and foremost interested in their own political survival. Even if politicians do not run for reelection immediately, maintaining popularity is important by reason of their future political careers and those of their political allies and cronies, which might even include family members. Popularity, it is worth mentioning, is important for both democratic and autocratic leaders. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that politicians have an incentive to affect military reforms to the extent that these reforms affect their ability to remain in power. In Latin American countries that have transitioned from military

⁷ Nielsen, *An Army Transformed*, 14.

⁸ Horowitz and Pindyck, "What Is a Military Innovation?"

dictatorships to democracy, for example, presidents started to push for civilian control in areas that affected their popularity and electoral standing the most.⁹ Therefore, politicians should be expected to contest the military when military reforms affect their ability to gain (or to avoid losing) widespread popular appeal.

But how do military reforms affect civilian leaders and their ability to remain in office? The first – and more obvious – answer is related to programmatic incentives: credit given to politicians for advances in public policy. In this case, the area of public policy affected by military reforms is national security. Resounding policy failures are often taken as the incumbent’s responsibility, especially in this area, which significantly affects the security and well-being of citizens. The public (or the winning coalition) does attempt to analyze incumbent performance and are capable of sanctioning leaders,¹⁰ including in foreign policy – several works emphasize how the public can constrain their leaders in this area.¹¹ Again, this should be especially the case in

⁹ Hunter, “Politicians against Soldiers”; Hunter, “Negotiating Civil-Military Relations in Post-Authoritarian Argentina and Chile”; Wendy Hunter, “Reason, Culture, or Structure?: Assessing Civil- Military Dynamics in Brazil,” in *Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: New Analytical Perspectives*, ed. David Pion-Berlin, 1st Edition (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Trinkunas, “Crafting Civilian Control in Argentina and Venezuela”; Felipe Agüero, “Legacies of Transitions: Institutionalization, the Military, and Democracy in South America,” *Mershon International Studies Review* 42, no. 2 (1998): 383–404, <https://doi.org/10.2307/254439>; Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil*; Harold A. Trinkunas, “Crafting Civilian Control in Emerging Democracies: Argentina and Venezuela,” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 42, no. 3 (2000): 77–109, <https://doi.org/10.2307/166439>.

¹⁰ See, for example, Gerald H. Kramer, “Short-Term Fluctuations in U.S. Voting Behavior, 1896-1964,” *The American Political Science Review* 65, no. 1 (1971): 131–43, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1955049>; Morris P. Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections* (New Haven: Yale Univ Pr, 1981); John Ferejohn, “Incumbent Performance and Electoral Control,” *Public Choice* 50, no. 1/3 (1986): 5–25; James D. Fearon, “Electoral Accountability and the Control of Politicians: Selecting Good Types versus Sanctioning Poor Performance,” in *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, by Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin, 1999, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139175104.003>.

¹¹ John H. Aldrich, John L. Sullivan, and Eugene Borgida, “Foreign Affairs and Issue Voting: Do Presidential Candidates ‘Waltz Before a Blind Audience?’,” *American Political Science Review* 83, no. 1 (March 1989): 123–41, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1956437>; Bruce W. Jentleson, “The Pretty Prudent Public: Post Post-Vietnam American Opinion on the Use of Military Force,” *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1992): 49–73, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2600916>; Daniel W. Drezner, “The Realist Tradition in American Public Opinion,” *Perspectives on Politics* 6, no. 1 (March 2008): 51–70, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592708080067>; Joshua D. Kertzer and Thomas Zeitzoff, “A Bottom-Up Theory of Public Opinion about Foreign Policy,” *American Journal of Political Science* 61, no. 3 (2017): 543–58, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12314>; John H. Aldrich et al., “Foreign Policy

post-war contexts, which are typically accompanied by heightened threat perceptions. Thus, leaders have an incentive to oversee reforms in order to make sure that they are the most effective possible and improve national security. Such reforms can guarantee a good performance in a future war, but also in smaller crises, or even be a deterrent for potential aggressors. They can also signal to the public that the government is investing in security. This incentive has a sound empirical basis: leaders are indeed punished for foreign policy blunders and defeat in wars.¹² This is the reason why benign international threat environments have been repeatedly associated with fewer civilian attempts to control defense policy.¹³ When neglecting national security becomes a low-risk proposition, voters and supporters assign low importance to the provision of national defense as either a public or a private good.¹⁴ As Desch puts it, “a state facing high external threats and low internal threats should have the most stable civil-military relations.”¹⁵

and the Electoral Connection,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 9, no. 1 (2006): 477–502, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.9.111605.105008>; Robert Y. Shapiro and Benjamin I. Page, “Foreign Policy and the Rational Public,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 32, no. 2 (1988): 211–47; Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans’ Policy Preferences*, 1 edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, “Changes in Americans’ Policy Preferences, 1935–1979,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (January 1, 1982): 24–42, <https://doi.org/10.1086/268697>.

¹² Jessica L. Weeks, “Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve,” *International Organization* 62, no. 1 (2008): 35–64; Alexandre Debs and H. E. Goemans, “Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders, and War,” *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 3 (August 2010): 430–45, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055410000195>; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Randolph M. Siverson, and Gary Woller, “War and the Fate of Regimes: A Comparative Analysis,” *The American Political Science Review* 86, no. 3 (1992): 638–46, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1964127>.

¹³ David Pion-Berlin and Harold Trinkunas, “Attention Deficits: Why Politicians Ignore Defense Policy in Latin America (Falta De Atención: ¿Por Qué Los Políticos Ignoran Las Políticas de Defensa En América Latina?),” *Latin American Research Review* 42, no. 3 (2007): 76–100; Michael C. Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Paul Staniland, “Explaining Civil-Military Relations in Complex Political Environments: India and Pakistan in Comparative Perspective,” *Security Studies* 17, no. 2 (May 22, 2008): 322–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410802099022>; Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 32; Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, A.D. 990–1990*, Revised edition (Cambridge, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992), 206; Charles Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, 1st Ed. edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975).

¹⁴ Pion-Berlin and Trinkunas, “Attention Deficits.”

¹⁵ Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military*, 13.

Additionally, leaders' incentives are not only related to improving national security, but to doing so at the minimal possible cost.¹⁶ After all, politicians receive credit for a wide range of advances in public policy other than national security – for example, welfare, education, health, and economic reform, among others. This is the old guns versus butter dilemma. Thus, if leaders can spend less on defense and achieve similar national security outcomes, they obviously will want to do so. However, when given more political autonomy, the military tends to pressure for increases in defense budgets, both due to organizational interests and interservice rivalries, as well as less transparency in budgets, with strategic considerations on how best to promote national security mostly absent from decision-making.¹⁷ This should remain the case in the context of military reforms. Without proper civilian oversight, the military will have more freedom to enact more “expensive” reforms. Resource allocation, then, should be of primary importance for politicians when it comes to these reforms.

Here, one could argue that it is still civilians who typically approve the defense budget at the end of the day, regardless of which types of reforms the military proposes. However, it is important to note that they would be facing increased political pressures for larger budgets if they did not have control over proposed reforms. Moreover, even in cases where they can shrink the defense budget, there would be a disconnect between military reforms and the resources available to enact them, which could cause problems for military effectiveness and national security. In an

¹⁶ Several authors mention this tradeoff specifically in regard to defense policy. For example, Pion-Berlin and Trinkunas, “Attention Deficits”; Hunter, “Politicians against Soldiers”; Jeanne Kinney Giraldo, “Legislatures and National Defense: Global Comparisons,” in *Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Scott D. Tollefson (University of Texas Press, 2006), 178; Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil*.

¹⁷ Giraldo, “Legislatures and National Defense: Global Comparisons,” 186; Octavio Amorim Neto and Pedro Accorsi, “Presidents and Generals: Systems of Government and the Selection of Defense Ministers,” *Armed Forces & Society* 48, no. 1 (January 1, 2022): 136–63, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X19900368>. As Giraldo notes, civilian control over the allocation of resources within the defense sector is still a significant challenge in many consolidating democracies.

ideal scenario for civilians, they would lead military reforms and shape the allocation of resources for training, personnel, and equipment, among others, to reflect the roles and missions assigned to the military by them through national security planning.¹⁸

Aside from programmatic incentives, particularistic incentives also generate pressures against the persistence of the military's autonomy. These are incentives related to the use of resources to fuel politicians' personal support networks. In many democracies, clientelism is rampant, and electoral competition has motivated politicians to vigorously look for economic benefits to distribute as political pork barrel to increase their chances of reelection.¹⁹ Just as in the case of programmatic incentives, particularistic incentives can often be pursued at the armed forces' expense.²⁰ They are not always related to clientelism, however, and can take many forms. One example would be through the defense industry and military bases: in the US, for instance, many voters – and often entire communities – depend on defense spending for their jobs and livelihoods. Thus, politicians are interested in controlling the allocation of these resources.²¹ Alternatively, in the case of autocracies, politicians are motivated to distribute these resources to their winning coalition – which might include the armed forces, but also other actors.²² Finally, if corruption is underway, politicians will have the incentive to either prevent it or collect these benefits for themselves and their inner circle if possible.

¹⁸ Giraldo, "Legislatures and National Defense: Global Comparisons," 181.

¹⁹ Allen Hicken, "Clientelism," *Annual Review of Political Science* 14, no. 1 (2011): 289–310, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.031908.220508>; Susan C. Stokes, "Political Clientelism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Robert Goodin (Oxford University Press, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199604456.013.0031>; Susan C. Stokes et al., *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism: The Puzzle of Distributive Politics* (New York, N.Y: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

²⁰ Hunter, "Politicians against Soldiers," 429.

²¹ Pion-Berlin and Trinkunas, "Attention Deficits," 88.

²² Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al., *The Logic of Political Survival*, Revised edition (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2004).

The point, therefore, is that civilian leaders will often find themselves in direct competition with military elites over state resources in the context of military reforms. Politicians will be tempted to shift budget shares away from the military to civilian ministries better suited for public policy, pork barrel, and rent seeking, depending on the political configuration of the country. Politically inclined, resource-hungry armed forces can then interfere in the making of policy and the distribution of patronage or rent-seeking, thus creating costs for politicians. Nevertheless, these incentives are related to more than the reforms themselves. When politicians grant the military the freedom to enact reforms without oversight, this creates a precedent for military autonomy, which will affect the competition for resources in the future. As the literature on path dependence shows, choices and actions that an institution – formal or informal – or organization takes at an earlier stage can significantly influence its trajectory and shape its future outcomes.²³ Thus, politicians will have the incentive to control resources from current reforms and avoid being disadvantaged in resource competitions in the future.

Moreover, there is the more general issue of civilian control. In addition to the problem of competition for resources, civilians will want to avoid the erosion of control over the armed forces

²³ For the purposes of this chapter, perspectives from Political Science, Economics, or Sociology are all useful. Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, 59262nd edition (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Paul A. David, “Clio and the Economics of QWERTY,” *The American Economic Review* 75, no. 2 (1985): 332–37; Mark Granovetter, “Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness,” *American Journal of Sociology* 91, no. 3 (1985): 481–510; W. Brian Arthur, “Competing Technologies, Increasing Returns, and Lock-In by Historical Events,” *The Economic Journal* 99, no. 394 (1989): 116–31, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2234208>; Paul Pierson, “Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics,” *The American Political Science Review* 94, no. 2 (2000): 251–67, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2586011>; William H. Sewell, “A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation,” *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 1 (1992): 1–29; Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen, and Frank Longstreth, eds., *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis* (Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Kathleen Thelen, “Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 2, no. 1 (1999): 369–404, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.369>; Kathleen Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan*, 1st Edition (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

more generally if they can. The goal of political autonomy constitutes an additional reason for politicians to oppose a politically active military, and allowing the military to control military reforms without oversight reinforces them as political actors. Again, the ability of politicians to formulate and implement policies without suffering outside interference is critical for their popularity. Since they are held accountable in both democracies and autocracies, leaders pursue the maximum control possible over events and processes within their state. As noted by Hunter, “large bureaucratic organizations like the military can compromise the latitude they need to carry out public policies in response to public opinion.”²⁴ Leaders often try to improve their image with the mass citizenry by enacting policies that appeal to popular demand for change and participation, whether socioeconomic (for example, land reform) or political (for example, labor rights) in nature – which a politically strong military can oppose.²⁵ This conflict generates incentives for politicians to reduce the military’s sphere of influence. Moreover, at the very least, leaders must appear in control of the military – otherwise, the public will see them as weak and inept.²⁶ Again, this was observed in Latin America after the third wave of democratization.²⁷

In sum, it is in the interest of civilian leaders to exert control over military reform efforts to enhance national security, control the allocation of state resources, and ensure ongoing civilian

²⁴ Hunter, “Politicians against Soldiers,” 430; Felipe Agüero, “Institutions, Transitions, and Bargaining: Civilians and the Military in Shaping Post- Authoritarian Regimes,” in *Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: New Analytical Perspectives*, ed. David Pion-Berlin, 1st Edition (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 199.

²⁵ Hunter, “Reason, Culture, or Structure?: Assessing Civil- Military Dynamics in Brazil.”

²⁶ Hunter, “Negotiating Civil-Military Relations in Post-Authoritarian Argentina and Chile,” 297; Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil*, Chaps. 1, 7.

²⁷ Hunter, “Politicians against Soldiers”; Hunter, “Negotiating Civil-Military Relations in Post-Authoritarian Argentina and Chile”; Agüero, “Institutions, Transitions, and Bargaining: Civilians and the Military in Shaping Post-Authoritarian Regimes”; Hunter, “Reason, Culture, or Structure?: Assessing Civil- Military Dynamics in Brazil”; Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil*.

oversight of the armed forces. These objectives not only serve the immediate interests of the government, but they also have long-term implications.

But what are the interests of the armed forces? Intuitively, they are precisely the opposite of the above-listed interests of civilian leaders. These are connected to the substantive organizational goals that militaries typically have, which include the following: a monopoly over the use of force, autonomy of the rank and seniority system from external interference, obedience to hierarchy, relative unity among the officer corps, and budgetary resources sufficient to maintain essential training, education, and equipment. The armed forces also seek to defend their salaries and budgets and to preserve decision-making autonomy over military matters like force structure, doctrine, recruitment, the structure of the organization, and weapons acquisition. In some cases, they also have preferences about what the political, economic, and social order should look like. Senior officers aspire to some degree of influence over these broader concerns. Still, for the most part, absent severe crises, concerns about organizational survival, viability, and prosperity are chief – which is what armed forces have incessantly pressed for, historically.²⁸ As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the military, like any large complex organization, seeks to advance its institutional prerogatives and autonomy, and maximize resources.

When it comes to military reforms, therefore, the military should seek autonomy precisely because these reforms affect doctrine, organizational matters, force structure, and recruitment. Second, reforms are also a way for the military to maximize their budget and political influence. With no oversight, it should be expected that the armed forces will choose more "expensive"

²⁸ Hunter, "Reason, Culture, or Structure?: Assessing Civil- Military Dynamics in Brazil," 46; Hunter, "Negotiating Civil-Military Relations in Post-Authoritarian Argentina and Chile," 297; Pion-Berlin, "Military Autonomy and Emerging Democracies in South America"; Milan W. Svobik, "Contracting on Violence: The Moral Hazard in Authoritarian Repression and Military Intervention in Politics," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 57, no. 5 (2013): 765–94.

reforms and seize the opportunity to increase salaries and other benefits. In some cases, the military can also engage in rent-seeking and corruption.²⁹

Moreover, the armed forces usually sincerely believe they are more suited to enact military reforms. Because of the very nature of their careers, military officers often live a life detached from civilian society, and their work contract implies the possibility of sacrificing their life for the sake of their country. These two aspects generate a solid esprit de corps, creating a life-long attachment to the armed forces' values and worldview. It is not by chance that there is a large body of research that argues that group cohesion increases the effectiveness of troops and that soldiers fight primarily for their "buddies."³⁰ In other words, "old soldiers never die." In terms of organizational behavior, this famous dictum implies rampant servicism, to use the United States military jargon. Servicism, in turn, means that, for example, an army officer will defend the organizational interests of the land force tooth and nail. This is, as mentioned above, a well-established finding.

Nevertheless, servicism goes beyond organizational interests, and also leads to the idea that military officers are more competent and deserving of enacting national security policy. As Freedman notes, policymakers who have never seen battle or wore the uniform are left with a "moral disadvantage" when it comes to decisions regarding military affairs.³¹ The idea is also consistent with the work of Horowitz, Stam, and Ellis, for example, which takes inspiration from

²⁹ Giraldo, "Legislatures and National Defense: Global Comparisons," 196.

³⁰ Roger W. Little, "Buddy Relations and Combat Performance," in *The New Military; Changing Patterns of Organization*, by Morris Janowitz (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1964); S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command*, 1 edition (Norman, Okla: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000); Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz, "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (January 1, 1948): 280–315, <https://doi.org/10.1086/265951>; Samuel A. Stouffer and Arthur A. Lumsdaine, *The American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton University Press, 1950).

³¹ Lawrence D. Freedman, "Calling the Shots: Should Politicians or Generals Run Our Wars?," ed. Eliot A. Cohen, *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 5 (2002): 192, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20033277>.

Janowitz to argue that “military personnel are the ones who will actually risk death in conflicts; in some organizations, setbacks can be career ending or worse for senior military officers; and military leaders often perceive civilians as naïve (...).”³² Even in democracies that are often mentioned as models of civilian control, like the US, this dynamics has been present historically. The military has often seen civilians as “amateurs”³³ and outsiders, “who were so bold as to instruct the Pentagon on how to plan for national security.”³⁴ Throughout the world, famous generals, such as Charles de Gaulle in France, have been known to loathe parliamentary and party politics.³⁵ Hence, the military’s innate sense of professional and personal dignity creates a kind of psychological rigidity that may be inimical to external intervention, as the now classic work of Dixon shows.³⁶ Therefore, in addition to material and organizational considerations, it should be expected that the military derives utility from leading military reforms due to personal satisfaction.

Finally, just as is the case for civilians, it is rational for the military to be interested in maximizing autonomy with future interactions in mind. That is, creating the precedent of military autonomy will be in the armed forces’ interest, because this will put them in a more advantageous starting point in future negotiations. All things equal, the military should also prefer to increase its political influence.

³² Michael C. Horowitz, Allan C. Stam, and Cali M. Ellis, *Why Leaders Fight* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 37.

³³ Harold Brown, Interview of Harold Brown, 1981, 5, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/oral_history/OH_Trans_BrownHarold12-4-81.pdf?ver=2020-03-02-085057-717.

³⁴ Edward C. Keefer, “HAROLD BROWN - Offsetting the Soviet Military Challenge 1977–1981” (Historical Office: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2017), 125.

³⁵ Julian Jackson, *De Gaulle* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018).

³⁶ Norman F. Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence* (Hachette UK, 1976). Dixon argues that the typical military officer has an authoritarian personality. See also Mostafa Rejai and Kay Phillips, *World Military Leaders: A Collective and Comparative Analysis* (Westport: Praeger, 1996).

To summarize, both civilians and the military should have strong incentives to control military reforms. Figure 2 summarizes these incentives.

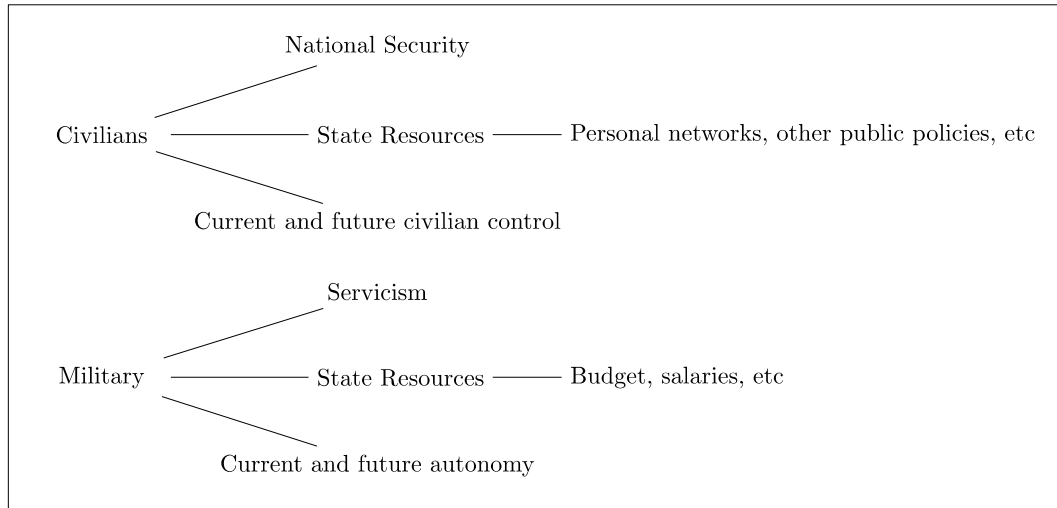
Popularity, The Balance of Power, And Reforms

The second step of my argument is that popularity affects the balance of power between civilians and the military, which, in turn, affects their prospects of influencing reforms. Here, I contend that popular support enhances the capacity of politicians to diminish military influence, because the armed forces incur considerable risks and costs in taking aggressive measures against a government with solid popular backing, and vice-versa. The more popular a given government is, the less likely it should be that military elites will forcefully counteract civilian attempts to diminish military autonomy to enact reforms.

Again, I treat negotiations between civilians and the military as a game of strategic interaction between rational actors. Popularity then affects each actor's bargaining power to influence military reforms. This intuition is consistent with a broad literature on civil-military relations, which sees popular backing as consequential for the balance of power between civilians and the military.³⁷ As Diamond and Plattner put it, "military establishments do not seize power from successful and legitimate civilian regimes. They intervene in politics (whether by coup or by

³⁷ Barbara Geddes and John Zaller, "Sources of Popular Support for Authoritarian Regimes," *American Journal of Political Science* 33, no. 2 (1989): 319–47, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2111150>; Brooks, "An Autocracy at War"; Morris Janowitz, *Military Institutions and Coercion in the Developing Nations: The Military in the Political Development of New Nations*, Reprint edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 160; Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*, 100–102; Hunter, "Reason, Culture, or Structure?: Assessing Civil- Military Dynamics in Brazil"; Hunter, "Politicians against Soldiers"; Hunter, "Negotiating Civil-Military Relations in Post-Authoritarian Argentina and Chile"; Agüero, "Institutions, Transitions, and Bargaining: Civilians and the Military in Shaping Post-Authoritarian Regimes"; Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt, eds., *Political Armies: The Military and Nation Building in the Age of Democracy* (London ; New York: Zed Books, 2002), 23; Harvey G. Kebschull, "Operation 'Just Missed': Lessons From Failed Coup Attempts," *Armed Forces & Society* 20, no. 4 (July 1, 1994): 565–79, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X9402000405>; Trinkunas, "Crafting Civilian Control in Emerging Democracies"; Trinkunas, "Crafting Civilian Control in Argentina and Venezuela."

Figure 2. Civilian and Military Incentives for Controlling Reforms.



a more gradual expansion of power and prerogatives) when civilian politicians and parties are weak and divided, and when their divisions and manifest failures of governance have generated a vacuum of authority."³⁸

Take the example of Brazil. After a period of military rule, President Fernando Collor successfully diminished the military’s influence in several areas of policymaking precisely because he had been elected with broad popular support. In contrast, Collor’s predecessor, President Jose Sarney, was far more submissive to the armed forces – he had not been elected and enjoyed far less popular backing. The same is true for Collor’s successor, President Itamar Franco, who replaced him following his impeachment. Franco suffered from the same weakness as Sarney, and, therefore, also manifested great timidity in taking steps to increase civilian control over the military. After Franco, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso was elected in 1995 with broad popular support, and again the balance of power moved in favor of the civilian leadership.³⁹ We

³⁸ Larry Diamond et al., eds., “Introduction,” in *Civil-Military Relations and Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), xxix.

³⁹ Hunter, “Politicians against Soldiers,” 430; Agüero, “Legacies of Transitions,” 397.

can also return to one of the examples at the beginning of this chapter, which explained how popular support was vital for establishing civilian control in Egypt after the Six-Day War. When the population strongly sided with President Nasser after the country's defeat, he was able to establish control over the armed forces.⁴⁰

This occurs for four main reasons. First, both politicians and military organizations are averse to reputational damage and material losses. In the context of military reforms, when civilians attempt to exert control, military officers can acquiesce to civilian demands or defy them and fight to retain (or gain) autonomy. However, military defiance is less likely to be successful if the armed forces are unpopular or civilian leaders are extremely popular. When this is the case, there simply is not enough public pressure to keep civilians away from reforms. Additionally, civilians will be expected to prevail if this becomes a public confrontation. In the example mentioned above of Brazil, military officers were aware that the political climate was unfavorable to aggressive lobbying, and that their attempted use would result in a loss of institutional prestige. This perception restrained their reactions to challenges that they viewed unfavorably. This, in turn, emboldened politicians to respond more to public opinion than to military opinion.⁴¹

Forcefully opposing a government with strong public backing could, in fact, be quite costly. Escalating conflict could turn civil and political society against military institutions and result in a loss of material privileges in the form of slashing of force levels, budgets, and other privileges, especially if civilian leaders are aware of their political advantage. In these cases, provoked politicians are less likely to tolerate challenges, and could choose to retaliate against hostile officers. If the armed forces overplay their cards, excessive complaints or threats can wear

⁴⁰ Brooks, "An Autocracy at War."

⁴¹ Hunter, "Politicians against Soldiers," 431.

down the reserve of goodwill that the military needs to retain long-term credibility. Therefore, popularity affects the balance of political power by shaping military officers' fears, interests, and beliefs to induce compliance with government orders. In the context of democratization, for example, Trinkunas explains:

Sanctioning strategies are designed to use the fear of punishment to induce military cooperation with a democratic regime. Democratizers may be able to use civilian and military courts, loyalists in the military command structure, or internal security forces to suppress military uprisings and punish rebellious officers. Officers who cooperate with a new democratic regime will tend to go on to successful careers and rapid advancement. Those that oppose it will find themselves imprisoned or retired if they participate in failed rebellions. These new incentives and the fear of punishment lead the armed forces to accept the jurisdictional boundaries set by civilians and cooperate with the government.⁴²

Thus, we should expect the armed forces to rationally comply with the directives of politicians when they fear the consequences of disobedience (material or reputational). For example, severe downsizing, which could result from the negative public opinion that overt conflict would generate, constituted one of the greatest fears of Latin American militaries in the 1980s and 1990s.⁴³ In the US, in the context of the Vietnam War, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird stated that the primary role he had while in office was to deal with the "time-ticking bomb" of public opinion, and that the ability of the armed forces to secure a minimum level of public support in the future, as well as their own survival, was in question due to the reputational problems the war had created for them.⁴⁴ Here, the Army strongly opposed ending conscription, but there was public support for the decision, and the Chiefs of Staff "were not in any position to object very

⁴² Trinkunas, "Crafting Civilian Control in Argentina and Venezuela," 168–69.

⁴³ Hunter, "Negotiating Civil-Military Relations in Post-Authoritarian Argentina and Chile," 298.

⁴⁴ Melvin Laird, Interview of Melvin Laird, 1986, 4, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/oral_history/OH_Trans_LairdMelvin%209-2-1986.pdf?ver=2015-06-30-110159-040.

strongly."⁴⁵ The armed forces recognized that the public attitude was strongly anti-military, and it would not be wise to take a firm stance on issues like budget and personnel.⁴⁶ The Army leadership did not wish “risk a public and political struggle over the draft.”⁴⁷

In democratizing states, the political and economic performance of military dictatorships (which influenced the popularity of the armed forces) has been extensively used as a variable to explain the subsequent degree of mass mobilization and military autonomy in different countries.⁴⁸ In Greece and Argentina, for example, the armed forces were defeated and discredited, and remained politically weakened. The opposite took place in countries like Chile and Brazil.⁴⁹ In the Soviet Union, the Army significantly lost prestige after the war in Afghanistan, which allowed for reforms that increased civilian oversight.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ David Packard, Interview of David Packard, 1987, 15, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/oral_history/OH_Trans_PackardDavid%2011-9-1987.pdf?ver=2015-06-30-144714-967.

⁴⁶ Packard, 19; Laird, Interview of Melvin Laird, 14; David Jones, Interview with David Jones, 1987, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/oral_history/OH_Trans_JONESDavid%2008-26-87.pdf?ver=2018-04-10-065945-800; Harold Brown, Interview with Harold Brown, October 8, 1992, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/oral_history/OH_Trans_BrownHarold10-8-92.pdf?ver=2020-03-02-085051-670.

⁴⁷ Griffith, “The U.S. Army’s Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968–1974,” 24.

⁴⁸ Trinkunas, “Crafting Civilian Control in Emerging Democracies”; Trinkunas, “Crafting Civilian Control in Argentina and Venezuela.” This is one of the components of what the author names “regime leverage.”

⁴⁹ Agüero, “Institutions, Transitions, and Bargaining: Civilians and the Military in Shaping Post- Authoritarian Regimes,” 203; Agüero, “Legacies of Transitions,” 388; Guillermo A. O’Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics* (Berkeley: Univ of California Intl &, 1973); Manuel Antonio Garretón, *The Chilean Political Process*, 1st edition (Routledge, 2020); J Samuel Valenzuela, “Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings,” 1992; Terry Lynn Karl and Philippe C Schmitter, “Modes of Transition in Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe,” *International Social Science Journal*, 1991, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000088862>; Gerardo L. Munck and Carol Skalnik Leff, “Modes of Transition and Democratization: South America and Eastern Europe in Comparative Perspective,” *Comparative Politics* 29, no. 3 (1997): 343–62, <https://doi.org/10.2307/422125>; Hunter, “Negotiating Civil-Military Relations in Post-Authoritarian Argentina and Chile”; David Pion-Berlin, “Between Confrontation and Accommodation: Military and Government Policy in Democratic Argentina*,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 23, no. 3 (October 1991): 543–71, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00015844>; Pion-Berlin and Buchanan, “Civil-Military ‘Interaction’ and Democratic Consolidation: A Comparative Analysis of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile.”

⁵⁰ Daria Fane, “After Afghanistan: The Decline of Soviet Military Prestige,” *The Washington Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (June 1, 1990): 5–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01636609009477632>.

Second, popularity affects each actor's ability to form alliances with critical classes or social groups and gain influence within the state. This, in turn, affects each actor's prospects of controlling military reforms. For instance, political groups most congenial to military interests may fail to gather enough popular support when the military is unpopular, or they may grow gradually distant from the armed forces' interests if this comes to be the case. In post-Franco Spain, relatively moderate politicians whom the armed forces initially saw as allies eventually pursued policies that challenged core military interests.⁵¹ Alternatively, when the armed forces are backed by the population, it is often easy for them to enact effective alliances. Guillermo O'Donnell's seminal work emphasizes the importance of the military's ties to the middle class as a key source of influence in Latin American countries, when the armed forces were quite popular in the region.⁵² Analogously, ties between the historical Prussian Army and the agricultural class have been highlighted by scholars to explain the influence of the former in the state.⁵³ Through historical analysis and case studies, research on Latin America and Southern Europe has shown how alliances between the military and either the landed elite or the bourgeoisie often occur.⁵⁴ Finally, the same logic applies to politicians. As Brooks has shown, presidents can also use their popularity to forge alliances with important sectors. Her case study showcases how President Nasser used his newfound popularity to ally with the middle class and offset military influence in Egypt. Here,

⁵¹ Agüero, "Institutions, Transitions, and Bargaining: Civilians and the Military in Shaping Post- Authoritarian Regimes."

⁵² O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*.

⁵³ Brooks, "An Autocracy at War," 403.

⁵⁴ O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*; Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics*; Paul W. Drake, *Labor Movements and Dictatorships* (Baltimore ; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Jeffery M. Paige, *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

Nasser used the favorable balance of political power precisely to control subsequent military reforms.⁵⁵

Third, interactions between politicians and military organizations are unique because the armed forces are fine-tuned corporate bureaucracies that hold the preponderance of armed power in society. For this reason, these interactions always occur with an implicit threat in the background.⁵⁶ In extreme circumstances, antagonizing the armed forces could lead to major political crises and even coups, given that the military has the means to remove politicians from office by force. A great deal has been written on how officers' grievances can lead to coups, starting with the seminal work from Thompson,⁵⁷ including how military interventions originate in the military's institutional or political interests.⁵⁸ Thus, leaders acting rationally should exercise caution in their efforts to contest the military – incentives to do so will always be weighed against their evident interest in completing their current term in office.

Extreme options such as coups and overt demonstrations of power, however, become more costly – and thus less credible – to the military the more popular the civilian leader is and the less popular the armed forces are. The reason is that the success of a coup depends on persuading social and political groups in society to support the movement or at least stand aside – for example, failures often occur when conspirators operate from a flawed reading of the support they could mobilize within society (e.g., Argentina in 1990).⁵⁹ Military coups usually take the form of

⁵⁵ Brooks, "An Autocracy at War."

⁵⁶ This is not to say that a coup is always plausible. As I show, the likelihood of such an event can vary significantly. This includes contexts in which it is indistinguishable from zero.

⁵⁷ William R. Thompson, *The Grievances of Military Coup-Makers* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1973); Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics*; Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*.

⁵⁸ Morris Janowitz, *The Military in the Political Development of New Nations; an Essay in Comparative Analysis* (Chicago University Press, 1964); O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*.

⁵⁹ Kechschull, "Operation 'Just Missed,'" 570–71.

civilian-military "coup coalitions" that provide the necessary legitimacy for the intervention. Thus, popular support and pacts with other important social actors are crucial.⁶⁰

Not only that, but even if a coup is successful, the very prospect of a military government is less appealing to the armed forces when popular support is severely lacking. The general populace may be less willing to cooperate with a military government that has taken over from a popular civilian regime through force, and may resist through strikes, protests, boycotts, sabotage, or capital flight, among other strategies. Conversely, in situations where the legitimacy of the civilian government is questionable, the military may face fewer obstacles in terms of public opposition, and governance costs become less of a challenge. Once in power, the military must also strive to establish and maintain their own legitimacy. Therefore, popular legitimacy among civilians can increase the likelihood of collective action against military interference in politics.⁶¹

In sum, popular support affects the bargaining power of each actor by affecting the credibility of military threats. For example, during the Cold War, perceived threats to the socioeconomic and political order granted widespread support to military interventions in several countries, which increased the bargaining power of the armed forces and made civilian politicians fearful of antagonizing their generals. With the end of the Cold War, this scenario was reversed, which led to more civilian control. The costs of employing coercive tactics rose, as most officers became mindful that large sectors of society, as well as the international community, would now

⁶⁰ Koonings and Kruijt, *Political Armies*, 23; Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*, 100–102; Martin C. Needler, *Political Development in Latin America: Instability, Violence, and Evolutionary Change* (Random House, 1968); O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*.

⁶¹ Staniland, "Explaining Civil-Military Relations in Complex Political Environments," 335; Aaron Belkin and Evan Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47, no. 5 (October 1, 2003): 594–620, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002703258197>.

condemn these tactics.⁶² Hunter notes that "the low credibility of military force renders elected politicians less fearful than previously about upsetting the military."⁶³ Agüero arrives at a similar conclusion: "manifest citizen support for emergent civilian structures, leaders, and policies is a deterrent to antireformist military actions, as it signals increased costs to intervention and reduces the military's bargaining power."⁶⁴

From the point of view of civilian leaders, then, the game for post-war reforms is to keep the military minimally satisfied when it comes to autonomy and resources so that it is not worth it (or feasible) for the armed forces to attempt coups or other extreme actions. For the armed forces, the game is to extract as much autonomy and resources as possible from civilians, and enact coups or other extreme actions when the payoff is better. Indeed, several findings indicate that concessions to the military in the form of budget and personnel are associated with a lower likelihood of coups.⁶⁵ As Svulik shows, this bargaining sometime breaks down due to informational problems.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, if civilians need to calculate the risks of being the victims of coups, the same is true for military leaders, given the risks of failed coups, which include exile, prison, and death.⁶⁷

⁶² Hunter, "Politicians against Soldiers," 430; Hunter, "Reason, Culture, or Structure?: Assessing Civil- Military Dynamics in Brazil," 47; Koonings and Kruijt, *Political Armies*, 16–17; Hunter, "Negotiating Civil-Military Relations in Post-Authoritarian Argentina and Chile," 297–98; Agüero, "Institutions, Transitions, and Bargaining: Civilians and the Military in Shaping Post- Authoritarian Regimes."

⁶³ Hunter, "Reason, Culture, or Structure?: Assessing Civil- Military Dynamics in Brazil," 47.

⁶⁴ Agüero, "Institutions, Transitions, and Bargaining: Civilians and the Military in Shaping Post- Authoritarian Regimes."

⁶⁵ Vincenzo Bove and Mauricio Rivera, "Elite Co-Optation, Repression, and Coups in Autocracies," *International Interactions* 41, no. 3 (May 27, 2015): 453–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2015.1006727>; Jonathan Powell, "Determinants of the Attempting and Outcome of Coups d'état," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 6 (2012): 1017–40; P. Collier and A. Hoeffler, "Military Spending and the Risks of Coups d'états," 2007, <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:51403b51-4530-457f-a7a1-f17c787fdfe4>.

⁶⁶ Svulik, "Contracting on Violence."

⁶⁷ Kebschull, "Operation 'Just Missed,'" 575; Singh, *Seizing Power*.

Fourth, and related to the above, during serious political crises, the survival of governments often rests on their relationship with the armed forces. In other words, leaders who seriously lack popular backing will be more likely to rely on the military to suppress popular opposition. Again, when this is the case, the leader will be forced to make more concessions to the armed forces. Allowing for greater political influence and granting budgetary concessions to the military are typical ways struggling leaders try to secure their governments.⁶⁸ In post-war contexts, then, weakened leaders have strong incentives to grant autonomy to the military when it comes to military reforms. As Svolik argues, “we frequently observe that in return for the military’s support of the government against mass domestic opposition, the government concedes greater institutional autonomy, resources, and a say in policy to the military.”⁶⁹

At this point, two observations are in order. The first is about the many forms that bargaining can take in the context of military reforms. Importantly, they might be explicit or implicit. Throughout the process, each actor may offer or withdraw guarantees, reassurances, and threats in an attempt to achieve desired outcomes within the constraints they face. In determining what is attainable, these actors consider their own resources and try to predict the resources of others. This creates a situation of interdependence in which the actors engage in communication and bargaining. Again, this can take many forms, including explicit exchanges of demands and agendas. However, it can also involve signaling intentions and using resources to elicit reactions and responses that lead to further interaction. It is the responsibility of the parties involved to organize, gain support, and get ready internally to make the extra effort necessary to change the

⁶⁸ Bove and Rivera, “Elite Co-Optation, Repression, and Coups in Autocracies”; Powell, “Determinants of the Attempting and Outcome of Coups d’état”; Collier and Hoeffler, “Military Spending and the Risks of Coups d’états”; Svolik, “Contracting on Violence”; Hunter, “Reason, Culture, or Structure?: Assessing Civil- Military Dynamics in Brazil.”

⁶⁹ Svolik, “Contracting on Violence.”

situation in order to pursue the objectives they value. They may conclude they cannot do it, the dangers are not worth it, or the alternative does not seem all that terrible. Thus, in some cases, an actor in an unfavorable position might choose to acquiesce without conflict. Alternatively, they may take risks and deal with the consequences. As mentioned earlier, the outcomes of these bargaining exchanges can institutionalize new power dynamics that shape future interactions, with success depending on the relative strength of the actors involved.⁷⁰

This brings us to the second observation. To fully understand the outcomes of military reforms, it is essential to examine the resources available to each actor and how they access, use, and deny them to their opponents. So, what is the “menu” for civilians and the military? Civilians may increase their bargaining power through tactics like mass mobilization, promoting policy platforms that give the government the initiative, and referenda. Again, by garnering mass support, civilian governments can signal to the military that insubordination would carry high costs and may become less likely to occur. This can help to prevent military intervention and maintain civilian control over reforms. The military, on the other hand, can use veto powers or oversight capacity over specific government policies, threaten to use force or attempt a coup, lobby the government, and “go public,” among other possibilities. The military may also seek to protect its core interests by making explicit “minimal conditions” in order to gauge the reaction of other political actors, influence their policies, and clarify its own bargaining position.⁷¹ This can have the effect of moderating the policies of civilian reformists by imposing a ceiling on the extent of reforms and civilian participation, even if those limits are eventually increased. By setting these

⁷⁰ For a discussion on bargaining between civilians and the military, see Agüero, “Institutions, Transitions, and Bargaining: Civilians and the Military in Shaping Post- Authoritarian Regimes,” 201–2.

⁷¹ See Agüero, 200.

conditions, the military aims to ensure that its interests are taken into account and that it retains a certain level of power and influence throughout the process of reforms. Individuals here could be political activists in military organizations, members of political clubs, and officers (either with grand internal ambitions or planning out of the military).⁷² Nonetheless, when it comes to reforms, the most important ones are the officers at the top of their respective hierarchies (the chief of each branch, and the chiefs of staff, among others).

What do these tactics look like in the real world? In Chile, throughout the first half of the 1990s, senior officers repeatedly orchestrated the mobilization and deployment of troops in defiance of civilian authority. These actions were not necessarily intended as threats of a coup, but rather as demonstrations of the military's power in order to pressure the government into making concessions. This strategy was generally successful in achieving the military's goals, including in defense policy.⁷³ In Argentina, the military's responses to perceived threats to its institutional integrity during the mid and late 1980s resulted in a series of mutinies and, ultimately, a failed coup attempt in 1990. By means of the crushing of this coup attempt, this tumultuous period ultimately gave way to a period of military acquiescence to government reform efforts that sought to downsize and professionalize the armed forces.⁷⁴ As for milder strategies, we can mention the US military going public against the all-volunteer force and decisions regarding weapons acquisitions.⁷⁵ Regarding the former, the Army was also accused of sabotaging the reform by

⁷² Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*, 101.

⁷³ Claudio Fuentes, *El Discurso Militar En La Transición Chilena* (Santiago, Chile: FLACSO, 1996), <https://biblio.flacsoandes.edu.ec/libros/5534-opac>.

⁷⁴ Deborah L. Norden, *Military Rebellion in Argentina: Between Coups and Consolidation*, Illustrated edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

⁷⁵ See Ben Franklin, "Lag in a Volunteer Force Spurs Talk of New Draft: Volunteer Military's Lag Spurring Talk of a New Draft Pressure on Recruiters 'Optimistic' Forecast 'Unprecedented' Plan General's Comment Califano's View Considered an Infringement," *New York Times*, 1973, sec. GN, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/119859019/abstract/13AD1AA2D9BA4D55PQ/1>; Donald Rumsfeld, *Known*

refusing to lower “quality” recruitment standards to price themselves out of the market and force a return to the draft.

From the civilian side, going public is also an option. In the example above on the US, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower Roger T. Kelley publicly charged the Army with sabotage. This exact word was also used by more than one member of the Gates Commission, the task force working on this issue, including Milton Friedman and Stephen Herbits.⁷⁶ The government also threatened to reduce the Army’s size due to its “apparent inability to achieve its stated quantitative manpower goals and its apparent unwillingness to reduce qualitative standards.”⁷⁷ Furthermore, Nixon was also careful to announce changes to the draft as part of a policy package that included the pullout of troops from Vietnam, which generated positive reactions from public opinion.⁷⁸ As for a more extreme example of civilian strategies, Azerbaijani President Aliyev, after the military defeat to Armenia in the 1990s, challenged military leaders by demonstrating his popularity and charisma – he gathered, on short notice, thousands of supporters in front of the presidential palace on two separate days.⁷⁹ This allowed him to assert control over the military and lead subsequent reforms. In China, after the Sino-Vietnamese War, Deng Xiaoping “used China’s poor performance to override resistance from military leaders to more

and Unknown: A Memoir, Reprint edition (Sentinel, 2012), 544–49, respectively. See also Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “Tank Trouble,” *The Washington Post* (1974-), August 6, 1976, sec. General.

⁷⁶ Rostker, “I Want You!,” 268–69; Franklin, “Lag in a Volunteer Force Spurs Talk of New Draft.” Milton Friedman, for example, signed a column in *Newsweek* in which he charged the Army leadership with “either gross incompetence or deliberate sabotage.” See Milton Friedman, “Volunteer Armed Force: Failure or Victim?: Military Opposition,” *Newsweek* (New York, United States: Newsweek Publishing LLC, February 11, 1974). Coverage of the Army’s problems, especially an article in the *New York Times*, also pushed the Army to act. See Griffith, “The U.S. Army’s Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968–1974,” 225; Rostker, “I Want You!,” 271.

⁷⁷ Griffith, “The U.S. Army’s Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968–1974,” 213.

⁷⁸ Hunt, “Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military, 1969–1973,” 381.

⁷⁹ Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers*, 94.

reforms.”⁸⁰ He attributed what took place in Vietnam to the “ossified thinking” inside the PLA.⁸¹

As Gomberg Binnendijk, and Lin explain,

Domestically, the war with Vietnam allowed Deng to push for military reform and consolidate his political power. The war revealed the PLA’s weaknesses and undermined the arguments that the military did not need to undergo significant changes. It allowed Deng to replace and rotate senior military leaders who either challenged his vision for China or were incapable of leading an army. (...)By the end of 1980, Deng had transferred or replaced seven of China’s senior regional military commanders, along with a number of political commissars. The PLA’s budget was also cut by 13 percent in 1980 and declined in the subsequent years. To buy support for his reform agenda, Deng shifted money and power from the PLA to provincial officials.⁸²

To summarize, in this section, I propose that popularity affects the level of civilian participation in military reforms, and lay out four mechanisms to explain this argument: 1) both politicians and military organizations are averse to reputational damage and material losses; 2) popularity affects each actor’s ability to form alliances with key classes or social groups and gain in influence within the state; 3) popularity affects the viability and credibility of military threats; 4) civilians sometimes need the military to remain in power. Figure 3 displays these mechanisms.

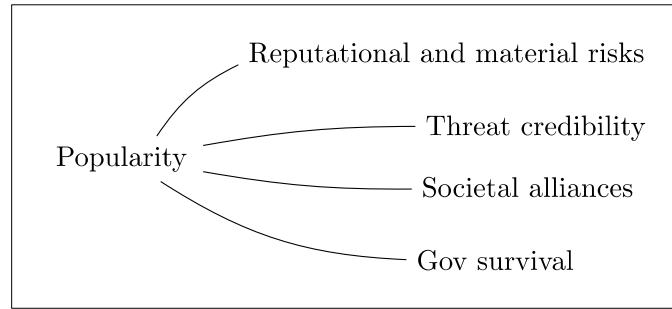
This leads to the first set of hypotheses of this chapter:

⁸⁰ Covell F. Meyskens, *Mao’s Third Front: The Militarization of Cold War China* (Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 230. See also Ezra F. Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, Reprint edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press, 2013), 533.

⁸¹ Richard Baum, *Burying Mao*, Revised edition (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 88.

⁸² David C. Gompert, Hans Binnendijk, and Bonny Lin, “Blinders, Blunders, and Wars: What America and China Can Learn” (RAND Corporation, December 2, 2014), 125–26, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR768.html. See also Baum, *Burying Mao*, 88.

Figure 3. Popularity's Mechanisms for Affecting Reforms.



Hypothesis 1.1. Blame assignment to civilians is associated with lower levels of civilian participation in post-war military reforms, with the opposite being true for blame assignment to the military.

Hypothesis 1.2. Praise assignment to civilians is associated with higher levels of civilian participation in post-war military reforms, with the opposite being true for blame assignment to the military.

War, Popularity, And Blame Assignment

The final step of my argument is the idea that wars affect the popularity of both civilian leaders and the military. This is intuitive, given that wars are highly consequential to societies. Here, the concept of a critical juncture is useful; these are “structural breaks” or “historical turning points,” or moments in time when a society’s underlying structures or institutions undergo significant change or transformation. This includes military conflict.⁸³

This concept is important to my argument because, at this point, one could ask: when it comes to military reforms, why don’t civilians and the military simply do what they have been doing previously? The answer is that although conditions antecedent to wars certainly matter, wars are powerful enough events to have the potential to drastically affect the balance of political power

⁸³ Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C. R. Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms,” *Political Studies* 44, no. 5 (December 1, 1996): 942, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1996.tb00343.x>.

between civilians and the military. The concept of critical junctures is at the core of debates about change in political science. It is especially relevant here because these shocks are the main analytical tool to explain change in rational choice approaches, which often emphasize patterns of regularized behavior and equilibria.⁸⁴ As Hall puts it, “institutional change happens only when *ceteris is no longer paribus*, that is, when shocks exogenous to the system of institutions alter the context.”⁸⁵ Again, it is intuitive that international conflicts have a great potential to affect public perceptions regarding both actors, as the impact of policy issues on the popularity of the government or specific institutions depends on their level of salience. When high-profile international threats arise, they can significantly influence the popularity of the government and relevant institutions, such as the military, because they affect the most fundamental of individual goods: physical security. Moreover, international conflicts often have drastic economic and psychological effects on the population. Indeed, it has been shown that major wars significantly impact domestic politics due to the lasting social changes they bring about and the redistribution of political power among different groups.⁸⁶

Here, it is worth emphasizing that public perception does not necessarily align with war outcomes in the form of victory or defeat. Therefore, it is necessarily the case that there are other

⁸⁴ Note, however, that historical institutionalism uses critical junctures as drivers of change as well.

⁸⁵ Peter A. Hall, “Historical Institutionalism in Rationalist and Sociological Perspective,” in *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*, ed. James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁸⁶ Jack A. Goldstone, “Theories of Revolution: The Third Generation,” ed. S. N. Eisenstadt et al., *World Politics* 32, no. 3 (1980): 425–53, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2010111>; Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*, Revised ed. edition (Harvard: Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press, 1995); William R. Thompson, “The Consequences of War,” *International Interactions* 19, no. 1–2 (November 1, 1993): 125–47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629308434822>; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and David Lalman, *War and Reason: Domestic and International Imperatives*, Reissue edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Robert Higgs, *Crisis and Leviathan: Critical Episodes in the Growth of American Government*, 1st edition (Oxford University Press, 1987); Rafael Reuveny and Aseem Prakash, “The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union,” *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 4 (October 1999): 693–708, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210599006932>.

aspects of conflicts that the public observes. What are these? Here, I assume a rational public that attempts to make judgments based on each actor's prerogatives. When trying to assign responsibility, a citizen's first question should be: who is in charge of what?

Before moving on to the specific issues that should be observable by the public, it is necessary to clarify the theoretical foundation I use to justify the assumption of voters as rational actors capable of assigning merit to public officials according to what these officials can control. This is an important assertion, that common sense would likely reject. Schumpeter, in "Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy," is an example: "The typical citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field. He argues and analyzes in a way which he would readily recognize as infantile within the sphere of his real interests. He becomes a primitive again."⁸⁷

This notion, however, is outdated. Here, I use the literature on retrospective voting to argue that, in some contexts, voters can sanction leaders' bad performances by using the knowledge at their disposal, as well as heuristic shortcuts from like-minded individuals and parties. Indeed, there is a considerable amount of literature supporting this idea.⁸⁸ Moreover, studies have found that voters track economic performance over time and contrast it with that of other nations in order to gather the data required to credit or punish leaders.⁸⁹ In other words, they do not blindly respond

⁸⁷ Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943), 269.

⁸⁸ Brandice Canes-Wrone, Michael C. Herron, and Kenneth W. Shotts, "Leadership and Pandering: A Theory of Executive Policymaking," *American Journal of Political Science* 45, no. 3 (2001): 532–50, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2669237>; Fearon, "Electoral Accountability and the Control of Politicians"; Ferejohn, "Incumbent Performance and Electoral Control"; Torsten Persson, Gérard Roland, and Guido Tabellini, "Separation of Powers and Political Accountability," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 112, no. 4 (November 1, 1997): 1163–1202, <https://doi.org/10.1162/003355300555457>.

⁸⁹ Raymond M. Duch and Randolph T. Stevenson, *The Economic Vote: How Political and Economic Institutions Condition Election Results*, 1st edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Timothy Hellwig and David Samuels, "Voting in Open Economies: The Electoral Consequences of Globalization," *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 3 (March 1, 2007): 283–306, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414006288974>; Isabella Alcañiz and Timothy Hellwig, "Who's to Blame? The Distribution of Responsibility in Developing Democracies," *British Journal of*

to perceived changes in their well-being – instead, they make an effort to assign merit to political leaders based on their performance.

If this is true for economic outcomes, should it be so for national security to the same extent? Even more so, I argue. First, as Healy and Malhotra note, the works I cited right above require four steps:

Voters observe events in the world (e.g., disasters, wars), outcomes (e.g., macroeconomic statistics, test scores), and policy actions taken by elected officials (Step 1). They then attribute responsibility for these events, outcomes, and actions to particular elected officials (Step 2). These attributions then lead people to evaluate the performance of officeholders, thereby influencing their voting decisions (Step 3). The manner in which events, outcomes, and actions are translated into election results creates incentives for elected officials, thereby influencing the formation of policy both before and after elections take place (Step 4).⁹⁰

My argument only necessitates two and a half. It does require that citizens observe events, attribute responsibility, and evaluate the performance of public officials, thereby influencing the popularity of these public officials. Note, however, that my argument does not say anything about voting.

Second, retrospective voting seems to require accessible benchmarks for performance comparisons.⁹¹ If so, wars provide the public with an incredibly obvious one: the adversary. In interstate conflict, almost every outcome is relational: whether a state fought better than its

Political Science 41, no. 2 (April 2011): 389–411, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123409990317>; Michael Ebeid and Jonathan Rodden, “Economic Geography and Economic Voting: Evidence from the US States,” *British Journal of Political Science* 36, no. 3 (2006): 527–47; Mark Andreas Kayser and Michael Peress, “Benchmarking across Borders: Electoral Accountability and the Necessity of Comparison,” *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 3 (August 2012): 661–84, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000275>.

⁹⁰ Andrew Healy and Neil Malhotra, “Retrospective Voting Reconsidered,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 16, no. 1 (2013): 285–306, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-032211-212920>.

⁹¹ Daniela Campello and Cesar Zucco, “Presidential Success and the World Economy,” *The Journal of Politics* 78, no. 2 (April 2016): 589–602, <https://doi.org/10.1086/684749>.

enemies, whether it gained or lost territories, and whether it fought better and neutralized the other side, among others.

Third, not only do wars tend to be highly salient, but there is growing empirical evidence of their electoral effects. Recent works have used the unpopular Iraq War to demonstrate the association between casualties and vote shares for presidents, senators, and representatives, building on Mueller’s seminal work in the wake of the Vietnam War.⁹² According to Karol and Miguel’s findings, counterfactually, President Bush would have won the national popular vote by two additional percentage points – resulting in a resounding Electoral College victory – had it not been for the 10,000 US casualties in the Iraq War prior to the 2004 election.⁹³

But how do wars affect civilian leaders and the military specifically? Starting with the armed forces, militaries are often perceived as competent organizations, in part due to the lack of readily available evidence to the contrary. Since 1945, there have been relatively few interstate wars, which makes it difficult to assess the performance of militaries in combat situations. As the citizens of several nations are removed from direct personal experience with the imperfections and shortcomings of these institutions, they might have become more reliant on abstract or stereotypical perceptions of it.⁹⁴ Thus, the public may view the armed forces more positively due to a lack of firsthand knowledge about its flaws and limitations. This notion certainly bears out on

⁹² John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973); David Karol and Edward Miguel, “The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election,” *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (August 2007): 633–48, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2007.00564.x>; Douglas L. Kriner and Francis X. Shen, “Iraq Casualties and the 2006 Senate Elections,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2007): 507–30, <https://doi.org/10.3162/036298007782398486>; Christian R. Grose and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, “The Iraq War, Partisanship, and Candidate Attributes: Variation in Partisan Swing in the 2006 U. S. House Elections,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2007): 531–57.

⁹³ Karol and Miguel, “The Electoral Cost of War.”

⁹⁴ Ronald R. Krebs and Pedro Accorsi, “Trust, but Verify: Explaining Public Trust in the Military Around the World, 2000-2018,” 2022.

the data: average trust in the Army across nations is higher than in the police, justice, and parliament.⁹⁵

What wars do, then, is reveal the competence of the military to the public. Of course, it can be difficult for the public to assess military performance accurately, given all the noise involved in international conflict. But, again, since wars are a highly salient issue, the general populace will certainly try and make judgments about how the armed forces performed, however imperfect these inferences might be. Indeed, there is evidence that performance is associated with trust in military institutions.⁹⁶

As for the civilian government, as mentioned above, important policy outcomes are often taken as the incumbent's responsibility, especially in this highly salient area, which significantly affects the security and well-being of citizens. The public (or winning coalition) does evaluate the performance of incumbent leaders and render judgment about their quality.⁹⁷ This evaluation is not limited to domestic issues, but also extends to foreign policy events.⁹⁸ This is particularly true in the aftermath of war, when threat perceptions may be heightened, and the public may be more inclined to scrutinize the actions and decisions of their leaders. It is worth noting that the public can also exert constraints on politicians through various instruments of political accountability,

⁹⁵ Krebs and Accorsi.

⁹⁶ Krebs and Accorsi.

⁹⁷ See, for example, Kramer, "Short-Term Fluctuations in U.S. Voting Behavior, 1896-1964"; Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*; Ferejohn, "Incumbent Performance and Electoral Control"; Fearon, "Electoral Accountability and the Control of Politicians"; Canes-Wrone, Herron, and Shotts, "Leadership and Pandering"; Persson, Roland, and Tabellini, "Separation of Powers and Political Accountability."

⁹⁸ Aldrich, Sullivan, and Borgida, "Foreign Affairs and Issue Voting"; Jentleson, "The Pretty Prudent Public"; Drezner, "The Realist Tradition in American Public Opinion"; Kertzer and Zeitzoff, "A Bottom-Up Theory of Public Opinion about Foreign Policy"; Aldrich et al., "Foreign Policy and the Electoral Connection"; Page and Shapiro, *The Rational Public*; Shapiro and Page, "Foreign Policy and the Rational Public"; Page and Shapiro, "Changes in Americans' Policy Preferences, 1935-1979."

including protests, media pressure, and other forms of civic engagement. Therefore, this process extends beyond electoral institutions.

Putting together post-war perceptions of civilian leaders and the military, then, what do we get? The answer is a process of responsibility assignment: the public blames or praises civilians or the military for what takes place in a war – its outcome, the country’s performance, and costs to society. It tries to make sense of these important events. If things go well, one or both actors might receive praise. If they go poorly, one or both might receive blame. Figure 4 describes all possible instances of responsibility assignment. As can be seen, seven outcomes are possible: blame civilians, blame military, blame both, praise civilians, praise military, praise both, and no blame or praise (when the war is not salient).

In some cases, everyone is blamed. For example, the devastating losses suffered by Europe’s armies during World War I called into question traditional values like duty, honor, and patriotism that sustain military organizations during times of war. It contributed to a general lack of trust in authority among the postwar generation.⁹⁹ Eksteins paints a picture of the collective mood of that time:

This ‘war boom’ used the war to voice contemporary anxiety. At the same time, however, it did more to shape the popular image of the Great War than any work by historians before or since. Its most successful works, Remarque’s *All Quiet*, Graves’s *Good-bye to All That*, Zweig’s *The Case of Sergeant Grischa*, and Hemingway’s *Farewell to Arms*, denounced the war as a futile slaughter, a monstrous injustice, a political and social catastrophe. Progress and purpose, all those bloated words with their putrid aspirates, consisted of nothing but foul-smelling vapour—reminding him, said Hemingway, of the stockyards of Chicago. Only individual resilience and an elementary camaraderie had meaning in this hell, tragic meaning at that. The ordinary soldier, the unknown warrior, the nameless, faceless victim, became the

⁹⁹ Douglas Porch, “Strategy Formulation and National Defense: Peace, War, and the Past as Prologue,” in *Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Scott D. Tollefson (University of Texas Press, 2006), 105.

symbol of this war. The anti-hero took the place of the hero, in a world devoid of socially significant will. Wilfred Owen, the young poet who had been killed a week before the armistice, had said of his work: 'The poetry is in the pity.' The same could be said of Remarque's more prosaic intentions a decade later. The new hero of the 1920s was the vagabond misfit Charlie Chaplin, who strolled through life buffeted and baffled by it.¹⁰⁰

France's stunning defeat in 1940, according to French historian Marc Bloch, was attributed by the French people to a variety of external factors, including the French system of parliamentary government, politicians, the rank and file of the fighting services, the English, and the fifth column. "In short, on any and everybody but themselves," he wrote.¹⁰¹ Bloch argued that the disaster's immediate cause was the incompetence of the French High Command. However, some French soldiers, just like American officials after Vietnam, viewed the defeat as a damning indictment of the French people's lack of resolve and the French republic's failure to guarantee the security of France.

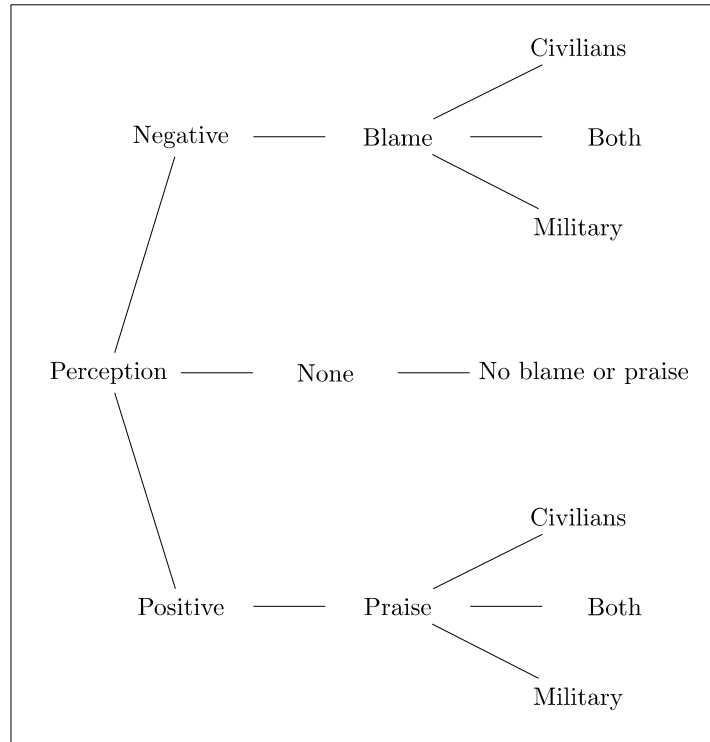
On other occasions, one actor is blamed more extensively. One notable instance in which public opinion heavily blamed a political leader for the consequences of a war is the case of former US President George W. Bush and the Iraq War. The conflict had significant consequences, both in terms of human loss and destabilization in the region. It also proved costly in financial terms: The Costs of War Project, led by Neta Crawford, estimated in 2020 that the long-term cost of the Iraq War for the United States would be approximately \$1.922 trillion.¹⁰² In addition, the conflict has had long-lasting effects, including the rise of the terrorist group ISIS. Bush's approval ratings

¹⁰⁰ Modris Eksteins, "Memory and the Great War," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War: New Edition*, ed. Hew Strachan, 2nd edition (Oxford University Press, 2016), 325.

¹⁰¹ Marc Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, 1st Edition (W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 25. Quoted in Porch, "Strategy Formulation and National Defense: Peace, War, and the Past as Prologue," 106.

¹⁰² Neta C. Crawford University Boston, "The Iraq War Has Cost the US Nearly \$2 Trillion," *Military Times*, February 6, 2020, <https://www.militarytimes.com/opinion/commentary/2020/02/06/the-iraq-war-has-cost-the-us-nearly-2-trillion/>.

Figure 4. Possible Responsibility Assignment Outcomes



plummeted in the years following the invasion, making him one of the least popular presidents in modern American history. While his first term averaged 62 percent approval ratings, his second one averaged only 37 percent, with a low point of 25 percent by the end of the term – the lowest average approval rating for a single presidential term in US history.¹⁰³ The military, on the other hand, was not punished by public opinion. Although it is uncontroversial that the military’s performance was less than optimal, especially when it came to counterinsurgency – and partly due to the decisions made by the very own Army during the 1970s and 1980s – the shortcomings in these wars were mainly associated with the Bush administration. A quick look at different polls

¹⁰³ Gallup Inc, “Presidential Approval Ratings -- George W. Bush,” Gallup.com, January 20, 2008, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116500/Presidential-Approval-Ratings-George-Bush.aspx>; Gallup Inc, “Presidential Approval Ratings -- Gallup Historical Statistics and Trends,” Gallup.com, March 12, 2008, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116677/Presidential-Approval-Ratings-Gallup-Historical-Statistics-Trends.aspx>.

reveals that public trust in the military was not negatively affected throughout the war – as Burbach shows, it achieved all-time highs.¹⁰⁴

The Soviet-Afghan War, in contrast, saw the Soviet military emerge as the primary culprit. This development was particularly surprising given the esteemed status of the Army in the nation’s collective consciousness. Having earned a reputation as a heroic force in World War II, the military was seen as a cornerstone of Soviet society and the protector of its ideology. Thus, its poor performance in Afghanistan shocked soldiers, generals, political leaders, and the general population alike, challenging the perception that the Army was invincible.¹⁰⁵ The moral legitimacy of the Soviet Army was also significantly undermined by instances of corruption, looting, and plundering by its soldiers. Furthermore, the prevalence of drug abuse among soldiers was a significant concern.¹⁰⁶ War crimes and atrocities by Soviet soldiers were also widely publicized.¹⁰⁷

As the conflict progressed, Soviet political leaders sought to distance themselves from the initial decision to intervene in Afghanistan. Instead, they attempted to attribute responsibility to the military and “the geriatric leadership of the previous regime.”¹⁰⁸ The war ended up becoming a rallying point against the armed forces. The poor performance of the Soviet Army in the conflict had generated demands for a reconsideration of the military’s role. In response to these pressures, some generals hesitantly accepted some measure of blame.¹⁰⁹ The elections for the Supreme Soviet in March 1989 revealed a decline in the prestige and political power of the military in the Soviet

¹⁰⁴ David T. Burbach, “Gaining Trust While Losing Wars: Confidence in the U.S. Military after Iraq and Afghanistan,” *Orbis* 61, no. 2 (January 1, 2017): 154–71, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2017.02.001>.

¹⁰⁵ Reuveny and Prakash, “The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union.”

¹⁰⁶ Fane, “After Afghanistan.”

¹⁰⁷ Reuveny and Prakash, “The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union,” 702.

¹⁰⁸ Nake M. Kamrany and David T. Killian, “Effects of Afghanistan War on Soviet Society and Policy,” *International Journal of Social Economics* 19, no. 7/8/9 (January 1, 1992): 129, <https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM00000000000492>.

¹⁰⁹ Reuveny and Prakash, “The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union,” 701.

Union. Some high-ranking officers, including the Commander-in-chief of the Soviet forces in Germany, were not elected, while some of their more radical critics were successful in their campaigns.¹¹⁰ Later in the year, the Congress of People's Deputies established a commission to examine the causes and consequences of the Afghanistan war. This represented a departure from previous practice, as the military had not typically been subject to evaluation by civilian bodies. The creation of this commission marked a significant shift in the relationship between the military and civilian authorities, as it allowed for greater civilian oversight of the actions and policies of the Army.¹¹¹

Here, it is important to emphasize one point: the public's perception of military performance in a war can be affected by various factors and can diverge from the outcome of the conflict. In other words, victory does not guarantee a positive reaction, and defeat does not necessarily lead to a negative one. Discrepancies can often be explained by the manner in which the war was fought, and conflict-specific variables. If a country demonstrates a courageous and tenacious defense, even when facing a materially superior opposition, the public may perceive the military's performance as effective, admirable, and heroic. This can be especially true if the country manages to inflict considerable damage on the enemy or prolongs the conflict longer than anticipated. A case that comes to mind is Finland's performance against the Soviet Union in the Winter War (1939-1940), which is one of the most-cited examples of military effectiveness, despite the Soviet victory.¹¹² As Clodfelter explains, "In one of the most remarkable military stands in military history, the small nation of Finland, with a population of 3,500,000, held back a

¹¹⁰ Fane, "After Afghanistan"; Reuveny and Prakash, "The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union."

¹¹¹ Reuveny and Prakash, "The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union," 701; Fane, "After Afghanistan."

¹¹² Pasi Tuunainen, *Finnish Military Effectiveness in the Winter War, 1939-1940* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-44606-0>.

massive onslaught from its Soviet neighbor, a nation of 180 million, for 105 valiant days." The country suffered 23,157 fatalities and 43,557 wounded and imposed 126,875 fatalities and 264,908 wounded on the Soviet Union – almost six times more.¹¹³

Conversely, public perception may be negative even if a country emerges victorious in a war. This can occur if the war results in significant loss of life or resources for the winning country, as the public may view the victory as a pyrrhic one. It is also possible that the public believes that a specific war should have been won more easily, given their prior expectations, which can be based on prior experiences, level of economic development, and material advantages, among other factors. Finally, it is conceivable that war is perceived as unnecessary or unjust, or that the military's tactics are deemed excessive or unethical. For example, when India defeated Pakistan in the Kargil War (1999), only three days after the conflict, the Kargil Review Committee was created to address perceived shortcomings in India's performance. The war had played out quite differently than elites expected, and the narrative in the media, civil society, and the opposition was that India underperformed on the battlefield.¹¹⁴

Of course, there are several examples of positive reactions to victories and adverse reactions to defeats. For example, in wars such as the Sino-Indian War (1962), the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, the Falklands War (1982), the Vietnam War (1955-1975), the Six-Day War (1969), and the Gulf War (1990-1991), the winners performed well. They were celebrated by public opinion for their performances, the opposite being true for the defeated states.

¹¹³ Micheal Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1500-2000*, 2 edition (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland Publishing, 2002), 436.

¹¹⁴ Stephen P. Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization*, Second edition (Brookings Institution Press, 2012), 41–42.

In sum, wars are critical junctures that allow for the balance of power between civilians and the military to change. This happens mainly through a process of responsibility assignment, where the public attempts to make sense of important events. If there is a negative public perception of them, the public assigns blame to one or both actors – it finds the culprits. If the reaction is positive, the public assigns praise to one or both actors – it finds heroes.

At this point in the analysis, the reader might be curious about the determinants of responsibility assignment. If blame and praise are so important, shouldn't we understand how they are assigned? A tempting answer, from the point of view of this project, would be that it treats responsibility assignment as exogenous. However, this question is too interesting and important to be left untouched.

Having established that 1) wars are critical junctures and 2) the public gathers information and evaluates the performance of leaders and institutions, we can move on to the specifics of what issues are the responsibility of each actor. First, political leaders are the ones with the power to initiate wars. Therefore, whenever a state initiates one, because this decision came from the political leadership, they are more likely to be held responsible and be assigned either blame or praise depending on the degree of success perceived by the public. Note that the narrative that arises from defeat in wars is sometimes of regret about the mistake of going to war in the first place, or staying for too long, instead of the performance on the battlefield. Several of these become known as “politicians wars.” This is what happened in the Vietnam and Iraq wars, for example. Among New York Times editorials that mentioned Vietnam during and after the Tet Offensive in 1968, the most common themes were calls for de-escalation or peace negotiations, which made up for the vast majority of criticism towards the Executive and even some. This theme

appeared in 51 percent of editorials, while 42 percent criticized the administration in any way.¹¹⁵ Polls were similar: by October 1967, more Americans said it was a mistake to send troops to Vietnam (47 percent) than said it was not (44 percent).¹¹⁶ Between July and November, only 22 percent of Americans, on average, wanted the US to pursue total military victory in the war.¹¹⁷ By October 1969, 71 percent of people agreed with a monthly reduction of troops,, against only 16 percent who disagreed.¹¹⁸

Another example takes place in Jordan after the defeat in the Six-Day War, when King Hussein was extremely apologetic for having chosen to fight the war. He frequently stated, in public, that he had no choice, that events unfolded regardless of his wishes, and that war was inevitable. He even stated that he knew Jordan would be defeated,¹¹⁹ and acknowledged having received a message from Israel stating it did not plan to attack Jordan.¹²⁰ In radio broadcasts, Hussein paid tributes to the military.¹²¹ According to Shlaim, “a heavy, almost crushing sense of personal responsibility for the loss lay on Hussein’s shoulders. The result was an emotionally

¹¹⁵ Coded by myself.

¹¹⁶ Gallup Inc, “Iraq Versus Vietnam: A Comparison of Public Opinion,” Gallup.com, August 24, 2005, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/18097/Iraq-Versus-Vietnam-Comparison-Public-Opinion.aspx>.

¹¹⁷ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: July 1967, Question 20, USHARRIS.67JUL.R1, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1967), Survey question, DOI: {doi}; Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: August 1967, Question 16, USHARRIS.082867.R1, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1967), Survey question, DOI: {doi}; Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: September 1967, Question 25, USHARRIS.67SEP.R1, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1967), Survey question, DOI: {doi}; Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: October 1967, Question 23, USHARRIS.111367.R1, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1967), Survey question, DOI: {doi}; Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: November 1967, Question 14, USHARRIS.120467.R1, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1967), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

¹¹⁸ Richard Nixon, Richard Nixon Poll: October 1968, Question 11, USORC.101068.R15B, Opinion Research Corporation, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1968), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

¹¹⁹ Avi Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace*, Illustrated edition (New York: Vintage, 2009), 240.

¹²⁰ Shlaim, 244.

¹²¹ Shlaim, 253.

disturbed state and mood swings that alternated between bouts of resignation and fatalism and sober realism in dealing with the bitter consequences of defeat.”¹²²

Similarly, as I have shown above, the Soviet leadership made a great effort to blame their antecessors for initiating the war on Afghanistan. As Reuveny and Prakash argue:

Soviet political leaders began distancing themselves from the decision to intervene in Afghanistan. They tried scapegoating the Army and ‘the geriatric leadership of the previous regime.’ In January 1988, Shevardnadze told Pravda: ‘not having chosen this legacy for ourselves [but] accepting it for what it is, we are also obliged to take decisions as to how to deal with it from here on.’ (...) In October 1989, in a speech to the Supreme Soviet, Shevardnadze, for the second time, argued that Gorbachev and he ‘happened to be together’ when Soviet troops went into Afghanistan and that they ‘learned about it from radio and newspaper reports.’¹²³

In Israel, the Lebanon War of 1982 led to strong domestic criticism because, unlike previous occasions, this invasion was the first conflict not viewed as essential to the survival of the Jewish state. A mounting death toll stirred sharp criticism of the war and the government from a war-weary public, with many viewing the conflict as unnecessary.¹²⁴ According to Bregman, the Lebanon War “was perhaps the most controversial of all of Israel’s wars, and it broke the former national consensus on defense and encouraged the previously little-known phenomenon of conscientious objection.”¹²⁵ This conflict also prompted some of the biggest demonstrations in the history of the state, with more than 400,000 protesters descending upon Tel Aviv.

Therefore, we have the following hypothesis:

¹²² Shlaim, 255.

¹²³ Reuveny and Prakash, “The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union,” 700.

¹²⁴ Ahron Bregman, *Israel’s Wars: A History since 1947*, 1st edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 2000), 116; Metz, “Israel,” 78.

¹²⁵ Bregman, *Israel’s Wars*, 115.

Hypothesis 2. Civilians are more likely to be held responsible for war initiation.

Note that the hypothesis above does not entail that leaders only face accountability when they have initiated wars. First, sins of omission do exist. Therefore, if a leader is perceived not to have initiated a war when it was necessary to do so, they are also expected to be punished. Second, leaders might not initiate a war but still be perceived as responsible for the war's outbreak. For instance, some leaders might fail on diplomatic efforts, or needlessly provoke adversaries, leading to an attack. These are all possible scenarios in which a leader did not de facto initiate a war, but can be held responsible for its initiation.

Second, the civilian leadership is responsible for gathering allies for the war effort. A higher number of allies can provide a sense of security, solidarity, and legitimacy, as well as a sense of shared purpose and common goals. As several studies have shown, military alliances do affect public support for the use of force.¹²⁶ Tomz and Weeks mention "public fears about the reputational costs of nonintervention and by heightening the perceived moral obligation to intervene out of concerns for fairness and loyalty."¹²⁷ This is consistent with research that argues that people use alliances as a heuristic for judging the justifiability and worthiness of the cause when it comes to war.¹²⁸ Citizens also use this type of information to decide whether to punish

¹²⁶ Michael Tomz and Jessica L P Weeks, "Military Alliances and Public Support for War," *International Studies Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (September 7, 2021): 811–24, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqab015>; Robert Johns and Graeme AM Davies, "Coalitions of the Willing? International Backing and British Public Support for Military Action," *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 6 (2014): 767–81; Erik Gartzke, "Preferences and the Democratic Peace," *International Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (2000): 191–212; Patricia L. Sullivan, "Sustaining the Fight: A Cross-Sectional Time-Series Analysis of Public Support for Ongoing Military Interventions," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 2 (April 1, 2008): 112–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07388940802007223>; Dan Reiter, "Learning, Realism, and Alliances: The Weight of the Shadow of the Past," *World Politics* 46, no. 4 (1994): 490–526, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2950716>.

¹²⁷ Tomz and Weeks, "Military Alliances and Public Support for War," 811.

¹²⁸ Johns and Davies, "Coalitions of the Willing?"

leaders who start conflicts.¹²⁹ Moreover, the number of allies is a heuristic for the probability of success – the higher the number of allies committed to a military coalition, the higher the likelihood of victory. Finally, the number of allies should be a heuristic for a leader’s competence – in this case, their ability to rally other countries for their cause.

Thus, a higher number of allies can be expected to be a way for leaders to justify choosing to go to war in the first place – be it for reasons of the worthiness of the cause or the likelihood of victory – and also serve as a heuristic for leaders’ competency. Thus, allies should be negatively associated with civilian blame and positively associated with civilian praise.

Hypothesis 3. The number of partners in military coalitions is negatively associated with civilian blame, and positively associated with civilian praise.

As for the military, what can the public observe? For the most part, events that unfold on the battlefield. The first is competency. The public assesses it by following news, reports, and data about the conflict on how a war is unfolding. This includes reports from the government, specialized news outlets and experts, and testimonies from family or friends involved in the war effort or informed about it, among other factors. Also important is the fact that wars involve a substantial number of different metrics, such as the number of fatalities and wounded, battles won or lost, and gain or loss of territory. Of course, the amount of information that the public can access will vary depending on factors such as regime type: in case a war breaks, the public in North Korea, for example, will not have access to the same type of information as the public in the US, Norway,

¹²⁹ Terrence L. Chapman, “International Security Institutions, Domestic Politics, and Institutional Legitimacy,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 1 (February 1, 2007): 134–66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002706296177>; Songying Fang, “The Informational Role of International Institutions and Domestic Politics,” *American Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 2 (2008): 304–21, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00314.x>.

or Uruguay. However, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, academic research, and social media, among others, are also sources of additional data and insights into the performance of the armed forces and the conflict. Barring extreme cases, it still should be difficult to prevent meaningful information from reaching the public, especially in the case of larger wars. Moreover, as I argued above, politicians sometimes seek to portray the military as incompetent.

Syria, for example, did not fare well in the Six-Day War against Israel. The military showing and outcome of the war were a disaster. As Pollack explains,

On the face of it, Syria should have beaten the Israelis in June 1967, and beaten them badly. Syrian forces outnumbered the IDF on the ground in every important category of military power by anywhere from two or four to one. Syria was on the defensive, positioned in superb terrain with very formidable fortifications. Its forces were fully alerted and waiting, hence the Israelis lacked even the advantage of surprise. (...) Even allowing for the Israeli advantages, there is no question that had the Syrians turned in even a reasonably competent performance in battle, they would have prevailed. In short, it required a truly awful combat performance for Syria to have lost the Golan to Israel in less than two days. (...) Syrian forces performed extremely poorly in every level.¹³⁰

The defeat had significant ramifications in Damascus, leading to a breakdown in relations among the party, the high command, and the government. Aligned with my theoretical expectations, the military officers blamed the civilian authorities for the onset of the conflict, while the civilians criticized the officers for their lack of competency. Ultimately, however, the generals of the Syrian General Staff were widely blamed for the defeat.¹³¹

This leads us to our third proposition on the sources of responsibility assignment:

¹³⁰ Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991* (Lincoln: Nebraska: U of Nebraska Press, 2002), 1047.

¹³¹ Pollack, 1068; Thomas Collelo, "Syria : A Country Study" (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1988), <https://www.loc.gov/item/87600488/>.

Hypothesis 4. Good battlefield performance is negatively associated with military blame, and positively associated with military praise.

The second category of problems that could lead to military blame includes corruption, perceived cowardice in the form of desertion or abandonment of posts, and perceived immorality in the form of drug use, prostitution, massacres, or war crimes. These are not always straightforward to disentangle from incompetence – Lyall, for example, uses desertion rates as a measure of military effectiveness.¹³² However, it seems appropriate to have a category that includes issues of discipline and morality apart from competency (in the form of cold numbers of casualties and territories). First, these issues indeed affect performance, including in potential future wars, but are not logically exclusive. Second, these are signs that the military might not be an effective organization in general, which should decrease trust from the public and give credence to calls for diminished military autonomy.

Examples abound. In Azerbaijan, after the Armenian–Azerbaijani War, President Aliyev repeatedly and heavily criticized military detachments for their lack of military discipline and cowardice, and accused them of abandoning positions and weapons to the Armenians without an effort to defend them. He also accused them of draft evasion and desertion.¹³³ Aliyev also “lambasted the army commanders and the leaders of the captured regions for betraying their country,” including on national television and in their presence.¹³⁴ In August 1994, a group of

¹³² Lyall, *Divided Armies*.

¹³³ Glenn E. Curtis, “Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia : Country Studies,” image (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1995), 144–45, <https://www.loc.gov/item/94045459/>.

¹³⁴ Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*, 10th Anniversary, Revised, Updated ed. edition (New York ; London: NYU Press, 2013), 237–38.

army commanders, including a former defense minister, were put on trial for allegedly having surrendered to the Armenians two years before.¹³⁵

In Syria, after the 1948 war against Israel, the civilian government responded to attempts from the Army to blame them by accusing the military of corruption, weakness, and incompetence. A hostile attitude developed among their leaders. Officers stated that they were the ones suffering at the front while the politicians were in Damascus, "enjoying the fruits of power and watching Palestine being taken from a distance." The civilian government responded by revealing scandals in the military rank, incriminating certain officers in illegal deals.¹³⁶ A prominent officer was brought to trial with the charge of high treason. Another officer, the Chief of Supply, who was also a close friend of the Chief of Staff, was arrested for corruption, with the Chief of Staff himself being interrogated. This became known as the "cooking-fat scandal."¹³⁷

Regarding moral issues, the cases of the US in Vietnam and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan are again good examples. In the former, blame directed toward the military was almost exclusively focused on this issue. The Army had an serious image problem, connected with social problems such as "dissent, drug abuse, alcoholism, absenteeism, corrupt behavior, war crimes, race relations, crime, issues of discipline, drugs, and behavior in general."¹³⁸ A poll from 1971, for example, showed that a majority of Americans believed it was adequate to blame the army, as an organization, for the My Lai massacre,¹³⁹ and also that such incidents demoralized the

¹³⁵ Waal, 263.

¹³⁶ Sami Moubayed, *Damascus Between Democracy and Dictatorship* (Lanham Md.: UPA, 2000), 11.

¹³⁷ Moubayed, 12.

¹³⁸ Nielsen, "U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1973-1982," 35. See also Roger J. Spiller, "In the Shadow of the Dragon: Doctrine and the US Army after Vietnam," in *The Vietnam War* (Routledge, 2006), 43; Griffith, "The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968-1974," 24-25.

¹³⁹ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: April 1971, Question 74, USHARRIS.71APR.R29G, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

US.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, 77 percent believed that the soldiers at My Lai were following orders from superiors.¹⁴¹ A majority of respondents also believed this was a common occurrence,¹⁴² and 81 percent were certain that there were many other similar incidents involving American troops that had been hidden.¹⁴³ Proponents of the end of the draft argued that the all-volunteer force would help solve this problem.¹⁴⁴

In the case of the Soviet Army, there were several reports of rising drug abuse and soldiers selling their equipment to obtain drugs, food, and electronic goods.¹⁴⁵ Horrendous acts were also reported in the media. Soldiers admitted to corruption, smuggling, the killing of non-combatants, torture, intentional targeting of women and children, and punitive attacks on local communities, and compared themselves to the Nazi Army. In an interview in 1990, one soldier told *Moscow News*: “We were supposedly equated with the participants in the Great Patriotic War, but they defended their homeland, while what did we do? We played the role of the Germans.”¹⁴⁶ In 1987, *Helsinki Watch Reports* described: “Russians systematically entered all the houses, executing the inhabitants including women and children often by shooting them in the head.”¹⁴⁷ According to

¹⁴⁰ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: February 1971, Question 30, USHARRIS.71FEB.R17E, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

¹⁴¹ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: February 1971, Question 27, USHARRIS.71FEB.R17B, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

¹⁴² Newsweek, Gallup/Newsweek Poll: FBI, Question 4, USGALNEW.71CLLY.R4, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

¹⁴³ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: February 1971, Question 26, USHARRIS.71FEB.R17A, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

¹⁴⁴ Rostker, “I Want You!,” 2; Hunt, “Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military, 1969–1973,” 368; Thomas W. Evans, “The All-Volunteer Army After Twenty Years: Recruiting in the Modern Era,” *Army History: The Professional Bulletin of Army History* 27 (1993), https://web.archive.org/web/20130808222147/http://www.shsu.edu/~his_ncp/VolArm.html.

¹⁴⁵ Fane, “After Afghanistan.”

¹⁴⁶ Reuveny and Prakash, “The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union,” 702.

¹⁴⁷ Reuveny and Prakash, 702.

Reuveny and Prakash, "With such reports of looting and brutal treatment of Afghan civilians coming in, the army began losing its moral high ground among Soviet citizens." ¹⁴⁸ The mechanisms above lead to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5. Desertion rates are positively associated with military blame, and negatively associated with military praise.

Hypothesis 6. War crimes are positively associated with military blame, and negatively associated with military praise.

At this point, it is worth reemphasizing that, as rational actors, both civilians and the military prefer to be credited for successes and avoid blame. Especially the latter. Therefore, they are expected to employ strategies to shift public opinion in their favor. Because the government and the armed forces are the two main actors involved in wars, these strategies often take the form of them attacking one another. If things go badly and politicians wish to avoid blame, the armed forces are the most natural target, alongside the previous administration in some contexts. And vice-versa.

What does this mean? Ultimately, there will not be a perfect correlation between the "facts of the matter" of the conflict and blame assignment. In the examples above, politicians attempted to distance themselves from the decision to initiate the war. Some blamed their predecessors, as in Azerbaijan and the Soviet Union. Others might say they did not have a choice, as King Hussein did in Jordan. At the same time, the military can also employ different strategies. In Syria, officers accused civilian leaders of not understanding the realities of the battlefield from their comfortable offices. They also blamed the government for failing to send more troops and equipment. This

¹⁴⁸ Reuveny and Prakash, 703.

narrative also became mainstream within the Army after the Vietnam War: had the country committed more to it and supported the military better, the war could have been won. Another possible strategy is to argue that civilians meddled too much in military affairs or did not follow the armed forces' advice. This was done by the Army in India after the defeat against China, for example. A military inquiry presented to the parliament "told an admonitory tale of meddling civilians."¹⁴⁹ It was also a tendency in the US during the Korean War, in which the military "could always point out that their advice had not been followed and might conceivably have prevented disaster," and, again, in the Vietnam War.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, French commanders after 1940 blamed politicians for the "costly and ultimately pointless construction of the Maginot Line."¹⁵¹

These strategies can have varying degrees of success, depending on the case. Although this is a fascinating research question, this project does not attempt to uncover when and how they succeed. Here, I argue that the "facts of the matter" of wars are determinants of blame assignment as contributing factors. They are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions – the argument is probabilistic. Thus, I propose that civilians are more likely to be held responsible when they choose to initiate wars. Likewise, the military should be more likely to be blamed when battlefield performance is poor and when there are more instances of indiscipline or immorality. Again, this will not be so in every case. Nevertheless, it should be uncontroversial to state that a performance such as the one from the Finnish forces against Russia in 1939-40 will be much easier to defend than a performance such as the Syrian ones against Israel in 1948 or 1967, even if all culminated in defeat. Moreover, the "facts of the matter" not only inform the public, but also significantly

¹⁴⁹ Srinath Raghavan, "Civil–Military Relations in India: The China Crisis and After," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 1 (February 1, 2009): 167, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390802407616>.

¹⁵⁰ Freedman, "Calling the Shots," 192; Porch, "Strategy Formulation and National Defense: Peace, War, and the Past as Prologue," 116.

¹⁵¹ Porch, "Strategy Formulation and National Defense: Peace, War, and the Past as Prologue," 116.

constrain which strategy each actor can employ. Again, as I showed above with the literature on prospective voting, the public pays attention to them when it comes to the economy. This does not mean that leaders will not attempt to frame these facts in their favor, only that the facts themselves influence public opinion.

In addition to what takes place on the battlefield, expectations also matter. For example, in Pakistan, the defeat to India in the Bangladesh War was so heavily blamed on President Ayub Khan because he misrepresented the country's winning chances. The government's own propaganda, which sold the idea that Pakistan was winning swiftly, was credited for the damage to Ayub Khan's image.¹⁵²

With this in mind, the better the conditions given to the military to fight well in a war, the more they will be held responsible for failures. Therefore, it should be expected that better-equipped and better-funded forces are more likely to be blamed by the public in case of failures. Correspondingly, material imbalances in comparison to adversaries should also be part of this math. Here, we should expect that the military is punished for losing wars against weaker adversaries, and civilian leaders to be punished for starting – and losing – wars against stronger ones.

Hypothesis 7. Losing wars against materially inferior adversaries is positively associated with military blame, and negatively associated with military praise.

Hypothesis 8. Starting wars against materially superior adversaries is positively associated with civilian blame, and negatively associated with civilian praise.

¹⁵² See Peter R. Blood, "Pakistan : A Country Study," image (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1995), 269, <https://www.loc.gov/item/95017247/>; H. Rizvi, *Military, State and Society in Pakistan*, 2000th edition (New York, N.Y: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 110,115.

Although these are too many hypotheses to include in a single figure, in Figure 5 I display the logic of the argument. That is, the specific prerogatives of civilians and the military.

Antecedent Conditions

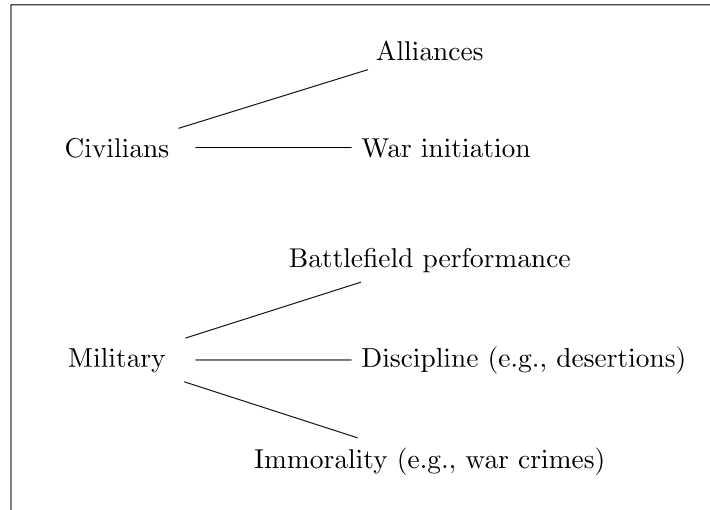
At this point, a natural question to have would be regarding the effects of antecedent conditions on military reforms. In other words, having established that wars should change the balance of power between civilians and the military, one must acknowledge that they are changed from somewhere. Because of this, the pre-war balance of power between civilians and the military should also be a predictor of civilian participation in reforms. The point is obvious: higher military trust or popularity before the war should be associated with military reforms. Alternatively, higher levels of popularity from the civilian leadership and higher levels of civilian control over the military prior to the war should be associated with a higher rate of civilian participation.

Hypothesis 9. Higher levels of pre-war civilian control over the military are positively associated with higher rates of civilian participation in military reforms.

In addition to the pre-war balance of political, we should also recognize that there are factors orthogonal to war and to blame assignment. An important one is expertise. Source expertise has been shown to provide messages with a fundamental level of credibility.¹⁵³ The same is true

¹⁵³ Herbert C. Kelman, "Compliance, Identification, and Internalization Three Processes of Attitude Change:," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, July 1, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002200275800200106>; Richard E. Petty, John T. Cacioppo, and Rachel Goldman, "Personal Involvement as a Determinant of Argument-Based Persuasion," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 41, no. 5 (1981): 847–55, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.41.5.847>; Pablo Briñol et al., "Power and Persuasion: Processes by Which Perceived Power Can Influence Evaluative Judgments:," *Review of General Psychology*, September 1, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000119>.

Figure 5. Civilian and Military War Attributions.



regarding the military.¹⁵⁴ In fact, as Krebs and Ralston show, even in a country with high levels of civilian control, such as the US, citizens are deferential to the military when it comes to military topics – they believe that the armed forces should be able to have considerable weight (e.g., veto power) in decisions regarding the use of force.¹⁵⁵ Some of these tendencies have been found in previous surveys, which showed, for example, that most Americans believe that "in wartime, civilian government leaders should let the military take over running the war."¹⁵⁶ Almost half of Americans (44.4 percent) have agreed with quite extreme assertions, such as that "high-ranking military officers," not "high-ranking civilian officials," should have "the final say on whether or not to use military force," and 58.7 percent have agreed that "high-ranking military officers" should have "the final say on what type of military force to use."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Michele Swers, "Building a Reputation on National Security: The Impact of Stereotypes Related To Gender and Military Experience," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2007): 559–95, <https://doi.org/10.3162/036298007782398512>.

¹⁵⁵ Ronald R. Krebs and Robert Ralston, "Patriotism or Paychecks: Who Believes What About Why Soldiers Serve," *Armed Forces & Society*, April 15, 2020, 0095327X20917166, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X20917166>.

¹⁵⁶ Krebs and Ralston.

¹⁵⁷ Krebs and Ralston.

Because of this, it should be expected that the military will have an advantage on more explicitly military topics, such as military doctrine. As has long been argued, civilian defense expertise limits the extent of civilian control over the armed forces.¹⁵⁸ Without proper expertise, civilians are unable to comprehend the security issues and threats facing the country, define the country's defense objectives, formulate an opinion on the function and mission of the armed forces, specify viewpoints on professional standards and education, and develop policies regarding the distribution of resources for national defense. The military's assertion of corporate autonomy is strengthened by civilians' inability to independently develop policies. This may also make it easier for the military to rebuild internal consensus within the military. Civilian expertise, conversely, makes it more likely that the military will view the civilian leadership as competent. As Agüero puts it, "the development of a conception and policy on national defense empowers the civilian leadership in the attempt to overcome corporate resistance and to advance leadership in the defense area."¹⁵⁹ At the very least, a familiarity with military capabilities means that civilians are "less likely to be bamboozled by military chiefs who employ operational or technological arguments to constrain policy or strategic options or resist military transformation or who suggest questionable 'silver bullet' strategies."¹⁶⁰

Nevertheless, civilian expertise is challenging, and requires specialized material and human resources.¹⁶¹ Additionally, the more domain-specific an issue is, the more challenging civilian expertise will be. In very specific domains within military science, it is more likely that

¹⁵⁸ Trinkunas, "Crafting Civilian Control in Emerging Democracies"; Trinkunas, "Crafting Civilian Control in Argentina and Venezuela."

¹⁵⁹ Agüero, "Institutions, Transitions, and Bargaining: Civilians and the Military in Shaping Post-Authoritarian Regimes," 205.

¹⁶⁰ Porch, "Strategy Formulation and National Defense: Peace, War, and the Past as Prologue," 101–2.

¹⁶¹ Trinkunas, "Crafting Civilian Control in Argentina and Venezuela," 171; Pion-Berlin and Trinkunas, "Attention Deficits," 77–78.

the armed forces will have a stronger claim to expertise. On issues like military tactics, the gap in expertise between civilians and the military can conceivably range from no knowledge on the civilian side to knowledge parity. Moreover, it is costly for civilians to get closer to parity. Even if they do, as mentioned in the sections above, the military tends to resist civilian intrusion in military domains by the very nature of their careers. To repeat one example above, the military in the US has often seen civilians as “amateurs”¹⁶² and outsiders, “who were so bold as to instruct the Pentagon on how to plan for national security.”¹⁶³

For example, during Harold Brown’s tenure as Defense Minister in the Carter administration, an attempt to reformulate the US military strategy and posture, instigated by Carter, proved unsuccessful. The task of steering the process and creating the final study was given to Lynn Davis, an academic from Columbia. As deputy assistant secretary for international security affairs, Davis was responsible for the department's policy portfolio. Throughout this procedure, the Joint Chiefs of Staff intensely opposed the study, categorizing it as filled with “shortcomings and inadequacies,” while the Navy went so far as to label it as “dangerous.”¹⁶⁴ A group of NSC staff saw the pushback against the study as mainly driven by bureaucratic motivations. They perceived a sense of resentment because the study was “not invented here” – implying that it was not conceived by the JCS and services, but by an academic within the OSD.¹⁶⁵ Keefer later noted Davis received strong backing from the NSC, the NSC staff, and National Security Advisor Brzezinski.¹⁶⁶ Brown, in a later interview, indicated that the Joint Staff “just didn’t like what we

¹⁶² Brown, Interview of Harold Brown, 1981, 5.

¹⁶³ Keefer, “HAROLD BROWN - Offsetting the Soviet Military Challenge 1977–1981,” 125.

¹⁶⁴ Keefer, 121–33.

¹⁶⁵ Keefer, 127.

¹⁶⁶ Harold Brown, Interview with Harold Brown, 2011, 29, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/oral_history/OH_Trans_BrownHarold%202-11-2011.pdf?ver=2017-09-27-102309-577.

were saying.” He noted that the criticism targeted Davis largely because she was a civilian, a woman, and an academic.¹⁶⁷

This case is illustrative because Davis was nothing but an expert, and even as one, she encountered strong resistance from the military. Brown himself, who was well-liked but the military, had several similar problems. When he decided to create an undersecretary of plans and operations, he had to name it “undersecretary of policy” because, otherwise, the military would have found it intrusive.¹⁶⁸ Brown also attempted to create a civilian-military operations and crisis team – this initiative failed because he was told “that the chiefs were going to make a big stink about it (...).”¹⁶⁹

On the other hand, civilians have more credibility as experts on issues related to organizational problems, economics, and human resources. Moreover, it is not costly to generate civilian expertise in these fields – they already exist, albeit to different degrees, in every society. As I will show in the Vietnam case study, the ability of economists to argue in favor of the all-volunteer force was crucial for its implementation. They had a massive impact on the Gates Commission and the general public debate.

My proposition, then, is that military doctrine reforms should be more likely to be enacted by the military than the other types of reforms. This is an interesting test because it is an additional way to test for more static factors regarding the balance of power between civilians and the military, which are not affected by war.

¹⁶⁷ Brown, 30.

¹⁶⁸ Harold Brown, Interview of Harold Brown, February 28, 1992, 13.

¹⁶⁹ Harold Brown, Interview with Harold Brown, March 4, 1994, 20–21, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/oral_history/OH_Trans_BrownHarold%203-4-1994.pdf?ver=2017-09-27-102338-750.

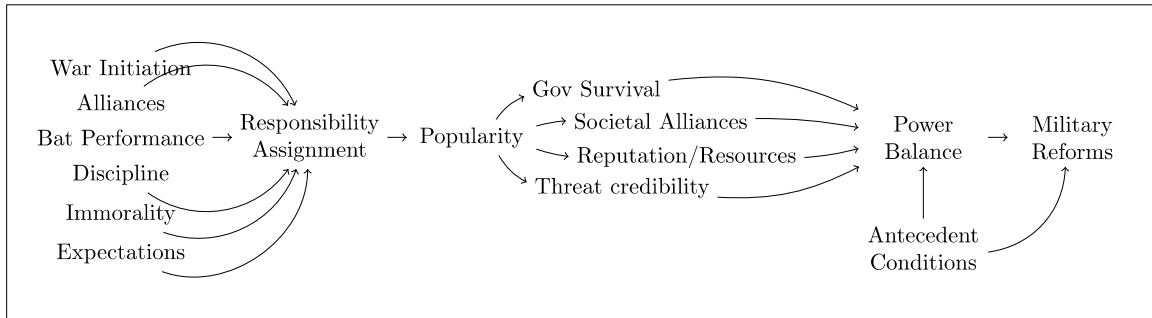
Hypothesis 10. Doctrine reforms have a lower rate of civilian participation.

At this point, we have the argument entirely laid out. My theory explains the connection between conflict-specific prerogatives, blame assignment, popularity, power balance, and military reforms. Figure 6 summarizes the argument in its entirety. Note that it is a combination of Figure 3 and Figure 5, with Figure 2 as a background assumption and Figure 4 constituting the typology of Responsibility Assignment. In addition, I include Expectations and Antecedent Conditions.

Here, a caveat is in order. Some might correctly note the fact that the multifaceted nature of the causes of post-war military reforms, as outlined in Figure 6, raises questions about the sequencing of these causal processes. A valid concern could exist about several of these variables – e.g., blame assignment, popularity, power balance, and, ultimately, military reform – being potentially endogenous to one another. For instance, popularity could be a driving factor behind blame assignment, or power balance could influence blame assignment.

However, there are ways to remedy these challenges. First, it is important to note that these steps of the causal chain are tested individually in the quantitative chapter. Therefore, the endogeneity question must be addressed individually, for each relationship being tested, which I do. Second, my coding of responsibility assignment is careful to place it after wars, and prior to reforms. Third, in the case studies, I have the opportunity to carefully examine the sequencing of events. Finally, note that I do not test every mechanism displayed in the figure. For example, the mechanisms connecting popularity with the balance of political power are not tested individually.

Figure 6. Summary of the Argument.



But Where do Reforms Come from Anyway?

To close off the chapter, let me address a common question the reader might have. Isn't it the case that, for this theory to be relevant, post-war military reforms must first occur? The answer is yes, they must. And they do. As I will show in the quantitative empirical chapter, 75 percent of the countries in my sample enacted some kind of reform after they fought a war. This is only logical. As discussed earlier in this chapter, wars reveal valuable information about military organizations, which normally are opaque institutions. In turn, this newfound information about military weaknesses, strengths, and lessons tends to bring about reflections, debates, and changes.

However, it is still the case that some countries enact post-war military reforms, while others do not. With this in mind, and as not to leave this question unaddressed, I propose a simple and intuitive explanation of conflict-specific factors that should be conducive to reform. Specifically, I propose that the prospects for military reforms are affected by three variables.

The first and most important is success. Successful military performance in wartime is an indication of the effectiveness of the existing military organization. As a result, there might be no apparent weaknesses or deficiencies in need of urgent attention. In this situation, policymakers and military officials may perceive the current system as adequate for future conflicts, thus

discouraging the pursuit of reforms. Moreover, the “if it is not broken, do not fix it” mentality might dominate the decision-making process, further reinforcing the status quo.

Secondly, military success can often result in a diminished perception of threats from adversaries. With a clear demonstration of superiority on the battlefield, the victorious state may believe its military prowess is sufficient to deter potential adversaries from future aggression. This sense of security can lead to a reduced urgency for change within the military establishment. Moreover, the successful state might be confident enough to believe that, even if deterrence fails, they can count on their military superiority as a safeguard. Consequently, the impetus for reforms and adjustments to defense policy may be weakened, as decision-makers prioritize maintaining the status quo over seeking improvements.

Lastly, the aftermath of a successful military campaign often involves a period of celebration, euphoria, and national pride. In such an environment, the political climate may not be conducive to advocating for military reforms. This kind of advocacy often entails the use of political capital, and requires motivated organizational entrepreneurs. When demand for reforms is low, these costs can become even more steep. Furthermore, when individuals find themselves amid a period of celebration following an important success, they rarely possess the desire to reflect on their own shortcomings and make difficult choices.

Both civilians and members of the military are subject to these mechanisms. *Ceteris paribus*, both actors want their military organizations to be competent, and become less motivated to make changes if they believe this to be the case. Additionally, as previously discussed, politicians prefer not to spend on guns if they can safely prioritize butter. Thus, there is no reason for them to pursue potentially expensive reforms if national security is under control, and they direct resources for public policy, pork, or rent seeking. Similarly, in these situations, the military

can rest assured that civilians will not push for reforms that could potentially intrude in their domain. Moreover, both actors are susceptible to the effects of a celebratory climate and will normally be content in riding the wave of great political or professional success.

For these reasons, I contend that success leads to policy continuation, and failure leads to policy change. In other words, change is most likely to take place “when policy fails either repeatedly or catastrophically, or when leaders become convinced that it will imminently do so.”¹⁷⁰ Again, this is intuitive, and there is empirical evidence in the realm of international security in this direction. Alliance decisions, for example, have been shown to be based on the success or failure of past choices.¹⁷¹

In El Salvador, for instance, the victory in the Football War led to a wave of patriotic sentiment and a newfound public admiration and respect for the Salvadoran armed forces, whose commendable performance during the short conflict significantly boosted their reputation¹⁷² and made them the beneficiaries of celebrations and parades.¹⁷³ Ecuador experienced something similar after its 1995 war against Peru. The conflict became a source of national pride, as the Ecuadorian Armed Forces were seen as successfully defending national territory against a larger and more resource-rich adversary. It also fostered a climate of heightened nationalism and significantly raised the prestige of the military. The Ecuadorean military “enhanced its already high level of respect for both its primary professional mission of defense of the borders and for its

¹⁷⁰ Claude Welch, *Painful Choices: A Theory of Foreign Policy Change* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 46, <https://press.princeton.edu/books/hardcover/9780691123400/painful-choices>.

¹⁷¹ See Reiter, “Learning, Realism, and Alliances.” See also Jeffrey W. Legro, *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order*, 1 edition (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007). The author argues that the most probable precipitants of change are situations in which a policy is recommended by an existing orthodoxy and fails, leading to an intellectual consensus to change.

¹⁷² Richard Haggerty, *El Salvador: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1990), 202, <https://www.loc.gov/item/89048948/>.

¹⁷³ Vincent Cable, “The ‘Football War’ and the Central American Common Market,” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 45, no. 4 (1969): 663, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2613335>.

secondary role as a nation-building force,”¹⁷⁴ and “successfully maintained their popular image as trustworthy and disciplined,” with “the military and its officers generally regarded as national models of efficiency, uprightness and organization.”¹⁷⁵ In this context, threat perception plummeted. After the Yom Kippur War, Egyptians were also ecstatic, as the war restored a degree of Arab pride. As Clodfelter puts it, “Arab honor was regained.”¹⁷⁶ Needless to say, none or very minor changes to the military were made in these cases.

The second driver of reform, I argue, is damage. High levels of destruction may necessitate rebuilding efforts beyond mere restoration, leading to more extensive reforms as the state seeks to adapt its military to the lessons learned from the conflict and the realities of the post-conflict environment. Moreover, when a relevant amount of reconstruction is necessary, this might present a window of opportunity to enact reforms. Suppose decision makers in a given state concluded that changing military doctrine would be beneficial, but the army's tanks were incompatible with the new doctrine they wished to adopt. Depending on the circumstances, this could be a sizeable roadblock, and replacing all the tanks in an army could be expensive and laborious. Suppose this army fought a war, and 95 percent of their tanks were destroyed. In this case, they might as well buy or produce the tanks suitable for their preferred doctrine, allowing them to adopt it. In other words, if a state is already incurring the costs of reconstruction, it can do so while enacting the changes it deems necessary.

Some extreme examples are Norway after World War II, South Korea after the Korean War, Azerbaijan after Azeri-Armeni War, and Uganda after the Tanzanian War. These countries

¹⁷⁴ Gabriel Marcella, “War and Peace in the Amazon: Strategic Implications for the United States and Latin America of the 1995 Ecuador-Peru War” (Department of National Security and Strategy, U.S. Army War College, 1995).

¹⁷⁵ Julian C. Quibell, “Civil-Military Relations in Ecuador: (In)Subordination and Challenges to Democratic Consolidation” (Washington, D.C., Georgetown University, 2002), 48.

¹⁷⁶ Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts*, 579.

had their armed forces practically decimated. When rebuilding them, they inevitably enacted important military reforms. Norway, for example, rebuilt its entire armed forces, which became an entirely different organization regarding size, doctrine, and mode of recruitment, among others.¹⁷⁷ Counterfactually, this would have been a tall order if they possessed a well-established force, with all the structures in place to operate in a certain way.

Finally, I expect operational complexity to create a greater perceived necessity for reform. States engaged in challenging military operations are posed with hard problems regarding logistics, coordination, force projection, equipment, and training, among others. In these scenarios, the shortcomings of a military organization become more apparent. In fact, they might not even have been noticed in a different circumstance. For example, conflicts taking place farther away from a state's borders and involving multiple coalition partners involve several of the challenges described above. Not only that, but coalition partners also allow for comparison, inspiration, emulation, and cooperation.

Take Colombia in the context of the Korean War, for instance. The country created two new training schools modeled after Fort Benning in the United States, established the Colombian General Command (similar to the US Joint Chiefs of Staff), and the army adopted an American organizational model.¹⁷⁸ During the war, it became clear that some deficiencies needed to be addressed, which led to changes in tactics and combat techniques.¹⁷⁹ The army, for example, learned how to incorporate modern weaponry and employ them under complex combat

¹⁷⁷ "Our History," Norwegian Armed Forces, accessed June 23, 2023, <https://www.forsvaret.no/en/about-us/our-history>.

¹⁷⁸ Bradley Lynn Coleman, *Colombia and the United States: The Making of an Inter-American Alliance, 1939-1960*, First Edition (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2008), 105.

¹⁷⁹ Alvaro Valencia Tovar, *Historia De Las Fuerzas Militares De Colombia Ejercito*, vol. 3 (Planeta, 1993), 215.

circumstances, as well as how to employ aerial support.¹⁸⁰ Throughout this period, there were visits from several US weapons demonstrations teams to provide specialized instruction to Colombian soldiers, and a wide-ranging study of the Colombian Army training system that would produce many major initiatives after 1953. Moreover, Colombian military personnel continued to train at US service schools.¹⁸¹ Overall, the United States and its experience in Korea played an important role in what was called a “reorganization of the Colombian armed forces.”¹⁸²

With all the above in mind, three hypotheses emerge regarding the occurrence of military reforms:

Hypothesis 11. Success should be negatively associated with post-war military reforms.

Hypothesis 12. Damage and destruction should be positively associated with post-war military reforms.

Hypothesis 13. Operational Complexity should be positively associated with post-war military reforms.

2.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

My central claim is that certain aspects of wars and the political landscape of societies entering these wars interact in complex but predictable ways and lead to civilians or the military being assigned blame or credit for the conflict's outcome, whatever it may be. This blame or praise game, in turn, empowers either civilians or the military, who can then conduct the ensuing military reforms and mold them according to their preferences. In this section, I outline the research

¹⁸⁰ Tovar, 3:214.

¹⁸¹ Coleman, *Colombia and the United States*, 129.

¹⁸² Coleman, 129.

strategy for testing this theory – its scope conditions, the selection and use of the empirical strategy, and the theory’s observable implications.

Scope Conditions

My argument applies to cases that satisfy the following conditions. First, the cases involve post-war military reform. It is standard practice in the literature to distinguish between peacetime innovation and wartime adaptation.¹⁸³ Although my cases qualify as taking place during peacetime, this is a very particular type of peacetime: post-war periods. Again, the security environment is not the same in a country that has not fought a war in more than a century, such as Mexico or Sweden, and countries that have just experienced fighting, such as post-Yom Kippur Israel, post Kargil War Pakistan, or post-Falklands Argentina. Although I strongly suspect that the reform mechanism I propose – involving a balance of political power based on public opinion – does operate during "normal" peacetime, it is unquestionable that defense matters become much more salient in post-war periods. In fact, they often take center stage. Therefore, analyzing peacetime in all its shapes and forms would likely require a different – or at least adapted – theoretical framework.

Second, I limit the analysis of cases to countries that have experienced interstate wars and suffered at least one hundred casualties. By doing so, the theory is scoped to exclude minor conflicts. At the same time, I do not limit the reforms to include only major ones, which is common in the military innovation literature.¹⁸⁴ In contrast, my bar is much lower. As I detail in the

¹⁸³ Theo Farrell, “Improving in War: Military Adaptation and the British in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 2006–2009,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 4 (August 1, 2010): 567–94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2010.489712>.

¹⁸⁴ Michael C. Horowitz, *The Diffusion of Military Power: Causes and Consequences for International Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 22–23.

quantitative chapter, I count as reforms changes such as in the profile of army divisions, or introducing conscription to individuals with criminal records. This is not to say that I do not include major reforms as well, which I do. However, the range of reforms in this study is much broader than what is often seen in adjacent literature.

Taking these conditions together, I examine minor to major reforms generally following impactful wars. Thus, my analysis, by design, will be tilted towards identifying and counting larger numbers of reforms, especially when it comes to building the dataset I present in the quantitative chapter. This is one of the reasons why such a high percentage of the countries in my sample enacted military reforms after wars. Again, I classified three-quarters of them as having done so. This is not a problem per se – it simply is a decision that fits well with the goal of examining how wars affect civil-military relations and military effectiveness. However, it is important to be explicit about the decisions I made, as well as their implications. These strategies are certainly not recommended for all – or even most – studies that involve military reforms or innovation.

In a similar vein, because my sample is biased towards more impactful wars, my findings related to public opinion will not necessarily be generalizable to smaller conflicts or crises. In my sample, it is rare to find wars that did not elicit much of a reaction in terms of public opinion. A few “forgotten wars” are certainly there, like Ifni is for Spain,¹⁸⁵ Assam is for China,¹⁸⁶ or Korea is for Canada.¹⁸⁷ However, they are much more the exception than the rule, as the wars I examine normally generate significant reactions in their respective societies.

¹⁸⁵ Juan Manuel González Sáez, “LA RETROCESIÓN DE IFNI: OPINIÓN PÚBLICA Y OPOSICIÓN POLÍTICA,” n.d., 26.

¹⁸⁶ Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, 533.

¹⁸⁷ Ted Barris, *Deadlock in Korea: Canadians at War, 1950-1953*, 1st edition (Thomas Allen Publishers, Inc., 2010), 377–78, 381; John Melady, *Korea: Canada's Forgotten War*, 2nd edition (Dundurn Press, 2011).

A few other variables could be argued to be scope conditions, but which I reject. An important one is democracy. Democracy as a scope condition for the assignment of blame and subsequent military reform might seem intuitive at first glance. After all, democracies typically feature transparency, a free press, and mechanisms that hold leaders accountable. Yet, the argument and mechanisms proposed in this study are not inherently tied to the type of political regime.

There are two main reasons why my theory should generally apply to autocracies. First, popularity also matters for autocrats. As Svoblik shows, it is precisely when autocratic leaders face mass opposition that the military is able to successfully demand greater institutional autonomy, as well as a say in policy.¹⁸⁸ Thus, popularity affects not only autocrats' survival in office, but also their balance of power with the military.

In my universe of cases, the importance of the public is well-exemplified in Azerbaijan and Egypt. As discussed above, in the former, when Aliyev was in danger of being the victim of a coup by Colonel Surat Huseynov, he demonstrated his popularity and charisma and gathered, on short notice, thousands of supporters in front of the presidential palace.¹⁸⁹ The next day, he presided over an even larger popular gathering in Freedom Square on Baku's Caspian Sea shoreline.¹⁹⁰ In Egypt, Nasser offered his resignation in a public speech to the Egyptian masses, which elicited a spontaneous eruption of support for the Arab leader. Egypt's masses poured onto the streets. As such, "the demonstrators constituted a massive plebiscite compelling Nasser to remain in power," and Nasser subsequently reinstated himself as the political leader of the country.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Svoblik, "Contracting on Violence"; Svoblik, *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*.

¹⁸⁹ Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers*, 94.

¹⁹⁰ Svante E. Cornell, *Azerbaijan Since Independence*, 1st edition (Armonk, N.Y: Routledge, 2011), 86.

¹⁹¹ Brooks, "An Autocracy at War," 419.

Moreover, even though autocratic leaders might have more tools to influence public opinion, perhaps only in totalitarian regimes do they have complete control of the information that reaches the public. Thus, autocrats should not be able direct blame on the military at will. For example, after the 1948 Arab-Israel War, the Lebanese government was held responsible for the debacle,¹⁹² and the war was credited as one of the factors for its deposition in 1952.¹⁹³ The government never tried to shift blame to the military, and even held parades to honor them. Instead, it unsuccessfully attempted to portray the war as a victory.¹⁹⁴ In Jordan, after the Six-Day, the leadership of the Jordanian Army was not held responsible for the defeat. In fact, King Hussein was apologetic after the war, and paid tributes to the military in radio broadcasts.¹⁹⁵

Even if I concede that autocrats can avoid blame more often, it can still be the case that the variables I propose work to make blame more likely to them. In this case, these explanatory variables would have the same effect on democracies and autocracies, but from a different baseline. For example, suppose that autocrats avoid blame 70 percent of the time, while democratic elected leaders do so 50 percent of the time. Suppose that war initiation brings this number down to 35 percent for the former and 25 percent for the latter. In this case, the variable works equally for both types of leaders. Again, just from a different baseline.

Second, autocrats are also accountable to their winning coalition, as defined by Bueno de Mesquita.¹⁹⁶ In many autocracies, then, the winning coalition is their audience instead of the population as a whole, and leaders in autocratic regimes stay in office by providing private goods

¹⁹² Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2nd edition (London : New York: Pluto Press, 2012), 114.

¹⁹³ Traboulsi, 123.

¹⁹⁴ Matthew Hughes, "Lebanon's Armed Forces and the Arab-Israeli War, 1948-49," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 34, no. 2 (2005): 32, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2005.34.2.024>.

¹⁹⁵ Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan*, 253.

¹⁹⁶ Mesquita et al., *The Logic of Political Survival*.

to key supporters. Importantly, there is no reason why winning coalitions will not have their views of civilians and the military affected by perceived failures or successes. Therefore, wars can still affect the balance of political power in these cases. This is important, because it is not the case that autocrats necessarily have full control over their military leaders, or that they can do as they wish. In fact, we see almost as much variation in autocracies when it comes to the sources of military reforms.

In China, after the Korean War, military leader Peng Te-Huai was the one who pushed for reforms. He concluded that the People's Liberation Army needed a vigorous push towards professionalism, and to develop new strategies for modern combined operations. In 1955, he began to implement what would soon become known as the "Four Great Systems" - the Compulsory Military Service System, the System of Military Ranks, the Salary System, and the Order of Merit System.¹⁹⁷ Importantly, Peng's ideas contradicted the military thought of Mao. According to Savada and Worden, "The military's new emphasis on Soviet-style professionalism produced tensions between the party and the military. (...) The military resented party attempts to strengthen political education, build a mass militia system under local party control, and conduct economic production activities to the detriment of military training."¹⁹⁸

Similarly, disagreements between the military and civilian leadership gradually intensified in Syria after the Six-Day War. They were largely centered on a conflict of priorities. The military was primarily focused on the military confrontation with Israel, while the Ba'ath leadership considered the internal revolution the paramount concern. The former perspective was largely

¹⁹⁷ Jurgen Domes, *P'eng Te-Huai: The Man and the Image*, 1st edition (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1985), 64–67.

¹⁹⁸ Robert L. Worden and Andrea Matles Savada, "China : A Country Study" (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1989), 548.

outward-looking, focused on the lost territory, while the latter was inward-looking, aimed at the continued transformation of Syria. These contentious debates grew increasingly bitter during party meetings, reaching a point of irreconcilability at the Fourth Regional Congress in September 1968. Eventually, the army prevailed.¹⁹⁹

Even in totalitarian regimes, it is sometimes the case that leaders cannot do as they wish. After the Korean War, for example, North Korean leader Kim Il Sung made speeches attacking “almost everybody, most particularly his own partisans who had mismanaged the war,” including military leaders. He dismissed members of the military early on, as a result of “haste and incipient panic,” but had to have them reinstated shortly after.²⁰⁰ Kim needed to the army to confront adversaries.²⁰¹

This is not to say that regime type never matters. For example, regimes that possess a large selectorate and a small winning coalition may be least constrained, as it is riskier for members of the winning coalition to defect in such regimes, given that defectors can be easily replaced.²⁰² However, this would be a much smaller scope condition than “democracy vs autocracy.”

Another distinction between democracies and autocracies is that the stakes for disgraced leaders and elites are higher in autocracies. This can make these actors more aggressive when playing the blame game. In fact, many autocrats rush to detract their militaries after a defeat, and more aggressively so. Relatedly, it also seems to be the case that bargains are more often taken to the extreme, leading to events such as coups. In my data collection effort for the quantitative chapter, the rate of post-war regime change was almost three times higher in dictatorships than in

¹⁹⁹ Patrick Seale, *Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1989), 145.

²⁰⁰ Dae-Sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, Revised ed. edition (Columbia University Press, 1995), 122.

²⁰¹ Suh, 143.

²⁰² Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al., “An Institutional Explanation of the Democratic Peace,” *The American Political Science Review* 93, no. 4 (1999): 791–807, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2586113>.

democracies. Examples of post-war coups include Pakistan after the Kargil War, Honduras after the Football War, Egypt after the Arab-Israeli War, Ecuador after the Cenepa War, and Syria after Arab-Israel and Six-Day War.

The second scope condition I reject is that my theory requires the existence of a clear defeat(victory) or failure(success). One could argue that the theory holds primarily in situations where a state experiences a clear and unequivocal military outcome. This would be because such circumstances naturally elicit demand for accountability and create a context in which responsibility assignment becomes a salient issue. As mentioned above, however, my theory does not require responsibility assignment – it simply posits what makes it more likely. In that sense, the severity of the war outcome is orthogonal to my argument. Yes, unequivocal outcomes could very well make responsibility assignments more likely. However, the independent variables I propose – war initiation and battlefield performance, among others – are expected to affect responsibility assignment across different levels of intensity. Therefore, similarly to my argument above about democracies versus autocracies, conflict intensity could affect baseline levels of responsibility assignment, but this does not render it a scope condition.

Related to the above, my theory does not require a sophisticated public or elite awareness of failure or success. It does require, however, that the public or winning coalition makes some kind of judgment about what took place in the war. Given that wars tend to receive significant coverage and meaningfully affect people's lives, this is a soft assumption to make.

Third, my theory does not require that the public pay attention to military reforms, nor it requires that they are knowledgeable about them. What it does require is that the war affects the public's perceptions of civilians and the military. This, in turn, will affect the outcomes of disagreements between civilians and members of the armed forces. This is because their

interactions are enacted with their own evaluations about the support each has among the populace in the background, which changes the terms of the bargain.

Suppose the Chief of Staff in State A wants to change the current mode of recruitment of their military. Recently, a war erupted in which the armed forces were hailed as heroes, while the civilian leaders received a lukewarm or even negative response. When the president of State A informed the Chief of Staff that they would make use of their legal prerogative and block this initiative, the Chief of Staff threatened to resign and go public about how the president was undermining national security. Due to the Chief of Staff's recently acquired political capital, the president decided this would be more costly than accepting their demand, which led to the reform being enacted. In such a situation, my theory is at full display – counterfactually, the reform would not have happened hadn't the war changed the balance of political between civilians and the military. However, it was never necessary, for any step of this process, that the public pay attention to military reforms. This is only one example – per the theoretical discussion above, each actor has several possible tools and strategies. Note, also, that I am not affirming that the public does not pay attention to military reforms. They often do. My point here is simply that this is not a necessary step in my theory.

Empirical Strategy

I employ a mixed-methods approach in this study. This is a commonly used strategy, and for a good reason. Its usefulness stems from the trivial fact that each methodological approach has strengths and weaknesses. The classic consensus is that case study research is stronger in internal validity and weaker in external validity. It is usually easier to establish the veracity of a causal relationship using a single or few cases, as one can study its details and several types of

evidence.²⁰³ Alternatively, cross-case research has, by definition, more cases, which makes this approach more representative of the population of cases.²⁰⁴ Moreover, cases studies are better suited to identifying causal mechanisms,²⁰⁵ while, cross-case studies usually rely on correlations of unit-level outcomes without necessarily addressing them. Cross-case analysis, nonetheless, is more suitable for measuring causal effects: the magnitude of a causal relationship (on average across a population) and the relative precision or uncertainty of that point estimate.²⁰⁶

Importantly, case studies and large-N analyses complement each other well, which makes up for the most persuasive argument for the use of multi-methods. Using combinations of case studies and cross-case research allows researchers to make claims about average causal effects and mechanisms simultaneously, for example. This is precisely my goal. In this study, the case studies will present evidence that the mechanisms proposed by the theory are indeed present in important cases – thus, his theory is not limited to being tested with broad statistical correlations. At the same time, the statistical evidence lends generalizability to the theory’s claims. Hence, some of the weaknesses of each approach alone are minimized.

²⁰³ See Thad Dunning, “Improving Process Tracing: The Case of Multi-Method Research,” in *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, by Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel (Cambridge University Press, 2014); John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*, 1 edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Ch. 7; David Waldner, “What Makes Process Tracing Good? Causal Mechanisms, Causal Inference, and the Completeness Standard in Comparative Politics,” in *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, by Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

²⁰⁴ Although authors such as challenge the notion that case studies cannot generate external validity, they acknowledge that cross-case research is better suited for this task in general. See Gerring, *Case Study Research*. and Dan Slater and Daniel Ziblatt, “The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Comparison,” *Comparative Political Studies* 46, no. 10 (October 1, 2013): 1301–27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414012472469>.

²⁰⁵ See Tulia G. Falleti and Julia F. Lynch, “Context and Causal Mechanisms in Political Analysis,” *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 9 (September 1, 2009): 1143–66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009331724>; James Mahoney, “Beyond Correlational Analysis: Recent Innovations in Theory and Method,” ed. Peter Hedström, Richard Swedberg, and Charles C. Ragin, *Sociological Forum* 16, no. 3 (2001): 575–93.

²⁰⁶ Gerring, *Case Study Research*; Mahoney, “Beyond Correlational Analysis.”

In the quantitative chapter, then, I aim to uncover broad patterns and find robust associations that reflect my theoretical expectations. Importantly, as I explain in the chapter, my coding of variables relies on country reports, which require me to engage in semi-depth with each observation. Thus, although the N in this project is not considered large ($N=72$), I have the benefit of observing the mechanism in action in dozens of cases. Granted, the country reports do not contain a detailed description of each of these mechanisms, but, in many cases, it is clear that the mechanisms are there.

As for my case selection strategy, my unit is the "country-war," and my possible universe of case studies includes every country that has ever fought a war. In the case studies, I adopt an empirical research strategy in the qualitative tradition of process tracing, which Mahoney defines as a set of procedures to formulate and test explanations with case studies, often making causal inference.²⁰⁷ Process tracing encompasses the systematic examination of diagnostic evidence from within a case in order to evaluate a hypothesis about that case.²⁰⁸ Causes, here, can take different forms, including necessary, sufficient, contributing factors, or some combination of those. As I discussed above, my theory makes causal claims using the idea of contributing factors, since the variables increase the probability of the outcome of interest. My goal is to trace the causal process proposed by my theoretical framework.

The choice of cases for process tracing and causal mechanism analysis was then based on four standards: meaningful variation of the variables under study, within-case variation, the availability of data, and practical and policy relevance.

²⁰⁷ James Mahoney, "Process Tracing and Historical Explanation," *Security Studies* 24, no. 2 (April 3, 2015): 200–218, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2015.1036610>.

²⁰⁸ James Mahoney and Rachel Sweet Vanderpoel, "Set Diagrams and Qualitative Research," *Comparative Political Studies* 48, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 65–100, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414013519410>.

First, the selected cases provide a broad range of outcomes, which enhances our understanding of the factors that lead to different types of military reforms. The aftermath of each of these conflicts presents a distinct set of challenges and responses, allowing for rich comparative analysis. For instance, the Six-Day War represents a case of a clear victory for Israel. The swift and decisive Israeli triumph led to significant territorial gains and a substantial boost in national confidence. This highly celebrated military victory was dubbed by Clodfelter “one of the most overwhelming and certainly the swiftest in military history.”²⁰⁹ However, this victory led to no reforms and masked underlying issues within the military that would later surface during the Yom Kippur War.

The 1973 war, albeit a military victory, shook the winner’s sense of security, exposed vulnerabilities in its military preparedness, and led to massive public outcry. This event became known as “the single most ominous point” in Israel’s history,²¹⁰ and has been repeatedly described as a “trauma” and *mehdal* (“the blunder”).²¹¹ The Yom Kippur prompted a major introspection and subsequent substantial military reform. Finally, the US experience in the Vietnam War represents a case of protracted conflict with a complex outcome. Although the US military was technologically superior and inflicted heavier casualties on the enemy, the war is widely regarded as a strategic failure, and a defeat, due to its enormous human and material costs, as well as its contentious political legacy. The perceived failure led to profound changes in US military doctrine and organization.

²⁰⁹ Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts*, 575–76.

²¹⁰ Asaf Siniver, “Introduction,” in *The Yom Kippur War: Politics, Diplomacy, Legacy*, ed. Asaf Siniver, 1st edition (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5.

²¹¹ Eriksson translates it as “omission,’ ‘oversight,’ or ‘shortcoming:’ something that went wrong because of a failure to act.” Jacob Eriksson, “Israel and The October War,” in *The Yom Kippur War: Politics, Diplomacy, Legacy*, ed. Asaf Siniver, 1st edition (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Moreover, these cases also exhibit substantial variation in terms of who carries out the reforms. The Six-Day War did not lead to any discernible reforms either by the military or the civilian leadership, being a case of no reforms. This situation changed dramatically in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, with both civilians and military personnel being involved in different comprehensive reforms. While civilians formalized civilian control over the military, the armed forces reformed recruitment and force structure. In the US context, the Vietnam War also resulted in a mix of reforms instigated by both civilian leadership and military. The former reformed recruitment and the later conscription. Regarding public opinion, there was also substantive variation. Israel post-Six Day War was an intense case of praise, Israel post-Yom Kippur was a strong case of blame, and the United States during Vietnam was a case of initial support which gradually became blame. These variations in the dependent variables – responsibility assignment and who enacts the reform – provide the opportunity to engage in controlled comparison.

Second, my selection of case studies provides a unique opportunity to leverage within-case variation. Particularly in the case of Israel, by examining two different wars fought by the same country, we can study the different impacts and outcomes of these conflicts, while controlling for national-specific factors. The Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War, fought by the same military but under different circumstances, offer a unique chance to observe different combinations of the dependent and independent variables within a single country's context. This allows us to scrutinize how variations in conflict circumstances can lead to different levels and types of military reform. Similarly, the long duration of the Vietnam War in the United States offers an extensive timeframe within which substantial variation occurred. The changing contexts and strategies throughout this protracted conflict allow us to observe how differing conditions influenced the eventual military reform process. Leveraging within-case variation in this way holds considerable value in

comparative case study research. It facilitates a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the causal mechanisms at play, and helps control for various contextual or macro-historical factors that might otherwise confound my findings.²¹²

Third, a vital element of process tracing is access to detailed, high-quality information about the cases under consideration. This requirement effectively limited my case selection to instances where either a highly detailed body of evidence was available in English, either through primary sources or an extensive and highly detailed body of secondary literature. The case of Israel fits this criterion exceptionally well. The country is the subject of a rich body of literature on civil-military relations, military affairs, and politics in general. A significant proportion of these works are available in English, offering a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the nation's military and political history. Additionally, several Israeli archives offer a wealth of documents and records in English, enabling deeper insights into the cases of the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War. As for the United States, it is an obvious choice, given the vast availability of English-language resources. This includes not only secondary literature but also primary sources such as archives, oral histories, and official documents.

Fourth, the selection of the cases holds important practical and policy implications. Israel, due to its unique strategic location and a history of ongoing conflict, serves as a significant study for understanding military reform dynamics. These reforms provide invaluable insights into how states under constant threat perceive and enact military reforms. Understanding these dynamics

²¹² Barbara Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (University of Michigan Press, 2003); Gary Goertz and James Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences* (Princeton University Press, 2012), Ch. 9; Mahoney, "Process Tracing and Historical Explanation," 214; Mahoney and Vanderpoel, "Set Diagrams and Qualitative Research," 84–87; Philip E. Tetlock and Aaron Belkin, *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and Psychological Perspectives* (Princeton University Press, 1996).

can guide future reform efforts and contribute to policy formulation to improve civil-military relations within Israel, and potentially other countries in similar conflict-ridden regions. Similarly, examining the United States military after the divisive and transformative Vietnam War has unquestionable practical relevance. This conflict catalyzed significant military structural and strategic changes, effectively reshaping the US military. The understanding gained from studying these reforms has the potential to inform future policy decisions, not only in the United States but also in other nations faced with the prospect of major military reform following contentious conflicts.

Moreover, the selection of Israel and the United States provides insight into the military reform process in global powers that have had a substantial impact on international relations and global security. Israel, as a significant regional power in the Middle East, has a military history that is intrinsically tied to the geopolitics of the region. Its military reforms and strategies have not only shaped its national security policies but also had profound effects on the broader Middle Eastern geopolitical landscape. Understanding these dynamics is critical for policymakers, strategists, and scholars who grapple with the complexities of this region. Similarly, the United States, as a superpower, has a military presence and influence that spans the globe. The military reforms undertaken by the US especially in the aftermath of a war as significant as Vietnam, have had widespread implications on its military engagements, alliances, and global security policies. These reforms, therefore, hold lessons for a variety of states and entities interacting on the international stage.

With all this in mind, the chosen cases offer substantial opportunity for process-tracing and exploring the causal mechanisms at play. These cases were not chosen because they are necessarily the most difficult or least likely for my theory to explain. Instead, they were selected because they

provide a rich and fertile ground for process-tracing, enabling me to flesh out the underlying causal mechanisms my theory proposes. My primary aim is to illustrate how the causal process unfolds, tracing the path from wars to the enactment of military reforms. The data-rich context of these cases, alongside their variation in both independent and dependent variables, facilitate this endeavor, enhancing the potential to uncover and examine intricate causal processes in detail. It is through this lens that the case selection for this study was determined.

This focus on illuminating the causal mechanisms and its primacy over selecting hard cases are not by chance. Notably, the quantitative analyses in this study provide robust external validity, which alleviates the need to focus exclusively on the most challenging cases for the theory to explain. The quantitative examination provides broad, generalizable insights, which we then deepen and nuance with the qualitative case studies. In this context, the primary aim of the case studies is to explore the theory's causal mechanisms in detail - to open the "black box" and see how the various components of the theory interact and shape outcomes in specific contexts. Thus, case selection was driven by the opportunities they offer for a robust, multi-faceted investigation of the causal mechanisms, bolstered by the broader external validity conferred by the quantitative analysis.

Case Study Method

The within-case analysis in this study adheres to a systematic method for measuring each variable present in the theoretical causal chain. First, I offer a contextual overview: each case study begins with a comprehensive account of the war and its domestic implications, establishing a clear context within which the subsequent analysis is grounded.

Second, I examine responsibility assignment. The next section delves into the assignment of responsibility, both blame and praise. It assesses the extent to which civilians and military personnel were attributed responsibility and explores the ramifications of these attributions. This assessment comprises two parts: an exploration of how civilians and the military were respectively held responsible, and a comparative analysis delineating which group bore the brunt of responsibility, thereby illuminating shifts in the balance of political power between these actors.

Third is reform analysis. Subsequent to responsibility assignment, the analysis shifts to military reforms. In instances where reforms are present, each reform is discussed in a separate subsection, detailing the process of its initiation, implementation, and outcomes. These sections are committed to unraveling the motivations behind each reform, identifying the key actors involved, understanding their strategies and preferences, and examining the extent and nature of opposition they faced. Each step in the reform process is meticulously traced to reveal the underlying dynamics between civilian and military actors.

Finally, I validate theory assumptions. Here, analysis extends to verify additional assumptions of the theory. For instance, in situations where civilians bear the brunt of blame, the theory anticipates an observable increase in the political clout of the armed forces, not just within the sphere of military reforms but across other realms as well. Similarly, if an actor struggles to assert their preferences in the context of military reforms, it can be deduced, as per the theory, that this is a direct result of their politically weakened position post-war. These and other assumptions are put to the test in each case study, providing a comprehensive validation of the theory's premises.

2.4. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I put forward a theory of post-war military reforms. The main question here was what determines the level of civilian participation in these reforms. In the previous sections, I showed that there is good reason to believe both civilians and the military have incentives to control reforms, their popularity affects the balance of power between them, and wars affect their popularity. My argument is that responsibility assignment after wars affects the level of civilian participation in subsequent reforms. More specifically, when the military gets blamed, or civilians praised, we should expect civilian participation to be higher. And vice-versa. Moreover, I proposed a theory of responsibility assignment, where the public can assess the responsibilities of civilians and the military in wars and sanction or reward them accordingly.

Throughout the chapter, I used examples of several anecdotes that align with my argument or parts of it. These include Argentina, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Chad, Chile, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Peru, South Africa, Spain, Syria, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States, and the Soviet Union. Overall, this chapter painted a picture of civilians and armed forces who want to control reforms, who attempt to avoid blame and receive credits after wars, and a public who attempts to gather information about each actor and sanction or reward them accordingly. In the next chapters, I more rigorously test my theory against a novel dataset and three case studies.

CHAPTER 3: WARS, BLAME, AND REFORMS:

QUANTITATIVE TESTS ON INTERSTATE WARS SINCE 1935

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The examples from the previous chapter lend initial support to the notion that the balance of political power between civilians and the military determines who gets to enact military reforms. They also suggest that it is indeed common that civilians are accountable for war initiation, and the military is judged for issues such as battlefield performance and discipline. This chapter takes up the challenge of determining whether these seeming patterns generalize to a broader universe of states who have fought interstate wars since 1935. Drawing on a novel dataset, I subject this study's theoretical propositions to a series of statistical analyses to test their robustness across different proxies and specifications of my dependent variables, controlling for relevant confounders.

First, I detail how core variables, including definitions of reform and responsibility assignment, were constructed, alongside key control variables. Second, conduct a series of statistical tests to assess the intricate relationships between conflict-specific factors, responsibility assignment, and who, among civilians and the military, enacts military reforms. I also analyze the determinants of reform in general. Here, it is worth mentioning that the chapter is laborious and requires a certain level of patience. As per the theory chapter, my project involves a long causal chain, of which I examine each piece here.

The investigation, however, reveals several noteworthy results. To preview the chapter's results, in examining the connection between blame assignment and reform, the analysis suggests that blame or praise assigned to civilians is indeed associated with their participation levels in post-war military reforms. This relationship holds after controlling for potential confounders and different country- and conflict-specific variables, as well as different model specifications, lending evidence to *Hypothesis 1*.

As for who shoulders responsibility, I show that civilians are indeed more likely to be held accountable if they initiate the war, reinforcing *Hypothesis 2*. However, the study finds no significant evidence to support *Hypothesis 3*: the public does not appear to take the number of partners in military coalitions into account when assigning blame or praise to civilians. When we shift our gaze to the military, performance on the battlefield and indiscipline surface as key determinants of the military's share of blame or praise, consistent with *Hypothesis 4* and *Hypothesis 5*. However, the relationship between war crimes and military praise/blame, as delineated in *Hypothesis 6*, proves to be complex and requires nuanced interpretation.

With regard to antecedent conditions, the analysis provides strong evidence supporting the theory that the pre-war state of civil-military relations influences the level of civilian participation in post-war military reforms. Moreover, it affirms the expectation that the military is more prone to enact doctrine reforms, while civilians are more involved in organizational ones. Therefore, *Hypothesis 9* and *Hypothesis 10* are also supported.

Finally, the study finds a robust link between the enactment of reforms and factors such as levels of destruction and victory in war, consistent with *Hypothesis 11* and *Hypothesis 12*. Proxies for operational complexity, on the other hand, were not found to be significant. As we delve deeper into the chapter, each of these findings will be unpacked and discussed in detail.

3.2. DATA

Data Collection

The chapter's empirical tests were made possible by the construction of an original dataset, including 80 belligerents who fought interstate wars between 1935 and 2008. The unit of analysis for this dataset is post-war states – thus, the unit of analysis is country-war. A few features of the dataset's assembly are worth emphasizing here. I have taken the pool of possible cases from the Correlates of War (COW) dataset. From these wars, I kept the ones in which the respective country had more than one hundred casualties, to avoid selecting minimal instances of participation in wars that would not be salient for the country fighting them. I have also excluded instances where it would not be reasonable to include a specific case. These include three categories: 1) countries that were occupied by a foreign power for an extended period of time and lost control of their military; 2) wars that take place in the midst of a much larger, more salient war; and 3) when it is questionable whether it was actually a particular state that fought a war, and not specific domestic groups such as rebels. In the first set of cases, I include cases such as Germany and Japan after World War II, or post-2001 Afghanistan. In the second set of cases, an obvious example is the United States in the "Second Laotian, Phase 2," coded in the COW dataset as having been fought from 1968 to 1973 – right amid the Vietnam War. In other instances, it is questionable whether it was actually a particular country that fought a war. The only country-war in the third category is Morocco in the Ifni War, coded as a state fighting Spain. However, in reality, the fighting was done by an assembly of Moroccan insurgents. The final list of exclusions is composed of 23 country-wars.

At the end of the process, 124 cases remain. To avoid selecting easier cases, I randomly selected half to start the coding process. After coding the initial 62, I then chose 10 more to code, totaling 72 cases. I have produced a country report for each case, explaining my coding decisions and citing the relevant literature. These reports are normally several pages long. Although I do not examine causal mechanisms in them, they are detailed enough so that it is possible to discuss each variable with a satisfactory degree of certainty. All the coding was done by me, and, evidently, no coding effort is entirely free of error. But the procedures described above do, at least, ensure that I have a relatively balanced sample and that any measurement error is not biased toward my hypotheses, making it less likely that they will be statistically significant. Moreover, they guarantee transparency, as each of my decisions is explained in detail.

Dependent Variable: Measuring Military Reform and Civilian Military Reform

Civilian participation in military reform is the dependent variable for *Hypothesis 1*. There are different definitions of reform in the relevant literature, but, for simplicity, I use Nielsen's definition. Reform, according to Nielsen, is defined as

An improvement in or the creation of a significant new program or policy that is intended to correct an identified deficiency. Therefore, reform does not necessarily entail adjustments to an organization's core tasks. It also does not necessarily require the visualization of new ways of warfare, or the development of new measures of effectiveness.¹

Below are the possible types of reforms alongside their definitions. Each of these is a binary variable, which receives the value of 1 if the reform took place and 0 otherwise.

¹ Nielsen, *An Army Transformed*, 14.

Organizational. Organizational reforms encompass any alterations in the decision-making hierarchy or structure within the high command of the armed forces. These reforms may involve redistribution of power, such as enhancing the decision-making authority of the defense minister or executive body, or introducing new positions or administrative organs, such as the establishment of a joint chief of staff or a decision-making council. To operationalize organizational reforms, I look at changes in the written rules governing the decision-making authority of key actors or organizations, and also at the creation of new decision-making bodies within the military.

Such reforms are exemplified by Iran’s formation of the Supreme National Security Council in 1980s,² Colombia’s establishment of the Colombian General Command (akin to the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff) in the 1950s,³ and Honduras’s founding of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (*Consejo Superior de las Fuerzas Armadas—Consuffaa*) to mitigate interagency rivalry in the 1970s.⁴ Another form of organizational reform involves the increase or reduction of power among key figures, such as the president, defense minister, chief of staff, or the military services. Here, we can mention Argentina’s empowerment of the president, defense minister, and chief of staff, while weakening the services, in the 1980s and early 1990s.⁵ Another well-known example is the Goldwater–Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act from 1986, which brought about the most significant modifications to the United States Department of Defense in

² Gawdat Bahgat and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *Defending Iran: From Revolutionary Guards to Ballistic Missiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 56, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108608510>.

³ Tovar, *Historia De Las Fuerzas Militares De Colombia Ejercito*, 3:214.

⁴ Tim Merrill, *Honduras : A Country Study* (Washington, D.C. : Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1995), 215, <https://www.loc.gov/item/94043036/>.

⁵ Florina Cristiana Matei, Carolyn Halladay, and Thomas C. Bruneau, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2021), 153.

decades. It amplified the authority of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and streamlined the military chain of command, bypassing the service chiefs.⁶

Organizational reforms may also involve formalizing pivotal processes, such as in the case of Israel after the Yom Kippur War. The implementation of the “Basic Law: The Army (1976),” following the Agranat Commission, formalized civilian control over the military, another significant aspect of organizational reform.⁷ In Pakistan, for example, the 1973 constitution strictly outlined the military's role in defending Pakistan against external threats and labeled any attempt to overthrow the constitution as high treason. A white paper on defense was published in 1976, which further subordinated the armed forces to civilian control.⁸

Doctrine. Military doctrine reforms refer to any significant modifications in the guiding principles, strategies, and tactics that shape a military organization’s conduct of operations. This can include alterations in battlefield strategy and amendments to theories of warfare and operational art. Any explicit change in doctrine found in secondary or primary sources is coded as a reform in doctrine. If there is no explicit change in doctrine, the coding of this variable requires that I identify an overarching change to how military missions and actions are to be carried out. This could involve changes in military textbooks and field manuals, shifts in training exercises or procurement decisions due to new tactical preferences, or explicit statements of new strategic doctrines by military or civilian leadership. Examples include Finland’s adoption of the Total

⁶ See Locher III, *Victory on the Potomac*.

⁷ Eriksson, “Israel and The October War,” 44–45; Netanel Loch, *Major Knesset Debates, 1948-1981* (University Press of America, 1993), 1890; Metin Heper and Joshua R. Itzkowitz-Shiffrinson, “Civil-Military Relations in Israel and Turkey,” *Journal of Political & Military Sociology* 33, no. 2 (2005): 235–36; Moshe Lissak, “Paradoxes of Israeli Civil–Military Relations: An Introduction,” in *Israeli Society and Its Defense Establishment: The Social and Political Impact of a Protracted Violent Conflict*, ed. Moshe Lissak, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 1984), 7; Yoram Peri, “Political-Military Partnership in Israel,” *International Political Science Review* 2, no. 3 (July 1, 1981): 310, <https://doi.org/10.1177/019251218100200306>; Yehuda Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, First Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 135.

⁸ Blood, “Pakistan,” 59, 273–74.

Defense Doctrine after World War II,⁹ Syria's adoption of Soviet doctrine after the Six-Day War,¹⁰ and India's Cold Start Doctrine, adopted after the Kargil War.¹¹

Recruitment. Recruitment reforms encompass any significant modifications to the strategies, policies, and procedures related to the attraction, selection, and induction of personnel into the military. These may include changes in the standards for recruitment, the demographic profile of recruits, the use of conscription versus volunteer service, the incorporation of minorities and women, and the methods used to attract potential recruits. It also includes changes such as changing how long soldiers are required to serve. To operationalize recruitment reforms for this study, I mainly look at changes in recruitment policy. However, this variable is also coded as present if secondary sources identify a *de facto* change in recruitment.

For example, recruitment reforms may involve shifts such as the transition from conscription to an all-volunteer force, as occurred in the United States in the 1970s, or the opening of combat roles to women, as has occurred in many modern militaries. For example, in Australia, the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps was established in the 1950s.¹² In Israel, many previously male-dominated fields opened to women after the 1973 war.¹³ In Iraq, although women were not conscripted, a law was passed in 1977 which allowed them to be commissioned as officers if they held a health-related university degree. They could be appointed as warrant officers or

⁹ Solsten and Meditz, *Finland*, 292.

¹⁰ Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*, 1068.

¹¹ Stephen P. Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization*, Second edition (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2012), 63.

¹² Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 3rd edition (Port Melbourne, VIC: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 205–6.

¹³ Efraim Inbar, "Israeli Strategic Thinking after 1973," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 6, no. 1 (March 1, 1983): 42–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402398308437140>; Nadav Safran, *Israel, the Embattled Ally*, Rev. edition (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press, 1981), 315; Mordechai Zvi Safrai, "Legitimizing Military Growth and Conscription: The Yom Kippur Mechanism," *Armed Forces & Society* 45, no. 3 (July 1, 2019): 229, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X18754789>; Michael N. Barnett, *Confronting the Costs of War* (Princeton University Press, 1993), 203.

NCOs in army medical institutes if they were qualified nurses.¹⁴ Another instance of recruitment reform was Azerbaijan's decision to enact the forced recruitment of teenagers in late 1993, in the context of the conflict with Armenia.¹⁵

Recruitment may also include efforts to diversify the force, such as the recruitment of underrepresented minorities or the implementation of new standards to accommodate different physical capabilities. For example, in the United States, in a series of changes that began in 2011, all combat roles were opened to women, the "Don't ask, don't tell" policy on military service of non-heterosexual people was repealed, and transgender individuals were authorized to openly serve in the armed forces.¹⁶ In Israel, conscription also came to include criminal offenders in the 1970s.¹⁷ However, reforms can also go in the opposite direction. In South Africa, after World War II, access to military careers became strictly reserved for white soldiers.¹⁸

Force Structure. Force structure reforms refer to any substantial adjustments to the size, composition, and organization of a military's operational units. This can involve changes to the overall size of the military, the distribution of personnel and resources among different branches or units, the creation or disbandment of specific units, changes in the proportion of active to reserve forces, or alterations in the hierarchy or command structure of operational units. To operationalize

¹⁴ Helen Chapin Metz, "Iraq: A Country Study," image (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1990), 221, <https://www.loc.gov/item/89013940/>.

¹⁵ Curtis, "Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia," 144; Waal, *Black Garden*, 238.

¹⁶ Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Obama Signs Away 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,'" *The New York Times*, December 22, 2010, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/23/us/politics/23military.html>; "Secretary of Defense Ash Carter Announces Policy for Transgender Service Members," U.S. Department of Defense, accessed June 29, 2023, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/821675/secretary-of-defense-ash-carter-announces-policy-for-transgender-service-members/https%3A%2F%2Fwww.defense.gov%2FNews%2FReleases%2FRelease%2FArticle%2F821675%2Fsecretary-of-defense-ash-carter-announces-policy-for-transgender-service-members%2F>; Matthew Rosenberg and Dave Philipps, "All Combat Roles Now Open to Women, Defense Secretary Says," *The New York Times*, December 3, 2015, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/04/us/politics/combat-military-women-ash-carter.html>.

¹⁷ Metz, "Israel," 299, 310.

¹⁸ Ian Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2015), 593.

force structure reforms, I examine changes in military budget allocations, changes in the size of the armed forces, alterations in the number and type of operational units, shifts in the balance between different service branches, or changes in the hierarchy or command structure of operational units.

For instance, in Honduras, the military saw a significant expansion in its size in the 1970s, surging from about 8,000 personnel in 1970 to 16,000 by 1980. As the military enlarged and its organizational structure became more complex, it necessitated the establishment of larger general staffs and auxiliary units.¹⁹ Similarly, the number of soldiers more than doubled in Colombia in the 1950s,²⁰ and the Iraqi military doubled to 210,000 men in the 1970s, with the addition of nine divisions.²¹ Going in the other direction, since the 1980s, the Argentine military forces have been significantly reduced in terms of numbers and budget.²² In the Soviet Union, substantial defense budget cuts were also enacted in the 1990s. The defense budget was cut by 8.3 percent, with a 14 percent cut in military spending planned for 1991.²³ The government also announced a cutback of 500,000 men in the armed forces.²⁴ The People's Liberation Army, in China, was reduced from 5.5 to 3 million from 1949 to 1952.²⁵ China also diminished spending on national defense from 4.6 percent of GNP in 1979 to 1.4 percent in 1991, and dismissed a million soldiers in the early

¹⁹ Merrill, *Honduras*, 215.

²⁰ Dennis M. Hanratty and Sandra W. Meditz, "Colombia: A Country Study," image (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 2010), 288–89, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2010009203/>; Coleman, *Colombia and the United States*, 129.

²¹ Ibrahim Al-Marashi and Sammy Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 1st edition (Routledge, 2008), 123.

²² "El presupuesto para Defensa es el más bajo de la historia," Perfil, July 26, 2010, <https://www.perfil.com/noticias/politica/el-presupuesto-para-defensa-es-el-mas-bajo-de-la-historia-20100725-0005.phtml>.

²³ Fane, "After Afghanistan," 11.

²⁴ Fane, 13.

²⁵ David Graff and Robin Higham, eds., *A Military History of China*, updated edition (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 251.

1980s.²⁶ In the early 1950s, Mongolia managed to reduce defense expenses from 33 percent of the entire budget in just four years.²⁷

As for more specific changes in military units, in Egypt, between 1967 and 1973, the army was reorganized into two field armies – the Second Army and the Third Army, both stationed in the eastern part of the country. Prior to the war Six-Day War, the army’s personnel had been divided into four regional commands.²⁸ In Jordan, in the same period, several new divisions were established, a fourth company was added to all battalions, and a fourth battalion was added to brigades to give tactical units greater staying power. Plans were made to build a larger, more modern force that would concentrate on counterair and ground-attack operations.²⁹ Italy’s *Pariani Reforms* changed infantry divisions from three to two battalions. Syria's commandos, which stood out as the best forces within their army in the 1973 war, were extensively expanded after the conflict.³⁰ In China, the People’s Liberation Army dissolved its field army structure in 1949.³¹ The field armies were eventually reorganized into group armies in the 1980s.³² Finally, Australia’s Citizen Military Forces had several units disbanded in 1959. The number of senior appointments was reduced, and the post of general officer for its 1st Division was transferred to the regular army. In 1965, there was another reorganization of the forces, with a reduction of existing battalions and the formation of new ones in several states.³³

²⁶ Meyskens, *Mao’s Third Front*, 231; Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, 541; Worden and Savada, “China,” 561.

²⁷ Robert L. Worden and Andrea Matles Savada, “Mongolia : A Country Study” (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991), 237.

²⁸ Helen Chapin Metz, “Egypt : A Country Study,” image (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991), 306, <https://www.loc.gov/item/91029876/>.

²⁹ Helen Chapin Metz, “Jordan : A Country Study,” image (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991), 242, <https://www.loc.gov/item/91006858/>.

³⁰ Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*, 1141.

³¹ Graff and Higham, *A Military History of China*, 249.

³² Worden and Savada, “China,” 561.

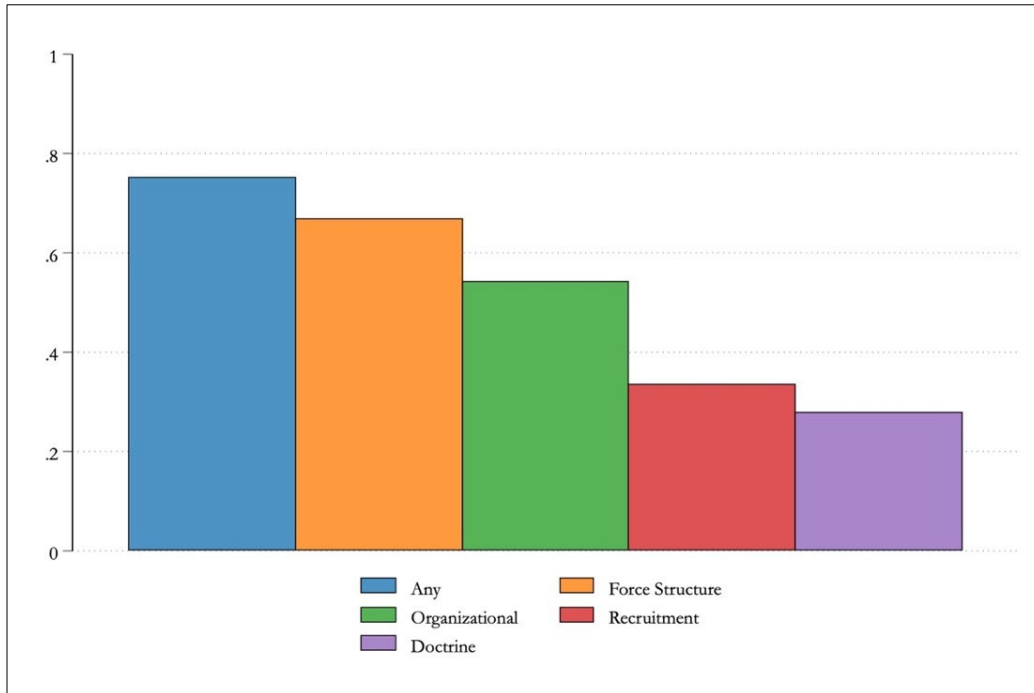
³³ Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 227–28, 238–39.

Figure 7 displays the frequency of each type of reform, from left to right: all reforms, force structure, organizational, recruitment, and doctrine. As can be seen, recruitment and doctrine are the rarest, taking place in around 30 percent of cases. Organizational and force structure reforms are much more common, with a frequency of 54 and 67 percent, respectively. This is intuitive, as force structure reforms are the more menial type among these, and organizational reforms are also usually not difficult. Doctrinal reforms, on the other hand, require critical changes in how states fight wars. Recruitment changes are also quite consequential in the sense that they can drastically affect the relationship between the population and the armed forces or the government, in addition to being important to warfighting itself. Overall, 75 percent of the countries in my sample enacted at least one kind of reform, and the average number of reforms is 1.8.

Civilian Reform Score. This variable quantifies the extent of civilian participation in the enactment of military reforms. For each type of reform – organizational, force structure, recruitment, and doctrine – I assess whether there was *de facto* civilian participation, meaning that civilians were the primary drivers of these reforms. The ***Civilian Reform Score***, or ***CRS***, is then calculated as the proportion of total reforms enacted by civilians. For instance, suppose a state implemented three types of reforms – organizational, force structure, and doctrine. If civilians enacted the first two and the military enacted the third, the ***CRS*** would be $2/3$, or approximately 0.66667. Again, this is the main dependent variable for *Hypothesis 1*.

The term “enacted by civilians” refers to reforms primarily initiated, proposed, or implemented by civilian authorities in the government, such as the executive, legislative bodies, or civilian elements within the defense ministry. For a reform to be classified as enacted by civilians, it must meet either of the following criteria: 1) the reform is initially proposed or strongly advocated for by civilian authorities. This could be demonstrated through official statements,

Figure 7. Frequency of Reforms, by Type.



legislative proposals, policy directives, or similar actions; 2) the reform receives official approval or endorsement from civilian authorities, such as passing a law or resolution in a civilian-controlled legislative body, or receiving formal approval from the executive. If the reform is proposed by the military and approved by civilians, I must find evidence that civilians believed they could have rejected it without incurring any costs. The reform is not coded as civilian if no such evidence is found.

To determine whether a reform was enacted by civilians, I examine historical documents, media coverage, statements from the government, the military, and influential organizations, as well as secondary historical sources. In each case, I look for clear evidence of civilian involvement in the initiation or approval of the reform. The specific evidence supporting each classification is detailed in the corresponding country reports.

Figure 8 displays the percentage of each type of reform with civilian participation, in the same order as Figure 7. As can be seen, the frequency of civilian participation in doctrinal reforms is quite low, encompassing only 20 percent of reforms. As I argue in the theory, chapter, this is intuitive, given that doctrinal reforms involve the most specialized knowledge of military sciences. The opposite is true for organizational reforms, with a rate of 77 percent of civilian participation. This is also not unexpected, as military organizations are often seen as conservative when it comes to reforms to the structures under which they operate. Moreover, organizational reforms commonly centralize power within the Defense Ministry, establish other mechanisms of civilian oversight, or create competing organizations from the point of view of the military.

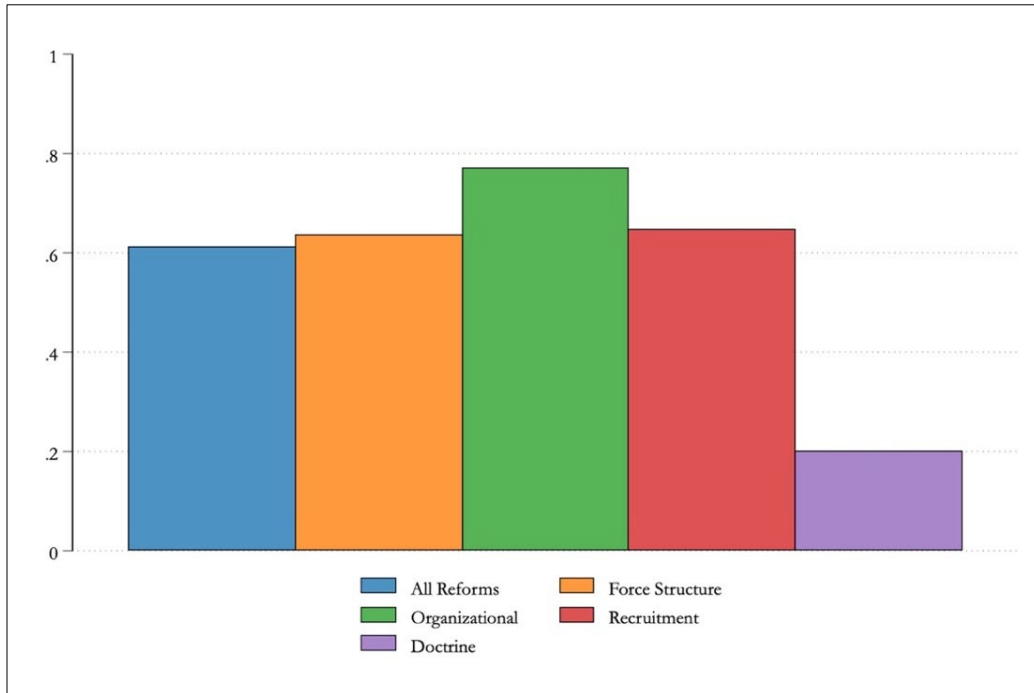
Finally, force structure and recruitment are relatively aligned with the average rate of civilian participation across all reforms, with rates of 63 and 64 percent of civilian participation, respectively. These reforms tend to have a more unpredictable relationship with the armed forces preferences. For example, there are cases in which the military opposes expanding recruitment to new groups, as was the case in Australia with the creation of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps.³⁴ In contrast, the military in Israel, in the 1970s, and the United, in the 2010s, were supportive of expanding military service.³⁵ Similarly, force structure reforms can take many forms, from greatly expanding to greatly reducing the budget and size of the armed forces.

In Figure 9(1), I illustrate the average **CRS** over each decade, ranging from the 1930s to the 2000s. Interestingly, but also intuitively, a quadratic shape emerges, suggesting

³⁴ Grey, 205–6.

³⁵ Tom Vanden Brook, "Army Eases Ban on Transgender Soldiers," *Army Times*, March 6, 2015, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2015/03/06/army-eases-ban-on-transgender-soldiers/>; "Pentagon Moves Closer to Allowing Transgender Troops to Serve," *USA TODAY*, accessed June 29, 2023, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/07/13/carter-defense-transgender-policy/30104403/>; Metz, "Israel," 299, 310.

Figure 8. Civilian Reform Score, by Type.

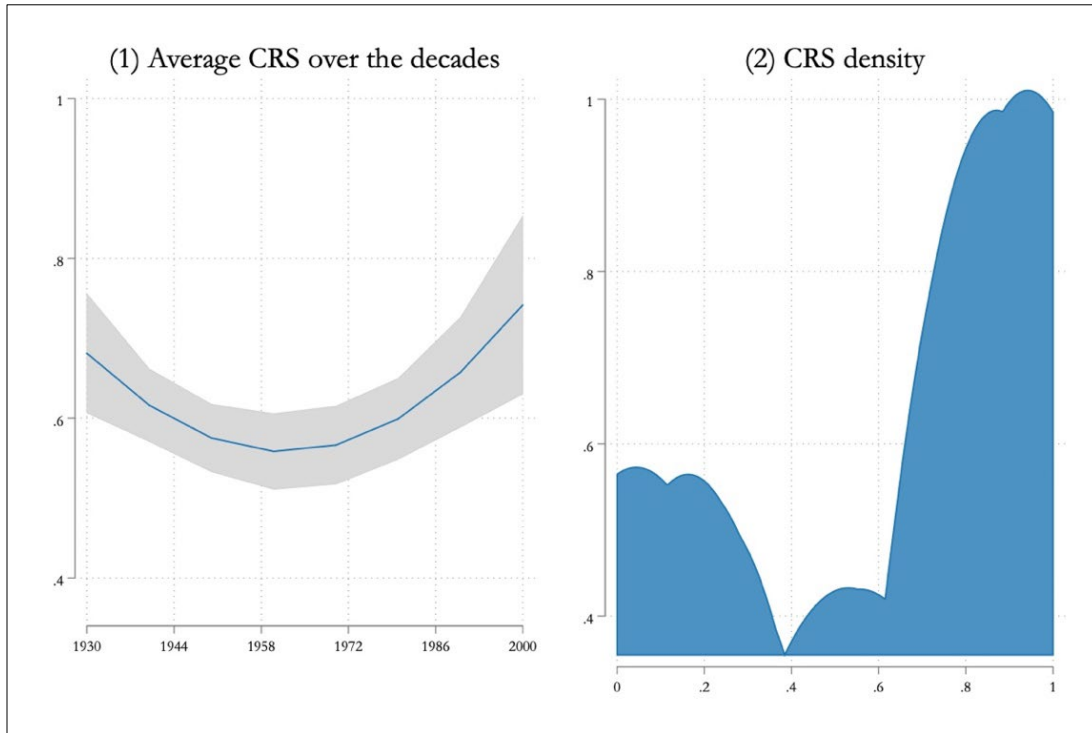


that the **CRS** was lower during the Cold War. Assuming civilian participation in military reforms is beneficial, recent tendencies are encouraging, with the score approaching 0.75. As for Figure 9(2), plotting the density of the **CRS** for all observations shows that scores are clustered in the extremes. This is intuitive: between civilians and the military, if one actor is able to dominate one reform, they are more likely to dominate others as well. This is consistent with the idea that political power matters for military reforms.

Independent (And Dependent) Variable: Measuring Blame and Credit Assignment

The **Blame** and **Credit** variables identify whether each entity – military or civilian – was assigned responsibility for the outcomes of a conflict based on public opinion. Before further explaining these variables, note that versions of these variables will be used as independent

Figure 9. The CRS: Descriptive Statistics.



variables for civilian participation in reforms, related to *Hypothesis 1*. However, they will also be used as dependent variables, given that I am also interested in the determinants of responsibility assignment (*Hypothesis 2 to Hypothesis 8*).

Having said that, the determination of blame or credit assignment is made through an extensive analysis of various sources, including historical documents, media coverage, statements from influential organizations, the armed forces, the government, opposition entities, opinion polls, and secondary historical sources. A consensus among recognized experts in the field typically determines the assignment of blame or credit. These experts include distinguished scholars, analysts, historians, and journalists with substantial expertise in the specific conflict or region. To code this variable, I review academic articles, books, reports, opinion pieces, and media

commentary by these experts. A consensus is identified when a majority agrees on whether each actor – military or civilian – was blamed or praised for the conflict's outcomes. If I cannot find specific expert commentary or analysis, I rely on direct evidence, such as public opinion polls. I was able to come to a decision in every case – thus, there is no missing data for this or other variables.

Here, it is important to acknowledge that this process has an element of subjectivity. To mitigate this, I adhere to a rigorous, transparent approach. All sources are carefully cited, and any interpretations are justified with direct quotes or specific references. Furthermore, it is generally straightforward to determine who was assigned responsibility for a given outcome, with few exceptions, which are always noted in the country reports.

To operationalize this variable, I assign a binary variable for civilians and the military, with 0 representing no blame(credit) and 1 representing blame(credit). Again, each assignment is substantiated with references from the specific sources used, detailed in the country reports.

Based on the above, I also coded an *Advantage* variable, which measures who gains political advantage from the assignment of blame or credit for the outcomes of a conflict. It builds on the previously defined *Blame* and *Credit* variables. In general, civilians are deemed to have gained an advantage if they are assigned praise for conflict outcomes, or if the military is assigned blame. Conversely, the military is considered to have gained an advantage if they receive credit or if civilians are blamed. However, there can be instances where the advantage is not clear-cut, such as when both civilians and military are jointly praised or blamed, or when neither group is distinctly held responsible. In such scenarios, the *Advantage* variable is coded as “none.” Therefore, the *Advantage* variable can take one of three categorical values: military, civilian, or

none. As outlined in the theory chapter, I expect that actors blamed for war failures are less likely to enact reforms, while those praised for successes are more likely to do so.

Figure 10 displays the frequency of *Blame* and *Credit* to civilians (on the left) and the military (on the right). As can be seen, civilians are held accountable more often than the military. They were blamed and praised in 39 and 32 percent of cases, respectively. This means the public assigned responsibility to civilians in 71 percent of cases. The military, on the other hand, was assigned blame and praise in 22 and 15 percent of cases, respectively, for a total of 37 percent of cases in which they were held responsible. Note that the blame-to-credit ratio here is similar: 1.21 for civilians, and 1.47 for the military. The *Advantage*, however, is well-balanced.

As per Figure 11, civilians receive the advantage in 40 percent of cases (left), against 42 of the military (right). In 18 percent of cases, both actors are on equal footing regarding responsibility assignment (center).

Independent Variables

The Determinants of Civilian Responsibility Assignment

Several independent variables are used in this chapter, based on the hypotheses outlined in the theory chapter. The variables below address the next set of hypotheses, concerning the determinants of civilian responsibility assignment, outlined in *Hypothesis 2*, *Hypothesis 3*, and *Hypothesis 8*.

First, let us address the determinants of responsibility assignment for civilians. I hypothesize that civilians are more likely to be held responsible if it was their decision to start the war, as opposed to having been the target of another state (*Hypothesis 2*), civilians benefit from

Figure 10. Frequency of Blame and Credit Assignment, by Actor.

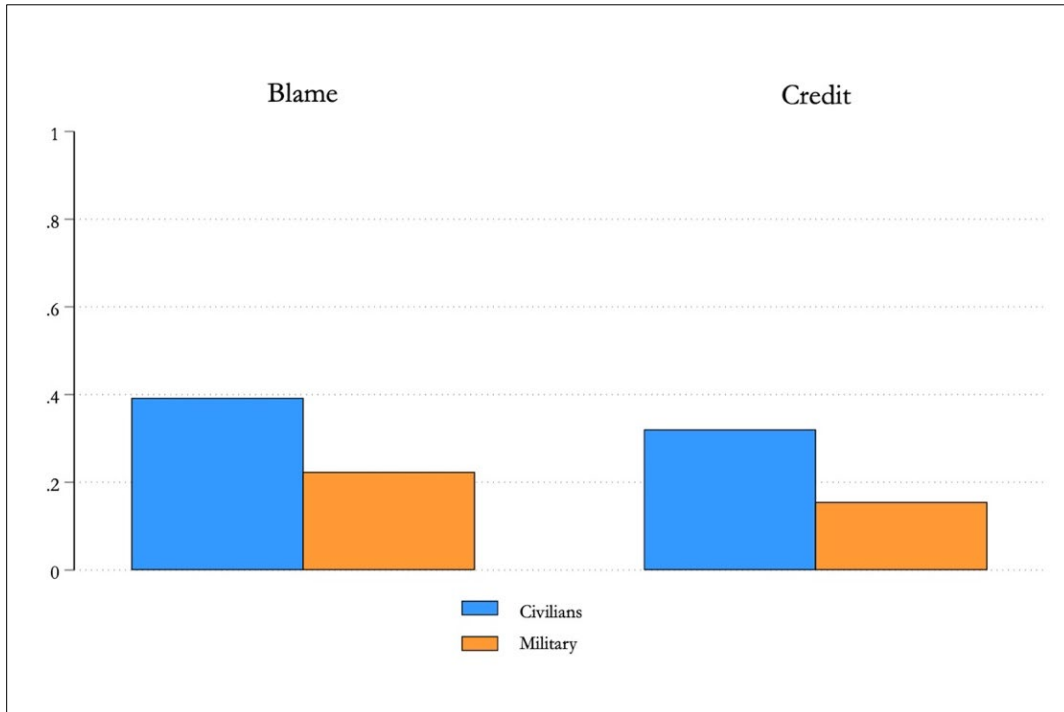
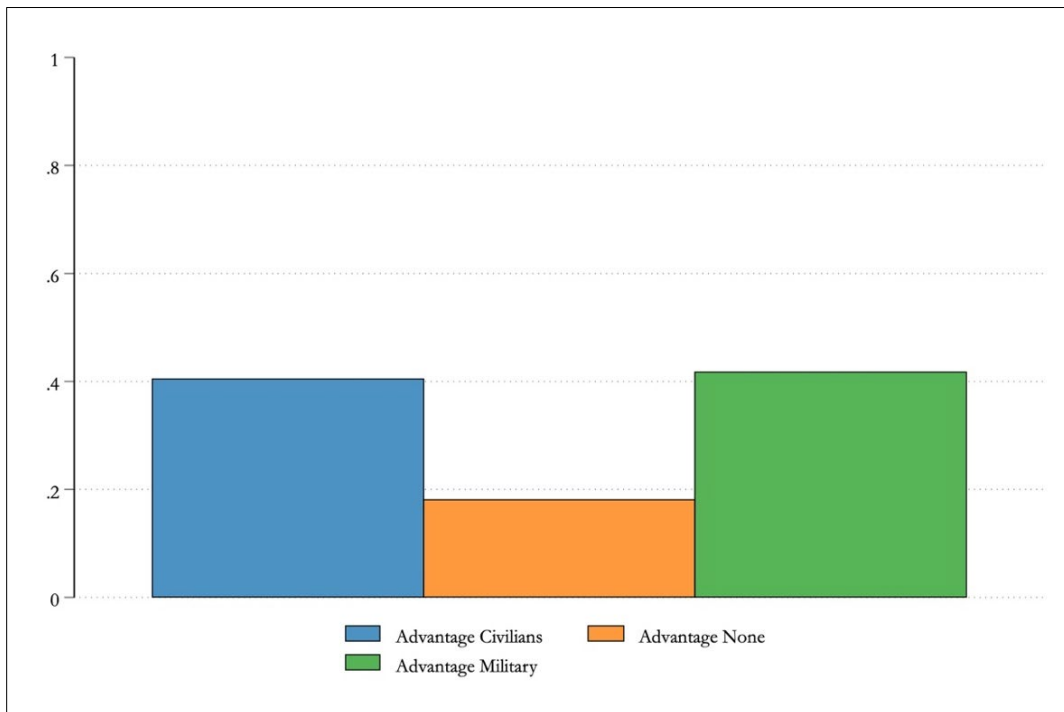


Figure 11. Frequency of Political Advantage by Actor.



having more coalition partners (*Hypothesis 3*), and that civilians are punished for starting wars against materially superior adversaries (*Hypothesis 8*).

To examine *Hypothesis 2*, I use the variable *War of Choice*. This binary variable is coded as 1 if the state was the initiator in that specific war, as per the coding from the Correlates of War Dataset (COW).³⁶ However, I modify the coding to assign the value of 1 to "joiners." As per Downes, a joiner is a belligerent who did not partake in the opening attacks of the war.³⁷ The underlying rationale is that joiners, even if they fight alongside states that were targets of aggression, are effectively choosing to participate in the war.

For example, in the first Gulf War, the United States is not coded as an initiator in the COW dataset; however, it can be argued that this war was a *War of Choice* for the country, as it chose to fight alongside Kuwait. Similarly, Colombia, Ethiopia, and Belgium chose to participate in the Korean War, thus qualifying as a *War of Choice* despite not being coded as initiators in the COW dataset.

To test *Hypothesis 3*, which posits that civilians are more likely to avoid blame or receive credit if they are part of a larger coalition, I utilize the *Coalition Size* variable. This variable represents the total number of states in a given coalition during a conflict, as per the COW dataset.

For the final hypothesis regarding responsibility assignment to civilians (*Hypothesis 8*), it is necessary to interact the *War of Choice* with some measure of relative material power. To operationalize material power, I use the percentage that the material power of a state's coalition represents of the total material power in a war. To measure material power, I use the Composite

³⁶ Meredith Reid Sarkees and Frank Wayman, *Resort To War: 1816 - 2007*, 1 edition (Washington, D.C: CQ Press, 2010).

³⁷ Alexander B. Downes, "How Smart and Tough Are Democracies? Reassessing Theories of Democratic Victory in War," *International Security* 33, no. 4 (2009): 9–51.

Indicator of National Capability (CINC) variable of COW's dataset.³⁸ Thus, the formula for *Relative Material Power* would be the following for State A, which is in a coalition alongside State B in a war against a coalition composed of States X, Y, and Z:

$$\text{State A score} = \frac{\text{CINC}(A) + \text{CINC}(B)}{\text{CINC}(A) + \text{CINC}(B) + \text{CINC}(X) + \text{CINC}(Y) + \text{CINC}(Z)}$$

The Determinants of Military Responsibility Assignment

Moving on, we can now lay out the variables to address the determinants of responsibility assignment to the military. I hypothesize that the military will benefit from good battlefield performance (*Hypothesis 4*) and be penalized for actions of indiscipline (*Hypothesis 5*) and cruelty (*Hypothesis 6*), as well as losing wars to materially inferior adversaries (*Hypothesis 7*).

I operationalize battlefield performance using the ***Loss-Exchange Ratio (LER)***. This measure is calculated as the number of enemy soldiers a coalition has killed divided by the number of its own soldiers lost during a war. A ***LER*** greater than one indicates that a belligerent's coalition has inflicted more fatalities than it has suffered, while a ratio of one denotes an equal number of fatalities inflicted and suffered, and values less than one suggest that a belligerent's coalition has experienced more fatalities than it caused. The LER is widely used in the military effectiveness literature as a proxy for battlefield performance.³⁹

³⁸ J. David Singer, Bremer Stuart, and John Stuckey, "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War, 1820-1965," in *Peace, War, and Numbers*, by Bruce Russett (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1972). The CINC index accounts for various elements of national power, including military expenditure, military personnel, energy consumption, iron and steel production, urban population, and total population.

³⁹ Reiter and Stam, "Democracy and Battlefield Military Effectiveness.", Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War*, Biddle and Long, "Democracy and Military Effectiveness: A Deeper Look.", Beckley, "Economic Development and Military Effectiveness.", Pilster and Böhmelt, "Coup-Proofing and Military Effectiveness in Interstate Wars, 1967-99.", Lyall, *Divided Armies: Inequality & Battlefield Performance in Modern War*.

To proxy indiscipline, I used Lyall's coding of *Mass Desertion*.⁴⁰ Desertion is defined by the author as the unauthorized departure of soldiers from the battlefield or nearby support area during wartime, with the intent to permanently abandon their military duty. *Mass Desertion* is a binary variable coded as 1 when desertions reach or exceed 10 percent of an army's total deployed forces. If desertions do not reach this threshold, the variable is coded as 0.

To operationalize cruelty, I rely on Morrow's data on adherence to the laws of war, focusing specifically on violations pertaining to the treatment of civilians, as these are typically perpetrated by the military. I include only instances classified as "Probable violation" or "Definite legal violation," and exclude cases where the evidence is deemed unreliable, according to Morrow's classifications. This variable, therefore, captures the severity of violations committed against civilians, rated on a scale from 1 to 4, and whether the violations were state-mandated.⁴¹

Lastly, to test the interaction between conflict outcome and relative power, I use the variable *Relative Material Power*, defined as outlined earlier, in conjunction with the outcome of the war. *Outcome* is coded based on the classification provided by the COW dataset, assigning a value of 3 to victories, 2 to ties, and 1 to defeats. The interaction of these two variables should provide insights into whether military forces are penalized for losing wars to materially inferior adversaries.

⁴⁰ Lyall, *Divided Armies*.

⁴¹ A score of 1 represents "No violations at all," a score of 2 indicates "Minor violations only," a score of 3 denotes "Some major violations," and a score of 4 signifies "Many major violations such that compliance doesn't matter."

Other Independent Variables

Finally, let us address the remaining hypotheses. For *Hypothesis 9*, which posits that higher levels of pre-war civilian control over the military are associated with higher rates of civilian participation in military reforms, I utilize estimates of civilian control as provided by Kenwick.⁴² This measure, which I call ***Civilian Control***, takes into account whether political elites have served in or maintain ties with the armed services, whether a regime was preceded by a military regime, or if the leader came into office with the aid of the military, and the extent to which executive political power is concentrated in military institutions. I utilize the ***Civilian Control*** estimate for the year prior to the war for each observation. For robustness, I also use another proxy: whether the defense minister was a member of the military at the moment the war began. The ***Military Minister*** variable was coded by me.

To test *Hypothesis 10*, which expects doctrine reforms to be associated with a lower civilian participation rate, I employ the same variables used to measure doctrine reform discussed earlier. Lastly, *Hypothesis 11* to *Hypothesis 13* deal with the determinants of reform. For this, I use markers of success and competency, namely, the ***LER***, ***Mass Desertion***, and ***Outcome***, as previously defined. As a proxy for the level of destruction, as the ***Total Number of Deaths***, from the COW dataset.⁴³ Finally, ***War Distance***, also from Lyall,⁴⁴ and ***Number of Coalition Partners***, as described above, are used as measures of operational complexity.

Controls

⁴² Michael R Kenwick, "Self-Reinforcing Civilian Control: A Measurement-Based Analysis of Civil-Military Relations," *International Studies Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (March 1, 2020): 71–84, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqz092>.

⁴³ Sarkees and Wayman, *Resort To War*.

⁴⁴ Lyall, *Divided Armies*.

Throughout the statical analyses, I use several relevant controls. These include the level of democracy,⁴⁵ income per capita,⁴⁶ total population,⁴⁷ duration of the conflict,⁴⁸ the state's mode of recruitment to the military,⁴⁹ and the state's total battle deaths.⁵⁰ These are variables that might also influence responsibility assignment and reform processes. For example, although I make the case that democracy is not a scope condition for my argument, one could still argue that it is plausible that autocracies differ from democracies reliably on how responsibility is assigned, as well as who gets to enact reforms. Similarly, richer countries might engage in reform differently due to their resources. At the same time, their populations could have different reactions to what happens in wars if income affects their ideology and worldview. Finally, specific characteristics of conflicts and military organizations have the potential to affect both public perception of the military and subsequent military reforms.

3.3. METHODS AND RESULTS

In this section, I test the hypotheses outlined in the theory chapter, in the order I discussed the variables in the previous section.

⁴⁵ I use the liberal democracy index from V-Dem. See Michael Coppedge et al., "V-Dem Codebook V9," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, April 1, 2019), <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3441060>.

⁴⁶ Coppedge et al.

⁴⁷ Sarkees and Wayman, *Resort To War*.

⁴⁸ Sarkees and Wayman.

⁴⁹ Lyall, *Divided Armies*.

⁵⁰ Sarkees and Wayman, *Resort To War*.

Is Responsibility Assignment Associated with Civilian Participation in Reforms?

Starting with the relationship between responsibility assignment and reforms, it is worth noting that descriptive data is already suggestive of a relationship. As Figure 12 shows, the *Civilian Reform Score* is markedly higher when civilians have the *Advantage* in responsibility assignment. An impressive 83 percent of reforms are civilian when this is the case, against 60 percent when none has the advantage, and 34 percent when the military has the advantage.

As we proceed with testing the hypotheses, it is important to consider potential confounding factors that could influence the observed relationship between responsibility assignment and the source of military reforms. From the descriptive data, we have an initial impression that a relationship exists; however, to move us closer to causal inference, more sophisticated analytical approaches are necessary. Here, it is worth referring back to Figure 6, where I summarize my argument. When presenting this figure, I noted that potential confounders were included. If they were, the figure would look like Figure 13 below.

The task of a researcher interested in causal inference with observational data often includes identifying variables that could act as confounders. In this context, the main potential confounding factor is the previous state of civil-military relations. Specifically, it is plausible that certain types of countries have more civilian control over the military for underlying reasons that also make them less susceptible to civilian blame while also having more civilian participation in military reforms. Therefore, to avoid the potential bias this might introduce, it is crucial to control for the previous state of civil-military relations in our analysis.

Additionally, another concern that arises is the potential impact of the previous state of popularity and the previous balance of power between civilian and military entities. Both of these factors could feasibly drive reforms and responsibility assignment. However, in this study, I am

Figure 12. Civilian Reform Score, by Advantage.

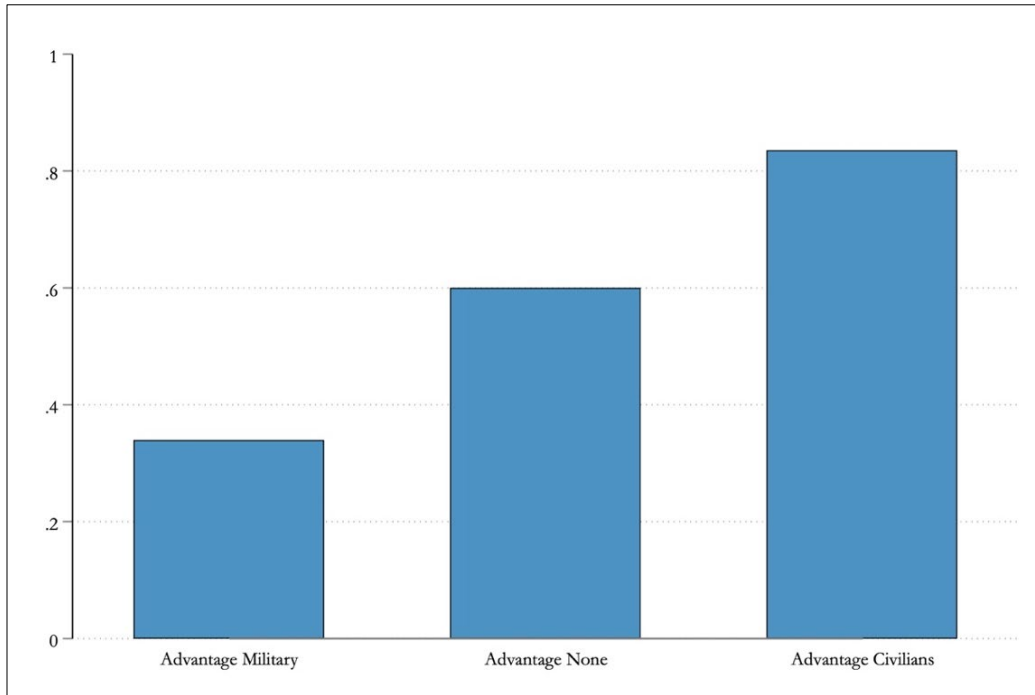
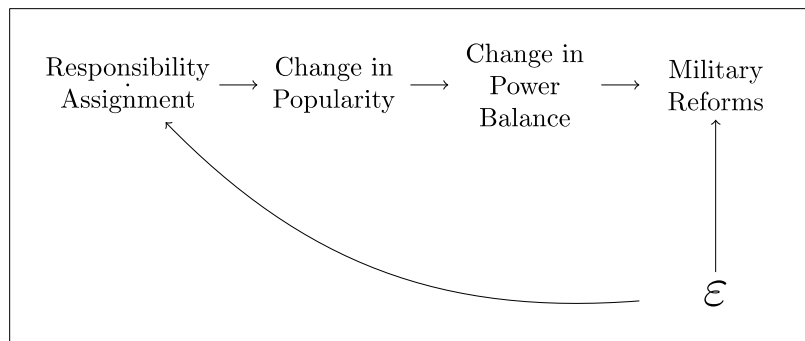


Figure 13. Theory with Error Term.



operating under the assumption that these elements are already encapsulated in the previous state of civil-military relations. In several ways, the prior state of civil-military relations is indicative of the previous balance of power and popularity, reflecting the dynamics and relations between the

military and civilian entities before any given conflict or reform process. As such, this variable serves as a comprehensive measure that captures these underlying factors.

Therefore, controlling the previous state of civil-military relations is critical in this context. By accounting for this factor in the analysis, we are, I argue, effectively controlling for previous popularity and balance of power. This allows for a more accurate assessment of the relationship between responsibility assignment and the initiation of military reforms.

With this in mind, we can move on to the statistical analysis. Because the dependent variable – the *CRS* – is a proportion, I employ a generalized linear model with a logit link and the Bernoulli family,⁵¹ with robust standard errors clustered, as per the equation below,

$$\text{logit}\{E(y)\} = x\beta, \quad y \sim \text{Bernoulli}$$

where the logit function is defined as $\eta = \ln \left\{ \frac{\mu}{1-\mu} \right\}$, or the natural log of the odds, y is the dependent variable, and x are the covariates.

Table 1 displays the results of the generalized linear model. In model 1, I include only *Advantage* as the independent variable. In models 2 and 3, I include the key control variables: the proxies for the previous state of civil-military relations, *Civilian Control* and *Military Minister*. In model 3, I test the effects of *Advantage* without controlling for civil-military relations, but including controls for the level of democracy, population size, and income per capita. Models 4 and 5 include each proxy for civilian control alongside country-specific variables, and model 6 includes both and adds war-specific characteristics: total battle deaths, war duration, and distance.

⁵¹ For more details, see Papke, Leslie E., and Jeffrey M. Wooldridge. 1996. "Econometric Methods for Fractional Response Variables with an Application to 401(k) Plan Participation Rates." *Journal of Applied Econometrics* 11(6): 619–32; Baum, Christopher F. 2008. "Stata Tip 63: Modeling Proportions." *The Stata Journal* 8(2): 299–303.

Table 1. Civilian Participation in Military Reforms – DV: Civilian Reform Score.

VARIABLES	(1) CRS	(2) CRS	(3) CRS	(4) CRS	(5) CRS	(6) CRS	(7) CRS
Adv Civilians	2.284*** (0.594)	2.761*** (0.591)	2.654*** (0.629)	2.652*** (0.589)	2.897*** (0.589)	2.754*** (0.665)	3.005*** (0.746)
Adv None	1.068** (0.532)	1.079** (0.540)	0.943* (0.552)	0.732 (0.556)	0.839 (0.561)	0.781 (0.528)	1.083** (0.488)
Civilian Control		0.874*** (0.261)			0.713*** (0.272)		0.637** (0.304)
Military Minister			-1.518*** (0.496)			-1.328* (0.742)	-1.016 (0.933)
Lib Dem Index				1.287 (1.063)	0.375 (1.128)	-0.294 (1.083)	-0.254 (1.186)
Population				-0.145 (0.148)	-0.0996 (0.144)	-0.136 (0.154)	-0.0713 (0.194)
GDP per Capita				0.319 (0.292)	0.342 (0.320)	0.329 (0.311)	0.344 (0.403)
War Duration							0.292 (0.562)
War Distance							-0.0476 (0.159)
Battle Deaths							-0.0347 (0.182)
LER							-0.263 (0.257)
Victory							0.617 (1.032)
Tie							-0.436 (0.565)
Constant	-0.674* (0.385)	-0.687* (0.380)	-0.0120 (0.469)	-0.173 (1.663)	-0.353 (1.595)	0.876 (1.993)	0.576 (2.288)
<i>N</i>	54	54	54	54	54	54	54

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note: Continuous variables are logged.

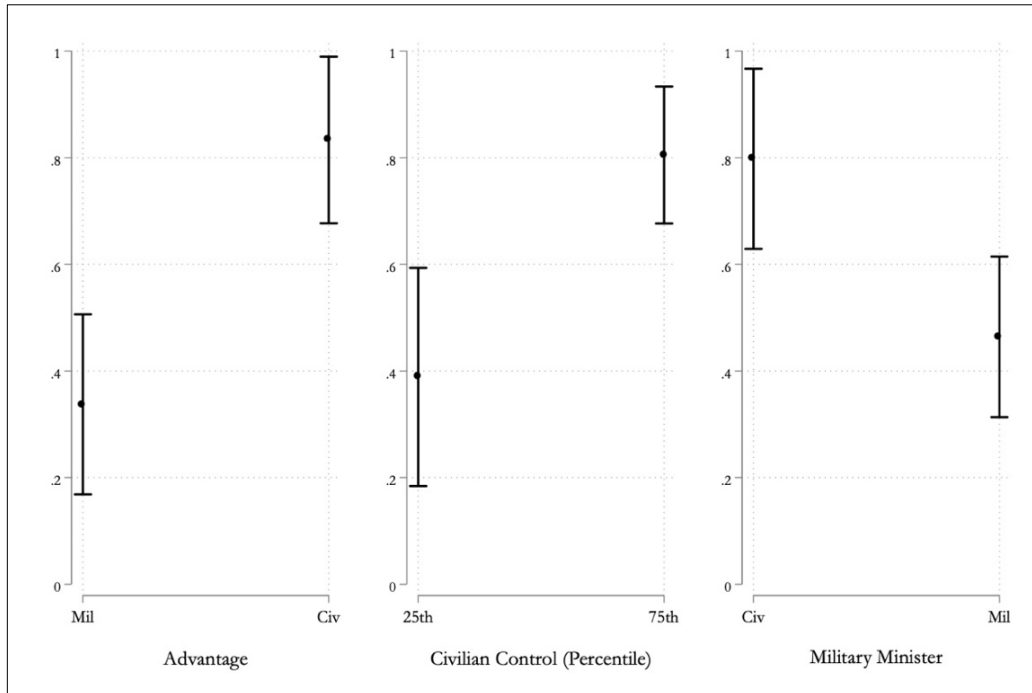
Note 2: Only countries that enacted reforms are included in these tests, meaning that the N is smaller than the entire sample.

The results in Table 1 are consistent with *Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 9*. As expected by the former, and reflecting the association between responsibility assignment and civilian participation, a *Civilian Advantage* is associated with a greater *CRS* and is highly statistically significant, even after controlling for relevant confounders. This variable is also substantively significant: with all other variables held at their means, moving from a military to a civilian advantage is predicted to increase civilian participation from a score of 35 to 84.

But antecedent conditions are, as theorized, associated with civilian participation as well. In models 2-3 and 4-7, I introduce *Civilian Control* and *Military Minister* as proxies of the previous state of civil-military relations. When countries have a pre-war state of civil-military relations more favorable to civilians, they benefit, participating more often in military reforms – in line with *Hypothesis 9*. Both *Civilian Control* and *Military Minister* are consistently significant relative to civilian participation in reforms, the only exception being the latter in model 7. With respect to substantive significance, moving from the 25th to the 75th percentile of *Civilian Control* is associated with a rise in *Civilian Reform Score* from 38 to 82. This would be the difference between South Africa in 1939 and Finland in 1941, or the United States in 1941 versus 1999. As for *Military Minister*, having a member of the military as the defense minister is associated with a decrease in the *Civilian Reform Score* from 80 to 46. These effect sizes are displayed in Figure 14.

Note here that antecedent conditions are performing two functions here. First, they are an essential control for the relationship between *Advantage* and the *Civilian Reform Score*. Second, they are themselves a factor that I hypothesize about. Thus, they work both as a control and part of my theory.

Figure 14. Effect Sizes – DV: Civilian Reform Score.



All in all, these are relevant effects.⁵² Moreover, the empirical results from the models support the validity of my coding scheme. The correspondence between the theoretical expectations and the empirical findings when using measures from other authors (in the case of Kenwick’s measurement of civilian control) or objective variables (in the case of my coding of defense ministers) provides a strong indication of the validity of the coding scheme used in this study. It shows that the conceptual definitions and operational measures employed here

⁵² A possible robustness check would be to disaggregate between instances of blame and praise. Here, I use, as independent variables, dummies for whether blame(credit) was assigned to civilians, the military, or neutral. With the same controls as the most complete model, taking civilians as the reference category, blame assigned to the military is associated with a higher *Civilian Reform Score* ($p=0.001$), with the opposite being true for credit assigned to the military ($p=0.001$). Instances of neutral responsibility assignment are not statistically significant. Importantly, *Civilian Control* and *Military Minister* are also statistically significant in this model ($p=0.05$ and $p=0.08$, respectively). This is further evidence in favor of *H1* and *H3.1*.

appropriately capture the underlying phenomena of interest, leading to results that are not only statistically significant but also substantively meaningful and theoretically consistent.

The Determinants of Civilian Responsibility Assignment

I now turn to the determinants of responsibility assignment, starting with civilians. As per *Hypothesis 2*, I posit that civilians are more likely to be held accountable if they initiate the conflict. To operationalize this hypothesis, I use a binary variable – *Civilian Responsibility*. This variable assumes a value of 1 when civilians have been either praised or blamed for the outcome of the conflict. The underlying assumption is that the decision to initiate a conflict can bring about either praise or blame, contingent on the conflict's outcome.

It is also crucial to address potential confounders in this analysis. However, in this specific context, I argue that we need not be overly concerned about potential confounding variables. The logic behind this assertion is that there are not many plausible factors that could simultaneously influence both the decision to initiate a war (by civilians) and the assignment of responsibility (to civilians). One might suggest that a civilian leader's low popularity could serve as a confounder. However, the dependent variable encompasses instances of both praise and blame. As such, it becomes difficult to picture a scenario where a confounder such as the low popularity of a leader would consistently influence both the initiation of war and the assignment of responsibility (blame or praise), irrespective of the conflict's outcome. Hence, my analysis of the following model, while mindful of potential confounding variables, does not consider them a significant concern for the validity of the results.

Still, I control for several variables. In Model 1, I examine the bivariate relationship between *War of Choice* and *Civilian Responsibility*. In Model 2, country-specific variables are

added: democracy, income per capita, and population. Finally, model 3 includes conflict-specific variables, such as war distance, war duration, civilian control, battle deaths, LER, conflict outcome, relative material power, and mode of recruitment to the military. The dichotomous nature of the dependent variable suggests a logit model, also with robust standard errors, of which the results are displayed in Table 2.

The variable *War of Choice* emerged as highly significant in all three models, with a positive coefficient. This implies that when a war results from a deliberate choice made by the state (rather than the state being the target of aggression), there is a higher likelihood of civilians being assigned responsibility, either in terms of blame or praise, which aligns with *Hypothesis 2*. In terms of effect size, model 3 suggests an increase from 43 to 80 percent in the predicted probability for *Civilian Responsibility Assignment*.

Furthermore, the variable indicating the number of *Battle Deaths* is both positive and statistically significant. This suggests that the larger the scale of the conflict, in terms of fatalities, the more likely civilians are to be assigned responsibility for the outcome. This is an intuitive result, as the gravity of decisions leading to high-casualty wars would reasonably be associated with greater scrutiny and accountability. The predicted probability of *Civilian Responsibility Assignment* increases from 66 to 84 percent with a move from the 25th to the 75th percentile in *Battle Deaths*. This is the difference between relatively minor wars, such as Pakistan's experience in the Kargil War or El Salvador's experience in the Football War, with 700 deaths each, and bigger efforts, such as the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, which cost the country almost 15,000 lives.

Finally, the *Volunteer Army* variable emerged as significant with a negative coefficient. This implies that in states with volunteer military forces, civilians are less likely to be held

Table 2. Assignment of Responsibility to Civilians in Post-War Contexts – DV: Civilian Responsibility.

VARIABLES	(1) Civilian Resp	(2) Civilian Resp	(3) Civilian Resp
War of Choice	1.316*** (0.496)	1.265** (0.527)	2.087*** (0.728)
Liberal Democracy Index		1.273 (1.647)	2.109 (2.204)
Population		0.0946 (0.161)	0.0513 (0.191)
GDP per Capita		-0.189 (0.395)	-0.194 (0.436)
War Distance			0.188 (0.239)
War Duration			-0.0349 (0.130)
Civilian Control			0.0557 (0.421)
Battle Deaths			0.335** (0.162)
LER			0.0958 (0.263)
Tie			-1.140 (0.851)
Victory			-0.00126 (1.089)
Relative Material Power			-0.0287 (0.333)
Volunteer Force			-1.229* (0.737)
Constant	-4.33E-12 (0.379)	-1.024 (1.601)	-4.627* (2.587)
<i>N</i>	72	72	72

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note: Continuous variables are logged.

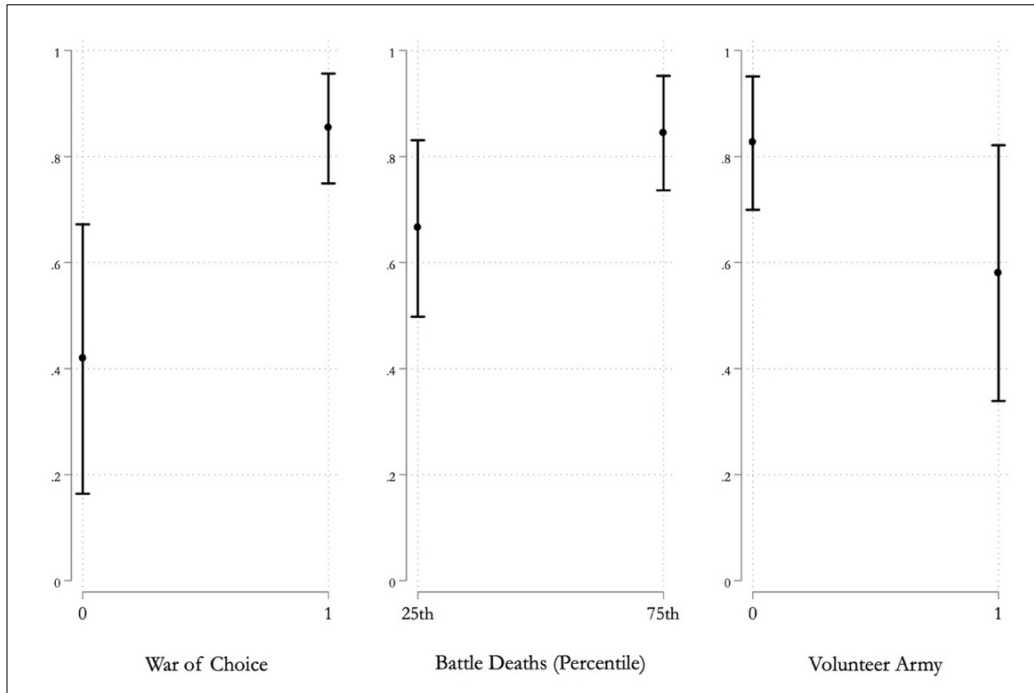
responsible for war outcomes. This is also an intuitive result, as volunteer forces may be seen as independent entities making a conscious choice to participate in the conflict, potentially reducing the perceived responsibility of civilian leadership. A volunteer force is associated with a change in the predicted probability of *Civilian Responsibility Assignment* from 58 to 82 percent. Figure 15 displays these effect sizes.

In sum, these findings lend substantial support to my theoretical expectations and suggest that civilians are indeed more likely to bear responsibility in cases where wars were initiated by choice. Additionally, civilian accountability was also associated with large-scale conflicts, and those which did not involve volunteer armies.

Having established the significance of *War of Choice* in assigning civilian responsibility, the subsequent step in my analysis is to delve deeper into the nature of this relationship. To achieve this, I formulate a new version of the blame/praise variable that gauges the favorability of responsibility assigned to civilians. This new variable is ordinal in nature, taking the value of 0 when civilians are blamed, 1 when civilians are neither blamed nor praised, and 2 when civilians are praised. Hence, higher values indicate a more favorable responsibility assignment for civilians. I call this variable *Civilian Favorability*.

I am particularly interested in the interaction between *War of Choice* and *Conflict Outcome*. This interaction term is expected to provide insights into whether civilians who choose to initiate wars are rewarded or punished based on the eventual outcomes of these wars. Theoretically, I hypothesize a positive interaction between these variables. This hypothesis is based on the expectation that the public is more likely to attribute positive(negative) outcomes to their leaders when these leaders have deliberately chosen to enter a war and then secured a victory(defeat). A positive interaction term would suggest that, when wars of choice result in

Figure 15. Effect Sizes – DV: Civilian Responsibility Assignment.



(un)favorable outcomes, the civilian leaders responsible for initiating such conflicts receive praise(blame) and positive(negative) assignment of responsibility.

Given the ordinal nature of the dependent variable, I employ an ordered logit with robust standard errors, the results of which can be seen in Table 3. The control variables are the same as in Table 2, with the addition of the number of coalition partners in Model 3.

The results of the analysis are consistent across all three models, as displayed in Table 3. The interaction term between *War of Choice* and *Victory* emerges as positive and highly statistically significant, substantiating the assumption that the public tends to reward(punish) leaders who initiate wars and subsequently win(lose) them. As anticipated, this interaction reveals that the relationship between war initiation and responsibility assignment is indeed contingent upon the outcome of the conflict.

Table 3. Assignment of Responsibility to Civilians in Post-War Contexts: Interacting War Initiation and War Outcome. DV: Civilian Favorability.

VARIABLES	(1) Civilian Fav	(2) Civilian Fav	(3) Civilian Fav
War of Choice # Tie	-0.452 (1.282)	-0.165 (1.422)	-0.110 (1.807)
War of Choice # Victory	2.728*** (0.901)	2.849*** (0.942)	2.861*** (0.942)
Number of Coalition Partners			0.0388 (0.339)
Other Controls	Table 2, Model 1	Table 2, Model 2	Table 2, Model 3
<i>N</i>	72	72	72

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Importantly, I repeated the tests above using *Advantage* as the dependent variable. Results are still significant ($p < 0.1$, $p < 0.05$, and $p < 0.05$, respectively). For robustness, I also conducted tests using only blame or only praise as dependent variables in separate logit models. As with the results above, the interaction term between *War of Choice* and *Victory* is statistically significant and negative when blame is the dependent variable, suggesting that leaders who initiate wars are more likely to be blamed if they ultimately experience a defeat. Conversely, the interaction term emerges as significant and positive when praise is the dependent variable, indicating that leaders who choose to initiate wars are more likely to receive praise if they are victorious. Examples of wars of choice which ended in victory are China against India in 1962, El Salvador in 1969 Football War, Chad in the War over the Aouzou Strip, Italy against Ethiopia in 1935, and the United States in the Gulf War, among others.

Here, a story about endogeneity is also implausible. After all, one would need to come up with a variable that predicts, simultaneously, three different outcomes: responsibility assignment,

war initiation, and victory. Could it be the case, for instance, that popular or charismatic leaders initiate more winnable wars more often? This is unlikely, I argue, especially considering the multivariate nature of the decision-making processes surrounding war initiation and victory.

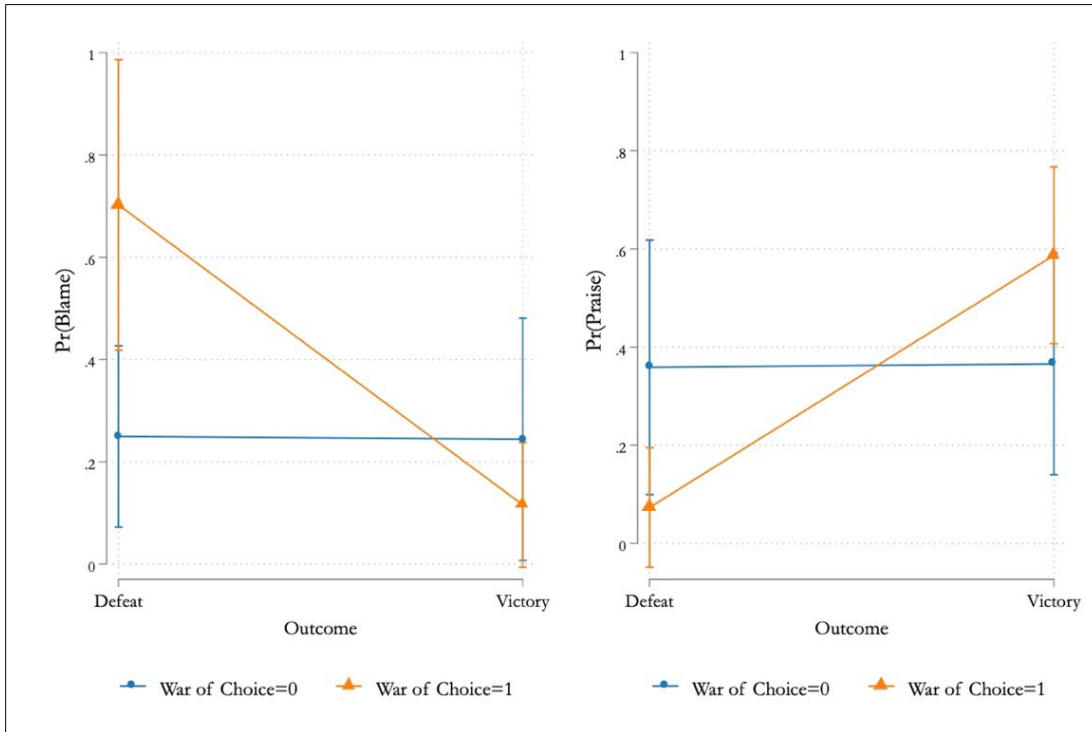
In Figure 16, I display the interaction in Model 3, Table 3, with the predicted probability of civilians being assigned blame or praise. As can be seen, when *War of Choice*=0, the probability of civilians being blamed or praised remains the same, regardless of *Outcome*, as represented by the blue line. Conversely, when *War of Choice*=1, as represented by the orange line, the probability of blame raises decreases with victory, and the probability of praise rises with victory.

For clarity and conciseness, I am not reporting the coefficients of the control variables in Table 3, as none reached statistical significance in any of the models. One of these controls is the *Number of Coalition Partners*, an integral component of *Hypothesis 3*. However, the nonsignificant coefficient for this variable suggests that the proposed relationship between the number of coalition partners and the assignment of responsibility to civilians may not hold up under statistical scrutiny. This could indicate that the assignment of responsibility is not heavily influenced by coalition dynamics, contradicting my expectations.

Finally, I probe the interaction between the decision to initiate war and the *Relative Material Power* of the coalition. The question here is whether leaders who choose to enter conflicts against more powerful adversaries are more likely to be held accountable, whether in the form of praise or blame, compared to those leaders who opt to confront less powerful foes.

Under *Hypothesis 8*, we would expect this interaction term to be positive. This would suggest that leaders who choose war against materially stronger foes are more likely to face blame. These leaders could be perceived as having made a high-risk decision, and therefore, they are more likely to be held accountable for unfavorable outcomes. On the other hand, leaders who decide to

Figure 16. Predicted Probability of Civilian Blame and Praise by War Initiation=0 and War Initiation=1.



confront less powerful foes are not expected to be heavily blamed. The public perceives these decisions as less risky or more calculated. Therefore, the leaders are less likely to be held responsible for unfavorable outcomes, as these are often attributed to unforeseen circumstances – such as the performance of other actors, including the military – rather than their decisions.

The analysis conducted in Table 4 shows that the evidence for this assertion is not as robust. The interaction is in the expected direction, but with a markedly weaker significance level. In models 1-3, statistical significance levels are $p=0.192$, $p=0.139$, and $p=0.065$, respectively. However, using *Advantage* as a dependent variable leads to more encouraging results, with significance levels at $p<0.18$, $p<0.1$, and $p<0.05$. Thus, there is some evidence of an effect, but insufficient to make a more conclusive assertion. Examples of wars of choice against weaker

Table 4. Assignment of Responsibility to Civilians in Post-War Contexts: Interacting War Initiation and Relative Power. DV: Civilian Favorability.

VARIABLES	(1) Civilian Fav	(2) Civilian Fav	(3) Civilian Fav
War of Choice # Relative Material Power	0.473 (0.362)	0.683 (0.473)	1.679* (0.911)
Victory			2.151** (0.874)
Volunteer Force			1.364* (0.793)
Number of Coalition Partners			-0.112 (0.395)
Other Controls	Table 2, Model 1	Table 2, Model 2	Table, Model 3
<i>N</i>	72	72	72

Robust standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

opponents are China against Taiwan (1958) and Vietnam (1979), Israel in the War over Lebanon, Uganda against Tanzania in 1978, and the United States in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq (2x), and Afghanistan, among others.

Taking into account the controls applied in previous models, we observe some familiar trends. For the sake of brevity and focus, I have again opted not to display all nonsignificant variables. Nevertheless, I will highlight a few noteworthy controls. The variable *Volunteer Force*, just like in previous models, demonstrated a positive and significant relationship with the *Civilian Favorability Index*. This outcome underscores the plausible hypothesis that voluntary enlistment in military service tends to positively influence public perception of civilian leaders. Surprisingly, the *Number of Coalition Partners* again did not significantly influence the outcome, further suggesting that coalition dynamics may not play a significant role in responsibility assignment, contrary to what *Hypothesis 3* postulated. Lastly, the variable *Victory* emerged as significant in

these models, reinforcing the intuitive notion that the outcome of conflict impacts the assignment of responsibility and public favorability towards civilian leaders.

To conclude the section on civilian responsibility assignment, I conducted further analysis to probe the robustness of the relationship posited by *Hypothesis 3*, which suggests that the number of coalition partners should influence responsibility assignment. In these additional models, I examined the role of *Number of Coalition Partners* in isolation and also in relation to other variables, based on the previous models in the section. However, this variable consistently failed to achieve statistical significance in these additional tests. Moreover, I created and incorporated a binary variable indicating whether the state was in a coalition. The aim was to ascertain if the mere presence of a coalition, irrespective of its size, had any bearing on responsibility assignment. However, just like the *Number of Coalition Partners*, the *Coalition* variable also did not come close to achieving statistical significance. These findings provide little support for *Hypothesis 3*. The data suggests that there might not be a substantial relationship between coalition dynamics and the assignment of responsibility for war outcomes. Therefore, this hypothesis might not hold up under rigorous empirical examination.

The Determinants of Military Responsibility Assignment

Moving on to military accountability, I examine a range of factors informed by the key hypotheses derived from the theory chapter. Particular emphasis is placed on aspects such as battlefield performance, desertion rates, war crimes, and the dynamics of conflicts where the military might face materially inferior adversaries. Each of these elements carries potentially significant implications for how blame or praise is attributed to the military and can illuminate the broader question of the conditions under which military responsibility is affirmed or disputed.

Taken together, these hypotheses probe the complex terrain of military responsibility and offer a nuanced understanding of how various aspects of military conduct and conflict outcomes intersect with societal and political responses. In the ensuing analysis, I systematically test these hypotheses and unravel the intricacies of military responsibility assignment.

As we initiate our analysis on military responsibility assignment, our primary focus is the *Military Favorability* variable. This variable, akin to its civilian counterpart, is ordinal and encapsulates the public's sentiment towards the military after a conflict. Specifically, it is coded as 0 when the military is blamed, 1 when neither receives blame nor praise, and 2 when the military is praised. In essence, higher scores signify favorable public opinion of the military, while lower scores indicate the opposite.

The first key independent variable in this analysis is the *Loss Exchange Ratio (LER)*, a metric that captures the military's effectiveness in combat. In line with *Hypothesis 4*, I expect a higher *LER* (representing a higher enemy-to-own casualty ratio) to correlate with higher *Military Favorability*. Conversely, a low *LER* (indicating a larger proportion of own casualties compared to enemy casualties) should elicit public criticism, leading to lower *Military Favorability*.

In conjunction with *LER*, I will also examine *Mass Desertion* within these models. According to *Hypothesis 5*, high desertion rates should negatively impact *Military Favorability*, with the public more likely to blame the military in cases of widespread desertion. These two variables will serve as the focal point in this stage of the analysis.

Table 5 displays the coefficients of an ordered logit model with robust standard errors. As with the civilian models, I begin with a bivariate test, and gradually add control variables. The analysis generated consistent results across all tested models. Both the *LER* and *Desertion* emerged as significant predictors of *Military Favorability*, with their effects aligning with the

Table 5. Assignment of Responsibility to the Military in Post-War Contexts: Battlefield Performance and Discipline. DV: Military Favorability.

VARIABLES	(1) Mil Fav	(2) Mil Fav	(3) Mil Fav	(4) Mil Fav	(5) Mil Fav
LER	0.328** (0.154)		0.278* (0.148)	0.556*** (0.209)	0.623** (0.299)
Mass Desertion		-1.547** (0.627)	-1.380** (0.699)	-1.458** (0.685)	-1.244* (0.659)
Liberal Dem Index				-0.936 (1.274)	-1.411 (1.694)
Population				-0.150 (0.170)	-0.132 (0.239)
GDP per Capita				-0.476 (0.333)	-0.291 (0.434)
War Distance					-0.336 (0.281)
War Duration					0.0464 (0.0912)
Civilian Control					0.220 (0.319)
Battle Deaths					0.162 (0.169)
Relative Material Power					-0.288 (0.458)
Tie					0.625 (0.922)
Victory					1.884* (1.118)
Volunteer Force					0.122 (0.692)
N of Coalition Partners					-0.0344 (0.425)
War of Choice					0.659 (0.847)
Constant cut1	-1.033*** (0.332)	-1.726*** (0.352)	-1.486*** (0.349)	-3.937** (1.585)	-3.211** (1.532)
Constant cut2	2.131*** (0.359)	1.462*** (0.309)	1.855*** (0.372)	-0.278 (1.582)	0.919 (1.518)
N	72	72	72	72	72

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

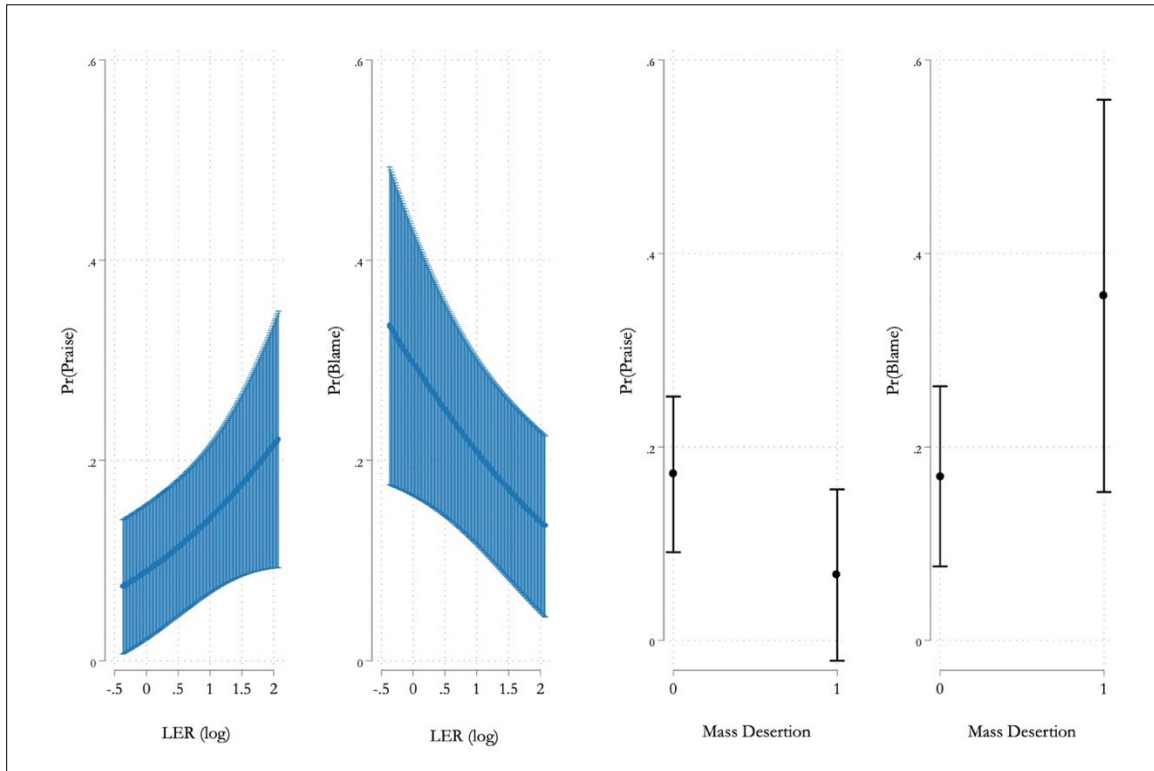
Note: continuous variables are logged.

expected direction. Regarding the substantive effects of the *LER*, the analysis suggests that a move from the 25th to the 75th percentile changes the predicted probability of praise from 7 to 22 percent, while reducing the predicted probability of blame from 33 to 13 percent. A *LER* in the 25th percentile is 0.69, meaning that the state suffered 10 deaths for each 6.9 it caused. This was the case for Pakistan in the Second Kashmir War, Uganda in the Ugandan-Tanzanian War, and India against China in 1962. Conversely, a 75th percentile *LER* is 8, meaning the state inflicted 80 deaths for each it suffered. This was the case of Spain in the Ifni War, for example.

As for *Desertion*, the presence of this variable is associated with a reduction in the predicted probability of praise from 17 to 7 percent, and an increase in the predicted probability of blame from 17 to 36 percent. Countries with mass desertion include Iran in the Iran-Iraq War, South Korea in the Korean War, Argentina in Falklands War, and the United States in Vietnam, among others. These results provide support for the stated hypotheses, lending evidence to the theory that both effective military performance and low indiscipline during war can play crucial roles in shaping post-conflict military favorability. Here, it is worth noting that results are very similar if *Advantage* is used as a DV. Figure 17 displays the size effects visually.

Here, it is important to discuss endogeneity once again. A plausible challenge to these findings is that better-funded or better-trained military would already be seen as competent prior to the war. This type of organization may achieve a high *LER* and also enjoy high favorability due to perceived competence and strength. However, if the population observes competence from the military using heuristics such as funding and training, there is no reason why they would not observe it from the armed forces' actual performance in the battlefield, and update their beliefs. Here, my argument holds. This is true for any competence assessment prior to the war.

Figure 17. Effect Sizes – DV: Military Responsibility Assignment.



In addition to the aforementioned variables, the outcome of the conflict, represented by the variable *Victory*, also appeared as a significant predictor of *Military Favorability*. As it appears, successful conflict resolution through victory is positively associated with post-war evaluations of the military. This result is intuitive, as victorious military endeavors are likely to boost public esteem for the military, reinforcing their credibility.

Interestingly, an interaction term between the outcome of the conflict and *Relative Material Power* did not emerge as a significant predictor of *Military Favorability* in any of the model specifications. This suggests that the public’s perception of military performance may not be as sensitive to the relative power of the adversary, but rather focuses on more direct and tangible indicators of battlefield performance. In essence, the public does not seem to reliably discern

between losses to more or less powerful opponents, but attributes responsibility based on observable measures such as the military's battlefield effectiveness and the overall outcome of the conflict.

The final element of military responsibility assignment to be examined pertains to war crimes committed during conflict. While we have looked at more conventional metrics of military performance, such as battlefield effectiveness and overall conflict outcome, it is crucial to consider the role of war crimes in shaping the public's attribution of responsibility. War crimes represent a significant deviation from expected military conduct and are likely to strongly impact the perception of the military's role in conflict outcomes. In *Hypothesis 6*, I posit that the occurrence of war crimes is positively associated with military blame and negatively associated with military praise.

The role of *War Crimes* in military responsibility assignment was examined separately from the previous analysis involving LER and mass desertion. This distinction is due to the smaller number of observations for war crimes within the dataset. Morrow's dataset for this particular variable has a considerably smaller N. This difference in sample size should be considered when interpreting the results of the subsequent analysis.

For this specific analysis of war crimes, I employ two distinct dependent variables. The first, *Magnitude of Violations*, measures the extent or severity of the war crimes committed by the military. This variable is useful in gauging how widespread or systemic the violations were and allows us to investigate whether the scale of violations impacts the assignment of responsibility. The second dependent variable is the degree to which these were *State-Mandated Violations*, which captures whether the reported war crimes were ordered or at least sanctioned by the state authorities. This distinction is crucial because it potentially differentiates between

transgressions committed by the military in the field, perhaps due to discipline issues or rogue elements, and those ordered by the state, indicative of a more deliberate and systematic intent to violate international laws and norms, and thus implicating civilians and the military equally. By using these two variables, we can more thoroughly dissect the impact of war crimes on military responsibility assignment. The results of the ordered logit models are shown in Table 6.

Starting with the variable *Magnitude of Violations*, we can observe that as the extent or severity of war crimes increases, there is a corresponding increase in the blame assigned to the military. This relationship is both positive and marginally statistically significant, providing some evidence for *Hypothesis 6*, which posits a positive association between the scale of war crimes and military blame.

Regarding the variable *State-Mandated Violations*, the results offer a more nuanced picture. For individual violations that were punished by the state, there is a significant negative correlation with military favorability. This suggests that when the state takes punitive action against the violators, the public may interpret it as a confirmation of military fault, leading to a decrease in the military's standing. Results obtained for individual violations not punished by the state also present a negative coefficient, but fail to achieve statistical significance. Here, violations might cause a negative effect, but the lack of state punishment for individual violations might lessen public backlash against the military. This result might be due to the importance of state responses in shaping public opinion toward the military.

When it comes to violations that are probable decisions of the state to violate, the association with military favorability is significant and negative. This suggests that the public is likely to blame the military when there is a perception that the state likely decided to commit the violations. Interestingly, when there is positive identification of state intent to violate, the

Table 6. Assignment of Responsibility to the Military in Post-War Contexts: War Crimes. DV: Military Favorability.

VARIABLES	(1) Mil Fav	(2) Mil Fav
Magnitude of Violations	-0.581* (0.326)	
Individual Violations, Punished by State Policy		-3.555** (1.701)
Individual Violations, Not Punished by State Policy		-1.807 (1.559)
Probable State Decision to Violate		-5.072*** (1.802)
Positive Identification of State Intent to Violate		0.189 (2.174)
Controls	Table 2, Model 3	Table 2, Model 3
<i>N</i>	57	57
Robust standard errors in parentheses		
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1		

correlation with military favorability is positive, though not statistically significant. This result suggests that when there is clear evidence of state intent to commit war crimes, the blame might shift away from the military and towards the state.

When taken together, these results only partially confirm the hypothesized relationships between war crimes and military blame or praise, with some unexpected patterns in the case of clear state intent to violate. This highlights the complex nature of public blame assignment in the context of war crimes and underscores the need for further research in this area.

Reform Type

In the following analysis, we pivot our focus to the question of antecedent conditions. Given that I have already addressed the previous state of civil-military relations, the remaining orthogonal condition to responsibility assignment yet to be explored is the type of military reform. As per my theoretical expectations, I posit that doctrinal reforms, which often encompass strategic, operational, and tactical norms, are more likely to be enacted by the military. This is contrasted against other types of reform like organizational changes, alterations to force structure, and recruitment modifications, which are expected to be more amenable to civilian involvement.

Indeed, as per the opening of this chapter, a preliminary examination of the descriptive statistics seems to substantiate this assumption. However, to more formally address the theory, I employ a t-test to determine if different types of reforms have a *Civilian Reform Score* that is statistically distinct from 0.5. This midpoint serves as the threshold to interpret the lead actor in reform implementation. If a reform type's average civilian score falls below 0.5, it indicates that the military is significantly more likely to drive the enactment of such reforms. Conversely, an average score above 0.5 suggests a dominant role for civilians in the reform process. If the score is not statistically different from 0.5, it suggests that the will or power to enact that particular type of reform varies, without a clear trend favoring either civilians or the military.

The choice to use t-tests here stems from several factors. Firstly, t-tests do not require a substantial volume of observations to return valid results, a crucial consideration in scenarios where data availability may be constrained. Given that I am breaking down the data by reform types, the sample sizes become quite limited here. Secondly, the specific purpose of this part of the analysis is to assess whether the mean *CRS* significantly diverges from a neutral value of 0.5. A one-sample t-test is precisely designed to evaluate such propositions. Overall, I am assuming

that there is something valuable about knowing who is more likely to have enacted a reform simply by its type, even if there might be more complex underlying reasons for such patterns to occur. That said, I present the results in Table 7 below.

As expected, the t-test results are consistent with *Hypothesis 10* – they provide support to the proposed relationship between reform type and the propensity for civilian or military enactment. Consistent with my theoretical expectations, doctrinal reforms appear to be the realm of the military, with a mean **CRS** of 0.2, significantly less than 0.5 at the $p < 0.01$ level. This affirms the hypothesis that the military is more likely to be the principal agent of doctrinal reforms, given their close relation to the operational practices and tactical norms of the armed forces, as well as their expertise. Conversely, organizational reforms seem to be more frequently enacted by civilians, with an average **CRS** of 0.77, which is significantly greater than 0.5 at the $p < 0.001$ level. This suggests that civilians are predominantly responsible for changes in the structure, responsibilities, or processes of military organizations.

Recruitment and force structure reform are less conclusive. The former, with an average score of 0.63, does not present a statistically significant difference from the 0.5 threshold. This indicates that there is no clear trend of either civilians or the military leading the implementation of recruitment reforms, suggesting a shared responsibility and decision-making power in this aspect. Force structure reforms demonstrate a peculiar pattern, with an average **CRS** of 0.64. Although this value is higher than 0.5, the difference is only statistically significant at the $p < 0.1$ level, suggesting weaker civilian predominance in these reforms. It seems that the force structure reforms, which often involve changes in the size, configuration, or disposition of military forces, could potentially be the arena of shared civilian-military enactment, albeit with a slight leaning towards civilian leadership.

Table 7. Reform Type and the Source of Reforms.

	Doctrine	Organizational	Recruitment	Force Structure
Mean	0.2	0.77	0.63	0.64
Standard Error	0.092	0.066	0.097	0.068
T-test	mean < 0.5 ***	mean > 0.5 ***	mean ≠ 0.5	mean = 0.5 *
<i>N</i>	20	39	24	48

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The Sources of Post-War Military Reforms, Regardless of Their Authors

Building upon my investigation into the actors responsible for enacting military reforms, I now turn my attention to the more general question: what precipitates military reforms, regardless of the actor initiating them? Here, it should be noted that, because post-war reforms are so common, I will be explaining the sources of nonreform more than the sources of reform. As I mentioned in the theory section, wars reveal so much about the armed forces that most post-war states enact some reform. In this chapter's sample, three-quarters of them.

So how come some states decide to enact military reforms, but others choose not to? As per the theory chapter, several expectations guide my analysis. First, as per *Hypothesis 11*, I hypothesize that success in conflict leads to continuity, not change, while failure serves as a catalyst for reform. Second, based on *Hypothesis 13*, I hypothesize that certain situational factors – such as participation in conflicts far from home or the necessity to coordinate with multiple allies – may precipitate military reforms. These challenging operational circumstances could reveal hidden deficiencies within the military and spur changes to address these weaknesses. Lastly, with *Hypothesis 12* in mind, I consider the impact of destruction on the necessity for reform. High levels of destruction may create windows of opportunity for reforms, given that states will be already rebuilding their armed forces.

With this in mind, when including the independent variables of interest, I am especially concerned with variables that proxy success or failures (*Conflict Outcome*, *LER*, *Mass Desertion*), operational complexity (*War Distance and Coalition Size*), and destruction (*Battle Deaths*). As for the dependent variable, I use reform in two different ways. First, as a binary variable – *Reform Binary* – which takes the value of 1 when any reforms occur and 0 otherwise. Second, as a count variable, *Reform Count*, which sums all the reforms enacted, and thus can take a value of 0 to 4. For the former dependent variable, I use a Logit model, and for the latter, I use a Poisson regression model, which is generally recommended for count data. Table 8 and Table 9 display the results.

Among the variables of interest, *Battle Deaths* emerged as highly significant across all models, underscoring the strong relationship between the level of destruction and the necessity for reform. A move from the 25th to the 75th percentile increases the predicted number of reforms from 1.5 to 2.1. This is evidence in favor of *Hypothesis 12*.

The *LER*, however, did not attain statistical significance in any of the models, suggesting that the effectiveness of the military in terms of kill ratios might not be a key driver for reform. *Mass desertion* emerged as a significant variable in one of the four models, hinting at a potential link between internal issues of military discipline and the need for reform. However, this result is not as robust as might be expected. Conversely, *Victory* is a significant predictor across all models, and, as hypothesized, is associated with a lower likelihood of reform. Changing from victory to defeat leads to an increase in the predicted number of reforms from 2.09 to 1.17. This is congruent with my assumption that successful conflict outcomes reinforce the perceived effectiveness of existing military structures and strategies, reducing the impetus for change. However, I can only claim partial confirmation for *Hypothesis 11*, given that only one metric of success was consistently statistically significant.

Table 8. The Sources of Military Reform – DV: Reform Binary.

VARIABLES	(1) Reform	(2) Reform	(3) Reform	(4) Reform	(5) Reform
Battle Deaths	0.322*** (0.0697)				0.884** (0.358)
LER		-0.0388 (0.136)			0.327 (0.435)
Mass Desertion			2.291 (1.427)		0.864 (1.521)
Tie				-0.459 (0.752)	-1.524 (1.629)
Victory				-1.316** (0.514)	-2.732* (1.644)
Liberal Dem Index					0.955 (2.283)
GDP per Capita					1.038* (0.629)
Population					0.441* (0.239)
Coalition					0.676 (1.237)
Civilian Control					-0.412 (0.553)
War Distance					0.492 (0.412)
Relative Material Capabilities					-0.340 (0.485)
Volunteer Force					-0.0500 (0.861)
War of Choice					1.179 (1.101)
Constant	-1.233** (0.594)	1.193*** (0.321)	0.803*** (0.256)	1.758*** (0.428)	14.65*** (5.087)
<i>N</i>	71	71	71	71	71

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note: Continuous variables are logged.

Table 9. The Sources of Military Reform – DV: Reform Count.

VARIABLES	(1) Reforms	(2) Reforms	(3) Reforms	(4) Reforms	(5) Reforms
Battle Deaths	0.0885*** (0.0283)				0.0943*** (0.0351)
LER		0.0218 (0.0453)			0.0889 (0.0753)
Mass Desertion			0.365*** (0.134)		0.151 (0.176)
Tie				0.238 (0.190)	0.168 (0.196)
Victory				-0.447** (0.186)	-0.575*** (0.210)
Liberal Dem Index					0.235 (0.449)
GDP per Capita					0.0181 (0.104)
Population					0.0103 (0.0525)
Coalition					0.177 (0.176)
Civilian Control					0.0616 (0.109)
War Distance					0.0178 (0.0675)
Relative Material Capabilities					0.00548 (0.0679)
Volunteer Force					0.141 (0.171)
War of Choice					-0.0506 (0.214)
Constant	-0.126 (0.284)	0.591*** (0.0949)	0.509*** (0.102)	0.678*** (0.108)	-0.613 (0.504)
<i>N</i>	71	71	71	71	71

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note: Continuous variables are logged.

Lastly, *War Distance* and *Coalition*, the situational factors I hypothesized could generate operational difficulties and thereby trigger reform, did not achieve statistical significance in my analysis. This suggests that these factors might not be as influential in stimulating military reforms as previously considered, and does not confirm *Hypothesis 13*.

Overall, the significant variables are all in the expected direction, affirming some key elements of my theoretical framework. The absence of statistical significance in some cases, however, underscores the complex nature of military reform. The finding that victory emerges as the only significant variable among the proxies for success may point to the symbolic and psychological importance of achieving victory in war. *Victory* is a clear, unequivocal indicator of military success, often accompanied by national celebration and an increased sense of pride and confidence in the military. In such a context, there may be a less perceived need for change, as the military strategies and structures are perceived to have been validated by the victorious outcome. Figure 18 displays the effect sizes of the significant variables.

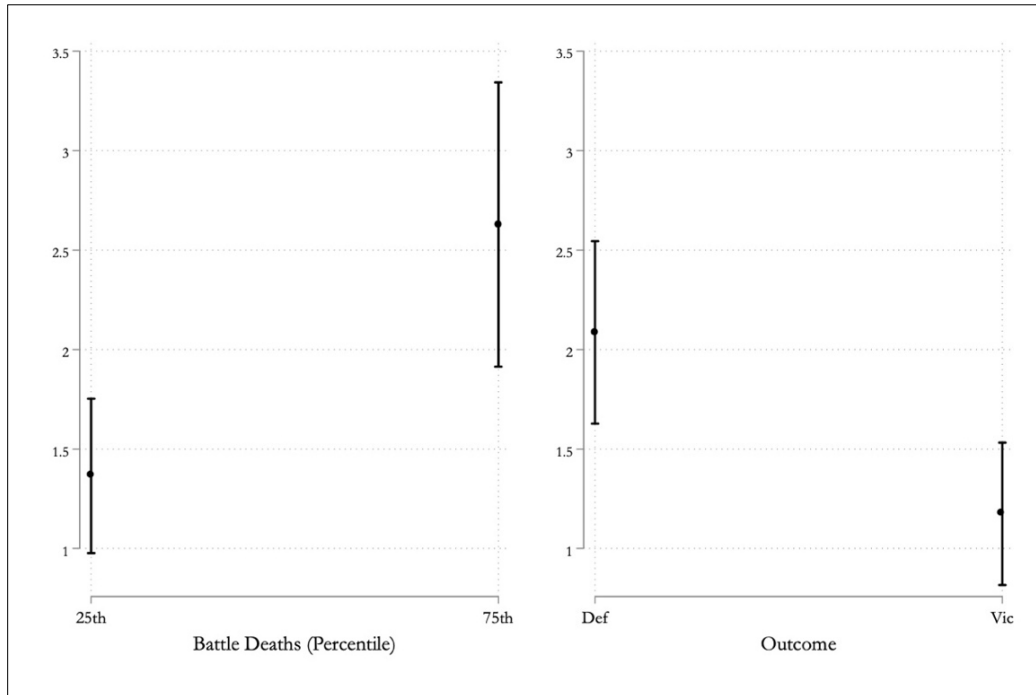
All in all, based on the analysis above, it appears valid to state that both the level of destruction incurred in conflict and some measures of success, particularly when defined as victory, are significant factors associated with military reform.

3.4. CONCLUSION

The findings in this chapter contribute significantly to our understanding of how blame and credit assignment in the wake of military conflicts impact post-war military reforms, and how specific conditions of war can shape the public's assignment of blame or praise.

Firstly, I established the strong and consistent link between blame and credit assignment, and the nature of post-war reforms. In alignment with *Hypothesis 1*, I found that blame assigned

Figure 18. Effect Sizes – DV: Number of Reforms.



to civilians is associated with lower levels of civilian participation in post-war military reforms, and vice versa for praise. The same is true for the military. These findings were consistently robust across multiple model specifications and despite the inclusion of various potentially confounding variables, as well as several country- and conflict-specific variables.

Turning to the link between war initiation and civilian accountability, the analysis indicated a resilient association between *Wars of Choice* and civilian blame and praise. Here too, a strong interaction emerged between *Wars of Choice* and *Conflict Outcome*, suggesting the public rewards leaders who initiate successful wars and punish those responsible for defeats. However, the public’s response seems less sensitive to the relative power of adversaries, with the interaction between *War of Choice* and *Relative Material Power* being less robust. Interestingly, the public

seems indifferent to the number of partners in military coalitions, as this factor was not significant in any model.

When examining military accountability, we saw that battlefield performance and discipline, measured by the *LER* and *Mass Desertion* rates, are significant predictors of *Military Favorability*. The public seems to judge the military largely based on these direct indicators of battlefield performance. The relationship between military war crimes and public sentiment, however, was more complex. While the *Magnitude of Violations* was marginally significant, the role of the state in its interactions with the military when committing these crimes presented a more puzzling picture. Still, it appears that committing war crimes generally detracts from the military's favorability.

Moving to antecedent conditions, the previous state of *Civil-Military Relations* emerged as a strong predictor of civilian participation in reforms. Furthermore, the type of reform played a significant role in determining whether it would be led by civilians or the military. As expected, doctrinal reforms were more likely to be enacted by the military, while civilians tended to lead organizational changes.

Lastly, the enactment of reforms was robustly associated with levels of destruction, as indicated by total *Battle Deaths*, and *Victory* in war. However, battlefield performance measures and operational complexity were not significant predictors of reform.

With all this in mind, the following table provides a summarized overview of the extent to which each hypothesis was confirmed, based on the analyses conducted in this chapter. It is critical to interpret these results in the context of the limitations and scope of this chapter. Therefore, the status assigned to each hypothesis in this table – whether “confirmed,” “partially confirmed,” or “not confirmed” – should be seen as a provisional and context-dependent interpretation based on

Table 10. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results, Quantitative Chapter.

Hypothesis	Status
Hypothesis 1: Blame (praise) assignment to civilians is associated with lower (higher) levels of civilian participation in post-war military reforms, with the opposite being true for blame (praise) assignment to the military.	Confirmed
Hypothesis 2: Civilians are more likely to be held responsible if it was their decision to start the war, as opposed to having been the target of another state.	Confirmed
Hypothesis 3: The number of partners in military coalitions is negatively associated with civilian blame, and positively associated with civilian praise.	Not confirmed
Hypothesis 8: Starting wars against materially superior adversaries is positively associated with civilian blame, and negatively associated with civilian praise.	Partially confirmed
Hypothesis 4: Good battlefield performance is negatively associated with military blame, and positively associated with military praise.	Confirmed
Hypothesis 5: Desertion rates are positively associated with military blame, and negatively associated with military praise.	Confirmed
Hypothesis 6: War crimes are positively associated with military blame, and negatively associated with military praise.	Partially confirmed
Hypothesis 7: Losing wars against materially inferior adversaries is positively associated with military blame, and negatively associated with military praise.	Not confirmed
Hypothesis 9: Higher levels of pre-war civilian control over the military are positively associated with higher rates of civilian participation in military reforms.	Confirmed
Hypothesis 10: Doctrine reforms have a lower rate of civilian participation.	Confirmed
Hypothesis 11. Success should be negatively associated with post-war military reforms.	Partially confirmed
Hypothesis 12. Damage and destruction should be positively associated with post-war military reforms.	Confirmed
Hypothesis 13. Operational Complexity should be positively associated with post-war military reforms.	Not confirmed

the data and methodologies utilized here. In no way does this imply a definitive or unchangeable validation of these hypotheses. Despite the cautionary notes, this table provides a valuable summary and review of the findings in this chapter, offering a clear sense of how the data align with the theoretical expectations outlined at the outset.

As for the limitations of these findings, there are several. First and foremost, the number of cases included in the analysis may not capture all variations in post-war reform processes. Although scholars of international politics often need to grapple with a limited number of cases, the dataset introduced here can be expanded, including other interstate wars, other types of conflicts, and additional time periods. Furthermore, despite the robustness of the results, they are not immune to potential misspecification errors, omitted variable bias, or issues related to the operationalization of the concepts. Thus, future research could seek to expand the number of cases, diversify the sample to ensure a more representative global distribution, and take into account the varying intensity and types of conflicts.

Another possible concern is related to the measurement of variables. Certain variables may be difficult to measure accurately, which could impact the results. For instance, civilian and military blame/praise partially rely on public opinion data, which might not always be reliable, comprehensive, or reflective of the entire population's sentiments. Similarly, battlefield performance can be hard to quantify and subject to interpretation. Moreover, some variables are highly aggregated, which could lead to loss of information and oversimplification.

Finally, the possibility of endogeneity cannot be fully ruled out. For example, it is plausible that the nature of reforms might influence how the public assigns blame or praise in the aftermath of a conflict, rather than solely the other way around. Although I put great effort into coding each variable in the "correct" order, the nature of the phenomena I tackle here entails several possible

sources of reverse causality. Moreover, there could be omitted variables not included in the model that influence both blame assignment and the nature of reforms. These could range from broader societal attitudes towards the military, political climate, international pressure, or certain historical or cultural factors.

Still, these concerns do not invalidate the findings presented here. Regarding the data sample, while the scope of the study is certainly bounded by the dataset and timeframe considered, the implications of the findings can nonetheless provide insights for a broader context. The findings provide a basis from which to explore similar phenomena in different settings or periods, further contributing to the robustness and generalizability of the theories presented. Furthermore, the principles established in the hypotheses are largely grounded in established social science theory, which increases their potential applicability across different contexts.

Also, despite potential difficulties in measuring certain variables, the ones used in this study were chosen because they represent the most reliable and valid indicators available. Public opinion data, for example, while not perfect, is a widely used proxy for societal sentiment in the social sciences. Similarly, battlefield performance, despite its inherent complexity, was quantified using indicators that have been widely adopted in the field. Furthermore, while aggregation might result in a loss of detailed information, it also allows for an analysis that can capture broader patterns and trends, which are the main focus of this study.

As for model specification and endogeneity concerns, although observational research is inherently subject to biases, the robustness of the findings from this study, across multiple model specifications, suggests that there is reason to take seriously the relationships identified here. Moreover, this quantitative investigation represents a piece of a larger research project. The comprehensive qualitative case studies and country reports accompanying this work provide rich

contextual detail and serve to elucidate the mechanisms proposed here. This mixed-methods approach helps to mitigate potential omitted variable bias and gives more confidence in the importance and relevance of the relationships and dynamics identified in this study.

Overall, it is important to recognize inherent trade-offs involving research, especially when tackling big questions that span expansive temporal and thematic scopes. In this study, I attempt to uncover broad societal patterns, and thus ventured into an analysis that traces long and multifaceted causal chains. This complex endeavor necessitates a delicate balancing act. On the one hand, one should strive for precision and accuracy in measurements and model specifications. On the other hand, some of this precision might be sacrificed when seeking to capture the broad strokes and overarching patterns that can inform our understanding of these complex socio-political processes. To fully grasp the nuanced interplay between blame assignment, war outcomes, and subsequent military reform, it became necessary to work with aggregated variables, make simplifying assumptions, and impose a certain level of abstraction on my theoretical framework. In doing so, here, I trade off some level of micro-level precision for the ability to discern macro-level trends and causal relationships.

In essence, while this research does have limitations, these findings offer valuable insights into the complex dynamics of civil-military relations, war, and military reform. They contribute to our theoretical understanding of these phenomena and provide empirically grounded hypotheses for future research, which should be seen as part of an ongoing conversation about civil-military relations, war, and military reform. This project, of course, does not claim to be the final word on this subject; rather, it serves as a steppingstone toward a more nuanced understanding of the intricacies of military reform in post-conflict societies. In this light, the limitations identified serve as guideposts for future research, steering us towards more precise measurements, comprehensive

models, and more in-depth analyses. They are not roadblocks, but invitations to further refine our understanding.

CHAPTER 4: THE LION'S GATE: ISRAEL AND THE SIX-DAY WAR

The Six-Day War was a brief yet significant conflict that took place from June 5 to 10, 1967. The war was fought between Israel and a coalition of Arab nations, including Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. Tensions between Israel and its neighbors had been escalating for years, and Israel perceived the buildup of Arab military forces along its borders as an imminent threat to its national security.

In the months leading up to the war, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser ordered the removal of the United Nations Emergency Force from the Sinai Peninsula, repositioned his troops there, and closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, even with Israel having reiterated that such an action would be a definite *casus belli*. These actions, along with the mobilization of Arab armies, were seen as acts of aggression and provocation by Israel, which saw the situation as an existential threat. As a response, the country launched a preemptive air strike on the morning of June 5, targeting Egyptian airfields and effectively destroying most of the Egyptian Air Force. This initial strike was a critical success, providing Israel with air superiority and enabling it to dictate the course of the war. It has been described as “the most successful in the history of aerial warfare.”¹ R. Goring-Morris, Britain’s air attaché in Tel Aviv, noted: “Never in the history of military aviation has the exercise of air power played so speedy and decisive a part in modern warfare.”²

¹ Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts*, 575.

² Oren, *Six Days of War*, 305. See also Guy Laron, *The Six Day War: The Breaking of the Middle East* (Yale University Press, 2017), 35.

Over the next six days, Israeli forces swiftly conquered the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights, significantly expanding its territory.³ The victory was seen as a testament to Israel's military capabilities, coordination, and intelligence. By the end of the war, Israel had more than tripled its territory, taking control of the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. The war is “among the shortest and yet most violently decisive in history—decisive, that is, in the size and scope of the Israeli victory (...)” and “(...) a great victory, one of the most overwhelming and certainly the swiftest in military history.”⁴ Israel’s total losses were 983 fatalities and 4,517 wounded, while the Arab states tallied 4,396 fatalities, 6,421 wounded, and 7,550 missing or captured: a 3.3 to 1 ratio.⁵ Other sources put them at 25 to 1 in Israel’s favor.⁶

Despite the war’s significance, several intriguing developments characterize its aftermath. Primarily, the bulk of the credit for Israel's overwhelming victory was assigned to the military, catalyzing its political ascendance. Secondly, this euphoric victory and the military's increased political influence did not translate into necessary reforms to address identified military flaws. Indeed, these flaws became starkly apparent six years later during the Yom Kippur War, following a period of complacency amongst Israel's elites in the interim. Why did the Israeli military, rather than other actors, receive the majority of the praise following the Six-Day War? How did this contribute to an increase in the military's political power, and why were there no military reforms despite the recognition of existing deficiencies?

³ Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts*, 576–77; Sarkees and Wayman, *Resort To War*, 158.

⁴ Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts*, 575–76.

⁵ Clodfelter, 577.

⁶ Oren, *Six Days of War*, 305.

The chapter is organized into three main sections. Section 1, “The Praise Game,” delves into the factors that skewed the credit assignment in favor of the armed forces. Section 2 analyzes the conditions that led to the “nonreform” period, and whether the military consciously chose to disregard known flaws. Lastly, Section 3 verifies a key assumption of our theory – the post-war increase in the military's political power.

4.1. THE PRAISE GAME

Theoretical Expectations

In the theory chapter, I contend that civilians are held responsible by the public for initiating wars and gathering allies. The military, alternatively, is expected to be judged by what takes place on the battlefield: better performances should favor the armed forces, as well as the absence of human rights violations and disciplinary problems. What, then, are theoretical expectations for this case?

At first sight, both civilians and the military are good candidates for receiving praise. Prime Minister Levi Eshkol decided to launch a preventive strike in the face of an external threat, which ended up being successful. Moreover, although the US only played an indirect role in the Six-Day War, during *ha-hamtana* (the “waiting period”) prior to the war, the special relationship he established with Johnson played a crucial role in obtaining political and military support for Israel from the US.⁷ When it comes to the military, as mentioned above, this was one of the most sweeping battlefield victories in the history of warfare. Additionally, there was no perception of

⁷ Yehuda Avner, *The Prime Ministers: An Intimate Narrative of Israeli Leadership*, First Edition (New Milford, CT: The Toby Press, LLC, 2010).

indiscipline, and allegations of human rights violations gained attention only many years later.⁸ At the time of the war and its immediate aftermath, the primary focus of international media coverage was on the military and political aspects of the conflict.

In summary, a superficial look would suggest that both civilians and the military would receive credit for the outcome of the Six-Day War. The details of the case, however, show how the military ended at an advantage, and how this development is consistent with my theoretical expectations.

Civilians

A key fact here is that the Arab states were considered the *de facto* initiators of the conflict, given that public perception was that Israel had no choice but to launch a preemptive strike. This is consistent with Nasser's posture. As his successor Anwar Sadat later testified, Nasser had said to his colleagues, whom he had brought together to decide on the closure of the Straits: "Now, with the concentration of our force in Sinai the chances of war are fifty-fifty but if we close the Straits, war will be 100 percent certain."⁹ Therefore, the Egyptian President knew he was starting a war at that moment. At a meeting with pilots at an air base, he said: "(...) if Jews threaten war we tell them 'you are welcome, we are ready for war. Our armed forces and all our people are ready for war.'"¹⁰ Salah al-Hadidi, the presiding judge in the trials of Egyptian officers held responsible for the defeat, asserted, "I can state that Egypt's political leadership called Israel to war. It clearly provoked Israel and forced it into a confrontation."¹¹ The Correlates of War dataset,

⁸ Karin Laub, "Historians: Israeli Troops Killed Hundreds Of Egyptian POWs | AP News," 1995, <https://apnews.com/article/25ac46caafc811c70c9367f04ef136fb>.

⁹ Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, 47.

¹⁰ Bregman, 46.

¹¹ Oren, *Six Days of War*, 311.

for example, codes Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, and Iraq as the initiators against Israel.¹² Some authors argue that the Arab states themselves justifiably felt that an Israeli attack would be forthcoming.¹³ For the purposes of this case, however, this is beside the point. As I demonstrate below, from the point of view of Israel's public opinion, there was no alternative but to launch an attack. Importantly, Eshkol was perceived as hesitant and indecisive prior to the war.

Nasser had started mobilizing troops into the desert in mid-May, and by June 1, the Egyptian forces in the Sinai encompassed seven divisions and a strength of 100,000 men. The Syrian and Jordanian armies, which were also fully mobilized at that point, comprised around 55,000 men each. Forces from Iraq, Algeria, Kuwait, and Lebanon were also mobilized. On May 30, King Hussein of Jordan and President Nasser signed a joint defense pact, which also stipulated that Jordan's forces would be placed under Egyptian command in the event of war. Israel had started mobilizing on May 16 and moved to full mobilization on May 19, which was completed by the next day.¹⁴

The mounting concern over the potential outbreak of war, however, led to a period of apprehension in the country known as *ha-hamtana* (the “waiting period”), during which the military was fully mobilized, and the country came to a virtual standstill. This period was psychologically quite taxing, as tensions continued to escalate. The closure of the Straits of Tiran only added to the already heightened anxiety, as Israeli leaders had long warned that such a move would inevitably lead to war. The situation was exacerbated by the belligerent rhetoric of Arab leaders, further fueling Israeli fears. For instance, just three days after the Straits were closed,

¹² Sarkees and Wayman, *Resort To War*, 158.

¹³ Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 1st edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 387; Zeev Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land: A Critical Analysis of Israel's Security and Foreign Policy*, Illustrated edition (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), Ch. 3.

¹⁴ Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, 48–49.

Nasser delivered a speech to unionists in which he issued ominous threats: “The battle [with Israel] will be a general one and our basic objective will be to destroy Israel.”¹⁵ When other Arab states joined Egypt’s alliances, Nasser told cheering Egyptians it was designed to “totally annihilate the State of Israel once and for all.”¹⁶

As I detail below, Eshkol preferred to exhaust every alternative before going to war. He held the conviction that if there existed any possibility of averting a war through an international resolution to lift the blockade, it was his responsibility to pursue such a course of action. The premier also refused to launch an attack without a majority vote in his cabinet and international support. The populace became impatient, overcome with a sense of inaction. Foreign Minister Abba Eban later described the mood in Israel at that moment: “A sense of vulnerability penetrated every part of the Israeli consciousness like an icy wind. As Israelis looked around, they saw the world divided between those who were seeking their destruction and those who were doing nothing to prevent it.”¹⁷

As the situation grew increasingly dire, there was mounting public pressure on Eshkol to bring back David Ben-Gurion as either Prime Minister or Defense Minister. This was because Ben-Gurion had successfully led the country through the 1948 and 1956 wars, and was considered an expert in military affairs. In contrast, Eshkol was primarily known for his financial expertise, and focused on domestic affairs, particularly economic development and social welfare. His military background was limited. However, tensions between Eshkol and Ben-Gurion were high,

¹⁵ Bregman, 51.

¹⁶ Avner, *The Prime Ministers*, 305.

¹⁷ Abba Eban, *My Country;: The Story of Modern Israel* (Random House, 1972), 214.

and Eshkol, who had invested heavily in arming the IDF in the years leading up to the crisis, vehemently opposed the idea of his predecessor returning to the cabinet.¹⁸

On May 28, a significant event occurred that compelled Eshkol to yield to public demands and political pressure. That Sunday, he personally went on the radio to address the nation. As Eshkol delivered his speech and the frightened people of Israel listened, it was apparent that he struggled with the words. The reading of his speech was so poorly executed and his performance so lackluster that it left a terrible impression. He sounded indecisive and panic-stricken. This was taken as “proof of incompetence” by the nation and “added to the feeling of helplessness among the Israeli public” to the point where “many generals felt that Israel might even lose a war without any fighting taking place.”¹⁹ Bregman contends that this was more a failure of presentation and delivery than of substance.²⁰ However, the problem was not only the tone of voice or the repeated grunts of “Err, err,” but also how Eshkol babbled on the government's established principles for maintaining policies that endorsed an American-led international effort intended to prevent war, and how only in the conclusion he mentioned that Israel would know how to defend itself if attacked.²¹ Gluska also notes how the speech lacked an uplifting message and was overly reliant on foreign elements instead of the IDF’s might.²² The national sentiment was such that the impact of this subpar delivery was disastrous. Following the address, which became infamously known as *Ha'neum Ha'megumgam* (“the stammering speech”), Eshkol faced widespread criticism.

¹⁸ Avner, *The Prime Ministers*, 326–31; Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, 52; Arye Naor, “Civil–Military Relations and Strategic Goal Setting in the Six Day War,” *Israel Affairs* 12, no. 3 (July 1, 2006): 396, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537120600744610>.

¹⁹ Naor, “Civil–Military Relations and Strategic Goal Setting in the Six Day War,” 400.

²⁰ Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, 52.

²¹ Avner, *The Prime Ministers*, 332–33.

²² Ami Gluska, *The Israeli Military and the Origins of the 1967 War: Government, Armed Forces and Defence Policy 1963–67*, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 2006), 196.

At that point, everyone's nerves were shaken, and the nation appeared suddenly helpless and without a leader. Subsequent news reports mentioned how “Israel’s enemies rejoiced while Israeli soldiers in the trenches smashed their transistors and broke down in tears.” People were digging trenches in their backyards. The next morning, Israel's leading daily, *Haaretz*, echoed this feeling:

If we could truly believe that Eshkol was really capable of navigating the ship of state in these crucial days, we would willingly follow him. But we have no such belief after his radio address last night. The proposal that Ben-Gurion be entrusted with the premiership and Moshe Dayan with the Ministry of Defense, while Eshkol takes charge of domestic affairs, seems to us a wise one.²³

Other newspapers followed suit. One wrote that the speech “evoked horror in Israel (...) it surprised a nation, whose nerves and muscles were strained to breaking point. It was in a pathetic tone, accompanied by inarticulate and disgraceful mumbling, like some bad provincial theatre.” Another described it as “The most shameful symptom of the Government’s lack of talent (...) the listener received the impression that his Government is headed by a broken man, stammering out with difficulty a text written by someone else (...) at this fateful emergency hour, when all nerves are stretched, this is a terrible thing.”²⁴

Facing increasing pressure, Eshkol found himself with no alternative but to relinquish his position as Defense Minister – which he held concurrently with his role as Prime Minister – and extend the offer to Moshe Dayan, a former IDF chief of staff and a current politician in Rafi, which

²³ Avner, *The Prime Ministers*, 334–35.

²⁴ Gluska, *The Israeli Military and the Origins of the 1967 War*, 196.

was part of the opposition and Ben-Gurion's party. Dayan's appointment appeared to signal that the IDF would soon be instructed to act. Four days later, it did, in a highly successful fashion.

Nonetheless, as Oren puts it, Eshkol was “overshadowed by the military men” and “haunted by his alleged indecisiveness in the weeks preceding the war.”²⁵ The author elaborates on how unfairly public perception developed towards Eshkol, whose steadfastness amidst military pressure to initiate an Israeli assault is believed to have played a crucial role in enhancing Israel's strategic edge and securing international legitimacy: “The man who had stood up to the entire general staff, who had bargained with Johnson and called Kosygin’s bluff, whose determination to wait three weeks had won much of world opinion and given his army much-needed time to prepare—that man sat unheralded among the Mount Scopus guests.”²⁶ Other scholars disagree. Eisenberg, for example, notes how Eshkol’s posture towards Israel’s adversaries was ambiguous, and defines these mixed messages as having produced “disappointing results.”²⁷ The author states that they failed to deter the Arabs, fully reassure Israelis, or appease the West, instead exacerbating tensions. Gluska defines his decision to wait as “disastrous.”²⁸ At the end of the day, Eshkol’s tenure in office was marked by charges of weakness by his domestic opponents.

In summary, as predicted in the theory chapter, civilian leaders are judged by their decisions to initiate (or not initiate) wars. In this case, Eshkol did not receive as much credit as he could have because the public perceived him to have waited too long to act. As I note in the theory chapter, leaders can be punished for not initiating wars when necessary, and this was the case here.

²⁵ Oren, *Six Days of War*, 316.

²⁶ Oren, 316.

²⁷ Laura Zittrain Eisenberg, “Israeli Independence Day, 1967: Mixed Messages on the Eve of War,” *Journal of Israeli History* 39, no. 2 (July 3, 2021): 197, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13531042.2021.2045081>.

²⁸ Gluska, *The Israeli Military and the Origins of the 1967 War*, 261.

As mentioned above, Israel's adversaries ended up being considered the *de facto* initiators of this conflict, which minimized the Prime Minister's claim to praise at that moment.

An alternative explanation, in this case, is Eshkol's charisma. For example, had his May 28th speech been more rousing and impactful, Eshkol might have garnered more recognition and support from the Israeli public. A powerful oration could have presented him as a strong leader capable of guiding the nation through a perilous situation. However, he was already criticized in the weeks before the war. Counterfactually, even if the May 28th speech had gone well, it is unlikely that Eshkol would have received more credit than the military. That charisma helps political leaders in the face of public opinion is uncontroversial, although my theory does not explicitly address this variable. As discussed in the theory chapter, I treat leaders' individual characteristics and strategies to control public narratives as part of the "error term" of my probabilistic theory. Nevertheless, it is worth noting this factor here.

The Military

As for the military, the praise received by them was unambiguous. Israel truly reveled in its triumph, with the media celebrating the military's boldness, resourcefulness, and strength for weeks to follow. *Haaretz* reported on a newly minted victory coin and even shared a "victory cake" recipe for welcoming soldiers back home. In a speech, Abba Eban's choice of words was revealing: he declared the glorious triumph of the IDF, not Israel. Dayan and Rabin's popularity soared to new heights,²⁹ transforming them into icons not only in Israel but also in the Jewish Diaspora, where people felt empowered to "walk with their backs straight" after the war. Rabin, the Chief of

²⁹ Among the polls opinion polls indicating the overwhelming popularity of the national leaders, those in charge of defense policies reached "staggering percentages" Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, 59.

Staff, was granted the extraordinary honor of naming the conflict. Among several options, he opted for the most modest one, the Six-Day War, alluding to the days of creation.³⁰ As Metz puts it, “The exploits of what was known in Israel as the Six-Day War soon became legend, and the commanders who led it became national heroes.”³¹

Rabin also received an honorary Doctor of Philosophy degree from the Hebrew University in a special ceremony. He accepted the degree in the name of the IDF and emphasized the experience of soldiers on the frontlines “who had seen not only the glories of victory but also its price—the friends who fell next to them, covered in blood.” They were “aware of the righteousness of our cause, of their deep love of the homeland, and the difficult tasks imposed on them” and had demonstrated their “moral, spiritual, and psychological worth under the hardest conditions.” Many had died to preserve what Rabin termed “the right of the people of Israel to live in its own State—free, independent, in peace and tranquility.”³² In the theory chapter, I explain how this is a recurring theme in narratives favoring soldiers: it is often claimed that politicians, from their offices, cannot know the realities of warfighting.

According to Oren, the public generally credited Rabin for the victory.³³ Gluska agrees, stating that, “In the eyes of the general public, (...) Rabin remained, and rightly so, the hero of the war and the champion of the glorious victory.”³⁴ Capitalizing on this wave of success, he eventually left the military to serve as Israel’s ambassador in Washington, precisely what he requested from Eshkol.³⁵ As we will see below, he also retained considerable political influence

³⁰ Oren, *Six Days of War*, 309.

³¹ Helen Chapin Metz, “Israel: A Country Study,” image (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1990), 259, <https://www.loc.gov/item/90006119/>.

³² Oren, *Six Days of War*, 313.

³³ Oren, 313.

³⁴ Gluska, *The Israeli Military and the Origins of the 1967 War*, 267.

³⁵ Avner, *The Prime Ministers*, 401.

in the years after the war. This was followed by a tenure as Israel's prime minister (1974–77) during the bleak period after the Yom Kippur War and again in 1992 until his assassination in 1995. Therefore, Rabin became a highly significant political figure in Israel's history.

Civilians Versus the Military

Notably, the public narratives about Eshkol and the military did take form independent of each other. As is often the case, these actors put forward competing narratives and were often critical of each other, as they had different views on the correct course of action leading to the Six-Days War. For example, Eshkol criticized Rabin for some press interviews, eventually ordering him to refrain from unauthorized public statements. He thought Rabin was “politically immature, if not imprudent,” and did not trust him.³⁶ Eshkol’s cabinet also questioned Rabin’s competence. In contrast, Rabin criticized Eshkol's restraint, which he saw as hesitation rather than prudence.

Overall, the dynamics between Eshkol and the military leading up to the Six-Day War were complex. While the generals respected Eshkol, many admired his predecessor, Ben-Gurion, who was critical of Eshkol's leadership. Prominent figures in the defense establishment, such as Dayan, Shimon Peres, Zvi Zur, and Chaim Herzog, also criticized Eshkol, which influenced the opinion of the IDF general staff. The media prominently covered the opinions these generals had regarding Eshkol. Their statements resonated with a broad audience, and *Haaretz* gave their viewpoints an influential forum.

As the crisis escalated, doubts about Eshkol's ability to lead during a crucial time grew among generals, politicians, and, as I have showed above, the media. The generals regarded him

³⁶ Naor, “Civil–Military Relations and Strategic Goal Setting in the Six Day War,” 396.

as someone “who could not make up his mind whenever a difficult, tough decision was needed.” They perceived Eshkol's judicious and cautious approach to crisis management as “weakness, indecisiveness and anxiety.”³⁷ As the situation dragged on, and as mentioned above, voices in political circles (including those of Eshkol's government) and the national press expressed a yearning for Ben-Gurion's firm leadership.

The generals believed that waiting would lead to a dangerous three-front conflict and were concerned that the inevitable war would begin under conditions substantially worse than those already in place. They were apprehensive about the possibility of pre-emptive airstrikes because, in their absence, the number of expected Israeli losses would be huge, and the likelihood of an unambiguous victory would plummet. They urged Eshkol to act immediately. In fact, they took turns doing so. Major General Aharon Yariv, the head of military intelligence, warned that the Arab countries “would interpret ongoing Israeli diplomatic steps as a demonstration of weakness that could create an opportunity to annihilate the Jewish state.” General Ezer Weizman, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, signed off on this opinion. He eventually stormed Eshkol's private office with tears in his eyes and yelled: “The country is being destroyed, everything is being ruined! Eshkol, just give an order and the IDF will fight and win the war. (...) We have a powerful army, waiting only for your order. Give us the order and we shall win and you will be the victorious Prime Minister!” Rabin asserted that battle should start with a surprise attack by the IDF, and that Israel must either use Gaza as a negotiating chip or annihilate the Egyptian army. Major General Ariel Sharon, then a young division commander, harshly accused the government of damaging the deterrence power of Israel: “We are capable of destroying the Egyptian army; (...) All this

³⁷ Naor, 397–98.

lobbying, including the maritime act, presents us as weak. We present ourselves as a helpless nation. We have never degraded ourselves that much before.” The Northern Command's head, Major General David Elazar, emphasized, “The IDF would not win, should the enemy achieve air supremacy; and if we did win it would pay deadly price. Consequently, the government is requested to return to the IDF its deterrent power. This could be achieved only if the government allows us to act [now] and not at a time when acting might be impossible.” Major General Matityahu Peled, the head of logistics, added the economic angle to the central contention. He stated that it would be beyond Israel's economic means to activate all its reserve forces for a protracted length of time. “Is this the intention of the Government?” he rhetorically posed. Major General Uzi Narkis, chief of Central Command, attempted to reassure the premier that the IDF was prepared and capable of victory.³⁸

Eshkol's harsh response focused on the definition of deterrence within a defensive notion of national security. “The basic definition of deterrent is a long breath, and we also need patience.” He continued by outlining his idea of a just war while criticizing a preventive war (as opposed to a pre-emptive strike). As one general later testified, “a feeling of rebellion was in the air” throughout these conversations, which had swiftly devolved into heated exchanges between the generals and the premier.³⁹ The IDF General Staff has been described as “straining at the leash like dogs penned up in kennels, wanting to strike the enemy before their buildup became impenetrable. For them, the delay was not due to military insufficiency but to political indecisiveness. Certain generals were even slinging accusations of cowardice at Eshkol.”⁴⁰ The

³⁸ Naor, 399–403; Gluska, *The Israeli Military and the Origins of the 1967 War*, Ch. 17.

³⁹ Naor, “Civil–Military Relations and Strategic Goal Setting in the Six Day War,” 399–403.

⁴⁰ Avner, *The Prime Ministers*, 335. See also Gluska, *The Israeli Military and the Origins of the 1967 War*, 196–98.

Prime Minister's military secretary characterized the atmosphere as extremely tense and almost unbearable. The generals' remarks not only conveyed criticism but also expressed distrust and even disdain for the government. The situation teetered on the brink of exploding.⁴¹

At the end of the day, Eshkol wanted to exhaust any possibility of averting a war through an international resolution to lift the blockade. He was hesitant to wage war without a consensus in his cabinet and sought international support – he had sent Eban to Washington to clarify the US position. Tensions between the generals and Eshkol intensified, and, despite the pressure, Eshkol insisted on considering the wider context, including international politics and the possibility of a diplomatic solution. The generals' involvement in politics during this period was because of a “sincere belief that everything was being ruined,” and it made them a powerful pressure group. Their lobbying influenced public opinion and contributed to Eshkol's decision to appoint Dayan.⁴² In the end, even after the victory, many generals, politicians, and media figures continued to doubt his ability to govern in critical moments. Naor contends, “there can be no doubt that the generals influenced public opinion.”⁴³

In conclusion, an in-depth examination of the case of Israel after the Six-Day War supports the argument that public evaluation of politicians and military personnel varies based on their perceived roles and responsibilities during wartime. The findings demonstrate that the Israeli public attributed the war's success primarily to the military, owing to their exceptional battlefield performance. The role of the Prime Minister in initiating the war was seen as less significant, as

⁴¹ Gluska, *The Israeli Military and the Origins of the 1967 War*, 198.

⁴² Naor, “Civil–Military Relations and Strategic Goal Setting in the Six Day War,” 405.

⁴³ Naor, 405.

he only authorized military action when faced with no viable alternatives, effectively placing the onus of initiation on Israel's adversaries. Importantly, he was perceived as hesitant.

4.2. MILITARY REFORMS

Theoretical Expectations

No significant military reforms were enacted in Israel after the Six-Day War. In the theory chapter, I include a section with theoretical expectations for instances of absence of reforms, which I test here. It is essential to include such a case because, for obvious reasons, examining the level of civilian participation in military reforms assumes that there was a reform in the first place. Thus, it is important to shed light on the first step of the process. When should we expect reforms?

My explanation for the existence of military reforms is intuitive. In the theory chapter, I argue that military success leads to policy continuity, and, thus, a lack of significant military reforms. Firstly, successful military performance in wartime is an indication of the effectiveness of the existing military organization. As a result, there might be no apparent weaknesses or deficiencies in need of urgent attention. In this situation, policymakers and military officials may perceive the current system as adequate for future conflicts, thus discouraging the pursuit of reforms. Moreover, the “if it is not broken, do not fix it” mentality might dominate the decision-making process, further reinforcing the status quo.

Secondly, military success can often result in a diminished perception of threats from adversaries. With a clear demonstration of superiority on the battlefield, the victorious state may believe its military prowess is sufficient to deter potential adversaries from future aggression. This sense of security can lead to a reduced urgency for change within the military establishment. Consequently, the impetus for reforms and adjustments to defense policy may be weakened, as

decision-makers prioritize maintaining the status quo over seeking improvements. Lastly, the aftermath of a successful military campaign often involves a period of celebration, euphoria, and national pride. In such an environment, the political climate may not be conducive to advocating for military reforms.

At this point, a methodological note is in order. Studying the absence of an event, such as military reforms, poses inherent difficulties for researchers. In the case of Israel after the Six-Day War, the lack of significant military reforms might mean that such reforms were not even discussed or explicitly considered by policymakers and military officials. However, if we see evidence that the IDF was widely considered highly effective, Israel felt safe from relatively future aggression from regional adversaries, and there was a widespread celebratory atmosphere that led to overconfidence, we should be able to conclude that the context was not conducive to advocating for military reforms. Why would it be? Nonetheless, in addition to establishing these conditions, I show that there were evident failures in the leading up to the war, of which Dayan was aware, that were not addressed. I also show that minor changes to the military actually decreased readiness, and that Israel focused on investing in what worked in the war, instead of correcting deficiencies.

Another theoretical expectation to consider when examining this is the role of the military as the foremost actor in determining the course of defense policy and military reforms. According to my theoretical expectations, the fact that the military received credit for the outcome of the conflict should increase its influence on defense policy.

Below, I discuss each of the expectations described above. Note that much of the evidence is in the context leading up to the Yom Kippur War, which took place from October 6 to 25, 1973, after an Arab coalition jointly launched a surprise attack against Israel on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur. A second and important note is that Levi Eshkol died from a heart attack in early

1969, a year and a half after the Six-Day War. Therefore, the sections below include most of the tenure of Golda Meir as Prime Minister.

Israel's Threat Perception

There is little question that a sense of security spread throughout Israel in the wake of the Six-Days War. In this section, I show that this was primarily a result of two factors: 1) its acquisition of new strategic borders and 2) the belief that Arab states would be deterred from attacking after such a crushing defeat.

Regarding the first point, one of the most tangible outcomes of the war was Israel's acquisition of new territories, which dramatically reshaped its borders. These new borders not only expanded Israel's geographical reach but also provided a perceived significant strategic advantage.

The capture of the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt in the southwest, the Golan Heights from Syria in the northeast, and the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan in the east created a buffer zone that significantly increased Israel's defensible space. The Sinai Peninsula alone provided a vast desert area that could act as a natural barrier against potential Egyptian aggression. The Golan Heights, on the other hand, offered a commanding position overlooking the Syrian plains, aiding Israel with early warning and enhanced intelligence capabilities.

Right after the war, for example, Ariel Sharon, from a helicopter ride, exclaimed how “All of this is ours,” as he was “smiling like a proud boy.” Yael Dayan, the daughter of Moshe Dayan, who would go on to become a politician, concluded at the end of the war that Israel had become “something new, safer, larger, stronger and happier.”⁴⁴ Michael Hadow, Britain's Ambassador in

⁴⁴ Jeremy Bowen, *Six Days : How the 1967 War Shaped the Middle East* (London: Gardners Books, 2004), 646.

Tel Aviv, noted how there was a desire in Israel “to attain maximum security” by not returning the land, an opinion shared by The New York Times: “(...) a peace treaty with the Arab countries would not be worth the sacrifice of land and security.”⁴⁵ Former air force leader Ezer Weizman proudly declared: “We are now strutting about as if each of us were three meters tall, like giants among grasshoppers.”⁴⁶

These perceptions became even more evident in the period leading up to the Yom Kippur War. Again and again, Israeli officials felt confident that the new territory would give them enough time to react to an attack. For example, after learning in April that war was expected to break out in May 1973 from a “trusted source,” Meir was told by Eli Zeira, the army’s chief intelligence officer, that the likelihood of combat taking place was extremely low. Zeira promised that he would be able to predict such a move far in advance after stating that he did not believe Egypt could surprise Israel with a canal crossing. David Elazar, now Chief of Staff of the IDF, was fully convinced that his military intelligence could warn of an impending war at least two days in advance, potentially even earlier.⁴⁷ Three days before the war, on October 3, in the context of the mobilization of Egyptian and Syrian troops in attacking formations, Elazar once more stated his belief that, whatever happened, the IDF would be notified in good time. Thus, he recommended the maintenance, with minor reinforcements, of the IDF’s existing deployment of forces.⁴⁸ Additionally, according to Dayan, in several strongholds, “communications equipment and vehicles were generally not properly maintained and weapons and ammunition were below

⁴⁵ Bowen, 659.

⁴⁶ Leslie Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War: Tears of Joy, Tears of Sorrow*, 1st edition (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2014), 59.

⁴⁷ Uri Bar-Joseph, *The Watchman Fell Asleep: The Surprise Of Yom Kippur And Its Sources* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 117; Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 79–80.

⁴⁸ Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 88.

acceptable levels and in some they were even below the essential minimum.” After being questioned, one battalion commander explained: “We’ll have plenty of time to replace you with regular units if and when we think something is about to happen.”⁴⁹

The media echoed the feeling above. For example, the military correspondent from the newspaper *Yediot Ahronot*, Eitan Haber, stated that the army “had adopted full measures to deprive Egypt of the possibility of surprise.”⁵⁰ As Oren puts it, “Many Israeli leaders shared his conviction, and some went even further, believing that for the first time peace was attainable, if purchased with Arab territories.”⁵¹

As for the second point, the swift and decisive victory of the Israeli military was believed to have sent a clear message to the Arab states about Israel's military prowess. The war showcased the effectiveness of Israel's strategy, the efficiency of its armed forces, and its ability to rapidly mobilize and respond to threats. As a result, the Arab states, which had suffered a humiliating defeat, were believed to be deterred from launching future attacks against Israel. The support from the United States could also help Israel maintain its qualitative military edge in the region, further discouraging Arab states from contemplating direct military confrontation. Moreover, the war exposed several problems of the Arab states’ militaries, which cast doubt on these states' ability to effectively challenge Israel and served as an additional deterrent against any coordinated military action. According to Stein,

In the days immediately after the Six-Day War, Israelis fervently believed that the longed-for era, if not of formal peace then at least an absence of war, had finally arrived. They assumed that, having been decisively routed, the Arabs would finally forego their dreams

⁴⁹ Stein, 92. See also Laron, *The Six Day War*, 691; Bar-Joseph, *The Watchman Fell Asleep*, 42.

⁵⁰ Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 92.

⁵¹ Oren, *Six Days of War*, 313.

of defeating the IDF. Not only were the Arabs not expected to wage war but it was thought that they would henceforth refrain from pursuing miscellaneous acts of violence for fear of igniting another full-blown confrontation. (...) The Israelis were so mesmerized by the devastating blows that they had administered that they became blinded to the rising Egyptian and Syrian military phoenixes.⁵²

This was one of the reasons why Zeira became fixated on the idea that Sadat would never start a war unless or until he received from the Soviet Union both fighter bombers capable of attacking Israeli Air Forces (IAF) bases within Israel and Scud missiles that could reach Tel Aviv. This idea came to be known as “the concept” or “the conception.”⁵³ Prior to the Yom Kippur War, even as Egypt and Syria were already coordinating plans for a joint invasion, Zeira and his chief subordinates stubbornly refused to reevaluate the validity of this idea.

Dayan was also convinced that Israel’s enemies posed no threat. He predicted that there would not be any border modifications or significant wars over the following ten years in an interview with *Time* magazine (which was released on July 30, 1973).⁵⁴ Dayan further discussed the underlying military deficiencies of the Arabs in August 1973, predicting that these issues would persist for some time to come. He believed the Arabs' inability to pose a significant danger to Israel was due to low educational levels, inadequate technological expertise, a general lack of honesty, and Arab fragmentation.⁵⁵ Quoting Dayan, *Haaretz* reported that “the Egyptians will not go to war within the next few years.”⁵⁶ Rabin was also not concerned. He concluded that the 1967 war had

⁵² Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 59–60.

⁵³ Metz, “Israel,” 260; Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 78; Bar-Joseph, *The Watchman Fell Asleep*, 45–46.

⁵⁴ Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 80. notes how Dayan made the exact same prediction in April 1967 while addressing Harvard academics, just two months before the Six-Day War.

⁵⁵ Bar-Joseph, *The Watchman Fell Asleep*, 229.

⁵⁶ Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 92.

changed the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict “not by making Israel any less repugnant to the Arabs, but by convincing them that it could never be eliminated by force of arms.”⁵⁷

In the leading up to the Yom Kippur War, after a credible source had indicated to Elazar that Syria was on the verge of launching a full-scale war, Zeira was not alarmed. Even with an unprecedented mobilization of Syrian forces, his conclusion was that a Syrian attack could be confidently dismissed. Zeira believed that the unprecedented mobilization of Syrian forces was either a result of their increasing concerns about an Israeli attack or a seemingly illogical attempt to generate momentum within their own army. Israel even shared an assessment with the US that the massing of Arab troops had arisen due to Arab fears of Israel launching a military offensive.⁵⁸ In a meeting on October 3, Aryeh Shalev, the head of the IDF’s military research branch, dismissed Egyptian military movements as military exercises, and reaffirmed that the Syrians were only preoccupied with preparing for an expected Israeli offensive.⁵⁹ On the eve of the war, in a meeting organized by Dayan, Zeira doubled down: “All indications show that the Syrians and Egyptians are not preparing to attack. On the contrary, they are gripped by a state of fear of us.”⁶⁰ As all Russian advisors’ families in Syria and Egypt were being transported by air to the Soviet Union and the Soviet ships that were docked in the ports of Alexandria and Mersa Matruh departed, he reasoned: “Maybe the Russians think the Arabs are going to attack because they don’t understand them well.”⁶¹

⁵⁷ Oren, *Six Days of War*, 313.

⁵⁸ Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 84–85.

⁵⁹ Stein, 87.

⁶⁰ A. Braun, *Moshe Dayan in the Yom Kippur War* (Tel Aviv: Edanim, 1992), 58.

⁶¹ Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter That Transformed the Middle East*, Reprint edition (New York: Schocken, 2005), 75; See also Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 90–91.

In conclusion, Israel's sense of security after the Six-Days War can be attributed to the acquisition of new strategic borders and the belief that their demonstrated military superiority would deter Arab states from future aggression. The combination of these factors has been described as Israel's generals becoming addicted to "magical thinking."⁶²

Israel's Perception of the IDF's Effectiveness

In the aftermath of the Six-Day War, the IDF garnered widespread acclaim for its strategic prowess and operational efficiency. This momentous victory – again, a remarkable feat in the annals of military history – reinforced the perception of the IDF as a formidable and resourceful force capable of overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds and fostering a sense of invincibility that pervaded the collective consciousness.

One central aspect of the post-war debates was what to do with the newly acquired territories. Many argued that not returning these territories to the Arab countries would foster even more resentment in Israel's adversaries and lead to war again. Ben-Gurion and Eban, for example, forcefully claimed that staying in the territories was a disastrous decision. However, the general sentiment was that Israel was more than capable of defeating its enemies in the case of another war. As Bowen observes, "the mood in Israel blew away any suggestion of caution as decisively as the Israeli army had dealt with the Arabs. In just under a week of war the Israeli public went from despair to the joy of deliverance. Israelis were never in as much danger as they thought they were, thanks to their military strength and the Arabs' weakness."⁶³ The author adds that "Israel did not take the beaten Arab leaders very seriously" and that "Israel's destruction of the Arab

⁶² Laron, *The Six Day War*, 691.

⁶³ Bowen, *Six Days*, 642–43.

armies gave it enormous confidence.”⁶⁴ This led to overconfidence and complacency.⁶⁵ Kimmerling agrees: “From the collective sense of being a small (if not tiny), besieged state, under continuous threat of destruction, there emerged the self-image of an almost omnipotent regional military and economic power.”⁶⁶

For instance, following his retirement from military service less than three months before the onset of the Yom Kippur War, Ariel Sharon stated in an interview:

Militarily, Israel ranks one rank higher than a medium power. If we accept the division according to strength, that at the top there are two superpowers—the USA and the USSR—and, then, at the second echelon come France, England, and others, then Israel belongs today to this echelon of powerful nations and not to that of the medium-size powers. We have an exceptional military might.⁶⁷

Based on this assessment, he also described the cost that Egypt would pay if it decided to go to war:

A horrible, horrible cost. A cost Egypt won't be able to stand. In the Six Days [War] the Egyptians could withdraw to the canal. And, so it was also in the [1956] Sinai Campaign. In the next war the Egyptian withdrawal line would be Cairo. They don't have another line. And it would involve a horrible destruction of Egypt. A total destruction. I deem it as unnecessary. We don't need it. But, we'll never return to a war of attrition, though we won it. The Egyptians would suffer a horrible strike.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Bowen, 670.

⁶⁵ Bowen, 706.

⁶⁶ Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, First Edition (Berkeley Los Angeles London: University of California Press, 2005), 75. See also Laron, *The Six Day War*, 691; Bar-Joseph, *The Watchman Fell Asleep*, 42.

⁶⁷ Bar-Joseph, *The Watchman Fell Asleep*, 43.

⁶⁸ Bar-Joseph, 43.

According to Bar-Joseph, “such arrogant expressions genuinely reflected the dominant Israeli atmosphere prior to the war; they must have impacted the way the intelligence estimate regarding the likelihood of war was formulated.”⁶⁹

This overconfidence was complemented by the notion that Israel's enemies could not create effective military organizations. As mentioned above, Dayan saw several underlying military deficiencies within the Arabs’ armies, including low educational levels, inadequate technological expertise, a general lack of honesty, and Arab fragmentation. Following evaluations conducted by Israeli psychologists on Egyptian prisoners of war from the 1967 conflict, IDF experts determined that the competency level of Egyptian officers had declined since 1956, with 60 percent of them being unable to pass the IDF officers' tests. Chaim Bar-Lev, Chief of General Staff, came to the following conclusion in the latter part of 1970 as a result of these findings: “The Arab soldier lacks the necessary qualities for modern war. Sophisticated weapon systems and modern warfare doctrines demand a high level of intelligence, adaptation, fast response, technical skill, and, above all, the ability to perceive the situation realistically and to tell the truth, even when it is a bitter and difficult one.”⁷⁰

This perception also remained in place in the leading up to the Yom Kippur War. As we have seen above, Israeli officials believe that their enemies would be deterred from attacking. However, these officials took further solace in that, even if they were wrong, Israel’s regular forces would have no problems checking the invaders and at least imposing a delay on their advance until the reserves arrived.⁷¹ This viewpoint resulted in a reduced sense of urgency regarding the need to

⁶⁹ Bar-Joseph, 43.

⁷⁰ Bar-Joseph, 42.

⁷¹ Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, 79; Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 82.

ensure that IDF's military intelligence was of high quality.⁷² When Yitzhak Hofi, the head of the Northern Command, expressed concern about relying on the standing army alone, Elazar reassured him and shared his assessment: “the Syrian deployment of anti-air missile batteries did not impinge on the IAF’s ability to eliminate them within a half a day.”⁷³

Several battlefield experiences reinforced Israel’s confidence. In 1970, following Syrian provocations, two tank battalions quickly took over the southern portion of the Syrian defense line in the Golan. Syrian losses included thirty-six tanks, twenty artillery pieces, and fifty destroyed bunkers, while only three Israeli tanks were damaged but later returned to service. The operation showed that Israel was capable of outflanking Damascus from the south and destroying the Syrian line of defense even without the use of surprise.⁷⁴

Three weeks prior to the war, Syria lost twelve planes against one Israeli plane in an air battle that raged off the Syrian coast as a result of the interception of an Israeli reconnaissance flight. The IDF's opinion that a widespread Arab attack would be “tantamount to suicide” was strengthened by the experience.⁷⁵ Ten days later, during a general staff meeting, Elazar presented a report stating that a reliable source had indicated that Syria was about to start a full-scale war. After concluding that the source added nothing new to what was already known, the decision was made to increase the number of tanks stationed in the Golan Heights to 100, post an additional artillery battery in the region, and alert air and ground forces. Elazar was of the opinion that having

⁷² Bar-Joseph, *The Watchman Fell Asleep*, 189.

⁷³ Braun, *Moshe Dayan in the Yom Kippur War*, 39.

⁷⁴ Bar-Joseph, *The Watchman Fell Asleep*, 42.

⁷⁵ Hanokh Bartov, *Dado, 48 Years and 20 Days* (Ma’ariv Book Guild, 1981), 229; Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 81.

100 tanks to counter an estimated 800 Syrian tanks would be sufficient. “Ought to be enough,” he stated.⁷⁶

In summary, the evidence of the perception of the IDF as a highly effective force among Israeli elites can be found in various sources, including interviews, archives, academic and military analyses, and media portrayals. These sources demonstrate the impact of the Six-Day War on the perception of the IDF and the clear recognition of its prowess within Israeli society.

Political Climate

Israel's swift victory over the Arab forces of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan not only resulted in a significant territorial expansion, but also fostered a political climate of elation. The astounding military success in the Six-Day War was largely unanticipated by both the international community and the Israeli public. This unforeseen triumph bolstered national pride and instilled a sense of invincibility in the Israeli population. The nation's ability to withstand external threats and emerge victorious reinforced a narrative of national resilience and perseverance, as exemplified by the numerous victory parades and public celebrations in the aftermath of the war. The military success fostered a sense of unity among the diverse Israeli population, temporarily bridging the divisions between religious, secular, and other social factions. This sense of unity was exemplified by the famous “Jerusalem Day” celebration on May 12, 1968, which commemorated the reunification of Jerusalem under Israeli control.

The aftermath of the war was also of religious significance. In 1948, for the first time, Jews gained access to the Old City of Jerusalem, allowing them to pray at the Western Wall, their most

⁷⁶ Bartov, *Dado, 48 Years and 20 Days*, 239.

sacred site for prayer. This milestone is commemorated annually on *Yom Yerushalayim*. For the first time since the 14th century, Jews in Hebron could enter the Cave of the Patriarchs, the second-most sacred location in Judaism after the Temple Mount. Moreover, other Jewish holy locations, including Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem and Joseph's Tomb in Nablus, became accessible as well. According to Kimmerling,

New lands were opened up for Jewish settlement, especially the core territories of the ancient Jewish kingdoms of David and Solomon, an essential component of Jewish mythic consciousness. The capture of many holy places of the Jewish religion, which had been controlled by the Jordanians until 1967, served to strengthen religious and messianic sentiments, chauvinistic orientations, and the settlement drive within Jewish Israeli society. The scope, the ease, and the speed of the 1967 victory were perceived as a sign of divine grace and the supremacy of the Jewish presence in the region.⁷⁷

The author adds that this “messianic political mood” postponed any internal struggles, created a sense of security, and bolstered the nation’s pride.⁷⁸ Even Moshe Dayan, the purely secular defense minister, adopted a religious tone: “We have returned to Shilo and Anatot in order never to leave.” A profound sense of religious – if not messianic – sentiment engulfed the majority of Israelis, who interpreted the war's outcome as a “miracle” and a manifestation of the divine intervention in history.⁷⁹

Bregman describes a “reaction to the stunning victory was euphoria and jubilation as a spontaneous expression of relief.”⁸⁰ Teddy Kollek, the mayor of West Jerusalem, sent Dayan a telegraph, saying, “You were right. Well done. There is a festive air in the city.”⁸¹ This feeling

⁷⁷ Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness*, 46.

⁷⁸ Kimmerling, 74–75, 78.

⁷⁹ Bowen, *Six Days*, 651; Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, 58–59; Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness*, 109.

⁸⁰ Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, 58–59.

⁸¹ Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 30.

even had international ramifications. Following Israel's triumph, the British foreign correspondent James Cameron expressed his elation. He wrote, “many are saying that Zion was born not nineteen years ago with the birth of the state of Israel, but today, in its great and rather frightening exultation, with the Jewish nation suddenly translated from David into Goliath.”⁸² While the Vietnam War was draining the Johnson administration's resources, they thought Israel had made war seem effortless. Harry McPherson, Johnson’s envoy, wrote to the President, “after the doubts, confusions and ambiguities of Vietnam, it was deeply moving to see people whose commitment is total and unquestioning.”⁸³ Retired French General Andre Beaufre compared the Israeli victory to Germany's crushing defeat of France in 1940, and British observers likened the Six-Day War to the daring campaigns of Napoleon Bonaparte.⁸⁴ The war also inspired the Jewish Diaspora, enabling them “to walk with their backs straight.”⁸⁵ After the victory, Israel attracted masses of enthusiastic immigrants.⁸⁶

The period following the 1967 war, marked by an atmosphere of overconfidence, “certainly facilitated the tendency of Premier Golda Meir to neglect the diplomatic options that had become available to Israel following the war.” Moreover, it also impacted the way Israeli generals inaccurately assessed the required balance of forces at the frontline during the initial stages of the conflict that began in October 1973.⁸⁷

⁸² Bowen, *Six Days*, 637.

⁸³ Bowen, 639.

⁸⁴ Dr George W. Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War: The Albatross Of Decisive Victory* (Tannenberg Publishing, 2015), 3.

⁸⁵ Oren, *Six Days of War*, 309.

⁸⁶ Daphna Berman, “The 40th Anniversary of the Six-Day War Rate of Return,” *Haaretz*, 2007, <https://www.haaretz.com/2007-06-01/ty-article/the-40th-anniversary-of-the-six-day-war-rate-of-return/0000017f-f84e-d47e-a37f-f97e73540000>.

⁸⁷ Bar-Joseph, *The Watchman Fell Asleep*, 43.

In conclusion, the aftermath of the Six-Day War saw a surge of euphoria among Israeli elites and the general public. The swift victory, territorial expansion, and perceived divine intervention in the war's outcome fostered a sense of national pride, unity, and invincibility.

Observing Nonreform

Having established that the expected conditions were present in this case, we can apply counterfactual reasoning to argue that, had this not been the case, reforms would have been more likely. A combination of public doubts about the military's capabilities, heightened threat perception, and sober and critical political mood would certainly be more conducive to military reforms.

Still, is there a way to “observe nonreform” directly? In this section, I show that there were apparent mistakes in the leading up to the Six-Day War that were not addressed, and that the slight changes made to the IDF were towards decreasing military readiness and focusing on what had worked well, instead of correcting for mistakes.

Israel's biggest problem was military intelligence. The Israeli leadership was completely at ease about the security situation in the period leading up to the Six-Day war. For example, a report written by Walt Rostow, National Security Adviser in Lyndon Johnson's administration, of his meeting with Israeli Ambassador Abraham Harman on January 31, 1967, stated: “Israeli ambassador Harman came in yesterday (...) to share his observations on the mood in Israel. (...) he said most Israeli leaders feel the long-term security situation is under control.”

Indeed, in the first half of 1967, the prevailing belief in Israel was that Nasser would likely not initiate a full-scale war. This perspective was grounded in a hypothesis that ultimately proved to be entirely incorrect; the assumption was that as long as the elite units of Nasser's forces,

consisting of eight brigades, remained engaged in the Yemeni civil war, he would not risk attacking Israel. Complementary to this calculation was the idea that neither Syria nor Jordan would initiate hostilities without Egypt's active involvement, given its powerful army and geographical position, which could force Israel to confront its greatest fear – a war on multiple fronts. The Israeli assessment of a low likelihood of war relied heavily on the ongoing Egyptian involvement in Yemen; as a result, their intelligence services closely monitored airfields in Yemen and Egypt to determine whether Egyptian troops were being pulled back home. The return of these troops to Egypt would signal an increased likelihood of war. As it turned out, these were misconceptions.

For the reasons above, Dayan adopted a critical tone in his *ex-post* assessment of the conflict. In his final report to the general staff, he condemned Israel for misinterpreting Nasser's intentions, relying too heavily on the United States, and hesitating to take action as soon as Egypt closed the Straits. Despite these shortcomings, he noted that Israel concluded the Six-Day War with the greatest territorial gains on all fronts. This outcome resulted from Egypt's failure to recognize the benefits of initiating a first strike and its inability to accurately assess the enemy's strength and willingness to use it. These misjudgments led to a sense of overconfidence among the Israelis, causing them to make the same mistakes six years later in their subsequent major conflict with the Arab nations.⁸⁸ Dayan also said after the war: “Many wars had started unexpectedly, but it is doubtful if there has been ever in the history of Israel, such an unexpected war as the [June 1967 war].”⁸⁹ There is also evidence of general awareness that specific operational issues needed to be fixed.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Oren, *Six Days of War*, 311–12.

⁸⁹ Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, 147.

⁹⁰ Bar-Joseph, *The Watchman Fell Asleep*, 39.

In fact, beyond the objectives of neutralizing the Egyptian threat and dismantling Nasser's army, no other aspects of the conflict were premeditated or even considered, such as seizing the entire Sinai Peninsula, capturing the West Bank, or taking the Golan Heights. Even the capture of Jerusalem occurred largely due to chance. The unpredictable nature and momentum of war, rather than deliberate decision-making, played a more significant role in shaping the results of the conflict. As Oren notes, if Egypt had agreed to a cease-fire after the first day of fighting, if the Jordanians had abstained from capturing Government Hill, or if Dayan had maintained his opposition to conquering the Golan (to mention just a few hypothetical scenarios), the region's landscape would have been vastly different. The author lists several other incidents, including the last-minute cancellation of Operation Dawn – which represented Egypt's sole opportunity to inflict the same damage on Israel that Israel would soon inflict on Egypt – to highlight the randomness of these occurrences.⁹¹

If there were evident problems with military intelligence, and the defense minister acknowledged them, why were they not addressed? The success of the IDF prevented possible reviews of weaknesses and hindered the implementation of reforms to rectify them. As Bregman argues,

The outbreak of war in the spring of 1967 shocked Israelis to the core, for it came, to speak bluntly, as a bolt from the blue. And it is only because this war was so remarkably successful that no demand was ever made – as was to be the case after the 1973 war – to investigate the politico-military establishment, whose superficial optimism and complacency had led Israelis to believe that war was a remote and unlikely event.⁹²

⁹¹ Oren, *Six Days of War*, 311–12.

⁹² Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, 41. See also Bar-Joseph, *The Watchman Fell Asleep*, 241–42; Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 505–10. Bar-Joseph shows how failures within the intelligence bureaucracy were critical to the 1973 disaster, and Maoz examines the determinants of failures of intelligence throughout history.

Indeed, the minor modifications implemented to the military demonstrate the feeling of confidence and security that prevailed among both the general population and the elites. The annual call-up period for reserves was cut from sixty to thirty days, and in 1973 the length of conscription was shortened from 36 to 33 months.⁹³ Notably, the Israeli war college (*michlala Vbitachon leumi* or Mabal) was disbanded after 1967, in what Cohen et al describe as an “act of hubris,” only to be reopened after 1973.⁹⁴

Although these are not significant changes, they are undoubtedly in the direction of decreased readiness.

Moreover, given its success in this war, Israel relied upon what worked best in 1967. Besides the overconfidence in intelligence, the country invested in expanding its air force even more, almost doubling the number of combat aircraft from 1967 to 1972. The Israeli General Staff also placed an even greater emphasis on armor in budget allocations.⁹⁵ As Gawrych puts it, the IDF prepared to fight the last war.⁹⁶ This is important because it precisely illustrates the mechanism of nonreform discussed here: a mentality of “if our forces are effective and we are secure, let us keep doing what has been working.”

In sum, the lack of military reforms following the Six-Day War can be attributed to a prevailing sense of confidence and security. Through an examination analysis of the evident mistakes made leading up to the war and the minor policy changes after the conflict, it becomes clear that 1) known failures were not addressed, and 2) whatever adjustments were made only

⁹³ Metz, “Israel,” 260.

⁹⁴ Eliot A. Cohen, Michael Eisenstadt, and Andrew J. Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles: Israel's Security Revolution* (Washington, DC: Washington Inst for Near East Pol, 1998), 74.

⁹⁵ In 1967, following significant advancements in eastern Sinai at Rafah and Abu Ageila, the IDF's swift progress across the Sinai desert was spearheaded by armored brigades led by tanks, with minimal or no infantry support.

⁹⁶ Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War*, 5–8.

served to decrease military readiness and focus on what had been working well, rather than address the root causes of these issues. This sequence of events is highly consistent with the hypothesis that success hindered the necessary reforms from taking place.

4.3. EVIDENCE OF INCREASED MILITARY INFLUENCE

The Six-Day War significantly impacted Israel's defense and foreign policy, leading to an increase in the influence of the military in these areas, as suggested by the theoretical expectation that the military's role as the foremost actor in determining defense policy and military reforms would be amplified due to the credit they received for the outcome of the conflict.

Immediately after the war, Eshkol was already described as being caught between the “politicians” and the “security men.”⁹⁷ These dynamics would remain during Meir’s tenure – a distinctive feature of her leadership style was her running of an informal “kitchen cabinet” that met on Saturday evenings at her apartment. It usually consisted of Yisrael Galili (a former general), Yigal Allon (a former general), Dayan (a former general), Eban, and Pinhas Sapir. As we will see below, however, the former generals were much more influential, in addition to other figures from the defense establishment. Meir’s new government, assembled in March 1969, kept Eban as foreign minister and Dayan as minister of defense, and had Allon as deputy prime minister, while Shimon Peres became “a minister without portfolio.”⁹⁸

The “security men” usually got their way, and the increased influence of the military in defense and foreign policy was apparent in various decisions taken by the Israeli government. For example, Yigal Allon's influence on Israeli policy was considerable. Allon, a retired general turned

⁹⁷ Oren, *Six Days of War*, 317.

⁹⁸ Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 39.

politician, proposed the “Allon Plan,” which was never formally approved by the cabinet but more or less defined the course of action regarding the Israeli occupation of parts of the West Bank. The plan called for Israel's eastern border to be on the River Jordan, providing strategic depth for the country's defenses, and would remain Israel's unofficial policy until the advent of Rabin's negotiations with Arafat.⁹⁹ Also influential were Sharon, Elazar, and Weizman. Elazar was steadfast on retaining the Golan Heights he “had lobbied so hard to capture.” Weizman, who was leaving the army for politics, was another outspoken opponent of territorial concessions. Meanwhile, the “politicians,” which included Eban and like-minded ministers such as Zalman Aran and Haim Moshe Shapira, conveyed their will to relinquish almost all the seized territory, with the exception of Jerusalem. They lost this debate, even with the unforeseen support of Ben-Gurion.¹⁰⁰

Another example is the initiation of in-depth aerial bombing up to the outskirts of Cairo in early 1970, in the context of the War of Attrition, which was decided by Meir's “kitchen cabinet.” The idea originated from Rabin, bolstered by Allon's backing. Dayan displayed a lack of enthusiasm, while Eban opposed it, as he was concerned that it could endanger Israel's armament provisions from the United States. Even when faced with unexpected setbacks like the Soviet intervention, Allon, Galili, and Weizman continued to argue for adhering to their misguided military strategy.¹⁰¹

Also notable was the increased influence of Dayan, a key military figure, who, as mentioned above, had acquired the status of a national savior after the Six-Day War. His

⁹⁹ Bowen, *Six Days*, 662; Oren, *Six Days of War*, 314.

¹⁰⁰ Oren, *Six Days of War*, 314–15.

¹⁰¹ Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 66.

uncompromising views on defense and foreign policy, shared by Peres, gained favor within the Labour Party, while more moderate voices like Eban were marginalized.

But what was the source of this military increased political influence? As expected by my theory, one key factor was the overwhelming popularity of those in charge of defense policies, as evidenced by staggering percentages in opinion polls, which showed high public support for military figures.¹⁰² At least in the case of Dayan, this translated into concerns that, if his demands were not met, he would oppose the Labor Party in the general election scheduled for the end of October 1969. This is precisely what my theory predicts. As Stein explains,

Fearful of Dayan bolting before a general election scheduled for the end of October 1969, the party caved into his demands – chief among which was an acceptance of a so-called oral doctrine that was not to be explicitly included in the party’s election manifesto. The doctrine involved an understanding that the River Jordan was to constitute the country’s eastern security border, that the Golan Heights and the Gaza Strip were to remain under Israeli control, and that freedom of navigation in the Straits of Tiran was to be assured by IDF forces stationed in Sharm el Sheikh linked by a continuous strip of territory to the Israeli mainland. The last point was encapsulated by Dayan when he asserted that “Sharm el Sheikh without peace is preferable to peace without Sharm el Sheikh.” At the insistence of Dayan and Peres, implicit in the Labour Party’s oral doctrine was the understanding that Jewish settlements in the occupied territories would be furthered.

Dayan was aware of his newfound status, and had been flexing his political muscles since the war had ended. For example, he began to express disagreements with Eban publicly, and accused him of “playing word games of diplomacy.”¹⁰³ Dayan also started to speak publicly about the Labor party, mentioning how he did not feel a part of it, and pledged to make a definitive choice regarding leaving before the October elections. These remarks “sent shock waves through

¹⁰² Bregman, *Israel’s Wars*, 59–61.

¹⁰³ David A. Korn, *Stalemate: The War Of Attrition And Great Power Diplomacy In The Middle East, 1967-1970*, 1st edition (Routledge, 2019), 343.

the Labor Party leadership,” and Meir’s reaction was to appease Dayan. At the time of her appointment, she lacked political capital and connection with the public, among whom less than 3 percent favored her as a leader.¹⁰⁴

Still, Dayan’s supporters pressured him to become a candidate, and Peres encouraged these sentiments. In a subsequent speech, Dayan accused the Labor party of not being united, and complained bitterly about being left out of crucial Cabinet decisions. Meir, again, adopted a conciliatory tone: she delivered an impassioned call for unity, and emphasized that a division would be disastrous for the nation.¹⁰⁵

Meir was able to cut a deal with Dayan, and promised he would remain defense minister for as long as she was prime minister. This bargain was possible partly because Dayan's prospects of winning an election were limited in a small party – in this case, Rafi – if he decided to leave Labor. Peres was also promised precisely what he wanted: a ministerial portfolio in the government to be formed after the elections. In the process, Dayan and Peres demanded that the party’s foreign and defense policy platform include specific statements regarding Israel's territorial interests, as mentioned above. Additionally, they advocated for the inclusion of a statement promoting new Israeli settlements in the territories and language supporting Dayan’s plan for economic integration. Eban fervently opposed, and Sapir supported him. However, neither could secure Golda Meir's support. As we saw above, their influence had been diminishing since her appointment as prime minister, and Dayan's proposals were well-received by the party's rank and file.¹⁰⁶ Despite all these political games, as Gluska notes, as soon as the war ended, Dayan emerged

¹⁰⁴ Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 38–39.

¹⁰⁵ Korn, *Stalemate*, 368–71.

¹⁰⁶ Bowen, *Six Days*, 662; Korn, *Stalemate*, 372–73; Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 33, 39–40.

as the central figure in shaping Israel's security policies and the management of the occupied areas.¹⁰⁷

Overall, the prevailing view is that the military, now more powerful than ever, was the driving force behind the absence of a settlement regarding the territories after the war.¹⁰⁸ As Laron describes, the army used its prestige and institutional power to pressure the government not to withdraw:

Arguably, civil–military relations can also explain the fact that no settlement followed the end of the Six-Day War. The army had been a central institution of Israeli society before the war and it became even more so after the decisive victory. As a consequence of the war, Israeli generals now had the defense lines they had always dreamed of. The military establishment, led by Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, advanced quickly to create the institutions and the arrangements that would turn the occupation into a low-cost, permanent condition. (...) Dayan himself became the architect of Israel's policy toward the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.¹⁰⁹

Civilian ministers, who did not see themselves as experts in national security, deferred the decision-making on the principles of future agreements with Arabs, including Palestinians, to security experts. Discussions related to the occupied Arab territories soon began to take place in secret forums. As a result, the government was essentially bypassed in daily Israeli policymaking concerning the Palestinian Territories, with informal policymaking bodies taking the reins. Within these informal bodies, members of the security network - predominantly Allon, Dayan, and Galili during this period, but later including figures like Peres and Rabin – held the most significant roles.

¹⁰⁷ Gluska, *The Israeli Military and the Origins of the 1967 War*, 258.

¹⁰⁸ See Gabriel Sheffer and Oren Barak, *Israel's Security Networks: A Theoretical and Comparative Perspective*, 1st edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 106–8. The authors argue that Allon and Dayan, alongside other members of Israel's security network, especially Israel Galili, were the driving force in transforming Israel's policy toward the Palestinians.

¹⁰⁹ Laron, *The Six Day War*, 674, 684. The author also mentions how the military lobbied heavily to buy the support of the strongest pressure group in Israeli society: the Histadrut, Israel's national trade union center.

Furthermore, members of Israel's security network assumed responsibility for managing the daily lives of the approximately 1.5 million residents in the Palestinian Territories. For instance, Dayan "ruled the occupied land directly, personally, with minimal oversight from cabinet or parliament,"¹¹⁰ so much so that he was called "King of the Territories."¹¹¹ Officially, this was carried out through a hastily formed body called the Military Administration, established after the war. This body was led by a high-ranking IDF officer who held the title of Coordinator of the Government's Activities in the Territories.¹¹²

However, this was not only Dayan. Other IDF officers also treated the regions they commanded after 1967 as their personal "kingdoms." For example, they invited celebrities, including media personalities and actors, to these areas and were later rewarded with favorable media coverage. Some of these officers with hawkish views, such as Major General Rehavam Zeevi, who headed the IDF's Central Command controlling the Jordan Rift area (the primary road in this area, Route No. 90, is named after him), enthusiastically endorsed the expansion of Israeli settlements in the areas under their control. Others, like Sharon, who was in charge of the Southern Command, participated in the displacement of Bedouins from the Raiah Plain, without oversight. Sharon, along with other officers, also faced reprimands for unauthorized expropriation and inappropriate conduct toward the residents of the desert Rafah region. Other security officials, such as Lieutenant General (res.) Tsvi Tsur, assistant to Dayan in the defense ministry, allocated substantial funds from the defense budget for Jewish settlement purposes.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Gershom Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967-1977*, First Edition (Holt Paperbacks, 2007), 230.

¹¹¹ Peri, "Political-Military Partnership in Israel," 309.

¹¹² Sheffer and Barak, *Israel's Security Networks*, 109.

¹¹³ Sheffer and Barak, 110; Peri, "Political-Military Partnership in Israel," 312.

Ultimately, Allon, Dayan, and Galili, in conjunction with other influential actors, such as senior IDF officers, were remarkably successful in advancing their shared policy agenda pertaining to the Palestinian Territories. This led Prime Minister Eshkol to recognize the coexistence of “the one government and the security government.”¹¹⁴ As mentioned above, during this foundational phase in the development of Israel’s policy vis-à-vis the Palestinian Territories, Israeli settlements were established in accordance with both Allon’s blueprint in the Jordan Rift and Dayan’s strategy in the mountainous regions. Their policies did not always correspond to the government’s decisions, but were supported by some ministries and the IDF. Often, the government’s approval for these actions was pursued *ex-post*, or not pursued at all.

Although Eban retained his position as foreign minister, he was largely reduced to a symbolic role. The prime minister herself assumed control over foreign policy, with Rabin in Washington and Galili and Allon in Jerusalem serving as her primary advisors. Even Pinhas Sapir, who played a crucial role in the prime minister's appointment, found himself in the outer circle of advisors. Once the relationship with Dayan was resolved, he, too, was admitted into the most confidential discussions. Note, then, that Meir’s inner circle consisted exclusively of former generals, with Dayan and Rabin having been Chiefs of Staff of the IDF quite recently. This is why Oren refers to the great impact on Israeli policy made by the military leaders associated with the “security school,”¹¹⁵ and Stein describes these military leaders as “hawks breathing down Meir’s neck.”¹¹⁶ Over the subsequent decades, the phenomenon of military commanders turning politicians remained extremely common.

¹¹⁴ Sheffer and Barak, *Israel’s Security Networks*, 111.

¹¹⁵ Oren, *Six Days of War*, 315.

¹¹⁶ Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 42.

Another victory for the IDF was in the budget. Following the war, Israel experienced a significant increase in defense expenditures. The defense budget surged from \$241 million, accounting for 6.4% of the nation's GDP in 1966, to \$1.3 billion, or 24.7% of GDP by 1970. This fivefold increase was primarily allocated to the acquisition of Skyhawk and Phantom aircraft from the United States. Israel's spending on American military equipment rose from \$308 million in 1968 to \$736 million in 1970. Although the rate of purchases decelerated over the next couple of years, Israel still allocated \$507 million to American arms in 1972. That year, the defense budget reached \$1.6 billion, constituting 17.9% of the country's GDP. According to Laron, the IDF perceived the growth in its budget as the reward for its success in the Six-Day War.¹¹⁷

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that the idea which became known as “the concept” or “the conception” originated in the military. This *misconception*, which posited that Egypt would attack only Israel after it had obtained advanced fighter-bombers and Scuds missiles that could reach Tel Aviv, was one of the main foundations of the failures of 1973. It became an obsession of Eli Zeira, the army’s chief intelligence officer, and highly institutionalized in Israeli military thinking. Zeira and his chief subordinates ignored robust evidence that contradicted this idea, and refused to acknowledge them up until the moment of the Arab invasion.¹¹⁸

The Agranat Commission, formed after the Yom Kippur War to examine the reasons behind the IDF's lack of preparedness and its initial failures, stated that the conception had been present in the army intelligence since 1971. However, as Bar-Joseph points out, the operational rationale behind the conception can be traced back to IDF discussions in late 1968. During these discussions, Weitzman, along with Brigadier General Benny Peled of the IAF, firmly maintained

¹¹⁷ Laron, *The Six Day War*, 688–89.

¹¹⁸ Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, 74; Metz, “Israel,” 260; Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 78–79.

that since the Egyptian Air Force could not strike IAF's air bases in Israel, Egypt faced two options: either refrain from a large-scale canal crossing or initiate such an operation and face defeat. Following Nasser's death and Sadat's rise to power, this mode of thought developed into a more structured intelligence conception.¹¹⁹

In sum, the theoretical expectations that posit the military's increased influence in defense policy when credited with victory in war are consistent with the case of the Six-Day War in Israel. Following the remarkable victory, the Israeli military gained immense popularity, elevating their status and enhancing their role in shaping defense policy. This case study, therefore, serves as a compelling illustration of the relationship between military outcomes in war and the subsequent effects in the military's influence over defense policy.

4.4. CONCLUSION

The case of Israel after the Six-Day War is unique in this project, as it represents an instance of nonreform. The reasons for nonreform largely conform to theoretical expectations. Although observing the absence of a phenomenon is a challenging task, it was possible to establish that 1) the three expected conditions for nonreform were present, 2) there were known deficiencies that were not addressed, 3) the minor changes to the military actually decreased readiness and focused on what had worked well, instead of correcting deficiencies. This is an easy case for my theoretical expectations for the absence of reforms, given that the IDF was so successful. However, it is a useful illustration of how different aspects of military success can suppress the political appetite for reforms. Thus, it is a good example of these mechanisms in action.

¹¹⁹ Bar-Joseph, *The Watchman Fell Asleep*, 45–46.

Additionally, this case also conformed to theoretical expectations regarding responsibility assignment and the political influence of the military. Regarding the first factor, the prime minister was judged for the initiation of the conflict, and the armed forces were assigned credit for battlefield performance. As for the second, the military saw their political influence increase after being credited for the victory. Importantly, this was a direct result of their increased popularity.

As mentioned above, it is important to note that the distinction between civilians and military personnel is particularly blurry in the Israeli context, which poses a limitation to this investigation. This blurring of boundaries was not evident in the analysis of the “blame game,” but it showed in the analysis of post-war military influence. After 1967, the “security men,” whose preferences I argued to have dominated the emergent Israeli policy toward the Territories, were no longer in the military. Here, one could question the extent to which they were first and foremost “military” men. However, it should be noted that Rabin and Dayan had very recently been Chiefs of Staff of the IDF, and the literature on civil-military relations often treats such actors very similarly to active military members. Moreover, individuals such as Elazar and Weizman, who became very influential, were still in the military. It was also the case that the IDF as an organization became more powerful and actively lobbied for its preferred policy regarding the Territories, which were put under military administration.

Moreover, many of the “security men” still viewed themselves as identified with the military. For example, Allon, who notably supported and advocated for Israeli settlers in Hebron, including supplying them with weapons for their protection, later provided insight into the operations of Israel’s security apparatus during that time. He stated, “It is true that I took upon myself an authority I did not formally have, but as a minister, and *as a general in reserve duty* [emphasis mine], I thought I could not leave the area [Hebron] without promising something [to

the settlers].”¹²⁰ It was also common for former military officers transitioning into political careers to be reinstated for active duty, given that they maintained their reserve officer status until reaching 55 years of age. This was exemplified in 1973 when Sharon, having retired in July to affiliate with the Likud Party, was summoned for active duty amid the October 1973 conflict.¹²¹ For these reasons, the literature on civil-military relations in Israel emphasizes how these former security officials sustained close connections and relationships with other members of the security network, exhibit common values and perspectives, display a strong sense of group solidarity among themselves and current members of the IDF, and are distinct from “purely civilian politicians.”¹²² Still, the assumption of a neat divide between the civilian and military domains is not entirely met in this case, and this should be acknowledged as a limitation.

¹²⁰ Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate*, First Edition (New York: Picador, 2001), 579.

¹²¹ Metz, “Israel,” 313.

¹²² Sheffer and Barak, *Israel’s Security Networks*, 26, 40–41, 69–70; Ofer Shelah, “National Security Decisionmaking Processes in Israel: Persistent Flaws and How to Amend Them” (RAND Corporation, November 15, 2022), <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PEA2156-1.html>.

CHAPTER 5: THE DAWN OF NEAR DESTRUCTION: ISRAEL AND THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

The Yom Kippur War, also known as the October War or the Ramadan War, took place from October 6 to October 25, 1973. It was a conflict in which Israel faced a surprise attack from a coalition of Arab states, led primarily by Egypt and Syria. The war was named after the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, which fell on the day the hostilities began.

The war began with a sudden, unexpected, and well-coordinated assault on Israel on two fronts. Egyptian forces crossed the Suez Canal and breached the Bar-Lev Line, Israel's heavily fortified defense line along the canal. Simultaneously, Syrian forces launched an attack on the Golan Heights, which Israel had captured during the Six-Day War. Later, Jordan, Iraq, and finally Saudi Arabia joined the Arab side of this dispute.¹ Caught off-guard and initially overwhelmed, Israeli forces suffered heavy losses in the initial stages of the conflict. However, with the rapid mobilization of its reserves, Israel managed to halt the advances of both Egypt and Syria. Despite the surprise and initial setbacks, Israel demonstrated its resilience and strategic capabilities.

In the Golan Heights, Israeli forces were able to push back the Syrian army and advance into Syrian territory. On the southern front, Israeli forces crossed the Suez Canal and encircled the Egyptian Third Army, threatening Egypt's capital, Cairo. International pressure, especially from the United States and the Soviet Union, led to a ceasefire on October 25, 1973. Israel's losses were

¹ Although minor players, Jordan and Saudi Arabia did commit more than 1,000 troops each to the anti-Israeli effort. See Sarkees and Wayman, *Resort To War*, 164.

2,838 fatalities, 8,800 wounded, 508 missing, and 301 prisoners of war, while Arab casualties lists total dead at 8,528 and the wounded at 19,549.²

Though Israel emerged militarily victorious, the Yom Kippur War had significant psychological and political repercussions. Israel's sense of security was shaken, and the war exposed vulnerabilities in its military preparedness. The war also led to the resignation of Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir and her defense minister, Moshe Dayan, due to public dissatisfaction with their handling of the crisis. As Clodfelter explains,

Both President Anwar Sadat of Egypt and President Hafez Assad of Syria were determined to erase the shame of the 1967 military debacle. That was their minimum goal. Their maximum objective in attacking Israel was the reconquest of all those Arab lands lost to the Israelis in the Six-Day War (the complete destruction of the state of Israel, the intent of the Arab attack in 1948, was never a realistic aim in 1973). The minimum goal was obtained; Arab honor was regained.³

The Yom Kippur War became “the single most ominous point in the country’s history.”⁴ “Trauma” is a word that became associated with this conflict, which jolted the Israeli government, military, and public out of the complacency that had taken hold following the triumphs of 1967. The war was known as *mehdal* (“the blunder”)⁵ rather than as a successful defense of both Israel and the Occupied Territories, even though it was technically a military victory.⁶ The situation was

² Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts*, 584.

³ Clodfelter, 579.

⁴ Asaf Siniver, “Introduction,” in *The Yom Kippur War: Politics, Diplomacy, Legacy*, ed. Asaf Siniver, 1st edition (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5.

⁵ Eriksson translates it as “omission,” “oversight,” or “shortcoming:” something that went wrong because of a failure to act.” Eriksson, “Israel and The October War.”

⁶ Carly Beckerman-Boys, “Assessing The Historiography of The October War,” in *The Yom Kippur War: Politics, Diplomacy, Legacy*, ed. Asaf Siniver, 1st edition (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11; Charles S. Liebman, “The Myth of Defeat: The Memory of the Yom Kippur War in Israeli Society,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 29, no. 3 (1993): 399–418.

so distressing that, amid the panic, Dayan seemingly explored nuclear options in an attempt to reverse unfavorable military trends.⁷

To this day, Israelis look back on the initial week of the conflict with feelings of embarrassment and humiliation, and as a chilling reminder of when Israel was almost unable to protect its citizens.⁸ These reactions can partly be explained by the expectations set before the conflict. As we saw in the previous section, there was a climate of euphoria and invincibility in Israel after the Six-Day War. As Shoufani describes,

Before the October War, Israelis developed the illusion of being a big power in the area, to the extent of seeing themselves as policemen of the Arab world, the power entrusted with the task of standing up to the Soviet Union in the Middle East. They were convinced of their deterrent power against the Arabs, and they felt they would soon be self-sufficient in armament. They believed themselves secure in the occupied territories without having to make peace with the Arabs. These notions of the Israelis were nourished by their previous successes. When they looked back on their achievements during twenty-five years of political independence, they saw only a success story. (...) Suddenly, the October war destroyed this self-image.⁹

The aftermath of the October War saw some blame being assigned to the military, but the blunt of it was directed at Gold Meir's government. Facing mass protests and increasing public pressure, Meir resigned a few months later. In the years that followed, the military became a powerful political actor, and practically dictated subsequent military reforms. This military primacy in the political arena, however, led to a serious failure of civilian control in the 1982

⁷ P. R. Kumaraswamy, "Introduction," in *Revisiting the Yom Kippur War*, ed. P. R. Kumaraswamy, 1st edition (Routledge, 2000), 2, 9.

⁸ Meron Medzini, *Golda Meir: A Political Biography* (Boston ; Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2017), 608.

⁹ Elias Shoufani, "Israeli Reactions to the War," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 3, no. 2 (1974): 59, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2535799>.

Lebanon War, when the military, alongside defense minister Ariel Sharon, deceived the government in order to initiate the conflict.

Why were civilians, rather than military leaders, more heavily censured by public opinion, given that Meir's decisions were heavily influenced by her military advisors? How did the military's increased political power following the Yom Kippur War shape the nature and course of military reforms? These are some of the main questions this chapter tackles.

This chapter is organized as follows. Section 1 examines the factors that led to the disproportionate blaming of civilians in the aftermath of the war. In section 2, I delve into the military reforms of the period, showing that the armed forces enacted the majority of these reforms, and all of them reflected the military's preferences. Section 3 discusses the dynamics and implications of the military's newfound political power, and Section 4 briefly discusses whether the reforms chosen by the military were suboptimal, and whether we should care. Section 5 summarizes the findings and concludes.

5.1. THE BLAME GAME

Theoretical Expectations

Based on the theory that political leaders are judged by their role in initiating war and their ability to garner international support, while military forces are assessed through battlefield performance, discipline, and adherence to human rights, the theoretical expectation here is that civilians should be blamed. First, although Prime Minister Golda Meir did not initiate the conflict, her hawkish attitude and refusal to engage in diplomacy created the conditions for the war to break out. As noted when discussing *Hypothesis 2*, leaders need not be *de facto* initiators for them to be perceived as having caused the war. Second, the surprising nature of the Yom Kippur War explains

the initial setbacks of the IDF. However, Israeli forces demonstrated tremendous skill, recovered from these setbacks, and achieved a military victory. They also imposed many more casualties than they suffered.

As per *Hypothesis 4*, “*Good battlefield performance is negatively associated with military blame, and positively associated with military praise.*” Thus, I expect the military to have better prospects than civilians when facing public opinion.

Indeed, while blame was attributed to both civilian and military parties, it was much more so to civilians. Golda Meir, in particular, faced scrutiny for her decisions related to the initiation of conflict, as expected, and the military saved face due to their battlefield recovery.

Civilians

While the war was still taking place, the government fared well with public opinion and performed well in public sentiment surveys. Among other questions, 86.9 percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with “the government's handling of the uncertainties of the situation.”¹⁰ A wide-ranging political quasi-consensus seemingly prevailed, and public criticism in times of war was frowned upon. The Knesset, Israel’s legislature, voted 84 to 3 in calling “on the entire nation to stand united behind the Army, which is fighting to repel the aggressive forces of the enemy, in order to give Israel victory, security and peace.”¹¹ Even the press contributed to this political climate – their focus was primarily on reporting and offering military analysis on war maneuvers, while avoiding criticism.

¹⁰ Gad Barzilai, *Wars, Internal Conflicts, and Political Order: A Jewish Democracy in the Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 111.

¹¹ Loch, *Major Knesset Debates, 1948-1981*, 1788.

However, after the end of the war, the government faced mounting difficulties. Across the nation, the primary means of addressing concerns was the establishment of an inquiry commission by the government to respond to pressing questions. Even before the war's end, Dayan and Meir had already recognized that accountability would be essential – possibly including their own – and that only an investigation led by a highly respected entity could potentially rebuild public trust in the government and military. Within three weeks following the ceasefire, Shimon Agranat, an American-born judge and president of the Israeli Supreme Court, was appointed to lead a five-member commission tasked with examining the events preceding the war and the setbacks of the opening days.¹²

The Knesset elections, initially scheduled for October but delayed due to the war, took place on December 31. It was too early for any significant shifts in long-standing voting patterns. Golda Meir's Labor Party won once more, albeit with fewer seats, securing 51 out of the 120 available in the Knesset. At this point, the public had already directed its fury towards Dayan, the charismatic figure they had once relied on for a sense of security, without waiting for the commission's findings. For example, the press circulated pronouncements by soldiers' parents, accusing him of "being guilty of criminal negligence."¹³ This anger was also made evident during public appearances. During a planned lecture by Dayan at Bar Ilan University, demonstrators impeded him from addressing the audience. After locating Dayan in the university's Board Room, the protesters initiated a barrage of disparaging remarks aimed at the university staff members, asserting, "You should be ashamed that you came to listen to a murderer."¹⁴ During military

¹² Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 1088.

¹³ Udi Lebel, "'Whom to Blame?' The Culture of Loss Following Crisis: Culture Shifts in the Bereaved Parents-State Relationship," *Journal for Cultural Research* 10, no. 4 (October 1, 2006): 377, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14797580601014573>.

¹⁴ Lebel, 377.

funerals, distraught family members would also yell “murderer” at Dayan.¹⁵ Meir would face similar situations. She was followed everywhere by protesters, who gathered at her home and office. These protesters comprised family members of deceased and injured soldiers, demanding her resignation and yelling “Murderer!” at her. One surviving officer stationed himself outside the Prime Minister’s office in the frigid weeks of winter. He urged her to accept accountability. “Grandma, your defense minister is a failure and 3,000 of your grandchildren are dead,” read the sign he held up.¹⁶ Meir also faced protests during soldiers’ funerals.¹⁷

On April 2, 1974, the Agranat Commission released its highly anticipated preliminary findings. The commission called for the removal of chief of staff David Elazar and director of the Israeli Military Intelligence (AMAN) Eli Zeira, and for the punishment of Zeira’s deputy Shalev, Lieutenant Colonel Bandman (head of the Egyptian desk at AMAN), Lieutenant Colonel Gedalia (chief intelligence officer of Southern Command), and General Gonen. However, it exonerated Meir and Dayan from all responsibility.

This sparked widespread outrage, leading to increased public demands for their resignation. Protest groups retaliated by joining forces to increase their influence and power even further – eleven smaller protest groups came together to form a single extra-parliamentary protest movement called “Our Israel.” The diverse personal and political makeup of these protest groups garnered support from various political parties, representing the entire political spectrum. One week after the report, Meir announced her resignation, stating she could not disregard the public

¹⁵ Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 1089; Lebel, ““Whom to Blame?,” 376.

¹⁶ Patrick Tyler, *Fortress Israel: The Inside Story of the Military Elite Who Run the Country--and Why They Can't Make Peace*, First Edition (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 241.

¹⁷ See Medzini, *Golda Meir*, 634.

uproar. The new government was led by Yitzhak Rabin, with Shimon Peres appointed defense minister.¹⁸

What happened, then, and why was Meir blamed? This seems especially puzzling, given that the Prime Minister did not start the war. To address these questions, we must examine the content and the nature of the criticism directed at her.

After the end of the conflict, Meir received criticism from two fronts: specific factions of the left wing, including inside her own Labor party, and the right-wing opposition. Criticism from the left started with political parties Moked and Meri – they were among the very few who leveled criticism towards the government during the war. They argued that the conflict might have been prevented if the government had demonstrated a willingness to withdraw from the occupied territories. According to them, the war was not solely the result of flawed military judgments, but primarily from a misguided political ideology.¹⁹

The parties held these positions before, during, and after the war. They were reiterated over and over again in political debates. As Shmuel Mikunis, a socialist politician, stated in a Knesset debate during the war,

(...) we do not desist from our criticism of the government, which (...) piled up obstacles of its own making and followed a policy of “creeping annexation” of the occupied territories (...). [The] status quo has not prevented the present pointless war. We are persuaded that had the territorial status quo been traded for a peace agreement and security arrangements, the present war would almost certainly have been avoided.²⁰

¹⁸ Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 1092–93.

¹⁹ Barzilai, *Wars, Internal Conflicts, and Political Order*, 111.

²⁰ Barzilai, 114.

Uri Avneri, a journalist and left-wing politician, echoed this feeling two days before the war's end, also in Knesset:

Let us talk of that fallen idol: strategic depth. In war, it is good to have strategic depth. (...) But if the strategic depth is the very factor that prevents the peace, if we are relinquishing a chance at peace because of a wish to annex territories-then we are creating a bloody paradox, one which will condemn us to fight a war every few years.²¹

The aftermath of the war saw similar statements. Mikunis kept making his case. On December 20, he stated that the government was afraid of “assuring Israel’s legitimate rights without impairing the legitimate rights of our Arab neighbors, and primarily the Palestinian Arab nation” and that “those who advocate the ‘Greater Land of Israel’ are consciously leading us to the continuation of war.” He also accused the Labor Party of “neither learned anything nor forgotten anything, (...) not even after the disaster of the Yom Kippur War.”²²

Meir Vilner, leader of Maki, stated that the government had “deprived Israel of peace, continuing with the policy which has kept Israel at war for twenty-five years.” He also took issue with the Agranat Commission, which, according to him, was apolitical in that it separated the military disaster from the government’s annexation policy.²³ Meir Pa’il, a left-wing politician who was a former colonel in the IDF, agreed, observing that the policy of “creeping annexation” only served to alienate world public opinion and intensify the hostility of the Arabs, and concluded that the principal blunder was a political one, which the commission ignored.²⁴

²¹ Barzilai, 117.

²² Loch, *Major Knesset Debates, 1948-1981*, 1864.

²³ Loch, 1901–3.

²⁴ Loch, 1906.

Therefore, a key aspect of the critique expressed during and following the conflict from the left was that relying on force and maintaining control over the occupied territories did not constitute a viable political resolution to the ongoing dispute. This position resonated with the labor movement in general. For example, Yitzhak Ben-Aharon, General Secretary of the General Organization of Workers in Israel, complained about how the Labor movement and the workers and settlers were “the ones presently bearing the system on their shoulders,” and how they, as workers, are the ones who risk their lives fighting.²⁵

These ideas gained traction within the Labor Party. As protests grew on legitimacy and the government started losing parliamentary support, various factions within the party began to express discontent. Intellectuals, scientists, writers, poets, artists, and high-ranking retired military officers demanded the government’s resignation. Among these, the demands for Dayan’s resignation were particularly intense. These factions protested and advocated for the promotion of “doves” who supported an Israeli peace plan based on significant territorial withdrawal. This marked the first open protest by groups within the dominant ruling party concerning national security issues. A vicious cycle began, where the loss of credibility of policymakers within their own party fueled more protests, and vice-versa. As Barzilai describes, “the political system was now in a protest mood.”²⁶

Party members began to rebel. As Meir recalls, the first open request for Dayan’s resignation within the Labor Party came from another cabinet member, Minister of Justice Yaakov Shimshon Shapiro. According to her, he made this demand in a way that “he knew it would be picked up by the press,” in addition to “walking around the Knesset restaurant going from one

²⁵ Barzilai, *Wars, Internal Conflicts, and Political Order*, 115.

²⁶ Barzilai, 118.

group to another to report on what he had done.”²⁷ Four days later, Shapiro himself resigned. Golda added that the continuing upheaval about Dayan within the party made the threat of a split in its ranks dangerously concrete.²⁸ As Medzini argues, the party was already “torn within.”²⁹ The Prime Minister resented the internal criticism:

People who had been ministers in my government, colleagues with whom I had worked closely throughout my years in office and who had been full partners in the formation of government policy now appeared unwilling to stand up to the barrage of unjust criticism, even slander, that was being hurled against Dayan, Galili and myself on the grounds that the three of us - without consulting others - had presumed to make crucial decisions that had allegedly led to the war.³⁰

In addition to criticism from the left and within its own party, the right-wing opposition strongly attacked the government. First, it is important to note that, although this was not the focus of right-wing parties’ criticisms, they also made use of the narrative that Labor, one way or another, had brought war to Israel. In Knesset debates, for example, opposition leader Menachem Begin asked provocatively: “Who led us to the Yom Kippur War? (...) You are the party of peace; how many wars has Israel fought since the party of peace has been running things? Isn’t it true that after every war you promise peace, and after every such promise there is another war?”³¹

The focus of the opposition, however, was “the blunder.” The government’s decisions not to order full mobilization and not to launch a preemptive military strike elicited significant negative public criticism. In the same Knesset session, Begin affirmed:

²⁷ Golda Meir, *My Life* (Dell, 1976), 379; See also Medzini, *Golda Meir*, 617–18.

²⁸ Meir, *My Life*, 384.

²⁹ Medzini, *Golda Meir*, 622.

³⁰ Meir, *My Life*, 383.

³¹ Loch, *Major Knesset Debates, 1948-1981*, 1851.

You have been too arrogant, you have closed your eyes and shut your ears, and so the terrible Yom Kippur came upon us, because of a fatal mistake, Madam Prime Minister, because of a disaster. And I cannot agree with your claim that Intelligence erred. Intelligence gave you all the information. Its assessment cannot influence that of the political echelon. You are responsible for the disaster which occurred, for the fatal mistake which was made, for the first 48 hours of that terrible war, for the fact that this country was at the edge of the abyss, as you yourself said, and for the grave political consequences which we are still feeling, and will yet feel.³²

In subsequent sessions, Begin would keep pressing on this point: “You made a tragic mistake. The evaluation of Intelligence assessments is the task of the politician. Otherwise, the Intelligence Service would run the country.”³³ Likud, Begin’s party, also attributed the high number of casualties to the government’s delayed mobilization of reserve forces.³⁴

However, Begin and his party were not alone in this line of questioning. All political groups called for a public debate on the causes of the “blunder” as soon as hostilities ended.³⁵ In addition to Begin and his party, several other opposition parties openly criticized the government for its inaction. Even cabinet members, including Minister of Justice Shapira and Minister of Commerce and Industry Bar-Lev, admitted the government’s responsibility for inadequately addressing Arab preparations and misinterpreting signs of war. As we saw above, Shapira blamed Dayan for the loss of lives and resources and called for his resignation.³⁶ The protesters used the failure to call up the reserves to request resignations from the government,³⁷ and some early military histories of the war also echoed this argument.³⁸

³² Loch, 1852.

³³ Loch, 1893.

³⁴ Barzilai, *Wars, Internal Conflicts, and Political Order*, 116.

³⁵ Barzilai, 113.

³⁶ Shoufani, “Israeli Reactions to the War,” 55.

³⁷ Barzilai, *Wars, Internal Conflicts, and Political Order*, 119.

³⁸ See Edgar O’Ballance, *No Victor, No Vanquished: The Yom Kippur War*, 1st edition (Presidio, 1978., 1978); Peter Allen, *The Yom Kippur War* (New York: Scribner, 1982).

The press also criticized the government for its omissions, which gained great publicity. According to the newspaper *Maariv*, the Israeli army was aware of the impending Syrian-Egyptian attack, from both local and foreign sources. However, the country chose not to strike first due to political reasons. The paper stated that Israel avoided total mobilization out of concern that the Arabs would use it as a pretext for launching their attack. Writing in *al-Hamishmar*, Mark Gefen argued that the warning signs were evident, and a pre-emptive strike would have been militarily beneficial but politically harmful. Also, he argued that Israel's international isolation played a significant role in the decision against a first strike. Shabtai Teveth, on the other hand, suggested that excessive confidence in the army's capabilities influenced the government's decision not to launch a pre-emptive attack. According to Zeev Shiff from *Haaretz*, Israel refrained from striking first because of "the known Israeli feeling of self-confidence," and in order to win the world's public opinion.³⁹

Substantial criticism was also directed at Meir's inner circle – the "kitchen," as described in the previous case study. As Begin states,

A military-political meeting of only four Ministers is held, and a fateful decision is made: there is no need to rush; there is no need to mobilize; there is no need to recommend mobilizing and there is no need to call a special meeting. (...) For three whole years the Ministers knew that a small group of Ministers made crucial decisions on political and military subjects. They accepted that situation. (...) Cabinet members who accept the usurpation of their lawful authority by a small group of Ministers have absolutely no grounds for claiming that because they did not know they are not responsible. The entire government is responsible.⁴⁰

³⁹

Shoufani, "Israeli Reactions to the War," 56.

⁴⁰ Loch, *Major Knesset Debates, 1948-1981*, 1894.

Initially, Meir's government did attempt to deflect blame. Regarding the accusations of having created the political conditions for the war, she countered these claims by urging people to envision the potential disaster that might have occurred if Israel had retreated to the borders of June 4, 1967. Meir was confident that the war was an effort to annihilate the Jewish state rather than a limited campaign to regain lost Arab territories.⁴¹ Curiously, this was a point of agreement with the right-wing opposition.⁴² In this context, the Labour Party attempted to portray itself as a "responsible, peace-seeking" leadership, in contrast to the extreme and "trigger-happy" Likud, whom they accused of lacking a consistent peace policy.⁴³

At the same time, the government also criticized the doves on the left. Moshe Shahal, a Labor politician, stated in the Knesset about the borders, "There are two camps here, with the government in the middle. One camp says, 'not one inch,' and this will inevitably lead to war; the other camp says, 'not one inch,' meaning that we must give everything back unconditionally, and this will lead to our extinction."⁴⁴ Ultimately, the party relied on the Israeli voters' fears of both the radical left and, more significantly, the radical right.

As for "the blunder," Meir and Dayan emphasized that the government had simply relied on the information provided by military intelligence, and that the political leadership was only informed of the imminent threat of war mere hours before the conflict began. This argument also aimed to convey that the Prime Minister, like any leader, had to trust and rely on the expertise of her advisors. Another argument was that economic necessities demanded maintaining minimal forces along the borders, as an extended general mobilization was not feasible.⁴⁵ Finally, Meir

⁴¹ Meir, *My Life*, 364–65.

⁴² Barzilai, *Wars, Internal Conflicts, and Political Order*, 117.

⁴³ Eriksson, "Israel and The October War," 43–44.

⁴⁴ Loch, *Major Knesset Debates, 1948-1981*, 1866.

⁴⁵ Barzilai, *Wars, Internal Conflicts, and Political Order*, 117.

contended that, to her credit, she had been responsible for securing the support of the US.⁴⁶ Recall that I discuss this variable in the theory section. Although Meir did try to use this fact in her favor, this was a marginal factor in the public stage.

However, this strategy of denial became unsustainable as more information emerged and protests mounted. The opposition and protest groups used the government's denials as further evidence that they were "blandly indifferent to the common people, (...) with their deliberate disregard for their supporters' opinions."⁴⁷ As public opinion began to turn against the government, they were forced to shift their strategy and emphasize that everyone makes mistakes. As Shimon Peres would argue in the Knesset,

Could it have been possible to run the country during those five years without making a single mistake? I am saying this because I think that the Knesset Members who have spoken in this debate have made a grave error. (...) Just as one should not ascribe superhuman powers to the leadership (...) neither should one blame it for all our problems. (...) No one can seriously claim that by a change in our leadership all our problems will disappear in the twinkling of an eye, and no more mistakes will ever be made.⁴⁸

Labor advertisements read, "Even a responsible government can err, but to elect an irresponsible government would be a grave error," and another, "In spite of everything, the [Labour] Alignment!"⁴⁹

Meir also described a conversation in which a British friend asked: "Do you think things like that haven't happened to us? That Churchill never made a mistake during the war?"⁵⁰ She

⁴⁶ See Loch, *Major Knesset Debates, 1948-1981*, 1871-72. There was a back-and-forth between Meir and opposition members on this issue.

⁴⁷ Barzilai, *Wars, Internal Conflicts, and Political Order*, 118, 121.

⁴⁸ Loch, *Major Knesset Debates, 1948-1981*, 1908.

⁴⁹ Eriksson, "Israel and The October War," 43-44.

⁵⁰ Meir, *My Life*, 381.

eventually adopted the apologetic tone herself. For example, in a speech to the Labor Party on December 5, she stated:

I too can find excuses, why in the face of such certainty by AMAN (military Intelligence) and the evaluations of other military figures, it would have been illogical for me to have insisted on a call-up. But I should have heeded the warnings of my heart and order the call-up. I know I had to do so, and this knowledge will be with me for the rest of my life. I will never be the person I was before the Yom Kippur War. And now a final word that I must say for the sake of fairness and amity. I said earlier that if someone has to bear parliamentary responsibility—I see myself as first and foremost responsible for this.⁵¹

The shift in strategy, however, was unsuccessful, because it gave the opposition the chance to argue that the initial denials were insincere. As Begin told Meir, “You have tried to conceal the truth, but to no avail. (...) The Prime Minister, who did not wish to admit the fatal mistake in the debate of November 13, was forced to do so.”⁵² He later repeated the accusations in light of the Agranat Commission reports: “But you denied it for a long time, saying there had been no blunder. (...) Now there is this document, and the entire nation should read it.”⁵³

Pressures continued to mount, and Meir’s administration became increasingly weak. A February 1974 survey, for example, showed that only 21.5 percent of the population wanted Golda Meir as prime minister (compared to 65.2 percent before the outbreak of the war).⁵⁴ Ultimately, as mentioned above, she resigned.

Meir’s tenure finished melancholically. As mentioned above, the wake of the Yom Kippur War marked by unprecedented public outrage, and mass protests erupted across the country. The magnitude of these demonstrations was unparalleled, with a mass rally in Tel Aviv’s Rabin Square

⁵¹ Meir, 623.

⁵² Loch, *Major Knesset Debates, 1948-1981*, 1850.

⁵³ Loch, 1896.

⁵⁴ Barzilai, *Wars, Internal Conflicts, and Political Order*, 119.

drawing an estimated 100,000 participants - a testament to the profound public disapproval and desire for accountability and change.

Here, it is worth noting that there is ample evidence that the war and its aftermath were a crushing experience for Meir. As we saw in the theory chapter, there are cases in which leaders acquire what seems a genuine and burdensome sense of personal blame – Nasser in Egypt and King Hussein in Jordan come to mind. As it turns out, Meir would become another of these cases. She often used expressions such as “I will never forgive myself,”⁵⁵ and close friends mentioned how she “Could never forgive herself to her dying day. She actually said that her life ended with the Yom Kippur War, not her political life, but her life.”⁵⁶ Even Kissinger, in his memoir, noted that the Golda Meir who arrived in Washington on October 31, “was a different person (...). The war had devastated her.”⁵⁷ In an interview shortly before she died in 1978, she stated, “I will never be the same Golda from before the Yom Kippur War. Yes, I smile, I laugh, I listen to music, I tell stories, I hear stories, but deep in my heart, inside, it is not the same Golda and never will be.”⁵⁸

Military

In contrast to the more complex manner in which blame was directed at politicians for the Yom Kippur War, the attribution of responsibility to the military was straightforward. The Agranat Commission’s investigation and subsequent findings identified the military’s shortcomings and failures. The public and media, deeply impacted by the war’s consequences, condemned the armed forces.

⁵⁵ Medzini, *Golda Meir*, 601.

⁵⁶ Medzini, 604.

⁵⁷ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, Reprint edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 619.

⁵⁸ Medzini, *Golda Meir*, 646.

Starting with the Agranat Commission, their report stated: “We have reached the conclusion that the chief of staff, Gen. David Elazar, bears direct responsibility for what happened on the eve of the war, both as to the assessment of the situation and the IDF’s preparedness.” The commission advised that Zeira be removed from his role as the head of intelligence due to “grave failures,” and that his deputy, Brigadier General Shalev, be relieved from his position as well. The panel also recommended reassigning two other officers, Lieutenant Colonel Bandman, who led the Egyptian desk at AMAN, and Lieutenant Colonel Gedalia, the top intelligence officer for the Southern Command. Finally, it suggested that General Gonen be temporarily suspended from active duty pending the outcome of their inquiry.⁵⁹

Elazar was asked by Meir to resign, in what she later described as one of the most difficult moments of her life.⁶⁰ He left the military deeply saddened by the Agranat Commission’s decision to place the burden of failure on him while sparing Dayan, and believed that the commission failed to acknowledge the vital stabilizing role he played during the conflict. But, as Rabinovich states, “There was a price to be paid for the Yom Kippur War, and he was unavoidably part of it.” The war and his dismissal weighed heavily on Elazar,⁶¹ who confided to Rabin that he had been

⁵⁹ Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 1091–92.

⁶⁰ Medzini, *Golda Meir*, 635. Although Elazar initially dismissed Hussein's warning of war, he did put the IDF on high alert the day before October 6, even though his intelligence chief deemed it unnecessary. On October 6, his desire for a pre-emptive IAF strike was overruled, as was his request for the complete mobilization of reservists. Throughout the war, Elazar maintained his nerve and composure, upheld his staff's morale, and carefully considered all options with utmost professionalism. His contribution to Israel eventually gaining the upper hand was significant. Meir described him as "like a rock," never faltering under the immense pressures of his command. She believed history would remember Elazar as a highly celebrated commander. Rabin compared Elazar to a solid cliff upon which the entire defense system rested. History indeed absolved Elazar, who came to be seen as a great commander. See Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 133.

⁶¹ His biographer, Hanoach Bartov, recounts that shortly after the ceasefire, while still serving as chief of staff, Elazar went to a room in army headquarters to look for a document. A transistor radio played a heartfelt song, reflecting the nation's pain from the war. Hearing it for the first time, Elazar stood motionless until the song ended, then quickly returned to his office without retrieving the document. His chief secretary followed him, and upon opening the door, she found the man whom Meir and others had called "a rock" sitting at his desk, holding his head, weeping.

struggling with a persistent depression that he could not shake off.⁶² Two years after the conflict, he died from a heart attack at age fifty-one.⁶³

After being driven into early retirement from the army, General Zeira enjoyed a lucrative career as an intelligence adviser to foreign countries. As for Shmuel Gonen, The Agranat Commission, wrote about him that “he failed to fulfill his duties adequately, and bears much of the responsibility for the dangerous situation in which our troops were caught.” The media and the general public saw him as the cause of many of the war’s blunders. According to Rabinovich, he was “the most tragic figure in the Israeli military hierarchy to emerge from the war.” The humiliation of being replaced as the southern front’s commander at the peak of the conflict was further intensified when he was compelled to exit the army after the final Agranat Report. Although the Israeli authorities typically provide appropriate positions for retired generals, Gonen received no such offers. He held Dayan responsible for his downfall, and “would tell reporters that he had considered walking into Dayan’s office and shooting him.” Later, Gonen spent thirteen years in the Central African Republic seeking diamonds to, according to him, accumulate enough wealth to hire Israel’s top lawyers to challenge the Agranat findings and restore his reputation. Gonen passed away in 1991 from a heart attack during one of his regular business trips to Europe.

The media was also critical of the armed forces. One problem was with how they communicated with the public. An editor at the daily newspaper *Hatzofeh* lambasted the Six-Day War generals for their denials that Israel was in danger of being destroyed at the time. “Then came the War of Yom Kippur and brought back with it the feeling of fear; it washed out the statements

⁶² Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 134.

⁶³ Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 1093–95; Oren, *Six Days of War*, 315.

of the generals, which were imbued with exaggerated self-confidence.”⁶⁴ Shabtai Teveth, writing in *Haaretz*, also lamented the situation, stating, “One of the painful lessons of the Yom Kippur War was the lack of credibility in the official spokesman of the Israeli army. What hurt more was the extension of that feeling beyond the particular individual to the institution which he represented.” Mark Gefen also discussed the disconnect between the public and the military spokesman’s credibility in an article for *Al-Hamishmar*.⁶⁵

The primary source of criticism, however, was the armed forces’ overconfidence. Zeev Shiff, for example, rejected the notion that the surprise could be attributed only to an incorrect interpretation of data by military Intelligence on the eve of the conflict. He argued that the problems were changes in the balance of power, weapons, and tactics, and stated, “Every high officer I knew tended to be contemptuous of the enemy and exaggerated in his self-confidence.” But he added, “This was not the fault of the military alone, but also of the political leaders.” Shiff later emphasized the tactical level, where, according to him, the Arab soldier presented the Israelis with several surprises. He wrote a book the following year, making similar arguments but adding criticism such as sloppy discipline in the IDF, the politicization of and nepotism within the bureaucracy, and more directly blaming the senior command echelons.⁶⁶

Teddy Preuss, a columnist for the newspaper *Davar*, mentioned how psychological studies carried out on Egyptian prisoners of war in 1967, which clearly demonstrated their resilience, excellent physical shape, and strong fighting spirit, were seemingly forgotten. He contended that this curious phenomenon could be attributed to the “arrogant and vain utterances of military

⁶⁴ Shoufani, “Israeli Reactions to the War,” 49.

⁶⁵ Shoufani, 62.

⁶⁶ Zeev Schiff, *October Earthquake: Yom Kippur 1973*, 1st edition (New Brunswick, NJ: Routledge, 2013), 299.

commanders and political leaders.” Teveth wrote that “what became clear in the war is that the leadership at the head of the army, either knew things and did not understand them, or did not know and understand, and even was unable to impose its authority and unity of action at certain stages of the battle.”⁶⁷

As Shoufani explains, “The most disturbing surprise, however, was in Israel’s discovery of the limitations of its power.”⁶⁸ For these reasons, the public also blamed the military. Here, it is important to note that the protest movements did target military leaders, although their primary focus was on Dayan and Meir. The two main groups formed at the beginning of 1974 called for the resignation of Dayan, Meir, Elazar, and Haim Bar-Lev (Head of Southern Command).⁶⁹ The protests movement included soldiers who had returned from the battlefields, each carrying their own chilling tales about the lack of readiness, the carnage, and an overwhelming feeling of powerlessness verging on hopelessness during the war’s initial days. In particular, they spoke of the “wars of the generals and bewilderment among the top command.”⁷⁰ The protesters’ anger stemmed from the fact that only the military faced blame, while the politicians escaped any responsibility. But they also protested the generals.

Therefore, the Israeli military faced significant criticism for their performance during the Yom Kippur War, for issues such as intelligence failures, overconfidence, slow mobilization, and handling of public relations. The punishment came in the form of criticism from the public and the media and, more directly, the Agranat Commission's report. The latter resulted in the dismissal of several of the most influential figures in the armed forces at the time.

⁶⁷ Shoufani, “Israeli Reactions to the War,” 57–62.

⁶⁸ Shoufani, 55.

⁶⁹ Barzilai, *Wars, Internal Conflicts, and Political Order*, 119.

⁷⁰ Medzini, *Golda Meir*, 618.

Civilians Versus the Military

As demonstrated above, responsibility was attributed to both civilians and the military. However, it is important to note that civilians appear to have experienced significantly more severe consequences in terms of public opinion. Several factors contribute to this observation.

First, in terms of blame assignment, the protracted process for political leaders proved especially detrimental for them, as the subject of their perceived failures remained a focal point of public attention for an extended period. This extended period of attention created an atmosphere of sustained scrutiny and criticism. Conversely, the IDF experienced a more expeditious resolution concerning the allocation of responsibility. High-ranking military officers were promptly dismissed or resigned, enabling the armed forces to address their perceived shortcomings without prolonged public scrutiny. This rapid resolution facilitated the IDF's efforts to preserve public trust.

Second, the unfolding of the war allowed for a specific narrative to emerge that enabled the IDF to preserve much of its reputation. Primarily, blame was attributed to the intelligence failure, which initially placed the IDF at a disadvantage against Arab forces. Despite this setback, Israeli forces managed to recover, halting the advances of both Egypt and Syria, pushing back the Syrian army, advancing into Syrian territory, and crossing the Suez Canal to encircle the Egyptian Third Army, even posing a threat to Cairo. Consequently, the IDF continued to be perceived as an effective and competent organization, despite the Intelligence Corps' specific flaws that led it to be caught "off guard."

Indeed, High-ranking officials extensively argued at the time that the IDF still maintained its qualitative advantage over its adversaries. As General Israel Tal argued, "But from the minute

the first shot was fired, their [the Arabs'] helplessness in conducting the war at every echelon was exposed. Our forces were revealed in their full superiority as soldier against soldier, tank against tank, plane against plane, ship against ship, and commander against commander."⁷¹ It is important to recall that, in the theory chapter, I argue that wars provide information to the public about armed forces, which tend to be opaque organizations. The information that the public received about the IDF in this instance was, at worst, mixed and, at best, encouraging.

IDF Colonel Emmanuel Wald, for example, posited in his 1987 report to Chief of Staff Moshe Levi that the Agranat Commission's limited scope, combined with the ongoing disputes among elites in the press over their respective contributions to the war's outcome, contributed to the formation of a consensus regarding the assignment of blame. According to this consensus, the public predominantly held Intelligence and political leaders responsible for the failures, while more profound doctrinal flaws and lack of professionalism within commanders and headquarters at all levels of the IDF remained largely unexamined.⁷² Indeed, in analyses of the 1973 war, Israeli commentators have generally concluded that the disparity between the IDF and the Arab armies, in terms of battlefield initiative, technical proficiency, and the capacity to learn during combat, had not decreased. Noted research at the time, conducted by US Army Colonel and military historian Trevor N. Dupuy, with the HERO organization, appears to have supported this conclusion.⁷³ This consensus was also reflected in early military histories of the war.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Yoav Ben-Horin and Barry Posen, "Israel's Strategic Doctrine" (RAND Corporation, January 1, 1981), 42, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R2845.html>.

⁷² Emanuel Wald, *The Wald Report: The Decline Of Israeli National Security Since 1967*, 1st edition (Routledge, 2019). See also Safrai, "Legitimizing Military Growth and Conscriptioin," 496–97, 505.

⁷³ Ben-Horin and Posen, "Israel's Strategic Doctrine," 11; Trevor N. Dupuy, *Elusive Victory: The Arab-Israeli Wars, 1947-1974* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).

⁷⁴ See O'Ballance, *No Victor, No Vanquished*; Allen, *The Yom Kippur War*.

Third, aside from the element of surprise, social discourse primarily centered on leadership's personal accountability for the disaster. Because blame towards the military was very personalized, IDF officials and former officials who were not involved in the 1973 "blunder" managed to keep their reputation unshattered. As Sheffer and Barak observe, there was "an increase in the power and capabilities of the informal security network, especially of retired security officials such as Rabin, Sharon, Weizman, Yadin, and Amit, in relation to the civilian sector, which, too, was seen as responsible for the blunder (*Mehdal*)."⁷⁵

Finally, international pressure, particularly from the United States and the Soviet Union, ultimately led to a ceasefire on October 25, 1973. The fact that a ceasefire was imposed by political leaders precisely at the moment in which Israeli forces were advancing led to the perception that the IDF was not allowed to achieve total victory. A popular expression in public discussions was "let the IDF win," that Israeli forces could have triumphed if not hindered by political constraints. This shifted power dynamics in favor of the military.⁷⁶ Indeed, the IDF embarked on the narrative that victory had been seemingly "snatched away" from them, and that they might desire to "set the record straight" in future engagements. Lieutenant General Mordechai Gur, who was the IDF chief of staff at the time, explicitly conveyed this sentiment, and emphasized his conviction that a "decisive victory" was an attainable goal for Israel.⁷⁷

For the reasons above, many observers believe that the politicians were more intensely blamed than the military. Given the unfavorable circumstances at the beginning of the war and the

⁷⁵ Sheffer and Barak, *Israel's Security Networks*, 73. See also Safrai, "Legitimizing Military Growth and Conscription," 505.

⁷⁶ Shelah, "National Security Decisionmaking Processes in Israel," 3.

⁷⁷ Ben-Horin and Posen, "Israel's Strategic Doctrine," 20.

miraculous recovery, the IDF was able to save face to an extent.⁷⁸ As Amidror concludes, “although several committees of inquiry since the 1973 Yom Kippur War have found the army unprepared and forced the retirement of senior officers, the IDF retains its public image of effectiveness.⁷⁹ According to Tyler, the verdict of the Agranat Commission “deeply offended the military elite and much of Israeli society, which understood that the cabinet was at the top of the chain of command whether or not it was written down.”⁸⁰ Cohen, similarly, observes,

Public anger had been principally directed against the political echelons (...). Thus, Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan were pilloried in 1973–1974 and ultimately hounded out of office. (...) By comparison, (...) the popularity of the military leadership – even though several of its representatives were judged to have failed in their duties by the government’s own commissions of inquiry – remained virtually unscathed.⁸¹

Among other observers, Meir subsequently recognized that even the Chief of Staff was somewhat forgiven by the public:

Many people in the country felt that the chief-of-staff had been dealt with unfairly and that Dayan, as minister of defense, was at least as much to blame for what had happened as ‘Dado’ [Elazar]. (Without commenting in any way on the Agranat Report, I do want, however, to say in this connection that Dado's conduct of the war itself was brilliant and beyond reproach.) There was tremendous discontent with the report’s treatment of Dayan, and feelings were running very high indeed.⁸²

⁷⁸ See Mark A. Heller, *Continuity and Change in Israeli Security Policy*, 1st edition (Oxford ; New York: Routledge, 2005), 81–90; Barnett, *Confronting the Costs of War*, 288; Stuart A. Cohen, *Israel and Its Army: From Cohesion to Confusion*, 1st edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 2008), 29, 163; Shimon Naveh, “The Cult of the Offensive Preemption and Future Challenges for Israeli Operational Thought,” *Israel Affairs* 2, no. 1 (September 1, 1995): 177, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537129508719369>; Tirza Hechter, “Historical Traumas, Ideological Conflicts, and the Process of Mythologizing,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35, no. 3 (2003): 439–60.

⁷⁹ Yaakov Amidror, “The Evolution and Development of the IDF,” in *Routledge Handbook on Israeli Security*, ed. Stuart A. Cohen and Aharon Klieman (Routledge, 2018), 38.

⁸⁰ Tyler, *Fortress Israel*, 242.

⁸¹ Cohen, *Israel and Its Army*, 163.

⁸² Meir, *My Life*, 385.

In conclusion, the criticisms directed at the government primarily revolved around its responsibility for initiating (or not initiating) the war. From the left, this criticism was that the government created the political conditions for the outbreak of war. Conversely, from the right, allegations centered on the government's omission, asserting that it failed to properly anticipate the attack and neglected to strike preemptively. This case generally aligns with the theoretical expectation that war initiation is integral to assigning responsibility to the government, which is evidence supporting *Hypothesis 2*.

Criticism of the military also generally aligns with my expectations, in the sense that the IDF was blamed for some aspects of its performance, but their recovery on the battlefield played in their favor. This is evidence in favor of *Hypothesis 4*.

Here, it is important to mention that, as with civilians, intelligence failures played a role in military blame. While I do not address Intelligence in the theory chapter, it appears to be a specific phenomenon that blurs the lines between civilian and military responsibilities in the context of wars.

5.2. MILITARY REFORMS

Theoretical Expectations

The accounts above indicate that the Yom Kippur War should be coded as blame having been assigned more extensively to the civilian leadership. Therefore, I expect that the IDF emerged as the dominant institution when bargaining with civilian leaders. As per *Hypothesis 1.1*, “*Blame assignment to civilians is associated with lower levels of civilian participation in post-war military reforms.*”

The IDF had already become more politically powerful since the 1967 war. However, it would be expected that this tendency would become even more pronounced after the further erosion of trust in the government, which was more intense than in the armed forces. Moreover, we would hope to find that the inability of the government to impose its will against the military was a direct consequence of its weakened state due to the 1973 war, and that the military was conscious of its leverage regarding public opinion. Finally, I expect that the military successfully implemented reforms that advanced its organizational interests while thwarting those seen as detrimental.

In the following subsection, I examine whether Rabin's government was indeed weak because of the war, and whether it was weaker than Meir's government. This is important because the relative weakness of the civilian leadership vis-à-vis the military is one of the mechanisms in the causal chain of my theory of post-war military reforms. I then discuss the military reforms which took place, and move on to discuss who authored these reforms. This includes reforms that were attempted but blocked. To conclude, I examine whether there was an overall increase in the political power of the military, even beyond military reforms – the relative increase in the military's political power is another mechanism of my theory, and thus worth checking.

Was Rabin's Government Weak?

Following Meir's resignation, the Labor Party needed to select a new leader to serve as Prime Minister. It wanted to select Pinhas Sapir, a skilled minister of finance. However, he firmly declined the offer. The field ended up open to Yitzhak Rabin and Simon Peres. In favor of Rabin was his exemplary performance as chief of staff, both before and throughout the Six-Day War, and

the fact that he had fulfilled his role as Israel's ambassador to the US with great success. Importantly, Rabin was not associated with the mishandling of the Yom Kippur War.⁸³

With Sapir's support, Rabin triumphed, securing 298 votes against Peres' 254. In Rabin's government, Allon took on the role of foreign minister, and Peres became the minister of defense. Meir, Dayan, Eban, and Sapir were all excluded from the new administration.⁸⁴ Here, it is important to mention that Rabin and Peres had a contentious rivalry. The decision to appoint Peres as defense minister was a concession Rabin had to make to uphold the Labor Party's coalition.⁸⁵ He originally wanted to appoint Allon as defense minister and believed Peres "lacked the moral authority to make life or death decisions."⁸⁶ Looking back, Rabin considered the appointment of Peres to be his most significant error, "a price he would pay in full."⁸⁷ At the time, however, he deemed the appointment necessary to appease the Labor Party's coalition.⁸⁸ According to Tyler, "Nothing epitomized Rabin's fragility as much as this decision to appoint Peres to defense instead of Yigal Allon."⁸⁹

Overall, historical accounts make it very clear that the Rabin government was weak due to the 1973 war.⁹⁰ As Tyler describes, "lacking the mandate of a general election, Rabin entered

⁸³ Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 131; L. Derfler, *Yitzhak Rabin: A Political Biography*, 2014th edition (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 44–47; Itamar Rabinovich, *Yitzhak Rabin: Soldier, Leader, Statesman*, First Edition (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 2017), 101; Sheffer and Barak, *Israel's Security Networks*, 40; Tyler, *Fortress Israel*, 242, 246.

⁸⁴ Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 135–36.

⁸⁵ More specifically, this was to maintain the support of the Rafi faction, one of the three parties that coalesced to form the Labor alignment, including figures like Dayan and Peres. See Derfler, *Yitzhak Rabin*, 46; Rabinovich, *Yitzhak Rabin*, 107; Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 136.

⁸⁶ Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 136.

⁸⁷ Yitzhak Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs, Expanded Edition with Recent Speeches, New Photographs, and an Afterword*, First Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 241.

⁸⁸ Rabin, 241.

⁸⁹ Tyler, *Fortress Israel*, 248.

⁹⁰ See Stein, *Israel Since the Six-Day War*, 130; Eriksson, "Israel and The October War," 46; Medzini, *Golda Meir*, 627; Yoram Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room: How the Military Shapes Israeli Policy*, First Edition (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006), 162.

office as a political weakling in a climate still marked by post-war anger and disillusionment.”⁹¹ Recall how, in the theory section, I give examples of how weaker governments tend to make more concessions to the military. Rabin's government would undoubtedly be a candidate for such dynamics.

As Rabinovich puts it, "These difficult challenges had to be met by what was an inherently weak government. Rabin was not an elected prime minister, and he lacked the authority derived from a popular mandate. His coalition was narrow and fragile (...). Nor did Rabin have a firm grip on his own party."⁹² Indeed, these dynamics extended to defense policy, where Rabin was “often frustrated by his inability to apply his profound knowledge and understanding of military affairs and Israel’s national security issues.”⁹³ Derfler shares a similar view: "Rabin and Peres rendered that government weaker than its predecessor, especially in matters of defense."⁹⁴ Aronson adds that, because Rabin was less popular than Meir, his government was even weaker than hers. As a result, he “could not sponsor any initiatives of his own” when it came to defense policy.⁹⁵ Finally, according to Perlmutter, “The erosion of authority, the national malaise that followed in the wake of the 1973 earthquake produced a disunited cabinet.”⁹⁶

As we will see below, the government’s weakness robbed Rabin of considerable influence over defense matters. Years later, in an interview, he admitted that his decisions on this area would have been "entirely different" had the administration been politically stronger.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Tyler, *Fortress Israel*, 247.

⁹² Rabinovich, *Yitzhak Rabin*, 105.

⁹³ Rabinovich, 108.

⁹⁴ Derfler, *Yitzhak Rabin*, 48.

⁹⁵ Shlomo Aronson, *Conflict and Bargaining in the Middle East: An Israeli Perspective*, First Edition (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 258.

⁹⁶ Amos Perlmutter, *Politics and the Military in Israel 1967-1977* (London ; Totowa, NJ: Frank Cass Publishers, 1978), 195.

⁹⁷ Tyler, *Fortress Israel*, 252.

Force Structure and Recruitment

Consistent with my expectations regarding the relationship between performance and reforms, the Yom Kippur War had a massive impact on Israel's defense establishment. Its influence in molding the IDF's approach to warfare was immeasurable, and it served as the blueprint for Israeli strategic military planning throughout the 1970s. The 1973 war precipitated a comprehensive reevaluation of the IDF's capability to secure early warnings, and highlighted the significance of tanks and aircraft when it came to force structure, particularly considering the severe losses endured by the armored corps and air force during the conflict. Furthermore, due to the uncertainty of early warning systems and the anticipation of confronting larger and more technologically advanced Arab forces compared to 1973, there was a perceived need to expand force structure significantly.⁹⁸ A key takeaway from the conflict was the importance of “masses,” and the necessity for significantly larger air and ground forces.⁹⁹

Indeed, expansion was precisely what occurred in the IDF after 1973, and the most significant changes took place in force structure. To reduce susceptibility to surprise attacks and ensure a larger pool of highly skilled technical personnel, the total active personnel across all services was steeply increased. Estimates put the number of active personnel in 75,000-100,000 in 1973, 160,000 in 1975, 170,000 by 1980, and 172,000 in 1982, marking a 70-130 percent increase. Regular active army personnel doubled from 11,000 to 25,000, and amendments to conscription

⁹⁸ See Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 81; Inbar, “Israeli Strategic Thinking after 1973,” 40–43.

⁹⁹ Ben-Horin and Posen, “Israel’s Strategic Doctrine,” 5–6; Avi Kober, “A Paradigm in Crisis? Israel’s Doctrine of Military Decision,” *Israel Affairs* 2, no. 1 (September 1, 1995): 197–98, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537129508719370>; Dan Horowitz, “Strategic Limitations Of ‘A Nation in Arms,’” *Armed Forces & Society* 13, no. 2 (January 1, 1987): 286–87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X8701300206>.

laws, along with greater participation of women, raised the number of conscripts from 50,000 to 110,000. Consequently, the standing army more than doubled in size. Reserve personnel grew from 210,000-275,000 to 310,000-450,000, a 60-70 percent increase. Concurrently, reserve training was restructured.¹⁰⁰ Altogether, the total force of the IDF almost doubled.¹⁰¹

Israel also made several other adjustments to its force structure. The country developed a significantly improved command and control system, establishing organized corps-level and regional defense forces, and enhanced its division-level organization to achieve greater coherence. The IAF was structured to offer both an efficient central command for managing offensive missions and a modern, centralized air defense system, with a focus on anti-SAM measures.¹⁰²

The country transitioned from a tank and fighter-centric force to a combined arms force, acquiring large quantities of self-propelled artillery weapons, modern anti-tank weapons, medium and heavy infantry weapons, and long-range strike capability. 1973 Israel had no independent artillery brigades; by 1982, it had fifteen. The Artillery Corps evolved into a major branch, incorporating long-range systems. The country also incorporated battle management technologies alongside its existing focus on modern armor and combat capabilities. It added modern fire-control systems, night-vision devices, adapted electronic warfare systems, and significantly advanced remotely piloted vehicles and sensor systems. Additionally, Israel modified its armored personnel carriers and established a sophisticated blend of combat engineering and support equipment. This

¹⁰⁰ Anthony H. Cordesman, *Arab Israeli Military Balance and the Art of Operations: An Analysis of Military Lessons and Trends and Implications for Future Conflicts* (Washington, DC : Lanham, MD: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1987), 47–48; Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 163; Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 22; Inbar, “Israeli Strategic Thinking after 1973,” 42–43; Nadav Safran, *Israel, the Embattled Ally*, Rev. edition (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press, 1981), 315.

¹⁰¹ Uri Bar-Joseph, “Lessons Not Learned: Israel in the Post-Yom Kippur War Era,” *Israel Affairs* 14, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537120701706005>.

¹⁰² Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 35–36.

led to the development of armored bulldozers, engineer assault vehicles, remotely controlled tanks, and various means for clearing minefields. The country also integrated new functions into its air battle management and acquired large quantities of smart munitions and advanced rocket launchers.¹⁰³

Furthermore, Israel greatly expanded its armored capabilities. Different sources report an increase from 1,200-2,000 tanks in 1973 to 3,600-3,800 (much better ones) in 1982. Armored brigades increased from eleven in 1973 to thirty-three in 1983. Israeli tanks were also modified to suppress anti-tank weapons and for improved survivability, as well as more firepower. This was achieved with the development of an improved anti-tank round and the implementation of reactive armor, automatic smoke projectors, machine guns, and a new mortar. A key initiative focused on developing a new tank – the Merkava – designed with specifications that addressed the challenges of the Yom Kippur War.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, between 1973 and 1977, the IDF increased its armored personnel carriers' inventory by 80 percent, its artillery inventory by 100 percent, and its combat aircraft inventory by 30 percent, while at the same time doubling the size of its order of battle.¹⁰⁵ The outdated French-made fighter planes, which saw action in the 1973 war, were decommissioned and replaced by modern aircraft produced in the US and Israel.¹⁰⁶ The number

¹⁰³ Cordesman, *Arab Israeli Military Balance and the Art of Operations*, 48; Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 163; Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel.*, 1st edition (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Security Studies, 2010), 94; Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 23, 33-34, 81, 83, 86-87; Inbar, "Israeli Strategic Thinking after 1973," 43-44; Safran, *Israel, the Embattled Ally*, 315.

¹⁰⁴ Cordesman, *Arab Israeli Military Balance and the Art of Operations*, 48; Metz, "Israel," 283; Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 163; Dupuy, *Elusive Victory*, 608; Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 33-34.

¹⁰⁵ Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 82; Inbar, "Israeli Strategic Thinking after 1973," 42-43; Bar-Joseph, "Lessons Not Learned," 78.

¹⁰⁶ Bar-Joseph, "Lessons Not Learned," 78.

of armored fighting vehicles grew from 2,500 to 8,000, and artillery pieces more than tripled to reach 2,000.¹⁰⁷

Significant enhancements were made to Israel's infantry, fully mechanizing its field forces and adding territorial defenses, and improving their protection and mobility. In 1973, the country had nine infantry and four paratroop brigades, whereas, in 1982, it had ten mechanized brigades, five paratroop brigades, and twelve territorial infantry brigades. As mentioned above, the number of modern, covered, and tracked armored personnel carriers soared. Mobile infantry capable of moving with tanks became crucial for providing fire support to suppress enemy infantry and anti-tank weapons. The infantry was heavily mechanized to enable maneuvering alongside tanks. Israel established elite infantry units trained to engage in integrated combat actions with main battle tanks. Combat engineers were mechanized, armored, and organized to advance with armor and mechanized infantry. Israel's helicopter force was also doubled, and the country acquired its first genuine attack helicopters.¹⁰⁸

The changes above were made while tactics promoting close collaboration between infantry and armored forces in battle were also enhanced. Israeli tacticians incorporated new techniques into the integrated land battle. However, as Maoz notes, these changes were not fundamental; instead, they represented marginal improvements in both techniques and technology. The IDF's overall strategy of ground warfare had not changed much in 1982.¹⁰⁹

Regarding strategy and logistics, Israel shifted its focus toward defending the Northern Front. Two of its three active divisions were assigned to the Northern Command, with three in

¹⁰⁷ Bar-Joseph, 78.

¹⁰⁸ Cordesman, *Arab Israeli Military Balance and the Art of Operations*, 49; Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 23, 33–34; Ben-Horin and Posen, "Israel's Strategic Doctrine," 47; Bar-Joseph, "Lessons Not Learned," 78.

¹⁰⁹ Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 163.

reserve. The Southern Command had one active division and two in reserve. The IDF's active presence on the Golan, consisting of two armored brigades in 1973, was increased to well over a division, and the Golan was heavily fortified with artillery and anti-tank weapons in place. The country transitioned from a supply-on-demand system to one of over-supply at the front. This system was supported by helicopters, aircraft, and tracked vehicles for quick reaction forward supply, which in many ways represented a shift from the US concept of unit pull to the Soviet concept of logistic push. Moreover, Israel significantly enhanced its medical services and protective gear.¹¹⁰

As for conscription, although the length of service in the standing army remained unchanged for men at three years, the IDF tapped into the workforce of Israeli society, enhancing its mobilization capacity. Concurrently, the duration of reserve service per year increased. Over the following decade, reservists served an average of forty-five days per year for regular soldiers and noncommissioned officers, and up to sixty days per year for officers.¹¹¹ Moreover, nearly 50,000 individuals were incorporated into the service by tightening service regulations and enlisting from previously exempted groups. Those who had dodged or had never been called up had their conscription registry reviewed. Additionally, many fields that were previously male dominated opened to women. Prior to 1973, the majority of women were assigned to office roles and relatively secure positions, distanced from combat zones. After the war, the IDF came to include women in combat training and instruction, eventually leading to their involvement in the support bases of combat units.¹¹² Conscription also came to include criminal offenders.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Cordesman, *Arab Israeli Military Balance and the Art of Operations*, 50.

¹¹¹ Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 164.

¹¹² Inbar, "Israeli Strategic Thinking after 1973," 42–43; Safran, *Israel, the Embattled Ally*, 315; Safrai, "Legitimizing Military Growth and Conscription," 229; Barnett, *Confronting the Costs of War*, 203.

¹¹³ Metz, "Israel," 299, 310.

All in all, the changes to described above led the country to experience a surge in defense expenditures, reaching 30.9 percent of GDP between 1973 and 1975, in contrast to 19.7 percent in the previous five years (1967-1972) and approximately 10 percent of GDP prior to 1966.¹¹⁴ This was primarily related to force structure and conscription, which were the most consequential reforms from the period. As we will see, organizational and doctrinal changes were only marginal.

Therefore, the most consequential post-war responses involved not just improving the armed forces in various ways but also fully doubling the ground order of battle by increasing the active force and expanding the scope of reserve service. In other words, the reaction was quantitative rather than merely qualitative. As an Israeli military proverb states, “Quality is a wonderful thing, as long as you have a lot of it.”¹¹⁵

The next question, then, is who decided that these initiatives would take the form that they took. Consistent with my theoretical expectations, the Israeli military led the reforms. For example, it is well documented that the lessons regarding anti-tank warfare and combined arms operations, as well as the solutions proposed and implemented, came from within the IDF. This was also the case regarding the decision to bolster the IDF’s infantry, combat engineer, and artillery capabilities, and heavily infuse them with modern equipment,¹¹⁶ as well as the decision to expand and improve Israeli armor, and emphasize tank survivability.¹¹⁷ The IDF also chose to allocate significant resources to boosting its long-range aerial, airmobile, and aerial strike capabilities.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Safrai, “Legitimizing Military Growth and Conscription,” 495. See also Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 165; Barnett, *Confronting the Costs of War*, 202; Safran, *Israel, the Embattled Ally*, 316; Bar-Joseph, “Lessons Not Learned,” 78. The numbers vary slightly among these authors, but all report a steep defense budget increase. Maoz also mentions that the “human burden” reached 8 percent.

¹¹⁵ Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 61.

¹¹⁶ Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, 23; Ben-Horin and Posen, “Israel’s Strategic Doctrine,” 46.

¹¹⁷ Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 33–34, 82; Naveh, “The Cult of the Offensive Preemption and Future Challenges for Israeli Operational Thought,” 169–77.

¹¹⁸ Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 82, 87. This decision was based on the experience of an IDF attack aimed at Iraqi forces.

The same is true for the massive increase in the size of the armed forces. It was the IDF that decided to substantially enhance the combat capability of the standing army, ensuring it would be better prepared and better staffed to withstand a surprise attack in the future.¹¹⁹ In fact, it demanded a bigger budget, and the demand for a larger force became “the IDF’s name of the game.”¹²⁰ According to Cohen, “the IDF was virtually fixated by its assessment that the manpower imbalance between the Arab states and Israel would further deteriorate.”¹²¹

Similarly, based on its experiences during the war, it was the IAF that determined that, even though human-crewed aircraft retained their effectiveness, there was a need to revamp its methods of neutralizing enemy air defenses. This led to a shift towards more advanced tactics, including decoy and deception drones, ground- and air-launched anti-radiation missiles, air-delivered precision munitions, and long-range artillery fires.¹²²

Were civilians on board?

For the purposes of this chapter, however, it is not enough to establish that the IDF dictated the military reforms described above. A more robust check of the mechanism proposed by my theory is whether the IDF was able to implement changes in a manner that went against the prime minister's preferences. Did Rabin feel constrained by the weakness of his administration and was unable to oppose initiatives that he deemed unnecessary? After all, it could be the case that he

¹¹⁹ Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 162–63; Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 82; Inbar, “Israeli Strategic Thinking after 1973,” 45–46; David Rodman, “Review Essay: Israel’s National Security Doctrine: An Appraisal of the Past and a Vision of the Future,” *Israel Affairs* 9, no. 4 (June 1, 2003): 126, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537120412331321563>. Cohen et al mention that, while the IDF did consider a drastic technological transformation during this period, the pressing operational needs resulted in a preference for quantity.

¹²⁰ Bar-Joseph, “Lessons Not Learned,” 77.

¹²¹ Stuart A. Cohen, “Small States and Their Armies: Restructuring the Militia Framework of the Israel Defense Force,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 18, no. 4 (December 1, 1995): 81, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402399508437620>.

¹²² Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 35.

simply trusted the IDF to make these judgments, and agreed with its decisions. This possibility is even more plausible once one remembers that Rabin was a former chief of staff.

Indeed, Rabin was on board with much of what took place in terms of military reforms. Historians, biographers, and the Prime Minister himself have stated that rebuilding the IDF to become even stronger was one of his priorities.¹²³ Rabin seemed even personally invested in this goal. As he stated to Kissinger,

I am fully aware that the situation is fraught with danger. And that it is not just a political problem for me. I regard every par soldier as my responsibility – almost as if he were my son. You know that my own son is in command of a tank platoon on the front line in the Sinai. My daughter’s husband commands a tank battalion there. In the event of war, I know what their fate might be. (...) there is nothing I can do but carry that heavy burden of responsibility – the national as well as the personal.¹²⁴

At the same time, however, Rabin did see excesses that he unsuccessfully attempted to curb. For example, he later recounted an episode in 1976 when Peres managed to increase the defense budget by using a letter from the chief of staff stating that the IDF would go public saying it should not be held responsible for any potential fiasco if the defense budget were reduced. Peres later confirmed this account, explaining that “every defense minister fights for higher budgets.”¹²⁵ According to Rabin, anytime he and Peres fought over the defense budget, “Peres chose to make the issue a subject of public debate.”¹²⁶

¹²³ Derfler, *Yitzhak Rabin*, 49; Inbar, “Israeli Strategic Thinking after 1973,” 37; Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs, Expanded Edition with Recent Speeches, New Photographs, and an Afterword*, 290; Tyler, *Fortress Israel*, 247; Dan Kurzman, *Soldier of Peace: The Life of Yitzhak Rabin*, 1st edition (New York: Harper, 1998), 325.

¹²⁴ Kurzman, *Soldier of Peace*, 319.

¹²⁵ Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 653.

¹²⁶ Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs, Expanded Edition with Recent Speeches, New Photographs, and an Afterword*, 307.

The Knesset was also hesitant to exert control over the defense budget. There was the idea that the defense budget should be somewhat sacred and not subject to significant adjustments, because the legislature lacked the appropriate tools to scrutinize strategic decisions made by the generals.¹²⁷ Recall how, in the theory section, I discuss the importance of expertise for civilians to exert control over the military.

Curbing the rise of defense spending, moreover, was not a weak preference of Rabin – it is well established that the growing budget was one of the main factors that “created chaos in the Israeli economy,”¹²⁸ led the country into what became known in its economic history as the “lost decade,”¹²⁹ and was overall a massive challenge for the prime minister.¹³⁰ As Bar-Joseph describes, “The fast expansion of the IDF in the post-1973 years, combined with additional factors, brought Israel to the verge of a complete economic crisis.”¹³¹ Maoz adds,

The IDF dug deep into its manpower pool, the Israeli government following the war dug deep into the nation’s pockets to extract money for the defensive effort. It can be clearly seen that the Yom Kippur War affected a significant upward jump in both human and material burdens. (...) It took the Israeli economy a long time to recover from the financial and human implications of the rebuilding of the IDF following the Yom Kippur War.¹³²

Importantly, Rabin explicitly recognized this, as well as the trade-offs between investing in the military and prioritizing economic and social issues.¹³³

¹²⁷ Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 47.

¹²⁸ Metz, “Israel,” 68.

¹²⁹ Bar-Joseph, “Lessons Not Learned,” 78.

¹³⁰ Derfler, *Yitzhak Rabin*, 49; Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 165; Barnett, *Confronting the Costs of War*, 193–95; Safran, *Israel, the Embattled Ally*, 316.

¹³¹ Bar-Joseph, “Lessons Not Learned,” 78.

¹³² Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 165.

¹³³ Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs, Expanded Edition with Recent Speeches, New Photographs, and an Afterword*, 302–3.

Furthermore, keeping defense spending at such high levels required Israel to rely substantially more on American aid, something Rabin was determined to avoid. In 1974-75, the American contribution averaged 1.5 billion dollars, constituting 42 percent of Israel's defense spending.¹³⁴ Furthermore, the US was virtually the sole source of the advanced, high-tech weapons that had become central to Israel's postwar strategy. This meant that Washington could directly influence Israel and limit the country's ability to pursue its defense policy independently.¹³⁵

However, because of the post-war narrative about the IDF's qualitative advantage and the need to increase in size, the armed forces' pledge for growth "was accepted in the public discourse almost unquestioningly in the years after the war."¹³⁶ Amazingly, this swift expansion was portrayed by the IDF as a burden, and generated a discourse of empathy towards the general staff, who were perceived as working tirelessly to establish new units quickly.¹³⁷ Senior military personnel even voiced concerns that society was lagging behind the newfound momentum within the IDF, and societal criticism of the IDF was depicted as fostering a climate that discouraged enlistment. To fill the ranks, public discourse called upon society to show greater commitment, which was expected to be reflected in increased volunteering for the permanent force.¹³⁸

Because social narratives focused mainly on the surprise factor and the personal responsibility of the leadership for the failures of 1973, the decision to broaden conscription passed without any scathing public criticism.¹³⁹ The military was also able to take advantage of the timing.

¹³⁴ In the first three years following the Six-Day War, American military assistance to Israel averaged around 40 million dollars annually, representing a tiny fraction of its total defense expenditures. Over the next three years, it averaged around 400 million dollars, nearly 28 percent of total defense expenditures. Therefore, although aid was already substantial, it was significantly increased after the Yom Kippur War.

¹³⁵ Safran, *Israel, the Embattled Ally*, 316.

¹³⁶ Safrai, "Legitimizing Military Growth and Conscription," 496-97.

¹³⁷ Safrai, 497.

¹³⁸ Safrai, 497-98; See also Barnett, *Confronting the Costs of War*, 203.

¹³⁹ Safrai, "Legitimizing Military Growth and Conscription," 505.

The expansion was carried out at an impressive pace; many substantial measures were put into effect within a year or two after the end of the hostilities, while the war's memory was still vivid.¹⁴⁰

In general, and consistent with the evidence above, scholars agree that the weaknesses of Rabin's government constrained his attempts to affect changes to Israel's defense budget – and, by extension, force structure and conscription. As Bar-Joseph states, “The political echelon had little choice but to support these demands.”¹⁴¹ According to Arnon Gafni, “The generals were all excited. (...) No one had the guts to say no [to increased defense spending].”¹⁴² Barnett contends that, due to the societal consensus, “the military had a blank check.”¹⁴³ Safran similarly asserts that “Much of the failure [to control the economic crisis], however, was due to weaknesses in the government and the Labor party. The defense minister, for example, opposed any meaningful reduction of the huge defense budget and was able to have his way.”¹⁴⁴ Again, the exact degree of the budget increase was directly imposed on Rabin by the chief of staff, General Gur, and the defense minister, Shimon Peres. Gur threatened to go public if the defense budget was decreased.

Here, one could argue that Peres was an important part of this equation, and that he was not a member of the military. The historical record shows, however, that Peres was a weak defense minister, who had to accommodate Gur's demands. Regarding the budget, Gur was a strong-willed and expansionist-minded chief of staff, not balanced out by a powerful defense minister or director general. According to Ben Meir, this led civilians to lose significant control over budgetary issues to the IDF. Importantly, this had not been the case prior to the 1973 war.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Safrai, 497.

¹⁴¹ Bar-Joseph, “Lessons Not Learned,” 77.

¹⁴² Quoted in Barnett, *Confronting the Costs of War*, 193.

¹⁴³ Barnett, 193.

¹⁴⁴ Safran, *Israel, the Embattled Ally*, 295.

¹⁴⁵ Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 90–91.

Gur himself recalls that Peres had endeavored to bolster the authority of the Ministry of Defense. Peres proposed that all procurement and research and development recommendations from the IDF be funneled through the bureaucratic structure of the Ministry of Defense, which would have transformed the Ministry into a strong organization. Nonetheless, Gur firmly opposed, voicing concerns that this system would undermine the importance of the general staff. “As might be expected,” Gur prevailed, and Peres abandoned the idea.¹⁴⁶

Overall, as Perlmutter contends, Peres “has not succeeded in dominating the powerful IDF.”¹⁴⁷ This led him to opt for a tacit alliance with Gur, but from a position of weakness. Gur, in turn, endorsed the idea of the chief of staff as a “quasi-minister,” a “quasi-political figure,” which Peres actually agreed with.¹⁴⁸ Importantly, Gur “was aware of the government’s having been weakened as a result of the war, (...) so Gur assumed a very proactive political posture.”¹⁴⁹

All in all – and running the risk of engaging in *ex post facto* reasoning – it is not clear whether an extensive, high-cost military expansion was not truly necessary. More localized reforms could have addressed many of the shortcomings experienced by Israel in 1973. Moreover, the country’s threat environment began to change. For example, following Sadat’s 1977 visit to Jerusalem, the then AMAN Director, Major General Gazit, questioned the assumption that Egypt was not ready for peace. Gur reflected in his diary,

The real self-examination that we had to do – based on the assumption that the analysis made by Maj. General Gazit was valid – involved the justification of our demand from the state, since 1974, to strengthen the IDF by investing giant budgets and taking upon ourselves various commitments to the USA as a result of the economic aid it provided us.

¹⁴⁶ Ben Meir, 90–91.

¹⁴⁷ Perlmutter, *Politics and the Military in Israel 1967-1977*, 196.

¹⁴⁸ Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 43.

¹⁴⁹ Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, 161–62.

And all these, while the Egyptians deserted the war option and turned to the road of peace.¹⁵⁰

Whether Gur would have finally agreed to decrease Israel's security expenditure is unclear, as his term as chief of staff ended shortly after this diary entry. His successor, Raphael Eitan, was a fervent proponent of unending Arab animosity towards Israel and the necessity to boost the IDF to counter this perpetual threat. Ariel Sharon, later appointed defense minister, backed Eitan's calls for a substantial security budget. Consequently, regional events like the peace agreement with Egypt and the Iran-Iraq War had minimal or no effect on the defense budget trajectory.¹⁵¹

A second possible objection is that Rabin was not actually opposed to the changes themselves, he only thought them to be too expensive. His opposition was to the budget, not the reforms. My answer to this is to refer the reader back to the theory chapter, where I explain that resource allocation is one of the main reasons why civilians and the military often have divergent interests. The fact here is that Rabin was not able to enact his preferred policy, and had to accept the military's precisely because the war had made the military politically more powerful in comparison with his government. Not only that, but Rabin paid a steep price for this, as Israel's economy was a fiasco at the time. Moreover, of course every politician would be in favor of expanding the military if doing so was "free." Defense policy, as with other areas of public policy, is difficult precisely because it involves tradeoffs and dilemmas. However, one concession I make is that we do not know exactly how much Rabin would have cut the defense budget and limit the expansion of the IDF, as I could not locate records of the prime minister being precise about his

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Bar-Joseph, "Lessons Not Learned," 79.

¹⁵¹ Bar-Joseph, 79.

preferences. Still, it is quite clear that he was strongly opposed to that level of military spending, and lost the battle against the IDF.

Organizational

Organizationally, the Basic Law: The Army was enacted in 1976. This occurred in response to the Agranat Commission, which recognized the absence of a clear delineation of authority and duties between the government, the prime minister, the defense minister, and the chief of staff concerning security issues. This ambiguity posed problems in the period leading up to and throughout the war.¹⁵² The new law, then, stated that the IDF is subject to the government's authority and that the minister in charge of the army on behalf of the government is the minister of defense.¹⁵³

Although the subsequent legislation formally established civilian control over the military, it did not provide much more clarity than its predecessor, still allowing the prime minister, defense minister, and chief of staff to come up with differing interpretations regarding their respective roles, responsibilities, and authority.¹⁵⁴ The prime minister was not even mentioned directly in any legislation dealing with defense matters or the IDF,¹⁵⁵ nor is the Knesset.¹⁵⁶ In fact, the law was

¹⁵² Eriksson, "Israel and The October War," 44–45; Loch, *Major Knesset Debates, 1948-1981*, 1890; Heper and Itzkowitz-Shiffrinson, "Civil-Military Relations in Israel and Turkey," 235–36; Lissak, "Paradoxes of Israeli Civil–Military Relations: An Introduction," 7; Peri, "Political-Military Partnership in Israel," 310; Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 135.

¹⁵³ Basic Law: The Military, 1976, Article 2.

¹⁵⁴ See Lissak, "Paradoxes of Israeli Civil–Military Relations: An Introduction," 5–7, 29–30; Peri, "Political-Military Partnership in Israel," 310–11; Amir Bar-Or, "The Link between the Government and IDF During Israel's First 50 Years: The Shifting Role of the Defense Minister," in *Military, State, and Society in Israel: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Daniel Maman, Eyal Ben-Ari, and Rosenhek Zeev, 1st edition (New Brunswick, N.J.: Routledge, 2001), 327; Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 41.

¹⁵⁵ Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 38.

¹⁵⁶ Ben Meir, 44.

short and quite vague. The constitutional act delineating the relationship between civil and military entities consists of six brief sections, amounting to a mere eighty-one words in total.¹⁵⁷

One major shortcoming of The Basic Law: The Army was how unclear it was regarding the relationship between the defense minister and the government, on the one hand, and that between the defense minister and the chief of staff on the other. The problem arises from the fact that the chief of staff is simultaneously "subject to the authority of the government" and "subordinate to the Minister of Defense" (section 3b). There is also confusion about how to reconcile this provision with the one stating that the CGS is "the supreme command level in the army" (section 3a). Again, given that the prime minister is not directly referred to in the legislation, one could argue that they do not have a direct role concerning the IDF or any direct relationship with the chief of staff. This aspect of the law has been a significant cause of strain in civil-military relations in Israel. For instance, during the Lebanon War, a wide range of actions were carried out without government authorization. Thus, the specific authority of the defense minister over the chief of staff is arguably the most complex issue arising from the 1976 law, and one that has attracted a multitude of differing views among legal experts, defense ministers, and chiefs of staff themselves.¹⁵⁸ According to Peri, later events "clearly vindicated those who had argued against the law, for in fact it made no hard and fast apportionment of authority or responsibility between the political and the military branches."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Ben Meir, 45. See also Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, 158.

¹⁵⁸ Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 57–58, 63.

¹⁵⁹ Peri, "Political-Military Partnership in Israel," 311. See also Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, 158.

Was everyone on board?

How come Israel also never fully addressed the appropriate form of ministerial control over the armed forces? The fact that Israeli forces remained under the control of the minister of defense, rather than the prime minister or the entire cabinet,¹⁶⁰ leads to the question of whether nobody opposed to how this legislation was formulated. As mentioned above, The Basic Law: The Army was quite vague and concise, and did not depart significantly from previous legislation. During the discussions surrounding The Basic Law: The Army, Aharon Yariv, who was then the Minister of Information and had a wealth of experience as the head of military intelligence, advocated for a much more extensive bill. This proposed bill aimed to define the relationships among the main actors in unequivocal and precise terms. Despite his efforts and those of several others, they were unable to succeed. The majority within the government preferred a concise, largely declarative law, which avoided addressing the more complex issues.¹⁶¹ According to Peri,

It was deliberately formulated to allow a high degree of military involvement in politics without either endorsing or preventing it; the blurred definitions of civilian areas of authority suited the intricate structure of the government coalition and enabled the opposing factions within the ruling party to compete for power and influence over the security sphere without legal constraints. The possible constitutional complication and political dangers were ignored.¹⁶²

Therefore, this decision appears to be aligned with both the interests of civilians and the military. However, it is important to note that the interests of civilians here had been shaped by

¹⁶⁰ Cordesman, *Arab Israeli Military Balance and the Art of Operations*, 53.

¹⁶¹ Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 56.

¹⁶² Peri, "Political-Military Partnership in Israel," 311. See also Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, 158.

the fact that they took military participation in politics as a given, and not worth being contested. Still, the text was drafted by civilians.

The main reason for the IDF not to oppose the enacting of The Basic Law: The Army seems to lie in the fact that military officers perceived the Agranat Commission as a harshly learned lesson on responsibility assignment. They believed politicians would renounce accountability for national security shortcomings and pin the blame on the generals. This led to a significant shift in the military's stance. Military leaders developed a deep mistrust towards politicians, and officers desired a more equitable partnership in decision-making to prevent being scapegoats for flawed policies they had no part in shaping.¹⁶³

Doctrine

Finally, it is necessary to address military doctrine. Here, I will forgo a detailed discussion of the topic because there were no major changes in this aspect of warfighting after the Yom Kippur War. Historically, Israeli military doctrine was quite consistent until the war, and remained so afterward.¹⁶⁴ Politically, this doctrine emphasized deterrence through decisive military victories,¹⁶⁵ usage of *casus belli*, autonomy from superpowers, and “naturally” defensible borders.¹⁶⁶ Operationally, the primary components of Israeli military strategy underscore the importance of strategic defense, offensive maneuvers, preemptive strikes, speed, short wars,

¹⁶³ Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, 53.

¹⁶⁴ Ben-Horin and Posen, “Israel’s Strategic Doctrine,” 48; Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 28; Ariel Levite, *Offense and Defense in Israeli Military Doctrine*, 1st edition (Routledge, 2020), 130, 157; Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 162–63; Naveh, “The Cult of the Offensive Preemption and Future Challenges for Israeli Operational Thought,” 169–77.

¹⁶⁵ This includes the capacity to punish Arab armies by inflicting significant damage and occasionally causing strategic damage beyond the battlefield.

¹⁶⁶ “Naturally defensible the borders” refers to a consensus that Israel could not return to pre-1967 borders, which did not provide enough space for absorbing attacks.

indirect strategies,¹⁶⁷ the leveraging of superior macro-level proficiency, and the implementation of integrated, combined-arms operations. These elements are interconnected and complement each other to reinforce the overall strategic approach.¹⁶⁸

What, then, if anything, changed in doctrine after 1973? First, there was a somewhat renewed emphasis on the *casus belli* principle in more explicit forms.¹⁶⁹ Second, regarding borders, Israeli strategic thinkers came to differentiate between the broader term “secure,” which includes factors like the political motivation for enemy attacks, and “defensible,” understood as a more specific military feature.¹⁷⁰ Third, although Israel’s doctrine remained primarily offensive, there were a few initiatives focusing on defensive tactics.¹⁷¹ Fourth, there was an increased perception of the necessity of “delivering the first blow.”¹⁷² Fifth, the war raised questions about the effectiveness of attack aircraft and tanks. However, the Israelis seemingly determined that an evolutionary adjustment was required regarding the nature of the tasks allocated to aircraft and

¹⁶⁷ The indirect approach in military strategy advocates taking advantage of the path of least resistance, or the least anticipated course, in military actions. One principle, for instance, suggests that traversing terrain considered impassable is significantly more favorable than crossing heavily fortified areas. Another principle suggests that operations involving flanking or enveloping the enemy are vastly superior to direct, frontal attacks.

¹⁶⁸ See Ben-Horin and Posen, “Israel’s Strategic Doctrine”; Dan Horowitz, “Flexible Responsiveness and Military Strategy: The Case of the Israeli Army,” *Policy Sciences* 1, no. 2 (1970): 191–205; Horowitz, “Strategic Limitations Of ‘A Nation in Arms’”; Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 18–28; Inbar, “Israeli Strategic Thinking after 1973”; Oren Barak, Amit Sheniak, and Assaf Shapira, “The Shift to Defence in Israel’s Hybrid Military Strategy,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 46, no. 2 (February 23, 2023): 345–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2020.1770090>; Levite, *Offense and Defense in Israeli Military Doctrine*; Kober, “A Paradigm in Crisis?”; Naveh, “The Cult of the Offensive Preemption and Future Challenges for Israeli Operational Thought”; David Rodman, “Regime-targeting: A Strategy for Israel,” *Israel Affairs* 2, no. 1 (September 1, 1995): 153–67, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537129508719368>.

¹⁶⁹ Ben-Horin and Posen, “Israel’s Strategic Doctrine,” 17; Inbar, “Israeli Strategic Thinking after 1973,” 37, 45, 50. See also Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 24–25. The authors see *casus belli* as a more constant feature of Israeli doctrine.

¹⁷⁰ Ben-Horin and Posen, “Israel’s Strategic Doctrine,” 27.

¹⁷¹ See Ben-Horin and Posen, 31–33; Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 19; Barak, Sheniak, and Shapira, “The Shift to Defence in Israel’s Hybrid Military Strategy,” 6; Levite, *Offense and Defense in Israeli Military Doctrine*, 130. Not only foremost officers suggested defense tactics during the Yom Kippur War, but defensive action was generally more successful during the conflict.

¹⁷² Ben-Horin and Posen, “Israel’s Strategic Doctrine,” 36; Levite, *Offense and Defense in Israeli Military Doctrine*, 244–45.

tanks, as well as in their mode of operation. They found no basis for a drastic shift in the relative prominence of these two primary systems.¹⁷³

These changes above, however, were only incremental. When it comes to doctrine, the vast majority of IDF officers saw the shortcomings of 1973 as either localized problems or a failure to apply Israel's doctrine correctly.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, several aspects of the changes in force structure described above reinforced the current doctrine. For example, the standing forces of the IDF had been expanded to enable rapid counter-offensive actions and significant preemptive strikes. They also facilitated the emphasis on combined-arms operations.¹⁷⁵

The decision to preserve Israeli military doctrine, with minor adjustments, also came from the IDF.¹⁷⁶ Overall, as Safran describes, it was the armed forces who took on the task to “correct the mistakes and shortcomings in relation to standard military norms revealed by the war and to draw the appropriate lessons regarding fighting doctrines, tactics, performance, optimal use of weapons, and so on.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ See Ben-Horin and Posen, “Israel’s Strategic Doctrine,” 46–47; Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 23–24; Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 162–63. The Israelis concluded that 1) the IAF could not effectively serve as a multi-purpose tool. Consequently, land forces had to be prepared to achieve their battlefield objectives without close air support; 2) land forces should emphasize combined-arms operations, even though the tank continued to hold a somewhat reduced prominence. Also, as mentioned above, the IDF strengthened its infantry, combat engineer, and artillery capabilities to enable the tank to operate more effectively on the battlefield.

¹⁷⁴ See Ben-Horin and Posen, “Israel’s Strategic Doctrine,” 31–33; Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 19, 68–69. Exceptions include Colonel Yaakov Hasdai and Colonel Emanuel Wald, who published the Wald Report in 1987. Both were punished at the time.

¹⁷⁵ Ben-Horin and Posen, “Israel’s Strategic Doctrine,” 33.

¹⁷⁶ See Ben-Horin and Posen, 31–33; Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 19, 68–69; Inbar, “Israeli Strategic Thinking after 1973,” 39, 44; Naveh, “The Cult of the Offensive Preemption and Future Challenges for Israeli Operational Thought,” 169–77.

¹⁷⁷ Safran, *Israel, the Embattled Ally*, 314.

Blocked Reforms

Not only was the IDF able to "have its way" regarding the changes it proposed, but it was remarkably successful in blocking reforms deemed detrimental. Here, it is important to note that neither the IDF Command, AMAN, the IAF, the Northern and Southern Commands, the Mossad, nor the Foreign Office ever conducted an organized inquiry into their roles in, and accountability for, the failures of 1973. The most thorough study that addressed some of the vital questions regarding the war was the one carried out by the Agranat Commission.¹⁷⁸

One of the commission's recommendations was to establish various advocacy systems in national security affairs, particularly, but not exclusively, on issues of intelligence assessment. Several suggestions were put forward to disrupt the military's monopoly over analysis, which was seen as hindering independent political, strategic, operational, and tactical intelligence evaluations. These suggestions included bolstering the intelligence analysis capabilities within the Foreign Ministry and Mossad, and appointing a special adviser to the prime minister on intelligence matters. This adviser would be tasked with gathering information from different branches.¹⁷⁹

The Rabin administration tried to implement several reforms in the intelligence community, but these alterations did not change its fundamental structure. IDF intelligence maintained dominance, and no substantial policy-planning entity emerged outside the military community. According to Maoz, "Even the Yom Kippur fiasco was not sufficiently severe to shake the intelligence community from its tendency for overconfidence and its propensity to make strategic errors."¹⁸⁰ The author notes that the intelligence community's near monopoly over the

¹⁷⁸ Bar-Joseph, "Lessons Not Learned," 70.

¹⁷⁹ See Eriksson, "Israel and The October War," 44; Loch, *Major Knesset Debates, 1948-1981*, 1890; Shelah, "National Security Decisionmaking Processes in Israel," 2.

¹⁸⁰ Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 505. See also Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, 49.

information accessible to decision-makers largely facilitated the dominance of military and security considerations over other policy aspects in Israel.¹⁸¹ As Ehud Barak stated while serving as head of AMAN in the 1980s, “There is a looming danger that the direct link [of AMAN] to the military system would give birth to a bias – even a subconscious one – to assign the military-technical side of reality a larger part of the situational picture than other elements.”¹⁸² Controlling intelligence entailed a great deal of political power.¹⁸³ Therefore, the IDF was motivated to preserve the *status quo*.

Over time, there have been several attempts to reform the intelligence community in Israel. However, the heads of AMAN, the Israeli military intelligence, successfully resisted various efforts aimed at altering the power balance among different intelligence agencies, and undermined any new role or institution intended to act as a mediator between AMAN and key decision-makers. Additionally, AMAN resisted any significant internal changes in its methods of intelligence assessment beyond some superficial adjustments.¹⁸⁴ In fact, despite the intelligence community's excellent collection capabilities before the Yom Kippur War, the main focus of investment in Israel's intelligence infrastructure after the war was in the area of information gathering. This expansion occurred even though the root cause of the 1973 crisis was not a lack of information about the impending threat, but rather a misinterpretation of the available information.¹⁸⁵ After all, as the Agranat Commission and many other analysts had recognized, Zeira (the head of AMAN

¹⁸¹ Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 505, 515. See also Cohen, *Israel and Its Army*, 69–70; Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, 51. Not only the IDF virtually monopolized access to intelligence information, but it analyzed those materials and devised policy responses. Moreover, it could count on a receptive audience at the Cabinet table, where individuals recently retired from senior military positions were present.

¹⁸² Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 515; Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, 52.

¹⁸³ Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, 49–51.

¹⁸⁴ Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 511.

¹⁸⁵ Bar-Joseph, “Lessons Not Learned,” 73.

during the war) appointed himself as “the sole arbiter of all intelligence matters in Israel.”¹⁸⁶ Thus, despite the organization's less-than-stellar track record, AMAN and the IDF got essentially what they wanted.

As Maoz put it, "Where AMAN truly has succeeded is in its bureaucratic struggle with other intelligence bodies and in ingenious cover-ups of its fiascos that prevented any serious effort at accountability and structural reform."¹⁸⁷ Peri agrees, stating that “intelligence reforms have been proposed a number of times during Israel’s history, particularly after big military failures, but inevitably such proposals always collapsed, primarily because of the IDF’s power and its interest in maintaining that power.”¹⁸⁸ In fact, the military’s opposition prevented any kind of net assessments from being introduced in Israel after the 1973 war.¹⁸⁹

At the organizational level, a key suggestion made by the Agranat Commission was the creation of a National Security Council, an entity capable of offering ministers a robust counterbalance to the IDF’s assessments and forecasts. The commission’s report highlighted the absence of a consultative entity to the government that would operate independently of the IDF, Security Service (SHABAK), and Mossad’s influence. It recommended creating such a body to provide civilian policymakers with diverse perspectives on Israel’s strategic position. However, this recommendation was effectively blocked by the IDF, which “saw in such a body a threat to their dominance in security issues,”¹⁹⁰ and the security network. As a result, a National Security Council was only established in 1999, even though it did not become a significant player in Israel’s

¹⁸⁶ Stewart Steven, *The Spymasters of Israel* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982), 371–72.

¹⁸⁷ Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 514.

¹⁸⁸ Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, 49.

¹⁸⁹ Peri, 52.

¹⁹⁰ Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 78.

national security landscape.¹⁹¹ Even then, there was strong opposition from AMAN and the IDF, more generally, as well as attempts to weaken the position.¹⁹²

To be precise, Rabin's exact preferences regarding the creation of a National Security Council are not completely clear. On the one hand, it is well documented that Rabin was aware that the decision-making process regarding national security was not functioning as it should, and that most procedures were flawed at the time.¹⁹³ Yet, at the same time, Rabin was said to have been neither prepared nor willing to change them. Mordechai Gazit, who served as Rabin's director-general for a year, stated that Rabin was openly against a national security council system, arguing that it was unsuitable for the realities of the Israeli government.¹⁹⁴ However, the motives for the disconnect between Rabin's assessment of decision-making processes and his opposition to a national security council system are unclear. Counterfactually, one could argue that the prime minister would have at least introduced some kind of reform had his government been stronger, given his abovementioned opinions. However, this can only be speculated.

Still, note that during Menachem Begin's government, which started in 1977, and Ezer Weizman's tenure as defense minister, Weizman attempted to establish a National Security Advisory Staff within the defense ministry, which would assist the minister by serving as a counterweight in his disputes with the general staff, and tempering his excessive reliance on the chief of staff. Nevertheless, Weizman failed due to the military's opposition.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Sheffer and Barak, *Israel's Security Networks*, 39–40. See also Efraim Inbar, "Israeli National Security, 1973-96," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 555, no. 1 (January 1, 1998): 64, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716298555001005>; Cohen, *Israel and Its Army*, 167.

¹⁹² Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 515; Cohen, *Israel and Its Army*, 69.

¹⁹³ This was confirmed by former head of military intelligence and cabinet member Aharon Yariv, who was close to Rabin. See Yehuda Meir, *National Security Decisionmaking: The Israeli Case*, 1st edition (Routledge, 2019), 244.

¹⁹⁴ Meir, 244.

¹⁹⁵ Bar-Or, "The Link between the Government and IDF During Israel's First 50 Years: The Shifting Role of the Defense Minister," 328.

Regarding other organizational and force structure changes, the IDF made minimal changes to its higher command structure. Although dysfunctionalities in the Ministry of Defense became evident during the peak of Arab success in 1973, the military did not establish effective land force commands for central operational control of war efforts. Instead, it relied on a unified interservice command that was more suitable for planning rather than battle management.¹⁹⁶ There were proposals for restructuring the IDF after the war, including making it smaller and more efficient. However, as Cohen describes, these were blocked due to “The obstinacy with which successive Chiefs of Staff had since the end of the 1973 war,” which “shelved any change that threatened to impinge on their proclivity for micro-management.”¹⁹⁷ For example, in 1977, Major General Yisrael Tal proposed a comprehensive framework for the ground forces. However, even after six years of significant pressure from Ezer Weizmann and Moshe Arens, who served as Ministers of Defense from 1977–1980 and 1983–1984, respectively, the military’s resistance to reform led to a coordinating body established in 1983 that turned out to be an immature and poorly defined structure.¹⁹⁸

Finally, a set of reforms was proposed by Chief Justice Meir Shamgar regarding the system of military justice and military courts. Shamgar recommended sweeping changes, including 1) the formation of a nine-member committee responsible for the appointment of military judges, a task that had previously been under the sole jurisdiction of the chief of staff; 2) the appointment of military judges for a term of office lasting five years, during which they would be protected from replacement, which contrasted with the existing practice where the chief of staff could dismiss a

¹⁹⁶ Cordesman, *Arab Israeli Military Balance and the Art of Operations*, 53.

¹⁹⁷ Cohen, *Israel and Its Army*, 86.

¹⁹⁸ Cohen, 86.

military judge at any time; and 3) a limited right of appeal from the military court of appeals to the Supreme Court – a right which was previously non-existent.

This is an interesting stance of reform attempt, because my theory does not address the judiciary. Still, needless to state, Shamgar's plan was vehemently opposed by the IDF, who battled long and hard to prevent its adoption and execution. They were successful in postponing acceptance of any of the suggestions for more than ten years.¹⁹⁹

In sum, the previous subsections lend strong evidence for *Hypothesis 1.1*: “*Blame assignment to civilians is associated with lower levels of civilian participation in post-war military reforms, with the opposite being true for blame assignment to the military.*” Up to this point, we have established that Rabin’s government was weak due to the Yom Kippur War, and that the armed forces were able to leverage this weakness to enact the reforms they deemed necessary, often against the government's preferences. Not only that, but they were also able to block the reforms they considered detrimental to their organizational interests. Table 11 summarizes the reforms and reform attempts and their authors.

5.3. FURTHER EVIDENCE OF MILITARY INFLUENCE

To further validate the mechanism proposed by this study, it is possible to evaluate whether the military’s influence extended beyond the specific reforms under discussion. One foundational assumption of my analysis is that the armed forces were able to both lead and obstruct reforms because of a shift in the balance of political power in their favor. The government’s inability to significantly influence reforms due to its weakness, as demonstrated above, lends credence to this

¹⁹⁹ Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 55.

Table 11. Reforms and Reform Attempts, Israel post-Yom Kippur.

Area	Description	Content	Author	Outcome
Force Structure	Reform	Expansion and Restructuring	Military	Successful, despite civilian opposition
Conscription	Reform	Expansion through rules changes	Military	Successful, despite civilian opposition
Organizational	Reform	Basic Law: The Army	Civilians	Successful, with military support
Doctrine	No Reform	NA	Military	Successful, civilian preferences unclear
Organizational	Attempted Reform	Intelligence	Civilians	Failure due to military opposition
Organizational	Attempted Reform	National Security Council	Civilians	Failure due to military opposition
Organizational/Force Structure	Attempted Reform	Higher command and ground forces' structure	Civilians	Failure due to military opposition
Military justice	Attempted Reform	Diminished military autonomy	Judiciary	Failure due to military opposition

assumption. However, it is also valuable to substantiate whether the military indeed became more powerful in other spheres.

Several anecdotes are consistent with this assumption. For example, under Meir's new administration, the cabinet became more militaristic. Of note was Rabin serving as the Minister of Labor and Aharon Yariv taking up the role of Minister of Transport.²⁰⁰ Both actively took part in the discussions of the Etgar Circle, a group primarily consisting of retired high-ranking officers who were dissatisfied with the nation's condition and the state of the Labor Party overall. These gatherings, openly known and referred to as the "Night of the Generals," were viewed by Meir as a display of disloyalty.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Yariv, previously heading the military intelligence and recognized for his successful negotiations with Egyptian general Abd al-Ghani Gamasi at the conclusion of the war, was a celebrated and deeply respected figure.

²⁰¹ Rabinovich, *Yitzhak Rabin*, 99–100.

The new chief of staff, career military officer Lt. Gen. Mordechai “Motta” Gur, participated in the actual negotiations on a separation of forces agreement in the Golan Heights with Kissinger, in May 1974. He angered Meir and Dayan by constantly raising unnecessary suggestions. At one point, he said to Meir,

“You don’t have to invite me to the negotiations, but if you do, anytime I have something to suggest, I will suggest to you. You don’t have to accept my suggestions or ideas, but you cannot prevent me from suggesting them. (...) If I am convinced that we can reach such an agreement without compromising our security, it is my duty to the government to say so.”²⁰²

In the end, Golda Meir accepted Gur’s proposal. As mentioned above, Gur understood very well that the government had been weakened due to the 1973 war, and thus adopted a very proactive political stance.²⁰³

The trend continued during Rabin’s tenure. In one instance, when Rabin ordered the removal of settlers from occupied territories by force, Gur refused to use force and threatened to resign if Rabin insisted on this order. This led the prime minister to relent - he lacked support from Peres and his own political backers.²⁰⁴ Importantly, Gur’s objections were explicitly political. He refused to obey an order which would, according to him, “endanger Jewish lives” and “have disastrous results for the IDF and for Israel for years to come.” He also contended that even though the settlers were acting in violation of the law, they were not attempting to topple the government. Consequently, the deployment of force by the army was not justified. The episode has been described as “One of the most severe civil-military confrontations in Israel’s history.”²⁰⁵

²⁰² Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 111–12.

²⁰³ Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, 161–62.

²⁰⁴ Derfler, *Yitzhak Rabin*, 48; Tyler, *Fortress Israel*, 252; Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, 168–69.

²⁰⁵ Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 114.

In another prime example of the complete involvement and influence of the chief of staff on defense policy, the IDF general staff told Gur that, contrary to the estimates of the Ministry of Defense's purchasing office in New York, there were three hundred million dollars of unused or uncommitted surplus American aid. Gur demanded a joint review of the accounts at the office, involving the IDF. The director general refused, arguing that this was solely a civilian matter. Gur countered with a threat that if the IDF were not permitted to participate in a comprehensive examination, the general staff would withhold requests for the upcoming years, effectively bringing procurement activities to a standstill. Peres decided in favor of the chief of staff.²⁰⁶

As I argued above, Peres, as defense minister, was not able to subject Gur to civilian authority. As Peri argues, under his tenure, defense policies suffered strong input from the military echelons, rather than directives from the civil authority.²⁰⁷ In the "absence of Peres' authority," Gur became a "powerful interventionist Chief of Staff."²⁰⁸ He used his political power in several other instances. For example, he became the first officer to personally partake in Kissinger's mediations, earning a *de facto* membership in the government's negotiation team (alongside Rabin, Peres, and Allon). Moreover, during the 1975 discussions over the interim agreement with Egypt, Gur was allowed to introduce a drastically different strategic perspective to the cabinet.²⁰⁹ During the Entebbe incident,²¹⁰ despite strong advocacy for a rescue operation by Peres, he refused to

²⁰⁶ Ben Meir, 119.

²⁰⁷ Peri, "Political-Military Partnership in Israel," 309; Perlmutter, *Politics and the Military in Israel 1967-1977*, 196.

²⁰⁸ Perlmutter, *Politics and the Military in Israel 1967-1977*, 196.

²⁰⁹ Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 43.

²¹⁰ Operation Entebbe, or Operation Thunderbolt, was a counter-terrorist hostage rescue operation. It was carried out by the IDF at Entebbe Airport in Uganda on July 4, 1976. An Air France plane with 248 passengers was hijacked by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the German Revolutionary Cells. In a rescue mission, a group of Israeli commandos flew to Uganda and managed to rescue 102 of the 106 hostages. The operation, which took less than 90 minutes, resulted in the death of all the hijackers, 45 Ugandan soldiers, and three hostages. The mission's commander, Lieutenant Colonel Yonatan Netanyahu, was also killed during the operation.

authorize such an operation unless he was sure it would succeed.²¹¹ His firm refusal to appoint Sharon to a high-ranking military role also showcased his ability to override the prime minister's objections, who desired Sharon's re-entry into the IDF. Through the alliance Gur had formed with Peres, he successfully blocked Sharon from resuming active duty.²¹² Finally, on at least a couple of occasions, Gur contradicted Rabin in statements to the press regarding Israel's strategic posture, which greatly displeased the prime minister. For example, the chief of staff said that Israel was open to "the option of starting the next war," in a moment where the government clearly had no intention of promoting an image of Israel as aggressive.²¹³

The lack of explicit, defined relationships between the prime minister, the defense minister, and the chief of staff (as discussed above), as well as Rabin's disregard for the Agranat Committee's recommendations to establish a National Security Council, also helped amplify Gur's political influence.²¹⁴ At the end of the day, Gur's undertaking of political responsibilities and contributions to national security policies were among the most intense in Israel's history, and he was undoubtedly more powerful than former chiefs of staff.²¹⁵ Gur saw himself as a "quasi-political figure," and Peres saw him the same way.²¹⁶ His diary entries from that time depict an officer with immense self-confidence, who did not perceive himself as being of lesser stature than those leading the political echelon. Gur wrote that the IDF was indeed not containing itself to military-strategic advice, and had been stepping into political territory, but that these areas could

²¹¹ Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 113.

²¹² Perlmutter, *Politics and the Military in Israel 1967-1977*, 196.

²¹³ Inbar, "Israeli Strategic Thinking after 1973," 38–39.

²¹⁴ Perlmutter, *Politics and the Military in Israel 1967-1977*, 196.

²¹⁵ Perlmutter, 197, 200; Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 108. To be precise, although Gur carried considerable weight in cabinet decisions, he was also overruled on military-political decisions. The chief of staff was quite influential in relative terms, but by no means was he all-powerful.

²¹⁶ Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 43.

not be separated, “especially in light of Israel’s situation after the Yom Kippur War.”²¹⁷ In an interview conducted 15 years later, Rabin identified his most serious mistake as his failure to take a more assertive stance towards the defense establishment.²¹⁸

After the Likud party won the elections, Menachem Begin was appointed prime minister, and his government was also subject to excessive military influence. The administration of the right-wing nationalist party Likud, which governed from 1977 to 1983, was unable to prevent the political crisis from intensifying, and, as Israel entered the 1980s, it remained laden with ongoing processes of political fragmentation and the erosion of governmental legitimacy.²¹⁹

Begin appointed Ezer Weizman as defense minister. They found themselves “facing a very sovereign chief of staff.”²²⁰ For example, upon assuming the role of defense minister, Weizman also proposed to decrease the defense budget by nearly two hundred million dollars in an effort to curb the mounting inflation, exactly like Rabin had attempted. Gur strongly protested this proposal, asserted it was unrealistic, and insisted that the planned reductions be postponed for a minimum of three months to allow for thorough examination and dialogue on the matter. Along with the rest of the general staff, he sought to delay, raised objections, and put up as many hindrances as possible. Ultimately, the IDF prevailed, and the planned budget cuts never materialized.²²¹

In another episode of blatant political interference, just a few days prior to Sadat’s historic visit to Jerusalem on November 21, 1977, a leading Israeli daily newspaper featured an interview with Gur, in which he claimed that Sadat’s visit was a deception and a pretext for war. The

²¹⁷ Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, 162.

²¹⁸ Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 114.

²¹⁹ Peri, “Political-Military Partnership in Israel,” 307.

²²⁰ Bar-Or, “The Link between the Government and IDF During Israel’s First 50 Years: The Shifting Role of the Defense Minister,” 328.

²²¹ Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 159.

interview was conducted without the approval or knowledge of either the defense minister or the prime minister. Gur conceded that this was an act of insubordination. However, he attributed it to the unprecedented scenario of a prime minister undertaking a significant political initiative with substantial implications for Israel's security without consultation or discussion with the IDF. Gur stated, "This was my way of protesting the fact that there had been no proper discussion in the cabinet and that I was not given an opportunity to present to the cabinet the views of the general staff."²²²

Weizman was infuriated and severely reprimanded the chief of staff. "Why did you do this?" he asked. Gur replied, "Because I believe that we are willfully setting into an exceedingly bad situation, which, from a national morale perspective, I could not allow. All the internal discussions we had were of no use, and I had no choice but to explode the matter publicly." In turn, Weizman threatened to fire Gur, who responded, "Suit yourself; I'm willing to resign right away if that's what you want. I could either resign, or you could fire me, but I will not accept punishment. I'm not some low-ranking commander; I don't get punished." Weizman promptly called Begin and insisted that Gur be discharged at once, arguing that it was unthinkable for a chief of staff to make a statement at such a critical juncture that could potentially derail the government's policy. Such a discharge would have been unprecedented in Israel. Despite sharing Weizman's critique of Gur, Begin declined to dismiss him.

After a few weeks, while recalling the incident, Gur wrote, "The CGS serves in a position which combines military and political considerations, and this occasionally forces him to deal with sensitive matters on the boundaries of both spheres."²²³ Gur opposed a complete withdrawal from

²²² Tyler, *Fortress Israel*, 270.

²²³ Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, 164; Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 117.

Sinai and saw the politicians' openness in their interactions with the Egyptians as a replacement of judgment and true political vision by "drunkenness and political illusions." Ultimately, the peace treaty with Egypt was finalized, and Gur stepped down from his role and embarked on a political career.²²⁴ Rafael Eitan, a prominent figure in Israeli military history, was appointed chief of staff of the IDF in 1978, succeeding Gur. A seasoned veteran, his military career spans several pivotal moments in the history of Israel, including key roles in the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War. Like Gur, he also became a hyperpolitical figure who did not keep his political views to himself.²²⁵

According to Bar-Or, it was Weizman's disagreement with Begin regarding the extent of his powers as defense minister which resulted in his departure from the government in 1980.²²⁶ Tyler, however, notes that Weizman was influenced by the fact that his political standing had improved – his popularity was rising compared to Begin's. The defense minister publicly stated that he welcomed a change, and that new elections in Israel might be beneficial, even if it means a potential return to power of the Labor Party. According to the author, with elections just a year away, Weizman was "shopping for a suitable issue over which to resign." When the economic crisis finally led Begin's finance minister to halt all government contracts, including those pertaining to the defense ministry, Weizman declared his refusal to accept any reductions in defense, and finally did resign.²²⁷

Despite Begin's limited expertise in matters of national security, he took on the role of acting defense minister in addition to his prime ministerial duties until the 1981 elections. This

²²⁴ Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, 164–65.

²²⁵ Peri, 165.

²²⁶ Bar-Or, "The Link between the Government and IDF During Israel's First 50 Years: The Shifting Role of the Defense Minister," 328.

²²⁷ Tyler, *Fortress Israel*, 287.

created a valuable opportunity for Eitan to consolidate his authority as chief of staff.²²⁸ Begin indeed relied heavily on Eitan to run the military establishment.²²⁹

At this point, the “partnership between the military and civilian systems was replaced with manipulation of the civilian system by the defense establishment, exploiting the latter’s professional authority to dictate policies to the government.”²³⁰ For example, Eitan dismissed the idea of deterrence, arguing that “an unused military force is a wasted one.” He also sparked a national uproar by asserting that Israel should never relinquish the West Bank. This marked the first time in more than years that a chief of staff had publicly voiced his view on the future of the territories, grounding it in political and ideological arguments. Many demanded Eitan’s resignation; however, the government supported him.²³¹

In the same vein, the notion that Israel could enhance her strategic bargaining position by adopting a sort of “madman posture” gained prominence when Sharon took over as defense minister and worked alongside Begin and Eitan.²³² Sharon became a powerful cabinet minister as a respected retired general within the officer ranks. This influence manifested in military engagements such as the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981, for which the security network, rather than the civilian politicians, were mainly responsible.²³³

²²⁸ Bar-Or, “The Link between the Government and IDF During Israel’s First 50 Years: The Shifting Role of the Defense Minister,” 328.

²²⁹ See Tyler, *Fortress Israel*, 287.

²³⁰ Dan Horowitz, “Israel’s War in Lebanon: New Patterns of Strategic Thinking and Civilian–Military Relations,” in *Israeli Society and Its Defense Establishment: The Social and Political Impact of a Protracted Violent Conflict*, ed. Moshe Lissak, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 1984), 254–55.

²³¹ Peri, “Political–Military Partnership in Israel,” 308.

²³² Horowitz, “Israel’s War in Lebanon: New Patterns of Strategic Thinking and Civilian–Military Relations,” 244–45.

²³³ See Sheffer and Barak, *Israel’s Security Networks*, 41. As per Major General David Ivry, the IAF commander at the time, the IDF had been preparing for that operation long before it was launched.

Military influence even spilled over to other areas of society. Emboldened by the government's backing after the West Bank comments, Eitan took even greater liberties to voice and promote his stance on other political and purely civil matters, far exceeding any boundaries set by his predecessors.²³⁴ His influence and opinions were felt in economic, educational, and overtly political areas, and the IDF sponsored initiatives in these spheres.²³⁵ According to Cohen, Eitan "epitomized" the trend of military intrusion on "policy areas that were once considered to lie entirely within the civilian sphere of jurisdiction."²³⁶ Eitan even got to the point of criticizing Begin's government for incompetence in economic affairs.²³⁷

In this context, the constitutionally ambiguous jurisdiction of civilian power over the military, as well as divisions within the government, allowed military officers to liberate themselves from political constraints. The political activities undertaken by officers even prompted the State Comptroller, in his 1979 annual report, to express his disapproval of the military's incursion into civilian policy matters. However, the military censor banned these sections of the report, much to the consternation of the members of the Knesset's Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee.²³⁸

Of note was also the appointment of former security officials to key positions,²³⁹ and the steady rise in the number of Members of the Knesset with significant security backgrounds, from

²³⁴ Peri, "Political-Military Partnership in Israel," 308.

²³⁵ Lissak, "Paradoxes of Israeli Civil-Military Relations: An Introduction," 29-30; Metz, "Israel," 311.

²³⁶ Stuart A. Cohen, "Changing Civil-Military Relations in Israel: Towards an Over-Subordinate IDF?," *Israel Affairs* 12, no. 4 (October 1, 2006): 773-74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310600890091>.

²³⁷ Tyler, *Fortress Israel*, 284.

²³⁸ Peri, "Political-Military Partnership in Israel," 312.

²³⁹ See Sheffer and Barak, *Israel's Security Networks*, 40-41. These included Major General (res.) Ezer Weizman as minister of defense; former chief of staff Lieutenant General (res.) Moshe Dayan as minister of foreign affairs; former chief of staff Lieutenant General (res.) Yigael Yadin as deputy prime minister; Major General (res.) Ariel Sharon as minister of agriculture and later defense; and Major General (res.) Meir Amit, former head of military intelligence and the Mossad, as minister of transportation.

4.1 percent in 1965–1974 to 8.3 percent in 1974–1977 and 12.5 percent in 1977–1981.²⁴⁰ Even new parties were dominated by former military members. Seven out of the 20 senior members of the Democratic Movement for Change, established in 1977, were former generals, and the party was headed by former Chief of Staff Yigael Yadin.²⁴¹ Unsurprisingly, throughout Begin’s tenure from 1977 to 1983, defense expenditure saw a significant surge of 66 percent, keeping up with the trends of the Rabin administration.²⁴²

The significant influence that the military held over foreign policy also became more apparent than ever. The 1973 war had little impact on rectifying the unfavorable balance of power between the foreign policy and security establishment, with the latter still reigning over the former. In fact, it reinforced it. This domination of the security establishment over foreign policy is evident in Israel's strengthening relationships with ostracized nations at that time like South Africa, Turkey, and Iran. Due to the IDF's influence, these relationships were primarily founded on security cooperation.²⁴³ In South Africa, for example, it is well documented that “The military establishment had orchestrated Israel's foreign policy in South Africa around the parochial interests of the military elite.”²⁴⁴

Current and former officers in the IDF, as well as other security officials, also became heavily involved in negotiations between Israel and its neighbors.²⁴⁵ For example, after the Yom Kippur War, high-ranking Israeli officers played a primary role in military disengagement discussions with Egypt and Syria, and eventually with the Palestinians.²⁴⁶ IDF officers, both low-

²⁴⁰ Sheffer and Barak, 51.

²⁴¹ Peri, “Political-Military Partnership in Israel,” 306.

²⁴² Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 526.

²⁴³ Maoz, 166–68.

²⁴⁴ Tyler, *Fortress Israel*, 261.

²⁴⁵ Sheffer and Barak, *Israel's Security Networks*, 43.

²⁴⁶ Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 78.

and high-ranking, were also very influential in the settlements in Lebanon, in a pattern similar to what had taken place in Palestine.²⁴⁷ In fact, the formulation of policy toward Lebanon became the exclusive province of the IDF, and the foreign minister was excluded.²⁴⁸ This took place throughout Rabin's and Begin's governments.

Israeli occupation policy was particularly contentious between 1977 and 1981. According to Peri, "control weakened severely, and the Chief of Staff became a dominant force not only in the implementation of policies in the territories, but also in their formulation and in opposition to the minister, his nominal superior." Here, the author refers to Weizman. He also describes newspaper articles inspired by the army and military government criticizing the defense minister, "all these were but a few expressions of the struggle between civilians and officers and of enfeebled civil control," and adds that "It became apparent that in fact the Chief of Staff was not a public servant responsible to his superior minister but an equal political partner."²⁴⁹ In this period, as Cohen et al. note, the top brass of the IDF found themselves preoccupied with managing an increasingly inquisitive press, often to the detriment of their traditional military duties.²⁵⁰

Another example occurred when Sharon personally managed negotiations to establish a strategic cooperation agreement with the US, effectively sidelining the Foreign Office. Doubts and objections were raised by several ministers, including the foreign minister, but Sharon pressed for immediate Cabinet approval so he could depart for the US that very day. Begin backed Sharon,

²⁴⁷ See Sheffer and Barak, *Israel's Security Networks*, 117–18. Lieutenant Colonel Yoram Hamizrachi, for example, became known as the "King of the North." He had direct access to Major General Raphael Eitan, who oversaw the IDF's Northern Command and later became the IDF's chief of staff. Members of Israel's security network also established the "South Lebanon Area" in the territory adjacent to the Israeli–Lebanese border in 1976, launched the Litani Operation in 1978, and began advocating for a full-ledged Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

²⁴⁸ Meir, *National Security Decisionmaking*, 260.

²⁴⁹ Peri, "Political-Military Partnership in Israel," 310.

²⁵⁰ Cohen, Eisenstadt, and Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles*, 78.

and the cabinet acquiesced.²⁵¹ The inclination to view the military aspect of national security as an almost independent element, one that diplomacy should cater to rather than complement, has always found supporters among the more activist members of Israel's security establishment.²⁵² They were now better able to implement this vision more fully.

The Lebanon War of 1982 was the most striking illustration of military control over national security. In 1981, the government handed the IDF *carte blanche* to escalate hostilities in Lebanon with the Syrians and the PLO. From the onset of the missile crisis in April 1981 to the culmination with the Sabra and Shatilla massacre, Sharon and Eitan were the pivotal figures in the government's decision-making process. They held an unchallenged monopoly over the interpretation of the situation, outlining available options, and proposing a preferred plan of action. No other body or individual was capable or inclined to offer an opposing analysis, alternate strategies, or – most crucially – different policy suggestions.²⁵³ The invasion plan, with its comprehensive military and political goals, was entirely born out of the defense establishment's initiative. It was a high-level IDF project, designed under the orders of the defense minister well before it gained government approval.²⁵⁴ As Ben Meir describes, “the effects of the continued absence of independent checks — at the prime ministerial or cabinet level — on the individual ministries, and specifically on the Defense Ministry and the IDF, were now to be fully felt, and with tragic consequences.”²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ Meir, *National Security Decisionmaking*, 261–62; Bar-Or, “The Link between the Government and IDF During Israel's First 50 Years: The Shifting Role of the Defense Minister,” 329.

²⁵² Horowitz, “Israel's War in Lebanon: New Patterns of Strategic Thinking and Civilian–Military Relations,” 244–45.

²⁵³ Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land*, 518.

²⁵⁴ Horowitz, “Israel's War in Lebanon: New Patterns of Strategic Thinking and Civilian–Military Relations,” 245–46.

²⁵⁵ Meir, *National Security Decisionmaking*, 265.

The influence of the armed forces peaked during the war, when all escalations and expansions were driven by the defense minister and the military, and the government was asked to endorse these actions *ex post facto*. In fact, Sharon and Eitan outright misled Begin, his government, the Knesset, and the Israeli public regarding the real intentions behind the war.²⁵⁶ This state of affairs was feasible, in part, due to the vagueness of the “Basic Law: The Army,” which I have previously discussed. On several occasions, Israeli defense ministers have considered themselves as representatives of the military to the government, even though, under this legislation, they are expected to represent the political level – to which they belong – to the military. Sharon directly intervened in military operations and acted as a “super-chief-of-staff,” precisely what the Agranat Commission had sought to avoid.²⁵⁷

As Ben Meir notes, “Had there been significant civilian involvement – beyond that of the defense minister – in the planning stages of the Lebanon War, Sharon and the IDF would never have been able to keep their preparations secret.”²⁵⁸ According to the author, “Not only was Sharon’s grand design never subjected to external civilian review, but it was never even presented to the ultimate civilian authority.”²⁵⁹ Although Sharon, serving as the defense minister, was officially part of the civilian sector, he took personal charge of the IDF’s strategic planning system. Hence, the Lebanon War was the execution of a plan formulated by Sharon and the IDF.²⁶⁰ Sharon

²⁵⁶ See Sheffer and Barak, *Israel’s Security Networks*, 41, 119. The authors note that the bypassing of the Israeli government with regard to Israel’s policy in Lebanon started to occur even earlier than in 1982. Major General Avigdor Ben-Gal, who in 1982 was a corps commander in the IDF, later stated that one of the problems of the Lebanon War was “the covert and non-authorized plan of the defense minister [Sharon] and the chief of staff [Eitan] who led the government step-by-step to its approval.” See also Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 60, 150.

²⁵⁷ Horowitz, “Israel’s War in Lebanon: New Patterns of Strategic Thinking and Civilian–Military Relations,” 246–47; Bar-Or, “The Link between the Government and IDF During Israel’s First 50 Years: The Shifting Role of the Defense Minister,” 329.

²⁵⁸ Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 152.

²⁵⁹ Ben Meir, 155.

²⁶⁰ Ben Meir, 148.

and Eitan, together, were “an unstoppable force.”²⁶¹ As Eitan stated, “Now that I’ve built a military machine which costs billions of dollars, I have to use it.”²⁶² The Lebanon War, thus, was “a colossal failure of civilian oversight of strategic planning. (...) No better example than the Lebanon War can be found to illustrate military monopolization of strategic planning and the IDF’s almost complete dominance over the formulation of national security policy.”²⁶³

Here, one could argue that these anecdotes are not informative without a baseline comparison. Yes, the military was politically powerful, but had they become *more powerful after 1973*? Several observers suggest that the answer is yes. According to Sheffer and Barak, “Although the IDF suffered a major blow in the 1973 War, (...) the security network did not lose its dominant position in the area of Israel’s national security. On the contrary, its power only increased further.”²⁶⁴ Metz shares this assessment, stating, “The setbacks at the outset of the October 1973 War gave rise to an exceptional period when senior officers influenced political decisions through their contacts with members of the cabinet and the Knesset.”²⁶⁵ Lissak makes a very similar statement.²⁶⁶ Perri aptly describes the full picture: “The weakening of the political elite’s position, combined with the strengthening of the military elite’s demands for greater autonomy, brought about the development of a new form of party-military relations.”²⁶⁷ The author also suggests that civil control was severely weakened during the 1970s, and the Chief of Staff had become a dominant force.²⁶⁸ Levy suggests that it was in the 1970s that the political echelon started to

²⁶¹ Tyler, *Fortress Israel*, 300.

²⁶² Tyler, 301.

²⁶³ Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 156.

²⁶⁴ Sheffer and Barak, *Israel’s Security Networks*, 39.

²⁶⁵ Metz, “Israel,” 312.

²⁶⁶ Lissak, “Paradoxes of Israeli Civil–Military Relations: An Introduction,” 29–30.

²⁶⁷ Yoram Peri, “Party–Military Relations in a Pluralist System,” in *Israeli Society and Its Defense Establishment: The Social and Political Impact of a Protracted Violent Conflict*, ed. Moshe Lissak, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 1984), 166.

²⁶⁸ Peri, “Political–Military Partnership in Israel,” 310.

studiously refrain from issuing clear directives in the critical realms of strategic planning, the definition of war goals, force construction, and armament programs.²⁶⁹ According to Perlmutter, “The 1973 war further elevated the political assets of the military.”²⁷⁰ Ben Meir agrees and sees a “definite change in the relative balance of power between the CSG in the mid 1970s, with the pendulum swinging in the IDF's favor.” The author notes how Gur and Eitan were “two very strong chiefs of staff.”²⁷¹ He adds, “Military involvement in the formulation of foreign affairs always present but reached its peak in the 1970s.”²⁷²

Therefore, based on the above, we can establish that Israel saw an increase in the relative political power of the military after the Yom Kippur War. This manifested not only in the post-war military reforms, but in several aspects of the country's civil-military relations, defense policy, and foreign policy.

5.4. WHERE THE MILITARY REFORMS DETRIMENTAL?

Before closing the chapter, let me address how this chapter relates to the motivating assumption of my project – my “so what” question. Recall that, in the Introduction, I explain the assumption that military reforms are, on average, conducive to less military effectiveness. However, one could argue here that the military reforms enacted by the military in Israel after the Yom Kippur War were, in fact, quite successful. After the above-described military expansion, the country went on to become more secure. Additionally, one could argue that the problem in Lebanon was not military, but political, and that military Intelligence has not been such a relevant

²⁶⁹ Yagil Levy, “The Dynamics of Civil–Military Relations and the Complexity of Israel’s Security Policies,” in *Routledge Handbook on Israeli Security*, ed. Stuart A. Cohen and Aharon Klieman (Routledge, 2018), 164.

²⁷⁰ Perlmutter, *Politics and the Military in Israel 1967-1977*, 191.

²⁷¹ Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 121.

²⁷² Ben Meir, 174.

problem. If this is true, this case study is unlike the other two, where the military acted detrimentally.

My answer here is that one should be cautious with ex-post reasoning. A decision that ends up working out is not always the correct decision when considering the available information at the time it was made. Suppose I am offered a prize for rolling some dice successfully, and I have the option of choosing between one that has a 70 percent probability of winning versus another with a 50 percent probability. In that case, the obvious better choice is the former. I can choose it and lose the prize, however, and perhaps I even see another person choosing the later dice and winning. This is not to say I made the incorrect decision, considering the information I had. Not only that, but if I keep choosing the better dice, I will accumulate more prizes in the long term than someone who chooses the worse one.

This is a good analogy because the information available to Israel at the time was that the way its Intelligence was set up was a complete disaster, and establishing a National Security Council would be beneficial. However, the military still blocked any attempts to address these issues. Notably, the IDF also campaigned for reforms that benefited the armed forces. These sensible reforms directly addressed the failures the country experienced during the Yom Kippur War – nonetheless, they did not survive military opposition.

Moreover, the IDF could not have been aware that Egypt would take the initiative to establish peace talks, a large part of why Israel became more secure after the 1970s. If this is how the military decides what to favor and what to oppose when it comes to reforms, I reaffirm my assumption that, on average, military reforms will not be as effective.

Finally, it is worth reemphasizing that the importance of my project does not hinge on this assumption being correct. If the opposite was true, this study would be just as relevant. The only

scenario in which my findings become inconsequential is when civilian and military reforms are the same.

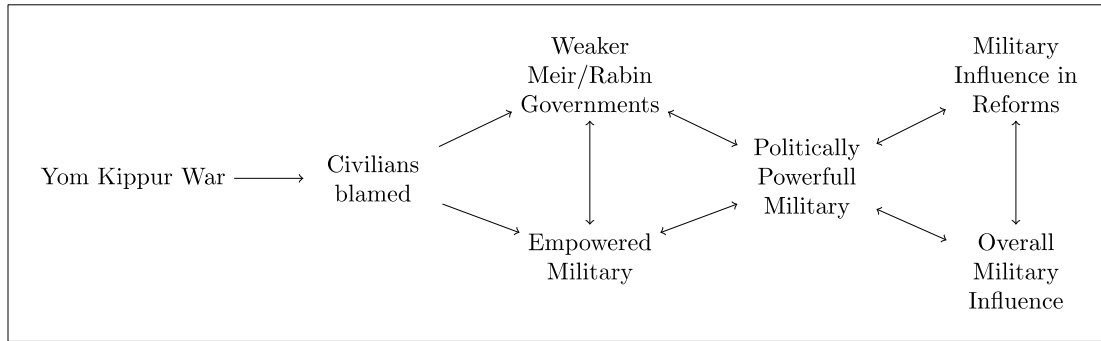
5.5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I examined how the post-Yom Kippur War period in Israel led to the assignment of blame towards civilians more extensively than towards the military. This led to an increase in the armed forces' relative political power, which allowed them to enact reforms to their advantage and block those they perceived as detrimental to their organizational interests.

Furthermore, I explored the impact of the war on Rabin's government, highlighting how weak this administration became. I also show that the military's increase in political power was not confined to the realm of military reforms, and manifested in several aspects of defense policy and foreign policy. Doing so matters because these are key mechanisms of my theory.

Overall, the chapter offers robust evidence for *Hypothesis 1*. As expected, blame assignment to civilians was associated with lower levels of civilian participation in post-war military reforms. Moreover, the chapter swiftly conveys the causal mechanism at play, which I display in Figure 19. Note that, in the theory chapter, I sometimes treat these variables as static, for parsimony. Throughout, however, I argue that they are subject to path dependence. This case study is an excellent illustration of how dynamic these relationships can become, given that several variables influence each other. To provide just one example, the choice of enacting vague and concise legislation outlining civilian control over the military in the form of The Basic Law: The Army facilitated the exercise of political influence by the military, which in turn affected subsequent choices, and so on.

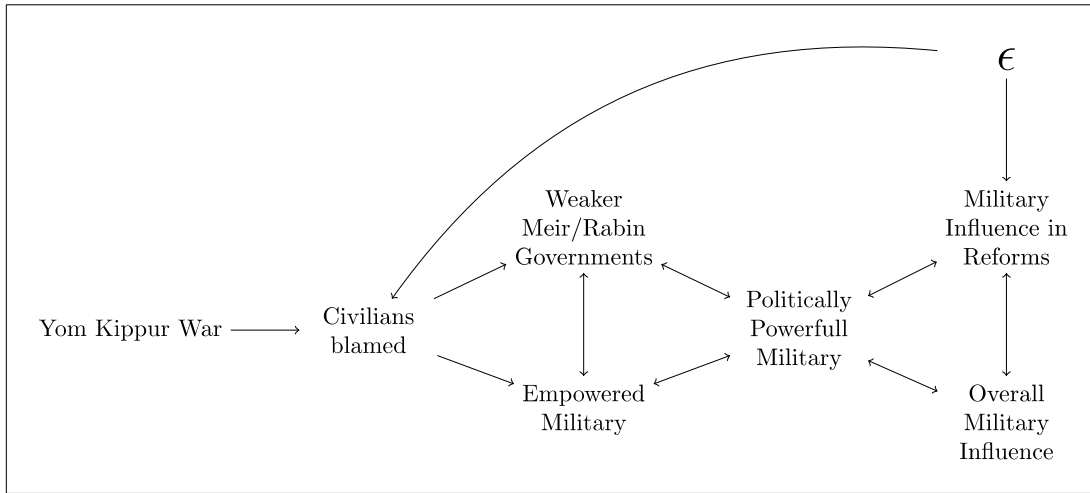
Figure 19. Causal Mechanisms, Yom Kippur.



Here, one could argue that an error term should be included in the figure. Omitted variables could conceivably affect both blame assignment and military reforms - for example, the *ex-ante* popularity of each actor, or the *ex-ante* norms regarding civil-military relations. Therefore, a more accurate representation of the case would be as displayed in Figure 20.

Although this concern is entirely valid, it is lessened by some of the findings of this case study. As I showed, the government was quite popular at the beginning of the war. It is evident that what weakened the Labor Party – consequently changing the balance of political power between civilians and the military – were specific events in the war. Rabin, for example, directly stated that he would have stood up to the military had his administration been stronger. Similarly, Gur mentioned that he understood that a weak and divided government allowed him to become politically more active – he and Eitan were unprecedentedly powerful chiefs of staff. These dynamics dictated the subsequent military reforms. Finally, the foremost historians and social scientists of the period agree that the 1973 war markedly changed the balance of power between civilians and the military, in favor of the IDF. Therefore, although *ex-ante* conditions will always be relevant for this type of analysis, this case showcases a relatively straightforward causal path consistent with my theory.

Figure 20. Causal Mechanisms, Yom Kippur, Including Error Term.



The analysis of the determinants of responsibility assignment also aligns with my hypotheses. This case showed that responsibility is assigned to civilians when it comes to war initiation, and to the military for battlefield performance (*Hypothesis 2* and *Hypothesis 4*, respectively). It also shows how the idea of war initiation can take different forms. First, the case displays how diplomacy can come into play. Gold Meir was blamed, in part, for not engaging in diplomacy effectively, and thus creating the political conditions for the arising of the conflict. Second, Meir was blamed for *not* initiating the conflict when she should have, similar to Levi Eshkol in the Six-Day War.

Overall, then, the chapter makes a strong case for the connection between responsibility assignment, the relative balance of political power between civilians and the military, and post-war military reforms. Moreover, it lends evidence for my hypotheses on responsibility assignment. This case also showcases how the involvement of civilians in military reforms can be beneficial for military effectiveness and national security.

CHAPTER 6: A BRIGHT SHINING LIE: THE UNITED STATES AND THE VIETNAM WAR

The Vietnam War was a protracted and highly controversial conflict that dramatically reshaped the United States' military strategy, doctrine, and organizational structure. The war's profound impacts permeated all levels of American society, from shifting public sentiment toward military intervention and national security to significant changes in military-civil relations.

The US direct military involvement began with the deployment of advisors under President Dwight D. Eisenhower and gradually escalated under the subsequent administrations. The Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964, an alleged attack on US naval vessels by North Vietnamese forces, led to the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, giving President Lyndon B. Johnson the authority to increase US military presence without a formal declaration of war. This led to the large-scale deployment of American troops and the full-scale war that followed.

Despite the United States' technological and military superiority, the Vietnam War ended in a strategic defeat, as the North Vietnamese forces ultimately achieved their objectives. The Paris Peace Accords in 1973 marked the beginning of the end of US direct involvement in the Vietnam War, with the last American combat troops leaving Vietnam in March of the same year. The war formally ended in 1975 when South Vietnam capitulated to North Vietnamese forces, leading to the reunification of Vietnam under Communist rule, which was antithetical to the original American objective.

The war was marked by strong public reactions. Throughout the conflict, the US faced increasing domestic opposition, which peaked during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Public dissent was catalyzed by multiple factors, including the release of the Pentagon Papers, which revealed

the US government's deceit about the progression and purpose of the war, and the graphic media coverage that brought the brutal realities of the war into American living rooms, among others. Notably, both civilians and the military were the target of significant criticism, for different reasons. The politicians became associated with the decision to send troops to Vietnam and escalate the conflict, while reports of indiscipline, corruption, drug use, and war crimes plagued the soldiers. What conditions or factors influenced the assignment of blame to civilians and the military in the context of the Vietnam War?

The United States undertook a comprehensive reassessment of its military strategy in the aftermath of the conflict. Two distinct reforms, driven by separate entities, stood out in this period, both of which had far-reaching implications in the long term. First, civilians drove significant changes to military recruitment, resulting in the abolishment of the draft and the establishment of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) in 1973. This marked a significant departure from previous practices and reflected the civilians' recognition of the need for reform. Over time, the AVF has transformed the composition, professionalization, and societal relationship of the US military.

Second, within the military, there was an important shift in doctrine. In 1976, the US Army implemented a major change to its doctrine, marking a significant shift from its previous emphasis on attrition warfare, which had proven problematic in Vietnam. The new doctrine, "Active Defense," advocated a more flexible, agile approach to combat operations. It emphasized quick reactions to enemy movements and operations and allowed commanders greater autonomy. Over the decades, "Active Defense" greatly influenced how the US Army thinks about doctrine. Why and how did the defeat in the Vietnam War, coupled with domestic opposition, lead to a divergence in the reform process, with civilians pushing for changes in military recruitment and the military

altering its doctrine? Furthermore, why were these reforms, enacted by different actors and in response to the same war, successful in their implementation and enduring in their impact?

In this chapter, I use process tracing to carefully trace the causal path from the events of the Vietnam War, the subsequent assignment of blame or praise, to the civilian- or military-led military reforms. This allows for a fine-grained analysis of the sequence of independent, dependent, and intervening variables, which aids in establishing the cause-and-effect relationships that are at the core of this investigation. Through this, I aim to uncover the underlying mechanisms that shape how blame and praise assignment influences the level of civilian participation in military reforms, as well as how responsibility is assigned.

The systematic analysis will be structured around crucial decision points during and after the Vietnam War, focusing on the instances of responsibility assignment (either blame or credit) and the subsequent initiation and implementation of military reforms. By illuminating the link between these critical junctures, this chapter can provide an understanding of how and why certain reforms were enacted, and the role civilians and the military played in this process.

The Vietnam War represents a critical case for this study due to the profound effects the war had on the United States, both in terms of military strategy and civil-military relations. The war was marked by significant public discontent, a shift in the balance of political power between civilian leaders and the military, and substantial military reforms. This makes the Vietnam War a rich and meaningful case to examine the theory of blame and praise assignment's influence on the level of civilian participation in post-war military reforms.

The chapter proceeds in three broad sections. Section 1 examines the blame game, including if and when civilians and the military were blamed, and for what. It examines shifts in the dynamics of blame assignment throughout the conflict. In section 2, I examine each reform,

including which actor enacted it, whether there was opposition, and the preferences and strategies of civilians and the military. Section 3 concludes by providing a summary of the findings.

6.1. THE BLAME GAME

Theoretical Expectations

Given that civilian leaders are generally held accountable for initiating wars (*Hypothesis 2*), we would expect that a significant portion of the blame for the Vietnam War would be assigned to the US civilian leadership. This is due to their role in the escalation of American military involvement in Vietnam, despite public dissent and growing doubts about the war's winnability.

As for the military, the Vietnam War was marred by war crimes, most notably the My Lai Massacre, where US soldiers killed hundreds of unarmed Vietnamese civilians. Such incidents can significantly tarnish the military's reputation and lead to public condemnation for egregious violations of human rights and international law (*Hypothesis 6*). Finally, disciplinary problems were common, and the military leadership could be blamed for failing to maintain troop discipline and morale (*Hypothesis 5*). Battlefield performance, however, was not an issue for the US military. The armed forces won most of the battles they fought in Vietnam, and American forces were generally superior in technology, firepower, and resources. They also imposed many more casualties on their adversaries than they suffered, even though they were fighting far away from their territory.

Therefore, both actors are expected to be blamed. However, the prolonged nature of the Vietnam War needs to be taken into account. The American involvement in the Vietnam War spanned over a decade (1965-1975), a significant duration for any conflict. Given the complexity and duration of the Vietnam War, it is possible that both civilians and the military would shoulder

blame at different times. The assignment of blame could shift and evolve throughout the conflict, reflecting changing circumstances and events. Based on the theory, we would expect that the timing and intensity of blame assigned to each may fluctuate throughout the conflict based on events and outcomes tied to their specific responsibilities.

Since civilians are usually held accountable for initiating wars and managing diplomatic relations, blame directed at the civilian leadership might intensify during critical decision-making periods, such as the decision to escalate US involvement or continue the war despite increasing public dissent. Conversely, the military is typically held accountable for what occurs on the battlefield. Thus, military blame might peak during periods marked by tactical failures, lack of discipline, and war crimes.

Dynamics of blame shifting should be explained by the theory's key variables – the roles and responsibilities of civilian leadership and the military, and their perceived performance in the war. Thus, while both civilian leadership and the military are likely to be blamed for the Vietnam War, the timing, intensity, and focus of this blame may vary throughout the conflict.

Civilians

The first important fact to note is that, compared to the military, blame was more intensely assigned to civilians in the later stages of the war. The second is that the civilian leadership was blamed mainly for starting and escalating the war. This was the case for Johnson. Nixon, on the other hand, benefited from his promise and decision to de-escalate, at least for a few years into his presidency. Nonetheless, he was eventually bundled with other civilian leaders after 1975, and ended up sharing blame for the war. Below, I examine the dynamics of blame for both administrations.

“I Can't Run, I Can't Hide, And I Can't Make It Stop:” Johnson Is Blamed for Escalating

In terms of escalation, the Johnson administration leveraged the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964 to authorize an air strike against North Vietnam, marking the first direct application of American military force in the conflict. He also sought congressional approval for a resolution that would allow him to use power as he saw fit to protect US interests in the region. Americans largely supported these measures, and Congress swiftly and unquestioningly granted Johnson what amounted to a "blank check" for conducting the war. However, as these initiatives proved unsuccessful, Johnson invested even more strongly in military solutions. They culminated in July 1965, when the president opted for an open-ended military commitment. The “Americanization” of the war led to a substantial increase in troop deployment. By the end of 1965, some 190,000 troops had been sent to Vietnam, rising to nearly 400,000 by the end of 1966. Eventually, over 500,000 American forces would be committed to the conflict.

During the Johnson administration, pro-war coverage was much more common until 1966; the difference became smaller in 1968, and the trend reversed only in 1970.¹ Polls showed a similar trend: until mid-1967, a plurality of Americans consistently maintained that sending troops to Vietnam was not a mistake. In a poll conducted during that month, however, 48 percent of respondents still supported the notion that the decision to deploy troops to Vietnam was justified, while 41 percent believed it was a mistake. By October 1967, more Americans began to view the decision to send troops to Vietnam as a mistake, with 46 percent of respondents holding that belief compared to 44 percent who disagreed. This trend persisted for nearly a year. It was not until

¹ John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, 1st edition (Cambridge England ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 187.

August 1968, which marked three and a half years into the war, that Gallup conducted a poll where, for the first time, a majority of Americans expressed the view that sending troops to Vietnam was indeed a mistake. This comprised 53 percent of respondents, and signified a turning point in public opinion regarding the war. By 1971, this number had reached 60 percent.²

Figure 21 below shows that war initiation's net approval, defined here as the percentage of the population that stated that the war was not a mistake minus those who asserted it was. As can be seen, the public reached a net negative view of the war's initiation between mid-1967 and mid-1968, which only got worse from there.

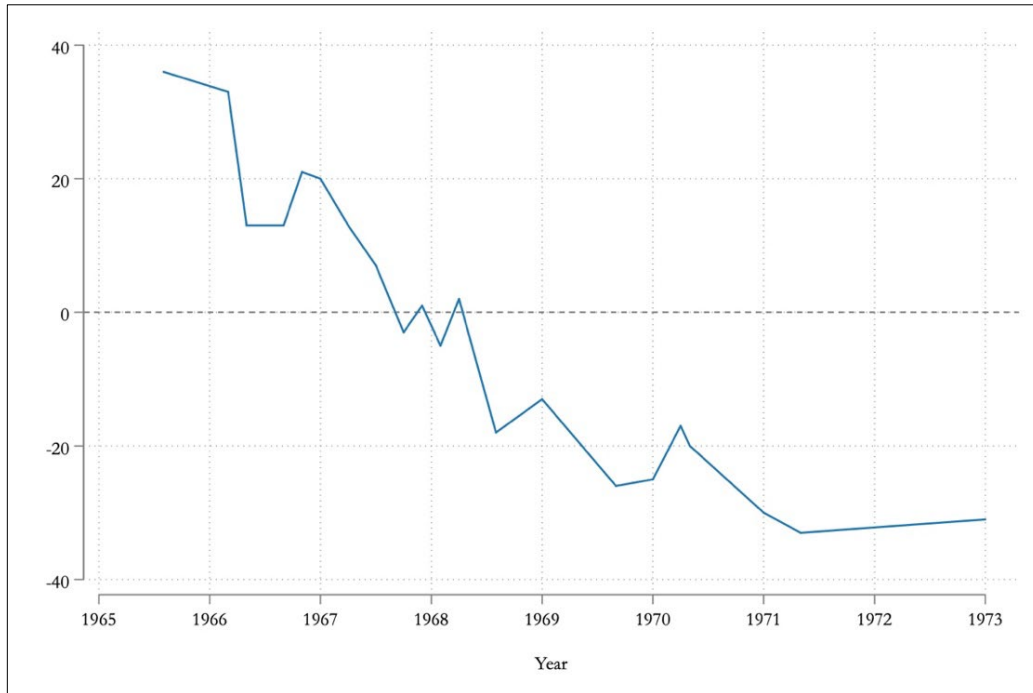
The public also knew what it wanted moving forward. Between July and November 1967, only 22 percent of Americans, on average, wanted the US to pursue total military victory in the war.³ By July 1968, 69 percent of Americans favored gradually withdrawing US troops from Vietnam. By October, this number was 71 percent, against only 16 percent who disagreed.⁴ Among *New York Times* editorials that mentioned Vietnam during and after the Tet Offensive in 1968, the most common theme was calls for de-escalation or peace negotiations, which comprised the vast

² Inc, "Iraq Versus Vietnam"; Larry Berman, *Lyndon Johnson's War: The Road to Stalemate in Vietnam*, New edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 86; David F. Schmitz, *The Tet Offensive: Politics, War, and Public Opinion* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 53.

³ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: July 1967, Question 20, USHARRIS.67JUL.R1, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1967), Survey question, DOI: {doi}; Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: August 1967, Question 16, USHARRIS.082867.R1, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1967), Survey question, DOI: {doi}; Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: September 1967, Question 25, USHARRIS.67SEP.R1, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1967), Survey question, DOI: {doi}; Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: October 1967, Question 23, USHARRIS.111367.R1, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1967), Survey question, DOI: {doi}; Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: November 1967, Question 14, USHARRIS.120467.R1, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1967), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁴ Richard Nixon, Richard Nixon Poll: October 1968, Question 11, USORC.101068.R15B, Opinion Research Corporation, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1968), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

Figure 21. Net Approval of the Vietnam War's Initiation.



Source: Gallup.

majority of criticism towards the Johnson administration, and even some. This theme appeared in 51 percent of editorials, and 42 percent criticized the administration directly in any way. Most of these were regarding a lack of de-escalation efforts.⁵

As for public opinion about Johnson specifically, in 1965, Gallup conducted four distinct polls, each revealing that the majority supported Johnson's approach to the Vietnam situation.⁶ Polls also revealed that 67 percent of respondents approved of Johnson's early air strikes, and 64 percent stated that US efforts in the conflict should persist.⁷ By April 1966, however, Johnson's handling of Vietnam had a 47 percent approval rating among Americans, less than half the population. From May to December of the same year, this approval rating saw a minor decline,

⁵ Code by myself.

⁶ Inc, "Iraq Versus Vietnam."

⁷ "Vietnam Air Strikes Get 67% US Approval," *Washington Post*, 1965.

averaging 42 percent. For the first time, in May and June 1966, the number of Americans disapproving of Johnson's war management exceeded those in approval. However, a more noticeable drop in approval was seen in 1967. Over the course of the year, Johnson's Vietnam policy received an average approval of just 37 percent, plunging to its floor of 27 percent in August. This would mark the lowest point of public approval during Johnson's tenure.⁸ His approval rate had also dipped to below 40 percent at the beginning of 1968.⁹

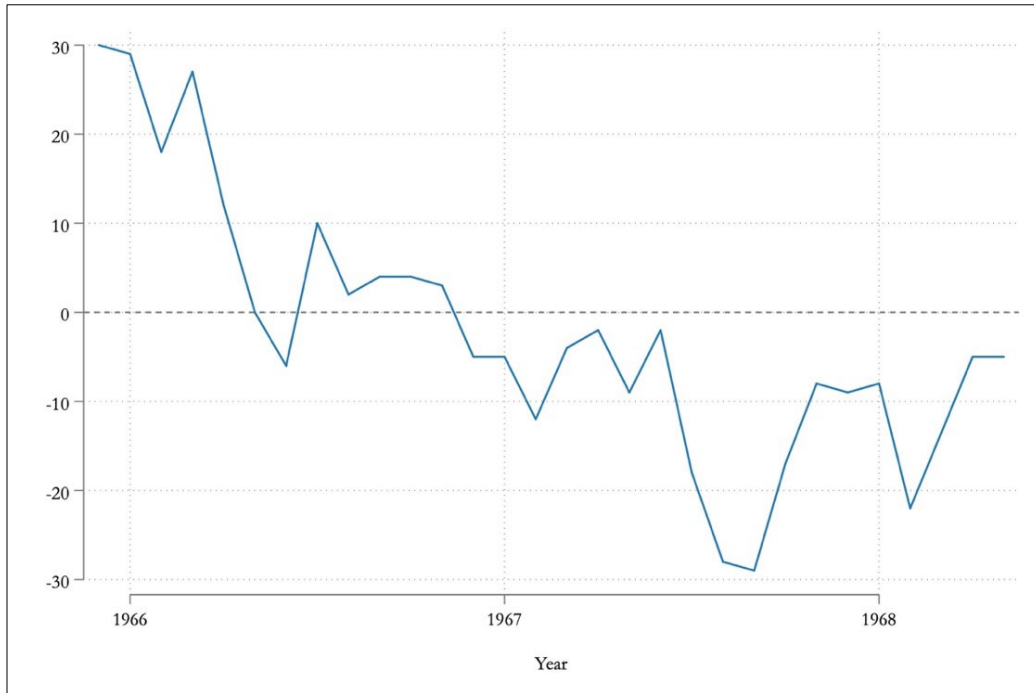
Figure 22 below displays the net approval of Johnson's handling of the war, defined here as the percentage of the population that approved it minus those who did not. As can be seen, the president's net approval plummeted from the beginning of 1966 onwards, and became negative around 1967.

The continuous decline in public backing for Johnson's war policies was also evident in the increasing number of newspapers, including the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, that shifted their editorial stances from mild support for the war to serious reservations about it. In the autumn of 1967, *Time* and *Life*, two of the nation's most widely circulated magazines, began expressing significant doubts about the US commitment, reversing their previous pro-war positions. In taking this stance, they joined *Newsweek*, another widely read weekly that had already shifted towards skepticism. The three major television networks—CBS, NBC, and ABC—were also gradually adopting a more questioning and less supportive attitude toward the war. This change was evident not only in the occasional editorial commentary by a network anchor but also in the kind of coverage presented on the evening news. There were also reports from the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Associated Press* about the

⁸ Inc, "Iraq Versus Vietnam"; Berman, *Lyndon Johnson's War*, 86; Schmitz, *The Tet Offensive*, 53.

⁹ Inc, "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Gallup Historical Statistics and Trends."

Figure 22. Net Approval of Johnson's Handling of the Vietnam War.



Source: Gallup.

“swelling ranks” of antiwar congress members and senators from Johnson’s Democratic Party.¹⁰ Again, the criticism here is against the war itself, meaning that the US should not have been there.

Johnson was acutely aware of these trends. On October 27, 1967, Harry McPherson, a trusted domestic adviser to the president, noted that a large number of average Americans had become “increasingly edgy about the bombing program.” The special counsel attributed it as “one of the main causes of disaffection with our Vietnam policy” and cautioned Johnson that, to many, the US appeared as “a big mechanized white nation obliterating a small agricultural brown nation.” As Small argues, the rationale behind bombarding an impoverished, defenseless agricultural

¹⁰ Phillip B. Davidson, *Vietnam at War: The History: 1946-1975*, 1st edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 552–53; Robert J. McMahon, “Turning Point: The Vietnam War’s Pivotal Year, November 1967–November 1968,” in *The Columbia History of the Vietnam War*, ed. David Anderson (Columbia University Press, 2011), 192–93.

country appeared to be dubious at most, especially once the Pentagon was forced to admit, in early 1967, that their airstrikes were not consistently safeguarding innocent civilians, often resulting in the casualties, known as "collateral damage." The acknowledgment resulted from a series by a well-known correspondent in the *New York Times* that provided convincing proof of that damage.¹¹

However, there is no evidence that the bombings were unpopular among the public, as every poll from 1965 to 1969 favored this policy. In mid-1968, for example, even when being told that the North Vietnamese said they would not agree to any progress in the peace talks if the bombings continued, only 24 percent of respondents claimed to favor stopping this policy, while 61 percent opposed it.¹² Numbers are very similar to earlier in the year,¹³ and reached up to 70 percent of approval for the bombings.¹⁴ The same is true for 1967.¹⁵ Therefore, the argument that the bombings contributed to Johnson's blame is not convincing.

The war, however, was becoming unpopular. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, who had long been the most prominent public advocate for the war effort, had become the most

¹¹ Melvin Small, "“Hey, Hey, LBJ!”: American Domestic Politics and the Vietnam War,” in *The Columbia History of the Vietnam War*, ed. David Anderson (Columbia University Press, 2011), 337–38.

¹² Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: June 1968, Question 1, USHARRIS.081968.R1, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1968), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

¹³ Gallup Organization, Gallup Poll # 1968-0760: 1968 Presidential Election/Vietnam, Question 13, USGALLUP.760.Q013, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1968), Survey question, DOI: {doi}; Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: April 1968, Question 5, USHARRIS.040868.R2, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1968), Survey question, DOI: {doi}; Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: December 1967, Question 10, USHARRIS.122367.R2D, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1967), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

¹⁴ Gallup Organization, Gallup Poll # 1968-0757: Crime/Presidential Election/Vietnam, Question 16, USGALLUP.757.Q016, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1968), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

¹⁵ Gallup Organization, Gallup Poll # 1967-0752: Vietnam/1968 Presidential Election, Question 11, USGALLUP.752.Q10, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1967), Survey question, DOI: {doi}; Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: March 1967, Question 1, USHARRIS.031367.R1, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1967), Survey question, DOI: {doi}; Gallup Organization, Gallup Poll # 1967-0741: 1968 Presidential Election/US-China Relations, Question 19, USGALLUP.741.Q17A, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1967), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

notable among the dissenters. On November 1, 1967, he submitted a memorandum to the president, articulating his exceedingly pessimistic "personal views" on the trajectory of the war and the path of US policy. The Pentagon chief cautioned that "continuing our present course of action will not bring us by the end of 1968 enough closer to success, in the eyes of the American public, to prevent the continued erosion of popular support for our involvement in Vietnam." He later emphasized that "the American public, frustrated by the slow rate of progress, fearing continued escalation, and doubting that all approaches to peace have been sincerely probed, does not give the appearance of having the will to persist."¹⁶

Johnson was convinced that significant and visible military progress was essential to sway public opinion in a more favorable direction, bolstering his chances for reelection. What he received, however, was the Tet Offensive, a major series of coordinated attacks by the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong against South Vietnam and its allies, beginning on January 30, 1968. George A. Carver, the CIA's chief Vietnam analyst, suggested that regardless of the effectiveness of the US and South Vietnamese counterattacks, the initial success of the offensive would undoubtedly boost the morale of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong. "Regardless of what happens tonight or during the next few days," Carver forecasted, "the degree of success already achieved in Saigon and around the country will negatively impact the image of the Government of South Vietnam (and its formidable American allies as well) in the eyes of the people." McNamara, like Carver, immediately recognized the severe psychological and public relations implications the attacks were bound to have. Although the defense secretary confidently predicted a "heavy defeat" for the attackers, he anticipated that America's adversaries would achieve a significant

¹⁶ McMahan, "Turning Point: The Vietnam War's Pivotal Year, November 1967–November 1968," 193–94.

psychological victory. “I imagine our people across the country this morning will feel that [the North Vietnamese are] much stronger than they had previously anticipated they were,” he observed.¹⁷

Indeed, McNamara and Carver's predictions turned out to be remarkably accurate. The Tet Offensive had significant psychological and political effects that far surpassed its relatively modest military achievements. It dealt a substantial blow to the credibility of the Johnson administration, especially given the overly optimistic statements recently made by Johnson and his team. When the president and his key aides stated that the attacks were anticipated and that the US and South Vietnamese forces had dealt a devastating blow to the insurgents, their claims were met with significant skepticism from both Congress and the media, including scorns from the *New York Times* and disapproval from *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News & World Report*, the nation's three leading weekly news magazines. Moreover, foremost politicians from both the Republican and Democratic parties harshly criticized the administration's policy. The view of Clark Clifford, Johnson's incoming defense secretary, was that the support for the Vietnam War, particularly among the elite, was swiftly deteriorating.¹⁸

To make matters worse, on March 10, the *New York Times* disclosed that General Westmoreland, Commander of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), had requested over 200,000 new soldiers and marines for deployment. The report also detailed the nature and extent of the policy divisions within the administration. This revelation, stemming from multiple

¹⁷ McMahan, 198.

¹⁸ See William M. Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam: Media and Military at War*, Revised ed. edition (Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 112; James S. Olson and Randy Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell: America and Vietnam, 1945–2004*, First Edition (New York: St Martins Press, 1991), 27; Robert D. Schulzinger, *A Time for War: The United States and Vietnam, 1941-1975*, Revised ed. edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 262; McMahan, “Turning Point: The Vietnam War's Pivotal Year, November 1967–November 1968,” 200–202.

leaks from within the government, sparked a fresh wave of criticisms against the administration's credibility and competence. Political opponents, as expected, renewed their attacks on Johnson.¹⁹

On March 31, the president announced a major change in US policy. In a speech broadcast to a national television audience, he announced a nearly complete halt to bombing raids against North Vietnam, and extended an invitation to Hanoi to participate in formal peace talks with American representatives. Then, Johnson stunned his audience by announcing that he would neither seek nor accept his party's presidential nomination.

Johnson's administration was blamed for escalating the Vietnam War, and for the administration's lack of credibility. As mentioned above, the bombings, notably Operation Rolling Thunder, are said to have been a significant problem domestically, but there is no evidence for that in public opinion data. Johnson's credibility problem, on the other hand, certainly did not help. It was intensified due to his administration's overly optimistic portrayal of the war situation, with unrealistic predictions of imminent victory and the contrast between the government's rosy depictions and the grim realities reported by journalists and returning soldiers.

Nevertheless, the strongest and most enduring criticism of Johnson's handling of the Vietnam War was his drastic escalation of American involvement. The president inherited a difficult situation in Vietnam from his predecessor, but it was under his leadership that the war escalated dramatically. Not only that, but critics argue that he missed several opportunities to de-escalate the conflict. His insistence on "not losing Vietnam" led him to commit more and more American troops to an increasingly unwinnable war. He pushed for a military victory, disregarding the domestic unrest the war was causing. At the end of the day, the public perception that the

¹⁹ Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam*, 125; "Westmoreland Requests 206,000 More Men; Stirring Debate in Administration," *New York Times*, March 10, 1968.

Vietnam War had been a mistake posed a serious problem for Johnson. The American public grew increasingly disillusioned with a war that seemed endless and purposeless, and which was the responsibility of their political leadership. This sentiment was widely echoed by the media and politicians from both parties.

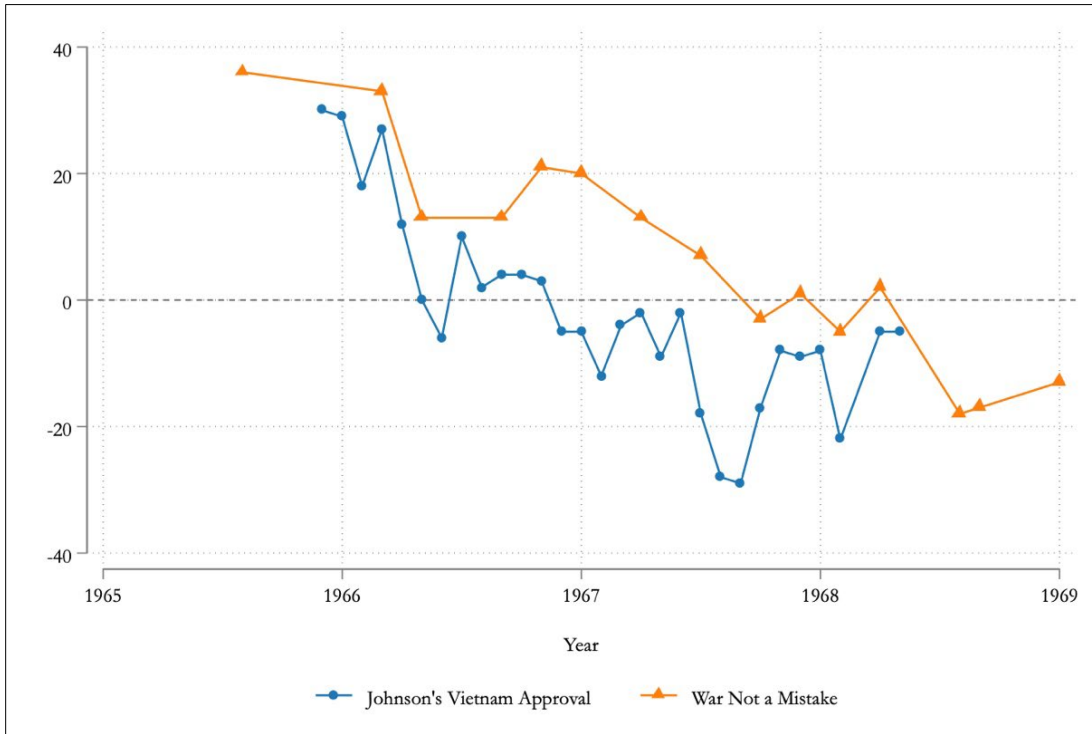
If the majority of the content of the criticism towards Johnson was the war's escalation, including in leading media outlets and his own party, public opinion data also shows that the approval of his handling of the war was tightly connected to the perception of whether the war had been a mistake. Figure 23 combines Figure 21 and Figure 22, and displays the similarity between these trends.

Nixon's Opportunity: "Peace with Honor"

With Johnson out of the presidential run in 1968, an unusual convergence of expectations emerged between war hawks and doves. Both desired an end to the conflict, though through contrasting means. Nixon's campaign capitalized on this convergence of goals and divergence of methods. To secure victory in the election, he bridged the chasm between war supporters and opponents, and maintained equilibrium in his rhetoric. In addressing all Americans, Nixon spoke of achieving an honorable peace. Throughout the tumultuous year, he astonishingly emerged as a peace candidate in the eyes of many. This former Cold War hawk now expressed a desire to bring an honorable conclusion to the Vietnam War while establishing a framework for lasting peace.²⁰

²⁰ Richard J. Whalen, *Catch the Falling Flag: A Republican's Challenge to His Party* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 25, 135; Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*, 36, 38, 56; Jeffrey Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War* (University Press of Kansas, 1998), chap. 3; Jeffrey Kimball, "Richard M. Nixon and the Vietnam War: The Paradox of Disengagement with Escalation," in *The Columbia History of the Vietnam War*, ed. David Anderson (Columbia University Press, 2011), 220–21.

Figure 23. Net Approval of Johnson's Handling of the Vietnam War Versus Net Approval of the War's Initiation.



Source: Gallup.

Nixon's policy, known as "Vietnamization," aimed to gradually withdraw US troops while bolstering South Vietnamese forces to continue the fight against the North. This policy was seen as a constructive step towards ending American involvement in Vietnam – it was supported by 84 percent of the population.²¹ And he got credit for it. Importantly, Nixon was not tied to the escalation of the war. Therefore, at least initially, the public's evaluation of the president's handling of the war was independent of the perception of whether the war had been a mistake. In other words, Nixon had a window of opportunity to be popular despite the unpopular war. He could deliver what the public wanted: the withdrawal from the conflict.

²¹ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: March 1971, Question 46, USHARRIS.71MAR.R13, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

This is precisely what happened. After winning the 1969 election, Nixon's job approval, in contrast to Johnson's, was consistently over 60 percent.²² Furthermore, as Figure 24 shows, Nixon's handling of the war remained popular until the Paris Peace Accords, signed on January 27, 1973, while the war itself became increasingly unpopular. Therefore, Nixon came into office in a position of strength. His popularity was high, he was not tied to the war's initiation or escalation, and he was in a favorable position to deliver what the population wanted.

As can be seen, Nixon's Vietnam policy popularity peaked precisely when the Paris Peace Accords were signed. At this point, the public believed that he was experienced and knew what he was doing,²³ 80 percent of the public was satisfied with the peace agreement reached,²⁴ 62 percent rated Nixon positively on the terms agreed to in the settlement,²⁵ and 72 percent on his bringing of the war to a close.²⁶

Most people also believed that the US had made the best deal it could under the circumstances,²⁷ and that the recent bombing of cities in North Vietnam helped bring about the peace agreement.²⁸ Moreover, it is evident that Nixon was being rewarded for putting an end to

²² Inc, "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Gallup Historical Statistics and Trends."

²³ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: January 1973, Question 5, USHARRIS.020173.R2B, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1973), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

²⁴ Gallup Organization, Gallup Organization Poll: January 1973, Question 1, USGALLUP.92.R01, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1973), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

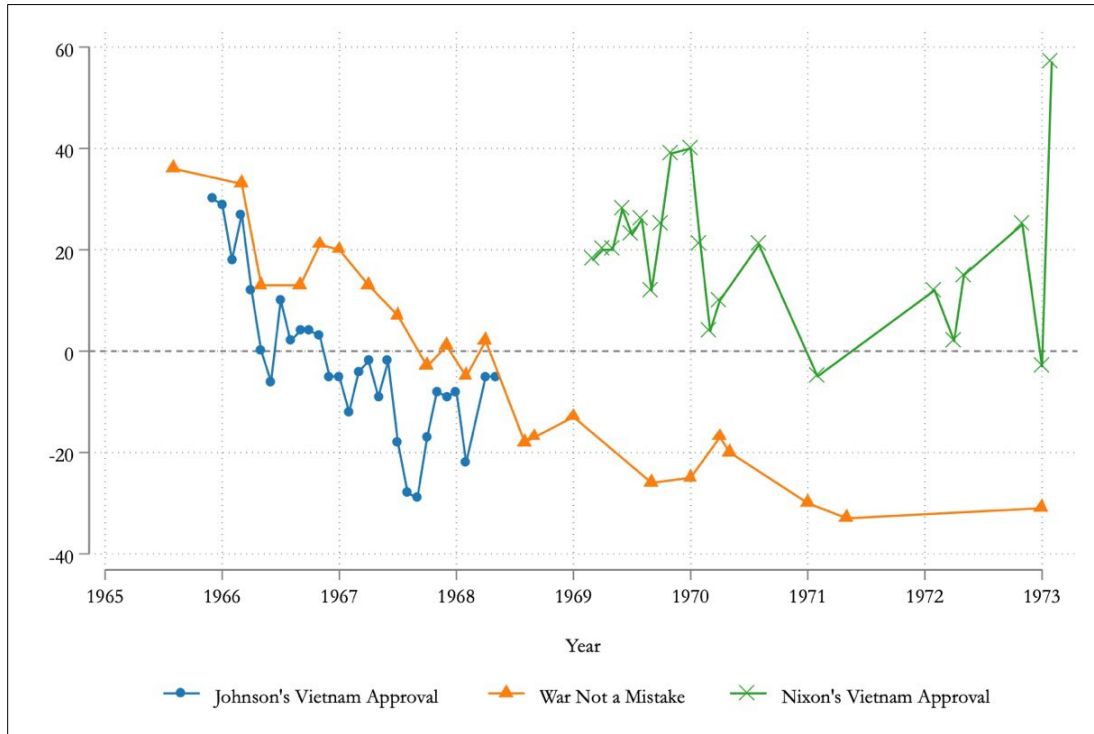
²⁵ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: February 1973, Question 33, USHARRIS.030873.R1E, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1973), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

²⁶ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: February 1973, Question 30, USHARRIS.030873.R1B, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1973), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

²⁷ Potomac Associates, Gallup/Potomac Associates Poll: State of the Nation, 1974, Question 144, USGALLUP.74POTC.Q03, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1974), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

²⁸ Gallup Organization, Gallup Organization Poll: January 1973, Question 4, USGALLUP.92.R04, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1973), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

Figure 24. Net Approval of Johnson’s Handling of the Vietnam War Versus Net Approval of the War’s Initiation Versus Net Approval of Nixon’s Handling of the Vietnam War.



Source: Gallup.

the conflict, and that the American public wanted nothing to do with Vietnam anymore. For example, more than 70 percent of respondents opposed sending troops if North Vietnam tried to take over South Vietnam again,²⁹ 71 percent opposed new bombings,³⁰ and 50 percent opposed

²⁹ Gallup Organization, Gallup Organization Poll: January 1973, Question 10, USGALLUP.92.R10, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1973), Survey question, DOI: {doi}; The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Chicago Council on Foreign Relations Poll # 1974-2436G: American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy, 1974: General Public, Question 250, USHARRIS.74CFR.Q08C, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1974), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

³⁰ Gallup Organization, Gallup Organization Poll: January 1973, Question 9, USGALLUP.92.R09, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1973), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

even the sending of war materials.³¹ The public also heavily opposed sending military aid,³² even if it would avoid a “bloodbath,”³³ and most people also believed that a lesson from Vietnam was not to send troops to other countries civil wars.³⁴ The withdrawal also clearly had the population's attention: only 8 percent of respondents claimed not to be paying much attention.

Nixon's presidency, of course, was not without crises. One major setback for civilian leaders occurred in 1971, with the release of the Pentagon Papers. Officially titled "Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force," this was a classified study of the US government's political and military involvement in Vietnam from 1945 to 1967. The papers were leaked to the press in 1971 by Daniel Ellsberg, a former State Department official who had worked on the study; this resulted in a famous legal case, "The New York Times Co. v. United States." Ellsberg gave copies of the documents to the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and other newspapers. The papers revealed that the government had been dishonest in its communication with the public about the extent and likelihood of success of US involvement in the war, provoking widespread outrage.

³¹ Gallup Organization, Gallup Organization Poll: January 1973, Question 8, USGALLUP.92.R08, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1973), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

³² Opinion Research Corporation, Opinion Research Corporation Poll: January 1975, Question 31, USORC.75MAR.R3, Opinion Research Corporation, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1975), Survey question, DOI: {doi}; Gallup Organization, Gallup Poll # 923, Question 3, USGALLUP.923.Q02B, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1975), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

³³ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: April 1975, Question 3, USHARRIS.041075.R3, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1975), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

³⁴ The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Chicago Council on Foreign Relations Poll # 1974-2436G: American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy, 1974: General Public, Question 163, USHARRIS.74CFR.Q06BD, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1974), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

The Nixon administration tried to prevent the *Times* and the *Post* from publishing the materials, arguing that the release would cause immediate and irreparable harm to the US. This led to a Supreme Court case, in which the court ruled in favor of the press. The release of the Pentagon Papers increased public opposition to the Vietnam War and added fuel to the fire of anti-war protests. It also contributed to the growing credibility gap between the US government and its citizens, a significant factor in the diminishing public trust in government.

The president was also criticized for expanding the Vietnam War into Cambodia. The invasion sparked a new wave of protests on college campuses across the US. The most notable of these occurred at Kent State University in Ohio, where the Ohio National Guard, four students were killed, and nine others were injured when the guardsmen opened fire on a crowd of protesters. This event further ignited protests nationwide and intensified public opinion against the war. Amidst the campus chaos, the Democratic Congress asserted its power. During this time, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was annulled. Even more significantly, the Senate approved the Cooper-Church Amendment, which threatened to halt funds for the invasion of Cambodia unless US troops were pulled out by June 30. Nixon met the deadline, insisting that he never intended to maintain forces in Cambodia beyond that point.³⁵

For the remainder of his term, Nixon constantly met resistance from the opposition, and bills aimed at expediting the war's end and preventing the president from initiating further escalations were received and occasionally approved. Due to these dynamics, when Nixon orchestrated an invasion of Laos in February 1971, he ensured that only South Vietnamese forces crossed the border. These challenges to presidential power peaked in 1973 with the historic War

³⁵ Small, ““Hey, Hey, LBJ!”: American Domestic Politics and the Vietnam War,” 350.

Powers Resolution. This law mandated that presidents notify Congress when deploying armed forces into combat zones and seek Congressional approval to retain troops in those zones beyond sixty days.³⁶

The Pentagon Papers and the War Powers Resolution can be viewed as crucial points in the history of the war because they reflect the consolidation of the public's loss of confidence in the executive branch's judgment on when to initiate or escalate conflicts. They represent pivotal moments of disillusionment with the government's handling of foreign conflicts. The Pentagon Papers, on the one hand, eroded public trust in the executive's handling of the war. The perception was that the government was not acting in the people's best interests and that there was an information gap between the government and the public, leading many to question whether the executive branch could be trusted to make judicious decisions about initiating or escalating conflicts. The War Powers Resolution, on the other hand, was a form of institutionalization of this distrust. Thus, both were clear indicators of the beginning of a shift in public sentiment. In 1971, the population still believed that the Johnson Administration had deceived the public regarding the escalation of the war,³⁷ that the newspapers had done the right thing by publishing the Pentagon Papers,³⁸ and that their publishing was a good thing.³⁹ In 1973, most people also believed the Nixon administration was not “telling the public all they should know about the Vietnam war.”⁴⁰

³⁶ Small, 351.

³⁷ Opinion Research Corporation, ORC Public Opinion Index, Question 8, USORC.062171.R09, Opinion Research Corporation, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

³⁸ Gallup Organization, Gallup Poll # 833, Question 7, USGALLUP.833.Q06B, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

³⁹ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: July 1971, Question 49, USHARRIS.71JUL.R22A, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁴⁰ Gallup Organization, Gallup Poll # 862, Question 5, USGALLUP.862.Q005, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1973), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

At the time, there were no polls about the War Powers Resolution, but, 14 years later, it was supported by 77 percent of the public.⁴¹

Nixon was not able to consolidate his image as a successful president when it came to Vietnam. Nor was he able to save face for civilian leaders in general. After Paris Peace Accords were signed, the public had to make sense of the war and grapple with what had happened. As Anderson notes, the post-war evaluations of the public – in which the vast majority of people surveyed in various studies conducted in the years following the war said it was a mistake – clearly show a recognition that the US had lost the war. The proclaimed goals of US policy had been to maintain South Vietnam's independence and keep it a non-communist bastion against Asian Communism. However, despite much effort and sacrifice, the US had been unable to do so.⁴² Thus, as the war approached its end, the notion that political elites were the main actors to blame – because they had started the war – crystallized. The conflict became a "politician's war," just as would happen in the second Iraq War decades later.

Moreover, The Fall of Saigon, in 1975, became an iconic representation of the US defeat in Vietnam. The capture of Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, by the People's Army of Vietnam and the Viet Cong, on 30 April 1975, marked the end of the Vietnam War and the start of a transition period leading to the formal reunification of Vietnam under communist rule. The US evacuation of its embassy in Saigon, with images of helicopters taking off from the embassy roof, was widely covered in the media. At this point, they had to make sense of what had happened in the previous decade.

⁴¹ Newsweek Magazine, Newsweek Poll # 1987-87120: Gary Hart, Question 27, USGALNEW.87120.R18, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1987), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁴² David Anderson, "Introduction: The Vietnam War and Its Enduring Historical Relevance," in *The Columbia History of the Vietnam War*, ed. David Anderson (Columbia University Press, 2011), 8–9.

Contemporary polls reflected these sentiments. In 1975, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, and Congress were assigned blame for “what happened in Southeast Asia and Vietnam” by 54, 70, 69, 58, 55, and 70 percent of respondents, respectively. When asked to choose one president, respondents blamed the most "for Vietnam" Johnson and Nixon, with 34 and 29 percent, respectively. The public, at this point, still took the war very seriously. Only 12 percent of the public reported not being personally concerned with the collapse of South Vietnam,⁴³ and the victory of the North Vietnamese, and 56 percent felt that their own security was threatened due to the conflict.⁴⁴

Regarding what went wrong in the war, “The fact that we had no right to be there in the first place” was a factor for 66 percent of respondents, with only 27 percent disagreeing.⁴⁵ Thus, having started and escalated the war was seen as a major mistake by the public. The conflict was also described as a dark moment in American history by 72 percent of the public,⁴⁶ and 41 percent believed it had made the US a "second-rate nation."⁴⁷ Only 10 percent believed the US had done the right thing by fighting the war in Vietnam.⁴⁸ In 1978, 72 percent of Americans stated that they

⁴³ Time Magazine, Time Soundings Poll # 1975-8440: Economy/Foreign Relations, Question 5, USYANK.758440.Q02D, Yankelovich, Skelly & White, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1975), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁴⁴ Time Magazine, Time Soundings Poll # 1975-8440: Economy/Foreign Relations, Question 56, USYANK.758440.Q11B, Yankelovich, Skelly & White, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1975), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁴⁵ Time Magazine, Time Soundings Poll # 1975-8440: Economy/Foreign Relations, Question 35, 42, 44, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, USYANK.758440.Q09A6, Yankelovich, Skelly & White, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1975), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁴⁶ The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Chicago Council on Foreign Relations Poll # 1974-2436G: American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy, 1974: General Public, Question 223, USHARRIS.74CFR.Q07CD, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1974), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁴⁷ Time Magazine, Time Soundings Poll # 1975-8440: Economy/Foreign Relations, Question 55, USYANK.758440.Q11A, Yankelovich, Skelly & White, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1975), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁴⁸ The Roper Organization, Roper Reports # 1975-06: International Relations/Consumerism, Question 89, USROPER.75-6.R31G, The Roper Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1975), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

thought the Vietnam War was "fundamentally wrong and immoral,"⁴⁹ and these attitudes did not shift in the polls that followed.⁵⁰ Importantly, most people also believed that the war had contributed to people's hostility toward the government⁵¹ and people's lack of trust in the government to do what is right.⁵² Therefore, the public reacted as expected by my theory: civilian leaders were held responsible for initiating and escalating a disastrous war, even when they had good reasons not to.

In the press, the month after the US final withdrawal from Vietnam, in 1975, saw increased criticism towards civilian leaders. In editorials from the period, the overarching themes were: 1) wrong decisions led to US involvement in the war; 2) how the military made sacrifices and was victimized by these decisions; and 3) how the war was impossible to have been won. Two new narratives also arose: that civilians intruded too much and did not allow the armed forces to do their job, and that lack of public support was a decisive factor that impeded victory. For example, one article argued that "(...) military power without political cohesiveness and support proved to be an empty shell."⁵³ Another article quotes veterans stating, "The US sent an Army with its hands tied behind its back - it could not fight all out to win because politicians and diplomats were

⁴⁹ The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Chicago Council on Foreign Relations Poll # 1978-78175G: American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy, 1978--General Public, Question 179, USGALLUP.78CFR.R33A, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1978), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁵⁰ Robert McMahon, "Contested Memory: The Vietnam War and American Society, 1975–2001," *Diplomatic History* 26, no. 2 (April 1, 2002): 175, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7709.00306>.

⁵¹ The Veterans Administration, The Veterans Administration Poll: November 1979, Question 3, USHARRIS.79VETS.R01B02, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1979), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁵² The Veterans Administration, The Veterans Administration Poll: November 1979, Question 5, USHARRIS.79VETS.R01B04, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1979), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁵³ FLORA LEWIS Special to The New York Times, "Long Road to the Paris Pacts Had Misleading Sins, Pitfalls and Dead Ends," *New York Times*, 1975.

running the war. Therefore, don't blame the US Army for losing the war."⁵⁴ These narratives became somewhat popular.⁵⁵ In a 1975 poll, 49 percent of respondents believed "Lack of commitment on the part of the American people" was to blame to some degree "for what happened in Vietnam," with 43 percent believing otherwise.⁵⁶

Therefore, the period between 1973 and 1975 saw a transition from Nixon having credit for withdrawing the US from the war to a general assignment of blame to civilians, which included Nixon himself. It is expected that a president will benefit from withdrawing the public from an unpopular war. However, when the conflict came to an end, the American public needed to make sense of what had happened, and make judgments about what had gone wrong. In this case, they understood that civilians had made the decision to initiate and massively escalate this conflict, and the notion that the US should have never been there in the first place was well ingrained in the public.

Military

Two factors are important for our understanding of blame assigned to the military in the context of the Vietnam War. First, neither the military, civilians, nor public opinion identified military effectiveness as the main problem in the war. There was a significant image problem for the army. However, it was connected with discipline issues, drugs, and behavior in general.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ JAMES P. STERBA Special to The New York Times, "Reaction of US Troops: Relief, Tears and Anger," *New York Times*, 1975.

⁵⁵ See Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy II: A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War*, First Printing edition (New York, N.Y: Dell, 1992); James F. Dunnigan and Raymond M. Macedonia, *Getting It Right: American Military Reforms After Vietnam to the Gulf War and Beyond*, 1st edition (New York: William Morrow & Co, 1993).

⁵⁶ Time Magazine, Time Soundings Poll # 1975-8440: Economy/Foreign Relations, Question 34, USYANK.758440.Q08A, Yankelovich, Skelly & White, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1975), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁵⁷ Nielsen, "US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1973-1982," 35. See also Spiller, "In the Shadow of the Dragon," 43.

As mentioned above, the initial stages of the war took place in a context of highly favorable public opinion, which began to change between 1967 and 1968. Public perception of the military evolved in a similar fashion initially. In 1967, for example, the job that General William Westmoreland, Chief of Staff of the United States Army, had done in the Vietnam War was rated excellent/pretty good by 68 percent of respondents, with only 16 percent rating it fair/poor.⁵⁸

However, the military's optimistic rhetoric about progress in the war, contrasted with the harsh realities on the ground, bred skepticism. These growing reservations culminated in the Tet Offensive in early 1968. As explained above, despite being a military defeat for the Viet Cong, the Tet Offensive profoundly shook American confidence in the war effort. Graphic media coverage and rising casualty counts amplified public discontent. Protests against the war and the military grew more frequent and intense, peaking in 1969.

In the months prior to the offensive, Westmoreland had been boasting about the positive outlook of the war. "We are making real progress," he confidently declared in an interview. During a speech at the National Press Club, he gave an even more optimistic view of the current scenario. "We have reached an important point," Westmoreland asserted, "where the end begins to come into view." During another interview on NBC Television's Meet the Press, he maintained the US was "winning a war of attrition now." He even predicted that within two years or less, the adversary would be so depleted that the US could gradually decrease its involvement and initiate the withdrawal of some troops. Johnson was lifted by these hopeful statements, especially Westmoreland's forecast that US troops could begin pulling out within the next two years.⁵⁹ As

⁵⁸ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: November 1967, Question 2, USHARRIS.120967.R1B, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1967), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁵⁹ McMahan, "Turning Point: The Vietnam War's Pivotal Year, November 1967–November 1968," 195.

McMahon notes, the Tet Offensive “dealt a body blow to the Johnson administration’s credibility, making a mockery of the wildly optimistic statements that Westmoreland, Bunker, and Johnson himself had delivered so recently.”⁶⁰ It also did not help that the *New York Times* disclosed that Westmoreland had requested over 200,000 new soldiers and marines for deployment after the offensive, leading to a fresh wave of criticisms.⁶¹

At this moment, however, the focus was still much more on Johnson than on the armed forces. For example, after the Tet Offensive, only 8 percent of *New York Times* editorials about Vietnam made remarks about military strategy or performance in any form, although 17 percent criticized the military somehow. But another 17 percent suggested that the army had been sent to a war that was impossible to win, 13 percent expressed optimism about the army's fighting capacity, and 8 percent referred to soldiers as victims of decisions by civilian leaders.⁶²

Another massive problem for the military was the My Lai Massacre, a tragic event in which a unit of the US Army, under the command of Lieutenant William Calley, indiscriminately killed approximately 500 unarmed civilians in the South Vietnamese hamlet of My Lai on March 16, 1968. The victims encompassed women, children, and older adults. When the massacre became public knowledge in 1969, it generated significant international outrage and exacerbated the already escalating anti-war sentiment in the US. The subsequent investigation and prosecution of Lieutenant Calley and others involved in the massacre revealed systemic issues of leadership and moral responsibility within the military establishment.

⁶⁰ McMahon, 199.

⁶¹ Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam*, 125; “Westmoreland Requests 206,000 More Men; Stirring Debate in Administration”.

⁶² Code by myself.

The My Lai Massacre had a significant impact on the public image of the US military. It served as an affront to the nation's collective moral consciousness and called into question the ethical framework within which the Vietnam War was being waged. This event tarnished the military's reputation. Contemporary polls showed that a majority of respondents believed it was adequate to blame the army, as an organization, for “what Lt. Calley and others did,”⁶³ and also that such incidents made it “difficult to argue that we fight wars in a more moral way than the Communists.”⁶⁴ Moreover, 77 percent believed that the soldiers at My Lai were “following orders from their higher-ups,”⁶⁵ and 88 percent believed that it was unfair to find Lt. Calley guilty and “not put higher-ups on trial who gave Calley his orders.”⁶⁶ A majority of respondents also believed this was a common occurrence, as opposed to only 24 percent who believed this was an isolated incident,⁶⁷ and 81 percent were “sure there are many other incidents like My Lai involving American troops that have been hidden.”⁶⁸ Even two years after the massacre had been made public, the public was still very aware of the incident: an average of 94 percent of respondents had read or heard about it.⁶⁹

⁶³ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: April 1971, Question 74, USHARRIS.71APR.R29G, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁶⁴ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: February 1971, Question 30, USHARRIS.71FEB.R17E, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁶⁵ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: February 1971, Question 27, USHARRIS.71FEB.R17B, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁶⁶ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: April 1971, Question 68, USHARRIS.71APR.R29A, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁶⁷ Newsweek, Gallup/Newsweek Poll: FBI, Question 4, USGALNEW.71CLLY.R4, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁶⁸ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: February 1971, Question 26, USHARRIS.71FEB.R17A, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁶⁹ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: February 1971, Question 23, USHARRIS.71FEB.R14, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey

Another challenge was the public perception of drug abuse and indiscipline within the US Army. The issue of drug abuse among soldiers came to the fore mainly in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This was precipitated by a series of media exposés and military reports detailing the escalating use of drugs, particularly heroin and marijuana, among US service members stationed in Vietnam. Public exposure to this issue was catalyzed by a 1971 report by the Department of Defense, revealing that approximately 15 percent of soldiers were habitual drug users, a statistic that resonated profoundly with an already disillusioned American populace. In 1971, 68 percent of Americans agreed that "The Army's discipline has broken down when so many soldiers are using drugs," with only 25 percent disagreeing.⁷⁰ Among the public, 86 percent believed marijuana was very or somewhat accessible in the armed forces, with the number being 76 percent for harder drugs such as heroin.⁷¹

The phenomenon of indiscipline, manifested in fragging incidents (soldiers attacking their superiors), desertion, and mutiny, similarly aroused public consternation. The peak of this issue can be situated between 1969 and 1971, a period marked by increased soldier resistance to the war and increasing instances of insubordination within the military ranks. In 1971, 82 percent of the public believed that the army had produced many soldiers who "did not want to fight," and 54

question, DOI: {doi}; Opinion Research Corporation, ORC Public Opinion Index, Question 2, USORC.040171.R02, Opinion Research Corporation, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁷⁰ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: March 1971, Question 38, USHARRIS.71MAR.R07F, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁷¹ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: December 1971, Questions 1 and 2, USHARRIS.022172.R1, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

percent agreed that “The Army's clubs for soldiers in Vietnam are shot through with corruption and graft,” with only 16 percent disagreeing.⁷²

The discursive construction of these problems in the public sphere contributed to a pervasive narrative of a demoralized, disoriented, and dysfunctional US Army, effectively undermining the military's authority. However, throughout the 1970s, public attention to these issues began to wane, especially after the cessation of US involvement in Vietnam in 1973 and the subsequent demobilization of troops. This was accompanied by concerted efforts within the military to manage and rectify these issues, as demonstrated by the implementation of comprehensive drug testing and substance abuse programs.

By 1975, the armed forces were in a much better place in the eyes of public opinion. In public opinion polls, respondents with a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in the armed forces amounted to 58 percent, with only 10 percent claiming to have "very little" confidence. In 1976, 74 percent reported "a great deal" or "a fair amount" of confidence in the armed forces leadership.⁷³ In 1977, a different pollster reported that confidence in the armed forces was high for 44 percent, medium for 45 percent, and low for only 10 percent of respondents.⁷⁴

Moreover, negative public perceptions did not extend to battlefield performance. For example, the same surveys that conveyed the perception of disciplinary problems also found that 68 percent of Americans believed that “American fighting men are well trained,” 62 percent

⁷² Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: March 1971, Question 39, USHARRIS.71MAR.R07E,G, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁷³ Potomac Associates, State of the Nation, 1976, Question 106, USGALLUP.76POTM.Q24B, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1976), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁷⁴ Opinion Research Corporation, ORC Public Opinion Index, Question 3, USORC.78MAR.R01C, Opinion Research Corporation, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1977), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

thought the army was a “well-run, efficient fighting organization,” and 59 percent agreed that “The American Army can out-fight any other army in the world.”⁷⁵

The military was indeed not shy when defending its competence on the battlefield. General DePuy, Commander of the 1st Infantry Division, thought, for example, that the Tet Offensive was a “military disaster” for the other side, even though it was a political victory, and that their success in advancing lines was a result of the idiosyncrasies of irregular warfare. The problem was that it “terrified and horrified people in Washington.” He argued that the American people decided it was “not worth it,” and that the war could have been won through General LeMay’s concept of bombing North Vietnam “back to the stone age.” But that “that wasn’t within the tolerances of the American people and their political leaders.”⁷⁶ For him, Washington and the media were always behind in the understanding of the conflict⁷⁷ - the public and media were “clueless,” and the army could not get the authorization to do “what was needed.”⁷⁸ He criticized the fact that, for news editors in the US, somehow “social justice was on the side of the enemy.”⁷⁹ DePuy also believed that the US Army fought “extremely well” for most of the war – where it had not, it was because the conflict was “ill-suited.”⁸⁰ Moreover, he praised the enemy’s performance.⁸¹ Finally, the General believed the US should not have committed so much to the conflict, and hinted at it being impossible to win.⁸²

⁷⁵ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: March 1971, Questions 34, 35, and 36, USHARRIS.71MAR.R07D, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁷⁶ Romie L. Brownlee and William J. Mullen III, *Changing An Army: An Oral History of General William E. DePuy, USA Retired* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015), 125.

⁷⁷ Brownlee and III, 131–32.

⁷⁸ Brownlee and III, 133.

⁷⁹ Brownlee and III, 165.

⁸⁰ Brownlee and III, 133.

⁸¹ Brownlee and III, 160.

⁸² Brownlee and III, 161.

David Jones, former Air Force Chief of Staff and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, believed the most significant error in Vietnam was political, in that the US made it its war what should have been a Vietnamese war.⁸³ He also stated that Johnson made mistakes in "selecting military targets and all that," but "that was subsumed in a much bigger problem of having made if our was and we all fell into that trap."⁸⁴ This was not only true for senior officers. As Summer argues, junior officers "knew they weren't the ones who lost it (the war)."⁸⁵

These ideas were consolidated in some circles throughout the 1970s. Summers, for example, agrees with most of them in his famous neo-Clausewitzian analysis of the war. The author argues about how the US did not lose the war on the battlefield, and how well the soldiers actually performed.⁸⁶ Instead, he blames civilian intrusion in strategy, and failure to mobilize public opinion. Several of these points were later echoed by other authors.⁸⁷

Interestingly, civilian elites did not seem to disagree with the military regarding their performance on the battlefield. In May 1975, the State Department and the National Security Council prepared documents on the "lessons of Vietnam" for the president.⁸⁸ In neither of them there was mention of the warfighting performance of the military. The State Department document mentions the following points: 1) the incompetence of South Vietnam and the will of North Vietnamese soldiers; 2) the mistake of committing too much to the conflict – in other words, the US should not have gotten involved to the extent it did; 3) inadequacy of using conventional forces

⁸³ Jones, Interview with David Jones, 26.

⁸⁴ Jones, 27.

⁸⁵ Summers, *On Strategy II*, 44.

⁸⁶ For example, Summers, 45.

⁸⁷ Dunnigan and Macedonia, *Getting It Right*.

⁸⁸ Henry A. Kissinger, "State Department Paper on the Lessons of Vietnam," May 1975, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/exhibits/vietnam/032400091-002.pdf>; George S. Springsteen, "State Department Paper on the Lessons of Vietnam," May 1975, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/exhibits/vietnam/032400090-001.pdf>.

in unconventional conflicts, to which the solution is not to get involved in unconventional conflicts in the future; and 4) biased intelligence and advocacy reporting.

The National Security Council reached similar conclusions. It offers the following conclusions: 1) there are almost no lessons to be applied elsewhere, as Vietnam was unique; 2) excessively optimistic reports; 3) failure in securing domestic support for the war; 4) the US armed forces are not suited for this type of war, because of the nature of the war and partly because the US should have let South Vietnam be the protagonist; 5) shortcomings in diplomacy; 6) given the goals achieved, the war still had a net positive outcome.

Note how similar these conclusions are to the views of the military themselves. Overall, the perceived failures were much more connected to the decision to go to the "wrong" kind of war in the first place, and how Vietnam was an exception. When asked about planning for counterinsurgency in the future, Melvin Laird (Secretary of Defense from 1969 to 1973 under President Nixon) stated that his concern instead was trying to avoid getting "into that kind of situation again."⁸⁹ David Packard, his deputy, also shared the view that Vietnam was a policy failure instead of a military failure, and that the military was asked something unrealistic.⁹⁰

Finally, the media mirrored these views. In newspaper editorials in the month after the US final withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975, there was absolutely no criticism of the military performance. In fact, there was practically no criticism of the military whatsoever. Instead, as mentioned above, the overarching themes were: 1) wrong decisions led to US involvement in the war; 2) how the military made sacrifices and was victimized by these decisions; and 3) how the

⁸⁹ Laird, Interview of Melvin Laird, 32–33.

⁹⁰ David Packard, Interview of David Packard, November 28, 1988, 17, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/oral_history/OH_Trans_PackardDavid11-28-1988.pdf?ver=2014-05-28-122923-757.

war was impossible to win. Even behavioral problems that had been criticized in the past were cast in a new, forgiving light – one article described the massacre of innocent civilians by US troops as the result of "emotional terror and confusion."⁹¹

As we saw above, two new narratives also arose in the media: that civilians intruded too much and did not allow the armed forces to do their job, and, again, that lack of public support was a decisive factor that impeded victory. Recall the article that argued that "(...) military power without political cohesiveness and support proved to be an empty shell,"⁹² and another quoting a veteran stating, "The US sent an Army with its hands tied behind its back-it could not fight all out to win because politicians and diplomats were running the war. Therefore, don't blame the US Army for losing the war."⁹³ Again, these narratives eventually gained traction.⁹⁴ In 1975, a plurality of Americans believed the Vietnam War had shown that military leaders should be able to fight wars without civilian leaders "tying their hands."⁹⁵

As I showed above, the American people still viewed the US military as a capable force, and started to believe that a "lack of commitment on the part of the American people" was to blame for what happened in Vietnam, precisely the narrative from the armed forces. In 1975, 49 percent agreed with this sentiment, with 43 percent disagreeing⁹⁶ The "soldiers-as-victims" narrative also

⁹¹ IVER PETERSON, "THE LONG WAR IN VIETNAM: A HISTORY: Invaders, Ancient and Modern," *New York Times*, 1975.

⁹² Times, "Long Road to the Paris Pacts Had Misleading Sins, Pitfalls and Dead Ends."

⁹³ JAMES P. STERBA Special to The New York Times, "Reaction of US Troops: Relief, Tears and Anger," *New York Times*, 1975.

⁹⁴ See Summers, *On Strategy II*; Dunnigan and Macedonia, *Getting It Right*.

⁹⁵ The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Chicago Council on Foreign Relations Poll # 1974-2436G: American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy, 1974: General Public, Question 166, USHARRIS.74CFR.Q06BG, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1974), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

⁹⁶ Time Magazine, Time Soundings Poll # 1975-8440: Economy/Foreign Relations, Question 34, USYANK.758440.Q08A, Yankelovich, Skelly & White, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1975), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

gained popularity. In 1979, 64 percent of Americans believed that “veterans of the Vietnam War were made suckers, having to risk their lives in the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time,” with only 27 percent disagreeing.⁹⁷

In sum, the military had a good reputation in the early stages of Vietnam. However, it was damaged significantly in the late 1960s and early 1970s due to instances of indiscipline and human rights violations. The armed forces always retained an image of a capable organization on the battlefield, however, and the military's reputation improved throughout the 1970s. This is consistent with *Hypothesis 5 and Hypothesis 6* of the theory chapter, which expect the military to be blamed for lack of discipline and human rights violations, respectively.

Civilians Versus the Military

If we compare the public's assignment of blame to civilians and the military during the Vietnam War, we can identify three distinct phases. In the first phase, which lasted roughly until 1967, public opinion generally supported the civilian government and the military.

However, after 1967, this support began to wane. By 1968, both the Johnson administration and the armed forces were struggling. The election of Nixon provided some respite for the civilians, however. The new president announced plans to withdraw from Vietnam, a move aligned with public sentiment, putting civilians in a comparatively favorable position. In contrast, the military was plagued by a series of issues such as indiscipline, drug abuse, insubordination, and

⁹⁷ ABC News/Louis Harris and Associates, ABC News/Louis Harris and Associates Poll: November 1979, Question 3, USABCHS.111080.R1C, ABC News/Louis Harris and Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1979), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

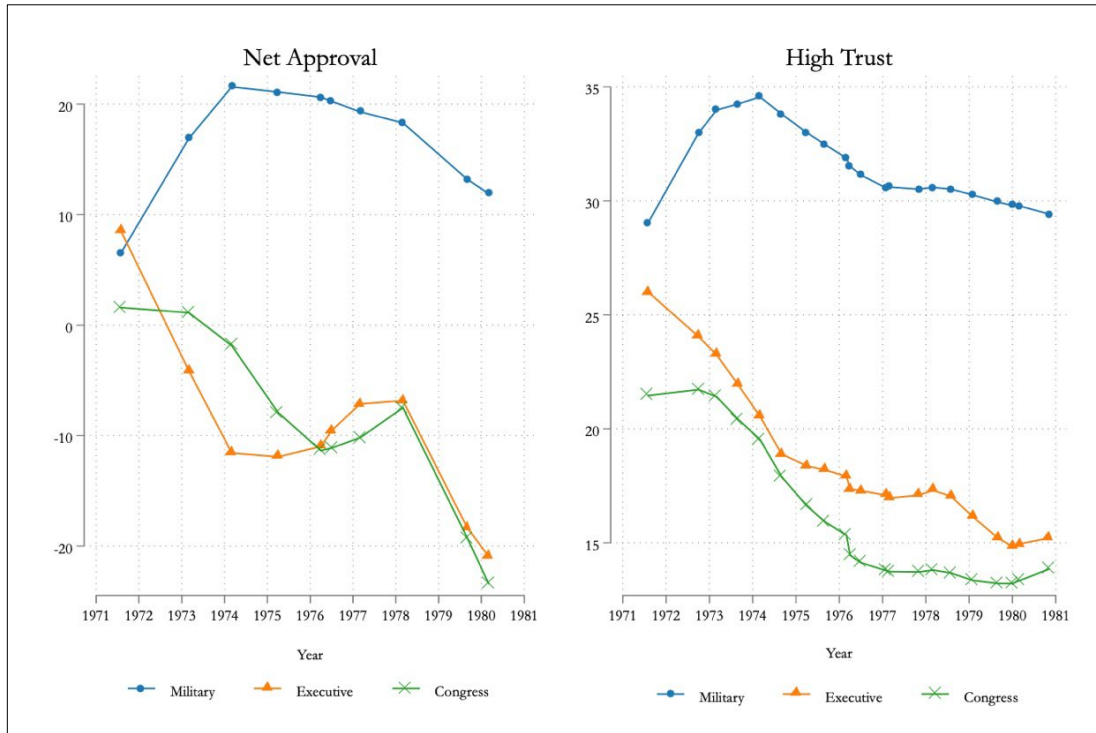
human rights violations as it entered the 1970s. Consequently, this second phase, spanning from 1969 to 1973, favored civilians in the court of public opinion.

However, as the mid-1970s approached, the public began to reflect more on the initiation and escalation of the war. Also, it started to realize that the conflict had been a defeat. Moreover, civilian leaders were embroiled in their own scandals, which dented their public image and culminated in the War Powers Resolution in 1973. Conversely, the military initiated a process of image rehabilitation, banking on public perception of its effectiveness and investing in narratives that reinforced this view. As the conflict dragged on, a narrative of “soldiers-as-victims” also emerged. Hence, the third phase, beginning around 1973, marked a shift toward a military advantage.

There is a notable scarcity of public opinion data that includes both civilian leaders and the military during much of the Vietnam War. However, it is relatively uncontroversial to state that the first phase of the war was characterized by broad public support for both. As for the second phase, from 1969 to 1973, Nixon benefited from his de-escalation policy and enjoyed solid approval ratings, while the military underwent intense scrutiny for indiscipline and alleged war crimes. Regarding the third phase, by 1975, while civilians faced difficulties, the military regained a positive public image. Nevertheless, there is a data gap on these perceptions between 1973 and 1975.

More comprehensive data on trust in institutions can help illustrate these trends. These data support the argument that the military significantly improved its image compared to civilians throughout the 1970s. As seen in Figure 25 – which includes poll results from ABC News, Louis Harris and Associates, the National Opinion Research Center, and the Los Angeles Times – the military clearly outperformed government institutions in earning societal trust. These polls, posing

Figure 25. Trends in Public Trust in the US Government and Military During the 1970s.



nearly identical questions, let us track the shifting public perceptions throughout the decade. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the 1970s emerge as a period of image recovery for the US military compared to civilians.⁹⁸

Here, one could mention that the Watergate scandal explains these numbers. Keep in mind, however, that this figure is only to illustrate trends. As I showed above, many polls with questions specifically about blame for Vietnam demonstrate the state of affairs in 1975. Moreover, the case that these figures are only about Watergate is not strong. For example, in August 1977, when

⁹⁸ All the polls ask whether respondents “have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence or hardly any confidence at all” in the people running these institutions. The Net Approval figure subtracts the percentage of “a great deal” responses by the percentage of “any at all” responses, while the High Trust figure displays the percentage of “a great deal” responses. Additionally, the lines are smoothed. More specifically, they represent the results of locally weighted scatterplot smoothing, which fits a smooth curve to data points in a scatterplot.

Carter was president, 70 percent of the population believed the president's ethical and moral practices were good or excellent.⁹⁹ In 1975, the number for Ford was 52 percent.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the American people did not extend their judgments about the scandal from Nixon to Ford and Carter as presidents. Still, trust in the presidency remained low.

In sum, the Vietnam War presents a complex picture of shifting public attitudes towards both civilian leadership and the military. This nuanced transition, split into three distinctive phases, demonstrates the dynamic nature of public opinion in response to prolonged conflict and evolving internal issues. Given that the prevailing narrative shifted multiple times throughout the war, my analysis underscores the complex ways in which the facts of the conflict can be translated into public narratives throughout the years. The varying degrees of blame assigned to civilians and the military were not static, but rather a continuous oscillation of perceptions and narratives.

This conclusion, while fascinating, also poses further questions. It is consistent with, but also somewhat complicates my theory of responsibility assignment, developed earlier in the theory chapter. The dynamic nature of public opinion, particularly in protracted conflicts such as the Vietnam War, problematizes the static model of responsibility assignment. The shifts in blame, varying public perceptions, and diverse narratives indicate that responsibility assignment is sometimes not a singular, static event but an ongoing process that evolves over the course of a conflict.

⁹⁹ Opinion Research Corporation, ORC Public Opinion Index, Question 17, USORC.78MAR.R02B, Opinion Research Corporation, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1977), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

¹⁰⁰ Opinion Research Corporation, Opinion Research Corporation Poll: September 1975, Question 9, USORC.75DEC3.R11, Opinion Research Corporation, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1975), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

However, two observations are in order. First, it is still true that this case provides evidence supporting *Hypothesis 2*, which suggests civilians are blamed for conflict initiation, and *Hypothesis 5* and *Hypothesis 6*, indicating military blame for lack of discipline and human rights violations, respectively. Second, it is important to note that my theory has been formulated to explain post-war responsibility allocation, especially because it assumes that the public needs to come to terms with what happened in a conflict after its end, and inevitably makes judgments and inferences about it. In this case, extending its application to intra-conflict blame shifts was necessary because the US enacted an important military reform during an ongoing conflict, which is extremely rare. In fact, conflicts of this length are also quite rare. In the Correlates of War Dataset, out of 94 interstate wars, the Vietnam War is the longest.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, 72 of these wars ended the same year or the following after their breakout, and only 6 have a span longer than five years.¹⁰² In any case, it is encouraging that this case showcases that even intra-conflict blame seems to fluctuate according to my theoretical expectations.

6.2. MILITARY REFORMS

Theoretical Expectations

Based on the analysis presented in the previous section, we can develop several theoretical expectations as we examine military reforms that occurred as a consequence of the Vietnam War, and the actors leading those reforms. As a reminder, *Hypothesis 1* from the theory chapter states

¹⁰¹ The Afghanistan Invasion is counted only for 2001, and Afghan Resistance is coded as an “Extra-State War,” from 2001 to 2021. If we code the Afghanistan War with a duration of 20 years, the Vietnam War is the second longest in the dataset.

¹⁰² Meredieth Reid Sarkees and Frank Wayman, *Resort To War: 1816 - 2007*, 1 edition (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010).

that blame assignment to civilians is expected to decrease levels of civilian participation in military reforms, while blame assignment to the military is expected to decrease levels of military participation.

With the hypothesis above in mind, the only point in which the civilian government was in a position of advantage regarding blame assignment was during the second phase of the war, from 1969 to the early-to-mid 1970s. Therefore, it could be anticipated that if any major military reforms were led primarily by civilian authorities, they would have been enacted during this period. Their perceived advantage in public opinion could have given them the political capital necessary to initiate and enact significant reforms, and decrease the prospects of successful resistance by the military. Moreover, their likelihood of success should be higher in reforms that address the most pressing perceived problems of the military. In this period, they were connected to indiscipline, rather than more technical aspects of battlefield performance.

The third phase of the conflict (from 1973 onwards), however, saw the military rehabilitate its image and regain public trust, thus, increasing its power relative to the civilian government. Consequently, one would expect that military leaders would have a more significant role in initiating and driving reforms were they to take place during this period. The rebuilding of the armed forces' image and increased public confidence might have translated into greater political influence, enabling them to enact reforms.

In summary, based on the relative balance of political power between civilians and the military in each phase of the conflict, we would expect that the actor with more public support at the time would be the primary driver behind military reforms. This expectation is rooted in *Hypothesis 1* from the theory chapter, which expands on how public support often translates to political power and, thus, the ability to influence and enact changes. As I delve deeper into the

specifics of the military reforms, I will test these expectations against the historical record to better understand the dynamics between public opinion, political power, and the ability to enact reforms in the context of the Vietnam War. Each subsection below includes a description of each reform, who led it, and whether the other actor opposed it and attempted to block it.

The End of Conscription and the All-volunteer Force

The first significant reform that took place at the end of the Vietnam War was the move from the draft to an all-volunteer force. When Nixon was a candidate for the Republican nomination in 1967, he named Martin Anderson his research director. Anderson was an associate professor at Columbia University who was focused on conscription at the time, and would be a key figure in the draft debate that was about to come. In April of that year, he sent Nixon a memorandum arguing for a voluntary force, which became a more extensive document in July, named *An Analysis of the Factors Involved in Moving to an All-Volunteer Armed Force*. This document echoed Milton Friedman's arguments against the duty of individuals to serve the state, and argued that virtually everyone would agree that an all-volunteer force is "right." It also argued that the policy would benefit national security, and that the country should be willing to "pay even reasonably fair wages to our men in the military." Finally, the document stated that any additional cost would be feasible within the federal budget. In sum, it argued that an all-volunteer was moral and fair, effective for national security, and economically viable.¹⁰³

After sending the document to a number of his advisors and participating in several conversations on the subject, Nixon announced support for the all-volunteer force on November

¹⁰³ See Rostker, "I Want You!," 33–34; Hunt, "Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military, 1969–1973," 365.

16, 1967, during a visit to the University of Wisconsin.¹⁰⁴ He continued to support the idea after being nominated as the Republican candidate.

After Nixon's election, he asked Defense Minister Laird for two papers: one about a possible transition to an all-volunteer Army and one on his views on the draft. He also requested that Laird "begin immediately to plan a special Commission to develop a detailed plan of action for ending the draft."¹⁰⁵ At the same time, there was already an ongoing study about the all-volunteer force at the Pentagon, at the initiative of Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) Alfred Fitt. Fitt had decided to begin the study after receiving an inquiry from the House Armed Services Committee chairman, Congressman L. Mendel Rivers (D-North Carolina), in 1968.¹⁰⁶ Fitt shared the study with Laird and advised that the DoD should be the one to make the recommendation on the subject, instead of a special commission.¹⁰⁷

Nixon decided to establish a commission, despite Laird's objections. It was formed in 1969 under the leadership of former Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates, Jr.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, it included names such as economists Milton Friedman and Alan Greenspan, as well as "a number of people who had already made their mark on the debate over the draft during the previous decade."¹⁰⁹ There were military members as well.

¹⁰⁴ Rostker, 35; See also Robert B. Semple Jr Special To the New York Times, "Nixon Backs Eventual End of Draft," *The New York Times*, November 18, 1967, sec. Archives, <https://www.nytimes.com/1967/11/18/archives/nixon-backs-eventual-end-of-draft.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Rostker, "I Want You!," 62–63. See also Hunt, "Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military, 1969–1973," 366. It is worth noting that Laird did not favor a special Commission, even though he was on board with the all-volunteer force.

¹⁰⁶ WILLIAM BEECHER Special to The New York Times, "Pentagon Orders a Study Of All-Volunteer Force," *New York Times*, 1968.

¹⁰⁷ Rostker, "I Want You!," 64–65.

¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, Gates opposed the idea of an all-volunteer force at the time.

¹⁰⁹ Rostker, "I Want You!," 66.

Then, parallel to the activities of the Gates Commission, the DoD undertook its own planning studies. Laird established the Project Volunteer Committee to develop “a comprehensive action program for moving toward a volunteer force,” with the new Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Roger Kelley appointed chairman. Kelley repeatedly emphasized to the services that he wanted them to be the prime agents for implementing the all-volunteer force, and asked them to develop their own proposed program and recommendations.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, in addition to military leaders of the services, he also appointed civilians to the committee. Wool, the secretary and staff director, saw Project Volunteer as a counterweight to the work of the Gates Commission, whose objectivity was questioned by him.¹¹¹

By December 1969, after the commissioners reviewed the staff papers prepared for them, the Gates Commission came together in the unanimous recommendation for an all-volunteer force. Although the DoD agreed with this conclusion, there were disagreements on implementation. While the commission focused on better military compensation as a form of attracting recruits, the DoD thought that changes in personnel management practices were more relevant, as well as issues such as housing and new programs for education and training, among others. There was also a stark disagreement regarding the timeline for implementation, with the commission suggesting the date of June 30th, 1971, and Laird pushing – publicly – for 1973. Nixon ended up choosing the DoD's plan. After lengthy negotiations with Congress, he signed Public Law 92-129 to end the draft on September 28, 1971.

In sum, the end of conscription and the establishment of an all-volunteer force was formulated in 1969 and 1970, signed into law in 1971, and implemented in 1973. It was led by

¹¹⁰ Rostker, 143–44.

¹¹¹ Hunt, “Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military, 1969–1973,” 367.

civilians. Nixon pushed for the reform, and was influenced by his adviser, Martin Anderson. He then established a commission with a heavy presence of civilians, including its president, Thomas Gates Jr., and other prominent civilians, such as Milton Friedman and Alan Greenspan, in addition to other academic and policy professionals. The DoD's Project Volunteer Committee was also created by a civilian, Melvin Laird, and led by a civilian, Roger Kelley. Overall, this aligns perfectly with my theoretical expectations: a major reform was led by civilians precisely in the period in which they had an advantage, which I named the second phase of the conflict and estimated its duration roughly between 1969 and 1973.

Was the military on board?

For the purposes of this chapter, however, it is not enough to establish that civilians dictated the military reforms described above. A more robust check of the mechanism proposed by my theory is whether these leaders could implement changes in a manner that went against the armed forces' preferences. Did the military feel constrained by their relative political fragility? Were they unable to oppose initiatives that they deemed detrimental to their interests?

So, what was the military's position during the decision-making process regarding the all-volunteer force? There is some debate on the issue. Griffith argues that the Army leadership had concluded that ending conscription was in the service's best interest,¹¹² a view that is endorsed by Rostker and partly by Nielsen.¹¹³ But the evidence shows that the army opposed the decision but still prepared accordingly, in case it turned out to be inevitable. Part of Griffith's argument seems

¹¹² Robert K. Griffith Jr., "The US Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968–1974" (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1997).

¹¹³ Rostker, "I Want You!," 147; Suzanne Nielsen, *An Army Transformed: The US Army's Post-Vietnam Recovery and the Dynamics of Change in Military Organizations* (Independently published, 2019), 38.

to rely on the fact that Westmoreland (who had returned from Vietnam in June 1968 to become chief of staff of the army) commissioned a study about the end of the draft a month prior to Nixon's policy statement on the issue on October 1968.¹¹⁴ However, as we have seen above, Nixon's position on the matter was publicly known at least from November 1967, and he was nominated as the Republican candidate in August 1968, against a fractured Democratic Party. It is only natural, then, that the army started preparing for this possibility. Griffith even concedes that the Butler Study

(...) indicated a willingness on the part of the army to consider the subject of an all-volunteer force in advance of events. Westmoreland and his colleagues hardly were keen on the idea of losing the draft, but they recognized that circumstances beyond the army's control might lead to such a contingency and that they needed information on the subject.¹¹⁵

The study group Project PROVIDE – which went on to work with the DoD's Project Volunteer study – was created on the receipt of news by Westmoreland that the new president intended to appoint a commission to study how to end the draft. The strategy was to "study the subject and be prepared to act as events developed."¹¹⁶ The dilemma was explicitly expressed as a decision between opposing the concept of an all-volunteer force and "risk a further public and political struggle" or taking the initiative and having a higher chance of affecting the implementation process.¹¹⁷

Throughout this process, it was clear that Vice Chief of Staff of the Army General Bruce Palmer Jr. also did not favor the volunteer Army concept, but "he was politically astute and realized

¹¹⁴ See also Hunt, "Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military, 1969–1973," 367.

¹¹⁵ Griffith, "The US Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968–1974," 19.

¹¹⁶ Griffith, "The US Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968–1974," 21–22.

¹¹⁷ Griffith, "The US Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968–1974," 24.

that the draft was dying.” Thus, he advised Westmoreland to approve the PROVIDE recommendations “in principle.”¹¹⁸ Westmoreland agreed with Palmer's recommendations, but emphasized that the army should remain firm on the position that inductions end, but the draft formally does not. This became known as the "zero-draft" goal, a proposal that proved unsuccessful. Eventually, Westmoreland ordered that the PROVIDE recommendations be modified so that the army was vague and not committed to a particular course of action – he ordered that recommendations avoided direct references to reducing reliance on the draft. Additionally, Westmoreland knew that most of the army's officers opposed ending the draft, and there was a need to educate them "on the realities of the situation facing the institution." In November 1969, Study Group PROVIDE became a task group.¹¹⁹

Therefore, despite Griffith's characterization, what emerges is a picture of a leadership that opposed the ending of the draft but had no choice but to reluctantly prepare for it and try to affect the process as much as possible. The fact is that there was clear opposition from the military to ending the draft. In addition to the above concerns from Westmoreland and Palmer, General Lewis B. Hershey, Advisor to the President on Manpower Mobilization, tried to convince Nixon to change his mind. He voiced to the president that the "presumption that the national security can be maintained by armed forces provided by added pay incentives is based on hopes that have not been sustained by the history of the United States" and that the "message gives encouragement to those who desire to be relieved from obligations of military service."¹²⁰ Laird would later recount that he also had problems with the military chiefs regarding the all-volunteer force and "just had to tell

¹¹⁸ Griffith, 25.

¹¹⁹ Griffith, 26.

¹²⁰ Rostker, "I Want You!," 92.

them that that was what we were going to do."¹²¹ David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense at the time, mentioned that services were concerned about the all-volunteer force, and were doubtful and unenthusiastic.¹²²

John Kester, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army, has stated that he was skeptical for several reasons, as well as Secretary of the Army Stan Resor and Assistant Secretary of the Army Bill Brehm.¹²³ He was “never of the view that there was something wrong with the draft.”¹²⁴ Kester also explained that the attitude at the Department of the Army was that the Office of the Secretary of Defense was a “roadblock.” According to him, “When we were trying to get things done they told us they wanted to have a Volunteer Army. (...) My recollection is that we felt that they were like a stone we had to keep dragging along behind us.”¹²⁵ Major General Harley L. Moore Jr., commanding general at Fort Gordon, called the all-volunteer force an "optimistic mistake," and said that many in the army shared his view.¹²⁶ Westmoreland stated that he did not want to command an army of mercenaries,¹²⁷ publicly called the end of the draft "premature," criticized several aspects of the all-volunteer force in 1973,¹²⁸ and even wrote, by 1975, that time had “demonstrated that the political maneuver by President Nixon of setting aside the draft was

¹²¹ Laird, Interview of Melvin Laird, 19.

¹²² Packard, Interview of David Packard, 1987, 15.

¹²³ John G. Kester, interview with Mr. John G. Kester, 1998, 5, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/oral_history/OH_Trans_KESTERJohn%20G041498.pdf?ver=2017-11-21-104348-020.

¹²⁴ Kester, 11.

¹²⁵ Kester, 13.

¹²⁶ BEN A. FRANKLIN Special to The New York Times, “Lag in a Volunteer Force Spurs Talk of New Draft: Volunteer Military’s Lag Spurring Talk of a New Draft Pressure on Recruiters ‘Optimistic’ Forecast ‘Unprecedented’ Plan General’s Comment Califano’s View Considered an Infringement,” *New York Times*, 1973, sec. GNGN.

¹²⁷ Milton Friedman and Rose D. Friedman, *Two Lucky People: Memoirs*, 1st edition (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1998), 398.

¹²⁸ Franklin, “Lag in a Volunteer Force Spurs Talk of New Draft.”

not in the national interest. The all-volunteer force has not produced the military posture required by the leader of the free world. Reappraisal of the ill-advised concept is essential.”¹²⁹

Historical accounts are consistent with the depiction above. Lock-Pullan describes what he considered “clear military displeasure with the volunteer concept,”¹³⁰ and Milton Friedman stated that the draft had ended “despite the opposition of the military.”¹³¹ A majority of military people who were interviewed by the media at the time favored the draft.¹³² According to Kitfield, it was known that “nothing would please the majority of the Army’s senior leadership more than the end of what many considered this all-volunteer ‘madness.’”¹³³ The author also mentions how it was no secret that the regular officer corps generally despised the all-volunteer idea – they saw it as purely political maneuver from the Nixon administration, that went against the idea that national service is a moral responsibility.¹³⁴

In this context, there were even accusations that the military was sabotaging the implementation of the decision, intending to get the draft reinstated. This is also subject to debate, and Griffith denies that any policies or actions were intended as such.¹³⁵ Other authors agree, and emphasize unintentional failures of judgment¹³⁶ or question the plausibility of the army having such goals.¹³⁷ But members of Kelley's office accused the services of using the "quality issue" to price themselves out of the market and force a return to the draft, and noted that this issue was

¹²⁹ Lock-Pullan, *US Intervention Policy and Army Innovation*, 46.

¹³⁰ Lock-Pullan, 46.

¹³¹ Friedman, “Volunteer Armed Force.”

¹³² Franklin, “Lag in a Volunteer Force Spurs Talk of New Draft.”

¹³³ James Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers: How the Generation of Officers Born of Vietnam Revolutionized the American Style of War*, First Softcover Edition (Washington, DC: POTOMAC BOOKS, 1997), 132.

¹³⁴ Kitfield, 134.

¹³⁵ Griffith, "The US Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968–1974," 209.

¹³⁶ Gus C. Lee and Geoffrey Y Parker, *Ending the Draft -- The Story of the All Volunteer Force* (Defense Technical Information Center, 1977), 207.

¹³⁷ Rostker, “I Want You!,” 268.

becoming a solid rallying point for opponents of the all-volunteer force. Another issue that raised questions was the termination of the Modern Volunteer Army Program at the time. In a memorandum from 1973 to Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements, Kelley insinuated that the army was not committed to the cause, which prompted a response from the Secretary of the Army. Then, after leaving the DoD, Kelley publicly charged the army with sabotage. This exact word was also used by more than one member of the Gates Commission, including Milton Friedman and Stephen Herbits.¹³⁸ The latter complained:

The army was no longer emphasizing the all-volunteer force sufficiently to overcome the problems it faces in the immediate future (...). Because of (...) negative statements by Army officials, the Congress, the press, and the public are apprehensive about the success of the program. (...) these signals have led to an attitude (...) that the army is willing and actually desires to return to past practices.¹³⁹

But why couldn't the military oppose more effectively to the end of the draft? Consistent with my theory, the crucial factor was public opinion. According to Packard, due to the state of public opinion, the Chiefs "were not in any position to object very strongly."¹⁴⁰ This affected some prerogatives of the armed forces. For example, both Laird and Packard mention that the military recognized that the public attitude was strongly anti-military, and it would not be wise to take a firm stance on issues like budget and personnel.¹⁴¹ Harold Brown and David Jones, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, shared this assessment,¹⁴² and Griffith mentions that the Army leadership

¹³⁸ See Rostker, 268–69; Franklin, "Lag in a Volunteer Force Spurs Talk of New Draft"; Friedman, "Volunteer Armed Force."

¹³⁹ Rostker, "I Want You!," 270.

¹⁴⁰ Packard, Interview of David Packard, 1987, 15.

¹⁴¹ Packard, 19; Laird, Interview of Melvin Laird, 14.

¹⁴² Jones, Interview with David Jones, 8; Brown, Interview with Harold Brown, October 8, 1992, 30. Jones was Chief of Staff of the Air Force, 1974–78, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1978–1982. Brown was Carter's Secretary of Defense.

did not wish "risk a public and political struggle over the draft."¹⁴³ Note, however, that the army was not averse to taking up on public and political struggles overall – it just did not want anything to do with this one and at this time in particular. Importantly, all these accounts, from some of the foremost individuals in the military and at the DoD at the time, are a direct display of the mechanism proposed by my theory.

The same is true for the failure of the army's actions described as sabotage – specifically, the issue of significantly failing to meet its recruitment goals and refusing to lower qualification standards. Lowering standards was believed to likely stir "bitter resistance" from troop commanders, who were already voicing open criticism.¹⁴⁴ Kelley got Clements personally involved, and hired Herbits as the new Special Assistant for All-Volunteer Force Matters. Under pressure from Herbits, acting assistant secretary General Taber conceded that "recent statements by Service officials casting doubt on the feasibility of the all-volunteer concept, and a growing number of stories in the media about all-volunteer force difficulties [make it imperative] that you call a Task Force meeting."¹⁴⁵ In a meeting with the Armed Force Policy Board, Clements was direct and forceful, stating that he wanted "more positive and timely action to meet the President's All-Volunteer Force objective."¹⁴⁶ The pressure from the Office of the Secretary of Defense was matched by pressure from Congress, which held hearings and questioned the army about what was happening.

Eventually, the army did decide to lower qualification standards, and the new Secretary of the Army, Howard Callaway, even launched a personal campaign to increase support for the

¹⁴³ Griffith, "The US Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968–1974," 24.

¹⁴⁴ Franklin, "Lag in a Volunteer Force Spurs Talk of New Draft."

¹⁴⁵ Rostker, "I Want You!," 270.

¹⁴⁶ Rostker, 270.

volunteer force from key groups within and outside the service. According to Griffith, this happened because the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Lieutenant General Bernard Rogers, was convinced that Congress was willing to reduce the army's size due to its "apparent inability to achieve its stated quantitative manpower goals and its apparent unwillingness to reduce qualitative standards."¹⁴⁷ Lee agrees this was a critical factor for the decision, citing a conversation with Rogers.¹⁴⁸ Public opinion was key throughout this debacle. Among several pieces, Milton Friedman, for example, signed a column in *Newsweek* in which he charged the Army leadership with "either gross incompetence or deliberate sabotage."¹⁴⁹ Coverage of the army's problems, especially an article in the *New York Times*, also pushed Callaway to act.¹⁵⁰

Moreover, as mentioned above, once the military thought that the all-volunteer force could be inevitable, they shifted their focus to shaping, as much as possible, how the process would take place. Kester explains that he found over the years that he could "use the Volunteer Army as an excuse for pushing whatever policies seemed otherwise right on the merits and say this is good for morale--this will increase volunteerism and so on. So the Volunteer Army really became a vehicle for lots of things like trying to get money for housing." He also mentions that the attitude at the Department of the Army eventually became, "Okay, we'll give it a try, especially if you give us some money to do it. We were always going around trying to get more money for things the army wanted to do."¹⁵¹ Westmoreland operated according to this same logic. Although he was not "a fan of the all-volunteer concept," the focus on professionalism required to make it work allowed

¹⁴⁷ Griffith, "The US Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968–1974," 213; Quoted in Rostker, "I Want You!," 271.

¹⁴⁸ Lee and Parker, *Ending the Draft -- The Story of the All Volunteer Force*.

¹⁴⁹ Friedman, "Volunteer Armed Force."

¹⁵⁰ Griffith, "The US Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968–1974," 225; Rostker, "I Want You!," 271.

¹⁵¹ Kester, interview with Mr. John G. Kester, 5–7.

him to make organizational changes that he felt were essential in the first place.¹⁵² As mentioned above, although the army did not thoroughly cooperate with the Gates Commission, it worked closely with the DoD to affect aspects of the transition and make specific requests.

In sum, these findings are highly consistent with my theory. Here, it was established that the Army leadership recognized that the public attitude was strongly anti-military, and it would not be wise to take a firm public stance on this issue. They wanted to avoid a public political struggle over this policy, as public opinion did not favor them. Note, again, that the military routinely took strong public stances, but saw this one, at this time, as a losing battle.

How did the civilians pull this off?

If civilian leaders were also being blamed for the war, how were they motivated and capable of implementing this change? Four main factors made this possible. First, as explained above, there were severe problems with the public image of the military and the defense establishment, and they were in an even worse position than civilians. Second, the all-volunteer force became tightly associated with Nixon's promise to leave Vietnam, which was supported by the public. Civilians were rewarded by what was seen as their responsibility: deciding to end the conflict. Third, civilians were able to employ their areas of expertise effectively to argue in favor of this reform. Finally, the draft was seen as a way to curb the armed forces' problems of indiscipline.

First, as I mentioned above, civilians were aware of the difficult position of the military. In an interview, Laird stated that the primary role he had at the time as Secretary of Defense was

¹⁵² Nielsen, *An Army Transformed*, 38.

to deal with the "time-ticking bomb" of public opinion, and that the ability of the armed forces to secure a minimum level of public support in the future, as well as their own survival, was in question.¹⁵³ Laird directly cites public pressure as a critical factor for the decision to pursue the all-volunteer force,¹⁵⁴ and Harold Brown, Carter's Secretary of Defense, believed that the end of the draft had increased the public's acceptance of the military.¹⁵⁵

Regarding the second factor, Nixon was strategic. Since the beginning of his term, the president pushed for draft reform while the volunteer force was being studied, "as part of his policy to disentangle his administration from Vietnam and dampen domestic antiwar protests."¹⁵⁶ He went on national television the day after his draft reform announcement to present a comprehensive peace proposal involving withdrawing all foreign troops from South Vietnam. In this period, there were several warnings that delays in draft reform risked causing renewed outbreaks of campus demonstrations, and risked decreasing political support for both Republicans and Democrats. Draft reform, alongside the volunteer force, helped weaken the antiwar movement. Thus, Laird claimed that dissent and unrest in the country would diminish due to a combination of troop withdrawals, fewer casualties, draft calls, and more equitable conscription. In fact, a contemporary Harris poll showed that Americans overwhelmingly approved of the lottery for the draft, which was implemented before the Gates Commission issued its final report.¹⁵⁷ Hunt mentions "positive public and congressional reactions" when the troop pullout was announced, as well as the decision to phase out conscription,¹⁵⁸ and maintains that "ever sensitive to the political climate, Nixon and

¹⁵³ Laird, Interview of Melvin Laird, 4.

¹⁵⁴ Laird, 10.

¹⁵⁵ Brown, Interview with Harold Brown, October 8, 1992, 30.

¹⁵⁶ Hunt, "Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military, 1969–1973," 372.

¹⁵⁷ Hunt, 373–74.

¹⁵⁸ Hunt, 381.

Laird believed that ending the war and the draft would benefit the administration, especially in gaining greater public support.”¹⁵⁹

As we saw, a key point here is that civilians were being blamed mainly not for their performance in the war, but for choosing to go to Vietnam in the first place, and remain there. This helps explain why civilians were emboldened to pursue this specific reform – yes, they were blamed for the war, but Nixon connected the end of the draft to the withdrawal of troops, which was precisely what was being asked of them. To a large degree, phasing out the draft depended on the success of Vietnamization and the rate of US troop withdrawals.

As for the third factor, it has to do with the kind of reform. As *Hypothesis 10* in the theory chapter posits, the more domain-specific an issue is, the more challenging civilian expertise will be. In very specific domains within military science, it is more likely that the armed forces will have a stronger claim to expertise. Of vital importance here is the fact that the issue of conscription is relatively amenable to civilian expertise, as well as to ideological considerations, as opposed to issues that are perceived to be entirely technical. The end of conscription was never publicly framed as a civilian intrusion into military matters. Instead, it was framed as an affordable and viable alternative regarding the potential of recruiting volunteers. They also argued that it would increase national security and help solve disciplinary issues. Furthermore, civilians framed this reform as fair and just.

Note, again, that economists were quite effective at defending the position in favor of an all-volunteer force. Thomas Gates Jr, the leader of the Gates Commission, actually opposed ending the draft when he went into the job, as well as other members of the commission, which was evenly

¹⁵⁹ Hunt, 392.

divided.¹⁶⁰ Nixon told Gates that that is why he chose him: "If you change your mind and think we should end the draft, then I'll know it is a good idea."¹⁶¹ Martin Anderson, Nixon's adviser who advocated for the all-volunteer force since early in his campaign, hoped that the substantial powers of persuasion of economists Milton Friedman and Alan Greenspan would drive the commission to recommend the end of conscription.¹⁶² This intuition proved correct, as Friedman and Greenspan successfully delivered a unanimous recommendation in favor of an all-volunteer force. Note that Gates was quite familiar with this debate, as he had formerly acted as Secretary of Defense – thus, persuading him to change his mind on this subject was undoubtedly no small task. Friedman later described Gates as a "splendid, open-minded, even-handed chairman, who gradually shifted his position to become a convinced supporter of an all-volunteer army," and noted that the same thing happened to the other two men from the military, Al Gruenther and Lauris Norstad. "Though evenly split at the outset, we ended by submitting a unanimous report."¹⁶³

In fact, these dynamics had been playing out since the early days of Friedman's advocacy. In December 1966, he organized a four-day conference at the University of Chicago and invited several prominent academics, politicians, and activists, both pro and anti-draft. Reports are that "people from various parts of the ideological spectrum found that they shared a strong antipathy to the draft and that the economists had a surprisingly strong economic case against it."¹⁶⁴ Years later, he recalled:

I have attended many conferences. I have never attended any other that had so dramatic effect on the participants. A straw poll taken at the outset of the conference recorded two-

¹⁶⁰ Henderson, "The Role of Economists in Ending the Draft," 366.

¹⁶¹ Rostker, "I Want You!," 66.

¹⁶² Rostker, 66.

¹⁶³ Friedman and Friedman, *Two Lucky People*, 379.

¹⁶⁴ Henderson, "The Role of Economists in Ending the Draft," 364.

thirds of the participants in favor of the draft; a similar poll at the end, two-thirds opposed. I believe that this conference was the key event that started the ball rolling decisively toward ending the draft.¹⁶⁵

Other economists had been working on the subject of the draft for some years. One of the first empirical studies of the economics of the draft and the possibility of ending it was from Walter Oi, an economics professor at the University of Washington. A great many articles followed, including in prestigious economic journals. One noteworthy group comprised students and graduates from the University of Virginia's Ph.D. program in economics. It put together a book of essays, *Why the Draft? The Case for the Volunteer Army* (1968), which had a preface written by Edward Brooke, a Republican Senator from Massachusetts.¹⁶⁶

One example of the fact that economists were not out of their element when debating the draft was Friedman's response to the charge that those advocating for ending the draft were advocating for a "mercenary" army. He said:

Now, when anybody starts talking about this [an all-volunteer force] he immediately shifts language. My army is 'volunteer,' your army is 'professional,' and the enemy's army is 'mercenary.' All these three words mean exactly the same thing. I am a volunteer professor, I am a mercenary professor, and I am a professional professor. And all you people around here are mercenary professional people. And I trust you realize that. It's always a puzzle to me why people should think that the term 'mercenary' somehow has a negative connotation. I remind you of that wonderful quotation of Adam Smith when he said, 'You do not owe your daily bread to the benevolence of the baker, but to his proper regard for his own interest.' And this is much more broadly based. In fact, I think mercenary motives are among the least unattractive that we have.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Friedman and Friedman, *Two Lucky People*, 378.

¹⁶⁶ See Henderson, "The Role of Economists in Ending the Draft," 363–66.

¹⁶⁷ Quoted in Sol Tax, *Draft, a Handbook of Facts and Alternatives* (Univ of Chicago Pr, 1967), 366.

He made a similar point to Westmoreland. In his testimony to the Gates Commission, the General said that he did not want to command an army of mercenaries, and Friedman stopped him and asked if he would instead prefer to command an army of slaves. He argued that if volunteers were mercenaries, he was a mercenary professor, and Westmoreland was a mercenary general. And they were served by mercenary physicians, mercenary lawyers, and mercenary butchers. According to Friedman, the General did not mention mercenaries again.¹⁶⁸

Several of these types of arguments were made in the context of the Gates Commission. Conservatives and libertarians increasingly questioned the moral and economic rationale for conscription, noting that the state had no right to take the services of young men without their consent. At the same time, many liberals noted that the draft imposed unfair burdens on the less-advantaged members of society, who were more likely to be unable to obtain educational or occupational deferments.¹⁶⁹ For example, Allen Wallis, an economist and President of the University of Rochester, raised a similar question in a speech: why are officers who are well-paid “dedicated career men” but privates who would volunteer for higher levels of pay called “mercenaries?” This speech was covered positively in *The Nation*, a prominent left-wing publication.¹⁷⁰

The Gates Commission's final report concluded:

It is the system for maintaining standing forces that minimizes government interference with the freedom of the individual to determine his own life in accord with his values. The often-ignored fact (...) is that our present armed forces are made up predominantly of volunteers. (...) Reasonable improvements in pay and benefits in the early years of service should increase the number of volunteers by these amounts. (...) In any event, such

¹⁶⁸ Friedman and Friedman, *Two Lucky People*, 380.

¹⁶⁹ See Rostker, “I Want You!,” 780.

¹⁷⁰ Henderson, “The Role of Economists in Ending the Draft,” 372.

improvements are called for on the ground of equity alone. Because conscription has been used to provide raw recruits, the pay of men entering the services has been kept at a very low level. It has not risen nearly as rapidly as the pay of experienced military personnel, and it is now about 60 percent of comparable civilian pay.¹⁷¹

It also stated:

Conscription is like the first alternative—a tax-in-kind. A mixed force of volunteers and conscripts contains first-term servicemen of three types—(1) draftees, (2) draft-induced volunteers, and (3) true volunteers. Draftees and draft-induced volunteers in such a force are coerced into serving at levels of compensation below what would be required to induce them to volunteer. They are, in short, underpaid. This underpayment is a form of taxation.¹⁷²

In fact, since the early days of Nixon's campaign, Martin Anderson had been arguing on the same basis. In a report, he affirmed:

Because it is moral and fair, because it increases our national security, and because it is economically feasible, we should establish a volunteer armed force that will offer the young people of our country the opportunity to participate in her defense with dignity, with honor, and as free men.¹⁷³

It is worth noting that the commission also examined non-economic issues. According to Henderson, excellent studies were produced on the US historical experience with volunteerism, the draft, and conscription and constitutional law. These were also written up in a "logical and compelling way."¹⁷⁴ But there was an emphasis on the combination of moral and fairness arguments with a sound empirical foundation showing that the all-volunteer force was also

¹⁷¹ Rostker, "I Want You!," 78.

¹⁷² Henderson, "The Role of Economists in Ending the Draft," 368.

¹⁷³ Rostker, "I Want You!," 34.

¹⁷⁴ Henderson, "The Role of Economists in Ending the Draft," 39.

affordable and viable. As Bailey explains, the economists "offered plans based on conservative or libertarian doctrines of market economies."¹⁷⁵ Hunt agrees, noting that they "constructed a cogent argument, which in essence provided empirical evidence of the AVF's feasibility."¹⁷⁶ These arguments trumped concerns from within the army about its ability to attract volunteers, and the cost of such an endeavor.¹⁷⁷ After all, there was "a long line of articles by economists who used empirical methods to estimate the labor supply of first-term enlistees."¹⁷⁸ Moreover, the Gates Commission hired many economists to "estimate supply curves for officers and enlistees, the effects of bonuses on retention, the effect of various factors on reenlistments, determinants of labor turnover costs in the military, the size of the conscription "tax," and productivity of the US military recruiting system, to name a few."¹⁷⁹ Rostker agrees:

They presented a totally new paradigm for evaluating military organizations. (...) They addressed all the issues of demand and supply, attrition and retention, and the mix of career and noncareer members in the context of management efficiency and personal equity. (...) Instead of framing the debate about the AVF around notions of citizenship and obligation, or around concerns about the shared burden of service and social equality, they [the economists] offered plans based on conservative or libertarian doctrines of market economies.¹⁸⁰

Finally, the fourth important factor was the argument about discipline and professionalism. As I showed, at the time, blame directed towards the military was almost exclusively on these issues. There was undoubtedly a problem with the army's reputation due to social issues like

¹⁷⁵ Beth L. Bailey, *AMERICA'S ARMY: Making the All-Volunteer Force*, 1st edition (Harvard University Press, 2009), 4.

¹⁷⁶ Hunt, "Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military, 1969–1973," 392.

¹⁷⁷ See Hunt, 368.

¹⁷⁸ Henderson, "The Role of Economists in Ending the Draft," 363.

¹⁷⁹ Henderson, 369.

¹⁸⁰ Rostker, "I Want You!"

dissent, drug usage, alcoholism, absenteeism, corrupt behavior, war crimes, racial tensions, crime, discipline issues, and general behavior.¹⁸¹

Proponents of the end of the draft argued that the all-volunteer force would help solve this problem. The military argued the opposite – for them, monetary incentives and concessions “would attract people poorly suited to military service and unlikely to become good soldiers.”¹⁸² This is the "mercenary" argument again, which states that a volunteer force would be made of low-quality people, who would enlist only for the money rather than to serve their country. Nevertheless, the argument that a volunteer force would increase professionalism won, and even the Army leadership privately recognized its merits. According to Griffith,

The chief of staff and his closest colleagues perceived a link between manpower procurement and the army's social problems. If the dissent, undiscipline, and drug and alcohol abuse were indeed problems imports from society, they reasoned, reduced reliance on the draft and unwilling draft-motivated volunteers might offer a way for the army to solve some of its own social problems. In a smaller post-Vietnam Army of true volunteers, professional standards could be reestablished and dissidents, malcontents, and misfits weeded out.¹⁸³

With a smaller, post-Vietnam volunteer force, the Army “could raise standards and weed out malcontents and misfits.”¹⁸⁴

The Gates Commission was effective in debating this point. In conducting and presenting its recommendations, it developed a theoretical case for the increased cost-effectiveness of a professional force. Total workforce requirements would be lower as three- to six-year enlistments

¹⁸¹ Nielsen, "US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1973-1982," 35. See also Spiller, "In the Shadow of the Dragon," 43; Griffith, "The US Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968-1974," 24-25.

¹⁸² Evans, "The All-Volunteer Army After Twenty Years: Recruiting in the Modern Era."

¹⁸³ Griffith, "The US Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968-1974," 25.

¹⁸⁴ Hunt, "Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military, 1969-1973," 368.

replaced two-year draft periods. Fewer soldiers would have to be trained and outfitted. An increased measure of professionalism would result not only from soldiers being volunteers, but also from more extended average tours, as well as from a recommended policy of making military service more attractive by relieving soldiers of nonmilitary duties and chores.¹⁸⁵ This is the reason why Rostker lists discipline problems among draftees mounted in Vietnam as one of the leading causes of the end of the draft. He also mentions that the army itself recognized that.¹⁸⁶ The public agreed with civilians regarding the nature of the problem: in a survey from March 1971, 82 percent of respondents agreed with the statement, "The draft has produced a lot of soldiers who don't want to fight." Only 10 percent disagreed.¹⁸⁷

The overall picture, then, is the following: on the one hand, the military's public image was damaged, and they did not have enough political power to effectively use public opinion to oppose the all-volunteer force. This is consistent with my theory. On the other hand, although civilian leaders were also blamed for the war, they tied the end of the draft to their commitment to leaving Vietnam. Additionally, this reform was facilitated by the fact that the subject of conscription was amenable to civilian expertise. This is also consistent with my theory, which predicts that specific types of reforms are more or less likely to be made by civilians. Finally, the draft was seen as a means of fixing the armed forces' main problems: indiscipline and unprofessionalism.

Moreover, the army was able to choose a strategy to at least, affect the implementation process and bargain for other benefits to the organization. As I argue in the theory chapter, reforms

¹⁸⁵ Evans, "The All-Volunteer Army After Twenty Years: Recruiting in the Modern Era."

¹⁸⁶ Rostker, "I Want You!," 2; See also Hunt, "Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military, 1969–1973," 368.

¹⁸⁷ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: March 1971, Question 37, USHARRIS.71MAR.R07E, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

result from these types of bargains. The army evaluated its chances to block the reform as slim due to public opinion, and instead chose to strategically affect the formulation of the policy.

However, it is worth noting that the fact that Nixon had just come into office seems to have been a contributing factor. Several of his cabinet members were, in fact, skeptical about ending the draft, but stated that they never questioned it because it was a campaign promise.¹⁸⁸ This diminished internal opposition to the decision, and even Nixon himself drew motivation from this commitment.¹⁸⁹ Moreover, at that point, Johnson was the main target of criticism, which might have helped Nixon push for reforms. Therefore, it is plausible that two mechanisms, in some cases, can help newly elected leaders have a window of opportunity for reforms: 1) campaign promises are a costly signal that "tie their hand," and 2) criticism is sometimes still personalized to the previous administration, which grants the current leader with more political power for some time.

Finally, it is worth addressing one potential alternative explanation. Was the end of the draft simply popular? Is this work theorizing too much on the simple fact that popular policies get implemented? The answer is no. As polls show, the draft was not unpopular when the Nixon administration was pursuing the all-volunteer force. In January 1969, right when Nixon took office, and just two months prior to the establishment of the Gates Commission, 62 percent of people favored continuing the draft after Vietnam was over, with only 32 percent preferring a shift to volunteers.¹⁹⁰ After Nixon had made the decision, in August 1970, the public was already shifting, but still evenly divided, with 46 percent supporting the idea of an all-volunteer army and 45 percent preferring the policy in place.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ See Laird, Interview of Melvin Laird, 10.

¹⁸⁹ See Hunt, "Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military, 1969–1973," 366.

¹⁹⁰ Gallup Organization, Gallup Poll # 773, Question 19, USGALLUP.773.Q018, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1969), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

¹⁹¹ Virginia Slims Polls (Roper #31107584).

There was also no sympathy for protesters or draftees. Regarding the former, the public overwhelmingly believed they should be handled more severely – in 1969, this number varied between 84¹⁹² and 89 percent.¹⁹³ As for the latter, 78 percent of respondents believe young men should give one year of their life to serve the country (military or nonmilitary), with 16 percent opposing.¹⁹⁴ A similar number of people thought young men avoiding the draft was unhealthy,¹⁹⁵ and most (58 percent) opposed amnesty for those who avoided the draft, with a minority (29 percent) favoring this decision.¹⁹⁶ Respondents also heavily opposed amnesty for those who had deserted due to opposition to the war.¹⁹⁷

Therefore, the causal direction was not that a popular policy led Nixon to pursue. Given the evidence above, the Nixon Administration was not forced by public opinion in any sense to pursue the end of conscription. Instead, the president pursued this policy because he was convinced of the argument. Nixon, Laird, Anderson, and others were successful because they were able to tie the policy to Vietnamization (which was very popular), civilians were able to make a sound technical case for it, and the military was being blamed for issues of indiscipline and had an image problem.

¹⁹² Newsweek, Gallup/Newsweek Poll # 1969-6988: Middle America, Question 49, USGALNEW.696988.Q52A, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1969), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

¹⁹³ Opinion Research Corporation, ORC Public Opinion Index, Question 57, USORC.050269.R43, Opinion Research Corporation, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1969), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

¹⁹⁴ Gallup Organization, Gallup Poll # 773, Question 4, USGALLUP.773.Q004, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1969), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

¹⁹⁵ Louis Harris & Associates, Louis Harris & Associates Poll: January 1971, Question 191, USHARRIS.71JAN.R63F, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1971), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

¹⁹⁶ Newsweek, Newsweek Poll: January 1972, Question 1, USGALNEW.72AMN.R1A, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1972), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

¹⁹⁷ Newsweek, Newsweek Poll: January 1972, Question 8, USGALNEW.72AMN.R5, Gallup Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1972), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

Doctrine

Another consequential reform enacted in the context of the Vietnam War was doctrine, which culminated in the FM 100-5 document, published in 1976. FM 100-5 is a pivotal document in the history of the US military. It stands for Field Manual 100-5 and is the US Army's keystone warfighting doctrine, often called Operations. The version published in 1976 was one of the most significant, as it marked a critical shift in the US military doctrine from an approach based on attrition to one of "Active Defense."

The 1976 version of FM 100-5 was the brainchild of General William E. DePuy, the first commander of the US Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). This doctrine sought to avoid a static defense that would merely absorb an enemy's attack and instead emphasized that forces should try to disrupt an attacking enemy's cohesion and operational rhythm. The "Active Defense" aimed to use mobility and firepower, including the defensive potential of anti-tank guided missiles and attack helicopters, to disrupt and destroy attacking forces. Under this doctrine, the army would seek to attrite enemy forces at all stages of their attack, not just in a 'meeting battle' scenario but also during their approach march and follow-on operations. However, despite its name, this doctrine faced criticism for its perceived passivity. Critics argued that it did not provide a way to seize the initiative or transition to the offensive, leaving NATO forces in a potentially perpetual state of reaction to Warsaw Pact moves. The doctrine was revised in 1982.

As hinted above, the most important individual actor in this development was General DePuy. He vigorously campaigned within the army for the new doctrine, and there is no evidence of civilian involvement at any stage. This is consistent with my theory - the new doctrine was

published in 1976, when the military was in a better position than civilians in the face of public opinion.

The Intra-Military Politics of The New Doctrine

The new doctrine has its roots in the establishment of TRADOC. DePuy, its first commander, had well-established ideas about tactics, which were primarily based on his experiences in World War II. Vietnam, for him, was only a special case, which did not affect these ideas much. He had also developed a peculiar bureaucratic style, which consisted of recruiting bright officers, more on the junior side, and brainstorming specific problems to develop comprehensive recommendations. This strategy made it possible to quickly gain the approval of superiors.¹⁹⁸

The Yom Kippur War erupted in the Middle East in the same year TRADOC was created. Many see this war as having significantly influenced the creation of the new US Army doctrine. Abrams indeed asked TRADOC to extract lessons from the war, which influenced doctrinal initiatives that were to come,¹⁹⁹ and DePuy and others believed that wars in the future would be similar to the Yom Kippur War. At the same time, the war confirmed several of his conceptions about combat, strategic outlook, and fundamental ideas about tactics.²⁰⁰

However, it is important not to overstate the importance of the Yom Kippur War. As DePuy later stated, one thing "the Arab-Israeli War did was to provide a marvelous excuse (...) for

¹⁹⁸ See Paul H. Herbert, "Deciding What Has to Be Done: General William E. DePuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5, Operations (Leavenworth Paper, Number 16)" (ARMY COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLL FORT LEAVENWORTH KS COMBAT STUDIES INST, July 1, 1988), 22–23, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA531279>; See also Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers*, 157.

¹⁹⁹ Herbert, "Deciding What Has to Be Done," 31.

²⁰⁰ Herbert, 34,37.

reviewing and updating our own doctrine."²⁰¹ Also, he stated that “it would be incorrect to say that the Arab-Israeli War was the sole foundation upon which that doctrine was built. In fact, there are aspects of the current US Army doctrine that the Israelis do not consider directly applicable (...).”²⁰² There were important lessons incorporated from this war by TRADOC. However, the new doctrine was also based on lessons from the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, and emphasized abandoning methods and habits from Vietnam.²⁰³ Moreover, DePuy had a new concept of standard scenarios approved by Abrams in early 1973.²⁰⁴ Even before that, other initiatives had started to appear.²⁰⁵ Counterfactually, the Yom Kippur War was not a necessary condition for doctrinal reform, although it made it easier, probably speedier, and affected its content. The main objective of the new doctrine, however, was to recover from the Vietnam War, which DePuy and many others believed had cost the army a generation of modernization.²⁰⁶ Moreover, the army wanted to distance itself from the experience in this war, which the institution considered an anomaly. As Spiller argues, the Vietnam War was the leading cause for the changes in US military doctrine.²⁰⁷

When TRADOC decided to guide doctrinal reform, DePuy circulated an internal document outlining its model. After this, he decided to implement steps two and three of his plan, which consisted of establishing a dialogue with field commanders and conducting a series of clinics and seminars on tactics. He organized a FORSCOM-TRADOC²⁰⁸ conference, which was named Octoberfest, and a visit to US troops in Germany in October 1974. DePuy and General Starry,

²⁰¹ Brownlee and III, *Changing An Army*, 190.

²⁰² Brownlee and III, 191.

²⁰³ Herbert, “Deciding What Has to Be Done,” 48.

²⁰⁴ Herbert, 37.

²⁰⁵ See Robert A. Doughty, *The Evolution of US Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76* (Combat Studies Institute, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1979), 43.

²⁰⁶ Doughty, 41.

²⁰⁷ Spiller, “In the Shadow of the Dragon,” 42.

²⁰⁸ FORSCOM refers to United States Army Forces Command.

commandant of the US Army Armor School, personally supervised the organization of the conference, hoping to sell TRADOC's concept of doctrine to the attending officers. It ended with a positive note, which DePuy called a "consensus." He then decided to rewrite all field manuals, capitalizing on the conference, and initiated the writing of FM 100-5, *Operations*.²⁰⁹

At first, Major General John H. Cushman, commandant at the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, was tasked with writing the manual. However, due to philosophical differences regarding doctrine and training, DePuy did not approve the document he produced. DePuy then transferred the responsibilities for the document to TRADOC's headquarters, and directly and meticulously supervised its writing by a small group of elected officers. During the process, for military and bureaucrat reasons, DePuy emphasized TRADOC's ties with the US Air Force Tactical Command and the West German Army, and ensured that the new manual was consistent with the doctrine of these institutions.²¹⁰ This was an important device for "gaining acceptance of those ideas within the Army,"²¹¹ and was "as important to establishing TRADOC's authority within the US Army as they were to developing substantive doctrine."²¹²

By the fall of 1975, FM 100-5's concepts were ready. During these months, DePuy rallied support within the army and addressed any sources of opposition he identified. In October, he gathered support from FORSCOM by hosting a joint conference with TRADOC, which included the Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Frederick Weyand,²¹³ high-ranking officers from both organizations and the Reserve Components, and overseas commanders.²¹⁴ He also briefed the Germans on a

²⁰⁹ Herbert, "Deciding What Has to Be Done," 45–49; Spiller, "In the Shadow of the Dragon," 49.

²¹⁰ For a detailed review of the interactions with Cushman and the cooperation with outside institutions, see Herbert, "Deciding What Has to Be Done," 51–60, 61–74. See also Spiller, "In the Shadow of the Dragon," 49–50.

²¹¹ Herbert, "Deciding What Has to Be Done," 63.

²¹² Herbert, 75.

²¹³ Weyand had replaced Abrams after his untimely passing.

²¹⁴ Herbert, "Deciding What Has to Be Done," 89.

preliminary draft, of which they were supportive. Finally, DePuy got together with Starry and Gorman (TRADOC's deputy chief of staff for training) to rewrite the document's final draft, which was presented at the Department of the Army Commanders' Conference in December. The briefing went well, and none of the commanders requested significant alterations to the doctrine. In July 1976, it was approved by the Department of the Army and started to be printed as the US Army's new combat doctrine.²¹⁵

With the story above in mind, the conclusion reached by Herbert is not surprising:

FM 100-5 was not so much a product of an institutional process as of the highly personalized bureaucratic style of William E. DePuy. It reflected DePuy's beliefs about combat and the army and his penchant for detailed system analyses. While writing the manual, DePuy became convinced that what had started as a quick fix to reorient the army's training had become a major overhaul of the army's doctrine that would last for years.²¹⁶

Indeed, DePuy was a crucial figure in the army for the creation of the Active Defense doctrine – perhaps the most important US Army General at the time and the most important figure in the modern history of the Army doctrine.²¹⁷ In fact, it is difficult to imagine, counterfactually, what doctrinal reform would have looked like without him. As Spiller describes, he was the only general officer that seemed to "have a vision, along with the energy and resources to pursue it."²¹⁸

Nonetheless, two points are worth noting. First, DePuy had Abrams' full support throughout these processes, from the lessons of the Yom Kippur War to the cooperation with West

²¹⁵ Herbert, 92–93.

²¹⁶ Herbert, 75; See also Suzanne C. Nielsen, "US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1973-1982: A Case Study in Successful Peacetime Military Reform" (ARMY COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLL FORT LEAVENWORTH KS, January 1, 2003), 40, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA416922>.

²¹⁷ Spiller, "In the Shadow of the Dragon," 44.

²¹⁸ Spiller, 51.

Germany and the Air Force.²¹⁹ Although DePuy "did the work" here, these initiatives also reflected Abram's preferences. Second, TRADOC, as an organization, was well-positioned to engage in these reforms. Nielsen explains that it had "both the institutional charter and resources to develop new training philosophies, create new military doctrine, and ensure that training, doctrine, leader development, material, and the development of organizational structures received a new level of integration."²²⁰ Thus, institutional factors can be given at least some credit for these reforms, even though there is no doubt this was not the "faceless" approach that had been common until that point.²²¹

Were Civilians on Board?

As discussed above, the process of doctrinal reform took place within the military, and reflected the preferences of the Army leadership at the time. How come civilians did not get involved?

Spiller explains why the army reformed itself:

No civilian reformer in the tradition of a Haldane or Cardwell or Root would appear to rescue the army from its malaise. The politico-military leadership had lost any moral or professional credibility it may have enjoyed. The war had not supplied this army with institutional heroes around whom the faithful could rally.²²²

²¹⁹ Herbert, "Deciding What Has to Be Done"; Nielsen, *An Army Transformed*; Nielsen, "US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1973-1982."

²²⁰ Nielsen, *An Army Transformed*, 43. Spiller makes a similar point about integration. Spiller, "In the Shadow of the Dragon," 49.

²²¹ Spiller, "In the Shadow of the Dragon," 49.

²²² Spiller, 43.

Therefore, the demoralization of the civilian leadership is understood to have played a role in the lack of civilian involvement. As we saw, the public had markedly negative views about civilian leaders in the closing of the Vietnam War, especially regarding their handling of the conflict. However, although Spiller is correct, two additional factors can help explain the absence of civilians in this reform. In fact, the same two factors that explained the end of the draft can shed light on the shape that doctrinal reform took: the specific narratives used to make sense of the Vietnam War outcome, and how amenable this area is for civilian expertise.

Regarding the first factor, neither the military, civilians, nor public opinion identified military effectiveness as a problem in the war. There was, instead, an image problem for the army. However, as previously mentioned, it was connected with problems related to discipline, drugs, and behavior in general. But these do not speak to the army's capacity to formulate doctrine.

As I discussed above, DePuy viewed the Tet Offensive as a military failure for the opposition, believed the US could have won the Vietnam War with a more aggressive bombing campaign, and criticized Washington and the media for misunderstanding the conflict. He also claimed the US Army was restricted in its actions, and praised its performance and the enemy's resilience, while also emphasizing that the US should have limited its involvement in the conflict earlier. Similarly, David Jones believed the primary mistake in Vietnam was political, with the US wrongfully taking on a war that should have been fought by the Vietnamese. While acknowledging military errors, he considered them minor compared to the significant issue of the US taking ownership of the war. This sentiment was shared by junior officers, who did not see themselves as the ones who lost the war.

These ideas were consolidated among scholars and the public during the closing of the war, and even civilian elites seemed to agree with some of them. As I mentioned, documents prepared

by the State Department and the National Security Council prepared documents on the "lessons of Vietnam" echoed many of these points, as well as statements from DoD officials and politicians. Because of the above, there was no "political appetite" for pushing for civilian participation in doctrine, as there was for issues of indiscipline and behavior.

This does not mean civilians did not attempt to affect doctrine during this period. Here, the second factor plays a role: how amenable is the reform to civilian expertise? In the case of doctrine, very little. For example, Harold Brown, who acted as Secretary of Defense during the Carter Administration, mentioned that it was quite difficult for civilians to exercise influence in operational practices, as the military is most jealous of prerogatives in this area. If they do not believe the Secretary of Defense has relevant experience, it will be an "enormous struggle for him even try to participate, let alone decide." Moreover, Brown noted that the military will resist civilian staff participation even more strongly, because they do not have the same legal right as the Secretary to participate in the decision-making process and are seen as "amateurs."²²³ Looking back at his tenure, he concluded that he "never did get adequate control or influence over military plans and operations."²²⁴

This issue was so sensitive that when Brown decided to create an undersecretary of plans and operations, he had to name them "undersecretary of policy" because, otherwise, the military would have found it intrusive.²²⁵ Kester recounts the same story. According to him, one function of the undersecretary was "to snoop on what the JCS was doing in the Joint Staff." The name, Kester maintained, was chosen not "to set off alarm bells anywhere."²²⁶ Brown also attempted to

²²³ Brown, Interview of Harold Brown, 1981, 5.

²²⁴ Brown, 9.

²²⁵ Brown, Interview of Harold Brown, February 28, 1992, 13.

²²⁶ Keefer, "HAROLD BROWN - Offsetting the Soviet Military Challenge 1977-1981," 101.

create a civilian-military operations and crisis team. This initiative failed because he was told "that the chiefs were going to make a big stink about it (...)." ²²⁷

Packard, from the Nixon Administration, shared a similar view. He believed the Office of the Secretary of Defense was incapable of establishing policy regarding military operations. ²²⁸ Finally, Donald Rumsfeld, Ford's Defense Secretary, also viewed civilian control as something that "wasn't what a lot of people had in mind" at the time, and something that was resisted within the DoD. ²²⁹ As an example, he mentions how the army was "stunned" when he decided to take time to choose between their recommendation and Deputy Secretary Clements' recommendation for a new tank – Army officials were so sure they would have their position endorsed that they had already announced the decision to the press. ²³⁰ Rumsfeld later stated, "The XM-1 tank contract taught me that overruling a recommendation by the military services would almost certainly lead to upheaval and come at the cost of additional scar tissue." ²³¹

Notably, during Brown's tenure, there was an unsuccessful attempt at revising the US military strategy and posture, per Carter's request. Brown recruited Lynn Davis, a Columbia Ph.D. and former assistant professor of political science, to manage the process and draft the final study. Davis was deputy assistant secretary for international security affairs and was in charge of its policy portfolio. At every stage of this process, there was "a torrent of opposition" from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the study, which they classified as having several "inadequacies and shortcomings," and which the Navy even called "dangerous." ²³² A big part of the problem was that

²²⁷ Brown, Interview with Harold Brown, March 4, 1994, 20–21.

²²⁸ Packard, Interview of David Packard, November 28, 1988, 22.

²²⁹ Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, 543–44.

²³⁰ See Rumsfeld, 544–49. See also Evans and Novak, "Tank Trouble."

²³¹ Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, 549.

²³² See Keefer, "HAROLD BROWN - Offsetting the Soviet Military Challenge 1977–1981," 121–33.

Davis and her team were viewed as outsiders, “who were so bold as to instruct the Pentagon on how to plan for national security.”²³³ A group of NSC staffers viewed the campaign against the study as “mainly bureaucratically motivated,” and believed that there was resentment because they were “not invented here [i.e., not by the JCS and services but by an academic in OSD].”²³⁴ They also suggested that there was a dislike of the services of anything that constrained their freedom of action. Keefer later mentioned how Davis “got strong support from in the NSC and the NSC staff and (National Security Advisor) Brzezinski as well.”²³⁵ It is unclear what Carter’s exact thoughts were about the study, but he was said to have lost interest in it in this context. In an interview, Brown later mentioned how the Joint Staff “just didn’t like what we were saying,” and that they targeted her (Davis) because she was a civilian, a woman, and a professor.²³⁶

In sum, three factors affected the lack of civilian participation in doctrine reform after the Vietnam War. First, civilian leaders were demoralized in 1975, and the military was not as much. Second, the lessons from Vietnam did not include the notion that the army was ineffective. Instead, both the public narrative and civilian elites seemed to agree with the military that the mistakes were choosing to fight an unwinnable war in the first place, not securing public support, and letting civilians meddle too much in operational decisions. Moreover, even criticism of the behavior of the military appeared to have been winding down at that time. Third, civilians have difficulty affecting markedly technical areas of warfare, and at the same time, the military actively attempted to block their participation.

²³³ See Keefer, 125.

²³⁴ Keefer, 127.

²³⁵ ,Brown, Interview with Harold Brown, 2011, 29.

²³⁶ Brown, 30.

Two polls are especially illuminating regarding the political climate at the time. The first, which I have mentioned above, showed that, in 1975, a plurality of Americans believed the Vietnam War had shown that military leaders should be able to fight wars without civilian leaders "tying their hands."²³⁷ The second was a real-life example of the public's view of competing preferences between civilians and the military about a military decision. As the 1977 poll explained, Carter announced that he would not authorize building the new long-range B-1 bomber for the United States Air Force, because it was too costly. Instead, he believed the US should produce more Cruise missiles to be used in conjunction with the B-52 bomber. The poll then mentioned that top Air Force officials felt that the B-1 was essential to the country's defense, and that the cost was worth it. When asked whether the US should build the B-1 bomber, a plurality of Americans agreed with the military. Importantly, only 15 percent of respondents opposed the B-1 because they agreed with Carter's evaluation, while 21 percent simply opposed the arms race.²³⁸ Therefore, the public seemed to favor the military for these types of decisions in the period between 1975 and 1977.

How do these findings fit with my theory? This reform lends evidence for three of my hypotheses. First, it is consistent with *Hypothesis 1*, which states that blame assignment to civilians is expected to decrease levels of civilian participation in military reforms, while blame assignment to the military is expected to decrease levels of military participation. As expected, given that blame was more intensely directed at civilians in the post-1973 period, a reform that occurred in

²³⁷ The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Chicago Council on Foreign Relations Poll # 1974-2436G: American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy, 1974: General Public, Question 166, USHARRIS.74CFR.Q06BG, Louis Harris & Associates, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1974), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

²³⁸ The Roper Organization, Roper Reports 77-8, Question 31, USROPER.77-8.R09, The Roper Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1977), Survey question, DOI: {doi}.

1975-1976 was led by the military. Second, consistent with *Hypothesis 4*, which expects the military to be rewarded by good battlefield performance, the military maintained its dominance in this area, which was not seen as a problem during the Vietnam War. Finally, just as in the conscription reform, there is strong evidence for *Hypothesis 10*, which emphasizes how expertise plays a role in civilian participation in reforms. In this case, the armed forces successfully painted civilians who attempted to influence doctrine and operations as outsiders.

The Other Reforms from the Period

Although the end of conscription and the doctrinal reforms were the most important in the context of the Vietnam War, two other reforms are worth briefly mentioning. They are less interesting for my theory, however, because there was broad consensus in their favor, and both civilians and the military supported them.

The end of CONARC and the creation of TRADOC

The first reform was the inactivation of the Continental Army Command (CONARC). In light of experiences in the Vietnam War, Westmoreland directed an extensive review of the Army organizational structure in September 1969. He selected Major General D. S. Parker to lead a Special Review Panel to examine the organizations, procedures, and responsibilities of CONARC, the Combat Developments Command, the Army Material Command, and the departmental headquarters staff. This panel questioned whether the existing mission assignment and command

structure of CONARC and its units were efficient and effective.²³⁹ The conclusion was that its missions covered too many loosely related functional areas, which prevented optimal performance. Other potential problems included duplicative staffing and slowness in response. Several solutions were proposed, many of which were acted upon by General Palmer.²⁴⁰

In September 1970, the Deputy Secretary of Defense instructed the three services to review their organizational structure again, with the assistance of the DoD.²⁴¹ The following month, CONARC also created a "Management Improvement Panel." General Haines approved all of the changes proposed by the panel, except for the "Reorganization of the Command Structure of the US Continental Army Command," for which he requested further studies.²⁴²

In January 1971, Haines was told that there was a growing inclination inside the Pentagon, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the Department of the Army to enact changes. He insisted that the findings from CONARC's Management Improvement Panel had convinced him that its structure was sound, and directed his Deputy Chief of Staff, Comptroller, to prepare a major policy statement to be presented to Palmer, "outlining his rationale for retaining the current overall organizational structure of the US Continental Army Command and detailing contemplated management and organizational improvements within that overall organization," and got personally involved in its drafting.²⁴³

²³⁹ Jean R. Moenk, "Operation STEADFAST Historical Summary: A History of the Reorganization of the US Continental Army Command (1972-1973)" (Fort McPherson, GA: Headquarters, US Army Forces Command, 1974), 2.

²⁴⁰ Moenk, 3-6; See also Robert T. Davis II, *The Challenge of Adaptation: The US Army in the Aftermath of Conflict, 1953-2000: The Long War Series Occasional Paper 27* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012), 50.

²⁴¹ This panel was formed by Nixon at the beginning of his term to review the organization of the DoD.

²⁴² See Moenk, "Operation STEADFAST Historical Summary: A History of the Reorganization of the US Continental Army Command (1972-1973)," 6-9.

²⁴³ Moenk, 11.

Despite Haines' efforts, the DoD was basing its proposals on CONARC's own Management Improvement Panel recommendations, and the Department of the Army did not receive CONARC's new study until after the DoD published its Program/Budget Decisions. Therefore, "it was almost inevitable that such a reorganization and streamlining would be directed from above and that it would take such form as the higher headquarters determined."²⁴⁴ Haines continued fighting, but the consensus among the Department of the Army leadership was that a thorough reorganization of the entire Army structure in CONARC was practically inevitable. At the beginning of 1972, Palmer noted that there was sufficient pressure from outside the army, especially from the DoD and Congress, to "require a study of the adequacy and effectiveness of the existing organizational structure."²⁴⁵

DePuy, at the time Assistant Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, prepared a study for the Army Chief of Staff, the Secretary of the Army, and the Secretary of Defense, in which he argued that the Vietnam War had distorted the organizational structure of the Department of the Army.²⁴⁶ He also argued that its adequacy and effectiveness had not been proven in the field. The end of the war, DePuy noted, would necessarily bring many changes to the organization of the army in the continental United States. As he put it, "The mobilization after Vietnam broke the camel's back."²⁴⁷

DePuy concluded that the mission of maintaining active and reserve forces in the continent was enough for one major commander, and that the mission of training was enough for another. He thought CONARC had too many responsibilities, was "too big to be managed," and was "a decade behind in management techniques."²⁴⁸ Therefore, he and the Department of the Army Staff

²⁴⁴ Moenk, 27.

²⁴⁵ Moenk, 29.

²⁴⁶ As DePuy recounts, the study was requested by Palmer. See Brownlee and III, *Changing An Army*, 177.

²⁴⁷ Brownlee and III, 177.

²⁴⁸ Davis II, *The Challenge of Adaptation*, 177.

determined that the CONARC should be divided into two new commands.²⁴⁹ On February 1972, Haines was informed by Palmer of the reorganization. At that point, the concept had already been presented to Westmoreland, Secretary of the Army Froehlke, and Laird, and approved by all of them.²⁵⁰ This happened quite quickly. According to DePuy, they took the study to Palmer on a Monday, and he was very enthusiastic about it. Then they went to Westmoreland on Tuesday, and he approved it. They went to the Secretary of the Army on a Wednesday, and he also approved it. Finally, they met with Laird on a Friday, who also approved it. DePuy later stated that this was a "very remarkable experience that probably should go on into the Guinness Book of Records."²⁵¹ This goes to show how strong the consensus was at that point.

General Abrams Jr., who replaced Westmoreland in 1972, maintained support for the idea. He appointed General James G. Kalergis as head of the STEADFAST Study group, tasked with solving the implementation details.²⁵² The wide-ranging reorganization was announced by him and Froehlke in January 1973. It resulted in the dissolution of CONARC and the creation of two new commands, the United States Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) and the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). FORSCOM was in control of operational divisions and other forces in the continental United States, as well as the readiness of reserves. TRADOC was responsible for overseeing all aspects of Army training and education, and the combat development process.²⁵³ As Nielsen explains, the creation of TRADOC tasked one command with unified responsibility for "training, teaching, and developing the Army in terms of

²⁴⁹ Another determination was to extinguish the Combat Developments Command.

²⁵⁰ Moenk, "Operation STEADFAST Historical Summary: A History of the Reorganization of the US Continental Army Command (1972-1973)," 33–35; Davis II, *The Challenge of Adaptation*, 50–51; Brownlee and III, *Changing An Army*, 178.

²⁵¹ Brownlee and III, *Changing An Army*, 178; See also Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers*, 157.

²⁵² Brownlee and III, 178; See also Davis II, *The Challenge of Adaptation*, 51.

²⁵³ Davis II, *The Challenge of Adaptation*, 51–52.

equipment, doctrine, and force structure.”²⁵⁴ As we saw above, DePuy was named its first commander.

In sum, this was a case in which civilians and the military shared the same preference for reorganizing the CONARC. Throughout the process, there was pressure from the DoD, Congress, and the Secretary of the Army in this direction. The Secretary of Defense was the one who approved the change. At the same time, many in the army concluded that this was the best course of action, and both Westmoreland and Palmer agreed. Abrams also supported the idea. Not only he agreed with the assessments that CONARC's functions had grown out of control and made it ineffective, but he believed that this reorganization also enabled him to "establish himself as a sound manager of resources and enhanced the Army's credibility with civilian policymakers through a reorganization that saved money and reduced headquarters personnel."²⁵⁵ The only apparent source of opposition came from Haines, who was not capable of blocking this decision.

The 16-division Army and the Turn to Europe

Two other changes in the military after the Vietnam War are frequently mentioned alongside the ones examined above. First, the decision to move from a 13 to a 16-division Army has been described as a decision from the military. More specifically, from Abrams, the Chief of Staff at the time. Nielsen describes it as Abrams having "negotiated an arrangement with Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger,"²⁵⁶ and Lock-Pullan states that "General Abrams utilized the 'Total War' concept and gained support from the new Secretary of Defense, James Schlesinger, for a new

²⁵⁴ Nielsen, *An Army Transformed*, 40.

²⁵⁵ Nielsen, 41; Davis II, *The Challenge of Adaptation*, 51–52.

²⁵⁶ Nielsen, "US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1973-1982," 41.

16-division model of the army. Schlesinger accepted this understanding of Total Force as it was a cost reduction.”²⁵⁷ Gallo similarly states that "when Abrams boldly, and without analysis from his staff, declared in March 1974 that the Army would establish a 16-division force even though it was only budgeted for 13 divisions, civilian policymakers did not intervene to stop him." However, he notes that the Nixon Administration supported the 16-divisions plan by promoting the integration of the National Guard and Reserves into the total Army force posture.²⁵⁸ Sorley also notes how the decision was made without consulting staff, but describes the decision as an agreement with Schlesinger – a “golden handshake.”²⁵⁹ Finally, Davis argues that Abrams made this decision independently, without supporting staff work, and does not mention Schlesinger or the DoD.²⁶⁰

However, Norman Augustine, Under Secretary of the Army at the time, suggests this was an idea from Secretary of Defense Schlesinger. Also, according to him, "Schlesinger, Bo Callaway, General Abrams, General Weyand, and General Rogers, everybody in the Army got on board with this idea."²⁶¹ Former Secretary of Defense Brown has a similar recollection. According to him, “Jim Schlesinger did it (...). (...) Schlesinger told Abrams he could have two more divisions but no more people.”²⁶²

Regardless of who initiated the idea, the fact is that there was an agreement between civilians and the military about this decision. Thus, this is a sufficient condition for it to be enacted.

²⁵⁷ Lock-Pullan, *US Intervention Policy and Army Innovation*, 47.

²⁵⁸ Andrew A. Gallo, “Understanding Military Doctrinal Change During Peacetime” (Columbia University, 2018), 158, <https://doi.org/10.7916/D8709HB9>.

²⁵⁹ Lewis Sorley, *Thunderbolt: General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times*, 2nd edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 363.

²⁶⁰ Davis II, *The Challenge of Adaptation*, 52.

²⁶¹ Norman Augustine, Interview with Norman Augustine, 2001, 17–18, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/oral_history/OH_Trans_AugustineNorman12-14-2001.pdf?ver=2014-05-28-123647-677.

²⁶² Brown, Interview of Harold Brown, February 28, 1992, 28.

In any case, if the seeming consensus that this was a change enacted by the military is correct, the fact is consistent with my theoretical expectations. This decision was made in the third phase of the conflict, in which I expect reforms to come from the military.

The second change worth mentioning, though not a reform, is the military turn to Europe. These two issues were connected. Army historian Robert Davis explains that the army needed to develop doctrine and training to employ the new integrated force, including the reserves. Abrams viewed the dependence on the reserves as something positive and desirable, because it would make policymakers more dependent on public opinion to declare war, and Schlesinger knew about this.²⁶³ The Nixon Administration provided guidance through NSDM 95, to ensure the capability for credible conventional deterrence in Europe. Nixon and Kissinger also declared, in 1973, that that would be the "Year of Europe." Thus, As David notes, it was created "an atmosphere in which the army's turn to Europe fell in sync with the proclaimed foreign policy agenda. The army was quick to embrace this return to a more conducive and comfortable strategic environment."²⁶⁴ As DePuy states, the manual focused on war in Western Europe "because the defense of NATO Europe has been assigned to the Army by the Department of Defense as its principal mission."²⁶⁵ But, again, the army was happy to embrace this reorientation. General Starry later explained: "With the Nixon doctrine beginning to reaffirm our national interest in Western Europe, our military focus narrowed to NATO (...) So, we decided to begin with developing operational concepts to cope with our most difficult problem, the mechanized war."²⁶⁶ In sum, as Gallo explains, "the

²⁶³ Lock-Pullan, *US Intervention Policy and Army Innovation*, 47; Davis II, *The Challenge of Adaptation*, 52; Summers, *On Strategy II*, 72; Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 364.

²⁶⁴ Davis II, *The Challenge of Adaptation*, 52.

²⁶⁵ Nielsen, "US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1973-1982," 59.

²⁶⁶ Nielsen, *An Army Transformed*, 47; Doughty, *The Evolution of US Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76*, 40; See also Spiller, "In the Shadow of the Dragon," 43.

preferences of civilian elites matched the preferences of Army leaders who were eager to transition their focus from the Vietnam War to Europe.”²⁶⁷

One would be correct in stating that these decisions favored the army in the sense that the military strongly believed that public support should be necessary for going to war, and that Total Force decreased civilians' decision-making powers. However, it is important to emphasize once more that Schlesinger knew about this, and agreed with the decision. Also, this decision is consistent with what civilians learned from Vietnam. Again, the State Department and the National Security Council directly mentioned "failure in securing domestic support for the war" as a cause for the defeat in Vietnam. Therefore, civilians believed this was the best course of action, even if it meant that going to war in the future would be more difficult. Still, if the correct interpretation is that this was a military reform, that would also be consistent with my theory. As with the 16-division army, this decision was made in the third phase of the conflict, in which I expect reforms to come from the military.

6.3. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I examined four different reforms from the post-Vietnam era. Two were the results of consensus among civilians and the military, one was enacted by civilians, and another was enacted by the military. Table 12 displays the reforms enacted in the period.

If both civilians and the military were blamed for this war, what explains the variation in their capacity to enact reforms? Due to the length of the Vietnam War, the war can be understood as having had three phases of blame assignment. At first, both civilians and the military were

²⁶⁷ Gallo, "Understanding Military Doctrinal Change During Peacetime," 157.

Table 12. Reforms and Reform Attempts, US post-Vietnam.

Area	Description	Content	Author	Outcome
Conscription	Reform	All-volunteer Force	Civilians	Successful, despite military opposition.
Doctrine	Reform	Publication of Field Manual 100-5, Operations, and establishment of "Active Defense" doctrine.	Military	Successful, no civilian participation. Civilians were unsuccessful in affecting other aspects of doctrine and operations in this period.
Organizational	Reform	End of CONARC	Military	Successful, with civilian support.
Organizational	Reform	16-Divisions Army	Most scholars attribute it to the military, but there is some controversy.	Successful, with support from both actors.
Doctrine/Strategy	Attempt	Revision of military strategy and posture.	Civilians	Failure due to military opposition.

supported by public opinion. In the second, civilians had an advantage. Finally, in the third, the advantage was with the armed forces. Consistent with my theoretical expectations, civilians were able to enact an important reform during the second phase, while the military enacted another during the third phase. This is evidence for *Hypothesis 1* of my theory, which connects responsibility assignment with civilian participation in reforms.

During the formulation of the civilian reform, which established the all-volunteer force, there is direct evidence that the military not only opposed this reform, but decided not to fight it because of how it was perceived by public opinion. Moreover, civilians were able to deploy their expertise effectively, and frame the reform in ways that addressed perceived mistakes from the military and themselves. More specifically, they tied the reform to the withdrawal from Vietnam, and framed it as a way of solving the disciplinary problems within the army. In addition to *Hypothesis 1*, this is evidence in favor of *Hypothesis 10*, which discusses the role of expertise.

During the formulation of the military reform, civilians were remarkably silent, and there was no evidence that they attempted to intervene. This might have occurred for two reasons. First, civilians did not seem to believe that military effectiveness had been one of the causes of the failures in Vietnam. Second, however, they were explicitly aware of how difficult it was to affect military doctrine and operations. Thus, they likely refrained from attempting to intervene in the first place. This was exemplified in Harold Brown's attempt to revise US military strategy and posture during the Carter administration, which resulted in a strong reaction from the armed forces, who blocked the initiative. The post-war dynamics of changes in military doctrine and operations are consistent with *Hypothesis 1*, and also *Hypothesis 10*, which emphasizes the role of expertise.

As for the determinants of responsibility assignment, the Vietnam case is also broadly consistent with my theory. Civilians were blamed for war initiation and escalation, which aligns with *Hypothesis 2*. The military, alternatively, was subject to public condemnation for violations of human rights and international law (*Hypothesis 6*), and for failings to maintain troop discipline and morale (*Hypothesis 5*). The obvious qualification here is that blame assignment was not static, and, due to the lengthy nature of the Vietnam War, fluctuated according to the development of the war. As I discussed in the relevant sections, however, wars this long are extremely rare, and the fluctuations in responsibility assignment were consistent with my theoretical expectations.

All in all, this case displays a strong connection between blame assignment and reforms. When it comes to the determinants of blame assignment, they were still consistent with theoretical expectations, but with relevant qualifications.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, I revisit the core arguments of the dissertation and recap the empirical findings. Subsequently, I highlight the key implications for the academic literature and policymaking. Additionally, I list the main limitations of this study, and, based on them, suggest avenues for future research.

7.1. ARGUMENT AND FINDINGS

This dissertation developed a theory that connected wars with the extent of civilian participation in military reforms. I propose that the process of post-war military reform is influenced by a chain of variables. First, the public observes what occurred in the war, and uses some basic heuristics to assign blame or praise for that outcome. Here, the public tends to attribute responsibility based on the perceived roles and duties of civilian leaders and the military. This allocation of responsibility is contingent upon the common understanding of the respective “job descriptions” of these entities. Civilian leaders, for example, are expected to make judicious decisions regarding the initiation of war, while the military has the task of competently managing battlefield operations. The attribution of praise or blame, therefore, stems from how well these groups fulfill their respective responsibilities in the public’s view.

These perceptions, in turn, significantly impact the balance of power between civilian leaders and the military. The public’s assignment of praise or blame serves as a *de facto* performance review that can increase or decrease the influence of the respective parties. When civilian leaders are viewed as competent and effective, they enjoy greater political capital, strengthening their position in the policymaking process, including enacting military reforms.

Conversely, if the public perceives the military to have successfully executed their duties, it bolsters its standing and influence in shaping defense policy and instigating reforms.

Therefore, this dynamic interaction between public perception, responsibility assignment, and the balance of power plays a pivotal role in dictating who holds sway in implementing military reforms in the aftermath of wars. The parties deemed to have performed their “jobs” well are often empowered to guide the course of institutional change in the military. This argument is carefully developed in Chapter 2, where, step-by-step, I establish that 1) civilian and military have incentives to control military reforms; 2) popularity affects the balance of power between civilians and the military, which, in turn, affects their prospects of influencing reforms; and 3) wars affect the popularity of both civilian leaders and the military. In this same chapter, I also discuss the influence of factors external to wars, such as expertise and the pre-war context, and make predictions about how reforms emerge in the first place.

In Chapter 3, statistical analysis robustly establishes an association between the public’s blame and credit assignment and the nature of post-war military reforms. Civilian leaders blamed for a war’s outcome tend to have reduced participation in post-war military reforms, whereas those credited with success are more involved. The same is true for the military. It is also found that the public significantly associates war initiation with civilian accountability, rewarding leaders who initiate successful wars and punishing those responsible for failures. In terms of military accountability, battlefield performance, and discipline are significant predictors of military favorability, while war crimes generally reduce it. Additionally, the previous state of civil-military relations and the type of reform – doctrinal, recruitment, organizational, or force structure – significantly influence whether civilians or the military lead reforms. Finally, the enactment of reforms is associated with higher levels of destruction and defeat.

Chapters 4-6 are the case studies. In Chapter 4, the post-Six-Day War Israel case study exemplifies a unique instance of nonreform, which aligns with my theoretical predictions. The conditions that usually precede nonreform were present, and despite acknowledging the presence of deficiencies by the military, only minor changes were implemented – and not to address said deficiencies. This is evidence of the power of military success to suppress the political appetite for reforms. The case is also consistent with theoretical expectations concerning responsibility assignment and the political influence of the military. The prime minister faced judgment for not initiating the conflict soon enough. At the same time, the military was lauded for its battlefield performance, which characterized one of the most lopsided victories in the history of warfare. This not only boosted military popularity but also directly led to an increase in their political influence. Thus, this case provides a vivid illustration of the mechanisms of nonreform and credit assignment in action.

Chapter 5 investigates the aftermath of Israel's Yom Kippur War, exploring how blame assigned predominantly to civilians led to an increase in the armed forces' political power, thereby enabling them to implement the reforms they desired, and block the ones they deemed detrimental to their interests. Importantly, the blocked reforms were precisely the ones that addressed the Israeli failures in this crisis. The chapter underscores the fragility of Rabin's administration after the war and illustrates the broadened influence of the military, even beyond reforms and into the defense and foreign policy arenas. With strategies such as threatening to resign and go public, the IDF's Chief of Staff dominated defense policy.

Thus, the chapter supports the argument that civilian-blaming leads to decreased civilian involvement in military reforms. It also confirms hypotheses on responsibility attribution, showcasing civilians bearing the onus for war initiation, while the military shoulders the

responsibility for battlefield performance. Ultimately, the chapter convincingly ties responsibility assignment to the political balance of power between civilians and the military, and the nature of post-war military reforms, while also highlighting the positive impact of civilian involvement on military effectiveness and national security policy.

Finally, in Chapter 6, an analysis of reforms in the context of the Vietnam War revealed variation in enactment based on the shifting assignment of blame during the war's distinct phases. Initially, public opinion supported both civilians and the military. However, civilians gained an advantage in the second phase, leading to a significant civilian-enacted reform in the form of the all-volunteer force. Then, the military's increased public favor in the third phase allowed them to implement a crucial reform that established a new military doctrine in 1976. This pattern supports the connection between responsibility assignment and civilian participation in reforms. The chapter also highlights the role of expertise – while economists and other civilian experts were important for the change in recruitment, civilians were never able to properly affect military operations, and were viewed by the military as amateurs and outsiders.

On the determinants of responsibility assignment, that blame was directed at civilians for war initiation and escalation, and at the military for human rights violations and disciplinary problems, was in broad agreement with my hypotheses, though subject to shifts due to the war's length. Ultimately, the chapter strongly links blame assignment and the nature of reforms.

In conclusion, in the quantitative chapter, I established broad correlations and demonstrated the theory's external validity. This was then complemented in the case studies, where I delved into the mechanisms in play, grounding the theory further in historical events. These chapters largely corroborated the theory proposed in Chapter 2. They exhibit the strong link between responsibility assignment, the balance of political power, and post-war military reforms. The pressures of

wartime outcomes, accountability, and consequent shifts in power balance, induced comparable patterns in military reform across diverse geopolitical settings, societal contexts, military engagements, and periods of conflict.

Table 13 summarizes the dissertation's key findings, outlining how each hypothesis fares in light of the gathered evidence from the quantitative study and the case studies. Notably, the table confirms a considerable alignment of the empirical data with the theoretical framework, with a multitude of hypotheses being either confirmed or partially confirmed. While it is important to acknowledge that not every hypothesis has seen validation, the overarching trend corroborates the foundational premises of the theory, enhancing its overall credibility and applicability.

7.2. IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOLARSHIP

The first significant contribution of this dissertation to the literature on international security and civil-military relations lies in its theoretical advancements regarding military reforms and innovation. Existing literature tends to gravitate towards a dichotomous debate on whether civilians or the military are pivotal for military reforms. This discourse often falls into deterministic thinking, attributing innovation universally to one group or the other.¹ However, my dissertation reconciles these competing perspectives. It posits that both viewpoints can be valid, contingent on the particular circumstances at play. I contend that both civilians and the military have incentives to control military reforms, and the balance of political power between them goes a long way in determining who holds sway in enacting them. Therefore, instead of imposing a binary role on either entity, my work underscores the significance of context, and how it influences

¹ E.g., Rosen, *Winning the Next War*; Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*; Jensen, *Forging the Sword*; Nielsen, *An Army Transformed*; Nielsen, "U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1973-1982."

Table 13. Key Findings of the Dissertation.

Hypothesis	Confirmed	Partially Confirmed
Hypothesis 1: Blame (praise) assignment to civilians is associated with lower (higher) levels of civilian participation in post-war military reforms, with the opposite being true for blame (praise) assignment to the military.	Large N, Yom Kippur, Vietnam	
Hypothesis 2: Civilians are more likely to be held responsible if it was their decision to start the war, as opposed to having been the target of another state.	Large N, Six-Day, Yom Kippur, Vietnam	
Hypothesis 3: The number of partners in military coalitions is negatively associated with civilian blame, and positively associated with civilian praise.		
Hypothesis 8: Starting wars against materially superior adversaries is positively associated with civilian blame, and negatively associated with civilian praise.		Large N
Hypothesis 4: Good battlefield performance is negatively associated with military blame, and positively associated with military praise.	Large N, Six-Day, Yom Kippur	
Hypothesis 5: Desertion rates are positively associated with military blame, and negatively associated with military praise.	Large N, Vietnam	
Hypothesis 6: War crimes are positively associated with military blame, and negatively associated with military praise.	Vietnam	Large N
Hypothesis 7: Losing wars against materially inferior adversaries is positively associated with military blame, and negatively associated with military praise.		
Hypothesis 9: Higher levels of pre-war civilian control over the military are positively associated with higher rates of civilian participation in military reforms.	Large N	
Hypothesis 10: Doctrine reforms have a lower rate of civilian participation.	Large N, Vietnam	
Hypothesis 11. Success should be negatively associated with post-war military reforms.	Large N, Six-Day	
Hypothesis 12. Damage and destruction should be positively associated with post-war military reforms.	Large N	
Hypothesis 13. Operational Complexity should be positively associated with post-war military reforms.		

whether civilians or the military take the reins of reforms. This approach provides a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics of military change and innovation, making it a significant contribution to the field.

Secondly, this research uncovers a novel source of military effectiveness. Although civil-military relations have been examined as a driver of battlefield performance,² my study introduces a unique lens through which this relationship can be viewed. Importantly, it challenges the prevailing assumption that innovation or reform invariably leads to improvements and success. This bias is particularly pronounced in military innovation discourse, where it is almost always linked with enhanced performance and strategic advantage. However, there is emerging pushback to this notion. For instance, Kuo recently explored the concept of "self-defeating innovation," advocating for a shift in focus from the prevailing emphasis on explaining the presence or absence of innovation towards an analysis of the quality of the innovation process.³ If, as I suggest, there are systematic differences in the quality of military reforms due to varying degrees of civilian participation, my theory aligns precisely with this emerging perspective.

Third, the field of international relations has traditionally concentrated on the causes of war, rather than its aftermath. With notable exceptions, the effects of interstate conflicts have often been overlooked, and continue to be less explored by academics compared to their origins. While my research centers on the origins and dynamics of civilian participation in military reforms, the empirical data and results have important implications for understanding the domestic

² Brooks, "An Autocracy at War"; Pilster and Böhmelt, "Coup-Proofing and Military Effectiveness in Interstate Wars, 1967–99"; Furlan, "Civilian Control and Military Effectiveness"; Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes*; Croissant and Kuehn, *Reforming Civil-Military Relations in New Democracies: Democratic Control and Military Effectiveness in Comparative Perspectives*.

³ Kendrick Kuo, "Military Magic: The Promise and Peril of Military Innovation" (Washington, D.C., The George Washington University, 2021), 646.

ramifications of war. These implications are broad and intricate, encompassing elements such as the state of democracy, the nature of civil-military relations, and the development of public narratives. As such, my research offers substantial insights into various domestic political processes that transpire in the aftermath of warfare.

For instance, my findings can illuminate our understanding of the shifting power dynamics between civilian institutions and the military. Through the lens of my research, we can discern how these power shifts can manifest themselves and what triggers them. As my case studies suggest, the effects of responsibility assignment have implications for civil-military relations beyond military reforms. In Israel, for example, the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War were critical junctures that increased the political influence of the military. In contrast, wars involving Egypt in 1967, Azerbaijan in 1993-1994, and the Soviet Union in 1979-1989 led to much stronger civilian control over the military. Therefore, wars can potentially affect civil-military relations for decades to come.

Moreover, these dynamics play a crucial role in charting the course of democracy following a conflict. In specific contexts, should blame be assigned to civilians, we may observe a decrease in oversight and transparency in defense policy, along with an erosion of civilian control over the military. In contrast, in other contexts, the attribution of credit to civilians may strengthen autocrats, aiding them in consolidating their power. In more extreme cases, regime change can occur. Pakistan is a prime example, where shifts from and to democracy followed wars against India. Following Pakistan's defeat in the 1971 Bangladesh War, violent protests against the autocratic government occurred, and a new president took over amidst a demoralized military. Conversely, after the Kargil War in 1999, there was a military coup, which was supported by the population.

Other countries went through similar processes. The Ecuadorian population supported a military coup in 2000, only five years after the Cenepa War, which significantly raised the prestige of the military. After the defeat against El Salvador, Lopez, Honduras' dictator, allowed for a bipartisan national unity government in 1971. However, following difficulties from this new coalition, Lopez overthrew it in 1972, and established a military regime. In Syria, in the aftermath of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the president saw his chief of staff accuse him of mismanaging the conflict, his popularity implode, the press turn against him, and the population demand his resignation. He suffered a military coup in 1949. Alternatively, Argentina democratized after the military emerged as the main culprit in the Falklands War.

Fourth, the assignment of credit or blame for the outcome of a war also has profound implications on public narratives, significantly influencing how the war and its aftermath are remembered and understood by the populace. These narratives, in turn, can shape national identity and influence collective memory. As we learned throughout this study, defeat in war is not perfectly correlated with blame, nor is victory synonymous with praise. For example, even in defeat, a country that is invaded by a powerful enemy and performs admirably on the battlefield, as Finland did against Russia in the Winter War, will remember the conflict as a glorious struggle, which will inflate the nation's sense of pride and bravery. In contrast, a victory can lead to feelings of shock and insecurity, as with Israel in the Yom Kippur War and India in the Kargil War. Each of these narratives is highly consequential for states' identities, and thus for their behavior in the future regarding defense policy, aggressiveness in foreign policy, and the emergence of nationalism, among other consequences. My theory can help shed light on when we should expect positive or negative narratives to arise following international conflict.

Fifth, my theory forges new territory in suggesting that military performance can be partially endogenous to the outcomes of conflicts. This means that a state's military effectiveness in one conflict has the potential to shape and influence its military capabilities and readiness in future wars. The framework I propose here introduces a dynamic perspective to the understanding of military performance, in contrast to views that tend to isolate each conflict as a distinct episode.

This perspective posits that military performance is not just a product of current conditions and decisions, but also the legacy of past warfare. For instance, if a military institution fails to learn and innovate from past defeats or does not effectively analyze victories to cement successful strategies, this could establish a pattern that impacts its readiness and effectiveness in subsequent conflicts. On the other hand, success or effective learning and adaptation from past experiences could foster a virtuous cycle of improved military effectiveness. This concept has substantial implications for how we understand and anticipate national military strategy, decision-making, and the trajectory of military institutions over time. In my case studies of Israel, I showed how the country became locked into a pattern of military advantage over civilians after the 1967 war, which led to grave failures in 1973 and 1982. In the United States, the military dominance in operations after the Vietnam War led to the elimination of every single counterinsurgency training unit, which then caused difficulties in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, for which civilians were also blamed.

Thus, this dynamic interplay adds complexity to how we perceive warfare trends, challenging us to think beyond the confines of individual wars to consider a broader, interconnected series of conflicts. This work then broadens the scholarly discourse around military effectiveness, urging a more profound understanding of the interplay between conflict outcomes and subsequent military performance. This perspective offers a foundation for more nuanced, dynamic theories and analyses of warfare and military change over time.

7.3. AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this dissertation provides a comprehensive exploration of the role of blame and credit assignment in shaping the trajectory of military reforms, it also opens numerous avenues for future research. These prospective studies could range from further scrutiny of the mechanisms proposed in this work, to extensions of the theory to other domains, and even to the refinement of the empirical strategies I employed. Below, I elaborate on potential avenues for future research that emerge from this project.

First, while my research assumes that civilian participation in military reforms enhances subsequent military effectiveness, and the case studies seemingly provide supportive evidence for this proposition, it is necessary to note that this core assumption has not been subjected to a comprehensive, systematic analysis. Therefore, an avenue for future research lies in this precise task.

In fact, it should be noted that there are cases in my dataset in which the military advocated for more effective reforms. For example, in China, military leader Peng Te-huai strongly pushed for reforms that would increase professionalism after the Korean War. At the same time, Mao Zedong preferred an approach that emphasized "political education" in the military and the "men over arms" doctrine. Similar dynamics occurred in Syria after the Six-Day War, where the army wanted to professionalize, and civilians preferred that it focused on the domestic revolution.

The literature on military effectiveness and civil-military relations would greatly benefit from an in-depth study that tests the proposed relationship between civilian participation in military reforms and military effectiveness. This study could adopt a cross-national comparative approach to account for the several confounders that might impact the process and outcomes of

civilian-led reforms. Future research could also delve into the nuanced distinctions between civilian-led and military-led reforms. By identifying specific areas or aspects of military effectiveness where either civilian or military-led reforms have a more substantial impact, we could cultivate a more targeted and effective approach to driving military reforms.

Second, civilian participation is just one of many variables that might affect the quality of military reforms. These warrant further investigation. For example, factors such as the state's political system, economic resources, the presence of external actors or pressure, and the state's military culture may play significant roles in shaping the process and outcome of post-war military reforms. Additionally, the specific lessons learned and absorbed from past military engagements, the relative power of a state in the international system, and societal norms and values around warfare could also contribute to the quality of reform. While the literature on military effectiveness has much to say about some of the determinants of battlefield performance, it lacks an understanding of the determinants of military learning and change following armed conflict.

Furthermore, understanding the interaction between these factors and civilian participation could offer unique insights. For instance, are there circumstances where civilian participation is more or less beneficial, depending on these other variables? For instance, the examples of China and Syria above seem to suggest that certain ideologies might render civilian participation detrimental to the quality of reform.

Third, another limitation of this project is that it primarily investigates how the "facts of the matter" of a conflict, such as the choice to initiate a war or battlefield performance, influence credit or blame assignment. However, a fascinating question this project does not attempt to answer is how strategies employed by the government and the armed forces to influence public opinion affect this process of responsibility assignment.

It is clear that both civilians and the military have a vested interest in avoiding blame and taking credit for successes, and will engage in various strategies to achieve this. Thus, one potential line of research would be to investigate the effectiveness of these strategies in shaping public narratives and opinions. Are specific strategies more effective than others, and if so, under what conditions? For instance, how do factors like the scale of the conflict, the degree of public awareness and involvement, and the overall political climate influence the success of these strategies? And crucially, how do these strategies interact with the “facts of the matter?” Another avenue for research would be the process through which these strategies are formulated and implemented. What influences the choice of strategy? Is it primarily determined by the nature of the conflict and the actors involved, or are there other institutional, societal, or international factors at play?

It would also be insightful to explore the long-term impacts of these strategies on civil-military relations and the broader political landscape. Does the employment of blame-shifting strategies lead to sustained changes in public perception of civilian and military institutions? Do they strain the relationship between civilians and the military for long periods of time? And what are the implications of these changes for policymaking, accountability, and civilian oversight of the military?

Fourth, an avenue for future research that my dissertation does not address in depth is the variance in the intensity or magnitude of military reforms. While my research provides a useful starting point in examining the occurrence of either civilian or military-led reforms, it employs a binary approach that does not capture the diversity in the size and intensity of these reforms. For example, a comprehensive overhaul of military recruitment might have vastly different implications for a nation’s military effectiveness compared to a minor tweak in the same domain,

even though both events would be coded the same in my dataset. Future research could thus attempt to construct a more nuanced measurement framework that encompasses this variance.

Such a venture could involve creating a scale that rates reforms based on criteria such as their scope, the level of institutional change they initiate, and their prospective impact on military capabilities. Of course, this would necessitate a more intricate data collection process. However, embarking on this line of research could offer valuable insights regarding how the intensity or scope of military reforms influence military effectiveness, civil-military relations, and broader political dynamics. By distinguishing between minor and major reforms, this research could yield a more granular understanding of how the balance of civilian and military influence in a given country shapes the nature of its military reforms. Such a study might also reveal whether there exists an optimal degree of reform intensity that strikes a balance between fostering innovation and ensuring the practicality of implementation.

Fifth, while my research has provided valuable insights into the dynamics of civil-military relations in the context of interstate wars, it offers an avenue for future research to broaden the scope of the investigation to other types of conflicts. There is no reason to believe that the theoretical framework I developed does not apply to conflicts such as civil wars or confrontations with non-state actors.

However, the role of civilians and the military, as well as the dynamics of blame and credit assignment, could potentially operate differently in these contexts. For example, the dynamics of blame and credit assignment in civil wars might be significantly influenced by the extent of civilian victimization, or the degree to which the military is perceived to defend the nation from internal threats. Moreover, when it comes to conflicts with non-state actors, the role of unconventional warfare may further complicate the dynamics of military reform and civil-military relations.

Therefore, it would be valuable for future research to investigate how these factors might interact with the mechanisms I outlined in this dissertation.

Sixth, the ways in which the public perceives and remembers wars, and how these narratives evolve over time, is another question worth investigating in greater depth. In this dissertation, I have outlined how credit and blame assignments can occur. Nevertheless, the intricacies of these narrative developments, how they affect national identity and collective memory, and their long-term impacts remained unexplored. For instance, future research might seek to understand how different societal groups within the same nation interpret and remember wars differently. How do factors like age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or even personal or familial involvement in the war affect an individual's perception of the conflict and their process of blame or credit assignment? Moreover, how do these differing perceptions shape national narratives, public discourse, and policy debates?

A final suggestion for future research relates to a more nuanced examination of how the blame game affects democracy and civil-military relations. In this dissertation, I have suggested that the allocation of blame and credit for war outcomes can influence these aspects. However, there is significant scope to delve deeper into this relationship. For instance, how does the blame game influence the democratic process? Do citizens' perceptions of blame and credit for war outcomes shape voting behavior, trust in institutions, or levels of political engagement? How does this, in turn, affect political stability, policymaking, and the health of the democratic process in the long term? Which conflict and societal-specific variables might make bargaining difficult between civilians and the military? When should we expect each to "play" more aggressively?

In conclusion, while this dissertation offers a novel perspective on civil-military relations, military reforms, and blame assignment in the aftermath of wars, it also opens up a range of

potential avenues for future research. As I have outlined, these include the testing of some assumptions of my theory, exploring factors affecting the quality of reform, studying the dynamics of conflict other than interstate wars, investigating how public narratives about wars are shaped and evolve over time, and a more detailed examination of how the blame game affects democracy and civil-military relations.

7.4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The research carried out in this project has significant implications for policymaking, both at the domestic and international levels. By highlighting the critical role that the assignment of blame or credit in the aftermath of a war plays in determining the trajectory of military reforms, this study provides valuable insights that can guide policy decisions in various contexts.

First, wars often serve as catalysts for military reform. The aftermath of a conflict frequently creates a unique window of opportunity, during which major changes that would usually be challenging to enact become more feasible. However, the complexities of civil-military relations during and after a war demand thoughtful navigation from policymakers who seek to introduce reforms.

The assignment of credit or blame for a war's outcome can significantly impact this process, as it often precipitates shifts in the balance of political power between civilians and the military. If a war concludes with civilians demoralized and the military hailed as heroes, the military's political standing will likely be bolstered. This development can curtail civilian leaders' capacity to push through substantial reforms. On the other hand, if the military is seen as having performed poorly or behaved irresponsibly, this could provide civilians with increased political leverage, enabling them to implement more ambitious reforms. Consequently, it is crucial for

policymakers to understand these dynamics when contemplating military reforms post-conflict. They must be cognizant of their bargaining power and leverage it effectively to instigate changes that will improve military effectiveness and foster enhanced responsiveness to civilian control. A failure to grasp these dynamics can lead to overly optimistic expectations and poorly conceived reform initiatives that face resistance or fail to realize their intended outcomes.

Policymakers should also remain vigilant about the fluid nature of blame or credit perceptions and their evolution over time. As such, they should continuously monitor public sentiment and adapt their strategies accordingly. Policymakers can also play an active role in shaping these perceptions. By clearly communicating their intentions and actions, acknowledging errors where necessary, and convincingly arguing the case for the reforms they wish to implement, they can help generate public support for their efforts. This approach can assist in overcoming opposition and implementing meaningful reform.

Therefore, policymakers must not only seize the windows of opportunity for reform granted by war but also navigate the intricacies of power dynamics and public sentiment. This awareness can facilitate the design of better strategies to carry out military reforms, enhancing their likelihood of success.

Second, my research underlines elements that could have lasting implications for military effectiveness. For instance, if civilians are blamed for poor war outcomes and lose political power as a result, this could result in an unbalanced growth of the military, and reforms might become skewed and could potentially compromise military performance in future conflicts. Similarly, the public narratives crafted in the aftermath of war can affect a nation's perception of its military. A narrative that unduly blames the military might erode public trust in the institution, potentially leading to difficulties in recruitment, lower morale within the ranks, and lesser public support for

defense funding and initiatives. On the other hand, a narrative that excessively glorifies the military, ignoring genuine areas of weakness or failure, can result in complacency, obstructing necessary reforms and improvements. Consequently, policymakers need to view these domestic consequences of war as indicators of future military effectiveness. When assessing their military readiness and planning for potential future conflicts, they should consider these factors.

Third, the aftermath of wars often triggers a blame game, with the various involved parties striving to shift the responsibility for unfavorable outcomes away from themselves. This dynamic can significantly impact democratic processes, leading to reduced transparency and undermining civilian control over the military, both central pillars of a functional democracy. Policymakers, civil society actors, and the general public must be aware of this potential fallout and undertake concerted efforts to preserve democratic principles in the tumultuous period following a conflict.

Reduced transparency often arises from attempts to avoid accountability. Actors implicated in the war's conduct may be inclined to suppress information or manipulate narratives to escape blame. Such actions, while potentially protecting individual actors or institutions from immediate criticism or repercussions, are detrimental to the health of a democratic society and undermine trust in institutions. Furthermore, these attempts to sidestep accountability can often backfire. As history has repeatedly shown, attempts to manipulate narratives often lead to the eventual public backlash when the truth surfaces, causing more significant damage to the credibility and standing of those involved than if they had been transparent from the outset.

For instance, during the Vietnam War, the United States government attempted to control the narrative around the conflict, concealing information that contradicted its public assertions. This manipulation was exposed with the leak of the Pentagon Papers in 1971, a top-secret Department of Defense study of US political and military involvement in Vietnam. The papers'

publication revealed that the government had systematically lied about the war's scope, objectives, and progress, leading to a loss of public trust and contributing to growing anti-war sentiment. More recently, the “Afghanistan Papers” release in 2019 exposed similar deceptions in the US government’s conduct of the War in Afghanistan. These documents revealed that high-ranking officials consistently misled the public about the war’s progress, and its disclosure further eroded public trust in the government and the military, adding to the disillusionment over endless wars.

Moreover, the blame game can shift the balance of power between civilians and the military, leading to reduced civilian control. If civilians bear the brunt of the blame for poor war outcomes, it may strengthen the military’s hand in dictating the terms of post-war reforms, possibly leading to an unhealthy dominance of military perspectives in policy matters that should ideally be under civilian oversight. Therefore, policymakers and civil society actors should proactively work to counter these potential implications, and efforts should be made to uphold civilian control over the military. This could include promoting a clear understanding of the doctrine of civilian supremacy among both the public and the military, cultivating strong civilian expertise in defense matters, and instituting mechanisms to ensure civilian oversight of military affairs.

The blame game can also introduce biases to post-conflict reviews. These processes, ideally, should be aimed at correctly identifying successes and failures, attributing them appropriately, and drawing key learnings for future reforms. Thus, it might be beneficial to have a systematic and formal process of evaluation that is planned even before conflicts arise. Such a procedure, designed with forethought and impartiality, is less likely to be subject to emotional volatility and potential biases that can color perceptions in the aftermath of war. This evaluation process should be guided by a clear set of criteria for assessing military performance, and conducted by a body or panel thought to be impartial and independent. These reviews should have

a forward-looking orientation, aimed not just at understanding what went wrong or right in the past but, more importantly, at informing changes that can enhance future military performance. This includes identifying necessary reforms and ensuring they are effectively implemented.

Finally, this study can illuminate important contemporary developments in international politics and civil-military relations. It can help explain trends in great powers such as the US and Russia, for example. Therefore, it has important implications for grand strategy and great power politics.

Applying the Theory to Post-Iraq United States

In the US, during the war in Iraq, blame was assigned to civilian leaders.⁴ Bush's approval ratings plummeted in the years following the invasion, making him one of the least popular presidents in modern American history. While his first term averaged 62 percent approval ratings, his second one averaged only 37 percent, with a low point of 25 percent by the end of the term – the lowest average approval rating for a single presidential term in US history.⁵ The military, on the other hand, was not punished by public opinion. A quick look at different polls reveals that public trust in the military was not negatively affected throughout the war – as Burbach shows, it achieved all-time highs.⁶

How does this connect with my theory? First, civilians were blamed extensively for their decisions to start and remain in this war. In the early 2000s, the Bush administration's decision to launch the invasion was justified by the threat of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. However,

⁴ Civilians were also blamed for the failures in Afghanistan, especially after the 2021 withdrawal. However, at the time of the writing of this dissertation, this is still a very recent development.

⁵ Inc, "Presidential Approval Ratings -- George W. Bush"; Inc, "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Gallup Historical Statistics and Trends."

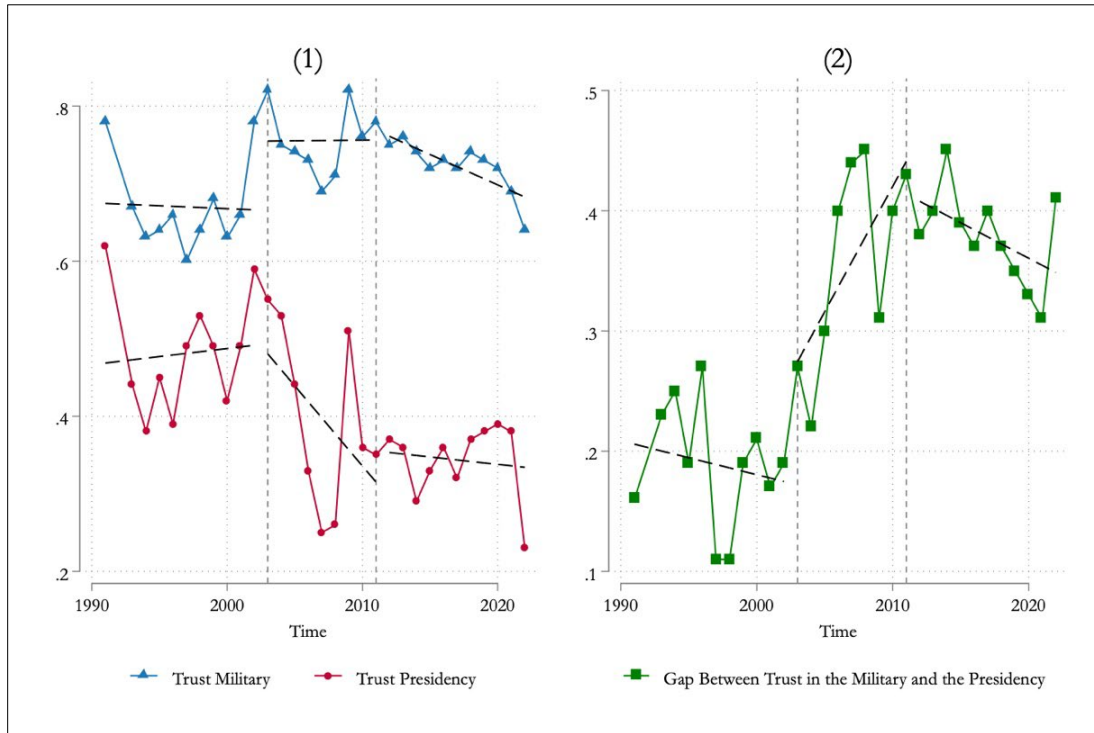
⁶ Burbach, "Gaining Trust While Losing Wars."

as the conflict dragged on, the original justifications were widely contested, and the civilian leadership came under fire for initiating and prolonging the debacle. The claims of weapons of mass destruction, a primary reason for the invasion, were later debunked, leading to significant controversy and a widespread perception of deception by the Bush administration.

The assignment of blame to civilians coincided with changes in public trust in the government versus the military. Gallup polls, for instance, have shown a decline in trust in the government and a rise in confidence in the military. As shown in Figure 26(2), the period leading up to the Iraq War (1991-2003) marked a moderate gap between trust in civilians and the military, averaging a 19-point difference in trust levels. Also, as per Figure 26(1), the two trends were relatively similar. However, this gap widened dramatically during the Iraq War (2003-2011), as per Figure 26(2). As seen in Figure 26(1), this was because trust in the presidency plummeted after the 2001 surge, while trust in the military remained high after the 2001-2003 surge. By the end of the conflict, the gap had ballooned to over 40 points. Although trust levels for both institutions have moved in tandem since 2011, the gap remains, indicating a sustained shift in public trust away from civilian leaders and towards the military.

As can be seen, the gap increased more significantly after 2004. This is consistent with the historical record. Initially, in the months after the US invasion in March 2003, public support was relatively high. However, from 2004 onwards, with the release of the Duelfer Report that found no active weapons of mass destruction programs in Iraq, public opinion began to turn. The public's perception that the war was going badly was further exacerbated by growing US casualties, continued insurgent attacks, and the apparent lack of a clear exit strategy. By 2005, a majority of

Figure 26. Trust in the Presidency and the Military in the US, and their Gap.



Americans believed the war was a mistake and disapproved of the Bush administration’s handling of the conflict.⁷

Although outside the purview of this chapter, it is worth mentioning that a preliminary statistical analysis was conducted. Using an Ordinary Least Squares-based interrupted time series model, a significant change in the trend of the gap shown in Figure 26(2) takes place at the beginning of the Iraq War ($p < 0.001$).⁸ A quick glance at the figure, however, should render this result unsurprising to the reader.

Second, drawing on my theory, this widespread attribution of blame toward civilians could have implications for civil-military relations and military reforms. Notably, the United States has

⁷ Inc, “Iraq Versus Vietnam.”

⁸ The standard model is the following: $Y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_t + \beta_2 X_t + \beta_3 X_t T_t + \varepsilon_t$

seen two former generals appointed to the position of Secretary of Defense in recent years: James Mattis in 2017 and Lloyd Austin in 2021. This role is typically held by a civilian, symbolizing civilian control over the military. Moreover, these appointments required waivers of the National Security Act of 1947's seven-year cooling-off period for retired military personnel, a provision intended to safeguard civilian control of the military. These were only the second and third instances such waivers had been granted since the rule's establishment, and the first time such waivers had been granted in over seven decades. My theory suggests that this development – although not a definitive indicator – might reflect a shift in the balance of political power in favor of the military following the perceived wartime failures of civilian leadership.

Lloyd Austin's tenure is still ongoing, but Jim Mattis's tenure as Secretary of Defense provides a clear illustration of the potential challenges associated with appointing retired military officers to top defense positions. His term was marked by tensions in civil-military relations, and his actions and decisions tended to blur the lines between civilian and military authority, thereby eroding established civil-military norms. For instance, Mattis' approach to delegating responsibilities within the Pentagon and his tendency to empower uniformed military leaders created an imbalance of power between civilian and military authorities. This imbalance, coupled with limited transparency and a lack of public engagement from Mattis, hindered democratic oversight and accountability. According to Golby, Mattis's approach "(1) blurred the lines of authority between civilian and military, as well as between active-duty and retired military; (2) enabled the rapid erosion of civil-military norms; and (3) widened gaps between the military and

American society as well as between the military brass and elected political leaders.”⁹ White agrees, stating that “Mattis’s tenure (...) was characterized by the relative marginalization of civilian voices in national security policymaking.”¹⁰ Importantly, both authors see Mattis as both a cause and a symptom of problems in civil-military relations.

It is important to note, moreover, that scholars have pointed to a deterioration in civil-military relations in the US since before Mattis’ appointment. Brooks et al., for example, argue:

Senior military officers may still follow orders and avoid overt insubordination, but their influence has grown, while oversight and accountability mechanisms have faltered. Today, presidents worry about military opposition to their policies and must reckon with an institution that selectively implements executive guidance. Too often, unelected military leaders limit or engineer civilians’ options so that generals can run wars as they see fit. (...) Civilian control is therefore about more than whether military leaders openly defy orders or want to overthrow the government. It’s about the extent to which political leaders can realize the goals the American people elected them to accomplish.¹¹

Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump both publicly expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that their military options were restricted, and information was leaked by their officers. They felt compelled to reluctantly approve troop surges they did not favor.

Obama’s generals, for example, insisted on a strong counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan, even in the face of opposition from the White House. The development of this situation fits nicely with my description of strategies available to civilians and the military when

⁹ Jim Golbi, “In the Wake of CHAOS: Civil-Military Relations Under Secretary Jim Mattis,” *War on the Rocks*, February 4, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/02/in-the-wake-of-chaos-civil-military-relations-under-secretary-jim-mattis/>.

¹⁰ Peter B. White, “Militarized Ministries of Defense?: Placing the Military Experience of Secretaries of Defense in a Comparative Context,” in *Reconsidering American Civil-Military Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197535493.003.0007>.

¹¹ Risa Brooks, Jim Golby, and Heidi Urben, “Crisis of Command,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 9, 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-04-09/national-security-crisis-command>.

bargaining with each other. Here, military leaders attempted to increase the political costs Obama would incur for not accepting their recommendations. According to journalist Bob Woodward, General David Petraeus, who was leading the US Central Command then, contacted a friendly *Washington Post* journalist suggesting a rebuttal to an opinion piece in the paper that cast doubt on the Afghanistan surge. Furthermore, General Stanley McChrystal, the commander of US and international forces in Afghanistan, unequivocally stated at a British think tank gathering that he would not accept a mission in Afghanistan solely focused on counterterrorism. An intelligence report by McChrystal advocating for significant troop deployment was also leaked, an act that Secretary of Defense Robert Gates assigned to McChrystal's office.¹² As Feaver noted at the time, "The leak makes it harder for President Obama to reject a McChrystal request for additional troops because the assessment so clearly argues for them."¹³

To recall my argument in the theory section, these strategies are only effective when there is a relevant differential in popularity between the civilian leader and the armed forces. Counterfactually, were the armed forces a distrusted institution and the president a highly trusted and popular leader, the political costs of rejecting public pressures from the military would be much lower. But that had not been the case for some time in the US. As Obama later stated, "I think that the episode illustrated just how accustomed the military had become to getting whatever it wanted."¹⁴ The trend continued, and the Trump administration's decision to delay the withdrawal from Afghanistan was another case of military preferences prevailing over the president's. In August 2021, for example, many Republicans criticized President Joe Biden for

¹² Brooks, Golby, and Urban.

¹³ Peter D. Feaver, "Bob Woodward Strikes Again! (McChrystal Assessment Edition)," *Foreign Policy* (blog), September 21, 2009, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/09/21/bob-woodward-strikes-again-mcchrystal-assessment-edition/>.

¹⁴ Barack Obama, *A Promised Land*, First Edition (New York: Crown, 2020), Ch. 23.

going against his generals' advice and removing all US forces from Afghanistan.¹⁵ Moreover, these are just examples of military influence in policy – several other concerns have arisen regarding the armed forces' involvement in other aspects of domestic politics.

Importantly, Brooks et al. argue that one of the reasons for this increased military influence is a result of the public's esteem for the military. As the authors note,

Americans increasingly fetishize the armed forces and believe the only true patriots are those in uniform. According to Gallup polling, the public consistently has more confidence in the military than in any other national institution. That admiration, coupled with declining trust and confidence in civilian organizations, means that large segments of the population think that those in uniform should run the military, and maybe even the country itself.¹⁶

The authors mention, "After 9/11, the public's esteem for the military spiked, and politicians noticed."¹⁷ What they fail to mention, however, is that the public's esteem for the president also spiked, but it did not survive the unfolding of the war. In contrast, after the first Gulf War, when both civilians and the military were credited, their approval rates followed similar trajectories.

The authors also argue that the deterioration of civil-military relations took place in the past 30 years, but only mention one pre-Iraq example: the armed forces' influence in the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, in 1993. All the other worrisome anecdotal evidence took place from George W. Bush onwards. A quick glance at Kenwick's indicator of civilian control seems to

¹⁵ Sam Dorman, "Haley, Blackburn, Other Republicans Call for Biden's Resignation or Impeachment after Attack at Kabul Airport," Text.Article, Fox News (Fox News, August 26, 2021), <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/biden-resignation-impeachment-calls>.

¹⁶ Brooks, Golby, and Urben, "Crisis of Command."

¹⁷ Brooks, Golby, and Urben.

suggest that the problem is more recent.¹⁸ As per Figure 27, between 1980 and 2003, the US index only improved. In the early 2000s, however, it fell for the first time in decades. After the beginning of the Iraq War, the drop was significant.

Undoubtedly, the United States possesses robust institutions and procedures that dictate the enactment of military reforms. Therefore, the recent upswing in the military's political influence has not directly translated into military-led reforms. However, emerging signals may suggest an inclination toward such a shift. For instance, in 2018, the bipartisan National Defense Strategy Commission, a congressionally appointed panel, noted that "civilian voices have been relatively muted on issues at the center of US defense and national security policy, undermining the concept of civilian control."¹⁹

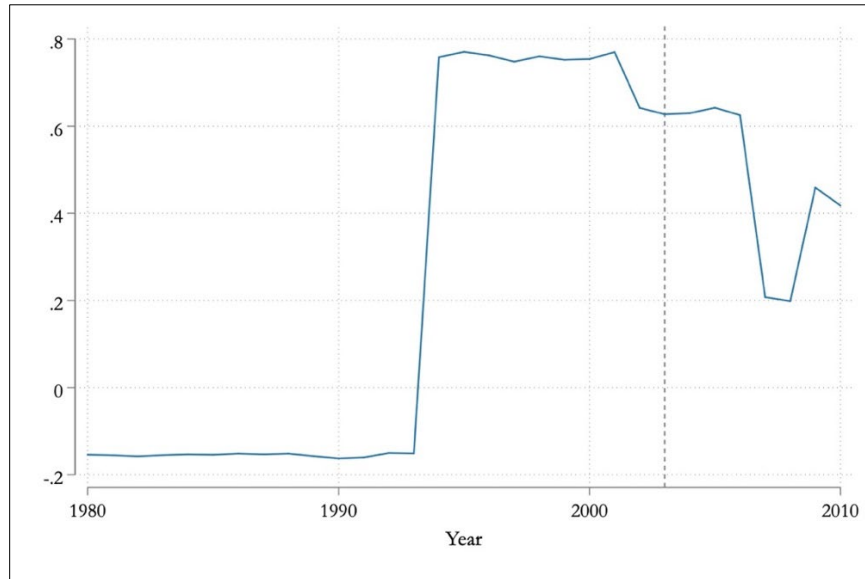
While these signs do not conclusively point to military dominance, they indicate a gradual shift in the power dynamics that may be worthy of attention. Should these tendencies continue, it is plausible that future military reforms might witness lesser civilian participation. Such a trend could lead to more insular reforms, less conducive to military effectiveness, and potentially lacking democratic accountability. This could have substantial impacts on US defense policies.

In summary, my theoretical framework not only elucidates the assignment of blame post the Iraq War and the subsequent implications for the power balance between civilians and the military, but it also projects potential risks associated with diminished civilian involvement in future reforms. This points to the critical need for maintaining a delicate balance in civil-military

¹⁸ Kenwick, "Self-Reinforcing Civilian Control."

¹⁹ "National Defense Strategy Commission Releases Its Review of 2018 National Defense Strategy," United States Institute of Peace, accessed July 21, 2023, <https://www.usip.org/press/2018/11/national-defense-strategy-commission-releases-its-review-2018-national-defense>.

Figure 27. Civilian Control Index, United States.



relations to uphold democratic principles, especially in the face of complex and challenging security concerns.

Applying the Theory to Contemporary Russia

As for Russia in the context of the war with Ukraine, A recent *New York Times* report detailed mounting criticism from within the ranks of Russia’s own pro-military bloggers and militia commanders against the nation’s military leadership. The dissatisfaction was driven by Russia's military setbacks and unexpected difficulty subjugating its smaller opponent. These internal voices accuse the military command of major strategic missteps, which they believe have undermined the effectiveness of Russia’s armed forces. “The collective system of circular, mutual self-deception is the herpes of the Russian Army,” a pro-Russian militia commander wrote on Telegram in June. A prominent blogger stated, “Due to stupidity – I emphasize, because of the

stupidity of the Russian command – at least one battalion tactical group was burned, possibly two.”²⁰

Other examples abound. One analyst admitted, “Most of these people are in shock and did not think that this could happen. (...) “Most of them are, I think, genuinely angry.” Another one of the bloggers, reporting from Crimea, told his 2.3 million Telegram followers that if the military continued to play down its battlefield setbacks, Russians would “cease to trust the Ministry of Defense and soon the government as a whole.” Yet another prominent blogger argued, “It’s time to punish the commanders who allowed these kinds of things.” Description such as Russia’s retreat as a “catastrophe” also became very common.²¹

Russian President Vladimir Putin held a closed-door meeting with the bloggers and media chiefs at an annual economic conference in St. Petersburg, an event that was traditionally reserved for high-profile news media. The grievances and concerns of the bloggers were heard directly by Putin, marking an unprecedented moment in the nation's military and political discourse. According to the report, “It appeared to the person there that Russia’s intelligence agencies were using the bloggers to shift the blame for the war’s failings to the Ministry of Defense.” Notably, a key Putin ally in Parliament, Mr. Zatulin said a blame game has broken out, and took a side himself. “Of course, to a certain degree, we now have an element of everyone wanting to dump the responsibility on someone else,” Mr. Zatulin stated. “But I think that the main miscalculations,” he added, “were made by the Defense Ministry and the General Staff” – the military’s top brass.²²

²⁰ Michael Schwartz et al., “Putin’s War: The Inside Story of a Catastrophe,” *The New York Times*, December 17, 2022, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/12/16/world/europe/russia-putin-war-failures-ukraine.html>.

²¹ Anton Troianovski, “As Russians Retreat, Putin Is Criticized by Hawks Who Trumpeted His War,” *The New York Times*, September 10, 2022, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/10/world/europe/russia-ukraine-retreat-putin.html>.

²² Schwartz et al., “Putin’s War.”

According to the *Times*, “The public finger-pointing has added to a sense of disarray within the Russian war effort. Mr. Putin has replaced several top military commanders.”²³ As another story from the outlet explains, several analysts have hypothesized that General Surovikin was recently assigned as the commander of all Russian forces in Ukraine as a scapegoat to divert culpability from Putin. For example, right after his assignment, the general cautioned that “tough decisions” could be on the horizon. By early November, he advocated for a pullout from Kherson, in Ukraine.²⁴ In January 2023, Valery Gerasimov took over from Surovikin as commander, with Surovikin becoming one of his deputies. As McFaul puts it, “There are signs of cracks within Putin’s ruling elite. When you are losing the battle, the blame game begins. This is precisely what is happening in Russia today. Putin recently replaced his commander in Ukraine, General Sergei Surovikin, after only a few months in the job.”²⁵

Moreover, because Russia is using several different security forces in Ukraine, the blame game takes place among these forces as well. Following the withdrawal of Russian forces from northeast Ukraine in the late summer, Ramzan Kadyrov, the head of the Chechen Republic, demanded the demotion of the Russian commander in charge to the rank of private, insisting he should be sent to the frontlines, “to wash his shame away with blood.” Yevgeny Prigozhin, leader of the mercenary Wagner Group, also weighed in: “All these bastards should go with machine guns barefoot to the front.”²⁶

²³ Schwartz et al.

²⁴ Ivan Nechepurenko, “Putin Makes Rare Visit to Ukraine War Headquarters,” *The New York Times*, December 17, 2022, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/17/world/europe/putin-ukraine-war-headquarters.html>.

²⁵ Michael McFaul, “Why Vladimir Putin’s Luck Ran Out,” *Journal of Democracy*, 2023, <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/why-vladimir-putins-luck-ran-out/>.

²⁶ Schwartz et al., “Putin’s War.”

Concurrently, Russia's propaganda efforts are at full speed. The country's leading security service, the FSB, closely collaborated with the military and state television to create an illusion of success, despite mounting evidence to the contrary. Leaked emails from Russia's largest state-owned media company, VGTRK, depict a carefully managed narrative. According to the *Times* report, the state media, at times, received specific instructions from the military and the FSB, down to the selection of video clips and the timing of their release. The emails portrayed Russia as a victim of NATO, cornered and forced into a defensive position. Once the full invasion started, this propaganda machine sought to downplay Russian atrocities, amplify conspiracy theories, and paint the Ukrainian troops as deserters. Yet, while state broadcasters continued to present an upbeat narrative, Putin privately acknowledged the struggles of the Russian military.²⁷

Despite these propaganda efforts and Russia's military leaders not having pushed back, there has been some backlash against Putin. Retired Russian General Leonid Ivashov stated that he and other Russian military officials tried to warn the Kremlin not to invade Ukraine. According to him, service members told him that "victory in such a situation is impossible." Ivashov added, "Never in its history has Russia made such stupid decisions. (...) Alas, today stupidity has triumphed — stupidity, greed, a kind of vengefulness and even a kind of malice." Yevgeny Nuzhin, a deserter from the Wagner Group, stated, "What good has Putin done in the time that he has been in power? Has he done anything good? (...) I think this war is Putin's grave." After being released in a prisoner swap, his murder appeared in a video on a pro-Russian Telegram account.²⁸

Russia's current state of affairs is a striking real-world illustration of the "blame game" dynamics I have outlined in my research. In my theory, I highlight how civilians and the military

²⁷ Schwartz et al.

²⁸ Schwartz et al.

within a system often attempt to shift responsibility for failures onto each other. These dynamics are evident in the way Russian bloggers, militia commanders, and even members of the Russian Parliament are attributing the failings of the war effort to the missteps of the military command, while simultaneously suggesting that a blame game has ensued within the ranks of the Russian leadership. Moreover, this process has taken the shape I suggest in the theory section. Whatever blame has been directed at Putin is related to war initiation, while the military is criticized for battlefield and operational performance. Moving forward, Putin's defense might focus on the armed forces' lack of skill and corruption, which caused them to lose a very winnable war. The military, on the other hand, if willing to mount a defense, would be advised to focus on the narrative of this being a war of choice, which was impossible to win in the first place, and victimized Russia's soldiers, who were sent to their deaths as a result of Putin's recklessness.

As for the future of military reforms and civil-military relations in Russia, the dynamics outlined in my theory suggest several possible developments. In its most basic form, my theory would expect that Putin retains his dominance over the military. This is because this war offers fertile ground to blame Putin as the initiator, but also the armed forces for their performance. If both actors are blamed, a marked shift in their relative political power is not expected.

Here, it is important to note that the previous state of civil-military relations in Russia is one of strong civilian control over the military. For instance, after the 2008 war against Georgia, civilians were widely recognized as the driver of military reforms. Anatoly Serdyukov, the civilian defense minister, even had a conflictual and explosive relationship with members of the military, but prevailed in his attempts to enact changes in the armed forces, despite strong opposition from

the general staff.²⁹ Reports of intense disputes between Serdyukov and General of the Army Yuri Baluyevsky, Chief of the General Staff, emerged in late 2007 and early 2008. Baluyevsky resigned in 2008.³⁰ Some analysts even believe that the war was an “orchestrated effort by the government to ‘sell’ reform to the military and garner support among the populace.”³¹ It was also believed that Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces General Makarov was appointed to deflect criticism away from Serdyukov in the context of these reforms.³²

Let us assume that Russia will end the war in Ukraine with the statistics from Table 14, based on how the conflict is currently developing. In this case, my full model on the determinants of responsibility assignment from the quantitative section would predict a 52 percent probability for a civilian advantage, 25 percent for none having the advantage, and 23 percent for a military advantage. Conditional on the relationship between *Advantage* and the *Civilian Reform Score (CRS)*, my model to predict the *CRS* suggests that the expected value for Russia’s *CRS* is 0.95 in case of civilian advantage, 0.72 in case of advantage to none, and 0.51 in case of military advantage. Therefore, Russia’s overall expected *CRS* is $(0.52 * 0.95) + (0.25 * 0.72) + (0.23 * 0.51) = 0.792$. In other words, civilians are expected to enact reforms almost 80 percent of the time. If we can broadly extrapolate the *CRS* to mean something about the balance of power between civilians and the military, this also suggests that Putin will likely remain dominant concerning the military. Again, this is a speculative model, based on the current situation of this

²⁹ Owen Matthews, “Russia: A New Model Army,” *Newsweek*, August 29, 2008, <https://www.newsweek.com/russia-new-model-army-88367>; Roger McDermott, “Russia’s Conventional Armed Forces and the Georgian War,” *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 39, no. 1 (March 1, 2009): 76–78, <https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.2463>.

³⁰ Tim Whewell, “Inside Russia’s Military,” *BBC*, March 17, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/newsnight/7947082.stm>; Ruslan Pukhov, “Serdyukov Cleans Up the Arbat,” *Moscow Defense Brief*, August 18, 2008, <https://web.archive.org/web/20080818210933/http://mdb.cast.ru/mdb/1-2008/item2/article1/>.

³¹ McDermott, “Russia’s Conventional Armed Forces and the Georgian War,” 68.

³² McDermott, 68.

Table 14. Assumed Key War Metrics in Russia Post-Ukraine War.

Variable	Value
Loss Exchange Ratio	0.5
Mass Desertion	Yes
Democracy	No
Population	≈ 145.000.000
GDP Per Capita	≈ 17.000 USD
Distance	862 km
Duration	3 years
Civilian Control	High (0.7)
Battle Deaths	≈ 350.000
Relative Material Power	≈ 6 to 1
Volunteer Force	No
Number of Coalition Partners	1
War of Choice	Yes
Outcome	Tie or Defeat

war, which is still subject to changes. The idea is to illustrate how these assumptions translate into expectations regarding important real-world outcomes.

However, a couple of qualifications are in order. First, as I argue in the theory section, the blame game often takes aggressive forms in autocracies, which are also more conducive to regime change. So far, military leaders have been silent, but there are reports of strong discontent with Putin among Russian soldiers. More recently, Prigozhin launched a rebellion in the context of disagreements with Russia's Defense Minister, an action Putin decried as treason. Thus, an escalation of the blame game can spell instability for Russia. This can take the form of an ousting of Putin from power, as happened in Pakistan in the 1990s, Egypt in the 1950s, or Syria in the 1960s, but also autocratic consolidation, as in Azerbaijan in the 1990s, North Korea in the 1950s, China in the 1950s and 1960s, and Egypt in the 1960s and 1970s. Given Putin's pre-war dominance

over the military, the latter scenario should be more likely in case of an overly aggressive blame game. However, alliances do shift, especially in the course of a few years after a traumatic war.

Second, my statistical analysis did not find a statistically significant relationship to suggest that longer wars favor civilians or the military. However, it is important to note that long wars that do not go well tend to hurt civilian leaders, at least when examining descriptive data. In my dataset, out of the eleven wars lasting three years or more that led to blame, seven resulted in a military advantage, three were neutral, and only one resulted in a civilian advantage. There is a lot more balance with shorter wars that last two years or less, with fourteen leading to a military advantage and eleven to a civilian advantage. Putin may find comfort in discovering that the only long war that led to blame on the military was Russia's Afghanistan debacle. However, it is essential to note that part of the reason civilians avoided blame is that new leadership was in power.

All in all, even without a statistically significant relationship, my data suggests – somewhat counterintuitively – that Putin's better chances are to exit the war sooner than later, even if it means accepting a stalemate or defeat. Again, my model predicts a 77 percent likelihood of avoiding a disadvantage to the military, and an expected *CRS* of 0.79. As for those who wish to undermine Putin and possibly Russia's military effectiveness, a suitable strategy would be to focus on a more protracted war and foster a public narrative that focuses on how this was a war of choice, which the military could not have won.

In conclusion, a brief examination of the US experience post-Iraq War and the ongoing Russian-Ukraine conflict offers significant insights into the intricacies of responsibility attribution, civil-military relations, and their impact on international security. These cases, approached through the lens of my theoretical framework, serve as real-world illustrations of how my theory can help illuminate contemporary issues in international politics. A nuanced understanding of these

dynamics, as proffered by my theoretical framework, can enable more accurate predictions of a state's future trajectory, thereby informing policymaking and strategic decisions on the international stage.

My theoretical framework, although robust and informed by empirical evidence, should be viewed as a tool rather than a definitive predictor. The complex reality of international security is characterized by a multitude of unique conflict characteristics and nuances that require individualized consideration.

Studying the causes and characteristics of wars can be so promising that we, as a field, often do not pay enough attention to their consequences. But, as Bertrand Russel once stated, "War does not determine who is right, only who is left." And, as the book that inspired this dissertation's title so pessimistically puts it,

If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry.

Whether or not the world was designed to kill the good, the gentle, and the brave, those who are left are tasked with rebuilding and preparing for the next war, if it ever comes. If this dissertation stimulates the study of these broad cycles of war and rebuilding, an important objective of this project will have been achieved. If it inspires more scholars to examine how people make sense of war, whom they blame or credit, and why, another goal of mine will have been successful.

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