The Operational Artist: A Politico-Military Opportunities Provider

A Monograph

by

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Civil-military relationships suffer from a double issue. On the one hand, the military tends to only look at the military objective rather than the political one or, more precisely, to resist the change of the military aim when the political one evolves. At the same time, to preserve the sacrosanct civilian control, civilian leaders are reluctant to concede to the military the ability, and thus the role, of contributing to the strategy. This mistrust creates a divide that directly impacts the effectiveness of the strategy. Although this divide can be explained by a theoretical and historical heritage, this situation is no more satisfactory, but also irrelevant in the 21st century context of limited conflicts and complex operational environment. A more balanced relationship, where the operational artist negotiates the strategy with the politicians and contributes to the elaboration and the refinement of the political aim, is possible. Through the case studies of General Abrams in the Vietnam War – especially the Cambodian incursion, and General Schwarzkopf during the First Gulf War, this monograph shows where and who the operational artist should be to play this greater role in a renewed civil-military relation. It demonstrates that, as long as he is granted the proper authority and responsibility, and is politically aware and compatible, the operational artist does not only address military options, but is also a politico-military opportunities provider.

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Abstract

The Operational Artist: A Politico-Military Opportunities Provider, by LTC Cyrille Tiberghien, 47 pages.

Civil-military relationships suffer from a double issue. On the one hand, the military tends to only look at the military objective rather than the political one or, more precisely, to resist the change of the military aim when the political one evolves. At the same time, to preserve the sacrosanct civilian control, civilian leaders are reluctant to concede to the military the ability, and thus the role, of contributing to the strategy. This mistrust creates a divide that directly impacts the effectiveness of the strategy. Although this divide can be explained by a theoretical and historical heritage, this situation is no more satisfactory, but also irrelevant in the 21st century context of limited conflicts and complex operational environment. A more balanced relationship, where the operational artist negotiates the strategy with the politicians and contributes to the elaboration and the refinement of the political aim, is possible. Through the case studies of General Abrams in the Vietnam War – especially the Cambodian incursion, and General Schwarzkopf during the First Gulf War, this monograph shows where and who the operational artist should be to play this greater role in a renewed civil-military relation. It demonstrates that, as long as he is granted the proper authority and responsibility, and is politically aware and compatible, the operational artist does not only address military options, but is also a politico-military opportunities provider.

Contents

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Section 1: Introduction

Whereas France has been, almost continuously, involved in wars, conflicts or peace-keeping operations during the last three decades, the engagements, alone or part of a coalition, have always been of limited size. After the French contribution of 12,500 men to the First Gulf War, force caps for a single operation like *Serval* (2013-2015) and then *Barkhane* (2015-) in Sahel, or coalition like the International Assistance Security Forces (ISAF) in Afghanistan, never exceeded 5,000 soldiers. Commanders of these operations are chosen accordingly and, therefore, are most often junior general officers. Operation *Barkhane*, the main French commitment abroad currently, is 4,500 men strong and commanded by a Major-General.

Meanwhile, operations are planned, synchronized and controlled by the Center for Planning and Control of Operations (CPCO) in Paris, inducing the following separation: the campaign plan is conceived in Paris and executed on the ground. The commanding general's role is therefore globally limited to the implementation of the strategy, while the CPCO, with and through the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff (CJCS),[1] handles the relation to the politics and the conception of the strategy. In this case, the operational artist is either – if considered as the commanding general – far from the political discussions, or – if considered as the strategy maker and the campaign planner – far from the terrain.

Some would say this allows a clear separation between the civil and the military realms considering the employment of the military forces, by avoiding intrusion of the politics into the conduct of the operations. But this also implies that the Rubicon is set relatively low on the scale of the repartition of responsibilities: even if military advisers are part of the process of elaborating the strategy with the politics, the latter have the upper hand on the definition of the ends, the means and often the ways, as the results of the bargain to preserve the operational-tactical level

[1] In the French system, while there is no Geographic Combatant Command equivalent, the CJCS is also the head of the chain of command for the operations.

from political intrusion. In a self-protective or cultural manner, military leaders tend to apply a minimalist interpretation of the civil-military relation, "tell me what to do, I will tell you how I will do it." To put it another way, Cicero's *cedant arma togae*[2] is understood literally and strictly.

This situation mires Clausewitz' statement that the less violence is employed, the greater the dominance of the political factors in the civil-military relations.[3] Yet, a risk is that this frame, if adapted to the current situation of small-scale utilizations of the military instrument, may not be effective in case of a greater conflict. What would be a better frame, a more effective organization of these relations in case of larger scale commitments?

The US system, albeit considerably marked by a minimalist view of the civil-military relations as well, provides another way of implementing this interaction, especially since the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. Reporting directly to the Secretary of Defense, the Combatant Commanders are both connected to the politics and rooted to the ground, becoming central in the whole process of elaborating and executing the strategy. How does this frame impact the role of the operational artist? Is it sufficient to ensure permanently a greater role in the negotiations of the strategy?

The character of the political aim as potentially evolving and even unclear in a limited wars context is another consideration of the problem. Whereas the minimalist view of the civil-military relations implies that the political authorities provide clear and long-term guidance to the military, the reality is often different. The political authorities' desired outcomes constantly evolve in response to perceived political and policy risk.[4] They attempt to preserve the ambiguities to maintain opportunities and ultimately their freedom of action. In this context, a strict what/how understanding of the separation of the roles by military leaders might result in

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[2] Let military power give way to civilian authority.

[3] Carl von Clausewitz, *On* War, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 87-88, 582.

[4] Alan C. Lamborn, "Theory and the Politics in World Politics," *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1997): 194.

gaps in the building of strategy. Those would be, at best, filled by the politics, at worst, by no one.

Hence, what is – or should be – the role and the place of the military adviser, under limited war conditions, in the development of a strategy to achieve a political aim through the military means, while still remaining in the professional, non-politicized, military realm?

This monograph demonstrates that there is a way for a more balanced civil-military relationship, to the benefit of the strategy, as well as the policy. Indeed, a politically aware operational artist[5] can be part of the whole, and constantly on-going, process of negotiating the military ends, ways and means of a military commitment. Moreover, not only can he contribute to building the strategy, but he may also impact the development and the refinement of the political aims. Rather than considering evolving and unclear political aims as a constraint to the operational artist's freedom of action, they can eventually be understood as opportunities for him to influence their refinement. This more ambitious role for the operational artist implies specific characteristics, for him to be "the right man at the right place," that we will explore in this monograph.

A review of the existing theories of civil-military relations (CMR) is first necessary to understand the theoretical context in which the interactions are at play. These theories have indeed had a considerable impact on the organization of the CMR after the Second World War and still heavily underpin the way they are thought and conceived, at least in the Western world. The review will allow us to draw the limits of these theories and understand the biases they created, which undermine the role of the operational artist at the strategic level. It will lead to the proposition of a different understanding of the role the latter can play today, to the condition that he is willing to play it. This role is the one of a negotiator who knows that he does not have the

[5] G. Stephen Lauer, "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks: Politics, Policy, and the Military Operational Artist," *The Strategy Bridge*, 20 February 2018, accessed 18 October 2019, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2018/02/20/blue_whales_and_tiger_sharks_113084.html.

final word in the discussion. More than advising, which implies a withdrawal from the responsibility of the decision, the operational artist conducts the development of the strategy by providing options that achieve or influence the political aim. In a word, as well as the politics is part of the "how," especially when it directly impacts the political realm, the military leader can be part of the "what" by providing options or opportunities from the ground, enlightened by his understanding of the political need.

This vision of the operational artist's role will be demonstrated historically with two case studies. Their study will allow identification of patterns in the position and the role of the operational artist interacting with the politics, and eventually show that this role may be broader and of greater importance than the one described by the theorists. The first case focuses on General Creighton Abrams as Military Assistance Command - Vietnam (MACV) commander, and especially his interactions with President Nixon regarding his proposition to intervene in Cambodia in 1970. Gen. Abrams' position and personality helped influence the President to adopt a new strategy and even to change his political aim while facing extreme political and public opposition. The second case study examines General Norman Schwartzkopf's relations with President Bush and Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, building the strategy which led to Desert Shield and Desert Storm and finally defining the way out of the First Gulf War. This case will be especially interesting in the sense that, here, the operational artist managed to negotiate an end to the conflict with a commander-in-chief willing to keep on employing the military means to achieve a different political aim.

The monograph examines the case studies through the lens of two identical criteria to determine the patterns. First, as a negotiator seeks a strong position to achieve success, the politically aware operational artist may play this role thanks to his functional position. Being directly connected to the political authorities *and* commanding the theater of operations provides indispensable legitimacy and authority to elaborate strategy with the policymaker. Second, because the position is not sufficient, a good negotiator shows or develops personal and

interpersonal skills. Hence, the military leader's personality and education also allow him to gain the trust of the civilian authority. In sum, we will study where and who the military adviser should be in this blurred environment to impact the development of the strategy and the policy with the civilian authorities.

If this monograph aims to demonstrate the possibility – and the necessity – for the operational artist to play this greater role in the conception of strategy, it does not, however, contest the primacy of the politics on every military decision. As obvious as it may appear, whatever the military leader's role may be, the political leader remains the ultimate decider and his policy is the reason of the military commitment. Criticizing the rigorous implementation of *cedant arma togae* is rather questioning the analogy regarding its historical context (powerful military leaders threatening the intrinsic values of the Roman Republic) than contesting its absolute meaning.

The negotiation between the civil authorities and the military leaders is understood here as a constant dialogue as explained by G. Stephen Lauer,[6] and as opposed to a clear separation of the roles and responsibilities. It is acknowledged that the discussion may not always resemble a negotiation between two opposite parties – there is no will to induce a notion of antagonism here – but the term negotiation is employed because it provides a frame for a shared area of responsibilities, issues and decisions. The negotiation occurs in a specific decision space, from the policy intervention up to the victory or defeat discourse,[7] and "understanding this space is the real art of military interaction in the political sphere."[8]

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[6] G. Stephen Lauer, "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks: Politics, Policy, and the Military Operational Artist," *The Strategy Bridge*, 20 February 2018, accessed 18 October 2019, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2018/02/20/blue_whales_and_tiger_sharks_113084.html.

[7] Ibid.

[8] William E. Rapp, "Civil-Military Relations: The Role of Military Leaders in Strategy Making," *The US Army War College Quarterly Parameters* 45, no. 3 (Autumn 2015), 23.

The operational artist is defined using the joint[9] definition of Operational Art: the commander who develops strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means.[10] In this definition, the operational artist *is* a strategist. Therefore, this monograph will not consider the operational artist as exclusively related to the operational level.

The theme of CMR offers plenty of theories and studies. To understand the frame in which the interactions occur today, we will focus on the main ones. Hence, Samuel Huntington's[11] and Eliot Cohen's[12] contributions to the theory provide this frame, while more recent authors, such as Hew Strachan,[13] consider a more balanced CMR. If the literature about the Vietnam War is unlimited, the Cambodian incursion at the political and strategic levels, is much less examined. Memoirs of Richard Nixon[14] and Henry Kissinger[15] provide the primary substance to analyze General Abrams' interactions with the politics. Unfortunately, he did not publish a memoir, and his perspective is principally represented by his biographers. Secondary sources will help fill the gap, like James Willbanks' *Abandoning Vietnam* [16] or *The Cambodian Campaign* by

[9] US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publications (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 17 January 2017, incorporating change 1, 22 October 2018), xii.

[10] The July 2019 version of ADP 3-0 adopted, for the Army, the Joint definition of Operational Art.

[11] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1957), 1-97.

[12] Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2002), 1-14, 173-224.

[13] Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1-9, 46-97.

[14] Richard M. Nixon, *RN: Memoirs of the White House Years, vol. 1* (New York, NY: Warner Books, 1978), 451-590.

[15] Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1979); and *Years of Upheaval* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1982), 17-54, 226-312, 433-521, 968-1046.

[16] James H. Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 1-121.

John Shaw.[17] Primary sources for the Gulf War case studies will provide more balanced substance since memoirs of George Bush,[18] Colin Powell,[19] and Gen Schwarzkopf[20] are available. Other books such as *The Commanders*[21] and *The Generals' War*[22] also examine their interactions deeply.

In order to demonstrate that the operational artist shall not be confined to the execution of the strategy but may play the greater role of negotiating its conception up to affecting the political aim, the first section of this monograph will address the theoretical field and its impact on the perception of what CMR should look like today. It will conclude by presenting a new model of relations, more inclusive of the military conceptual role. But to demonstrate that the operational artist is "the right man at the right place" to play this role, history has to provide evidence of success when such a military leader was in this situation. This will be the purpose of the two case studies, sections two and three. Gen. Abrams' and Gen. Schwartzkopf's analysis of their own understanding of their role, their position and their personalities, will provide such evidence that this frame is realist, and explore under which conditions it is.

Section 2: From a Clear Divide to Constant Negotiations, the Path to a More Balanced Civil-Military Relation

The theoretical field has considerably impacted and framed the CMR, especially since the second half of the 20th century. To understand the current situation and the need to acknowledge

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[17] John M. Shaw, *The Cambodian Campaign, The 1970 Offensive and America's Vietnam War* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 1-62, 153-170.

[18] George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1999), 302-492.

[19] Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York, NY: Random House, 1995), 446-528.

[20] General H. Norman Schwarzkopf and Peter Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1992), 309-585.

[21] Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York, NY: Pocket Books, 1991), 177-366.

[22] Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 1-477.

the operational artist's potential in this relation, it is indispensable to analyze at least the major contributions. Samuel Huntington proposes a clear model for the relation but limits it to a very minimalist one. Eliot Cohen then introduces the notion of dialogue, but describes it as unequal, thus advocating for a clear unbalance in favor of the politics. The consideration of this unbalance is finally reinforced by a misunderstanding of Clausewitz' formula as a unilateral one. Based on this context, and thanks to another interpretation of Clausewitz' thought, a new role for the military leader may emerge, depending on his functional position and his personal skills.

Samuel Huntington, Apostle of The Clear Divide

Samuel P. Huntington is indubitably the most influential civil-military theorist of modern times. In *The Soldier and the State*, he describes a relation which offers a response to the dilemma of a democracy relying on a military to ensure its security. The more focused on its functional imperative, the more it protects the state from outsider threats, but also the more it is powerful, disrespectful of the societal values and susceptible to threaten the democracy from inside. Conversely, the more it is embedded in "social forces, ideologies, and institutions dominant within the society,"[23] the less effective it is to protect the state. The remedy to this dilemma is the objective civilian control which may be characterized by the following repartition: while the polity provides the "what" of the strategy, the military handles the "how," the operational piece. For Huntington, this repartition must be strictly implemented, in order to avoid intrusion from either sphere into the other: "the area of military science is subordinate to, and yet independent of, the area of politics."[24] Objective civilian control maximizes the offer of security while keeping the officers in the professional realm, which means not tempted to adapt their service for the good of the corporation or themselves.[25] Overall, this frame is very close to Helmut von Moltke's vision

[23] Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 2.

[24] Ibid., 76.

[25] Ibid., 15.

of the relation: "Once the purposes of war had been set by the political leadership, the war's subsequent conduct was the military's responsibility. The civilians must then take a back seat."[26]

However, the clear division of labor underpinned by this model is far from depicting the reality of the relation. It indeed limits the interaction between top civilian and military leaders to the beginning and the end of the war,[27] whereas the former would never let the generals handle alone the survival of the state, even in Moltke's time.[28]

Furthermore, Huntington's model assumes that the civilian leaders provide clear guidance that can then be translated into an operational concept. Caspar Weinberger followed this line stating that political leaders should only dispatch US forces with "clearly defined political and military obligations."[29] Yet, the civilian leaders face disincentives to provide clear guidance, such as the need to change goals quickly, alter commitments, and adapt the discourse to different audiences.[30] This guidance may, thus, not be as clear as expected, requiring additional discussions to turn them into military actions.

In addition, avoiding the involvement of military leaders in a dialogue as the war goes on generates an adverse second effect for both sides. "It splits the responsibility for policy from the responsibility for strategy,"[31] discharging the leaders from a part of their responsibility to employ

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[26] Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 241.

[27] Dessie Zagorcheva, "Statesmen, Soldiers, and Strategy: The Influence of Civil-Military Relations on U.S. National Security Decision-Making" (Doctorate of Philosophy dissertation, University of Columbia, 18 February 2018), 133.

[28] Geoffrey Wavro, *The Franco-Prussian War* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 279-80, 290.

[29] Caspar W. Weinberger, Speech to the National Press Club, November 28, 1984, quoted in Walter LaFeber, "The Rise and Fall of Colin Powell and the Powell Doctrine," *Political Science Quarterly* 124, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 73.

[30] Paul Y. Hammond, "The Development of National Security Strategy in the Executive Branch: Overcoming Disincentives," in *Grand Strategy and the Decisionmaking Process,* ed. James C. Gaston (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1992), 10-14.

[31] Matthew Moten, "A Broken Dialogue," in *American Civil-Military Relations, the Soldier, and the State in a New Era,* Suzanne C. Nielsen and Don Snider, eds. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 60.

the military instrument and creating opportunities to blame the other side in case of failure. Hence, the clear divide between civilian and military leaders may also be harmful for the relation itself, however minimalist it may be.

Eventually, despite these shortfalls, Huntington's masterpiece still has a considerable influence on civilian and military leaders, since they have been educated within this frame. As Strachan states, "the effect of Huntington's pronouncements – *and even more of his continuing influence* – was to elevate a norm over the reality."[32]

Eliot Cohen and the Unequal Dialogue

Refusing the ideas of (1) a relation limited to the beginning and the end of the war and (2) a strict, rigid line between political and military matters, Eliot Cohen more recently offers a different view of the relation in *Supreme Command.*[33] Better accounting for the political nature of war and the intimate connection between politics and war,[34] Cohen explains that the politics have to be involved much deeper into the decision making process of the commitment of military forces and the conduct of operations: "the statesman may legitimately interject himself in any aspect of war-making."[35] Although not advocating for a micromanagement of the military, he rejects the principle of objective control forbidding to the civilian leaders any type of intrusion into the military realm. More realistic, he prefers the one of "prudential basis for civilian restraint in interrogating, probing, and even in extremis, dictating military action."[36] By connecting politics to any military action when such outcomes are predominantly political, especially under conditions of limited war after 1945, should allow a more effective use of the military instrument.

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[32] Strachan, *The Direction of War*, 77.

[33] Cohen, *Supreme Command*, 1-14, 173-224.

[34] Zagorcheva, "Statesmen, Soldiers, and Strategy: The Influence of Civil-Military Relations on U.S. National Security Decision-Making," 6.

[35] Cohen, *Supreme Command*, 8.

[36] Ibid., 13.

Although not stating it, *Supreme Command* brings the notion of negotiation between the civilian and military leaders.[37] Indeed, Cohen summarizes his theory into the concept of unequal dialogue, where "both sides express their views bluntly, […] sometimes offensively, and not once but repeatedly,"[38] and where "the final authority of the civilian leader [is] unambiguous and unquestioned."[39] The dialogue is, thus, constant throughout the conflict, under the civilian dominance.

Equally interesting for our study, Cohen's analyses of four heads of state dealing with their generals suggest that personalities matter too much to be bound by a rigid, established system of CMR. Though most often demonstrating the virtue of moderation, these leaders, civilian or military, relied on their "gut feeling"[40] as much as their status and experience to interact with each other, resulting sometimes in bypassing the implicit norms.

However, this theory has also some limitations. First of all, it is built on the study of four wartime cases. Yet, CMR are different in peace or wartime and their character in case of limited war aims[41] – especially the commitment of the civilian authorities and the constraints of limited political aims – must not be compared to those in a context of unlimited war. Furthermore, although Cohen insists on the importance for the political side to not micromanage the military, he does not address any way of avoiding this situation, neither does he describe at which point civilian meddling into military affairs is acceptable.[42] Above all, the unequal dialogue may well

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[37] As defined in G. Stephen Lauer, "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks: Politics, Policy, and the Military Operational Artist," *The Strategy Bridge*, 20 February 2018, accessed 18 October 2019, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2018/02/20/blue_whales_and_tiger_sharks_113084.html.

[38] Cohen, *Supreme Command*, 9.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Brandon L. DeWind, "Civil-Military Relations: From Vietnam to Operation Iraqi Freedom" (Master's degree thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 21 May 2009), 13.

[41] Clausewitz, *On* War, trans. Michael Howard and Peter, 87-88, 582.

[42] Zagorcheva, "Statesmen, Soldiers, and Strategy: The Influence of Civil-Military Relations on U.S. National Security Decision-Making," 7.

be translated into a "unilateral dialogue," for the civilian shall interfere into the military sphere whereas the generals shall remain in their own. Indeed, Cohen does not consider a military advice to the polity as receivable, but rather as an anomaly that should be avoided by his model. Any open door let by the politics to include the military leaders in the negotiations of the political aims is, according to him, an abdication of his utmost authority.[43]

To conclude, Eliot Cohen's contribution provides a more realistic view of the interactions, occurring before, during, and at the end of a conflict. Nevertheless, according to this theory, the dialogue remains restricted to the military sphere, and the more the politics interferes, the less the dialogue deals with the strategy, but rather with its execution. This unilateral conception of the relation has also been reinforced by a misunderstanding of Clausewitz' formula.

The Misunderstanding of Clausewitz' Formula as a Unilateral Relation

What makes the study of the masterpiece *On War* even more valuable, due to its worldwide and multigenerational success, is not only the exploitation of its content regarding the phenomenology of war and warfare, but also the analysis of how it was received and interpreted depending on the area, the period or the context of its reception. Hence, the famous formula, "War is merely the continuation of policy by other means,"[44] appeared to be much more studied and analyzed as of the second half of the 20th century than before, when *On War*'s reception focused more on the definition of war as a clash of will and on the connection between strategy and tactics.[45] Interestingly enough, this re-discovery of the "political Clausewitz" occurred globally at the same period of the development of political science and especially the study of CMR.

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[43] Cohen, *Supreme Command*, 198.

[44] Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter, 87.

[45] Benoît Durieux, "Carl von Clausewitz," in *Dictionnaire de la Guerre et de la Paix* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 2017), 224.

Yet, the most common interpretation of the formula is a literal understanding of it, i.e. the military action is dictated by the political imperative. But this interpretation may lead – and especially for the fast reader – to a model where the generals are nothing more than the specialized executors of the polity in the military domain (close to Huntington's theory); and where the politics must scrutinize firmly the military actions to control its political impacts (close to Cohen's theory). Therefore, in this meaning, the relation is vertical and unilateral, there is no room for military advice regarding the reasons to go to war, to protract, or to end it.

However, covering this theme several times in On War, Clausewitz appears to be much less radical regarding the role of the military leaders. The commander of an army, he said, needed to "be familiar with the higher affairs of state" and to possess a "keen insight into state policy in its higher relations"; in sum "the general becomes at the same time the statesman."[46] In this meaning, because war may be even more than the continuation of policy, "the very thing which creates policy,"[47] the one involved in war is necessarily involved in the conception and the refinement of the policy. Here, the political military advice is needed because of the war's impact on policy: "That […] does not imply that the political aim is a tyrant. It must adapt itself to its chosen means, a process which can radically change it."[48] Eventually, war can also be seen as an option-provider for policy, introducing reciprocity in the relation between policy and war in Clausewitz' definition. In this understanding, the role of the military leader is much broader than in the previous one, and the dialogue – here, confirming the tautology – truly bilateral. Hence, this interpretation of Clausewitz' formula provides the foundation for a different type of CMR, more balanced and harmonized, but also more demanding for the military actor.

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[46] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. O.J. Matthijs Jolles (Washington, DC: Infantry Journal Press, 1950, 45, 81-2), quoted in Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War, Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 56.

[47] Brian Orend, *The Morality of War* (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2006), 3.

[48] Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter, 87.

Which Military Leader for this More Balanced Civil Military Relation?

Before detailing where and who the military adviser should be, it is important to insist on the purpose of a renewed bilateral relation. This conception of the relation lies on the acknowledgment that the military leader is indispensable in the conception of an *effective* strategy. Previously studied theories led to the development of the idea that civilian control of the military instrument is the evidence, the proof of a healthy democracy. Yet, this concept transforms the CMR into an end, to be sought by the civilian authorities and the people as an ostentatious mark of their success in preserving and protecting the political model. As a consequence, civilian control has been overemphasized for its own sake, while forgetting that it is only a way to a better employment of the military instrument.[49] This is especially true in the United States or in Western democracies, mature enough to consider civilian control as unquestionable.[50] To reposition the effectiveness of strategy as the real end of a political system will allow one to de-demonize an active role of the military in its conception and lower the notion of power balance within the relation.

This more balanced relation, needed for the effectiveness of strategy, is described by Richard Betts as one of "equal dialogue with unequal authority," where equality in strategic discussion does not compromise the civilian's ultimate primacy.[51] Yet, the equal dialogue does not have the same expectations from its actors than the unequal one, and especially from the military side. The equal dialogue requires responsibility and authority, which are characteristics inherent in an operational artist connected both to the ground and to the politics – a "ground

[49] Strachan, *The Direction of War*, 76.

[50] Zagorcheva, "Statesmen, Soldiers, and Strategy: The Influence of Civil-Military Relations on U.S. National Security Decision-Making," 15.

[51] Richard K. Betts, *American Forces* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012), 225-231.

commander operational artist." The equal dialogue also requires additional skills, not always expected from officers, especially when they are confined to the execution of the strategy.

The harmonization of the relation implies, first, to reconsider the responsibility of the military adviser. If strategy is the product of both political and civilian leaders, both have to share the responsibility for its implementation and especially its outcomes. Where Huntington's or Cohen's theories "relieved generals of responsibility for what fails even at the operational and tactical level,"[52] a more equal dialogue repositions responsibility as a key value. Generals are, here, more susceptible of being held accountable for the conception of the strategy, which gives credit to combining conception and general execution responsibility. As a unique integration of the four levels of war provided Napoleon his "matrix of operational art,"[53] the combination of the strategic and the operational levels in the hands of a single officer (the ground commander operational artist) maximizes the benefits of responsibility. Being directly responsible before the politics for the implementation of the strategy, the operational artist is incentivized to provide the best advice for a most effective strategy. Due to his functional position, the operational artist is, thus, the most qualified to address the issue of responsibility.

His functional position offers another critical element of the effectiveness of the equal dialogue, legitimacy through authority. Being in charge of the military instrument designated to implement the strategy, the operational artist, in direct contact with forces or local actors, appears to be a reliable and perhaps the most credible source of information. Yet, two main factors influence decision makers' willingness to accept or reject advice, the content itself, but also its source.[54] Hence, the operational artist, thanks to his authority which grants a direct access to

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[52] Strachan, *The Direction of War*, 90.

[53] Dennis Showalter, "The Jena Campaign: Apogee and Perihelion," in *Napoleon and the Operational Art of War, Essays in Honor of Donald D. Horward*, ed. Michael V. Leggiere (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 174.

[54] Zagorcheva, "Statesmen, Soldiers, and Strategy: The Influence of Civil-Military Relations on U.S. National Security Decision-Making," 70.

credible information, is a more persuasive adviser, which favors achievement of his negotiations goals.

The functional position of the operational artist is, nevertheless, not sufficient to guarantee him a broader role in the negotiations. In addition to institutional factors, human factors affect the decision-makers by building – or not – trust in the relationship. Four factors of trust are identified in theories of communication and persuasion: (1) the expertness of the negotiator, (2) the decision makers' perception of his sincerity, (3) past interactions with him, and (4) the way the negotiator provides the advice.[55]

(1) Expertness was addressed above, since it is provided by the operational artist's authority which grants him access to information.

(2) The perceived sincerity of the military adviser depends on his goodwill and full commitment to the strategy, without ulterior motives, corporation (or services) favoritism, or personal agenda.[56] A commander, linked to the political level but not embedded in it, focused on the task to create a functional military strategy to achieve the stated political aim, is well suited to demonstrate this sincerity.

(3) Previous interactions between the military adviser and the civilian authority require that the generals are educated and positioned to become acquainted to the nature and characteristics of politicians and the politics associated to the decision to employ the military instrument of power. At least, they need to stay in position long enough to build confidence in this arena and to develop effective personal relationships.[57]

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[55] Carl I. Hovland, Irving L. Janis, and Harold H. Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion: Psychological Studies of Opinion Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 46, quoted in Zagorcheva, "Statesmen, Soldiers, and Strategy: The Influence of Civil-Military Relations on U.S. National Security Decision-Making," 72-3.

[56] Strachan, *The Direction of War*, 92.

[57] William E. Rapp, "Civil-Military Relations: The Role of Military Leaders in Strategy Making," *The US Army War College Quarterly Parameters* 45, no. 3 (Autumn 2015). 19.

(4) The way the advice is provided – e.g. privately or publically, at the right time, through the proper channel, requires as well familiarization to the political realm and its specific expectations.

To conclude, if the operational artist appears to be the right functional position to fit to the job, additional communication and interpersonal skills are indispensable to gain this trust while remaining in the professional, military realm. Moreover, building trust to be effective in the policy dialogue requires that the military adviser be on a thin and delicate position; he needs to be politically aware[58] and compatible to give astute advice, but not political in the sense of acting politically and thus engendering risk to the preferences and policies of the policymaker.[59] Such a demanding and ambiguous position may explain why few military leaders achieved this task of contributing to the polity to the point of influencing or refining the political aim. Some performed it though, which makes the model plausible.

Section 3: General Abrams and the Cambodian Campaign

Background

Appointed by President Johnson as commander of Vietnam forces in April 1967, General Creighton Abrams was already serving as General William Westmoreland's deputy for more than a year. When he took command, and especially after the Tet offensive, the ending administration wanted a change in the strategy and found his general for this purpose.[60] This new strategy, a shift from attrition to pacification and a progressive transfer of security matters to the South

[58] G. Stephen Lauer, "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks: Politics, Policy, and the Military Operational Artist," *The Strategy Bridge*, 20 February 2018, accessed 18 October 2019, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2018/02/20/blue_whales_and_tiger_sharks_113084.html.

[59] Alan C. Lamborn, "Theory and the Politics in World Politics," *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1997): 189.

[60] Lewis Sorley, *Thunderbolt* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 169.

Vietnamese forces would be embraced by the Nixon Administration and completed with negotiations with Hanoi and constant withdrawals as of June 1969.

Meanwhile, in retaliation for the February 1969 North Vietnamese offensive, Nixon had ordered secret bombings of Cambodian sanctuaries in Cambodia,[61] codenamed Operation Menu, which would last more than a year. By early 1970, the negotiations with Hanoi being in a stalemate, security and South Vietnamese autonomy improving more slowly than the pace of withdrawals, and a coup in Cambodia offering an opportunity to act, Nixon considered and finally decided to intervene in Cambodia and destroy the enemy's sanctuaries.

This decision provoked a heavy political opposition and above all enormous protests and strikes all over the United States against the widening of the war, and Nixon's inability to end it as promised. Operationally, the outcomes of the operation were clear.[62] US casualties were very limited, the amount of captured equipment and supplies outreached the expectations, and all US troops were pulled back from Cambodia in two months. It contributed to secure the Saigon area, buy time for implementation of *Vietnamization*, and probably protected subsequent withdrawal of US forces. However, considering its political impacts, Nixon's decision appears to be extremely bold, especially going against most of his civilian advisers.[63]

The study of Abrams' role concerning this decision, but also the conduct of the war in Vietnam in general in 1969 and 1970, helps understand the flow of history and the model of the operational artist's role in the negotiations.

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[61] Richard Nixon, *RN: Memoirs of the White House Years, vol. 1 (*New York: Warner Books), 470.

[62] John M. Shaw, *The Cambodian Campaign, The 1970 Offensive and America's Vietnam War* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 153.

[63] Nixon, *RN: Memoirs*, 556-7.

General Abrams' Functional Position, a Platform to Negotiate

As the Commander of United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV), General Abrams inherently possessed two key elements providing him with a strong position in the negotiations, authority and responsibility. They enabled him to be at the converging point of conception and implementation of the policy.

Authority as a Source of Credibility in the Negotiations

General Abrams exploited at his best the powerful outcomes generated by his position to gain credibility in his interactions with the politics. In addition to possessing credibility from his time as Deputy Commander MACV, he acquired a unique knowledge of the situation, built an emerging strategy and even anticipated the need of the change in policy.[64]

Appointed as General Westmoreland's deputy and MACV commander to be in April 1967, General Abrams was recommended as the "number one soldier in the Army,"[65] who had more combat experience than any other general. Abrams built on this reputation and expanded it to gain credibility, being described as "very effective to do the job, and very respected by the whole forces."[66] In June 1968, all US forces were under his operational control, and he held three titles: COMUSMACV; Commanding General, US Army Vietnam; and Senior Adviser to the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces.[67]

Not resting on this given authority, he used it to develop a strong knowledge of the situation in the area of operations. He seized the opportunity of being the deputy to prepare him

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[64] G. Stephen Lauer, "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks: Politics, Policy, and the Military Operational Artist," *The Strategy Bridge*, 20 February 2018, accessed 18 October 2019, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2018/02/20/blue_whales_and_tiger_sharks_113084.html.

[65] Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 193-4.

[66] Phillip B. Davidson, *Vietnam at War, The History: 1946-197* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson Limited Publishers, 1988), 580.

[67] Willard J. Webb, "The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970," in *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2002), 15.

as an effective leader by traveling almost constantly, visiting units, grasping the magnitude of the problems, especially those involved in bringing the Vietnamese armed forces up to full fighting potential.[68] In a briefing to President Johnson in the autumn of 1968, he demonstrated a unique ability to "know the position of every battalion of allied soldiers in Vietnam, and […] to pinpoint the strength and weaknesses of every unit in the South Vietnamese Army."[69] This knowledge undoubtedly provided him credibility in the interactions, and likely aided him when his intelligence assessments opposed the CIA analyses.[70]

In addition to his situational awareness, Abrams developed relations with the allies as granted by his authority, which would prove central to his strategy. By gaining the liking and confidence of the Vietnamese leaders,[71] he rendered himself indispensable to the implementation of President Nixon's "Vietnamization," and to the Vietnamese themselves who considered him as "really a fighting man, who understands the situation of how a good strategy could be developed, but taking into account the circumstances in the terrain, and the political circumstance, too."[72]

Above all, Abrams' position allowed him to produce an emergent strategy that would be discussed at the political level. After his nomination as MACV commander, he created a task force to study America's strategy over the previous four years and to recommend any needed changes, the Long Range Planning Task Group, or LORAPL. While its preliminary conclusions emphasized "the loss of sight of why [the US forces] were driving back the enemy and destroying his combat capability,"[73] it addressed the "bewildering array of statements from State, Defense,

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[68] Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 203.

[69] George Christian, *The President Steps Down* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1970), 87.

[70] Notably on the use of the Sihanouk harbor by the North Vietnamese in Cambodia. See Shaw, *The Cambodian Campaign*, 62.

[71] Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 255.

[72] Peter Braestrup, *Vietnam as History, Ten Years After the Paris Peace Accords* (Washington, DC: University Press of America), 62.

[73] Samuel Lipsman and Edward Doyle, *Fighting for Time* (Boston, MA: Boston Publishing Company, 1983), 50.

and the White House, often contradictory in nature."[74] LORAPL's first task was to understand what underpinned these statements and shape them into a "single, internally consistent, statement of objectives."[75] The ultimate one was "A free, independent and viable nation of South Vietnam that is not hostile to the United States, functioning in a secure environment both internally and regionally."[76] After having secured Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker's approval of these objectives, Abrams sent them to Washington.

If COMUSMACV did not receive any response to his emergent strategy from Johnson's Administration (the objectives were sent in December 1968, after Nixon's election but before his inauguration,) it shaped Nixon's Administration's conception of the war, or at least contributed to it. Henry Kissinger, Nixon's National Security adviser, published his vision of the US strategy for Vietnam in *Foreign Affairs* in January 1969 where he advocated for linking the military objectives to negotiations to end the war.[77] The role of the military was no longer to win the war but to favor the negotiations and to transfer the conduct of the war to the Vietnamese. This vision was, on the long term, adopted by President Nixon. However, its translation into military objectives closely reflected what Abrams had already implemented and proposed to validation. As James Willbanks states it, "by the time that Nixon, Laird, and Kissinger had formulated their new strategy for ending the war, the strategic ingredients were already in place and the process was ongoing."[78] A former ARVN general suggested that what Abrams had done the year before Nixon assumed office had been an "important factor that influenced the new president's thinking

[74] Lipsman and Doyle, *Fighting for Time*, 50.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Henry Kissinger, "The Viet Nam Negotiations," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 47, no. 2 (January 1969), 211-34.

[78] James H. Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 20.

when he considered ways to end the war."[79] Nixon himself credited Abrams for anticipating his strategy:

> General Creighton Abrams had initiated this shift in strategy when he took command of our forces in Vietnam in 1968. I reemphasized the critical importance of our pacification programs and channeled additional resources to them.[80]

Hence, a proactive use of authority over the US forces in Vietnam allowed Abrams to gain the necessary credibility in an equal dialogue with the civilian authorities, and contribute to the whole conception of the strategy.

Responsibility to Implement Vietnamization, the Connecter to the Politics

Being responsible for implementation of the strategy, Abrams, as the operational artist, enjoyed a direct connection to the political level which he exploited wisely to diffuse his own views. Indeed, while several personalities and agencies conflicted against one another for the conception of the ends, ways and means, the MACV commander was the unique point of entry for their execution. This gave him a key position to influence them, which ultimately did not reflect the official hierarchy.

The way Abrams concentrated the political guidance demonstrates how central his position was. Climactic among the people, the question of the Vietnam War was also a conflicting issue among Nixon's Administration[81] which often interacted by multiple channels with Abrams. Lewis Sorley identifies two groups, with Nixon and Kissinger pushing for forceful prosecution of the war, while Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird and Secretary of State William Rogers were pushing for disengagement as quickly as possible.[82] Kissinger himself, "equally scornful of Washington bureaucracy, routinely sent back-channel messages to Abrams and

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[79] Maj. Gen. Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Vietnamization and the Cease-Fire* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 11), quoted in Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam*, 20.

[80] Richard M. Nixon, *No More Vietnams* (New York, NY: Arbor House, 1985), 105.

[81] Nixon, *RN: Memoirs*, 535.

[82] Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 258.

Ambassador Bunker to keep Laird and Rogers out of the wartime decision making process."[83] And at the same time, Laird "would often try to countermand or modify the President's instructions."[84] It is in fact a divided administration which eventually transmitted its various guidance to a unique ground commander.[85] This situation inflated dramatically during the Cambodian incursion.[86]

Abrams' central position allowed him to not only be the executer but also to influence the policy. Early in 1969, Abrams' intelligence staff provided him with a location for the headquarters of the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN HQ), from which the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were directing the war in South Vietnam. He transmitted it to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) requesting authorization to strike. After having submitted it to the White House which took the idea seriously, General John McConnell, the then-acting chairman, replied with some guidance from the President and added his recommendation not to send a briefing team to Washington. Abrams, did the exact opposite and sent a briefing team,[87] probably to make sure that all members of the National Security Council considered his request, which would eventually be authorized by the President.[88] This operation led to yearlong secret bombing of Cambodian sanctuaries, from March 1969 to the ground incursion.

One of Abrams' goals would later be to convince the political level of the necessity to destroy the sanctuaries by more effective ground operations. As the Secretary of Defense Laird visited Saigon in February 1970, he made a strong case for it and, even if he did not convince him

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[83] Gregory A. Daddis, "'A Better War?' The View from the Nixon White House," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 36, no. 3 (2013): 379.

[84] Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 258.

[85] Nixon, *RN: Memoirs,* 470.

[86] Ibid., 289-90.

[87] William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 20-21.

[88] Lipsman and Doyle, *Fighting for Time*, 140.

at the moment, the message was passed and brought back to the White House.[89] A few weeks later, as the political situation worsened in Cambodia, and with Abrams continuously advocating and demonstrating his readiness for action,[90] this option would be validated by the President, albeit with strong debates.

Finally, the COMUSMACV's relation with the political leaders was less hierarchical than an official organizational chart would suggest it. Under the Johnson Administration, Abrams already benefited from this extensive influence. In late October 1968, President Johnson summoned the COMUSMACV to Washington to discuss, with the National Security Council members, a potential halt to the bombing of North Vietnam, one week prior to the elections. Abrams' advice proved most influential, as Johnson told the general, "I am going to put more weight on your judgment than anybody else."[91] On Richard Nixon's first day in office, Kissinger issued the National Security Study Memorandum 1 (NSSM1) and sent it to select members of the administration, requesting a response to twenty-eight questions to better understand the situation in Vietnam.[92] Kissinger addressed one copy directly to Abrams in addition to the JCS, and requested separate responses. Through this method, Abrams was directly considered as an adviser to the political level to build the new strategy. This consideration for Abrams' advice among the other political ones would be constant, at least until 1972. Nixon would even balance his advice with Kissinger's on the decision to initiate Operation Menu[93] in March 1969, and with Laird's and Rogers' to launch the Cambodian incursion.

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[89] Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam*, 70-1.

[90] Ibid., 77; Nixon, *RN: Memoirs*, 557.

[91] Gregory A. Daddis, *Withdrawal: Reassessing America's Final Years in Vietnam* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 49.

[92] Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 238.

[93] Ibid., 242-3.

Consequently, thanks to his central position as COMUSMACV, Abrams was able to shape the policy within the political circle of decision makers. He did not always get what he wanted, especially concerning Nixon's continuously imposed withdrawals of troops, against which his cautious advice would almost never be listened to.[94] However, while failing in this negotiation for his desired means, he played a crucial role in the negotiations of the policy, of the emergent strategy, and of the ways to execute it.

General Abrams' Personal and Interpersonal Skills: Politically Aware and Compatible

Because trust is a key element in a human relation, institutional organization, while providing the operational artist access to the political level, does not guarantee his advice will be listened to. Abrams had to prove his loyalty to the administration, he had to understand the political world, and finally he had to communicate wisely his advice in order to build the necessary trust to maintain his role in the negotiations.

Loyalty, the Premium Value in a Political Environment

For gaining space in the decision-making process, a military leader has to show the politician he is not primarily serving his own interest or the one of his corporation, to the detriment of the global interest or of the politics himself. Abrams demonstrated early his honesty and his loyalty to the new administration. One of his aides reported "his tremendous loyalty to civilian control, the loyalty he felt to the established government, Nixon—not as an individual, but as the Commander in Chief."[95] Even if he could disagree with the administration's decisions, he would never let his subordinates notice it. At some point, he even sent a message to thirty-eight addresses under his authority saying that he had "accepted completely and was executing to the best of his ability, all orders of the President." He concluded: "Let's don't waste any time or

[94] Nixon, *RN: Memoirs*, 485; Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 289.

[95] Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 259.

effort on anything that tends to detract from the cohesive pursuit and accomplishment of US objectives."[96] That cannot be clearer and must have reinforced Washington's perception of his loyalty to execute the orders.

Abrams' relationship with Laird was a byproduct of this trust that was built early on, the latter understanding that Abrams would not play on his own. During their first meeting in Saigon in February 1969, Laird warned him that the quality of his cooperation would impact his career. Abrams just answered that he wasn't expecting anything else, that he was ready to leave if necessary, but he could be assured that there would be no press conferences, no books written.[97] This was Abrams' manner to explain his loyalty, which proved reliable since, as the myth grew up that Laird was bypassed by Nixon and Kissinger, Abrams consistantly kept him fully informed.[98]

The famous general could also have threatened Nixon himself, as previous commanders in US history viewed access to the White House as the ultimate ascension. Joseph Alsop's article in the *Washington Post* "Nixon Would Be Wise To Heed Abrams' call for pullout pause"[99] shows how easy it could have been for Abrams to take advantage of Nixon's unstable position. In fact, the MACV commander always refused to be attracted by the siren song of fame. As soon as he had assumed command, he banned every press conference in Saigon and never held one during his five years in Vietnam.[100] Hence, Abrams' loyalty and sincerity in his interactions with the political level, as well as his disinterest for personal outcomes of his position, might have been appreciated, especially in the intriguing atmosphere surrounding the White House under Nixon.

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[96] Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 268.

[97] Ibid., 258.

[98] Dale Van Atta, *With Honor, Melvin Laird in War, Peace, and Politics* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 154.

[99] Joseph Alsop, "Nixon would be wise to heed Abrams' call for pullout pause." *The Washington Post*, 30 March 1970.

[100] Davidson, *Vietnam at War, The History: 1946-1975*, 578-9.

The Process of Building Trust

History of interactions play a significant role in the way politicians handle their advisers. Abrams had already impressed previous administrations. During the desegregation troubles of Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, he had been noticed by Cyrus Vance, then Secretary of the Army, who described him as "unflappable,"[101] and Robert Kennedy who praised his competence, his patience and especially his advice.[102] Later, Johnson even compared his relation to Abrams with Lincoln's to Grant.[103] However, everything had to be rebuilt with Nixon's Administration, and Abrams relation with his commander in chief might have suffered from a lack of meetings, especially as of 1972. Laird, who visited Abrams in Saigon more than Nixon, did develop this kind of relation with the MACV commander. Whereas he was a professional politician who often did not share Abrams' perception of the war, he always carried the messages as their relation was marked by a mutual respect.[104] Abrams' gain of the Secretary of Defense's trust is even more noticeable since the latter appeared to distrust the Joint Chiefs."[105]

In addition to this patient construction of close relations, Abrams also needed an understanding of the political issues to provide his best advice. As explained earlier, he had understood quickly the divisions among the executive and knew how to address each one while keeping track of his assigned objectives. But the main potential subject of tensions was the political imperative to constantly withdraw US troops, as initiated by Nixon in June 1969.[106] As Kissinger recalls it, the President considered the first announcement of withdrawals a "political

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[101] Davidson, *Vietnam at War, The History: 1946-1975*, 577.

[102] Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 169.

[103] Ibid., 253.

[104] Van Atta, *With Honor*, 176; Nixon, *RN: Memoirs*, 485.

[105] Lipsman and Doyle, *Fighting for Time*, 34.

[106] Shaw, *The Cambodian Campaign*, 14.

triumph."[107] But even if Abrams approached this subject with a "heavy heart,"[108] because it rendered victory impossible, he also understood the realities of eroding domestic support for the war[109] and gave it his wholehearted support.[110] Consequently, being far from the political turmoil may have hindered the operational artist's ability to interact physically with the President – which did not prevent Nixon from trusting him for the crucial choice of launching the Cambodian incursion,[111] but it also protected him from the Washingtonian intrigues. Abrams was, above all, still able to create a key relation with the Secretary of Defense, and to understand and embrace the evolving political aim.

The Abrams Way of Communicating in the Negotiations

The way the views are exposed or disseminated in the negotiations is almost as important to their positive reception as the views themselves. Abrams had his own way: he was frank, he used relays, and he smoothly prepared his audience to new inputs.

Abrams' frankness is to be related to his loyalty, and was a factor of fluidity in the decision making. Laird paid tribute to his candor and his cold-headed judgments:

> Unvarying honesty touched everything he did. He never once predicted stability for Vietnam without the essential qualifiers, and stubbornly refused to offer quick assessments of events, even if the President was on the line demanding them.[112]

In the urgent atmosphere of Cambodian deliberations, Nixon was balancing the options and directly cabled Abrams asking if he could ensure that an Air Force-supported, South-Vietnamese

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[107] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 274.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 258.

[110] Lewis Sorley, A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace, 1999), 113, 128.

[111] Nixon, *RN: Memoirs*, 557; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 490.

[112] Melvin Laird, "Unforgettable Creighton Abrams," *Reader's Digest* (July 1976), 75.

ground forces-only offensive would be successful. Abrams answered simply he could not ensure success, which eventually drove the decision to the US commitment.[113]

Building relays was essential to Abrams strategy of communication and helped him soften the inconvenience of distance. Laird's importance in support of Abrams – once again, although he did not share several of his points of view – has already been detailed. From the beginning of his assignment, the COMUSMACV also made it critical to be aligned with Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker in Saigon. Instead of having an exclusive use of his title of Senior Adviser to the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, he always made sure to coordinate with Bunker, which resulted in a mutual support in Vietnam and also in Washington.[114] As Lewis Sorley states it, "there was just such a tremendous rapport and professional respect, one for the other."[115] When Kissinger sent his NSSM1 to assess the situation and envision the strategy, they both received one and both answers were aligned.[116] Abrams also relayed his perspective through Admiral John McCain, Commander in Chief of the Pacific Command (CINCPAC), his immediate superior, although he had a direct link to the Pentagon and the White House, who proved to be a strong support. Ten days before launching the ground incursion in Cambodia, Nixon flew to Hawaii to greet the Apollo 13 crew. McCain seized the opportunity to brief him and said: "If you are going to withdraw another 150,000 from South Vietnam this year, you must protect Saigon's western flank by an invasion of the Cambodian sanctuaries."[117] This was negotiation at its best.

Finally, knowing the force of a continuous but patient persuasion strategy, Abrams prepared his interlocutors to his points of view. Coming up in March 1969 with his new proposed

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[113] Lipsman and Doyle, *Fighting for Time*, 149; Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 281.

[114] J. Edward Lee and H.C. Haynsworth, *Nixon, Ford and the Abandonment of South Vietnam* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2002), 24.

[115] Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 285.

[116] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 238.

[117] James S. Olson and Randy Roberts, *Where the Last Domino Fell: America and Vietnam, 1945 to 1990* (New York, NY: St. Martin's), 234.

objectives that he pulled from the conclusions of LORAPL, the MACV commander decided not to send them as a plan to Washington, where he feared they would be "nit-picked to death like flies around an elephant."[118] On the contrary, he preferred dealing with his superiors informally and gradually to gain their piecemeal approval. He used the same tactic for the operation against COSVN HQ behind the Cambodian border. While persuaded as early as his arrival in Saigon that the North Vietnamese used Cambodia as a rear logistic area,[119] Abrams kept diffusing the idea that a military action should be considered.[120] When Nixon took office after the transition period he used to familiarize himself with the main concerns, he immediately requested a report on "what the enemy has in Cambodia, and what, if anything, [US forces] are doing to destroy the buildup there."[121] Abrams idea was getting across.

To conclude, despite a tensed political atmosphere in Washington, and a physical distance between the operational artist and his commander in chief, the former demonstrated high negotiating competence through interpersonal skills, which led, among others, to the dramatic decision to invade Cambodia. Being politically aware and compatible, Abrams exploited the advantage of his functional position as the operational artist.

Section 4: General Schwarzkopf in the Gulf War

Background

General Norman Schwarzkopf was appointed Commander in Chief (CINC) of Central Command (CENTCOM) on November 23, 1988. Starting with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, the Gulf War would propel him to fame, as the field commander of a

[118] Lipsman and Doyle, *Fighting for Time*, 53.

[119] Shaw, *The Cambodian Campaign*, 8.

[120] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 241.

[121] Ibid., 241.

multinational coalition defeating a powerful Soviet-equipped enemy through a decisive victory, and eventually erasing the bitter Vietnam heritage for the US nation and military.

Both determined not to repeat the errors that supposedly contributed to this previous tragedy, civilian and military leaders developed a clear and frank relationship, respectful of the chain of command as well as of the expertise, relying on a reorganization of the roles and responsibilities. It is commonly accepted that this healthy relationship contributed to the success of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. But if some argue that this meant the triumph of the Huntingtonian model,[122] others blame an abdication of the civilian leadership, especially regarding the decision to end the war, when the opportunities to pursue to Baghdad and remove Saddam Hussein from power generated potential new political war aims.[123] It is not the purpose here to analyze whether the decision was right or wrong. However, the study of Schwarzkopf's contribution and of General Colin Powell's, his indispensable chairman, in negotiating on the whole spectrum of strategy – to include the evolution of the war goals – provides another case demonstrating the operational artist's key role, and his necessary abilities to play it. Although the whole campaign is covered in the following study, three decision-making sequences provide specific insight: the start in August 1990, the decision to shift to the offense and reinforce the ground forces in October, and ending the war in late February 1991.

General Schwarzkopf's Functional Position

A Wide and Clear Authority

Schwarzkopf's authority provided him an evident credibility by empowering him as the "single man in charge," the expert on the Iraqi problem, but also the key regional catalyzer of forces. As the CINC of CENTCOM, Schwarzkopf was naturally in charge of dealing with the

[122] Zagorcheva, "Statesmen, Soldiers, and Strategy: The Influence of Civil-Military Relations on U.S. National Security Decision-Making," 140.

[123] Cohen, *Supreme Command*, 188-198.

emerging Iraqi threat in July 1990. Even if CENTCOM was then considered as a "paper command,"[124] a staff without permanently assigned forces, it was the only headquarters through which an operation could be prepared, launched, and commanded. For that reason, because no other crisis would emerge in the CENTCOM area by that time, and because he was not willing to delegate his authority, Schwarzkopf would command the Joint Task Force. He would even command the ground forces during Desert Storm, in spite of the presence of Lieutenant General John Yeosock, commanding the Third Army, the Army component of CENTCOM.[125]

In addition, his authority had been reinforced by the then recent Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. This revolutionary change in the organization of the Secretary of Defense increased the role of Combatant Commanders and especially unified all US forces under a single command, whatever their service:

> The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that a commander of a combatant command has sufficient authority, direction, and control over the commands and forces assigned to the command to exercise effective command over those commands and forces.[126]

As explained by Les Aspen, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, the act gave new authority to field commanders: "It created a clear line of command, one integrated operational plan and one focal point for decisions on the ground."[127] In fact, the law enabled Schwarzkopf by extending and clarifying his authority.

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[124] Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York, NY: Pocket Books, 1991), 187-8; and Norman H. Schwarzkopf and Peter Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1992), 313.

[125] Robert H. Scales, *Certain Victory: The United States Army in the Gulf War* (Washington, DC: Pocket Books, 1993), 46.

[126] US Congress, Public Law 99-433—OCT. 1, 1986, 100 STAT. 1014, paragraph 164 (c) Command Authority of Combatant Commanders, accessed 10 December 2019, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-100/pdf/STATUTE-100-Pg992.pdf

[127] Les Aspin, "Desert One to Desert Storm: Making Ready for Victory," address before the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, 20 June 1991, quoted in Jeffrey Record, *Hollow Victory* (McLean, VA: Brassey's, 1993), 121.

As CENTCOM commander, Schwarzkopf was also the subject matter expert for the Iraqi problem. This expertise contributed to build his credibility. Having identified early the threat the Iraqis represented for to the Middle East stability, he had shifted the focus of his staff from a Soviet intervention in Iran to an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia as of November 1989.[128] Fortuitously, he had ordered the conduct of a staff exercise, Internal Look 90, to plan the defense of Saudi Arabia against an Iraqi aggression a few days before the actual invasion. He and his staff were intellectually ready for what happened next.[129]

On August 2, while the National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft called for an emergency National Security Council (NSC) meeting, Schwarzkopf was summoned to Washington, DC to attend it, because "he knew the disposition of all the forces in the Middle East."[130] In the following three weeks, he would attend several meetings at the White House, delivering briefings recalling the Internal Look plan[131] for potential options, and would travel to Saudi Arabia with Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense, to brief King Fahd and convince him to request US assistance. As the subject matter expert, Schwarzkopf was contributing to the emergent strategy at the top level of decision-making.

Thanks to his authority, Schwarzkopf held diplomatic responsibilities. Good relations with his Arab hosts were crucial for the buildup of the joint force and for the conduct of the operations. This was a mission in itself since the Saudis were not initially keen to see their kingdom "invaded" by US forces.[132] But Schwarzkopf, a serious student and lover of Arab

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[128] Scales, *Certain Victory*, 43.

[129] Ibid, 44.

[130] Woodward, *The Commanders*, 204.

[131] Schwarzkopf and Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 348.

[132] Ibid., 350-5.

culture, quickly gained their consideration and even became a favorite of King Fahd.[133] At the military level, the CENTCOM commander had also to reassure Lieutenant General Khalid, the Arab forces commander, that he would not usurp his power, and that the Arab role in the coalition force would be decisive.[134] Thanks to the US general's personality and the Saudi's knowledge of English language they both became real friends, highly facilitating the relation with the Host Nation – indispensable for its logistical support[135] – and all the Arab forces which were a key element of the coalition's cohesion and legitimacy.

In addition to convincing his Arab hosts, Schwarzkopf also had the enormous task of bringing together thirty-three national contributions to the war effort, a strategic and diplomatic challenge. As recalled by Colin Powell, "Norm Schwarzkopf's greatest single achievement was his extraordinary ability to weld this babel of armies into one fighting force, without offending dozens of heads of state."[136] His action proved so fascinating that almost half the Senate and a third of the House traveled to the theater during the buildup to see what was happening, to a point that Powell had to put a stop to these time-consuming visits.[137] Schwarzkopf's position, thanks to his legal and recognized authority, eventually became so central to the US strategy from both an operational and diplomatic perspective, that he rendered himself indispensable to the processes of its conception and refinement.

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[133] Colin Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1995), 462.

[134] Roger Cohen and Claudio Gatti, *In the Eye of the Storm: The Life of General H. Norman Schwarzkopf* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991), 221.

[135] Laura J. Ziegler, "On to Baghdad?" (US Naval War College, Newport, RI, 13 November 1992), 12.

[136] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 462

[137] Cohen and Gatti, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 222.

A Virtuous Responsibility: Honored by the Field Commander, Respected by the Politics

As formulated in the Goldwater-Nichols Act:

> The commander of a combatant command is responsible to the President and to the Secretary of Defense for the performance of missions assigned to that command by the President or by the Secretary with the approval of the President.[138]

In this regard, Schwarzkopf was directly linked to the Pentagon and the White House, and identified as the unique interlocutor, responsible for the implementation of the policy. Constant interactions were however tempered by the willingness, not openly communicated but shared by both the military and the civilian leaders, to not repeat the Vietnam-era political meddling into military matters.[139] Hence, the interactions between the field commander and the politicians mainly went through Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But this does not mean that Schwarzkopf abdicated his responsibility toward the Defense Secretary and the President. On the contrary, Powell constantly sought Schwarzkopf's advice and emphasized it within the political arena, giving it the necessary range.[140] Despite the distance, several decisions concerning the means, the ways, and the ends of Desert Shield and Desert Storm reveal how much influence Schwarzkopf had, thanks to his commitment to his responsibility and to the consideration of the politics for this responsibility.

By early October 1990, CENTCOM had identified a window for a ground offensive in January and February before deterioration of weather and the Ramadan, and the need for a second corps-sized ground combat element in reinforcement. The logistic implication of this offensive imposed a decision by the end of October.[141] Schwarzkopf knew that this did not allow politicians

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[138] US Congress, Public Law 99-433—OCT. 1, 1986, 100 STAT. 1014, paragraph 164 (b) Responsibilities of Combatant Commanders, accessed 10 December 2019, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-100/pdf/STATUTE-100-Pg992.pdf

[139] Cohen and Gatti, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 216.

[140] Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 128.

[141] Cohen and Gatti, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 229.

the opportunity to wait for a potential success of the previously imposed sanctions before deciding on a massive reinforcement. Moreover, this decision was to be taken at the eve of congressional elections. However, he had decided to fight for his second corps, because wanted to be able to "guaran-damn-tee" victory.[142] He made his point through military channels as well as through the embassy in Riyadh, trying to convince a reluctant Department of State. He gained Powell's support during a visit on October 21, who, in turn, rallied an already favorable Dick Cheney. In late October, Powell and Cheney brought the "political dynamite" to the President's table. In spite of the opposition of State Department and a strong skepticism from Scowcroft, President Bush authorized the doubling of forces and an intellectual – and diplomatic – shift to the offense.[143] Schwarzkopf had won the negotiations of the means.

Later on, as the air campaign was ongoing in January 1991, came the debate on when to start the ground campaign. Whereas President Bush worried about collateral damage, the global effectiveness of military action with regard to political opposition,[144] and a potentially deteriorating coalition, Schwarzkopf wanted to take full advantage of the air campaign before launching his corps. [145] In early February, as Schwarzkopf recommended another two weeks for the air campaign, Bush, urging for ground action, sent Cheney and Powell to Saudi Arabia. However, guarding against the appearance of second-guessing the military experts, the President told the emissaries he would abide by more cautious military advice, should it make it comfortable to attack. At the end, Schwarzkopf got what he proposed: the 21st of February, with a three day-window, refusing to be too rigidly pinned down on the date.[146] Facilitated by a

[142] Cohen and Gatti, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 229.

[143] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 474-6.

[144] John Mueller, *Policy and Opinion in the Gulf War* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 58-60.

[145] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 466.

[146] Ibid., 467-9; Schwarzkopf and Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 503-4.

President reluctant to be too intrusive with the military, Schwarzkopf was in a strong position to negotiate the timing of the attack in spite of political considerations.

Whether the war should have been protracted is still being debated. What is interesting for our study was the CENTCOM commander's role in the decision-making. Worried by the press exploitation of images of the "Highway of Death,"[147] Powell wanted to anticipate a political move to end the war. Reaching Schwarzkopf on February 27, they agreed that a five-day war (which meant one more day) would allow him to fulfill the mission.[148] Being presented this option later in the day, Bush asked whether to stop now rather than waiting one more day. Caught by surprise, Powell responded that "[they] had better get the command views."[149] Reached from the direct secure line to Riyadh on the President's desk, Schwarzkopf replied he had no objections but wanted to consult his commanders. He called back a few hours later to confirm his commanders were aligned. Hence, within a few hours when the military action mutated into political results, the operational artist had been reached three times, including two with the President, to make sure the political view was in line with the reality on the ground.[150]

A last decision which showed the tremendous confidence of the administration for the field commander and his responsibility, was to let him handle the peace negotiations with the Iraqis, which took place at Safwan, inside the Iraqi territory, on March 3. Arguably, the military should probably not have been let alone for this highly political stake,[151] but the fact that Schwarzkopf was the senior representative for the US in this situation is revealing. Furthermore,

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[147] It was the name given by the media to the highway which linked Iraq to Kuwait and on which withdrawing Iraqi forces were easily targeted after the beginning of the ground operation.

[148] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 505.

[149] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 485.

[150] Schwarzkopf and Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 543-5.

[151] Cohen and Gatti, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 307; Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 448.

although some civilian leaders disagreed with the commander's handling of the arrangements, they did not dare to repudiate the victor of the hundred-hour war's agreements.[152]

As a conclusion, it appears that Schwarzkopf had a strong audience in Washington, which allowed him and his chairman to negotiate the means, the ways and the ends of strategy. This audience was mainly due to his authority over the US and multinational forces and his responsibility toward the administration. He also benefited from a favorable context, with civilian leaders themselves refusing to meddle into military matters.

Bush had been accused of abdicating his power to the military during the First Gulf War.[153] It appears however, that he "was clearly the person in full command of decision-making,"[154] and that he expected military advice and "sought it at every turn."[155] But the fact that this question has been debated tells about the influence the military gained in the negotiation with the civilian authorities. Beside the operational artist's functional position, this influence also came from his and Powell's personalities.

Schwarzkopf and Powell: Two Equals One

Stormin' Norman, the "bear," was well known for his strong personality. If this allowed him to command half a million soldiers and a thirty-three-nation coalition, a different set of skills was needed to interact effectively with the political level. As he did not always possess all of them, success in this domain was brought by the creation of a perfect tandem with the much more politically aware and compatible Colin Powell. It was this tandem which very effectively conducted the negotiations.

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[152] Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 448.

[153] Ibid., 415; Cohen, *Supreme Command*, 198.

[154] Edward R. Drachman and Alan Shank, with Edward Kannyo and Steven R. Ligon, *Presidents and Foreign Policy: Countdown to Ten Controversial Decisions* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 300.

[155] *Triumph without Victory: The Unreported History of the Persian Gulf War* (New York, NY: Times Book, 1992), 95.

Politically Mindful and Deferential, but Not Always Politically Compatible

In the process of building trust within the political arena beyond the platform of his functional position, Schwarzkopf was not necessarily the best suited. He did possess a political awareness of the situations and events and did not pursue personal or corporate interests. He was not, however, well-acquainted to the political world, even feeling some distrust for it, and did not always communicate his military advice well.

The CENTCOM commander had a political sense in the way that he envisioned his actions through the lens of their political impacts. While the Marines were racing toward Kuwait City, defeating the Iraqi defensive positions quicker than expected, he slowed them down and organized a "political and diplomatic seizure" of Kuwait City. In a deferential gesture, Kuwaiti forces, followed by a Saudi brigade and then US troops entered the city to make it clear for the Middle East and the world that the Arabs had retaken it.[156] Later on, Schwarzkopf also ensured that the peace negotiations were not conducted in Kuwait City but in Iraq. He designated a specific site, displayed ostentatious US military equipment for the press, and welcomed the defeated Iraqi generals on Iraqi ground. It had to be obvious, for them and for posterity, that "the Iraqis had been forced out of Kuwait and that it was the allies who were dictating the terms in Iraqi territory."[157]

In addition to this political sense, Schwarzkopf, acting as CENTCOM commander, did not pursue a personal agenda. In a relationship, this perceived sincerity is crucial for the reception of advice. He recalls the pride he felt when President Bush personally recognized him on national television in early August 1990, "Good Luck, Norm. We're with you all the way,"[158] leading him

[156] Cohen and Gatti, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 290-2.

[157] Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 438.

[158] Schwarzkopf and Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 367.

to think afterwards that, "if things turned right, [he] could end up Chief of Staff of the Army."[159] But a few minutes later, he was reminding himself he had never wanted to be chief of staff and realized that, during the crisis, he "didn't want his judgment clouded by concern with how [his] decisions would affect [his] chances for a job."[160] He even decided by that time to retire when the crisis was over. Also, having become a national hero after the war, Schwarzkopf could easily have entered politics. Florida Republicans insistently called on him for the 1992 elections, and even for the Presidential campaign.[161] But despite his popularity, he was not interested in politics, and thus never threatened the Bush Administration.

Nevertheless, these qualities were not sufficient to establish a real sense of trust. Schwarzkopf lacked acquaintance with the political world to suddenly be able to interact on a daily basis with it. Acknowledging himself that he had always tried to avoid assignments in Washington, DC, the general never had an opportunity to work with the politics and get acquainted with them.[162] Colin Powell reminisces about the first NSC meeting dealing with the Iraqi invasion on August 2, 1990, which he asked the CENTCOM commander to attend: "This was Norm's first chance to see the senior policy crowd in action, and I wanted him to get a feel for the people with whom he was likely to be working."[163] Furthermore, he inherited from his father "a basic dislike of politics and politicians,"[164] which led him to draw a clear line between the military and the politics, unwilling to interfere in the latter. Talking about his potential

[159] Schwarzkopf and Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 367.

[160] Ibid.

[161] Cohen and Gatti, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 352.

[162] Thomas E. Ricks, *The Generals: American Military Command from World War II to Today* (New York, NY: The Penguin Press, 2012), 368.

[163] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 449.

[164] Cohen and Gatti, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 178, 325.

position of chief of staff, he said: "I don't want to deal with the damn politicians and all the crap you'll have to put up with."[165]

Finally, a great public communicant, Schwarzkopf did not fit with the preferred requirement to provide private military advice. Convinced of the importance of dealing with the press to avoid what he witnessed during the Vietnam War, Schwarzkopf often communicated through the media. Added to the fact that, from the moment he deployed to Riyadh in late August 1990 until April 1991 he never traveled back to the US even for a brief,[166] his use of media for diffusing his assessments and advice was not necessarily appropriate for politicians who hate feeling boxed in by subordinates. Gordon and Trainor describe him as "laying his cards on the table" in an interview to the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*:

> Now we are starting to see evidence that the sanctions are pinching. So why should we say, 'Okay, gave 'em two months, didn't work. Let's get on with it and kill a whole bunch of people'? That's crazy.[167]

After the briefing he gave to the media on the fourth day of the ground offensive,[168] and as the relevance of ending the war was discussed in the White House, Cheney complained that Schwarzkopf had explained that the allies could have gone to Baghdad but had no intention to do so. It was, then, too late to consider the option of threatening Saddam Hussein.[169] These public statements from the field commander led Cheney to become suspicious of Schwarzkopf's motives and skills. Powell explains that, "occasionally, Cheney required [his] reassurance that [they] had the right man in Riyadh."[170]

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[165] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 516.

[166] Cohen and Gatti, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 204.

[167] Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 149.

[168] This briefing would later be called "The Mother of All Briefing," in parody of Saddam Hussein's pre-war pledge to fight the Mother of All Battles.

[169] Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 424.

[170] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 479.

Therefore, it appears that, despite an ability to think politically and a sincere sense of duty, Schwarzkopf's lack of experience with politics and tendency to speak out, in addition to very few physical communications, prevented him from developing a high level of trust with the civilian leaders above what was inherently generated by his functional position.

The Perfect Tandem

With Schwarzkopf, Colin Powell had found the right man, and reciprocally. Powell played this role of dealing daily with the politics, negotiating the strategy, while he was providing the indispensable context and ground vision. Powell gained the necessary trust to be influential in the political realm and did it thanks to a strong political awareness. Eventually, they both found this way of playing the crucial role of pivot between policy and operations by dividing the labor, while each remained perfectly aligned with the other.

Colin Powell gained a tremendous trust from the civilian leaders, President Bush especially, which gave range and impact to his advice. At the eve of launching the ground campaign, concerned about casualties, Bush recalls Powell's appeasing intervention: "As Colin briefed me, he conveyed a quiet confidence that was contagious."[171] Due to this confidence, Powell was admitted into the very restrictive group with which Bush weighed and took his decisions. Yet, the President's way of decision-making was mostly the groupthink perspective.[172] He did not make decisions during NSC meetings which he considered more as source of information. "When the President [had] to make one, he [did] it in consultation with a much

[171] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed,* 469.

[172] For more insight on the decision-making perspectives, the groupthink one in particular, and Bush's decisions during the Gulf War regarding this perspective, see Lawrence K. Montgomery Jr., "The Decision to Not Invade Baghdad" (US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, 14 April 2007), 22-29.

smaller group."[173] This smaller group was what became the Gang of Eight[174]: "The President had begun a custom of inviting the Gang of Eight to the White House after he returned from Camp David on Sunday evenings."[175] Hence, Powell had gained his seat within the unofficial decision-making group, an active duty military man among the civilian leaders, and his persuasion skills would allow him not only to give his advice, but to orient decisions toward his convictions.

Powell's prior acquaintance to the political world was highly beneficial to his position. He began this experience as a White House Fellow in 1972-1973,[176] and as President Reagan's last National Security Advisor from 1987 to 1989. By that time, he knew how to deal with civilians, he had developed an acute sense of foreign policy, and, not least important, his own doctrine for the use of military power.[177] He knew how to communicate because he knew what the civilian expected, and when; he had the proper understanding of when his message would be best received. Recalling the debate on bringing a second corps to be able to go on the offense, Powell explains how he convinced the President: "I let a new overlay drop. 'And here,' I said, 'is how we would go on the offensive to kick the Iraqis out of Kuwait.' The President leaned forward. This was what he was waiting to hear."[178]

Ironically, he may even have become more politically aware than the politicians themselves. On the decision to end the war, it was Powell who brought the necessity to cease combat when he saw the news reports about the so called Highway of Death: "I would have to

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[173] Schwarzkopf and Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 344.

[174] President, Vice-President, National Security Advisor, Deputy National Security Advisor, White House Chief of Staff, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

[175] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 488.

[176] Ricks, *The Generals*, 369.

[177] Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 129.

[178] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 475.

give the President and the Secretary a recommendation soon as to when to stop, I told Norm."[179] Even if it was clearly the President who eventually decided to stop the war, Bush was considering the emerging opportunity to topple Saddam despite the initial war goals, but Powell's influence within the Group of Eight mainly contributed to diffuse the urgent need to call the war off.[180]

The role Powell played in Washington, DC, was exactly what Schwarzkopf needed and could not do in Riyadh. Bush allowed communications between him and the field commander to pass through the chairman because he trusted him. Understanding Schwarzkopf's character and civilian expectations, Powell used this trust to deftly place himself as a relay between them.[181] This relay was acknowledged by Schwarzkopf, who was thankful for it, recognizing that his plans needed Powell's persuasion skills to be accepted in Washington.[182] As the chairman said to the CENTCOM commander: "You worry about the theater and let me worry about Washington."[183] The two men were associating their efforts, each in their own field, and altogether happened to be very successful in the negotiations of the use of military power and its political aim.

Section 5: Conclusion

Due to a various theoretical and historical heritage, CMR are characterized by a double issue. On the one hand, the military tends to only look at the military objective rather than the political one or, more precisely, to resist the change of the military aim when the political one evolves. At the same time, for this very reason, and above all to preserve the sacrosanct civilian control, civilian leaders are reluctant to concede to the military the ability, and thus the role, of contributing to the strategy. This mistrust creates a divide that directly impacts the effectiveness

[179] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 505.

[180] Record, *Hollow Victory*, 125; Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 515.

[181] Dale R. Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency: Civil-Military Relations from FDR to George W. Bush* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 310, 329.

[182] Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 147.

[183] Schwarzkopf and Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 377-8.

of the strategy. It indeed translates either into a lack of interactions, or into a deep political meddling into the conception and the execution of military strategy.

The acknowledgement, both by the military and the civilian leader, of the need and the benefits of a greater role played by the generals offers an alternative to this divide: an equal dialogue with unequal authority, in which the interactions are characterized by constant negotiations of the means, the approaches, but also of the policy options. In this case, the military is not only an executant of the policy, it is also an opportunities-provider for the design and the refinement of the policy.

This model implies two imperatives, one from each side of the table. First, the military ought to focus on the political aim and be able to adapt its military ends, campaign plans and organizational structures to it when evolving. Yet, military leaders find themselves in the dilemma of either giving sense to the lives of the soldiers lost for the previous political aim and often sticking to cultural and doctrinal values of their institution or abiding by the political vision by duty. Nevertheless, only the latter ensures trust within the relationship, which eventually generates dividends for the military leader who can, in return, influence the refined political aim. Second, the civilian leader ought to grant a better credibility to military advice in the emergence, conception and refinement of strategy, including the establishment of political war goals. The civilian leaders must acknowledge this role not as an abdication of prerogatives but as a way to better achieve the end, the CMR being considered not as an end in a healthy democracy, but as a means to the implementation of policy.

To enable the fulfillment of both imperatives in this new relationship, the military leaders have to fit the character expected by the politicians. They have to get the authority and the responsibility from a field commander position which render them expert and legitimate, while at the same time directly connected to the politics. But they also need to rely on personal and interpersonal skills to build trust within the political realm and make credible their contribution to the negotiations.

A politically aware and compatible operational artist, a field commander connected to civilian decision makers with a political mindset while remaining apolitical, appears to be the appropriate best-military-advice provider, in the interest of strategic effectiveness.

General Abrams case study shows that a theater commander may have the influence to make the President adopt his vision of the strategy, but also seize an opportunity that, in appearance, goes in contradiction with his political will of withdrawing, especially among fierce political and public opinion opposition. In a different way, the Gulf War study also demonstrates that the operational commander may be influential in negotiating a tremendous increase of the means, the validation of most of his proposed ways, and finally the military and political termination of the war. The Schwarzkopf-Powell example also proves that the model is not rigid: the role of negotiator with the political authorities can be played by a tandem of military leaders who, together, fulfill the conditions of authority, responsibility and political awareness and compatibility. The proper functioning of the tandem rests, however, on the sine qua non condition that both of the actors are strictly aligned and in constant communication.

A broader conclusion is also that the Combatant Command model offers a pedestal for the operational artist to play this role. Even if the opportunity of contributing to the policy through this model is not limited to the Combatant Command commanders, their intrinsic prerogatives favor this contribution. At a time when the overall organization of the US Combatant Commanders is put into question due to the globalization of the threats, the US military should also consider the benefits they generate in terms of civil military relations.

Finally, this model may also serve as a proposition of the shifts that might be implemented in France in case of a large scale but with limited aims engagement. Because France is currently involved in small size conflicts, the field commanders of these operations are not in contact with the policy makers and cannot influence the overall strategy. This task falls into the hands of the chairman, who is no operational artist. If the current organization fits for small size commitments, an adaptation of the model should then be considered in case of a French

engagement in a larger scale conflict. This adaptation would imply to nominate a high-ranking general officer as field commander, directly connected to the civilian leaders – to the condition he his politically aware and compatible – or in very close contact with the chairman.

More globally, this demonstration, rather than simply arguing for expanded rights in the hands of the military leaders, advocates for an acknowledgment, within the military profession, of the possibility, the necessity – and even the duty – to provide the civilian authorities with politico-military opportunities, and not only military options.

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