THE POLITICS OF MILITARY OPERATIONS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

AND THE COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES

OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

CARRIE ANN LEE

AUGUST 2015

Abstract

Do domestic political institutions affect the way that states fight wars, and if so, why? I argue that military operations on the battlefield are systematically influenced by civilian politicians to favor lower-risk strategies in the months preceding a domestic election. Because domestic constituencies are casualty-sensitive, democratically elected civilians face strong incentives to temporarily trade long-term strategic success for a short-term decrease in casualties, resulting in the direct and indirect politicization of military operations. Direct politicization occurs when civilians intervene in operations through direct requests, increasing monitoring, or changing tactical guidelines, while operations are indirectly politicized when the military polices its own behavior in response to organizational, bureaucratic, or personal incentives. This culminates in a preference for defensive operations in the months leading up to a domestic election, while high-risk offensive strategies are delayed until after electoral pressures have been resolved.

The first empirical chapter uses the insights developed in my theory to systematically test the effect of electoral cycles on troop movement and violence levels during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. I then use both most different and most similar case designs to qualitatively evaluate the timing of military operations during the wars in Vietnam and Iraq. The third and fourth empirical chapters evaluate systematic deviations and patterns in bombing operations over North and South Vietnam using a recently released dataset that enables analysis of bombing runs from 1965 to 1975. Finally, I conclude with a comparative case study of the strategic bombing campaigns as executed by the United States and United Kingdom during World War II. In each case, I show that domestic politics profoundly influence civilian decision-making during conflict, and that this influence is most pronounced in the months immediately preceding an election. These findings challenge our current understanding of battlefield effectiveness, normal civil-military relations, and how democracies fight wars more generally.

For those who paid the ultimate price.

Preface and Acknowledgements

On January 28, 1968, North Vietnamese forces crept across the DMZ and Laos border to begin a siege of the Marine Outpost in South Vietnam known as Khe Sanh. Under tremendous political pressure after the surprise of the Tet Offensive and painfully aware of his plummeting approval ratings due to the emerging credibility gap, President Lyndon Johnson could not afford to launch another counter-offensive that would result in a high body count so close to the Democratic primaries. After Johnson decided against a rescue, daily hardship was punctuated with the traumatic experience of mounting casualties inflicted by an adversary that the Marines at Khe Sanh rarely saw. On February 25, Colonel Wilkinson approved an expeditionary force to scout the terrain and location of NVA forces around a nearby hill. Though the colonel later admitted that, "In hindsight… that patrol should have been a much smaller patrol. It should have probably been a squad patrol," the unit led by Lt. Donald Jacques engaged and attempted to capture NVA troops several hundred yards from their designated route and were ambushed by several hundred NVA forces and heavy automatic weapons fire. Out manned and out-gunned, the Jacques patrol never made it back to base – by the end of the day 21 wounded returned in groups of two and three while 25 were missing presumed dead. Lieutenant Colonel James Wilkinson, commander of the 1/26 Marines, elected not to send an additional company to retrieve the missing men, and the "ghost patrol," as it came to be known, would haunt the 1/26 Marines until they could retrieve the bodies almost six weeks later.

Research for this dissertation led me to story after story of those like the ghost patrol. A walk down the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. reveals over 56,000 stories – each unique and yet each the same – those who paid the ultimate price in the service of their country, under the leadership of their president. The dataset that was used for my analysis of Iraq and Afghanistan was built by tracing the locations of fallen soldiers, and the case studies motivated by the tremendous stories of courage and sacrifice by young men and women, far from home, whom I had the privilege of interviewing for this project. While the ability to abstract away from the specific is one of the most powerful

aspects of political science, it is also critically important to remember the human cost of war. This dissertation is first and foremost for them.

I owe tremendous debts, intellectual and personal, to those who have helped shepherd me through this long and oftentimes tedious process. There are too many people to possibly name, but a few stand out as truly exceptional, and without whom I could not have completed this process. The credit for this work belongs to them, all errors and omissions are my own. My committee and faculty advisors here at Stanford have inspired, challenged, and encouraged me to be better and do more than I ever thought possible. Scott Sagan suffered through the directed reading where the idea for this project was initially conceived, and offered invaluable direction as I refined the theory and case studies. His unwavering faith in this project, which I surely tested at times, is deeply humbling and I am forever grateful. He challenged me to think critically and deeply about the complex issues I wanted to address (and some that I did not), and helped to keep me both focused and relevant to academia and policy. I could not have asked for a better advisor or mentor. Jim Fearon prompted me to think bigger about this project, and gave me the courage I needed to tackle a truly important topic. Ken Schultz provided invaluable feedback and direction as an advisor, but his guidance while I was his teaching assistant forced me to clarify my theories and thoughts in a way that would be accessible to both faculty and undergraduates. I owe a deep debt to David Laitin, who is responsible for so much of my intellectual and professional development throughout graduate school. His invaluable support and advice helped me to navigate the unfamiliar waters of the academic world, and his deep concern for the welfare of his students inspires me daily. I am grateful to Condoleezza Rice, who provided significant help and motivation for my chapters on Iraq and Afghanistan, and who's directed reading on civil-military relations helped me to refine many of the ideas advanced in this dissertation. Finally, Martha Crenshaw, Peter Feaver, Justin Grimmer, Judy Goldstein, Nori Katagiri, and Mike Tomz provided enormously helpful feedback during various stages of this project.

I owe thanks to the Empirical Studies of Conflict project, and in particular Eli Berman, Joseph Felter, and Jacob Shapiro for the funding to complete some of the original data

presented in this dissertation. Meeting Jake my first year of graduate school may have been the most fortuitous thing that happened that year, and I am deeply grateful for his help and mentorship. Additionally, I am grateful to Peter Stansky, who provided the fellowship funding for my archival research at Kew Gardens in London.

I was incredibly blessed to have colleagues and friends at Stanford and elsewhere who made my time in graduate school so intellectually and personally fulfilling. Jon Lindsay was instrumental in helping me flush out and develop the ideas and cases advanced in this dissertation. I am proud that my writing and thought processes bear many of his intellectual fingerprints. I owe enormous debts to Jeff Bonheim, Ben Buch, Jonathan Chu, Brendan Green, Lindsay Hundley, John Kendall, Melissa Lee, and Lauren Prather, all of whom read entire chapters or more of this dissertation and provided valuable feedback and ideas. Additionally, Daniel Altman, Bobby Gulotty, Phil Haun, Colin Jackson, Austin Long, Eric Min, Lucas Puente, and Nick Sher all generously shared their own experiences and offered valuable advice about methods, data, and case studies. Finally, I could not have finished graduate school without the women in my cohort, who remain some of the strongest, smartest, most loyal people I know. Risa Kitigawa, Frannie Zlotnick, Adriane Fresh, Dorothy Kronick, Allison Anoll, and Kelly Zhang offered me shoulders to cry on, couches to sleep on, and people to lean on when I was most in need.

There are additionally a large number of non-academic friends and colleagues to whom I owe great thanks, but in particular I want to acknowledge Tamara Andrade, David Barmore, Shayne Bobo, Marina Dang, and Parama Pia Pal. You answered my every question about military operations and tours abroad, helped to copy-edit chapters, came to my defense, and listened to me analyze every thought I ever had about this project. Most importantly, even when I was a pain, you always took my calls.

I finally want to thank my family for their enduring love, patience, and support. Without you, none of this was possible, nor would it be worth it. Mom, Dad, and Logan – you have ever been my rock and my cheerleaders. I love you more than words can say.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Introduction

"To me 'bipartisan foreign policy' means a mutual effort, under our indispensable two-Party system, to unite our official voice at the water's edge so that America speaks with maximum authority against those who would divide and conquer us and the free world…. In a word, it simply seeks national security ahead of partisan advantage."

— Senator Arthur Vandenberg, Chairman of Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 1950.

"How can we get this job done? We need more money in an election year, more taxes in an election year, more troops in an election year and more cuts in an election year… We have no support for the war. This is caused by the 206,000 troop request, leaks, Ted Kennedy, and [Democratic primary challenger] Bobby Kennedy. I would give Westmoreland 206,000 men… if we could get them."

— President Lyndon B Johnson, March 26, 1968.

This is a study of the politicization of military operations. It analyzes the domestic political factors that contribute to and determine the timing, tactics, and resources dedicated to the pursuit of victory during times of war. Why during the Vietnam War did the Johnson administration refuse to bomb Hanoi and Haiphong, despite evidence that North Vietnam's war making capabilities were centered in those two cities? Why did Johnson eventually halt all bombing operations north of the 20th parallel, even as North Vietnam increased its conventional capabilities? Why did the Bush administration in 2004 delay the onset of the Second Battle of Fallujah by over two months, despite growing insurgent strength in Western Iraq? These operational decisions, made by civilians politicians, have far-reaching consequences for civil-military relations, how many resources are spent during war, and ultimately affect how successful a state is during conflict. This project seeks to understand when and why civilians influence

military operations for domestic parochial concerns during conflict, and how electoral institutions influence decision-making about battlefield outcomes.

The conventional wisdom states that in consolidated democracies, civilian leaders during war determine strategic priorities while the military implements these strategies through battlefield operations and tactics. Conventional further asserts that these norms of non-interference, combined with representative institutions that put pressure on the executive to win wars, result in better battlefield outcomes for democratic states and a higher probability that they will win the wars they fight. In contrast, I argue that civilians regularly intervene in military operations due to the very democratic institutions that are supposed to contribute to battlefield success. These unintended consequences of democratic institutions thus contribute to the systematic politicization of military operations conducted during war, where operations are directed by civilian leaders managing both the long-term security of the state and the short-term preferences of the voters.

Normatively speaking, civilian intervention may be considered either good or bad. It is easy to think of scenarios where politicization might result in sub-par outcomes and be considered a net negative. This kind of interference, however, where civilians reject the advice of military experts in favor of their own electoral priorities, is empirically fairly rare. I argue that intervention looks much more like influence than interference. While civilians traditionally take a "hands off" approach to military matters, a subject on which civilian leaders typically have very little experience (which a few notable exceptions such as Eisenhower), they do often exert influence on the composition and timing of operations to make them politically expedient. And many times, civilian intervention in this regard can be a net positive – ineffective programs are cut due to public outcry, unjust war practices are stopped once revealed to a liberal democratic public, etc. But the act of politicization does not immediately require a normative judgment. Rather, like any battlefield operation, it must be seen in context.

Why Study Military Operations?

A cursory look at any of the major conflicts of the last century will highlight the importance of individual military operations in determining war outcomes and the balance of power. The failure of the German offensive at the Second Battle of the Marne and resulting Allied counteroffensive was decisive in ending the First World War, and Operation Overlord and the Normandy Invasion were critical to ensuring Allied victory in the Second. The Christmas bombings (Operation Linebacker II) over North Vietnam finally generated a peace accord that allowed for complete American withdrawal from Vietnam, while General Norman Schwarzkopf's "Left Hook" during the Persian Gulf War left the Iraqi Republican Guard with little choice but to retreat and surrender. Though not every battle proves critical to the outcome of a conflict, operational and tactical decisions during wartime can and do have enormous effects on the progress, balance, and cost of war. Operations that are poorly timed or ill-equipped can result in a strong nation being defeated and a dramatic shift in the balance of power after a war (Biddle 2006). Ineffective operations can result in the defeat of a great power, as the French were at Dien Bien Phu, while effective military operations by a weak actor can prolong a conflict and extract additional concessions in negotiations. Thus, understanding military operations on the battlefield, while not a study in effectiveness itself, is a vital yet overlooked step in understanding why militaries operate the way they do and how the implementation of doctrine influences the overall distribution of power.

The politicization of military operations has further importance for the study of bargaining and war termination. Military operations during war serve two purposes: to signal private information about relative capabilities (indirect) and to influence the enemy's relative capabilities (direct) (Wagner 2000). To indirectly influence the war, battlefield operational and tactical decisions can reveal information about training levels, technological capacity, relative numbers, and predominant strategy. All of these factors must be considered during peace negotiations, as a state may be disinclined to continue fighting should it learn that its opponent is much better equipped, trained, and numerous than it prepared for. To directly influence the outcome of a war, operational and tactical

decisions focus on inflicting losses on the enemy. These targets can include a state's technological and logistical capabilities, overall numbers through casualties, territorial gains, and leadership abilities through selective targeting. Should a state suddenly find itself at a physical disadvantage during fighting and be unable to mount sustained operations, its position would naturally be much weaker at the bargaining table than if it had the upper hand; for this reason, states often suspend negotiations in order to fight for better battlefield position, only to resume once a new status quo has been reached.

The implications for policy are both tangible and far-reaching. Military operations are not costless. Each new offensive requires a certain amount of manpower and resources – understanding when and why operations are most likely to be initiated can therefore have a significant effect on the costs of conflict. Identifying biases that influence civilian decision-making during conflict can reduce the human cost of conflict by ending wars sooner and making operations more efficient and effective in their execution. The way in which force is employed on the battlefield also affects the balance of power in conflict and war outcomes, which can in turn affect state security in the international system. When operations are politicized and civilians intervene for parochial concerns in military tactics and offensives, they change the strategic landscape of the battlefield. In some cases, this may be to the detriment of effectiveness as military expert opinion is overridden for domestic political concerns. When Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld overruled the advice given by Pentagon war planners in order to reduce the number of forces required to invade and occupy Iraq in 2003 and ignored defense experts by disbanding the Iraqi Army and encouraging de-Ba'athification, it almost certainly contributed to the rise of the Sunni insurgency and resulting civil war. In other cases however, civilian intervention for political reasons may have positive consequences. Abraham Lincoln's decision to replace General George Meade with Ulysses S Grant and launch a new offensive in the spring of 1864, due in part to concerns that he would lose the upcoming presidential election to a candidate willing to accommodate Southern independence, was a decisive factor in defeating Confederate forces and ending the U.S. Civil War.

It is important to note that the dependent variable of interest is *not* battlefield effectiveness, though effectiveness is certainly a theoretical consequence of the kind of military operations conducted on the battlefield. However, I make no predictions as to the efficacy or competence of certain kinds of civilian intervention – this study is instead concerned with the operationalization of grand strategy within an organization. It is empirically true that there exist considerable differences in the operations that militaries conduct despite consensus on doctrine in the military. This dissertation concerns itself with the supply side of this chain, and argues that domestic politics, and in particular electoral cycles, are responsible for variation in when civilians intervene in military affairs and how military doctrine is implemented at the operational level of war.

Summary of the Argument

I argue that as politicians become increasingly concerned with their electoral prospects and sufficiently myopic about public opinion, elected leaders are more likely to consider the domestic political implications of military operations when the country is at war. Democratically elected leaders are cognizant of and responsive to public opinion before elections, and this need to generate public support in order to retain power domestically results in strategic policy changes by the political leadership. Unlike peacetime elections, during times of war the public votes overwhelming on issues of foreign policy, resulting in strong incentives for incumbents to manipulate military strategy in order to maintain high approval ratings and win elections (Kagay and Caldeira 1975, Light and Lake 1985, Hess and Nelson 1985, Aldrich et al 1989). However, I suggest that this political maneuvering does not stop at grand strategy but also affects areas traditionally considered to be the military's purview: the operational and tactical levels of war. This results in predictable and systematic variation in how military operations are conducted and doctrine is implemented on the battlefield. While civilian leaders do not always violate normal civil-military relations during war, they are much more likely to exert control over military operations as elections draw near.

In contrast to the assumptions made in most studies of civil-military relations, civilian leaders in democracies have both the ability and willingness to intervene in tactical and operational military affairs during conflict. During time of immense domestic pressure on an administration, the executive and his/her political appointees will intervene using a variety of mechanisms in planned military strategy and operations to make them more politically palatable to domestic audiences. Many of these mechanisms of *direct politicization*, while politically-motivated, do not require individual approvals but rather improve on monitoring and reporting abilities. Others set guidelines at the tactical level, such as altering the rules of engagement, to ensure politically-palatable outcomes while others still rely on the civilian's ultimate prerogative in hiring, firing, and promoting military officers. These political actions then set an expectation within the military about the preferences of the executive branch and leads to the top echelons of the officer corps making decisions with an eye toward the political impact on the home front. These mechanisms of *indirect politicization* can be motivated by organizational concerns, bureaucratic preferences, or personal ambitions. Ultimately, both direct and indirect politicization result in the modification of decision-making at the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war to accommodate domestic electoral concerns.

Direct politicization occurs when the civilian leadership in the executive branch uses its authority to alter the way in which the military conducts wartime operations. While there are times when civilians personally interfere with and control military operations from the capital and punish (or threaten to punish) those who do not account for the domestic impact of operations, they also rely on subtler, less time-intensive mechanisms. In addition to direct orders and consequences, direct politicization may take two other forms: the insertion of political actors into the war zone and the management of rules and guidelines for forces. Politicians may choose to insert political actors into a conflict environment by sending civilian advisors to monitor military decisions or by utilizing advances in information technology and communications to be more assertive from the home front. Alternatively, they may issue new guidelines that change the rules of engagement – operational and tactical guidelines for how forces seek out and engage enemy forces – or mark certain territories as off-limits to military operations. Through

these three classifications, politicians are able to directly influence military operations during conflict.

Additionally, as civilians issue guidelines and make clear their political preference regarding the execution of operations, the military then may alter the advice and proposals it presents to the civilian leadership in order to accommodate the domestic political environment. This indirect politicization may manifest through three primary concerns - organizational concerns, bureaucratic preferences, and personal ambition. Because organizations develop standard operating procedures and tend to institutionalize recurring phenomenon, politicization may be internalized within the structure of the organization. Additionally, bureaucratic preferences to increase budgets and maintain control over their personnel may result in self-policing efforts according to domestic politics. Finally, personal ambition may result in military officers taking more notice of domestic political problems on the home front in order to secure promotions and media coverage.

The civil-military relations literature has traditionally seen the military as agents of civilian masters (Huntington 1954, Betts 1977, Desch 1999, formalized by Feaver 2003). However, civilians during wartime are also agents of the national interest with strong incentives to shirk their responsibility to attend to national security in order to retain power domestically. Elections, which during peacetime are intended to hold politicians responsible to the preferences of the electorate, can actually divert attention and resources away from protecting the national interest when the country is at war. Thus, politicians in democracies during wartime must respond to competing demands regarding the execution of military operations on the battlefield. As statesmen, they are expected to approve operations that are most likely to win a war, but as politicians they must compete for votes and appeal to the short-term preferences of a casualty-sensitive electorate. Because foreign policy and military actions are often kept secret to protect information vital to national security, it is relatively easy for politicians to exploit information asymmetries between themselves and the public in order to maintain public support. This results in a trade-off between prescribed military doctrine and the execution of operations more

likely to be politically favorable. Knowing that the public often votes on foreign policy during wartime and that they hold politicians accountable ex post for failing military strategies, I argue that the executive responds ex ante by altering various aspects of military operations to be more politically palatable immediately before an election. As a result, operations on the battlefield become a tradeoff between long-term gains and short-term casualties, and politicians are much more likely to prioritize their electoral concerns over prescribed military strategy as elections approach and public opinion becomes important to the administration's domestic political survival. Therefore, when politicians anticipate that the public will view offensive actions (and the subsequent increase in casualties) unfavorably, they are more willing to order military commanders to assume defensive positions and delay offensive operations until the electoral threat has passed. After domestic elections, operations return to normal levels and may even result in an increase in offensive activity as operations that had been put on hold are finally initiated.

I further argue that there lies a subtle yet important distinction in how these preferences are operationalized both on the ground and during air campaigns. Politicians and military officers managing ground offensives are principally concerned with mitigating the number of friendly military casualties – soldiers whose loved ones are part of the electorate. Because offensive ground operations tend to be more risky and costly in terms of lives lost, this means that new offensives are likely to be delayed in the lead-up to an election, and then initiated once the executive and his/her co-partisans are electorally unconstrained. Air operations, however, while still risky for pilots and crew members, also have much more power to cause collateral damage and affect the non-combatants – an outcome fundamentally at odds with the ideology of liberal democracies and traditionally very unpopular with democratic publics. As a result, when military forces achieve air superiority (and changes to operations thus include no greater risk to friendly forces), I argue that politicians will take pains to avoid non-combatant deaths by overriding the organizational interests of their air forces and change the kind objectives targeted by bombing raids.

Alternate Explanations

Skeptics may argue that because military operations are developed and executed by unique individuals, the variable of interest is in fact the cognitive biases and experiences associated with changes in leadership (Saunders 2011). Great wartime leaders often intervene in military operations and tactics in order to shape outcomes in ways that are politically successful, even if not necessarily prescribed by doctrine. They further take an active role in the promotion process and elevate military commanders that share a similar vision on the employment of force. As a result, past experience, cognitive biases, personal relationships, and prior beliefs on the use of force may explain when civilians intervene in military operations. Clausewitz calls this quality "military genius" in his treatise *On War*, and Cohen (2002) explains the concept more fully in *Supreme Command*:

> The Clausewitzian view is incompatible with the doctrine of professionalism codified by the 'normal' theory of civil-military relations. If every facet of military life may have political consequences, if one cannot find a refuge from politics in the levels of war… civil-military relations are problematic. The Clausewitizian formula for civil-military relations has it that the statesman may legitimately interject himself in any aspect of war-making, although it is often imprudent for him to do so. On most occasions political leaders will have neither the knowledge nor the judgment to intervene in a tactical decision, and most episode in war have little or no political import. But there can be in Clausewitz's view no arbitrary line dividing civilian and military responsibility, no neat way of carving off a distinct sphere of military action (Cohen 2002, 8)

However, the literature on leadership during wartime has trouble explaining cases why an executive intervenes when he does, and what (aside from political importance) determines what kinds of operations are most susceptible to civilian intervention. Further, there is little to suggest what qualities determine what kind of leaders are more likely to be "great." Cohen neglects to develop criteria by which we would expect to see positive outcomes from civilian interference in wartime operations, and thus we are left only with a plausibility probe that suggests civilian direction in war *can* be useful. Further, Cohen gives the reader no sense of how often this phenomenon occurs and whether it is usually helpful or harmful to security outcomes.

Organizational and bureaucratic interests may also explain variation in how states fight wars and the nature of operations on the battlefield. Work building upon Allison's (1969) theory of bureaucratic politics has increasingly paid attention to the role of domestic interest groups in influencing foreign policy decision-making. Snyder (1991) shows that domestic interest groups who benefit from expansion are able to form coalitions and logroll policy choices, resulting in imperial overreach and a conflict prone state. Further, Mearsheimer and Walt (2006) suggest that the disproportionate influence of one foreign affairs interest group (AIPAC) can hijack regional policy and result in outcomes that may not necessarily reflect the national interest. Thus, while interest groups are often useful in the democratic process as a source of information and expertise, their organizational priorities and political power can result in a more conflict-prone state as leaders prioritize interest group support over electoral casualty aversion.[1] These tendencies may also result in variation in the execution of military operations: operations that jeopardize bureaucratic interests may be avoided by both civilian and military leaders under pressure from organizations both inside and outside the bureaucracy.

Independent of politics, government bureaucracies including the military also seek to increase their resources, protect their autonomy, and cultivate a unique identity, resulting in sets of preferences that can cause the state to behave in a manner that is more conflict-prone. Snyder (1984) illustrates that the origins of World War I can be traced to the offense-dominant military doctrines of the early 20th century as militaries sought to protect their interests within the state apparatus. Militaries regularly seek to follow standard operating procedures and conduct operations in accordance with established doctrine, making them highly resistant to change and/or innovation on the battlefield (Komer 1972, Krepinevich 1984). As a result, direction from civilians may be

[1] This line of thinking can also predict more dovish behavior from democracies. Gartzke (2007) and others argue that trade interdependence between capitalist countries results in relative peace between nations, both because war (and thus, autarky) becomes more costly and because interdependence generates interest groups that are primarily concerned with maintaining trade relations with other great powers.

circumvented or mitigated down the chain of command as the military attempts to maintain control over its operations (Allison and Halperin 1972). This has direct consequences for the execution of operations on the battlefield, and we should observe doctrine and tactics that are consistent with military objectives and priorities as well as a status-quo bias, except in cases where the organization's interests are at stake.

Empirically, however, this bureaucratic/organizational explanation leaves a considerable amount of variation unexplained. Why did civilians choose to override the interests of the military and end Operation Rolling Thunder in 1968, but not 1967? Why was the Bush administration unwilling to codify and implement a new counterinsurgency strategy until January 2007, despite successful trials by independent units? Why did Winston Churchill override the interests of Bomber Command in March 1945 instead of years earlier, when it became clear that the area offensive over Germany was not achieving its objectives? Organization theory predicts an alignment of bureaucratic interests and operational outcomes, yet empirically we observe civilians regularly overriding these interests during times of war.

Methodology

I test my theory using two different methods that provide both internal and external validity to the study. I first test the implications of my theory on troop deployment and violence patterns during conflict using two original datasets on U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. By using micro-level data within conflicts, I am able to test the mechanisms described in my theory and for the first time identify changes in the employment of force over the course of a single conflict. I then evaluate a series of historical puzzles that alternative explanations have trouble explaining. They are identified both because the operations signal major turning points in their respective wars (thus indicating that politicization impacts not just minor employments of force but also major offensives with profound consequences for battlefield outcomes) and because they are easily compared against one another for theory testing. I ask:

1. Why did Lyndon Johnson wait two months after the Tet Offensive to launch a ground offensive to liberate the besieged Marine base at Khe Sanh?
2. Why did the Bush administration wait two months to approve the initiation of the Second Battle of Fallujah, despite evidence insurgents were fortifying their defensive positions in the city?
3. Why was the 3rd Armored Cavalry Division able to implement new and unapproved counterinsurgency tactics in Tal Afar with little intervention by civilian authorities?
4. Why did the Johnson administration wait until March 1968 to end Operation Rolling Thunder when evidence suggesting its ineffectiveness had been pervasive since 1966?
5. Why did President Richard Nixon announce a peace deal in October 1972 than had not been agreed to by the South Vietnamese, only to resume bombing of North Vietnam two months later?
6. Why did Winston Churchill order a halt to the area bombing offensive over Germany just six weeks before the end of the Second World War, while the Americans escalated indiscriminate bombing in the Pacific campaign?

The Role of Institutions in Conflict

International relations theory has focused overwhelmingly on the causes of war, explaining conflict as a function of the balance of power, domestic factors, and a breakdown of identity and norms. The literature largely assumes that war is a black box, and that once battle begins conflict is simply won or lost with some probability based upon relative capabilities (Fearon 1995).[2] However, as the state is better able to exert control over its battlefield operations, the unexpected becomes increasingly marginalized, leaving ample room for theories of conduct *in bello*. Scholarship in civil war has

[2] Clausewitz refers to this probability as the "fog of war," where the unexpected often occurs and battle is difficult to affect from the strategy room (Clausewitz 1989)

developed a robust literature explaining the logics of violence and coercive behavior during intra-state conflict (Wood 2003, Kalyvas 2006, Weinstein 2006, Christia 2012, Cohen 2013). Given the development of theory in armed group behavior during intra-state war, there is little reason why a division should exist between theories of causes of war and operations during inter-state conflict.

Military doctrine at its heart is the military's best ex ante prescription for how to win a war given the strategic direction directed by civilian leadership. Battlefield operations, therefore, are the operationalization of military doctrine during combat, and the conventional wisdom states that this is codified as a divide between military operators and civilian strategists. That is, though civilians have *de jure* control over the military in consolidated democracies, they defer to the military's expertise on matters regarding operations and tactics, and instead set political priorities (strategy) during times of war. Consequently, the military refrains from participating in the political process and operates within its own sphere of expertise, respecting the direction provided by civilian leaders. Thus, civilian control is best codified with a division of labor that keeps civilians in control of politics and grand strategy while leaving a professional officer corps to be responsible for the "management of violence" (Huntington 1954). This "normal" theory of civil-military relations compares the relationship between civilians and the military to that of patients and doctors: Civilians may choose the course of treatment among options, and may even choose the operator, but lack the professional experience and training necessary to supervise the procedure itself, and thus must trust the agent to comply with the strategic directives given. This division of labor is reflected in strong norms of non-interference on both sides; Military officers who attempt to influence strategy are publicly sanctioned and dismissed while civilians who pay too close attention to battlefield operations and tactics are labeled as meddling and dangerous. "Good" civil-military relations thus traditionally means that this divide is respected by both parties acting in the interest of the state.

The literature to date has thus focused on the changing composition (Janowitz 1960), role (Desch 1999), and preferences (Feaver 2003) of the military, but largely neglects the

changing nature of civilian preferences and the ability of civilian leaders to act in different capacities. Existing work assumes that civilians act as agents of the state and are more capable of assessing both the state's interest and the international political system than the military.

> The military can say we need such and such level of armaments to have a certain probability of being able to defend successfully against our enemies, but only the civilian can say what probability of success society is willing to pay. The military can describe in some detail the nature of the threat posed by a particular enemy, but only the civilian can decide whether to feel threatened and so how or even whether to respond (Feaver 1996).

This assumption, however, misses an important dynamic inherent in the civilian decision-making calculus – the domestic political campaigns that civilian leaders must engage in to retain power. In reality, civilian leaders are also politicians and must satisfy an often ill-informed and disengaged domestic audience that may have different preferences and priorities that are not necessarily in the best interests of state security. If a state's primary interest is maintaining its security (Waltz 1979), then it follows that civilian leaders must balance the demands of the international system against their own domestic chances of reelection and/or power retention; these two may not always be in agreement. Thus, by focusing only on variation in military preferences, the literature largely misses an important dynamic in the interaction between civilian and military elites. Finally, the civil-military relations literature focuses almost exclusively on the appropriate role of the military in politics, and largely assumes that civilians have little to do with the implementation and execution of operations once political objectives have been determined (for an exception, see Cohen 2002).

Democracy: Advantage or Constraint?

This dissertation thus joins a growing literature that evaluates the role of democratic institutions on state behavior during war. International relations theory has a long history of using domestic politics and institutions to explain causes of war, determinates of

peace, relative power, and other outcomes in the state system.[3] Most of this literature has traditionally focused on the role of regime type in influencing causes of war and the empirical phenomenon known as the democratic peace (Doyle 1986, Russett 1994, Schultz 2001, Russett and Oneal 2001). Scholarship suggests that because war is costly to the public, leaders of democratic countries are more likely to be punished for engaging in unnecessary and unwinnable wars, making them more hesitant to initiate conflict (for a dissent see Weeks 2008). Thus, because leaders are accountable to the casualty-averse citizens who bear the cost of war, democracies are generally more dovish and do not fight each other. The open processes generally associated with liberal democracies further reduce the risks of war as public debate and discourse reveal private information, reducing information asymmetries and misrepresentations of capabilities (Fearon 1995, Schultz 2001). As a result, we observe a stark empirical reality that two liberal democracies have never fought a war against one another.

However, democracies may not *always* have incentives to be generally more peaceful in the international system, and political responsiveness to an electorate may also have perverse consequences associated with accountability to a public audience. Because democratic leaders tend to pursue politically-popular and ideologically-driven foreign policies, they may in fact be more war-like against non-democracies (Owen 2000). Levy (1988) writes that once engaged in a conflict, "…democracies adopt a crusading spirit and often fight particularly destructive wars. Democratic polities transform conflicts of interests into moral crusades, demand nothing less than total victory and unconditional surrender, and engage in 'liberal interventionism' to promote their own vision of the morally proper international order." The 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq was justified first in terms of eliminating Saddam Hussein and weapons of mass destruction, but continued involvement and the resulting counterinsurgency campaign transformed the conflict's objective from the decapitation of a dangerous leader to the establishment of a fully democratic, pro-Western, and stable country.

---

[3] For a thorough review, see Kenneth Schultz "Domestic Politics and International Relations," in *Handbook of International Relations, 2nd ed*, edited by Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth Simmons. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 2013.

Democratic institutions thus may also influence how successful states are during war. Holding politicians accountable for their actions in office ensures that the state is particularly sensitive to public concerns about the costs of war. Democratic theory thus suggests that democracies are more likely to win wars than non-democracies.[4] Because elected leaders are more likely to be punished for losing wars, democracies are more likely to choose winnable wars and then devote large amounts of resources to the effort in order to win (Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995, Bennet and Stam 1998, Reiter and Stam 1998). Thus, wars that are fought by democracies are thought to be more likely to be short, popular, and against substantially weaker enemies. As democracies are also generally more industrialized, economically powerful, and capital-intensive, they are better able to mobilize their economy for war. This combination of war selection and economic superiority results in a better outcome record for democratic countries in the international system.

However, do democratic institutions affect state behavior *during* conflict? Regular elections held during times of war, which rely upon the ability of the public to monitor behavior and then enforce their preferences at the ballot box, force politicians to anticipate public preferences regarding not just the decision to use force, but also how it is employed once conflict begins. The prevailing wisdom once again suggests that democracies have an advantage: liberal states externalize norms of respect for human life and are thus less likely to engage in mass murder and civilian victimization (Valentino 2004, Valentino et al 2004, Rummel 1995), even sometimes at the expense of winning the wars they fight (Merom 2003). In addition to being less likely to kill civilians, democracies may also train better war fighters. "Good" civil-military relations, prevalent in modern democracies, results in a more professional military that respects civilian control, where soldiers are more likely to show initiative and leadership in battle (Reiter and Stam 1998). As a result, democracies show more respect for the laws of just war and are more efficient and effective in the operations they conduct during conflict.

[4] For rebuttals suggesting that regime type has little influence on battlefield effectiveness, see Desch 2002, Desch 2008, Choi 2003, Biddle and Long 2004.

Democratic institutions, however, may also incentivize different behavior by incumbent executives seeking to satisfy public opinion and retain office. Concerns over public opinion and electoral politics may in fact push some states to enter wars they cannot win and escalate conflicts despite evidence of military failure (Downes 2009). Casualty sensitivity and cost aversion may also push democracies to adopt sub-optimal military strategies during counterinsurgency campaigns as politicians try to replace manpower with capital-intensive strategies such as air power and the use of heavy artillery – strategies that are less likely to result in poor electoral outcomes (Caverly 2010). This desperation to win protracted wars at low cost culminates in a willingness of democracies to engage in civilian victimization at rates equal to that of autocracies (Downes 2008), suggesting that there may indeed be a "dark side of democracy" during conflict. However, these studies either rely on cross-national outcomes and are thus unable to test the mechanisms proposed, or focus on case-studies that are able to trace mechanisms but suffer from problems of selection bias.

Contributions

This dissertation therefore contributes both new theoretical insights as well as improved methodology in the study of state conduct during war. I first introduce a theory of civilian agency during conflict, challenging the conventional wisdom that civilian statesmen make strategic decisions about war objectives, which are then executed by the military. I instead find that civilians are actively involved in operational and tactical decision-making during conflict, and that their motivations for intervening are often motivated by domestic political concerns rather than security interests. I thus argue that civilian control in democracies may result in unintended consequences for battlefield effectiveness as leaders prioritize electoral incentives over the advice of their military commanders. This new dimension to the study of civil-military relations moves the field forward toward better understanding of how civilian and military leaders prosecute the wars they fight.

I further contribute to the literature on democratic victory and behavior through a focus on the mechanisms by which civilians intervene and assert their authority. While most of the literature discusses strategy as a monolithic term, it is in fact made up of a variety of components, the most important of which are military operations executed on the battlefield. This project thus moves the field forward by focusing on the operational and tactical levels of war, tracing civilian intervention from the incentives of the incumbent to the physical constraints placed on field commanders in conflict. The recognition that incentives to politicize operations exist within both civilian and military cadres marks another major theoretical insight overlooked by the extant literature. Ultimately, these insights result in a theoretical transmission belt that explains how presidential priorities can affect the decisions of junior officers on the battlefield and accounts for variation in military operations over time.

The final contribution of this project lies in its methodological choices. I engage in a series of within-war statistical analysis using original data collected on troop locations during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and recently released data on strategic bombing operations during the Vietnam War. I am thus able to directly analyze variation within a single conflict *and* explain variation both across and within wars – an important contribution to the study of state behavior during conflict. The introduction of these data, which track individual units and troops movements as well as individual sorties flown over three different wars, is a major contribution to a growing literature that uses micro-level data to convincingly test mechanisms that operate at the operational and tactical levels of war. I then use a comparative case design to explore individual offensives that extant theories are unable to explain to satisfaction, leveraging most similar and most different case designs to examine the factors behind changes to the timing and objectives of battlefield operations. This mitigates the problems of selection bias that exist in the current literature, and contributes to both the internal and external validity of the study.

Plan of the Dissertation

The dissertation proceeds in the following way. I first introduce a theory of civilian agency during war, where I argue in detail that military operations on the battlefield are systematically influenced by civilian politicians to favor lower-risk strategies in the months preceding a domestic election. Because domestic constituencies are casualty-sensitive, democratically elected civilians face strong incentives to temporarily trade long-term strategic success for a short-term decrease in casualties, resulting in the direct and indirect politicization of military operations. I then test this theory in four subsequent empirical chapters.

Chapter 3 provides broad statistical evidences from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. I introduce two new datasets that includes geo-located troop and base locations, unit types and make-up, previously unused domestic polling information, and detailed leadership histories for the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. These data are then used in a large-n econometric and GIS analysis to determine how domestic politics affected military operations on the battlefield. Ultimately, results suggest that the most important determinants of variation in military operations are domestic politics and the electoral cycle. I find that the U.S. Military moves its forces to safer locations, conducts fewer operations, and attracts less violence when midterm and presidential elections are near, and that violence escalates dramatically in the aftermath of domestic elections, indicating that military commanders at the operational level of war as well as their civilian directors are highly sensitive to domestic politics and public approval at home, at the expense of the effective implementation of military doctrine.

Chapter 4 is a qualitative comparative case study of three ground offensive operations – one during the Vietnam War and two from the Iraq War. It utilizes most difference and most similar case designs to suggest that electoral politics are responsible for the timing and content of offensive operations during war. Despite dramatic differences in leadership, the strategic environment, technological capacity, and organizational structure, offensive operations in Khe Sanh, Vietnam and Fallujah, Iraq were both

heavily controlled by the civilian leadership. By contrast, the operations in Fallujah and Tal Afar, despite sharing many organizational and strategic similarities, display profound differences in civilian management. Using primary sources, archival evidence, extensive personal interviews, and a focus on the decision-making process on the battlefield, this paper argues that civilian intervention occurs when politicians are influenced substantially by fears of electoral retribution during an unpopular war.

Chapters 5 and 6 evaluate the strategic bombing campaign in Vietnam as quantitative and qualitative case studies, utilizing a recently released dataset containing over 4.6 million bombing operations over 8 years of the Vietnam War. Ultimately, results indicate that strategic bombing decisions at the operational and tactical levels of war during Vietnam were highly responsive to U.S. electoral cycles and changes in the domestic political landscape – in the lead up to both midterm and presidential elections sorties were flown increasingly at night and away from heavily populated and well defended areas. Further, qualitative evidence shows that the timing, frequency, and very nature of the bombing campaigns in both the North and the South were primarily dictated not by strategic necessity but rather domestic political concerns.

Chapter 7 is a qualitative comparative case study of the strategic bombing campaigns executed by the United States and the United Kingdom, taking advantage of differences in the electoral systems and timing of elections to explain deviations in the implementation of strategic bombing doctrine throughout the war. Using primary and secondary sources from the British and American archives, I find that differences in how Churchill and Roosevelt managed the strategic bombing campaign in the aftermath of Dresden can be explained through public opinion and electoral concerns. In particular, the British decision to halt the area offensive after the bombing of Dresden can be directly attributed to concerns about civilian casualties inflicted by Bomber Command and political pressure in the lead up to the July 1945 Parliamentary elections. Chapter 8 concludes with some of the normative and policy implications of the politicization of military operations.

Chapter 2

A Theory of Domestic Politics and Military Operations

"Foreign policy demands scarcely any of those qualities which are peculiar to a democracy; on the contrary it calls for the perfect use of almost all those qualities in which a democracy is deficient. Democracy… can only with great difficulty regulate the details of an important undertaking, persevere in a fixed design, and work out its execution in spite of serious obstacles. It cannot combine its measures with secrecy or await their consequences with patience."

— *Alexis de Toqueville,* Democracy in America

"One of the interesting things to me in that – part of that plank was to abolish *search and destroy operations, but when you think of a serious proposal in the Democratic platform to* prescribe *the* tactics *of the field commander on the battlefield, it's really quite an amazing development."*

— *Transcribed comments of General Creighton Abrams, 31 August 1968*

Do democracies fight wars differently than non-democracies? Differences in a country's political institutions may translate into differences in foreign policy, military strategy, and operations on the battlefield. The democratic system incentivizes the distribution of wealth and benefits to the majority of its citizens, resulting in greater prosperity and superior domestic institutions. However, the conduct of foreign policy often requires a unified and resolved state, leading observers of politics to ask whether aspects of the democratic system in fact undermine its ability to conduct international politics. When politicians are responsive to an electorate, they are incentivized to make policy decisions that satisfy the will of the majority; while these incentives result in better domestic outcomes, the conduct of international affairs, wartime strategy, and *realpolitik* at times

require politicians to ignore public opinion in order to ensure victory in conflict and the survival of the state. As a result, it is important to understand when and how politicians respond to these competing demands while in office, and how these factors affect a state's ability to wage war.

This chapter introduces a theory of domestic politics and military operations. I argue that democratically elected leaders are cognizant of and responsive to public opinion before elections, and that this need to generate public support in order to retain power domestically results in strategic policy changes by the political leadership. Unlike during peacetime, in times of war the public votes overwhelmingly on issues of foreign policy, creating strong incentives for incumbents to manipulate military strategy in order to maintain high approval ratings and win elections. As a result, while elections are useful means of monitoring and verifying that politicians are working in the interest of the people they represent during peacetime, they produce conflicting pressures during times of war as leaders act both as agents of the national interest and their domestic constituencies. Political maneuvering, however, does not stop at grand strategy but also affects areas traditionally considered to be the military's purview: the operational and tactical levels of war.[5] This results in predictable and systematic variation in how military operations are conducted and doctrine is implemented on the battlefield.[6] While civilian leaders do not always exert control beyond the boundaries described by normal theories of civil-military relations, they are much more likely to intervene in military

[5] The military conceives of a campaign at three different levels: strategic, operational, and tactical. The strategic level of war involves specifying the political aims of the war and overall philosophy in how the conflict is prosecuted. The operational level of war involves the planning and execution of battles and offensives in the context of the conflict, and the tactical level describes the conduct of individual soldiers during battle and maneuvers of small units during a particular offensive. While strategic decisions can have implications for the operational and tactical levels of war and vice versa, the three are traditionally thought of as independent domains with different guidelines, regulations, and norms for making decisions in each realm.

[6] Military doctrine is implemented in a variety of ways, including funding levels, training and personnel decisions, and military operations. In this study, I analyze the implementation of doctrine on the battlefield, which pertains to military operations during combat. As a result, I use the terms "military operations" and "implementation of doctrine" interchangeably.

operations as elections draw near and they become increasingly myopic about public opinion.

Thus, I find that democratically elected leaders during wartime face competing demands regarding the execution of military doctrine on the battlefield. As statesmen and guardians of the national interest they are expected to approve operations that are most likely to win a war, but as popularly elected representatives they must compete for votes and satisfy the preferences of a casualty-sensitive electorate. This results in a trade-off between prescribed military doctrine and the execution of operations more likely to be politically favorable. Operations are politicized both directly and indirectly; in addition to issuing direct orders, civilians are also able to influence operations through increases in monitoring and issuing tactical guidelines, while the military eventually self-polices their operational planning due to organizational and bureaucratic preferences. I argue that the execution of military operations on the battlefield is a tradeoff between long-term gains and short-term casualties, and show that politicians are much more likely to prioritize their electoral concerns over prescribed military strategy as elections approach and public opinion becomes important to the administration's domestic political survival.

Principal-Agent Relationships in Foreign Policy

The conflict that occurs between military and civilian preferences over doctrine and policy forms the basis of the civil-military relations literature. Essentially, why does the military agree to follow orders from civilians when it has the ability to enforce its own will through the use of force? Huntington (1954) famously argues that the military is a professional body responsible for the management of violence and that the "military mind" is particularly well-suited for making operational decisions during war (much like a medical professional is suited for making decisions regarding a course of treatment), while Janowitz's (1960) rebuttal instead suggests that because the military is made of a microcosm of society, it is inherently a political force. This seminal debate has lead to a thorough normative discussion about the proper division of labor between military

operators and their civilian managers (Feaver 2003, Cohen 2002, Golby 2011, Desch 1999, 2001, Levy 1988, Betts 1977, Brooks and Stanley 2007), which was further extended in a large literature on autocracies, coup-proofing, and the attempts of non-democratically elected leaders to retain power by weakening armed political rivals (Quinlivin 1999, Brooks 2008, Caforio and Nuciari 1994, Harries-Jenkins 1990).

Most of this literature, however, focuses on the role of the military in politics and the propensity of the executive to wage war despite differences in preferences (Feaver 2003, Feaver and Gelpi 2004, Golby 2011). Only Cohen (2002) engages in a study that tackles operational decision-making during conflict, ultimately suggesting that great war leaders actively influence strategic and operational outcomes. However, he also asserts that these same interferences by mediocre leaders can be counterproductive to the war effort. Further, Cohen makes no attempt to determine how pervasive this phenomenon is, and gives no criteria for determining what constitutes a "great" leader, leaving the field without a way to adjudicate the larger impact of domestic interference on military operations.

Feaver (2003) pushed the field forward by problematizing the dilemma from a principal-agent perspective, arguing that the costs of monitoring, differences in policy preferences, and the probability of punishment effectively predict the military's willingness to obey commands. However, like the majority of the literature, Feaver largely assumes that civilian preferences are fixed and begins analysis after the civilian leadership has made a decision about strategic aims. Yet, civilians are agents as well and face competing incentives when making decisions about foreign policy. State leaders are responsible for safeguarding the national interest, but elected leaders are similarly accountable to the preferences of an often short-sighted electorate. Brooks (2008) and Golby (2011) further advance the literature by analyzing how civilians arrive at choices about grand strategy, but little attention has been paid to civilian influence *during* conflict.

Politicians as Agents of the Voters

Politicians are elected as representatives of the voters, tasked with enacting policy that is in the interests of the electorate writ large while elections allow citizens to punish those officials who shirk their responsibilities. During peacetime, when the primary national interests are international cooperation and economic growth, elections help to ensure that leaders are responsive to the preferences and priorities of the electorate. Political competition during times of peace creates an effective monitoring mechanism that allows citizens to punish leaders who do not promote growth and prosperity. Further, because information about the impact of domestic policies and leaders' competence in managing domestic affairs is relatively available, voters use a variety of independent indicators of performance to evaluate and punish or reward their elected officials at the ballot box. This was exemplified at the end of the Cold War, when domestic attention again turned toward economic prosperity and voters increasingly chose candidates based upon economic factors, and despite the foreign policy successes of the first Bush administration, Democratic challenger Bill Clinton was able to unseat incumbent George H.W. Bush in 1992 because of a lagging economy and banking crisis.

Ideally, voters would be able to independently observe objective measures of progress and success when evaluating whether the executive is able to pursue good policies and prosecute wars effectively. Citizens would have access to relevant information, such as relative progress and/or future plans, when determining competence, and be able to determine intentions in addition to outcomes. This would more closely mirror the kind of information the public has access to over domestic policy as interest groups provide expertise and analysis about the effects of domestic programs. Public discourse using full information results in both a better informed electorate and changes in politicians' strategies, and forces them to pursue policies honestly that benefit their constituents.

However, progress in combat is often stochastic, difficult to observe, and measured in the long-term. Clausewtiz famously discusses the uncertainty of the "fog of war" and necessity of "military genius," both of which identify and highlight the stochastic nature

of battlefield outcomes. While there are operational programs a military can implement that improve the organization's ability to fight and win battles (Biddle 2006), the outcome of any individual combat operation depends upon some element of chance and the ability of the fighting force to adapt to the unknown. As a result, battlefield outcomes can appear more or less successful due to unforeseeable events. Further, progress during conflict is generally difficult to observe, particularly when objectives are defined as something other than pure territorial gains. Counterinsurgency and nation-building campaigns, for example, measure progress as the ability of the adversary to fight and the legitimacy and strength of host nation institutions – both very difficult outcomes to measure. Thus, even if progress were monotonic, it is unclear that the public would have access to the appropriate measures. Finally, progress during a major war is often measured in long-term objectives rather than short-term gains. Defense-in-depth uses territorial advantages to over-extend the enemy's ability to supply its troops and allow its own forces to regroup while depriving the attacking side of a major battle that may be decisive. However, it requires strategic retreat and the willingness to temporarily sacrifice territory in order to secure a long-term strategy. While this has traditionally been a very effective tactic when employed by powers with large amounts relatively unoccupied territory, it is by no means a politically popular strategy. Though Russia has traditionally employed defense-in-depth strategies as well as "slash and burn" tactics to stem invasions by European powers, it would have been highly unpopular with the Russians who found themselves temporarily under Napoleonic or Nazi jurisdiction.

Because metrics about foreign policy and conflict are less available and less reliable due to security classifications and private information, the electorate is therefore forced to rely upon imperfect measures to determine the efficacy of a policy or a leader's competence. Further, because voters are myopically retrospective, and make their decisions based upon recent past events, they are more likely to use short-term indicators of success over long-term progress. While voters are willing to reward politicians for pursuing "good" wars, these conflicts must ultimately also produce positive, short-term indicators, which can be difficult to observe. Additionally, voters prefer competent leaders, but because outcomes on the battlefield are often subject to stochastic variance

based upon relative power, military operational effectiveness, and civil-military relations, there are relatively few indicators that citizens can use to evaluate whether a leader is incompetent or simply unlucky. As a result, voters must rely on crude and noisy measures of progress when deciding whether to punish their representatives for pursuing bad foreign policies or for incompetent leadership, which may only manifest several years into the conflict. For example, despite the obvious retrospective differences between the outcomes of World War II and the Vietnam War, it nevertheless took the electorate almost four years to realize that the U.S. effort in Vietnam was not succeeding. As a result, I suggest that the most prevalent and pervasive measure the electorate uses when evaluating war outcomes is the number of new casualties incurred from month to month.

Casualty-Sensitivity in Democracies

In general, the public largely relies on casualty counts when determining how important a war is to the national debate and whether progress is being made in the war effort. This, in addition to the objective cost imposed upon the population through loss of life, results in profound casualty-sensitivity amongst the public (Milstein and Mitchell 1968, Milstein 1974, and Mueller 1971, among others).[7] While a rough and noisy measure, in general the higher a war's body count is, the more important the conflict is to the national consciousness – this then informs the public of how much attention should be paid to the conflict during policy debates. Large numbers of casualties during war suggest that the conflict is both important to the national interest but will also be very costly – as a result these wars tend to generate more discussion and debate within the public arena than low-intensity conflict. Further, with relatively few exceptions (World War II being the most notable), high casualty counts generally signal a failing military strategy to the public, indicating either bad policy or bad leadership, both of which could be disastrous to a

[7] Theories about casualty sensitivity amongst democratic publics are nothing new. Kant's initial writings on democracy and interstate conflict assume that citizens are more dovish than their leaders because the population bears the cost of war. Subsequent work on the democratic peace builds upon this assertion by highlighting the public's ability to constrain leaders through elections (Doyle 1986), free press (Schultz 2001), and competing institutions such as the legislative branch (Howell and Pevehouse 2007).

politician running for reelection. As a result, while a temporary increase in casualties can result in significant territorial gains and in fact signal good policies and competent leadership (such as D-Day and the Allied invasion of Normandy), in general the public interprets large numbers of dead and wounded as evidence that the conflict is not proceeding well. Finally, high levels of casualties impose an objective cost on the electorate – the first World War left not only dozens of shattered national economies but over ten million people, primarily young men of working age, dead. Because the public uses casualties as the primary indicator of conflict progress, salience, and cost, *they are largely unable to tell the difference between good policy and bad, only policy that results in large numbers of dead and wounded*. Casualty sensitivity thus results in an increased willingness to punish politicians when the body count of a conflict reaches unacceptable levels, regardless of whether the politicians is pursuing good policies effectively or not.

Military Strategy and "Teaching to the Test"

Casualty sensitivity amongst the electorate thus generates dual incentives for politicians – while leaders want to pursue strategies that will win the war, even at the cost of an increase in dead or wounded, they also need to signal to voters that they are effectively pursuing good policies by keeping casualty counts low. Military offensive operations on the battlefield generally result in two outcomes – acquisition of territory (strategic success) and accrual of casualties (tactical costs). These two phenomena, while not always rigidly related, represent a tradeoff in how the public views military operations; increases in the territory held by the state are important signs that the war is going well during conventional conflicts while increases in casualties provide an opposing indicator that the war is going poorly. However, in order to gain territory and initiate offensive operations, leaders must be willing to incur some casualties, resulting in a series of continuous choices available to leaders who must balance the risk vs. reward of potential operations. There exists, therefore, a theoretically ideal set of operations that appropriately balance the need for offensive operations versus the cost of battle for any

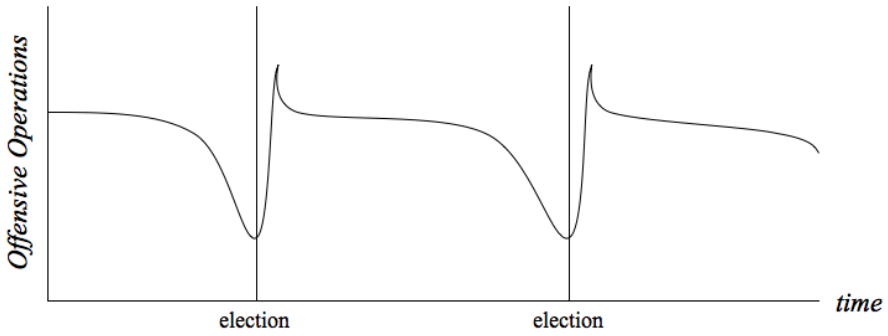
given type of conflict and strategic setting on the ground – this is the purpose of military doctrine.[8]

When military strategy is considered, large battlefield gains can result in high levels of public support but will also generally come at great human cost and can lower approval ratings, particularly if a high risk/high reward operation does not result in victory. Similarly, less risky operations are also usually associated with fewer gains, resulting in less public attention to the war effort. However, the timing of payoffs for territorial gains versus casualties is asymmetric. Absent major offensive victories, individual battles often do not result in easily distinguishable progress in a war, while increases in casualties are immediately felt and directly attributable to presidential decision-making. Similarly, lower casualty numbers are immediately recognized as progress while a lack of activity on the battlefield may take time to be understood as detrimental to the war effort. This asymmetry in timing results in an exploitable strategy leading up to elections – politicians thus have strong incentives to delay high-risk/high-reward operations until after an election period because *while the decline in casualties will immediately register with the public, any strategic losses from low risk efforts will not become obvious until well after the electoral period*.

Because voters are myopically retrospective, this delay will occur with more frequency closer to an election. The public is more likely to remember and vote upon actions taken one month ago rather than one year ago, particularly during conflict when circumstances on the battlefield often change quickly. As a result, politicians feel increasing pressure to delay high-risk operations in the months leading up to an election, only to initiate major

[8] It is important to note here that the tradeoff between offensive operations and casualties has been dramatically simplified for purposes of illustration. Each operation naturally has a probability of victory and some can be riskier than others, while advances in technology have allowed developed countries to escape the costs of warfare like never before. However, military establishments tend to protect those assets that are most precious to the war effort, suggesting that, in general, operations that will alter the battlefield balance of power most will be the costliest to undertake. Thus, while the above relationship is admittedly an abstraction away from the realty of combat, the core principles and tradeoffs of military operations are represented.

Figure 2.1: Expected Offensive Operations Over Time



offensives immediately after the public votes, when they are least likely to be punished in the subsequent electoral cycle. This generates a pattern similar to that described in the political business cycle literature (Nordhaus 1975, Schultz 1995) as civilian leaders "teach to the test" in the run up to elections. Figure 1 depicts the expected cycle of offensive operations over time.

Mitigating Risk Factors on the Battlefield

Delaying offensive operations is just one way in which politicians can decrease casualties in the lead up to an election. Aside from limiting the number of offensive and high-risk operations that troops initiate, civilian leaders have strong incentives to decrease soldiers' overall exposure to risk as well. In principle the fewer troops who are exposed to dangerous or hazardous conditions, the less likely they are to suffer injuries in combat and draw negative attention to the war. Short of withdrawing forces from theater (which would be a very public display of electoral politics and draw attention *to* rather than away from the conflict), political leaders have a number of other, low profile options at their disposal to reduce the amount of risk that the average soldier is exposed to in the lead up to an election.

Troops may be tasked with conducting lower-risk operations and moved into safer locations in the months leading up to a domestic election in order to increase their protection in theater. Rather than having soldiers conduct foot patrols during a

counterinsurgency campaign, missions may increasingly involve the use of armored vehicles and mounted operations. Air support may be less discriminate and artillery more likely to be used in order to shield soldiers from additional risk, even at the cost of an increase in collateral damage (this is discussed in greater detail below). In addition to conducting fewer offensive operations, if soldiers are based in areas with well-fortified bases or in territory that is firmly in the control of friendly forces, they are much less likely to be attacked by enemy troops. Thus, politicians can mitigate the amount of combat exposure forces get both by limited offensive actions as well as limiting forces' exposure to enemy attacks. In order words, civilian leaders have the ability to mitigate the risk to soldiers both on offense *and* defense.

Much of the risk to soldiers is dictated through the rules of engagement – how threatened a soldier must feel before she or he is free to fire upon a potential enemy combatant. These designations can be as strict as a requirement of being first fired upon or as loose as free fire zones – where soldiers are permitted to shoot anyone on sight under the assumption that anyone not wearing a friendly uniform is an enemy combatant. Alterations to the rules of engagement can therefore have dramatic effects on how much risk a soldier must accept before engaging the enemy – even small increases in restrictions can place soldiers in increasingly dangerous situations and translate into additional lives lost.[9] Similarly, loosening restrictions can allow soldiers to retake some initiative and decrease the amount of risk they are exposed to but this comes at the cost of civilian

Thus far my analysis has been limited to ground operations and infantry offensives. However, these are of course not the only kinds of operations that are conducted during war. The modern era of warfare has witnessed the rise of air operations and strategic bombing as major components of great power military strategy, and further carries great risks to the pilots and crew of those in the air. British Bomber Command during the

[9] Put crudely, given a risk level of r, x percent of soldiers on average will be killed out of a population n. Assuming all else remains constant and that r is positively correlated with x, if $r' > r$ then $x' > x$. Therefore, as risk increases, the number of casualties will also increase.

Second World War lost over 55,000 men over the course of the conflict – this means that almost 15% of all British war casualties were from the strategic bombing campaign alone. Civilian leaders thus have strong incentives to minimize the amount of risk that pilots are exposed to in the lead up to an election as well. Target locations may change to focus on areas less well defended and farther away from heavily populated centers in order to minimize risk to pilots and their crew, while the number of missions flown may also decrease in order to minimize the number of pilots exposed to risk. As night operations minimize the risk to pilots of being spotted by air defenses and harassed by defensive fighter forces, we would expect an increase in nighttime operations. Night operations, however, are also far less discriminate in the areas being targeted – the same factors that make it difficult for anti-aircraft defense to shoot down planes also make it nearly impossible for pilots operating by sight to visualize their targets on the ground. Though this trade-off between risk to friendly forces and the probability of inflicting collateral damage exists with both ground forces and air offensives, the sheer destructive potential of bombing campaigns in the modern era, with casualties that can reach into the hundreds of thousands due to a single operations, has incited a robust debate on the principles of just war that has spilled into public opinion about acceptable levels of non-combatant casualties.

Non-Combatants and Principles of Just War

While the electorate is primarily concerned with the number of casualties suffered by friendly forces, the liberal values that are commonplace in consolidated democracies may also make citizens sensitive to principles of just war and foreign non-combatant casualties inflicted during combat.[10] Strong societal norms of egalitarianism and cosmopolitanism lead to public preferences for keeping non-combatant deaths as low as possible during war. Treaties signed after the trauma of the Second World War – the first (and only conflict) where total war became a reality for many – affirmed liberal values and enshrined the protection of non-combatants during conflict, while public opinion has

[10] Kreps and Wallace (2014). For a dissent, see Sagan and Valentino (2015)

historically remained consistently opposed to indiscriminate tactics that target civilians.[11] Research has shown, however, that these preferences do not supercede concern for one's own casualties. Therefore we may expect that once air or ground superiority has been achieved, politicians concerned about their electoral fortunes and legacy have incentives to mitigate the number of civilians killed during combat in the lead up to an election, *so long as those measures do not put friendly forces at additional risk.*

Civilian Intervention in Military Operations – Direct and Indirect Politicization

While civilian leaders have established motivations and incentives to alter military operations and strategy, it is less clear how these preferences get translated down through the chain of command and executed on the battlefield. The majority of executives have *de jure* control over the execution of operations and strategy of a state's armed forces; in consolidated democracies with a history of civilian control over the military, this translates into *de facto* control as well. However, while theories of civil-military relations insist that it is prerogative of the civilian leadership to intervene in decisions made at any level of the military (Feaver (2003) reminds readers often that the civilians have "the right to be wrong"), it is simply not practical for the executive branch or even the general officer staff to monitor every decision made on the battlefield, especially in real time. Thus, the top echelons of civilian and military leadership alike largely delegate the responsibilities of conduct and operational- and tactical-level decision making to lower level field commanders. As a result of this division of labor, norms about civil-military relations largely assume that while civilians are responsible for grand strategy and strategic objectives during conflict, the operational and tactical levels – the how and when of war – are the purview of military operations. However, patterns of behavior as well as memoirs from general officers and political officials reveal that many operations and tactics are in fact conducted with an eye toward their impact on domestic audiences on the home front. This raises a puzzle: If civilian politicians are not directly

[11] One notable exception to this is American public opinion about bombing the Japanese toward the end of the war. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

manipulating each decision on the battlefield, what are the levers and strategies that politicians employ to alter combat decisions at the *operational and tactical* levels of war?

In contrast to the assumptions made in most studies of civil-military relations, civilian leaders in democracies have both the ability and willingness to intervene in tactical and operational military affairs during conflict. During time of immense domestic pressure on an administration, the executive and his/her political appointees will intervene using a variety of mechanisms in planned military strategy and operations to make them more politically palatable to domestic audiences. Many of these mechanisms of *direct politicization*, while politically-motivated, do not require the individual approval of operations but rather improve on monitoring and reporting abilities. Others set guidelines at the tactical level to ensure politically-palatable outcomes while others still rely on the civilian's ultimate prerogative in hiring, firing, and promoting military officers. Major interventions for political purposes then inform the military about the preferences of the executive branch and lead to the top echelons of the officer corps making decisions with an eye toward the political impact on the home front. These mechanisms of *indirect politicization* can be motivated by organizational concerns, bureaucratic preferences, or personal ambitions. Ultimately, both direct and indirect politicization combine to result in the modification of decision-making at the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war to accommodate domestic electoral concerns.

Direct Politicization

Direct politicization occurs when the civilian leadership in the executive branch uses its authority to alter the way in which the military conducts wartime operations. While there are times when civilians personally interfere with and control military operations from the capital and punish (or threaten to punish) those who do not account for the domestic impact of operations, they also rely on subtler, less time-intensive mechanisms. In addition to direct orders and consequences, direct politicization may take two other forms: the insertion of political actors into the war zone and the management of rules and guidelines for forces. Politicians may choose to insert political actors into a conflict environment by sending civilian advisors to monitor military decisions and help make

decisions or by utilizing advances in information technology and communications to be more assertive from the home front. Alternatively, they may issue new guidelines that change the rules of engagement – operational and tactical guidelines for how forces seek out and engage enemy forces – and mark certain territories as off-limits to military operations. Through these three classifications, politicians are able to directly influence military operations during conflict.

Personal Involvement

The most direct and obvious (yet also most controversial) manifestation of politicization is direct civilian control through personal orders and individualized direction regarding the timing and execution of maneuvers. In this scenario, powerful political figures within the executive branch – in the American context this would consist of the President, Secretary of Defense, or other important national security figures in the chain of command – issue a directive to subordinate military commanders that specifies preferences about a particular operation. These preferences, given as direct "requests" (orders), specify elements of the operations that should be changed, and can include the kinds of forces used, the timing of the operation, the rules of engagement, kind of munitions and explosives to be used, targets that are to be avoided, or any number of other decisions that are traditionally covered by military operators when preparing for an operation. During the controversial U.S. and NATO bombing campaign in Kosovo, operations that were expected to generate civilian casualties above a specified threshold were required to be approved by President Clinton himself. After being briefed by the military, *he* would then decide whether the anticipated domestic and international political ramifications of the collateral damage caused by a specific strike were worth the potential impact of the raid. Additionally, after the transition of Iraqi sovereignty in 2004, U.S. forces seeking to conduct operations against Shia militias in Baghdad were required to obtain approval from interim Iraqi President Ayad Allawi, who would then cull out specific targets who were politically valuable to his domestic power base. West (2005) reports in his account of U.S. operations during this time, "Allawi set the parameters, and Casey executed. The Americans did the fighting but could not finish the fight – that was Allawi's call. Allawi proved as changeable as Sadr, issuing ultimatums,

then backing down, then allowing the U.S. forces to press forward, then calling a halt and urging Sadr to negotiate… [but] under pressure from Sistani, at the last minute Allawi allowed Sadr and his henchmen to go free" (West, 239).

Additionally, civilians may promote particular generals who share their vision of how the war should be conducted, knowing that they will also be sensitive to domestic political issues. Because civilians retain ultimate hiring, firing, and promotion privileges in the military, they can credibly threaten to reward or punish officers who do or do not conduct operations in a manner that satisfies domestic political concerns, respectively. Officers who propose operations that also contain domestic political advantages may be rewarded with promotions or increased influence, while officers who propose operational plans that risk alienating the electorate may be silenced or slowed in the promotion process. During the lead up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, General Eric Shinseki was publicly eviscerated by Donald Rumsfeld and the Bush administration for suggesting that "several hundred thousand" troops would be required to invade and secure Iraq. While hindsight suggests that he was correct, the Bush administration was concerned with selling the war to the American public as a quick and easy strike that would topple a cruel dictator; expectations of large force requirements undermined this position and Shinseki was subsequently dismissed.

Increasing Monitoring

Another way in which civilians may exert influence on military operations, aside from direct requests from the executive, is to increase the ability of civilians to monitor military operations in theater. The traditional way that this has been accomplished was to send civilians advisors into the conflict zone and weigh in on operational decisions being made at headquarters, as President Johnson sent civilian advisors such as McNamara and Mac Bundy to Vietnam to report back on the war effort. These political liaisons then act as representatives of an administration and articulate the domestic concerns associated with any proposed operation – while they are not able to issue orders, they are able to make suggestions and alter operations around the edges to be more politically desirable in the eyes of domestic politicians. Further, they report back directly to the executive and/or

civilian leadership, placing increased pressure on military commanders to comply with their recommendations lest they be replaced by a more compliant officer. While perhaps the most famous and public instance of a officer being relieved of command is the replacement of General Douglas MacArthur during the Korean War by President Harry Truman, it is by no means the only example, and occurs with regularity throughout history when military officers overstep their bounds in states with histories of civilian control.

Increasingly, however, improvements in information technology and communications allow civilians on the home front to assess and monitor operations from afar, lessening the need for political proxies in the field. As a result, civilian politicians are able to follow and receive information on individual operations in real time and make decisions from the safety of the executive office. Thus, because civilians are better able to immediately communicate with and monitor the behavior of their military subordinates, they are increasingly willing to become involved in the details of military operations as never before. This trend is not recent, however. Over time, improvements in communications have led to increased civilian oversight and involvement in strategy. Cohen (2002) reports that during the U.S. Civil War Abraham Lincoln would receive news from the front via telegram and issue orders regarding future offensives as the news came in, and the introduction of radio frequencies led to dramatic improvements in military coordination during World War I, propaganda efforts, and the ability of the leaders to stay informed of and direct major operations on the battlefield. Today, digital media and satellite technology like the GPS-enabled Blue Force Tracker allow great powers to monitor the movement of individual units in real time and communicate back to headquarters when they come under fire, planning counteroffensives within hours of initial attacks with guidance from civilians both in theater and on the home front.

Tactical Guidelines

The final way in which politicians may directly politicize military operations is through the designation of general guidelines that describe expectations of conduct and tactics – decisions that are traditionally determined by the military. Altering and changing the

enforcement of the rules of engagement during conflict is particularly salient when civilian casualties are of concern. Regulations about when combat forces can engage potential enemy fighters can have dramatic effects on both civilian and friendly casualty rates. If forces are required to take fire before neutralizing a potential threat, this necessarily results in increased danger to friendly troops. By contrast, uncertainty about the threat posed by a potential combatant will result in higher levels of mistaken identifications and increases in collateral damage. By simply changing these tactical guidelines – when individual soldiers are allowed to shoot at an enemy combatant – civilian leaders can dramatically affect the overall totals of casualties that are incurred by their own forces as well as the number of civilian casualties. After Barack Obama was elected in 2008 and General Stanley McChrystal took over command of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan in June 2009, the rules of engagement for U.S. troops were changed dramatically in order to lower civilian casualties from U.S. operations. This concept of "courageous restraint," which rewarded U.S. forces for operating in severely threatening environments without engaging potential enemy forces, was politically controversial and immensely unpopular, leading some political commentators to nickname the proposed medal the "Coward Award." The proposal was subsequently tabled in the summer of 2010 during the run up to midterm elections, and never picked up again.

Civilians can also influence and even determine the tactical strategy employed by forces overseas. By approving the types of tactics used by forces during combat, civilians can exert large amounts of control over what kind of operations are conducted on the battlefield. During Vietnam, the now infamous "search and destroy" tactics became so politically unpopular that in 1968, the Democratic Party made their abolition a major policy platform at the National Convention. In response, General Creighton Abrams, who had recently replaced General Westmoreland as commander of U.S. Forces in Vietnam, expressed astonishment at the plank (Sorely, 42).

Finally, civilians may directly intervene in military operations by designating specific targets or zones as off-limits for political reasons, or severely restricting operational latitude in certain areas. In this case, civilian leaders issue strict rules and regulations to

military officers that establish cutoffs as to where and when operations may occur. Often they may be geographic in scope, as during Vietnam when President Johnson specifically ruled out bombing targets within five miles of Hanoi in an effort to keep civilian casualties low, or his decision to rule out a ground invasion of North Vietnam. Other restrictions may limit the altitude at which planes may fly during bombing operations, as occurred during the War in Kosovo when President Clinton established a 15,000 foot floor on how low planes could fly in order to reduce the risk to pilots from anti-aircraft defenses. Additionally, concerns about the threat to civilians or threat to pilots may lead civilians to establish guidelines about visibility requirements during bombing operations, as British Prime Minister Winston Churchill did toward to end of World War II when he required that the Royal Air Force cease night bombing due to the large numbers of civilians being killed and displaced.

In sum, direct politicization can take many forms, and simple guidelines and instructions from civilian leaders on the level of communication required from military officers as well as expectations regarding conduct can have enormous effects on how the military fights conflicts at the operational and tactical levels of war. In addition to more subtle mechanisms, civilians also retain hiring and firing privileges over officers and have the ultimate authority over how operations are conducted. Together, this results in a variety of levers that civilians can use to influence and politicize military operations during conflict.

Indirect Politicization

As civilians issue guidelines and make clear their political preference regarding the execution of operations, the military then may alter the advice and proposals it presents to the civilian leadership in order to accommodate the domestic political environment. This indirect politicization may manifest through three primary concerns - organizational concerns, bureaucratic preferences, and personal ambition. Because organizations develop standard operating procedures and tend to institutionalize recurring phenomenon, politicization may be internalized within the structure of the organization. Additionally,

bureaucratic preferences to increase budgets and maintain control over their personnel may result in self-policing efforts according to domestic politics. Finally, personal ambition may result in military officers taking more notice of domestic political problems on the home front in order to secure promotions and media coverage.

Organizational Concerns

In order to accomplish complex tasks quickly, efficiently, and routinely, organizations establish standard operating procedures that are informed by past performance and expectations about the future. Further, military officers are not blind to the actions of civilians, and learn over time that civilian preferences about the domestic effects of conflict operations are important to civilian politicians. As a result, they begin to tailor their recommendations and briefings to include variables that civilians care about for domestic political purposes such as anticipated public reaction or estimated enemy casualties. During the Vietnam War, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara insisted on identifying specific metrics by which civilians could analyze the outcomes of operations and report progress back to the American people. As a result, kill ratios – the ratio of enemy combatants killed versus friendly forces killed – were one of the most controversial and politicized measures of the war as military officers sought to prove how effective their forces were and more up the ranks.

Additionally, organizations such as the military institutionalize objectives and goals in accordance with guidance by civilian managers, but once specific objectives are defined the organization begins to define itself by those standards. If domestic political parties were to threaten to change those objectives during war when the military had already committed large numbers of resources, manpower, and staked credibility on attaining victory, then the organization would be naturally resistant to change and may politicize its operations in order to preserve the overall mission. Concerns about withdrawal, loss of integrity, and the impact of domestic outcomes on the overall mission would be discussed by the general staff and other members of the officer corps, and operations may reflect a greater sensitivity to accommodating potential domestic reactions to outcomes on the battlefield. During the Vietnam War, General Abrams and Komer remarked

about how difficult it would be for the Democrats to refuse even a bad deal offered by the North Vietnamese during the election season because of party pressure for peace and withdrawal,

> ABRAMS: "I listened to Vice President Humphrey last night…He's out to be elected. And, in my opinion, *this* gives *them* a *substantial* negotiating position. It *isn't* these *facts* here… What I'm talking about, though, is—at the Wednesday meeting Xuan Thuy sits down there and he starts reading his statement. And he says, 'I've come here today to propose that we have a cease-fire.' And then he has some *conditions*. And they'd be pretty *tough*. But my point is if he drops that at the Wednesday meeting, with things the way they are in the United States, he could get a damn good deal out of it. A *lot* better than he *deserves*."
> KOMER: "I think it would be almost *impossible* for us to stem the response if he came out and just proposed a simple cease-fire before the November election. I don't see how either candidate could oppose it. You know, a cease-fire is like motherhood. How can you be against an armistice? *Unconditional*. We'd have to negotiate *how* you cease fire, et cetera, but—. I think that would put us in an *extremely* difficult position" (Sorley 1977, 40-41).

Bureaucratic Preferences

In addition to organizational procedures and protocols, bureaucracies have a defined set of incentives and preferences that were first articulated in Selznick's (1949) groundbreaking study of the Tennessee Valley Authority. As institutions, bureaucracies and their members generally prefer to increase available resources, cultivate a unique identity, and enhance the autonomy of the organization. Domestic political actions that threaten these preferences may result in the politicization of operations in order to serve the interests of the organization. When elections juxtapose parties who alternately favor increasing or decreasing resources, the military may alter its behavior in order to protect its operating budget, identity, and independence. Potential threats to these priorities such as budget cuts can have dramatic effects on the organization's ability to pursue a conflict and conduct operations without interference; adjusting operations in such a way that the use of particular weapons systems or other threatened units appear indispensable may be one response of an organization seeking to protect itself.

Further, this politicization may extend even farther if members of the military overwhelmingly identify with one political party. The rightward shift of the U.S. military after the abolition of the draft in 1975 has had profound consequences on military policy

and operations (Feaver and Kohn 2001), despite strong norms against politicization within the organization. During contested elections, the military in conflict may show a preference for candidates of a particular party through a variety of channels, including but not limited to public perceptions of civil-military relations, comments to media and press, and a willingness to respect operational guidelines like rules of engagement and civilian casualty restrictions. A lack of respect for candidates may be expressed despite established norms, particularly if members of the organization largely belong to a single political party and military elites set political precedents. Beginning in 1992, General Colin Powell set important precedents regarding the role of military elites in politics as he publicly disagreed with some U.S. policies after the end of the Cold War; his op-eds and article in *Foreign Affairs* signaled an important breakdown of civil-military relations between the military and the Democratic Party that resulted in enormous political problems for a Clinton administration hoping to make reforms to the organization. Over twenty years later, General Stanley McChrystal, former commander of U.S. Forces Afghanistan, leaked a strategic assessment to the press in order to publicly pressure President Barack Obama into agreeing to a troop increase in August 2009 less than two months in command. One year later, he was forced to resign his command when an embedded reported revealed the general and his staff making disparaging comments about various members of the Obama administration. These public examples of military leaders expressing political views and preferences challenge norms against politicization in the military, and even junior officers today are much more comfortable expressing political views and discussing U.S. policy through social media and other outlets. These discussions naturally result in an increased political awareness during combat operations that may in turn affect operational planning and tactical maneuvers.

Personal Ambitions

Finally, military officers may engage in indirect politicization because of personal ambitions and careerist behavior. When military promotions are determined by civilians, generals and other elites face strong incentives to tailor the advice and operational recommendations presented for civilian leaders during conflict. Desires to get promoted and careerist behavior may result in self-policing and the alteration of military

operational plans in order to generate results that are favored by civilians but may not necessarily be the most constructive for fighting a war. Research has shown that organizations will focus on measurable outcomes in order to protect their budgets (Bush 2011), and commanders interested in climbing the professional ladder may also favor operations that result in measurables (such as body counts or kill ratios during the Vietnam War) at the expense of operations that are more difficult to quantify and brief civilians responsible for officers' advancement. After the Vietnam War, many commanders reflected that careerist and ticket-punching behavior were a common problem throughout the conflict and that there was an overwhelming focus on generating favorable kill-ratios at the expense of other tactics that may have been more effective. As a result, many senior commanders felt as though they could not trust reports of effectiveness in field and understood that the numbers being given to Washington were systematically inflated as officers attempted to impress their civilian managers. Wrote one general officer about kill ratios, "[They were] the bane of my existence and just about got me fired as a division commander. They were grossly exaggerated by many units primarily because of the incredible interest shown by people like McNamara and Westmoreland. I shudder to think how many of our soldiers were killed on a body-counting mission—what a waste" (Kinnard 1997, 75).

The Media and Politicization

It is important to take note of the role that the media and free press play in the politicization of operations. Because press coverage increases the ability of elites to shape public opinion but also provides more transparency to military operations overseas, it plays a critical role in connecting the public to combat operations on the battlefield. Domestic media sources cover both the progress of a conflict and the domestic political scene; it is the responsibility of the war correspondent to report on military operations and objectives and also analyze the effect of those operations on politics and strategy at home. As a result, civilians and military elites alike use this connection to politicize the operational and tactical levels of war. When officers have to interact with members of the press, their units are under much closer surveillance and scrutiny – those commanders are

responsible for the images and stories that make news on the home front. Therefore, interaction with the media creates a larger and more pressing awareness of domestic politics at home which may generate pressure to see tactics and operations through a more political lens. Civilian leaders may directly politicize operations by ordering increases in communication between commanders in the field and media representatives, while indirect politicization occurs from prolonged interaction with members of the press on particularly high profile operations.

Theoretical Expectations and Assumptions

The conduct of states after conflict has been initiated has been largely ignored by the literature in international relations and security studies, yet holds considerable power in explaining why states may choose to fight or negotiate. Less studied still is the effect of politics on state conduct *in bello*, particularly the influence of domestic political incentives to retain office. As politicians seek to maximize power and retain office, I argue that they influence military strategy in order to appease a casualty-sensitive electorate. While strategic gains on the battlefield may not necessarily be immediately observed, casualties of war are instantly identified as markers of bad policy, and voters are much less likely to support incumbents if a wartime strategy is faltering.

I argue that this is the product of both the direct and indirect politicization of military operations, and that domestic politics can explain substantial deviations in prescribed military doctrine on the battlefield. I therefore expect to find that military operations on the battlefield are responsive to domestic electoral cycles and public opinion. Further, I expect that leaders will be much more willing to interfere in military affairs at the operational and tactical levels of war as they become increasingly myopic about the importance of public opinion; this myopia most often manifests during elections but may also appear in situations where a decline in public and legislative support would threaten the survival of an administration.

Theoretical Expectations on the Battlefield

What do we expect to see when a leader alters the state's war aims or grand strategy in order to satisfy a domestic audience? What happens when commanders become politically sensitive and modify military operations in order to satisfy a political problem stateside? When domestic political concerns tempt elected leaders to intervene in military operations, this results in a series of observable implications when evaluating outcomes and processes on the battlefield. I generate three generalized observable implications from the insights developed above.

First, the types of missions and operations that units conduct during a deployment and on the battlefield are a strong indicator of how doctrine is being implemented on the battlefield. This portion of the implementation of doctrine, according to normal theories of civil-military relations (Huntington 1954), should be left up to strategists and operators on the ground, and responsive purely to the needs of the mission. However, they could also be influenced by any number of other factors, including the impact of operations and missions on domestic politics at home. The kind of missions selected, in many respects then, is the definition of how military doctrine is implemented on the battlefield. Doctrine defines the strategy, objective, and tactics that a unit is to incorporate and use during operations on the battlefield – nothing could be more indicative of how effectively doctrine is implemented by the military than the kinds of operations commanders choose to engage in during wartime. Further, the choice of mission is often the purview of commanders on the ground rather than politicians, suggesting that if domestic politics penetrate operations on the ground, we would observe it at this level. Second, the timing of operations is also usually left up to the discretion of military commanders in theater, and also usually given an ideal description in doctrine. Thus, deviations from expected timings for any reason should be easily identifiable and explained. Finally, the military will often fall into tactical designations – in Vietnam this would have been labeled "search and destroy" while in Iraq this was known in the post-2007 war period as "clear hold build." Deviations from this and changes in patterns of operations are important for identifying the causes of variation in the implementation of doctrine. Together, these

lead to a hypothesis about the impact of domestic politics on military operations as civilians leaders attempt to reduce casualties before an election:

1. High-risk, large ground operations should be less common in the months immediately preceding a domestic election. These delays then result in an increase in offensive operations in the months following an election.

Second, the level of risk that forces are exposed to is critical in reducing casualties on the battlefield. Ways to reduce risk include moving troops to safer locations, loosening the rules of engagement, and altering the tactics and targets of air operations to shield pilots and crews from anti-aircraft defenses. Though overall deployment levels are determined at the executive level and by the top echelon of commanders (a factor that in itself can profoundly affect effectiveness and the ability of the military to implement doctrine), the deployment of troops within theater – where they go once reaching the battlefield – is much more responsive to the situation on the ground and the needs of commanders engaged in battle. Given this discretion in distributing individual companies (and in many cases entire battalions), we can thus use troop deployment patterns to evaluate the effect of domestic politics on military operations. The location of forces when they are deployed in theater is obviously related to many things regarding the objectives and doctrine on the use of force on the battlefield. The discretion that commanders have, however, in sending troops to various locations to respond to threats and local objectives means that the location of forces within-theater can be particularly valuable in understanding how doctrine is being implemented on the battlefield. Further, the kinds of units that are sent – whether special forces, infantry, armor, etc. – and the size of the forces deployed are up to the discretion of commanders in the field, which can also provide valuable insight into how far domestic politics penetrate into the battlefield. Finally, deployment plans are often laid out in advance, and commanders tend to develop patterns of how they deploy troops. Deviations from these plans and patterns are an important measure of what has the most influence on battlefield operations and the implementation of military doctrine within theater.

Rules of engagement are often left to the discretion of senior officers and dependent upon the strategic environment. In general, rules of engagement are loosened when troops enter an area that is relatively free of civilians and known to be hostile but there is considerable leeway both for military commanders and civilian leaders to change the guidelines with relative ease. Finally, targeting priorities may shift and civilians may exert considerable control over target selection on a monthly and even weekly basis. Choosing targets that reduce the risk to pilots and crew members would be an effective way to reduce casualties with few strategic consequences. This leads to a generalized prediction regarding the role of domestic politics in affecting the deployment of forces in theater:

2. Military operations (both air and ground) will be modified to reduce risks to soldiers and pilots in the months leading up to an election. These restrictions will then be lifted shortly after an election has passed.

Finally, civilians are responsive to public opinion regarding civilian casualties inflicted over the course of a war. These public preferences, however, are secondary to concerns over friendly casualties. To limit the number of civilian casualties, elected leaders can change targeting priorities to focus on areas with fewer civilians, and target types that are less likely to involve civilian workers. Additionally, operations may be moved away from heavily populated areas in order to keep collateral damage at a minimum. Finally, air operations may be increasingly flown during the daytime using more precise munitions in order to limit the total destruction levied by strategic bombing campaigns. These decisions – targeting priorities, operation locations, munitions types and flying tactics – are traditionally considered the purview of the military. Munitions types are typically determined based upon the target infrastructure and assessed vulnerability, while the time of day a raid is flown can be a function of weather patterns, operational availability, organizational preferences, and strategic concerns about air defenses. Further, targets are most often determined according to the priorities set forth in the military's doctrinal guidelines – if an air force is focused on precision bombing it will necessarily target different locations that an air force whose doctrine emphasizes the

importance of morale bombing and the destruction of urban areas. Thus, patterns in how these operational and tactical guidelines are implemented can be an important indicator of how electoral incentives influence military operations at war. We thus develop a final generalized prediction:

3. If it poses no greater risk to friendly soldiers, politicians will seek to alter operations to protect non-combatants in the lead up to an election, while after an election civilian leaders will be unconstrained by public concern over non-combatant collateral damage.

Relaxing Assumptions

The above predictions rely on several assumptions about the priorities of politicians, the preferences of voters, and the willingness of the military to implement politically-motivated policy. While these assumptions have a strong basis in the literature for being generally true, exceptions can and do occur throughout history, and it is worth exploring what we may expect should one or more of the above assumptions be relaxed. The following section thus generates new expectations should politicians cease to care about the outcome of an election, the public be hawkish, or the military refuse to implement certain policies.

<u>Assumption 1: Politicians only care about reelection</u>

Most studies in political science typically assume that politicians prioritize the retention of power over all other outcomes – the reason why regular elections are necessary for the public to hold politicians accountable is because they provide voters with the chance to punish representatives who shirk their responsibilities. However, a representative's approval ratings may be so high or so low as to mitigate the effect of electoral pressures – representatives that face no competition have little incentive to work in the interest of their constituents, while politicians with unchangeably low approval ratings may be tempted to gamble for legacy or pursue a more ideologically motivated agenda. When politicians are no longer accountable to the voters or incentivized to "teach to the test"

because they are no longer concerned about reelection, we would expect little variation in how a politician conducts a military campaign around elections. Further, we would expect that once a politicians realizes s/he is not accountable to public opinion, military campaigns would resume the mixed strategy of high- and low-risk operations that is prescribed by doctrine.

Gambling for legacy is an important instance of what can happen when politicians are no longer constrained by the electorate, and will often result in large numbers of offensive and risky operations even in the lead up to an election. Just two months after losing both the House and the Senate in 2006 largely due to public opposition to the Iraq War, President George Bush announced a surge in troops – an addition of ten brigades, or 30,000 combat forces – that would begin almost immediately. Pairing this announcement with the adoption of new counterinsurgency doctrine, which among other guidelines advocated for dismounted foot patrols and risky operations that dramatically tightened the rules of engagement, Bush hoped that he could pacify the insurgency in Iraq before his successor took over and secure his legacy as a bringer of democracy to the Middle East. Even Abraham Lincoln, convinced that he was going to lose the 1864 election to "peace" candidate George McClellan, initiated a new major offensive in the spring of 1864, hoping to change the balance of power on the battlefield enough that negotiating with the South would be unthinkable, even for those who favored a separate peace. These gambles for legacy, which aimed to change the circumstances on the ground before the incumbent was out of office, reflect a different kind of concern about public opinion – one that is dominated by long-term considerations rather than short-term vote-getting. In 1972, rather than limit bombing operations against North Vietnam, Nixon released any previous restrictions on bombing during Operation Linebacker II in an effort to secure a peace deal before the November election. Knowing that regardless of the bombing campaign he would lose reelection without ending the war, Nixon escalated in a final bid to secure "peace with honor" before voters went to the polls on November 7.

<u>Assumption 2: Voters are dovish and casualty-sensitive</u>

While there is considerable empirical and anecdotal evidence to suggest that the public is sensitive to casualties and will punish politicians who pursue policies that result in large numbers of dead and wounded, there is also a large literature on the role of rally effects, audience costs, and ideology in making the public more hawkish than their elected representatives. Because democratic leaders tend to pursue politically-popular ideologically-driven foreign policies, they may actually be more war-like against non-democracies (Owen 2000). Fearon (1994) further shows that because democratic leaders are more likely to be sanctioned by the public for backing down in a crisis, democracies may be subject to additional incentives to initiate conflict once the audience costs of backing down become sufficiently high. Thus, if a public is more conflict-prone due to exogenous factors like nationalism or rally effects, democracies may be more likely to initiate conflict in order to satisfy domestic preferences. Perhaps the most dramatic extension of this line of thought is diversionary war theory, which suggests that presidents will initiate wars immediately before elections in order to appear strong, generate "rally 'round the flag" effects, and boost approval ratings (Stoll 1984); empirical results surrounding this theory, however, are mixed (Brody and Shapiro 1989).

If the public is hawkish (and thus more casualty-accepting), this then changes the incentives of politicians. Rather than favoring low-risk strategies designed to minimize casualties, elected leaders may instead favor high-risk operations that both signal decisive action to the public as well as result in potential strategic success that will mollify a public concerned that the government is not doing *enough* to win the war. As a result, operations may become politicized to be *more* high-risk than what an objective assessment of the situation would expect. Because the public may at times be casualty-accepting and instead prefer the government to demonstrate action (particularly in the aftermath of a national tragedy), politicians then face incentives to pursue a military strategy that favors kinetic action, particularly in the lead up to an election.

<u>Assumption 3: The military implements politically-motivated policy</u>

Civil-military relations theory has traditionally focused on the ability of civilians to exert control over an armed wing of the government tasked with defending the security of the

state. I make the assumption in this theory that once civilians delegate a task to the military, it is followed by the subordinate commanders and implemented without push back. However, the military may choose to shirk its responsibilities and instead pursue its own agenda in accordance with what military doctrine prescribes. Further, standard operating procedures, which are generally developed in a political vacuum, may actually result in insensitivity to political concerns should politicization not be internalized. Finally, commanders with personal ambitions have myriad forums in which they can politicize issues, particularly if they disagree with the executive branch. Military officials that disagree with foreign policy decisions can use their own private information to appeal to the public either by sharing that information with members of the opposite party or through public forums (Avant 1996-7, Feaver 2003, Golby 2011, for an example see Powell 1992-3), thus interfering with the ability of political leaders in power to implement politicized operations.

While there is reason to believe that conflict waged by a consolidated democracy is a most likely scenario when the military will obey commands by civilians (Desch 1999), a military which is reluctant to implement politicized operations will bias against any findings displayed in the subsequent chapters. While the military is generally reluctant to initiate a war, once conflict has started the organization favors high-intensity, offensive action that puts the adversary on the defensive. Most violent organizations benefit from choosing when and where to attack rather than ceding the initiative to enemy combatants. As a result, the military is likely to favor offensive and kinetic operations – any decision by the military to ignore civilian guidance would bias against a finding.

Empirical Strategy and Conclusions

I test these expectations in the following five empirical chapters. Two of these chapters utilize a comparative case study methodology, while three others utilize micro-level data from a single war to motivate large-n statistical analyses of general patterns within conflict. The analyses span four different wars, six decades, two domains of conflict, two

different political systems, and analyze radically distinct political parties and agendas, suggesting that the patterns and expectations outlined above are consistently found across time and space. By varying my methods and cases, I am able to address concerns about both internal and external validity as well as understand the mechanisms at work during conflict.

The first empirical chapter uses the expectations developed in this chapter to systematically test the effect of electoral cycles on the first two hypotheses during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan: mission selection and troop deployment patterns. Using two new datasets developed specifically for this project of unit locations during the two conflicts, as well as declassified government data on spending and violence levels in each country, I find systematic variations in how operations are conducted and how reliant forces are on kinetic action in the lead up to an election.

The second empirical chapter uses a most different and most similar case design to evaluate similar battlefield outcomes in both the Vietnam War and Iraq. Dozens of interviews with high-ranking officials in both the Bush and Obama administrations, as well as archival research at presidential libraries and the National Defense University, informed key parts of this comparative case study. It analyzes three key operations – the Siege of Khe Sanh (Vietnam), Second Battle of Fallujah (Iraq), and Battle of Tal Afar (Iraq) – and uses systematic differences and similarities to suggest that domestic political concerns dictated the timing and execution of each operation while holding other factors constant.

The third and fourth empirical chapters articulate the causal mechanisms described in the theory through a series of case studies of bombing operations during the Vietnam War. Using primary sources, transcripts, and secondary literature, I outline the politics of strategic bombing from the initiation of Operation Rolling Thunder in 1965 by President Johnson through the end of Nixon's Operation Linebacker II in 1973. I additionally evaluate systematic deviations and patterns in bombing operations using a recently released dataset that enables analysis of bombing runs from 1965 to 1973 at the strategic,

operational, and tactical levels of war. This dataset contains over 4.3 million data points of each individual bombing operation during the eight-year span and suggests that bombing varied systematically according to U.S. electoral cycles and domestic legislative events.

The final chapter tests mechanisms and outcomes predicted by my third hypothesis. In this chapter, I engage in a comparative case study of the strategic bombing campaigns on German-occupied Europe as executed by the United States and United Kingdom. I assert the divergence of U.S. and British bombing operations after the bombing of Dresden can best be explained by Churchill's concern about his legacy and domestic political calculations in the lead up to the July 1945 Parliamentary elections, while Roosevelt's electoral security provided the USAAF to escalate its indiscriminate bombing campaign. In evaluating my expectations, I use primary source documents and correspondence from both the National Archive in London and the U.S. National Defense University, as well as biographies and memoirs. In sum, each of the four chapters use a variety of methods to suggest that domestic politics, and electoral concerns in particular, played a large role in conditioning the timing and conduct of military operations during conflict, regardless of domain, level of threat, executing service, and time period.

Summary of the Argument and Contributions

The theory presented above challenges traditional theories of civil-military relations and calls into question our understanding of bargaining during war, causes of battlefield effectiveness, and the influence of regime type on operations on the battlefield. I argue that because the literature in civil-military relations has focused almost exclusively on the role of the military as active agents, it has missed an important source of variation in conduct during conflict – the role of civilians as both politicians and agents of the national interest. Further, because leaders of democratic societies are responsive to public opinion, domestic institutions are important to understanding decisions about foreign policy. When prospective public attitudes influence foreign policy decisions, ex post accountability through elections can result in ex ante strategy modification by

civilian leaders. This leads to strong incentives to alter military strategy in order to accommodate public opinion and the electoral calendar.

Foreign policy and strategy are not the only aspects of conflict that are modified by civilians, however. Though there has traditionally been a division between theories of causes of war and conduct during war, there is no reason why this division should exist. As a result, theories about the importance of domestic politics prior to conflict should also have theoretical power during conflict, and affect the outcomes of war through both negotiated settlements and the balance of power. By looking at the operational and tactical levels of war – where military operators are expected to dominate discourse and planning – we are able to observe in detail when and why civilians choose to intervene against civil-military norms. Further, because military operations can influence the balance of power on the battlefield, it is important to understand why and when they deviate from prescriptions offered by military doctrine.

Because military operations at their core are a series of tradeoffs between battlefield progress and costs incurred, politicians must choose whether to initiate operations that may generate high casualties or to pull back to safety at the expense of strategic success. I argue that as politicians become increasingly myopic about the importance of public opinion they become more concerned about the costs of war and are more likely to favor defensive and non-kinetic actions. While this is most often observed in the lead up to an election, we may also observe variation when domestic legislative issues are at stake or when a decline in public support would essentially destroy the political capital of the incumbent administration. Once the political event passes, military operations return to normal levels or result in even higher levels of casualties as politicians are most likely to initiate risky operations when they are least likely to be punished for poor outcomes.

These incentives are operationalized through both direct and indirect politicization. In addition to issuing direct requests about individual operations, civilians also influence conduct on the battlefield through increases in monitoring and broad tactical guidelines, each of which can have consequences for how soldiers fight in combat. Additionally, in

response to these pressures the military may self-police and politicize itself for organizational and bureaucratic reasons. Ambitious officers may additionally politicize their operations in an effort to generate reportable statistics for civilian overseers or be influenced by contact with domestic press.

This theory draws upon the literature in American politics, civil-military relations, and security studies to generate a theory of civilian agency during times of war. It challenges "normal" theories of civil-military relations that assume: 1) a civilian leader who makes decisions based upon principles of grand strategy; and 2) a relatively defined division between civilian strategists and military operators. By showing when, why, and how civilians reach down into the operations and tactical levels of war, I move the civil-military relations debate forward and establish a line for future research. Finally, my dissertation calls into question the current distinction between theories of causes of war and conduct during conflict. This pushes the international relations research agenda forward and encourages scholars to use theories about democratic institutions to understand how states fight wars, which ultimately affects the international balance of power.

Chapter 3

Statistical Evidence from Iraq and Afghanistan

"It was increasingly obvious to [Secretary of State Condoleezza] Rice that they didn't have a strategy. She wanted to reevaluate the strategy herself. But to be quite frank, she said, she didn't want 'to do anything that would be above the radar screen in the heavy political breathing of the November elections.' The administration did not need what she called 'a hothouse story' that acknowledged Iraq had gotten so bad that they were considering a new approach. That would play into the hands of critics and antiwar Democrats."

— *Bob Woodward,* The War Within

In 2004 the insurgency in Iraq continued to gain steam. Fighters in Mosul and Fallujah had all but pushed out U.S. and Coalition forces from the cities and had gained control of the streets, mosques, and population. The U.S. had attempted to displace Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) insurgents from their stronghold in Fallujah in April, but despite the initial clearing effort, they had not been able to maintain control and both cities were now hotbeds and fortresses for insurgent activity. It was common knowledge amongst the military that in order to gain any traction in Anbar and Ninewa these cities must be retaken – the only question was when and with how many forces (Ricks 2006, 345).

Counterinsurgency was not yet a household name, and any operations to retake the cities were bound to include considerable firepower and include significant Coalition and civilian casualties. However, 2004 was an election year – George W. Bush was running for reelection against Democratic Party nominee John Kerry who was campaigning on an anti-war platform, and needed to keep an unpopular war out of the headlines during the electoral season. "Each morning seemed to bring some new charge or leaked intelligence… The image of our troops being attacked… became a cause celebre." (Rice

2011, 286) As a result, the offensives in Fallujah and Mosul were delayed several months after the need for a major operation became evident, and on November 7, 2004, the Second Battle of Fallujah and the Battle of Mosul began – just five days after George W. Bush won a second term in office (Ricks 2006, 345).

What explains this deviation from prescribed military strategy? I will present evidence showing that the answer in this case is fairly clear: President George Bush was in a tight race for reelection while waging an unpopular war. The major offensives in Fallujah and Mosul that were deemed tactically and operationally necessary were also likely to create two phenomena that were politically undesirable for the administration: headlines about a failing military strategy and a large body count. While these two outcomes are generally detrimental to the approval rating of any sitting president, the lead-up to an election is particularly salient as voters decide on the trajectory of the country and evaluate the ability of a tangible challenger to better execute the office of the President. Thus, during the summer of 2004, when the War in Iraq was both becoming increasingly unpopular with the electorate and while in the midst of a presidential campaign against an anti-war veteran, the administration was naturally eager to keep news of the War in Iraq off of the front page. As a result, major operational decisions regarding offensives in the cities of Fallujah and Mosul were subject to the pressures of domestic politics and profoundly affected by the timing of U.S. electoral cycles, at the expense of the effective implementation of U.S. military doctrine on the battlefield.

The Fallujah case is but one example of the role that domestic politics can play in shaping the timing and type of military operations executed during conflict. This chapter examines the role that domestic politics played in affecting military operations during the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and explains deviations in the implementation of doctrine using large-n econometric analysis. I argue that political considerations stateside are largely responsible for deviations in how and when doctrine is implemented, rather than other factors that are commonly cited such as organizational biases or changes in leadership. As a result, military operations become both directly and indirectly politicized. I analyze variation in troop movements and violence levels in both wars to

evaluate the overall effect of domestic electoral politics on the implementation of military doctrine. Ultimately, I find that domestic politics and election cycles strongly influence how and when resources are distributed, troops are deployed, and the types of operations chosen and conducted throughout the course of the war – despite the recommendations prescribed by military professionals.

Theoretical Framework

The civil-military relations literature has traditionally seen the military as agents of civilian masters (Huntington 1954, Betts 1977, Desch 1999, formalized by Feaver 2003). However, civilians during wartime are also agents of the national interest with strong incentives to shirk their security responsibilities in order to retain power domestically. Elections, which during peacetime are intended to hold politicians responsible to the preferences of the electorate, can actually divert attention and resources away from protecting the national interest when the country is at war. Because foreign policy and military actions are often kept secret in the name of national security, it is relatively easy for politicians to exploit information asymmetries between themselves and the public in order to maintain public support. Knowing that the public often votes on foreign policy during wartime and that they hold politicians accountable ex post for failing military strategies, the executive responds ex ante by altering various aspects of military operations to be more politically palatable immediately before an election. Therefore, when politicians anticipate that the public will view offensive actions (and the subsequent increase in casualties) unfavorably, they are more willing to order military commanders to assume defensive positions and delay offensive operations until the electoral threat has passed. As a result, we should observe differences in how military doctrine is implemented on the battlefield during the lead-up to an election. Further, we should observe a return to normal operations and an increase in offensive activity, in the immediate aftermath of domestic elections as operations that had been put on hold are finally initiated. Thus, we can develop the following theoretical expectations regarding military operations during a U.S. election year:

T1: Offensive military operations will be halted or delayed by the executive branch while the incumbent is running for reelection.

T2: Offensive military operations will resume immediately when the incumbent is no longer running for reelection.

T3: Offensive military operations will be conducted without civilian interference in military affairs when there are no electoral concerns.

Empirical Strategy

The U.S. political cycle, with its regular election schedule and active global foreign policy, is an ideal country in which to test this theory across time and space. The President of the United States has sweeping powers over the conduct of the military as commander-in-chief, and the country has a firm history of civilian control over the military, suggesting that orders given by the president will be followed by his subordinates, regardless of rationale. The U.S. system also has a healthy history of scrutiny concerning foreign policy, particularly since the Vietnam War. Despite a lack of existential threats to the integrity of the state, the U.S. has engaged in multiple conflicts over the last 40 years across the globe and projected both military and economic power into nations large and small with regularity, providing no limit of potential military operations to analyze. Finally, the American public since the experience of Vietnam has voted consistently on an executive's ability to execute sound foreign policy and protect American hegemony across the globe.

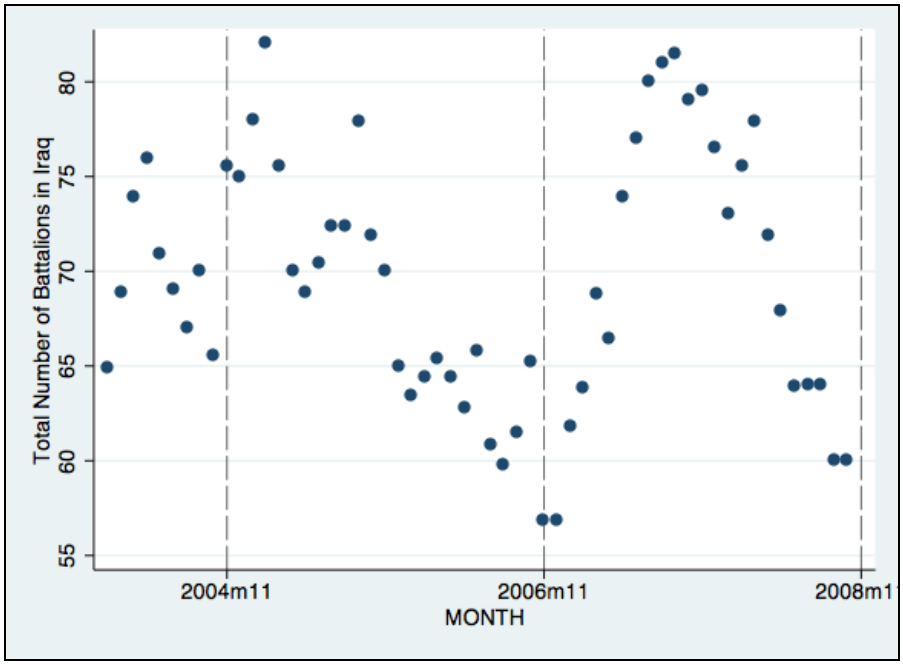
The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan further represent a natural experiment to test doctrine implementation where we are able to examine two radically different kinds of doctrine at work within a war. Therefore, this dramatic switch provides a useful rebuttal to concerns that these deviations are simply the product of one particular kind of doctrine like counterinsurgency – in fact, we observe politically-motivated battlefield operations regardless of official doctrine. The first half of the War on Terror primarily reflected principles from the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). This doctrine, exemplified in

Army FM 3-0 "Operations" published in 2001, emphasized a light footprint, offensive capabilities and the importance of agility, heavy use of special operators, and network-centric warfare that took advantage of specialties from all services – thereby placing a premium on joint operations. In sum, the RMA envisioned by then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld asks the military to "quickly dominate land operations," and "act as part of a fully inter-operable and integrate joint force." (FM 3-0)

By contrast, an analysis of Army FM 3-24, "Counterinsurgency," new doctrine introduced in January 2007, suggests that the Army should take a dramatically different approach to the war in Iraq. Counterinsurgency (or COIN) emphasized a heavy footprint with soldiers in the field interacting with the population - a strategy that popularly became known as "winning hearts and minds." This heavy military presence in villages and towns is intended to be complemented by a long-term presence to develop infrastructure, political institutions, and train security forces to prevent a relapse back into civil war. COIN suggests that by providing security and functioning institutions, along with inflicting minimum damage on the civilian population, the population will provide valuable information about the identity and whereabouts of insurgents that threaten the security of the state. Thus, the doctrine generally calls for an increase in forces, particularly infantry and other "ground" units, a focus on building infrastructure and security institutions, and operations that "clear hold and build," which means that once insurgents are cleared from an area, military units maintain a prolonged presence in the village or city in order to ensure that institutions are "built" and able to defend against future insurgent attacks.

As a result, while these two doctrines advocate for different kinds of operations, political leaders must still balance the recommendations of the doctrine against the preferences of the electorate during an election season. Using historical evidence and data collected on spending, troop deployments, and violence during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, I am

Figure 3.1: Overall Number of Combat Battalions in Iraq, 2004-08



able to empirically test the effect of domestic politics on two components of doctrine implementation: troop deployment in theater and mission selection.

Troop Deployment in Theater

The deployment of forces is politicized both before and after forces enter a war zone. Politicians, concerned about public reaction to escalation, will often not announce dramatic increases in forces levels until after it is politically safe, while holding forces constant in the months leading up to elections. In the case of Iraq and Afghanistan, this pattern is exceedingly clear. Figures (1) and (2) show large increases in the overall force levels committed to each war after elections, while numbers remain low in the preceding months.

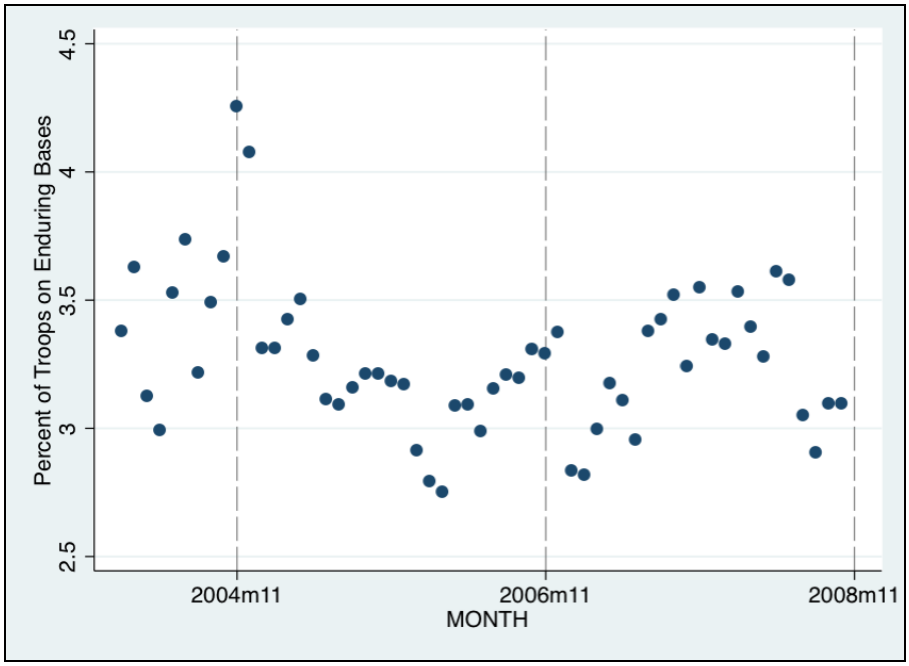
Additionally, though the overall deployment of U.S. forces to war is decided entirely at the executive level, where those forces are located and stationed once they arrive in theater is often left up to strategists and commanders on the battlefield. During the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. forces occupied several large airfields shortly after military

Figure 3.2: Overall Number of Combat Companies in Afghanistan, 2005-12

operations began and developed them into what the administration called "enduring bases." These were enormous complexes that were heavily fortified, secured, and housed thousands of soldiers at a time, often serving as a base of operations for quick reaction forces, special operations units, support staff, contractors, and battalion headquarters. Consequently, these bases were extraordinarily safe for Coalition forces stationed there – a soldier was statistically more likely to die in a car accident while in the U.S. than from enemy fire while stationed on an "enduring base" in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Because the U.S. public is casualty-averse, it is politically undesirable for an administration to suffer large numbers of war casualties in the lead-up to an election. Increases in casualties in the months immediately preceding an election draws attention to the trajectory of the war and enables political opponents to question the ability of a leader to win the conflict and, by extension, effectively protect national security interests. Thus, the administration has an incentive to limit the exposure of its forces within theater during campaign season, even at the expense of doctrinal prescriptions in the short term. This is best accomplished by moving troops to safer locations where they are less likely

Figure 3.3: Percentage of Troops on Enduring Bases in Iraq, 2004-08



to draw fire and suffer casualties: enduring bases. This results in an observable hypothesis:

H1: *The closer to an election, the more troops will be assigned to districts with enduring bases.*

Further, because voters are myopically retrospective – they vote based upon a politician's most recent past performance – this effect will be most pronounced in the months immediately preceding an election. We thus expect a sharp increase in the number of troops located in districts with enduring bases, while troop levels fluctuate according to strategic needs the rest of the electoral cycle. Figure 3 suggests what the distribution of forces should resemble.

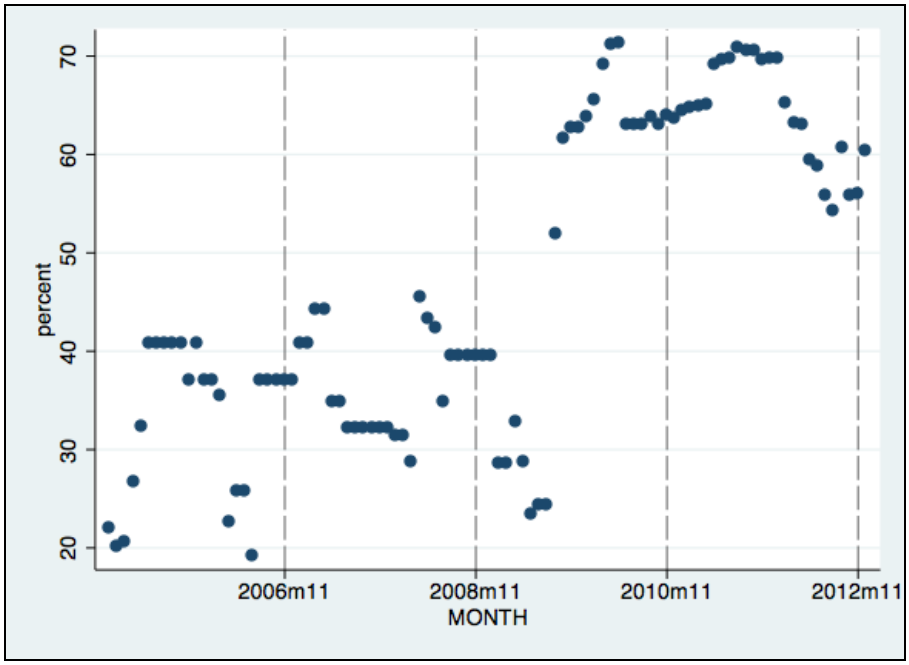
Mission Selection

Additionally, the clearest examples of doctrine implemented on the battlefield are the types of missions that military units engage in during the war. While systematic data is not available on the details of every major operation undertaken during the Wars in Iraq

and Afghanistan, data have been collected and released on the number of significant activities recorded by Coalition forces throughout the war in Iraq (SIGACTS), the number of attacks against civilians in Iraq (IBC), and the number of terrorist incidents in Afghanistan (WITS). While overall violence levels are not in themselves necessarily indicative of the types of missions that U.S forces are engaged in, this analysis takes advantage of two statistical weaknesses in the violence data provided by the government – SIGACTs are only recorded by U.S. and Coalition forces when they are present to witness the event, and the WITS database only catalogues violence against civilians and non-combatants. Thus, the Iraq SIGACTS data are affected by two factors: 1) If Coalition forces are not conducting operations in an area, then violence does not get recorded in the database; and 2) If Coalition forces are not engaging in operations likely to result in violence, then fewer SIGACTs will be recorded. Additionally, the Afghanistan WITS data only track terrorist violence against civilians, providing a way to measure fluctuations in violence outside the presence of U.S. and Coalition forces. The data from the Iraq Body Count (IBC) project supplement these sources by providing a reasonably accurate measure of violence against civilians during the War in Iraq; this allows for comparison between violence levels due to exogenous factors such as domestic electoral cycles.

In the lead-up to an election, an increase in violence on the battlefield could signal to the public that the administration is not winning the war – more casualties and violence means that the insurgency is not under control and that the war is far from being over. Feaver and Gelpi (2004) suggest that the public is casualty-tolerant so long as there is a reasonable expectation of success; however, body counts are traditionally one of the most important measures that the public uses to evaluate the success of military operations and the greater war effort. Violence against U.S. forces and increasing casualty rates thus provide opportunities for political opposition to accuse the party in power of mismanaging the war effort and position themselves as the competent party worthy of votes. While a short-term increase in violence may actually be strategically and operationally necessary to win the war *and* be the course of action prescribed by doctrine (as in the case of the Second Battle of Fallujah), implementing these recommendations in

Figure 3.4: Percentage of Troops on Enduring Bases in Afghanistan, 2005-12



the lead-up to an election could be politically disastrous for the party in power. As a result, incumbents have an incentive to temporarily lower the risk to combat troops immediately before an election by reducing the number of kinetic operations forces conduct as well as sending forces out on fewer patrols, thereby reducing the amount of time that they are vulnerable to attack.

It may be the case that insurgents attempt to increase violence immediately before a U.S. election in order to influence domestic attitudes about the war. Attempts to persuade the public that withdrawal is the only reasonable option may result in more violent attacks and more attempts again U.S. and Coalition forces, particularly when voters decide on candidates at the polls. However, if U.S. forces are conducting patrols less frequently, and in areas that are more secure, insurgent attempts to increase violence before the election may in fact result in an increase in violence *after* the election when combat troops resume regular patrol schedules and discover the hidden explosive devices, booby-traps, and other violent activities.

RMA doctrine, while it emphasized a light footprint and few forces on the ground, also emphasized the importance of the element of surprise and the ability of ground forces to quickly and decisively win land operations. This would imply that operations should not be delayed longer than absolutely necessary, which would not be consistent with the practice of waiting to conduct kinetic operations until after an election, thus providing insurgents with an opportunity to predict U.S. actions and fortify their positions. Further, counterinsurgency doctrine emphasizes a consistently heavy footprint and interaction with the locals. This suggests that refraining from conducting operations in order to reduce the exposure of U.S. troops during a U.S. electoral campaign season would also be inconsistent with the prescriptions of military doctrine in the post-2007 era.

These domestic political incentives do not extend to the governments of other Coalition forces, however. British, Polish, Spanish, and other forces that were in control of southern Iraq operate on electoral cycles that are independent of the United States and functioned largely outside of the U.S. chain of command. Because of this, SIGACTs recorded by independent Coalition forces in the south should be unrelated to U.S. electoral cycles. Finally, insurgent violence against civilians should be unaffected by U.S. mission selection and timing as fighters wage their own strategic campaign against the population. This is particularly true in the case of Iraq, where the sectarian war was conducted largely without regard to U.S. forces – Sunni and Shia militias engaged in a brutal ethnic cleansing campaign beginning in mid-2004 that temporarily lulled after U.S. withdrawal but has be reignited with the recent military campaign of Islamic State into western Iraq. In Afghanistan, however, terrorist violence may be more related to U.S. force presence and activity as groups like the Taliban attempt to intimidate and convince Afghans that the United States cannot protect them – this may result in a small increase in Taliban violence against civilians in the lead up to U.S. elections. However, given the sporadic control of the Taliban across the country, and the relatively sporadic nature of violence against civilians in the data (See Table 2), this is unlikely to be systematically reflected in the analysis. From these expectations, we can generate two final predictions:

H2a: *Violence as recorded by U.S. forces will decrease the closer an election becomes.*

H2b: *Violence as recorded by Coalition forces will be unrelated to U.S. electoral cycles.*

H2c: *Violence not recorded by U.S. and Coalition forces will be unrelated to U.S. electoral cycles.*

Econometric Design and Description of the Data

To evaluate each of the above hypotheses, I use data on reconstruction spending patterns, troop deployment, and violence from 2004 through 2010 during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. I then design a series of econometric models that regress these three indicators of military operations on U.S. electoral cycles to determine the influence of domestic politics on military operations during war. I expect to find that U.S. electoral cycles significantly alter the military's implementation of operational priorities by encouraging units to move troops to safer locations and conduct operations less likely to result in violent attacks.

Troop deployment data for Iraq utilizes replication data from Lee (2014) that catalogues the locations and concentrations of U.S. and Coalition forces in Iraq from February 2004 through October 2008. Deployment data for Afghanistan is a newly-constructed database specifically for this project that tracks the locations of maneuver companies from January 2005 through December 2012. Both datasets were compiled by the author and draw upon open-source documents from the Institute for the Study of War, DoD Press Releases, embedded media reporting, military battalion online unit histories, interviews, personal memoirs, journalist narratives, and stateside news reports to compile a comprehensive list of combat units at the district-month unit of analysis. For Iraq, the unit of observation is the district-battalion-month; for Afghanistan it is the province-company-month. Information was compiled from these disparate sources by hand, beginning with the locations of servicemen and women killed in action and the battalions to which they were attached, then building up to identify rotation/deployment schedules as well as the units that did not suffer fatal casualties. Stateside reports of reconstruction efforts and

upcoming deployments, often published in local newspapers archived online, were used to verify and update the dataset. Finally, personal interviews were conducted with various soldiers and civilians that operated in the region during the time periods analyzed to check the validity of the dataset. Because this composite information is kept classified by the DoD and has been previously unavailable to researchers, these two datasets fill a crucial omitted variable gap in current scholarship on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Despite their comprehensive sources, the datasets are biased in two major ways: first, more violent areas are likely to receive more press coverage, making it likely that the datasets better identify all of the units present in regions that experienced the most attacks; second, because of the lack of press reporting on non-English speaking Coalition forces, data on Southern Iraq and Northwestern Afghanistan (where there was a higher concentration of Coalition forces) is likely to be less accurate than for the other regions where U.S. forces were responsible for territory. This second bias is irrelevant to the current study, however, as I only analyze American forces operating around U.S. electoral cycles.

Finally, these data only include combat and artillery units, and not other kinds of support units that might have been involved in some combat operations such as transportation, engineering, military police, civil affairs units, or Provincial Reconstruction Teams. As a result, it paints a better picture of units that were regularly conducting kinetic operations like patrols, targeting, and raids against insurgents as opposed to hearts and minds activities like building schools or working with local tribal leaders. Finally, this dataset does not include special operations units due to the largely classified and unreported nature of their activities.

Data on enduring bases were developed specifically for this project and compiled using government statements in 2005 as well deductive works by security experts to determine the locations of 14 enduring bases and three major complexes. Overall, in Iraq 17 different bases in 13 districts were identified as being enduring bases that were heavily fortified and developed enough to indicate that security was considerably better than

other outposts, camps, and forward operating bases.[12] In Afghanistan, six major bases in six provinces were identified as developed enough to qualify as heavily fortified and more secure, and served as regional hubs for operations in the surrounding areas.

I employ violence and demographic data for Iraq using replication data from the Berman et al (2011) paper, "Can Hearts and Minds Be Bought?" Violence data was declassified and obtained from the *SIGACT III Database* that was created and operated by the U.S. Department of Defense, and covers the time periods from February 2004 to December 2008. This database records all significant insurgent activities (SIGACTS) either executed or discovered against Coalition and Iraqi troops, including improvised explosive devices (IEDs), grenade explosions, suicide bombings, sniper shootings, and other violent attacks. While each SIGACT is geo-coded to a precise date and location, it is important to note that in the replication data, the smallest unit of analysis available is the district-month. Because the primary objective of all counterinsurgency campaigns is security stabilization and the reduction of violence, this emerges as the best objective and quantifiable indicator of counterinsurgency success.[13]

There are undeniable problems, however, with the use of this measure. Inevitably, the SIGACTS variable underreports violence because it only records observations by Coalition and partner nation troops. This then biases the number of SIGACTS to be higher in areas where there are more troops to monitor violent activities. Additionally, because it only counts attacks on counterinsurgent forces, this variable completely

---

[12] Other work on this topic has used a different set of bases (Bonheim 2013). However, there is reason to believe that relying on government statements about the facilities it intends to maintain and develop is a better indicator of overall security levels surrounding the base rather than the presence of certain amenities, and thus an independent list was constructed for this project.

[13] There exists a robust debate in the literature about the best way to measure counterinsurgency success. Given the complex nature of each insurgency and the multiple (often conflicting) goals of modern counterinsurgents, violence against U.S. and Coalition forces may not adequately gauge progress on a variety of measures, including legitimacy and provision of public goods. However, because insurgency is defined as an armed conflict, violence emerges as at least the most consistent measure to gauge the strength and success of Iraq's insurgents.

excludes all sectarian violence from its purview.[14] This emerges as a positive omission for the purposes of this study, and I exploit its reliance on the presence of Coalition forces to suggest that mission types vary with the progression of the U.S. electoral season.

Data on sectarian violence in Iraq is from Condra and Shapiro (2012), "Who Takes the Blame? The Strategic Effect of Collateral Damage." It is the "product of a multi-year collaboration with Iraq Body Count (IBC)…the data provided here improve on the publicly available data in a variety of ways…" (Berman et al 2012) Civilian casualties are geo-coded more specifically at the district-month level of analysis and then divided into four different categories, of which we aggregate into two categories: 1) Coalition/insurgent killings of civilians, and 2) Sectarian killings of civilians.

Violence data on Afghanistan were collected from the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS), part of the U.S. Government's database on acts of terrorism, and covers violent incidents from 2005 through 2009 in Afghanistan at the province level. In contrast to the SIGACTS database, which only covers violence against Coalition forces, the WITS data only covers violent acts against civilians and non-combatants. This omission allows U.S. to test Hypothesis 2b, which suggests that insurgent strategy and violence should be unrelated to U.S. electoral cycles, though we are as yet unable to evaluate Hypothesis 2a in Afghanistan.

Other variables on Iraq used from the Empirical Studies of Conflict (ESOC) Iraq Civil War Dataset are voting shares in the 2005 parliamentary elections, which is a static

[14] Sectarian violence in this sense is defined as attacks by Iraqis against Iraqis of a different religious affiliation or different ethnicity – this is most commonly seen in Sunni and Shia militia attacks against each other. SIGACTs may capture some of this violence if U.S. or Coalition forces are caught in the crossfire, but the tacics employed in each of these wars were very different, and as a result U.S. forces were unlikely to experience the personal, brutal, political violence that characterized the sectarian conflict between 2004 and 2009. Thus, while SIGACTs may include some sectarian violence, it is likely neither systematic nor prevalent.

Table 3.1: Summary Statistics, War in Iraq

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max
Percent of U.S. Battalions on Secure Bases	57	3.49	.256	2.99	4.25
U.S. Battalions per District per Month	5871	.675	1.37	0	15.5
SIGACTS per District per Month	5871	28.39	74.07	0	954
Sunni vote share	5871	.208	.285	0	.917
Shia vote share	5871	.413	.384	0	.902
District Population	5871	279,023	309,115	10,966	1,668,737
Unemployment per District	5871	.105	.070	-.073	.509
CPI (base 2004) per District	5871	1.067	.049	.986	1.164

variable only available at aggregated Governorate level[15] and demographic household averages available for each district and interpolated to include yearly variation. These play an important role in accounting for potential omitted variables, but generally fail to reach statistical significance in the regression results.

Demographic information for Afghanistan was collected using a variety of open sources, primarily relying on the estimates given by the Naval Postgraduate School's Afghanistan Project. If exact percentages were not available, then best guesses were made based upon the composition of the surrounding provinces, terrain, and borders. This is rough and incomplete at best, but provides a basic estimate that allows U.S. to control for Pashtun influence in a given province. Further, because the War in Afghanistan is characterized by a fighting season, we also control for the average monthly temperature in each province. Data was collected from online records kept by the Norwegian Meteorological Institute – the average temperature in Celsius for the provincial capital was taken, using the assumption that most reconstruction efforts would be based in the capital city, where the majority of forces are stationed.

The variables are operationalized as such: 1) violent Coalition incidents in Iraq as the number of SIGACTS/sectarian killings per 1,000 people, 2) violent civilian incidents in Iraq as the number of IBC attacks against civilians per 1,000 people, 3) violent incidents

[15] The Iraqi government, in an effort to reduce district-based retaliatory targeting of populations based upon election results, did not release (and in fact, did not record) the district-level voting returns from the 2005 election. Thus, the only voting share data available are aggregated into Governorate-level figures.

Table 3.2: Summary Statistics, War in Afghanistan

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max
Percent of U.S. Companies on Secure Bases	96	7.34	1.87	3.85	10.18
U.S. Companies per Province per Month	3264	3.03	7.87	0	68
Violent Events per Province per Month	2346	3.34	5.25	0	54
Percent Pashtun	3264	45.35	35.42	0	99
Percent Tajik	3264	26.79	24.36	0	75
Percent Hazara	3264	12.04	19.78	0	86
Avg Temperature per Province	3264	15.64	10.14	-6	35
Province Population	3264	871,461	1,546,856	11,800	1.22e+07

in Afghanistan as the number of WITS incidents per 1,000 people, 4) Sunni/Shia vote share as the percentage of votes given to Sunni/Shia parties in the 2005 Provincial elections, 5) Pashtun/Tajik/Hazara population as the estimated percent of the province that identifies as one of those three ethnicities, and 6) troop strength as the number of combat battalions/companies per 1,000 people. Summary statistics are found in Tables (1) and (2).

Results and Analysis

In sum, I find supporting evidence for all four hypotheses using data from the wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan. In general, troops are moved into districts with large, fortified bases to prevent exposure to insurgent attacks then return to less secure areas after the election, and violence as recorded by U.S. forces decreases as units undertake missions that are less likely to result in violent incidents while violence recorded by unaffiliated Coalition forces and sectarian violence remains unaffected.

Statistical Results for Iraq

Table (2) shows results on the correlation between electoral cycles and the distribution of battalions on the battlefield. To test Hypothesis 1, I use a standard OLS regression where the dependent variable is the percentage battalions in a district that contains an enduring base; this is regressed on a continuous variable that indicates the number of months after a U.S. presidential or midterm election. The dependent variable, percent of troops

located on an enduring base, is aggregated to the national level – there is thus only one observation per month of the war period being analyzed. It is important to use a percentage in this analysis due to the fluctuation in overall deployment levels; because these overall levels are not the subject of this analysis, it is necessary to develop a dependent variable that accommodates for changes in the level of troops in theater. Further, by aggregating to the national level, rather than limiting the sample to only districts with enduring bases, this provides a more comprehensive account of the overall picture in theater, even if it does limit the number of observations.

The regressions below report on three different independent variables that each describe the predicted pattern. First, in order to capture the increasing pressure on the executive as an election draws near, the independent variable operationalized as a parabolic function (square root) where x decreases from 23 to 0, according to the number of months until the next election. As a result, the difference between month 23 and 22 (the two months immediate after an election) is much smaller than the difference between months 1 and 0 (the months immediately before an election), reflecting the difference in incentives between the beginning and end of an electoral cycle.[16] Moreover, a parabolic function better captures the expected percentage of troops located in districts with enduring bases as shown in Figure 3.

Second, in order to test whether there is in fact a difference between outcomes pre- and post-election, I generate a binary variable that indicates whether t is immediately before or after an election. I test this during two different time periods – six months prior and three months prior. Because some operations are planned months in advance and troop movements can take upwards of six weeks to two months to operationalize, testing at both six and three month intervals is necessary to capture short and medium-term trends. Model (1) thus estimates the coefficients β, λ, θ, and ψ in

[16] Alternative specifications of the independent variable are discussed in the robustness section.

$$p_t = \alpha + \beta e_t^{1/2} + \lambda v_t + \theta n_t + \psi s_t + \gamma z_t + \varepsilon_t \quad (1)$$

while Models (2) and (3) estimate β, χ, λ, θ, and ψ in

$$p_t = \alpha + \beta b_t + \chi a_t + \lambda v_t + \theta n_t + \psi s_t + \gamma z_t + \varepsilon_t \quad (2)$$

where p represents the percentage of troops in districts with an enduring base, e is a continuous variable indicating the number of months since the last election, b and a are binary variables indicating whether t is six or three months before and after an election, respectively, v is violence as measured by the number of SIGACTS recorded per 1,000 people, n is the total number of troops in theater, s is a dichotomous indicator that represents summer months, z is a vector of control variables including year indicators, and t is the time period in terms of months from 2004-2008.

Each model in Table (3) below takes several measures to attempt and control for biases that may violate assumptions of independence that are necessary for ordinary least squares. Models that estimate changes at the operational and tactical levels of war must pay close attention to assumptions about independence because most operations are planned as a series of offensives many months in advance. Further, observations "drawn" from a population of potential troop levels are not always random – each one is necessarily affected by changes in strategy in the preceding time periods, which may affect more than one observation. Finally, new commanders, changes on the ground, and domestic constraints means that each year of the war takes on radically different characteristics. As a result, I include yearly indicators to control for yearly patterns and cluster each analysis by the half-year. This is a stringent test of the significance of the data, as the model therefore establishes a new y-intercept for each year of the war while also interpreting observations within the same half year as being related to a single decision. While it would have been possible to use month indicators rather than year indicators in order to test for monthly effects, qualitatively it appears that the largest differences appear between years rather than months. I do attempt to account, however, for seasonal changes by including the "summer" binary variable.

Table 3.3: Iraq Troop Locations on Election Cycles, 2004-08

	Percentage of Troops in Districts with Enduring Bases		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Year Indicators	Y	Y	Y
Months Until Election	-0.118**		
(Square Root)	(0.042)		
Six Months Before Election		0.236*	
		(0.113)	
Six Months After Election		0.080	
		(0.049)	
Three Months Before Election			0.345**
			(0.145)
Three Months After Election			0.061
			(0.105)
Summer	-0.053	-0.078	0.045
	(0.007)	(0.088)	(0.070)
Battalions	0.012*	0.017*	0.013*
	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.006)
Violence	0.990	0.745	0.338
	(0.691)	(0.823)	(0.822)
Constant	2.894***	2.209***	3.400***
	(0.397)	(0.604)	(0.154)
Observations	57	57	57
R-squared	0.47	0.47	0.44

Note: All models clustered by the half-year. Robust standard errors in parentheses.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Results from Table (3) lend preliminary support to Hypothesis 1, showing a negative, significant coefficient in Model (1), which indicates that as the number of months until the next election decreases, the number of troops in districts with secure bases increases. This suggests that in the months immediately before a U.S. election, troops are moved into districts that contain large, fortified bases, thus limiting their exposure to violence and the number of attacks that could possibly cause the kind of headlines that would be damaging to a sitting president. Models (2) and (3) lend additional support to this theory – the positive significant coefficient in the six and three months immediately preceding

an election indicates that the percentage of troops in districts with large bases is significantly higher than normal levels. With an average of just 3.5%, the increase is both significant and substantive – in the three months before a domestic U.S. election there are 10% more American forces in districts with enduring bases. That the months immediately after an election reflect no difference from average levels is further evidence that there is a major policy break before and after domestic political events.

Overall, results signal two important patterns: 1) a continuous buildup of forces inside enduring bases that is highest immediately before a domestic U.S. election; and 2) a discontinuous shift in force locations that coincides with U.S. domestic political events. Together, Models (1) – (3) lend strong support to Hypothesis 1. Further research and refinement of data on troop movements, types of units, and base locations need to be conducted to conduct a full test, but the results in Table (2) indicate strong support.[17]

Table (4) presents results from a test of Hypothesis 2a and 2b, using SIGACTs per 1,000 persons as the dependent variable, while Table (5) tests Hypothesis 2c. The use of SIGACTs provides an opportunity to exploit what has typically been identified as a weakness of the dataset – its reliance on observations by U.S. and Coalition forces. Traditionally, this has been a liability for analyses because of concerns that it biases violence in districts where there are more troops and is not an objective measure of violence. However, because the very subject of this analysis is an understanding of the exposure of U.S. and Coalition forces to violence and potentially violent activities, this emerges as the best possible indicator short of a catalogue of missions that measures the kind of missions that U.S. forces are responsible for conducting in the lead-up to an election. Further, we are able to exploit differences in regional control to control for national-level phenomena that may alter violence levels independent of U.S. electoral cycles. Finally, it is necessary to use SIGACTs per capita rather than raw numbers

[17] The results have additionally been independently verified in Bonheim (2013), which uses the same troop deployment data with a smaller set of enduring bases, lending credibility to this argument.

because violence is much more likely to occur in high population areas, and thus the most accurate measure of violence will be the number of incidents per person in a district.

Table (5) utilizes data from the Iraq Body Count to analyze other violence levels in the country, and provides an independent measure of sectarian violence that is unrelated to insurgent-Coalition violence. The data are geo-coded and available at the district-month level and provide a unique measure of violence that does not proxy for U.S.-incited violence; the two measures are correlated at .39, suggesting that while there is some overlap between violent areas there is still much variation to be explained by other factors.

Table (4) is divided between U.S.-controlled areas and Coalition-controlled regions. Additionally, all regressions are weighted by the population of each district in order to ensure that unpopulated districts are not overrepresented in the sample. Consistent with the strategy in Table (3), regressions are run with time controls by year, but to account for monthly effect I also include an indicator by month. Additionally, because decisions about military operations in a given district are not made independently of one another from month to month, I cluster each analysis by district.[18] Further, I include a control variable for the month of Ramadan, which traditionally results in an increase in violence, and also happens to fall between September and November during the time period analyzed; controlling for this month is important when estimating violence around election periods. Models (1) and (4) estimate the coefficients β, χ, λ, and θ in

$$v_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta e_{it}^{1/2} + \lambda v_{it-3} + \theta m_{it} + \gamma z_{it} + \varepsilon_t \qquad (3)$$

while Models (2), (3), (5), and (6) estimate β, χ, λ, and θ in

[18] The empirical strategy in Tables (3) and (4) differ slightly than in Table (2) because of the dramatic increase in available observations. Whereas Table (2) estimated patterns for each month for the nation of Iraq as a whole, Tables (3) and (4) estimate patterns for each district-month. As a result, it is far more accurate to assume independence between districts, and cluster by district instead, which was typically the area of operation (AO) for each operating unit. Therefore, I include fixed effects by month and year and cluster by district.

$$v_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta b_{it} + \chi a_{it} + \lambda v_{it-3} + \theta m_{it} + \gamma z_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (4)$$

where m is the number of military units present per 1000 people, z is a vector of control variables that includes binary indicators for Ramadan and the surge as well as percentage indicators for Sunni and Shia vote share, and i is one of 103 districts. Model (1) in Table (5) estimates β, χ, λ, and θ in Equation (3) and Models (2) and (3) in Table (5) estimate β, χ, λ, and θ in Equation (4), where v is the number of sectarian violence counts per 1,000 observed in the Iraq Body Count data.

Results in Table (4) indicate that recorded SIGACTs are highly correlated with electoral cycles, and that as elections draw closer, U.S. forces also record fewer significant incidents while higher numbers of SIGACTs are recorded immediately after an election. The positive, significant coefficient in Model (1) indicates that as the time until a U.S. domestic election decreases, so does the number of violent events recorded by U.S. and Coalition forces in areas controlled by Americans. Conversely, it further suggests that the more time there is until an election, the more likely U.S. forces are to record SIGACTs. Models (2) and (3) appear to confirm this: the large, significant decrease in violent events per month in the six months immediately before an election indicates that U.S. forces recorded, on average, over 15% fewer violent events, while recording slightly more than average (5%) SIGACTs in the six months following an election. Model (3) confirms this, and suggests that violence in the three months after an election was particularly high.[19]

Further, violence in non-U.S.-controlled regions is uncorrelated with U.S. electoral cycles, indicating that this is a phenomenon unique to U.S. forces in theater. In contrast with American-controlled districts, international districts in the predominantly Shia south are uncorrelated with electoral cycles. Model (4) shows a positive, but statistical insignificant coefficient while Models (5) and (6) provide no evidence that violence in

[19] This may be an artifact of the battle of Fallujah, but dropping Fallujah from the sample does not significantly change the results.

Table 3.4: Iraq Violence on Election Cycles, 2004-2008

	SIGACTS per 1,000					
	American districts			International districts		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Month and Year Indicators	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Months Until Election	1.289***			0.103		
(Square Root)	(0.354)			(0.161)		
Six Months Before		-4.47***			-0.478	
Election		(1.016)			(0.575)	
Six Months After		1.637*			0.537	
Election		(0.860)			(0.489)	
Three Months Before			-1.859			1.730**
Election			(1.338)			(0.728)
Three Months After			5.787***			1.019
Election			(1.539)			(0.702)
Violence Levels Three	0.817***	0.806***	0.806***	0.53***	0.526***	0.530***
Months Prior	(0.045)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.036)
Battalions	593.79**	556.05**	558.46**	89.213*	91.386*	93.470*
	(284.87)	(258.70)	(258.22)	(45.60)	(45.835)	(47.057)
Ramadan	-1.915	-0.541	-0.055	-1.57**	-1.662**	-1.301**
	(1.538)	(0.860)	(0.725)	(0.631)	(0.663)	(0.507)
Surge	-5.315**	-6.08***	-2.769	-0.531	-0.373	0.195
	(2.035)	(2.092)	(1.876)	(0.671)	(0.759)	(0.582)
Sunni Vote Share	3.859**	2.995**	2.963**	13.591	13.629	13.475
	(1.796)	(1.406)	(1.416)	(11.78)	(11.821)	(11.677)
Shia Vote Share	0.389	0.055	0.048	-6.497	-6.540	-6.489
	(0.764)	(0.628)	(0.622)	(4.233)	(4.261)	(4.163)
Constant	-4.04***	0.640	-3.14***	5.624	5.847	5.130
	(1.201)	(0.836)	(1.065)	(3.413)	(3.534)	(3.309)
Observations	3,168	3,888	3,888	1,674	1,674	1,674
R-squared	0.77	0.77	0.77	0.39	0.39	0.40

Note: All models clustered by district and weighted by population. Robust standard errors in parentheses.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 3.5: Iraq Sectarian Violence on Election Cycles, 2004-2008

	Sectarian Violence per 1,000		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Month/Year Indicators		Y	Y
Months Until Election (Square Root)	0.048		
	(0.057)		
Six Months Before Election		-0.176	
		(0.154)	
Six Months After Election		0.141	
		(0.128)	
Three Months Before Election			0.287***
			(0.105)
Three Months After Election			0.362*
			(0.211)
Violence Levels Three Months Prior	0.709***	0.709***	0.710***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.030)
Battalions	16.958	17.027	17.258
	(11.722)	(11.784)	(11.644)
Ramadan	-0.057	-0.072	-0.019
	(0.090)	(0.090)	(0.071)
Surge	-0.388*	-0.371*	-0.202
	(0.209)	(0.190)	(0.160)
Sunni Vote Share	0.310*	0.311*	0.307*
	(0.159)	(0.160)	(0.160)
Shia Vote Share	0.086	0.087	0.086
	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.062)
Constant	-0.291	-0.164**	-0.380***
	(0.185)	(0.077)	(0.143)
Observations	5,562	5,562	5,562
R-squared	0.57	0.57	0.58

Note: All models clustered by district and weighted by population. Robust standard errors in parentheses.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

the south either before or after an election was different in the expected directions. If anything, Model (6) suggests that violence in the south was considerably *higher* before a U.S. election, indicating that insurgents may have chosen to increase attacks during this critical period in order to influence U.S. public opinion. Overall, these results show strong support for Hypothesis 2b, and indicate that U.S. forces alone are exposed to less violence in the lead up to an election, supporting the theory that U.S. tactics and operational targets changed in the months preceding a midterm or general election in the United States.

Further, Table (5) indicates that sectarian violence is largely uncorrelated with domestic electoral cycles, providing supporting evidence for Hypothesis 2c. Model (1) shows no significant relationship between electoral cycles and sectarian violence, indicating that these trends are not simply a product of overall violence levels but instead specifically related to actions taken by U.S. combat battalions in the lead-up to an election. Instead, Model (3) suggests that insurgents may increase violence in the lead up to an election. This may be a function of weather, but could also be because insurgents are looking to influence public opinion in the lead-up to an American election, and thus design a show of strength in the three months prior.

Statistical Results in Afghanistan

Tables (6) and (7) present results from the War in Afghanistan using data on troop deployments and violence against civilians between 2005 and 2012. Table (6) uses original troop deployment data collected by the author at the company level to test how combat forces were distributed during electoral seasons. The dependent variable, percent of deployed troops located in a province with an enduring base, normalizes for the overall number of forces deployed (something we would expect to be a political decision) and instead focuses on where they are deployed once service members reach the battlefield. As in Tables (3) – (5), the independent variable is operationalized both as a parametric function (square root) of a continuous variable that measures the number of months before the next election and as dichotomous indicators that differentiated between months

immediately before and after a U.S. election. Like Table (3), deployment locations in Table (6) are aggregated to the national level. Model (1) estimates the coefficients β, λ, θ, and ψ in

$$p_t = \alpha_i + \beta e_t^{1/2} + \lambda n_t + \theta f_t + \psi r_t + \gamma z_t + \varepsilon_t \tag{5}$$

while Models (2) and (3) estimate β, χ, λ, θ, and ψ in

$$p_t = \alpha_i + \beta b_t + \chi a_t + \lambda n_t + \theta f_t + \psi r_t + \gamma z_t + \varepsilon_t \tag{6}$$

where p represents the percentage of troops in provinces with an enduring base, e is a continuous variable indicating the number of months since the last election, b and a are binary variables indicating whether t is six or three months before and after an election, respectively, n is the total number of troops in theater, f is a dichotomous indicator that represents the fighting season in Afghanistan, r is a dichotomous indicator that represents where a month falls under Ramadan, z is a vector of control variables including year indicators, and t is the time period in terms of months from 2004-2008.

In Table (6) we again find support for Hypothesis 1. Results reveal that U.S. maneuver (combat) companies are more likely to be located in provinces that contain secure and well-fortified bases in the lead-up to an election, suggesting that units are moved to safer locations as elections draw near and are moved to more remote and violent places immediately after an election. The significant, negative coefficient signals that as an election draws closer (and thus the number of months until an election declines), the percentage of forces located in provinces with an enduring base increases. Further, Models (2) and (3) show a discrete difference in policy before and after a U.S. election. Forces are more likely to be operating in provinces with well-fortified bases in the six and three months leading up to an election, while the months immediately after suggest a 10% change. Overall, the shift in Afghanistan from provinces with large bases to less protected areas represents over a 16% average swing from pre- to post-election – a substantive difference in force projection.

Table 3.6: Afghanistan Troop Locations on Election Cycles, 2005-2012

	Percentage of Troops in Provinces with Enduring Bases		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Year Indicators	Y	Y	Y
Months Until Election	-0.175**		
(Square Root)	(0.080)		
Six Months Before Election		0.413*	
		(0.203)	
Six Months After Election		-0.771***	
		(0.146)	
Three Months Before Election			0.438
			(0.229)
Three Months After Election			-0.489*
			(0.273)
Companies in Theater	0.009***	0.009**	0.010***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Fighting Season	-0.404	-0.366*	-0.420
	(0.227)	(0.202)	(0.335)
Ramadan	-0.184	-0.114	-0.074
	(0.339)	(0.349)	(0.353)
Constant	7.426***	6.975***	6.760***
	(0.673)	(0.509)	(0.670)
Observations	96	96	96
R-squared	0.67	0.69	0.67

Note: All models clustered by the half year. Robust standard errors in parentheses.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Because Coalition violence data is unavailable for the War in Afghanistan,[20] Table (7) tests Hypothesis 2c using violence data against civilians. Further, terrorist violence data is only available between 2005 and 2009; I am therefore unable to measure civilian violence patterns during and after the U.S. surge in 2009. Model (1) estimates the coefficients β, λ, θ, and ψ in

[20] As of August 2015, these data have been declassified but are not yet available to publish.

Table 3.7: Afghanistan Violence on Election Cycles, 2005-2009

	Violence Against Civilians per 1,000		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Year Indicators	Y	Y	Y
Province Fixed Effects	Y	Y	Y
Months Until Election	-1.038		
(Square Root)	(0.974)		
Six Months Before Election		0.378	
		(0.325)	
Six Months After Election		-0.446	
		(0.306)	
Three Months Before Election			0.266
			(0.807)
Three Months After Election			-4.240
			(4.504)
Fighting Season	2.572***	1.108	1.794
	(0.802)	(1.029)	(1.413)
Number of Companies	-0.610	-0.609	-0.610
	(0.960)	(0.963)	(0.958)
Ramadan	4.931	4.744	5.611
	(3.979)	(4.206)	(4.786)
Constant	13.086	11.113	9.745
	(11.874)	(8.657)	(8.855)
Observations	1,938	1,938	1,938
R-squared	0.53	0.53	0.53

All models clustered by the half-year. Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

$$v_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta e_{it}^{1/2} + \lambda n_{it} + \theta f_{it} + \psi r_{it} + \gamma z_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \tag{5}$$

while Models (2) and (3) estimate β, χ, λ, θ, and ψ in

$$p_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta b_{it} + \chi a_{it} + \lambda n_{it} + \theta f_{it} + \psi r_{it} + \gamma z_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \tag{6}$$

where i is one of 34 provinces in Afghanistan.

To assess concerns about independence, I again utilize dichotomous indicators and clustering. For Afghanistan, I include province fixed effects – a stringent test of the data, but necessary because of the lack of province-specific time-variant data. I also include year indicators to control for differences in each year of the conflict from 2005 to 2009. Finally, because violence levels are most often part of an organized campaign, it is difficult to assert that each individual observation is truly independent – I thus cluster each model by the half year.

Again, we observe support for Hypothesis 2c – Table (7) suggests that terrorist violence is uncorrelated with U.S. electoral cycles while violence against civilians appears to be instead a seasonal effect, with more attacks occurring during the summer months. Further, the coefficients in each result suggest that violence against civilians in Afghanistan, like in Iraq, may increase immediately before a U.S. election rather than decrease. These results indicate that in general, violence levels in Afghanistan do not fluctuate with U.S. domestic politics, but instead are responsive to changes in the strategic setting such as weather.

In sum, regression results suggest support for the theory that electoral cycles systematically influence military operations on the battlefield. We observe support for the hypothesis that troops are moved to more secure bases in the lead-up to an election, though there is still some work to be done to refine the quality of analysis. SIGACTs as recorded by U.S. and Coalition forces decline considerably as U.S. elections draw nearer, while insurgent violence against civilians is largely unaffected by U.S. electoral cycles. Together, these results provide support for the theory that civilian domestic politics influence military operations on the battlefield.

Alternative Explanations and Robustness

These results, while consistent with the theory presented in this dissertation, might theoretically also be explained by several other factors. Deployment rotation schedules

may influence how much money is spent, where troops are stationed, and how many missions are conducted in a given month. Also, changes in the top leadership can heavily influence military operations at the tactical and operational level of war. Finally, changes in the structure of the military as an organization may affect the implementation of doctrine on the battlefield. To evaluate the relative merits of these plausible alternative explanations, I use variation in troop data and information on command and organizational structure over the two wars to construct a series of indicator variables and conduct robustness checks.

Deployment Cycles

Rotation schedules determine the amount of time that a unit spends in theater and set the timetable for turnover between military units on the battlefield, which may in turn affect the dependent variables in this study. These planned exchanges of areas of responsibility are largely exogenously scheduled – due to organizational constraints and the norm of 12-month deployments, this creates a regular change of personnel in theater that is determined by standard operating procedures and civilian leadership at the Pentagon. During these transitions, re-deploying units conduct joint operations, share information, and generally prepare the incoming unit to assume control over the outgoing unit's area of responsibility. These transitions are not always smooth, however, and often result in an increase in violence as insurgents test the resolve and capabilities of the new forces. Further, CERP spending may increase as the outgoing unit tries to spend its remaining funds before leaving theater, but be followed by a relative decline as the new unit attempts to establish relationships with local leaders. Finally, incoming troops arrive from and outgoing troops leave through the large enduring bases, because these are the only bases with regular transport to the international airports that deliver and return troops to and from their home countries. Thus, if deployment schedules happen to correlate with election cycles, we could be observing the effect of a different mechanism than domestic politics.

To control for this, I generate a new variable using the data on troop locations that indicates when there is a change of units in a given area. A cursory look through the data suggests that rotations in and out of theater are too dispersed and irregular to cause the kind of systematic variation observed in Tables (3) – (7), and this suspicion is confirmed when the variable is included in the above regressions. This indicates that deployment cycles cannot independently explain why electoral cycles are correlated the implementation of doctrine on the battlefield.

Leadership Changes

Changes in the military leadership may also explain variation in doctrine implementation. When General David Petraeus was appointed as the commanding general of Multi-National Forces – Iraq (MNF-I), his first visit to Baghdad resulted in dramatic changes in operations and strategy that reverberated throughout the country. Military elites clearly have control over the amount of money spent, where forces are stationed, and the kinds of operations that are conducted during the course of a war, suggesting that the effect of leadership changes should be evaluated alongside that of electoral cycles. To measure this, I develop a categorical variable that specifies leaders at the top levels of the military elite: Joint Chiefs of Staff, Central Command (CENTCOM) Commanders, commanding generals of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, and commanding generals of U.S. Forces – Iraq (US-I). Including these indicators does not affect the statistical significance or substantive interpretation of the results in Tables (3) – (7), suggesting that the effect of domestic politics is uninfluenced by changes in military leadership.

Organizational Structure

Finally, organizational structure and incentives may play a role in affecting the implementation of doctrine during war. Because the Department of Defense is one of many bureaucracies in the federal government, it must compete for funding and seeks to increase its autonomy over operations. Therefore, spending patterns in the field may be

affected by budget cycles, while operations and in-theater deployment may be responsive to organizational demands. Further, the structure of the organization and its components may affect the kinds of missions that units conduct and where they are stationed in theater. This kind of change in organizational structure began in late 2006 with the introduction of Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) in the U.S. Army – a comprehensive restructuring that departed from the Army's conventional organization by classification. By integrating cavalry, infantry, engineering, and logistics battalions into one unit, brigades became more mobile and self-contained rather than dependent upon a larger coordinated effort, potentially resulting in dramatic differences in combat effectiveness and operational decisions. However, this too does not fully explain the results presented above. When a binary variable is included to signal whether a unit has transitioned into a brigade combat team, the effect of electoral cycles does not change, suggesting that the results presented in Tables (3) – (7) are robust to alternative explanations.

Alternate Model Specifications

The variables in the statistical analyses are operationalized using a parabolic function. This is to account for the theoretical distinction made between the first months after an election and the months immediately before an election. However, a linear function was also used in robustness checks. The linear model, while not theoretically exact, confirms the intuition that forces are moved to more secure areas in the lead up to an election while violence decreases – this is a relatively easy test of the theory, and it is reflected in the results. A linear model returns very similar results as those presented above, with little to no change in the significance. While this is also not precisely measuring the phenomena predicted, it provides a useful robustness check on the strength of the results. In this specification, while statistical significance varies on the troop location results, estimates of violence levels remain with the expected coefficient and statistically significant.

Chapter Summary

There are naturally many explanations for when, where, and why military operations occur during war. However, the research design and theory described in this chapter account for most of these concerns by comparing the preferences of civilians and the military – while most operations should reflect military priorities, the influence of U.S. election proximity indicates systematic civilian interference at the operational and (at times) tactical level of war. That is not to imply that military preferences are always right – the military as an organization is subject to bureaucratic pathologies, cultural biases, and occasionally incompetent leaders just like any other government agency – but the contribution of this theory is to suggest that civilian preferences to retain power when faced with the prospect of domestic elections can take precedence over military preferences in a domain that is traditionally managed by politically-insulated battlefield commanders.

The data and empirical work presented here make an effort to proxy for information that is both classified and difficult to quantify. As a result, the results presented are imperfect and subject to alternative explanations. However, it is my hope that the combination of outcomes that consistently support my theory, along with to the addition of new (and more detailed) data over time, indicates that U.S. domestic politics do in fact have a substantive effect on how military operations are conducted on the battlefield. Only detailed case studies (which appear in subsequent chapters of this dissertation) can provide the strongest evidence for the causal mechanisms suggested in this chapter – these correlations, however, provide additional support that this phenomenon is systematic and widespread.

Chapter 4

Military Operations in Vietnam and Iraq: A Comparative Case Study

"[All of this at Khe Sanh] is complicated by the fact that it is an election year. I don't give a damn about the election. I will be happy just to keep doing what is right and lose the election… I will have overwhelming disapproval in the polls and elections. I will go down the drain…"

— President Lyndon B. Johnson, statements to Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Earle Wheeler and General Creighton Abrams, 26 March 1968

"I have concluded that I should not permit the Presidency to become involved in the partisan divisions that are developing in this political year…. Accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President."

— President Lyndon B. Johnson, televised address to the nation, 31 March 1968

This chapter evaluates the mechanisms of how electoral politics affected military operations on the battlefield in three separate cases. Until the moment Lyndon B. Johnson announced his intention not to run for another term as President of the United States, civilian and military officials alike throughout the administration carefully considered the political consequences of every operation during the War in Vietnam. As a result, politically controversial bombing operations were highly restricted around areas where civilian casualties may have reached politically unacceptable levels, and military operations in the wake of the Tet Offensive of 1968 were almost entirely defensive in nature. Almost 6,000 U.S. Marines trapped under siege in northwestern South Vietnam at a base in Khe Sanh had been denied reinforcements for a counteroffensive due to concerns about creating domestic civil unrest. Johnson himself remarked that he was concerned about popular response should additional forces be sent to take back a

strategically questionable outpost. However, one day after his stunning announcement to withdraw, the U.S. Air Force began Operation PEGASUS – a massive air assault followed by additional ground forces – which finally cleared the way for the relief of U.S. Marines, at a cost of almost 800 servicemen. Absent the political pressures of primary challengers and public opinion, Johnson was able and willing to approve offensive military operations in Vietnam and incur substantial casualties to secure the base at Khe Sanh.

Almost four decades later, President George W. Bush would find himself is a similar situation weighing the pros and cons of offensive military action during a presidential campaign in the midst of an increasingly unpopular war. Despite dramatically different strategic circumstances, military structure, and commanders, offensive operations during the summer of 2004 exhibited remarkably similar patterns to those in Vietnam; most were conducted to incur as few casualties as possible or delayed until after the November 2 general election. In Fallujah, a city the size of Des Moines located 40 miles west of Baghdad, Marines waited patiently after receiving an operational order in September for a second assault as the presidential campaigns in the U.S. came to a close. After two months of preparations by both sides, operations against insurgents in Fallujah began on 7 November 2004 – just five days after President Bush won reelection. Free from the constraints of public opinion during a close election, the Bush administration was free to pursue the war according to the advice of the military commanders on the ground. At the cost of almost 100 servicemen, U.S. Marines and Soldiers retook the city that had gained the nickname "the bomb factory" because of its ability to export weapons and munitions to insurgents throughout Iraq.

In contrast to the Fallujah campaign, counterinsurgency operations in Iraq were much less politicized immediately after the 2004 elections. Offensive operations during the summer and fall of 2005 reached far into the northeastern province of Iraq in Tal Afar – a city on the Syrian border that served as a center for smuggling and foreign fighters for the insurgency. Similar to the strategic situations in Fallujah and Khe Sanh, clearing the city of Tal Afar required a major offensive that was likely to result in high levels of U.S. casualties. However, because the administration was relatively safe from electoral

consequences after its victory in 2004, there was little to no political intervention in the military operation that would eventually secure the city. Relatively low levels of violence combined with considerable time before the 2006 midterm elections resulted in the freedom to conduct offensive operations. As a result, Operation RESTORING RIGHTS began in September of 2005 and lasted over two weeks, ultimately ending in the eradication of insurgents from Tal Afar and continued combat patrols by U.S. forces throughout the city. Though U.S. casualties were expected to be high going into the operation, U.S. and Iraqi forces were able to secure the city at only the cost of six and twelve combat deaths, respectively. Thus, Operation RESTORING RIGHTS was able to use heavy offensive action to clear out insurgents from an urban environment without interference from safely-elected political officials in Washington.

Using the three operations described above, I compare differences in the organizational structure, leadership hierarchy, and domestic political context of U.S. military operations at war to understand when and why operations become politicized. It first uses a most different case design to compare Operation PEGASUS at Khe Sanh with Operation PHANTOM FURY in Fallujah and identifies key differences in the type of assault, organization of the military, composition of the senior leadership, and other potential explanatory factors to suggest that as domestic political pressures changed, the willingness of the president to engage in offensive operations also changed. It then uses a most similar case design to compare Operation RESTORING RIGHTS in Tal Afar, suggesting that because all other factors were nearly identical, the only factor that can explain differences between the operations is the domestic political atmosphere. Together, these two comparisons between three unique cases present evidence that identifies domestic political influences on military operations at war.

Theoretical Expectations and Empirical Design

The U.S. political cycle, with its regular election schedule and active global foreign policy, is an ideal country in which to test this theory across time and space. The

President of the United States has sweeping powers over the conduct of the military as commander-in-chief, and the country has a firm history of civilian control over the military, suggesting that orders given by the president will be followed by his subordinates, regardless of rationale. The U.S. system also has a healthy history of scrutiny concerning foreign policy, particularly since the Vietnam War. Despite a lack of existential threats to the integrity of the state, the U.S. has engaged in multiple conflicts over the last 40 years across the globe and projected both military and economic power into nations large and small with regularity, providing no limit of potential military operations to analyze. Finally, the American public since the experience of Vietnam has voted consistently on an executive's ability to execute sound foreign policy and protect American hegemony across the globe.

Thus, we can develop the following expectations regarding military operations during a U.S. election year:

H1: Offensive military operations will be halted or delayed by the executive branch while the incumbent is running for reelection.

H2: Offensive military operations will resume immediately when the incumbent is no longer running for reelection.

H3: Offensive military operations will be conducted without civilian interference in military affairs when there are no electoral concerns.

Alternative Explanations

There are naturally many factors that affect the type, timing, and execution of military operations on the battlefield, and domestic political incentives may at times align with many of the expectations and predictions that other explanations suggest. The strategic environment, organizational structure of the military, experience of the leadership cadre and officer corps, individual personalities and relationships, and the geopolitical balance of power are all potentially powerful reasons why military doctrine may be implemented differently on the battlefield. By holding these factors constant or varying them in

systematic ways, however, we are able to identify the individual power of domestic political incentives on the timing and objectives of military operations during war.

The strategic environment is first and foremost the most intuitive reason why military operations vary on the battlefield. Depending on the situation on the ground, commanders and operators will vary the timing and type of operations to respond to local needs and immediate threats. These needs vary with the geography and terrain, weather, trends in violence, whether the operation is an offensive or counteroffensive, the level of training of the soldiers, local politics, and the size and scope of the potential operation, among others. Weather, terrain, and geography all affect the timing of operations as well as the type – jungle operations are expected to look different than operations in urban warfare. Further, adverse weather conditions such as extreme heat, cold or rain can delay major operations for months at a time. During World War II, strategic bombing operations slowed down considerably during the late fall and winter months as cloud cover limited the visibility of pilots, while winter months in Afghanistan mark the end of the fighting season as snow covers the Hindu Kush mountains. Violence levels and enemy activity also play key roles in how operations are conceived and timed. Counterattacks are usually planned and executed quickly as the defensive side seeks to regain territory and momentum, while offensives are often planned well in advance in order to mass the appropriate forces and catch the enemy off guard. Operation Overlord, the WWII invasion of Normandy, was planned months in advance with enormous amounts of preparation, while the German counteroffensive at Antwerp which led to the Battle of Bulge was planned and executed in much shorter time due to the strategic environment. Finally, local politics may also play a role in the timing and type of military operations. Large, kinetic operations in the lead up to a local election may result in strategically unfavorable outcomes, while smaller population-centric operations may be more effective in projecting government legitimacy.

The organizational structure of the military is also an important factor in how orders are received, interpreted, and executed down the chain of command. Organizational pathologies such as standard operating procedures, bureaucratic incentives, and

institutional memory all contribute to deviations in how military doctrine is implemented on the battlefield. Further, the composition of the organization itself and tours of duty may affect the way military operations are executed during war. Standard operating procedures, such as a force planning and logistics protocols, may delay the initiation of operations due to organizational constraints or force countries to engage in operations sooner than expected. In the mobilizations leading to World War I, standard operating procedures and logistics requirements led to the early mobilization of Russian forces and contributed to Germany's decision to begin an offensive in late 1914 (Snyder 1984). However, military operations in the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan were defined by low levels of invading forces in part because of the difficulty of mobilizing and deploying large numbers of troops immediately after the attacks of September 11. Bureaucratic incentives may also cause military operations to change in predictable ways. Each service and department is eager to grow its own budget and increase autonomy, which may result in operations that favor one service over another at the expense of responding to needs on the ground. Despite pleas from higher headquarters, strategic bombing by the UK during World War II focused not on aiding the ground offensive, but instead on breaking German morale on the continent, in large part because the Royal Air Force was trying to distinguish itself as a new department in the ministry of defense (Biddle 2004). Finally, institutional memory can affect military operations – the strategic goals and operational invasion plan during the first Gulf War were all informed by a military still scarred from the outcomes of the Vietnam War.

The composition of the leadership and officer corps are also important factors that affect the way doctrine is implemented on the battlefield. The abolition of the draft led to a series of profound changes in the U.S. military and the all-volunteer force today is more professional, better compensated and trained than the conscripted army of pre-1975. Enlisted men designated for military service by the draft were less motivated, not as well trained, and less likely to fully commit to missions than volunteer forces. Similarly, the military leadership suffered from a lack of morale and incomplete training – lieutenants during both World War II the Vietnam War were so likely to be seriously wounded or killed within the first three months of operations that many senior enlisted personnel

refused to develop relationships with junior officers. This breakdown in camaraderie and professional ethics resulted in profound difficulties when executing operations, a lack of leadership, and may have contributed to the kind of tragedies exemplified by the massacre at My Lai. Further, one-year deployment cycles, with the guarantee that men would not have to return to the battlefield, resulted in a defunct learning process and lack of commitment to sustainable practices and politically-sensitive operations. Officers with experience in counterinsurgency operations and creative thinking were few and far between in an organization that promoted careerist behavior, ticket punching, and short deployments.

Individual personalities and relationships may also affect the way that doctrine is implemented on the battlefield. How much a president or general officer trusts certain advisors can profoundly affect the way that information is interpreted and acted upon. Further, poor working relationships can result in micromanagement or a relief of responsibilities to other commanders at the expense of local knowledge and correct division of labor. Just as autocratic leaders often sacrifice military effectiveness for effective coup-proofing, insecure commanders and elected officials may inadvertently sacrifice battlefield effectiveness due to mistrust and poor relationships. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Graham Allison reports that President Kennedy's trust in Robert Kennedy, Secretary of Defense McNamara, and special counselor Theodore Sorensen ultimately outweighed the advice of Air Force Chief of Staff, Curtis LeMay, with whom Kennedy had a poor working relationship. As a result, Allison (1969) suggests that Kennedy chose to institute the naval blockade of Cuba over limited air strikes because of the coalition formed during a brief absence as he made a campaign trip to Connecticut.

Finally, the geopolitical balance of power may explain variation in the implementation of military doctrine. Operations that are too offensive in nature may appear threatening to other powers and provoke them to become more involved in order to defend interests at stake in the conflict. Further, operations that are primarily defensive in nature may assure allies of the limited nature of a campaign and encourage them to become more committed to a conflict. During the Korean War, U.S. offensive operations in North Korea provoked

the Chinese to become militarily involved in the conflict, and Beijing sent over a million men over the Yalu River to fight against U.S. and South Korean forces on the peninsula. Acutely aware of China's ability to launch a similar invasion on its southern border, President Johnson subsequently put significant constraints on bombing targets inside of North Vietnam, determined to keep communist China from intervening again against U.S. military forces. Regional factors such as neighboring powers can substantially alter a state's ability to conduct offensive operations within theater, resulting in systematic deviations from prescribed military doctrine in order to satisfy other international actors and honor commitments.

Empirical Strategy

Case studies present both an important empirical tool for theory development and theory testing. Process tracing and historical analysis provide invaluable insights into the inner workings of government and the causes of outcomes in world affairs. Pairing cases that are similar or different along the independent or dependent variables subsequently allows for theory testing – by holding potential explanatory variables constant, we gain a better understanding of which factors are most important in affecting decision-making. In the realm of foreign policy and the study of international relations, where the number of observations is typically small, this technique becomes even more valuable as large-n statistical analyses become increasingly difficult to conduct.

By identifying the alternative factors that may affect my dependent variable of choice – the timing and type of military operation – and varying them in systematic ways through comparing cases, I am able to account for many explanations and analyze the effect of my independent variable of interest – domestic political pressure through elections. To accomplish this, I use two established methods of case study analysis in the empirical design of this chapter: Mill's methods of difference and agreement. While each operation is similar in important ways such as the strategic value and relative size, they differ in equally important ways that allow for side-by-side comparison. I use Mill's method of agreement to compare the cases of Operation PEGASUS during the Battle for Khe Sanh

and Operation PHANTOM FURY during the Second Battle of Fallujah. Then, I use Mill's method of difference to compare the second battle of Fallujah with Operation RESTORING RIGHTS in Tal Afar, Iraq.

Mill's method of agreement is also known as a most different case design. Here, the two operations that I analyze differ in almost every respect except for the independent and dependent variables of interest. In this analysis, the Battle for Khe Sanh and the Second Battle of Fallujah differ in every respect along the alternative explanations provided above, but are still subject to the domestic political cycle during a U.S. presidential election year. I then show that once this pressure was relieved, we observed immediate military action and a resumption of offensive operations as ordered by the executive branch.

The Battle for Khe Sanh and the Second Battle of Fallujah are different on virtually every strategic consideration described above. Operation PEGASUS at Khe Sanh was an air strike counteroffensive to the Tet Offensive launched by the North Vietnamese in January 1968. Deep in the mountainous highland jungles of Vietnam, the small base consisted of a single airstrip and barracks for a few thousand Marines. After two months of siege, a massive air assault began on April 1 at the beginning of the monsoon season, and was followed up by reinforcements of Marines and infantryman who broke through to relieve the remote outpost. In total, the U.S. suffered over 700 casualties in a tactical victory, though the outpost would later be abandoned due to continued enemy pressure. In contrast, the Second Battle of Fallujah was a planned ground assault into an urban, desert environment to clear out insurgents who were occupying the city and using it to export weapons and munitions across Iraq. Conducted in November when the desert begins to cool, the two-month battle resulted in the deaths of over 100 U.S. service members and a tactical victory. However, as Coalition forces withdrew from the city, insurgents again took it over in a strategic loss.

The two battles further differ on organizational biases and leadership experience. While logistics were an issue for the forces at Khe Sanh as troops battled the Tet Offensive in

February of 1968, U.S. troops in Iraq were amassed well ahead of time and had little to prevent their mobility in and around Fallujah. With leaders whose primary experience had been forged in the conventional battles of World War II and Korea, the experiences of Vietnam's general officers would be remarkably different than the leaders of the Iraqi invasion – generals who had been young lieutenants in Vietnam and whose latest experience had been the peacekeeping operations in the 1990s. Further, the preferences and attitudes of soldiers drafted into the selective service during Vietnam diverged considerably from the training and morale of soldiers in the all-volunteer service that occupied Iraq. While Johnson insisted that the deployment cycles of all service members be held at one year during Vietnam, the Marines at Fallujah only served tours of six months, resulting in less institutional memory but higher morale amongst a smaller, better trained fighting force.

Additionally, the personalities responsible for the conduct of the war and relationships between the principles differed dramatically between Vietnam and Iraq. Lyndon B. Johnson, former Senate Majority Leader of Texas and liberal self-made Democrat, was known as a force of a personality, dependent upon public affirmation for validation but also determined to enact a new vision for American life. Insecure because of his sudden elevation due to the assassination of his rival John F. Kennedy, he kept the vast majority of Kennedy's national security advisors due to his relative lack of experience in foreign affairs. His relationships, however, with the military establishment were those of discord rather than harmony. Johnson never fully trusted Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, and ushered him out almost immediately after the Tet Offensive, while he repeatedly ignored the advice given by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and commanding officers. Johnson expressed full confidence in General William Westmoreland, Commander of Military Assistance Command Vietnam, and the combatant commanders, yet simultaneously consistently overrode their requests for more troops and more lenient rules of engagement during the bombing campaigns. By contrast, George Bush, a conservative Republican governor from Texas who would succeed his father as president, was instead known for his ability to represent the Republican establishment and consensus. Despite his inexperience as governor in dealing with foreign policy issues,

Bush suffered from little insecurity and established a national security advisory team that was largely composed of figures from the first Bush administration – Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, and later, Robert Gates. Cheney's recommendation of his friend and partner from the Ford administration for Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, resulted in a tight working relationship between Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld – very different from the relationship between Johnson, McNamara, and Vice President Humphrey. Finally, Bush often expressed a willingness to acquiesce to the requests of the military organization and overrule the civilians in the administration – despite profound concerns voiced by Secretary Colin Powell, an outsider amongst many neoconservatives in the administration, Bush agreed to Rumsfeld's and General Tommy Franks' invasion plan for Iraq.

Finally, the geopolitical context of the two operations were dramatically different. While the United States during Vietnam was heavily focused on constraining the war so as not to provoke Chinese or Soviet involvement, the U.S. operated with little to no constraints during the Iraq War. As a player in bipolarity, much of U.S. operational planning was done with the Soviet Union in mind, while as the hegemon in a unipolar world, the United States operated with considerable freedom across the globe. South Korean and Laotian allies in the conflict in Vietnam were fickle and not well trained, while British and other allies in Iraq operated professionally and with much success. In sum, it is clear that the two operations differ on almost every theoretical explanatory variable, from strategy setting to organizational biases, leadership and relationships, and the geopolitical stage. Table 1 below depicts in full the numerous differences between the two operations.

By contrast, Mill's method of difference is also known as a most similar case design. Here, the two operations that I analyze are similar in almost every respect except for the independent and dependent variables of interest. Both occur within a year of each other in Iraq, in provinces very close to each other with a large Sunni majority. Both operations are untaken under the same leadership and the same personalities in the same

Table 4.1: Similarities and Differences Between Operations in Vietnam and Iraq

		Khe Sanh, Vietnam 1 April 1968	Fallujah, Iraq 7 November 2004	Tal Afar, Iraq 1 September 2005
	Outcome of Interest	*Delayed*	*Delayed*	*Not-Delayed*
	Explanatory Factor			
Strategic Environment	Terrain	Jungle	Desert	Desert
	Warfare Type	Mountain	Urban	Urban
	Assault Type	Air Assault	Clearing	Clearing
	Weather	Hot, rainy, cloudy	Moderate, dry	Moderate, dry
	Violence Trends	High violence	Low violence	Low violence
	Nature of Offensive	Counter-offensive	Planned offensive	Planned offensive
	Nature of Enemy	Conventional	Insurgency	Insurgency
	Local Politics	No elections	Election in Jan 2005	Election in Dec 2005
	U.S. Casualties	703 KIA	96 KIA	6 KIA
	Success	Tactical victory, strategic loss	Tactical victory, strategic loss	Tactical and strategic victory
Organization Pathologies	Logistics	Reinforcements en route, delayed	Troops massed in advance of assault	Troops massed in advance of assault
	Fiscal Year Cycle	Third quarter	First quarter	Fourth quarter
	Primary Service	Marines, Air Force	Marines, Army	Army, Marines
	Previous conflict	Korean War	Peacekeeping in Kosovo	Peacekeeping in Kosovo
	High Troop Levels	540,000	150,000	150,000
Leadership	Deployment Cycles	One year	6 months	6 – 12 months
	Selective Service	Draft	All-volunteer	All-volunteer
	Officer Training	Low, high turnover	High, low turnover	High, low turnover
	Leadership Exp.	World War II	Vietnam	Vietnam
Personalities / Relationships	President	L.B. Johnson (D)	George W. Bush (R)	George W. Bush (R)
	Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff	Earle Wheeler (USA)	Richard Myers (USAF)	Richard Myers (USAF)
	Secretary of Defense	Robert McNamara / Clark Clifford	Donald Rumsfeld	Donald Rumsfeld
	Regional Commander	Ulysses Sharp (USN)	John Abizaid (USA)	John Abizaid (USA)
	Theater Commander	William Westmoreland / Creighton Abrams (USA)	George Casey (USA)	George Casey (USA)
Geopolitics	Region	Southeast Asia	Southwest Asia	Southwest Asia
	Structure of International System	Bipolarity	Unipolarity	Unipolarity
	Regional Powers	China	Iran, Israel	Iran, Israel
	Allies in Conflict	South Korea, Australia	UK, Poland, Australia	UK, Poland, Australia
Domestic Politics	Election Year	Yes, general	Yes, general	No
	Popularity of War	Unpopular	Increasingly unpopular	Increasingly unpopular
	Electoral Resolution	31 March 1968	2 November 2004	4 November 2006

geopolitical environment. Finally, both are urban, desert offensives designed to root out and capture insurgents who had taken over parts of the city in order to export fighters and weapons to the rest of the country. Table 1 also indicates the multiple levels on which the two operations are strategically, organizationally, and geopolitically similar.

Johnson, Khe Sanh, and Operation PEGASUS

The events of February and March 1968 marked a tremendous shift in American politics that would permanently change the course of both the Vietnam War and U.S. domestic policy more broadly. After the Tet Offensive that began on 31 January, the Johnson administration underwent a comprehensive strategy review that culminated in a policy reversal and de-escalation of the war, announced on March 31. In addition to declaring a cease in bombing (except in the demilitarized zone area), publicly calling on North Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh to pursue peace talks, and announcing a temporary troop increase to support forces already in combat, Lyndon Baines Johnson formally withdrew his candidacy for another term as president – a stunning and monumental decision to recuse himself of partisan politics in order to pursue the domestic and foreign agendas in the ways he felt were necessary but that campaign politics would prevent.

Why did Johnson withdraw from the election, and what was its effect on Vietnam policy? This section suggests that Johnson's decision to withdraw was the product of increasing partisan pressure to manipulate wartime strategy in order to satisfy domestic electoral necessities. Further, convincing polling data suggested he would not win the nomination let alone the general election, and Johnson's impact domestically and internationally would be better served by a withdrawal. If he had the freedom to pursue both the war and his domestic agenda without campaign politics interfering, he may be able to both win the war and restart the Great Society in his final months in office, cementing his legacy as a visionary for the future of the U.S. This had a profound effect on Vietnam policy and U.S. military operations in the war. Rather than being constrained by

domestic concerns about the possibilities of escalation and being pressured to withdraw, Johnson was able to temporarily escalate the war in key places while also following the course decided upon in the aftermath of Tet at his own pace: de-escalation, Vietnamization, and ultimate withdrawal.

This course of action is epitomized in Johnson's thoughts and actions during the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) siege of the Marines combat base at Khe Sanh. Casualties at the base were climbing as Marines took almost constant shelling, helicopter resupply efforts were in constant danger from NVA anti-aircraft weapons, and public dissatisfaction with the administration's inaction was growing. Over the 60-day period that the base was under siege, activity at Khe Sanh comprised 38% of all reports filed by the Associated Press, 25% of all television clips, and 17 out of 60 front-page headlines in the *New York Times* – the vast majority advocating for withdrawal from the base (Prados and Stubbe, 276). After two months of deliberations on the feasibility of defending the base, with civilian advisors in favor of withdrawal and military advisors in favor of a counter-offensive, Johnson approved a massive air strike to liberate the trapped Marines and drive out NVA forces just days before he announced his decision to withdraw from the domestic election. The strike, code-named Operation PEGASUS, commenced on April 1, 1968 – just one day after Johnson's historic speech. Absent concerns about reelection, Johnson was free to allow his general officers to conduct ground operations in accordance with their assessment of strategic needs on the ground while gradually guiding U.S. policy toward de-escalation and withdrawal.

Vietnam and the Politics of Khe Sanh

American military involvement in Vietnam escalated dramatically in 1965 with the introduction of the first U.S. combat troops in March of that year. Over the next three years, the military situation in South Vietnam slowly stabilized into a war of attrition as the United States continued to deploy additional forces and the North Vietnamese government in Hanoi steadily infused South Vietnam with large numbers of communist guerillas. Westmoreland's strategy of attrition, designed to inflict unacceptable casualties

on the North Vietnamese forces, additionally required the military command in Saigon to know how many troops Hanoi was able to send south. As a result, U.S. troops established a series of bases along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) at the 17th parallel as well as South Vietnam's borders with Cambodia and Laos in order to monitor the flow of troops and equipment into the country. This operational strategy became known as the "McNamara Line," and in addition to the bases the line was equipped with acoustic and heat sensing devices to monitor the flow of North Vietnamese forces south. Among these bases was an outpost north of Khe Sanh, district capital of Hurong Hoa in the northwestern corner of South Vietnam, that was manned by about 6,000 U.S. Marines.

Built in 1962, the base at Khe Sanh was considered strategically important for U.S. forces in Vietnam as a defense against a possible North Vietnamese invasion and to keep track of infiltrating Viet Minh forces traveling south. Composed of a small airstrip and located in the mountain highlands near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and Laotian border, Khe Sanh was little more than a series of hills less than 1,000 feet high and isolated from large population centers. Nevertheless, this relatively small base became a major point of contestation before, during, and after the Tet Offensive of 1968. Independent from the main thrust of the offensive, the North Vietnamese were trying to recreate their 1954 victory over the French at Diem Bien Phu and deal the United States a serious blow both militarily and in the court of public opinion. U.S. forces received intelligence as to the North Vietnamese plans in the fall of 1967 and began to prepare for the oncoming assault.

As North Vietnamese forces and supplies continued to infiltrate in the South Vietnam via the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which traversed through Laos and Cambodia, Westmoreland increasingly advocated for an invasion of Laos to cut off and destroy the supply route (Prados and Stubbe, 194). An invasion, however, would require a series of clearing operations beforehand to sweep the border of insurgents before an invasion could be planned – these four operations were code-named YORK. Though Johnson was skeptical of the merits of an invasion, he was not opposed to the clearing operations in the four most northern provinces. Knowing that the president could not initiate such a massive

escalation of the war during an election year, it was reported that, "Westmoreland hoped his plan could be approved after the 1968 elections" (Prados and Stubbe, 198). Khe Sanh provided the perfect scene for a major battle against North Vietnamese forces: away from populated centers it would result in fewer civilian casualties, the need to coordinate with Saigon was negligible because of their diminished presence in the North, and the NVA seemed to be interested in mounting an assault on the base.

Over the fall and winter of 1967, North Vietnamese forces infiltrated through Laos to mass in and around the base. General Westmoreland, fixated on the importance of defeating the NVA at Khe Sanh, declared it the most important battle of the war, to be fought (and won) at all costs (Prados and Stubbe, 199). Determined to deal the NVA a decisive blow and convinced that the United States had the tactical and strategic advantage, Westmoreland was nevertheless concerned about opinion back in Washington. Fearing that Johnson and his advisors would order U.S. forces to withdraw from the remote outpost, he enlisted the help of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) General Wheeler through a backchannel communication to emphasize to the president the importance of holding Khe Sanh. As Westmoreland ordered Marine Colonel Cushman to prepare defenses against a major assault around the Tet Holiday (but to support with no more reinforcements than could be resupplied by air), he ordered that all briefings, to be sanitized for the press, were to explicitly make the analogy between Khe Sanh and Dien Bien Phu. Still concerned that the civilian leadership would try and withdraw, on the eve of the first attacks Westmoreland instructed his subordinates, "There should be discussion on [the] need for unanimity and solidarity against any pressure to abandon the Khe Sanh area" (Prados and Stubbe, 219).

Initial Assaults and Indirect Politicization

After a series of engagements with NVA forces while out on patrol, on January 20, 1968 U.S. forces from Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion 26 Marines engaged North Vietnamese troops on a ridgeline near Hill 861 using artillery fire. After heavy bombardment, Company Captain Norman Jasper decided to send out a search platoon to scout the area,

only to receive immediate orders to call them back from Marine Colonel Lownds, who had just learned of a large planned assault set for later that night. Nine hours later the 325th North Vietnamese Division launched an attack on Hill 861 from the northwest while three additional NVA divisions attacked the Khe Sanh combat base to the southeast. NVA mortars hit the ammunition stockpile, destroying ¾ of the stocks, and by morning dozens of Marines had been killed in the engagement (Nalty, 25). As Colonel Lownds ordered the 1st Battalion 9th Marines to reinforce the forces at the combat base, NVA forces moved to take the village of Khe Sanh and on 22 January it was abandoned by U.S. and South Vietnamese Forces. The next night, NVA forces attacked Lao troops at Van Houei Sane with relatively little trouble. Using tanks in the first armored attack by North Vietnamese forces in the war, they were able to quickly overrun the Laotian defenses and by 7AM had captured their base of operations. Upon hearing of the engagements, President Johnson asked General Wheeler whether Westmoreland had all of the force he needed, to which Wheeler is reported have replied, "reinforcements have been sent into the area and the weather is not continuously bad. Even in the event of bad weather there is sufficient artillery." (Barrett, 571) Satisfied, Johnson then remarked on the good press coming from Vietnam over the past few weeks.

As forces inside the base took continuous shelling from NVA artillery, Westmoreland cancelled the Tet ceasefire agreement in Khe Sanh and began planning for a counter-offensive. A few days later, North Vietnamese forces were subsequently spotted around the base carrying mortars. While Marines prepared for another major assault, General Wheeler assured Johnson that Khe Sanh was vital to defend. According to notes from their meeting, "General Wheeler and all the Joint Chiefs agreed that everything which had been asked for had been granted and that they were confident that General Westmoreland and the troops there were prepared to cope with any contingency" (Barrett, 573). The assault came elsewhere, however, and on January 31 North Vietnamese forces launched the Tet Offensive while the guns at Khe Sanh stayed quiet and NVA forces in the area retreated back into Laos. As mortars hit the U.S. Embassy in Saigon and North Vietnamese forces rushed into major cities such as Da Nang and Hue, Johnson sat down to breakfast with Congressional leadership and stated, "This has been a

bad ten days. We have a rather hard season ahead of us for this team… We have our primaries coming up. We are having our conventions. We are in an election year" (Barrett, 579). In response to the attacks of Tet, Johnson ordered Westmoreland to engage with the media once per day, and on February 3 requested through special advisor on Vietnam W.W. Rostow a daily report specifically on the situation at Khe Sanh; these reports began on February 5 (Prados and Stubbe, 353).

North Vietnamese forces resumed their assault on Khe Sanh shortly after the Tet holiday, and on the night of February 4 U.S. forces were able to use airpower to break an NVA assault using technology from remote ground sensors. Despite this minor U.S. victory, however, North Vietnamese troops had a larger goal in sight: Lang Vei. As the NVA moved to further encircle the Marines at Khe Sanh, they attacked Special Forces and ARVN troops based south of the base at a small village known as Lang Vei. Using 12 Soviet amphibious tanks, NVA forces attacked the compound around 1130P on February 6 – nine hours later the base had fallen and by 630P the next day everyone had been evacuated (Prados and Stubbe, 328). Now completely encircled, the Marines at Khe Sanh were no longer able to be supplied by road, and airlifts began to drop food, ammunition, and equipment into the main combat base, which would then be distributed to the various camps on the surrounding hilltops via helicopter. To supply the estimated 6,000 Marines at the base, up to 40 tons of supplies per day had to be dropped in the landing zone at the base. However, conditions for incoming and landing aircraft had deteriorated to such an extent that helicopters could stay stationary for no longer than 20 seconds without taking mortar fire, and on February 12 large C-130 cargo aircraft were banned from making supply runs because of dangers to the pilot and crew (Callahan, 70). Though a decision about Khe Sanh had to be made, Johnson approved neither a risky extraction nor a high-casualty offensive but instead allowed Khe Sanh to fall under siege while making no preparations to liberate it as the Marines had done in Hue. Like most of his other Vietnam policies, the president chose a middle road – one that did not solve the problem, but stayed the course in an effort to avoid signaling either defeat or escalation while incurring as few casualties as possible. Rather than committing the resources and manpower to an offensive so soon after the Tet Offensive, while the American public was

still reeling from the emergence of a credibility gap, Johnson erred on the side of caution and approved orders to hold, but not liberate, Khe Sanh.

Siege

Additional assaults continued to harass the Marines over the first two weeks of February as North Vietnamese forces tightened their encirclement of the base, and casualties continued to accumulate. As a result, both civilian and military advisors began to question the wisdom of continuing to defend Khe Sanh. On February 9, one day after Alabama Democrat and segregationist George Wallace declared his candidacy for President as an independent, Westmoreland asked for an additional 15 battalions – part of the 82nd Airborne and 6/9 of a Marine Division to reinforce positions around Khe Sanh. Though Johnson approved the additional forces, divisions between civilian and military advisors soon revealed fractures in the military's assessment of the situation as well. Upon hearing of the troop request, Secretary Rusk remarked, "I do not see the strategic situation very clearly," and Clark Clifford pointed out the "strange contradiction" in asking for more troops while also claiming victory against the enemy (Barrett, 592). This culminated in a memorandum to the president from General Maxwell Taylor, Johnson's special military advisor and Ambassador to Vietnam, who wrote on February 14,

> My reviews of Westy's cables does not convince me of the military importance of maintaining Khe Sanh at the present time if it is feasible to withdraw. Whatever the past value of the position it is a positive liability now… My present opinion is that Khe Sanh probably can be held but that it will be at a heavy price in terms of casualties and in terms of other ground troops necessary to support and reinforce it…it is less clear that its present value justifies the cost of an all-out defense." (Barrett, 615)

Despite the words of warning, Taylor and other also knew that an extraction would also be a costly endeavor. Given the dangers associated with simple resupply operations, airlifting out several thousand Marines along with ammunition and equipment would have been a monumental and very risky operation, while a ground rescue offensive to battle back the North Vietnamese Army would have similarly resulted in heavy losses (Prados and Stubbe, 364). With public outrage at an all time high following the February

18 announcement of the war's highest casualty toll to date (543 killed and 2,547 wounded in a single week), Johnson could do little but wait and hope that air operations convinced the North Vietnamese to abandon their defenses at Khe Sanh.

Despite increasing ambivalence about the military strategy being pursued at Khe Sanh, the middle of February marked a substantial increase in the intensity of bombing operations against the NVA forces encircling the base. Already isolated in the mountains and with almost all civilian areas evacuated or overrun by NVA forces, U.S. air operations were conducted with little to no regard for civilian casualties. As a result, Marines and Air Force commanders in charge of Operation NIAGRA had almost complete discretion as to targets and tonnage dropped in and around the Khe Sanh area. Between the middle of February and the start of Operation PEGASUS on April 1, Westmoreland reports that, "tactical aircraft flew an average of 300 sorties daily around Khe Sanh, close to one every five minutes, and expended 35,000 tons of bombs and rockets. B-52s flew 2,602 sorties and dropped over 75,000 tons of bombs… It was an awesome display of firepower; given the bomb-delivery capacity of the B-52s, one of the heaviest and most concentrated in the history of warfare" (Westmoreland, 340).

Back in Washington, Johnson continued to receive daily reports on the situation in Khe Sanh, though these reports bore little resemblance to events at the combat base. Sanitized and watered down by Westmoreland, who was well-aware of Johnson's aversion to casualties, reports often low-balled estimates of friendly deaths and omitted estimates of wounded entirely, leaving Washington with the impression that fighting and pressure on the base was relatively light. Meanwhile, Marines at Khe Sanh continued to fortified their defenses with multiple layers of barbed wire, minefields, ground sensors, and bunkers. As a result, the battle "reverted to a contest of supporting arms and the North Vietnamese stepped up their shelling of the base, especially with direct fire weapons" (Shore 1969, 71). Shelling of the base became so regular, with NVA forces so close, the Marines reported an ability to hear the familiar "cough" of rounds being loaded, and they knew that less than a half minute later there would be incoming fire. One unit, in a show of defiance toward the NVA forces besieging the camp, would raise the colors to bugle

sounds every morning. They worked out the ceremony to take 29 seconds exactly before diving for cover as artillery shells rained down.

Despite the sanitized reports being sent to Johnson, some stories of hardship did make it out of Khe Sanh via press reporting and letters, which further pressured the administration to pull out of the isolated base. Letters written home by Lieutenant Willaim R. Ammon about the lack of supplies on Hill 881 were published by the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, sparking domestic outrage among "armchair strategists" that the base was virtually indefensible (Prados and Stubbe, 390).[21] While Westmoreland subsequently dismissed the letters as "exaggerations" and displaying "poor judgment," the reality was much closer to the soldier's complaints than the general's public expressions; twice the Marines at Hill 881 ran out of food supplies during the two-month siege, and at one point were down to only two gallons of water for 17 men. Johnson was eager, however, to redirect blame for Khe Sanh toward the military establishment, and revealed in late February to members of Congress and the press that the Joint Chiefs had personally endorsed the plans to defend Khe Sanh. This statement led to what Westmoreland later deemed, "the apocryphal story that the president had required the Joint Chiefs to 'sign in blood' that Khe Sanh could be held" (Westmoreland, 317).

Toward the middle of February, Westmoreland requested that his deputy, Creighton Abrams (who would replace Westmoreland as commander of MACV just six weeks later), resume planning for a counter-offensive in Khe Sanh – plans that had been delayed with the start of the Tet Offensive. Though Abrams had a very different opinion of U.S. prospects in Vietnam – he is reported to have told Walter Cronkite around this time that, "we cannot win this Goddamned war, and we ought to find a dignified way out" – he complied and took charge of MACV operations in the northern sectors of South Vietnam

[21] Generals Wheeler and Westmoreland repeatedly referred to civilians who recommended changes in military strategy as "armchair strategists," a derogatory term meant to juxtapose the relative comforts of Washington and the United States with the difficult battlefield conditions of Vietnam. The term was applied liberally, and in many cases was even used by General Wheeler to refer to Johnson's civilian advisors, Secretaries McNamara and Rusk included.

(Fromson 2009). Knowing that President Johnson would be hesitant to commit large forces in battle so soon after the Tet Offensive and so close to the spring presidential primaries, Westmoreland and Abrams began secretly developing an operational plan for opening up the road to Khe Sanh through offensive military action.

As March approached, and with it the Democratic primaries, Johnson and his advisors became increasingly worried about the situation in Khe Sanh and policy in Vietnam. Two days after the disappearance of the Jacques patrol, Walter Cronkite closed his "Report from Vietnam" with his own editorial report from his on-site experience after Tet, announcing to the American public,

> We have been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders, both in Vietnam and Washington, to have faith any longer in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds… For it seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate… It is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could.

Henry Graff reports that, "Khe Sanh seemed to symbolize the administration's determination to stick it out in Vietnam," even as the mood in the White House was shifting (Graff, 153). Westmoreland's request for a stunning additional 206,000 troops on 28 February led many in the White House to reevaluate the merits of the strategy of attrition being pursued by the general. Press reports from Khe Sanh grew increasingly negative and disenchanted as the Marines struggled to maintain their positions and morale, leading an increasingly detached Westmoreland to remark later on the "degree of theatrical hand-wringing and crape-hanging by press and television that I would hardly have believed possible. Virtually every television cameraman, for example, posed his commentator in the foreground of some awesome scene, such as a burning fuel dump or the wreckage of a C-130 that lay at the side of the runway" (Westmoreland, 339). With public pressure to withdraw from the base and deescalate in Vietnam ever increasing, the administration began to quietly contemplate the merits of temporarily shifting strategy in order to appease dovish Democrats even as they publicly professed their unconditional support for Westmoreland, right up to his removal from command.

The March Primaries, Escalation, and Withdrawal

March 1 brought the replacement of Secretary McNamara by Clark Clifford, and with it a new way of thinking about Vietnam policy. A thorough review revealed to Johnson's close friend that the administration had been operating largely without an overarching strategic goal, which convinced Clifford that de-escalation and withdrawal were the most sensible and viable options in a war that increasingly looked like a stalemate. Vietnam policy over the following month would change dramatically, just as domestic intra-party conflict pressured Johnson to adopt a less hawkish attitude toward the conflict. Meanwhile, North Vietnamese forces, having lost an estimated 2,000 men and even more battered than the Marines defending the base, began to retreat from their positions around Khe Sanh in mid-March. The NVA withdrawal, combined with the opening of good weather and Westmoreland's desire to silence critics at home, resulted in a relief operational target date of April 1, to be approved by President Johnson (Westmoreland, 347). After a briefing just four days before the estimated start date, Johnson simultaneously approved Operation PEGASUS and expressed his profound frustration at the politics of the situation – just days before he stunned the world and announced his decision not to seek reelection.

Westmoreland's request for additional troops would be short-lived as Clifford and others quickly reassessed the strategic situation in Vietnam. As part of his transition into the office of Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford conducted a top-down review of U.S. policy in Vietnam, ultimately finding that the United States had been operating without either strategic vision for the conflict or an exit plan. While Westmoreland planned for a new counter-offensive against NVA forces, intended to reverse NVA gains during the Tet Offensive, civilians in Washington became increasingly concerned that another escalation would further antagonize critics of Johnson's Vietnam policies. On March 4, just one day after Marines prevailed over NVA forces in dramatic fashion at Hue, Clifford emphasized this concern,

> "We are not sure the present strategy is the right strategy—that of being spread out all over the country with a seek and destroy policy… There will be considerably higher casualties if we follow the Westmoreland plan. It just follows that if we increase our troop commitment by 200,000 men, there will be significantly higher casualties… We must look at the overall impact on us, including the situation here in the United States. We must look at our economic stability, our other problems in the world, our other problems at home" (Barrett, 646-7).

This discussion culminated with almost universal agreement that Johnson should deny Westmoreland's request for large numbers of additional troops and instead suggested a modest increase of 22,000 to fill existing gaps. Despite Westmoreland's quick defense of his objectives in Vietnam, advisors inside the White House had determined that there was a need for new strategic guidance for the field commander from the administration.

As the weeks progressed, the gap between Westmoreland's field objectives and Washington's strategic vision grew, and civilian advisors began to lose confidence in the general's ability to win the war. Rostow, Clifford, and Bundy, concerned that any acknowledgement of a renewed offensive would result in the politicization of new and risky operations domestically, advised Johnson against sending a message of support and encouragement to Westmoreland (Barrett, 655). As a result, plans for the liberation of Khe Sanh remained at headquarters in Vietnam while civilians conducted affairs under the assumption that the situation at the base was stable. Several days later, Westmoreland's rosy assessments that "the enemy has [no] great capability to assume any general offensive in the near future" and that the NVA position around Khe Sanh was severely weakened evoked sharp criticism at home, and both Chairman Wheeler and President Johnson suggested that the general tone down his optimism when speculating on operational and strategic developments (Foreign Relations of the United States, Document 112). Political pressure about Vietnam policy and Khe Sanh meanwhile continued to mount as politicians inside and out of the party criticized Johnson's strategy in Vietnam. Richard Nixon, the presumptive Republic nominee, drew the notice of Johnson for his critique of gradualist policies while Democratic governors advocated for a cessation of bombing and withdrawal; regardless of the policy pursued by the White

House, Johnson could not win politically. Vietnam had become, as Clifford put it, a "sinkhole" both militarily and politically (Barrett, 643).

On March 10 the *New York Times* broke the news of Westmoreland's troop request, sparking outrage among both the public and in the halls of Congress. Though Johnson had already largely decided against sending the additional reinforcements, senators on the Foreign Relations Committee, led by William Fulbright, decided to hold additional hearings on the accuracy of the Times report. Two days before the New Hampshire primary election, Secretary of State Dean Rusk testified about the future of U.S. policy in Vietnam, including the U.S. position in Khe Sanh. With public opinion among Democrats strongly against escalation, voters in New Hampshire expressed their dissatisfaction with Vietnam policies at the ballot box.

On March 14, Johnson only narrowly defeated Eugene McCarthy in the New Hampshire primary – a result that took even close observers of politics by surprise. A strong rebuke of the president's policies abroad, Johnson found himself at the mercy of members of his own party while quietly conducting his own strategy review. Two days after the primary, Senator Robert Kennedy of New York, a vocal critic of Johnson's policies in Southeast Asia, approached Johnson with a qui pro quo offer: if Secretary Rusk (a hawk) resigned and Johnson established a policy review committee to oversee the war planning effort, he would refrain from running against Johnson (Barrett, 672). Wildly popular amongst the democratic base and running on the legacy of his brother, Kennedy was a formidable political opponent for Johnson to defeat in the primaries, even as an incumbent. After some consideration, however, Johnson rebuffed Kennedy's offer on the grounds that "no matter how the arrangement was handled, it would still *appear* to be a political deal" (emphasis added, Barrett 673). Two days after Johnson's refusal, Kennedy declared his candidacy for President and began campaigning, leading many to speculate that Johnson could no longer win the nomination of his party.

Kennedy's entrance into the race in order to protest Johnson's policies in Vietnam sparked considerable concern within a Democratic establishment focused on winning the

general election in November. As a result, members of the administration began to contemplate a temporary cessation in bombing in order to appease dovish democrats during the primary season and satisfy Kennedy and McCarthy. Campaign manager Harry McPherson advocated for "deescalating the fighting by changing [U.S.] tactics, and ultimately even brining a few Americans home" (Barrett, 680), while McGeorge Bundy wrote a few days later to Johnson, "*you* were dead right when you asked me to find a good left hook to go with the military right… the only one that the whole world—and Kennedy and McCarthy too—will call serious is a bombing halt… it has to last a good long time whenever it comes… nothing less will do" (Barrett, 681, 700). Even as plans were being drawn up to halt bombing operations just before the Wisconsin primary, however, Khe Sanh remained on the minds of White House officials. During discussions that centered on a major presidential address to announce the halt, Bundy highlighted just how much the administration had riding on the defense of the base when he remarked, "If we lost at Khe Sanh while stopping bombing we would be in a hell of a shape" (Barrett, 695). The address in question would be given at the end of the month, yet plans to relieve Khe Sanh remained secret from the civilian leadership.

After two months of battling against constant air attacks in an offensive that resulted in thousands of NVA deaths, North Vietnamese forces began to retreat from Khe Sanh and pull back into Laos toward the middle of March. However, the pullback resulted in little relief for the besieged Marines, who continued to take daily onslaughts of artillery fire and rely on dangerous resupply efforts by air. Press coverage of the ongoing battle, almost exclusively negative, culminated in an op-ed by noted historian Arthur Schlesinger that castigated Westmoreland for his decision to remain in Khe Sanh. Schlesinger argued that as soon as the forces were surrounded, "a humane or intelligent leadership would have arranged for the immediate evacuation of the men… [we are there] not for military reasons but for political reasons: we stay because President Johnson deliberately committed American honor to holding Khe Sanh… Khe Sanh is the bastion, not of the American military position, but of General Westmoreland's military strategy—his 'war of attrition' which has been so tragic and spectacular a failure" (Schlesinger 22 March 1968). The same day, President Johnson announced

Westmoreland's promotion to Army Chief of Staff – he would depart for Washington as soon as his replacement was named.

While Schlesinger's open letter to the *Washington Post* surely had little to do with the decision to replace Westmoreland, the two events symbolized the profound frustration that both the public and prominent political figures felt regarding policy in and around Khe Sanh as well as the shift in strategic vision that was occurring within the White House. With domestic dissatisfaction at an all-time high and the Wisconsin primary just nine days away, an anxious Johnson met in D.C. with General Crieghton Abrams, Westmoreland's deputy who would replace him as commander of the Military Assistance Command – Vietnam. Abrams' trip out to Washington was neither social nor coincidental, however. With new intelligence suggesting that NVA forces were beginning to withdraw and visibility improving as the weather cleared, Westmoreland had finally decided to submit his plan to liberate Khe Sanh for approval. The general reflected on how politicized the operation had become when he remarked, "The [NVA] withdrawal coincided with my own plans for re-establishing ground contact with the base. Although the marines were in no real peril, I was anxious to re-establish contact if for no other reason than to silence dolorous critics and allay President Johnson's concern" (Westmoreland, 347). To sell the plan he sent Abrams, who briefed the president on March 26.

Abrams brief consisted of both the plan to initiate offensive operations against NVA forces in Khe Sanh and open up the supply route (Route 9) for transport as well as a request for additional forces in order to fill the gaps that would be opened by the assault. Aware of the political implications of approving such a request, Johnson reacted poorly to the assessment, exclaiming, "[All of this] is complicated by the fact that it is an election year. I don't give a damn about the election. I will be happy just to keep doing what is right and lose the election… I will have overwhelming disapproval in the polls and elections. I will go down the drain" (Foreign Relations of the United States, Document 156). While Wheeler reminded Johnson that "we can't fight a war on the defensive and win," Abrams continued to explain the strategy in and around Khe Sanh.

"We need to be more flexible tactically inside South Vietnam. Khesanh is an example. Khesanh hasn't turned out too bad. We have had 5,000 men and irregulars there, and 20,000 loads of bombs on their two divisions. Their losses have been tremendous… [The enemy] has one division left—shifted one division. We think he has been persuaded not to attack Khesanh. He has lost munitions and fuel. Now we will open the road to relocate Khesanh so we support it better and bring more power to bear" (Ibid). With expected losses now lower than two months ago as NVA forces retreated and public outcry over Khe Sanh at al all-time high, Johnson appeared more amenable to the operation and had both Abrams and Wheeler brief his foreign policy advisors later that day about the proposed plan. Ever concerned about the political ramifications of such an escalation, however, Johnson mused toward the end of the meeting, "How can we get this job done? We need more money in an election year, more taxes in an election year, more troops in an election year, and more cuts in an election year… We have no support for the war" (Ibid).

The final days of March saw major revisions to President Johnson's televised speech, which had been scheduled for the evening of March 31. On March 29, shortly after Johnson approved the operations at Khe Sanh, he began to work from an alternate draft of the speech that focused on the pursuit of peace and cessation of bombing in the North rather than the 13,500 increase in troops to support offensive operations. While announcing a temporary escalation in policy that would prove unpopular, Johnson had also decided to pursue de-escalation and halt a bombing campaign that experts agreed was doing very little to support the war effort. The following night, after considerable debate and attention to the language of the speech, Johnson asked his speechwriter McPherson about the peroration, which had remained the same despite the dramatic changes to the body. "I didn't like it," McPherson replied, and promised to make it short given the length of the text. Johnson answered back to him, "That's O.K. Make it as long as you want. I may even add one of my own" (McPherson, 437). Resigned to plummeting public opinion over the course of the war, yet determined to pursue it in a fashion devoid of politics, Johnson informed McNamara of his intention to withdraw from the election later that evening. The next night, 31 March 1968, as U.S. Marines

marched through the elephant grass of South Vietnam to begin a long and bloody offensive that would relieve their besieged brothers at Khe Sanh, Johnson ended his address with the following statement:

> Fifty-two months and 10 days ago, in a moment of tragedy and trauma, the duties of this office fell upon me. I asked then for your help and God's that we might continue America on its course, binding up our wounds, healing our history, moving forward in new unity, to clear the American agenda and to keep the American commitment for all of our people.
>
> United we have kept that commitment. United we have enlarged that commitment.
>
> Through all time to come, I think American will be a stronger nation, a more just society, and a land of greater opportunity and fulfillment because of what we have all done together in these years of unparalleled achievement.
>
> Our reward will come in the life of freedom, peace, and hope that our children will enjoy through ages ahead.
>
> What we won when all of our people united just must not now be lost in suspicion, distrust, selfishness, and politics among any of our people.
>
> Believing this as I do, I have concluded that I should not permit the Presidency to become involved in the partisan divisions that are developing in this political year.
>
> With America's sons in the fields far away, with America's future under challenge right here at home, with our hopes and the world's hopes for peace in the balance every day, I do not believe that I should devote an hour or a day of my time to any personal partisan causes or to any duties other than the awesome duties of this office—the Presidency of your country.
>
> Accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President.
>
> But let men everywhere know, however, that a strong, a confident, and a vigilant America stands ready tonight to seek an honorable peace—and stands ready tonight to defend an honored cause—whatever the price, whatever the burden, whatever the sacrifice that duty may require" (Johnson, 31 March 1968).

Aftermath and Abandonment

It took the forces in Operation PEGASUS only five days to clear through the dense jungle and NVA forces around Khe Sanh and relieve the encircled Marines. Air support for the

operation was unpredictable due to weather but overwhelming when applied, and lasted about two weeks as troops broke out of the compound and secured Route 9. At an ultimate cost of over 700 Marines, soldiers, and airmen, Khe Sanh was again a viable place from which to launch operations around the demilitarized zone and Laotian border. However, the victory did not last long before strategic reassessments of the U.S. position in Hurong Hoa suggested that the base was no longer required. In June of 1968, General Abrams declared that the garrison was unnecessary to conduct operations throughout the province and deter an NVA invasion due to its remote location and the construction of a new base just east of Khe Sanh, and on July 15 the outpost was destroyed and abandoned in favor of more mobile operations.

If Khe Sanh had become a symbol of American entrenchment in the Vietnam War, its abandonment just three months after the dramatic siege and rescue signaled the administration's profound and abrupt change in strategy in the spring of 1968. Free from the constraints of domestic politics, Johnson was free to approve and pursue operations that furthered his strategic goals in Southeast Asia without regard to public opinion or electoral consequences. The events of February and March 1968 profoundly affected Johnson's interpretation of both the war and his own political fortunes, resulting in a strategy that temporarily escalated involvement in South Vietnam but opened the door for peace negotiations in a way that had previously been unthinkable. The politicization and publicity surrounding Khe Sanh resulted in an impossible decision for any presidential candidate: approve a new offensive at the expense of his party's nomination (either at the polls or voluntarily), or delay operations *yet again* in a bid to retain the office and fight Nixon in the general election. Johnson, acutely aware of the consequences of each decision, ultimately chose to pursue the offensive operations and strategy most in line with the national interest as he perceived it, ultimately sacrificing his own political fortunes in exchange for freedom from the pressures of electoral politics.

Rumsfeld, Fallujah, and Operation PHANTOM FURY

Far from the jungles of Vietnam and almost a half-century later, U.S. Marines found themselves in a similar position during the summer of 2004. As the insurgency in Iraq continued to gain steam, fighters in Mosul and Fallujah had all but pushed out U.S. and Coalition forces from the cities and had gained control of the streets, mosques, and population. The U.S. had attempted to displace Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) insurgents from their stronghold in Fallujah in April, but despite the initial clearing effort, they had not been able to maintain control and both cities were now hotbeds and fortresses for insurgent activity. It was common knowledge amongst the military that in order to gain any traction in Anbar and Ninewa these cities must be retaken – the only question was when and with how many forces (Ricks 2006, 345).

Counterinsurgency doctrine had not yet been articulated for the War in Iraq, and any operations to retake the cities were bound to include considerable firepower and include significant Coalition and civilian casualties. However, 2004 was an election year – George W. Bush was running for reelection against Democratic Party nominee John Kerry who was campaigning on an anti-war platform, and Bush needed to keep an unpopular war out of the headlines during the electoral season. "Each morning seemed to bring some new charge or leaked intelligence… The image of our troops being attacked… became a cause celebre." (Rice 2011, 286) As a result, the offensives in Fallujah and Mosul were delayed several months after the need for a major operation became evident, and on November 7, 2004, the Second Battle of Fallujah and the Battle of Mosul began – just five days after George W. Bush won a second term in office (Ricks 2006, 345).

What explains the timing of the Second Battle of Fallujah? The answer in this case emerges as fairly clear: President George Bush was in a tight race for reelection while waging an increasingly unpopular war. The major offensives in Fallujah and Mosul that were necessary to removed foreign fighters and make progress in establishing a competent governing authority were also likely to create two phenomena that were

politically undesirable for the administration: headlines about a failing military strategy and a large body count. While these two outcomes are generally detrimental to the approval rating of any sitting president, the lead-up to this election was particularly salient as voters decided on the trajectory of the country and evaluated the ability of Kerry – a decorated Vietnam Veteran campaigning against the war – to better execute the office of the President. Thus, during the summer of 2004, when the War in Iraq was both becoming increasingly unpopular with the electorate and while in the midst of a presidential campaign against an anti-war veteran, the administration was naturally eager to keep news of the War in Iraq off of the front page. As a result, major operational decisions regarding offensives in the cities of Fallujah and Mosul were subject to the pressures of domestic politics and profoundly affected by the timing of U.S. electoral cycles, at the expense of the effective implementation of U.S. military doctrine on the battlefield.

Iraq and the Politics of Fallujah

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 was driven by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's vision of a transformed, lighter, and more agile military. This new doctrine, which emphasized and relied upon overwhelming air superiority, targeting, and technological prowess, resulted in an invasion strategy and operational plan that quickly toppled Baghdad and decapitated the Hussein regime, but was woefully under prepared for the enormous task of nation-building that remained after the initial fighting. Shortly after Paul Bremer, administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority, unilaterally dissolved the Iraqi government and army, pockets of resistance to U.S. and Coalition forces began to appear and by 2004 it was clear that an organized insurgency had formed to combat the foreign occupying forces. This insurgency would subsequently inflict over 3,000 combat deaths on U.S. service members and divert attention and resources away from U.S. priorities in Afghanistan and other regions of the world.

Despite enormous success in the early stages of the war, as the U.S. failed to find weapons of mass destruction and continued to lose soldiers to anti-government forces,

public support for the war began to decline in early 2004. Down more than seventeen points from a high of 72 percent approval, only a slim majority of Americans believed that using force in Iraq was the right decision leading into April of a presidential election year (Pew Research Center). Additionally, the Sunni city of Fallujah became a center of operations for anti-coalition forces and would come to symbolize the administration's failing strategy in post-invasion Iraq as the U.S. initiated a series of military operations aimed at eradicating the insurgent presence there. As a result, the administration was wary of the political effects of offensive operations and the need to project success as the war lost support amongst the general public.

April 2004 – Intervention and Withdrawal

The initial Sunni insurgency, comprised largely of ex-Baathists and some foreign fighters, found a base of operations in Fallujah, a city roughly the size of St. Louis, MO located 40 miles west of Baghdad in the Sunni Province of Anbar. Led by Jordanian extremist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, by December 2003 the militants had gained control over large swaths of the city and U.S.-led patrols could not stay in one place more than half and hour before taking fire. Despite the rising violence, however, the arrival of U.S. electoral season meant that the administration could not admit that their policies had resulted in an organized resistance capable of fighting American forces. As a result, fighting "thugs, gangs, and terrorists" (Wright 2013, 104) in potentially high-profile combat operations was not a priority for the administration, which publicly insisted that the growing insurgency was merely an unorganized and disparate group of violent criminals. West reports that in 2004, "Although Fallujah was at the top of the list in terms of violence, in terms of politics it was a backwater problem." (West 2005, 44)

That all changed when four American contractors delivering food supplies were ambushed, shot and burned in their convoy by an angry mob in the heart of the city. The images of their charred corpses being dragged through the streets of the city and subsequently strung up over a bridge on the Euphrates River evoked what many called an "emotional and aggressive" response from the administration (West, 58). Further, the

event became highly politicized in Congress, and party leadership in Washington, D.C. quickly demanded action from the Bush administration. In the aftermath of a briefing to the Armed Services Committee, Congressman John Hunter (R) stated, "I think it's a major mistake for a congressional leadership to…indicate… that somehow we have been jarred or intimidated by actions like the ones that happened in Fallujah and that we will change our course." (Hunter, 2 April 2004) Public outcry for a swift reprisal was overwhelming and pervasive, forcing the administration to appear resolved to the American public while competing against a Democratic Party well into primary season for the 2004 elections.

Calling the murders "horrific, despicable attacks" (Stout, 31 March 2004), the administration overruled the Marines' recommendation to continue with a slow recapturing of the city that would last seven months, and saw it not as a "battlefield crime but a symbol of America's humiliation and a challenge to the American occupation." (West, 59) Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld (along with Central Command Commander General John Abazaid, CPA Administrator Paul Bremer, and Commander of U.S. Forces-Iraq General Ricardo Sanchez) ordered a division-wide assault on the city to be executed immediately. "They will go in, they will restore order, and they'll put those people back in their place." (Kimmitt, 31 March 2004) White House leaders publicly promised an "overwhelming" response to the attacks – a deliberate and radical departure from the operational policy the Marines in charge of Fallujah had planned for and advocated to their superiors (McGeough, 3 April 2004). Thus, as a result of political forces back in Washington, D.C. and the need to satisfy public opinion during an election year, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, with the approval of President Bush, ordered a massive, immediate assault on the city against the operational advice of Marine commanders on the ground.

However, the absence of time to lay the strategic groundwork for a major assault resulted in an international political nightmare for the Bush administration. Because the civilians in Washington had developed neither an operational nor strategic plan for the battle, as service commanders would have done, the anticipated phases and timelines of the

campaign were not laid out. (West, 60) The administration had ordered offensive operations into Fallujah, but neglected to provide the commanders of the operation with their strategic goals in assaulting the city – the inverse of normal civil-military relations. The subsequent overwhelming use of force combined with the absence of a political strategy resulted in almost universal condemnation from the international community and inside Iraq. Further, as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice prepared to give testimony to the 9/11 Commission over the National Security Council's knowledge about al-Qaeda, the stakes were high for the Bush administration to maintain its credibility and international legitimacy. After coming under pressure from allied Sunni governments in the Gulf, Iraqi leaders trying to negotiate a unity government, and even British allies who were concerned about blowback, Bush was forced to reconsider the Fallujah operation. In other words, "the battle for Fallujah had become equally a military matter and a political matter." (West, 115)

On April 9, 2004, the Coalition Provisional Authority announced that U.S. forces in Fallujah "had initiated a unilateral suspension of offensive operations," despite the considerable tactical gains made at the cost of 51 U.S. servicemen killed and almost 500 wounded. After three weeks of siege, negotiations, and waning White House support for another massive assault, the Fallujah Brigade – a local force comprised of Sunni tribesmen and former insurgents – was formed on 24 April. West concluded that, "the Marines… pursued a different approach because they had been told that the president wanted an alternative to attacking Fallujah" (West, 224). However, the loyalty of the brigade was questioned almost at the outset of its formation, and within a month Fallujah again became a haven for insurgents. By the end of May, exports of munitions and weapons from the city became so prevalent that Fallujah gained the nickname the "bomb factory." The Bush administration's military response to domestic political outrage had created an international incident, resulting in a withdrawal of U.S. forces, strategic battlefield loss, and the reestablishment of Fallujah as the primary location for insurgent activity across Iraq.

Autumn 2004 – The Politics of Timing and Force

As the 2004 presidential election drew closer and violence continued to increase, the administration began to delay the initiation of major combat operations and focus on good-news stories over the course of the summer, including the transfer of Iraqi sovereignty over to the interim government and the war crimes trial of Saddam Hussein. The only major military offensive of the summer, the Battle of Najaf, resulted in thirteen U.S. fatalities over a period of three weeks, while heavier fighting was ordered postponed until shortly after the 2 November election. While the timing of these military operations should have in theory been left to the discretion of commanders in the field, domestic politics in fact played a critical role in determining when and where offensives would take place. Each summer month before U.S. elections saw on average five fewer U.S. fatalities than other months, while the months after a U.S. election were more violent. Post-election months saw an average of six *additional* fatalities per month than other months, representing a 27% difference in average monthly U.S. combat fatalities before and after U.S. domestic elections (iCasualties).

Throughout the summer of 2004, Fallujah steadily became increasingly violent and inaccessible to U.S. forces, and by early September there was consensus from the regiment on the ground to the White House that the violence had reached intolerable levels. As both Iraqis and Americans renounced the Fallujah Brigade as a failure, the operation order to commence another major assault on the city came through that month. However, though the division wanted to seize Fallujah quickly they were instructed to wait, resulting in an increased cost to the U.S. assaulting force.

> With months to prepare, [the insurgents] had dug trench lines, rigged daisy chains of explosives along alleyways, hauled buses and trucks as barriers across the main streets, and planned fallback positions. To the south they had bulldozed earthen berms on the outskirts of the industrial sector and Queens, inserting land mines and RPG revetments. In the northwest… they dug trench lines and threw up a huge berm. Where McCoy and 3/4 [Marines] had assaulted from the northeast, they placed Hetsco barriers – massive sandbags filled with dirt and wired together to yield solid protection. At whatever point the Marines had previously entered the city, the insurgents prepared to repulse a return visit. (West, 254)

As President Bush hit the campaign trail that summer vying for reelection against John Kerry, calling attention to insurgent success in Fallujah was not in his interest. In a press conference with interim Prime Minister Allawi in September, Bush emphasized steady progress and increasing competence of the Iraqi Security Forces. "Iraqi Security Forces are taking increased responsibility for their country's security… And in Najaf and other important areas, Iraqi military forces have performed with skill and success" (White House Press Office). A U.S.-led assault on Fallujah, where Iraqi military and police forces had been co-opted by insurgents and actively cooperated with Islamic extremists, would have drawn attention away from the successes that the administration was seeking to highlight. Further, reinforcements had arrived in the city and U.S. forces now estimated that the number of insurgents had doubled to total three thousand. The increase in insurgent strength, combined with the physical barricades, virtually guaranteed that any assault on the city would be far more costly than the April operation – potentially a major political setback for an administration campaigning on the success of it transitional policy (Ricks 2006). Though the operation order was completed and received in September, the assaulting force was deprived of the final authorization to begin operations for a full two months.[22][23]

---

[22] Unpublished interview with a USMC Lieutenant Colonel, commanding officer of a Marine battalion from Second Battle of Fallujah.

[23] Operation Orders (Op Orders) vary considerable in their scope and timing, and are thus difficult to judge in comparison to one another. However, given the history of the Fallujah assault and the available forces outside the city, it is not unreasonable to suggest that an op order delivered in September could have easily been executed within two or three weeks upon receipt. Further, the receipt of the op order in early September, rather than June or July when the Fallujah Brigade revealed its true allegiances and a second

During the delay, U.S. forces used the time to encourage civilians to vacate the city and amass additional troops in preparation for the eventual assault. By the end of October, over a quarter of a million civilians had fled the city, leaving a population of less than 30,000 to witness the fighting that followed. Concerned about the public reaction to high number of civilian casualties, Rumsfeld increased the pressure on Iraqi civilians to vacate their homes by publicly stating to the Arab Press that there would be no cease-fire. On 7 November, five days after President George W. Bush won re-election for another four-year term, the Second Battle of Fallujah commenced with overwhelming force. Over 10,000 U.S. servicemen, assisted by fewer than three Iraqi battalions, launched a frontal assault from the north, beginning a battle that would last almost two months and result in almost 1,500 insurgents killed with another 1,500 captured. Cost to the United States was also high. Combat actions killed almost 100 U.S. servicemen and wounded another 560, while the operation itself became the subject of political scrutiny and would later be called destructive and unnecessary.

Aftermath and Legacy

An analysis of the nine-month battle for Fallujah suggests that it was significantly influenced by civilians at the operational level of war to accommodate domestic parochial political priorities. Concern about domestic outrage led to the initiation of major offensive operations into the city, only to subsequently be prematurely withdrawn because of the resulting political firestorm. Once it became clear to all parties – political and military – that a second offensive was necessary, the operation order was not processed for another two months and final approval delayed two months after the order's receipt. This suggests that concerns about the U.S. presidential elections allowed insurgents two to four additional months to prepare defensive postures and import reinforcements, almost certainly at increased risk to U.S. forces.

---

assault became apparent, suggests that the timing of the operation was meant to coincide with November.

In contrast to the strategic situation at Khe Sanh, Fallujah was a coordinated offensive assault on an urban environment intended to clear insurgents from a city that was serving as a base of operations for anti-U.S. forces. Led by dramatically different leadership than the forces fighting under Westmoreland and Johnson, and part of an all-volunteer force, the Marines responsible for Fallujah were nevertheless subjected to the very same politicization that their conscripted counterparts experienced forty years earlier. One year later however, after Bush had been safely reelected and before the midterm elections reestablished a microscope on U.S. policy in Iraq, the same administration that delayed the initiation of major operations in Fallujah would remain silent on the content and timing of a remarkably similar operation in the northern city of Tal Afar.

McMaster, Tal Afar, and Operation RESTORING RIGHTS

Just one year after the battle for Fallujah, Bush administration officials would refrain from intervening in another operation 300 miles north, despite profound similarities in the strategic setting, administration officials, and organizational structure. In the summer of 2004, Sunni extremists had seized control of Tal Afar in a bid to control the smuggling routes in and out of Syria. Despite its strategic importance as a border town that controlled much of the trade between Iraq and Syria, Tal Afar remained virtually untouched by U.S. and Coalition Forces. Unable to mount a sustained offensive in 2004 due to political concerns and manpower constraints, U.S. forces were forced to retreat back to their large base over an hour's drive away. As a result, they were unable to even enter the city without coming under direct fire, and by the fall of 2004 just a single U.S. Army company was responsible for the city and its surrounding areas.

In March of 2005, however, the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR), led by Colonel H.R. McMaster, rotated into Iraq and was assigned to Tal Afar and its surrounding areas. Known as a maverick in the Army organization, McMaster was not shy about voicing opinions and preferences that were outside of Army standard operating procedure. As a captain in the first Gulf War, he led the attack in the Battle of 73 Easting, surprising even

commanding generals with the speed at which his Eagle Troop advanced, and was awarded the silver star for his actions. In 1997 he authored a book, titled *Dereliction of Duty*, which laid considerable blame for the troubled military policies of the Vietnam War on the failure of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to be vocal about their preferences. As former director of the Commander's Advisory Group for the Commander of Central Command and having already completed a deployment to Iraq, McMaster had some different ideas about the way the war should be conducted. In an interview with the New Yorker magazine after his deployment to Tal Afar, he explained, "When we came to Iraq, we didn't understand the complexity—what it meant for a society to live under a brutal dictatorship, with ethnic and sectarian divisions… When we first got here, we made a lot of mistakes. We were like a blind man, trying to do the right thing but breaking a lot of things… You gotta come in with your ears open. You can't come in and start talking. You have to really listen to people" (quoted by Packer 2006).

Unimpeded by political concerns in the White House, McMaster was thus able to develop and execute a series of operations between March and September of 2005 that both attended to local concerns but also culminated in a massive offensive operation against insurgents that many in the press compared to the Second Battle of Fallujah from the year before. Utilizing intelligence gathered from local sources and scouting operations, the 3rd ACR successfully eradicated the Sunni extremists in a week-long urban assault that damaged almost 75% of property and resulted in the death or capture of over 750 insurgents. Continued patrols and searches kept violence levels low and insurgents away for over a year. However, troubles with police training resulted in numerous abuses against Sunni citizens, contributing to sectarian tensions in the city and impeding the resumption of commerce.

Iraq and the Politics of Tal Afar

Popular support for the War in Iraq continued to decline throughout 2004, dropping over 12 points between March of 2004 and February 2005 (Pew Research Center). When McMaster and the 3rd ACR entered theater in March 2005, the American public was

evenly split for the first time on whether the decision to use force in Iraq was right or wrong, and approval of the president had declined ten points in the four months since he won reelection. However, with midterm elections over eighteen months away and very few electoral constraints on the administration, operations in Iraq again became the purview of U.S. military officials. This flexibility to conduct operations in the time and way that each commander believed was necessary resulted in a series of major operations in 2005 intended to clear insurgents from urban areas, including Tal Afar.

A mixed city with a population of about a quarter million (though estimates vary), Tal Afar is ethnically distinct from most of Iraq because its population is primarily ethnically Turkmen, divided along religious lines between Sunni and Shia. Though it was previously a hub for commerce and trade due to its position along major trading routes between Iraq and Syria, during the war the divided city became primarily a center for Sunni smuggling efforts. As a result, throughout 2004 and 2005 it was of key importance for insurgent groups moving foreign fighters into the country and goods across the border. In 2004, militant Sunni insurgents known as *takfirin* assumed control of the city with little resistance from U.S or Iraqi forces. They terrorized the city through a campaign of coercion and intimidation, forcing the lone American infantry company responsible for patrolling the area to substantially pull back and essentially abandon the city, leading many to declare it the next Fallujah.

In September of 2004, U.S. and Iraqi forces made a half-hearted attempt to retake the city, yet were unwilling to seriously engage and destroy enemy forces. Operation BLACK TYPHOON, which consisted of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division and several contingents of the Iraqi Security Forces, pushed into the heart of Tal Afar on September 9, 2004. However, the heavy indiscriminate artillery resulted in mounting civilian casualties, prompting the government of Turkey to demand an end to military operations on behalf of their ethnic diaspora. On September 12, U.S. forces subsequently withdrew from the city, claiming that the operation had cleared the town of insurgents; in reality, most had simply fled and would quickly return to the abandoned city. U.S. troops, having suffered no casualties during the three-day operation, returned to their base almost

45 miles outside of Tal Afar and would not contest insurgent control until the 3rd ACR relieved them.

After the destruction caused by Operation PHANTOM FURY in Fallujah and resulting negative press, the Bush administration began searching for different language to frame the situation in Iraq. McMaster's success in Tal Afar, despite the offensive and highly kinetic nature of his operations (Lee Lindsay 2014), would provide the administration with a new set of tactics: clear hold build. The resulting shift in military tactics, first introduced by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in testimony to Congress, subsequently made its way into the president's 2006 State of the Union address and became the basis for new counterinsurgency strategy in Army doctrine. This shift in tactics, pioneered by McMaster in Tal Afar and formalized by politicians in the administration, would become a requirement for Bush's surge of forces in 2007.

McMaster and the 3rd Armored Cavalry in Tal Afar

Leading up to a second tour in Iraq in 2005, Colonel H.R. McMaster prepared the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) for a different kind of war than they had fought their first deployment. Rather than practicing open-field armor moves, he developed training exercises that placed soldiers in scenarios where they had to judge the relative threat of individuals, he issued a copy of Phoebe Marr's *A Modern History of Iraq* to each soldier, and added John Nagl's *Learning How to Eat Soup with a Knife* to the regiment reading list. About ten percent of soldiers were sent to three-week Arabic training courses in order to develop rudimentary communication skills with the locals. Though much of the language training became useless once the 3d ACR was deployed up north to Tal Afar, where ninety percent of the population is Turkmen rather than Arab, McMaster's focus on the local population was novel and may have resulted in an increased awareness of local grievances.

Upon arrival in Tal Afar, they recognized the need for closer access to the city and constructed FOB Sykes – a small base located about 12 km from the heart of Tal Afar.

However, this small base hosted, according to Army Major Jay Baker, "nearly a full division's firepower" (Baker 2009, 62). This included 41 M1A2 Abrams Main Battle Tanks, 41 M3A2 Bradley Cavalry Fighting Vehicles, 6 M1064A3 Self-propelled 120-mm mortars, and 6 M109A6 Paladin 155mm self-propelled howitzers in addition to a full aviation support squadron that consisted of over 55 helicopters capable of transit and close air support. In contrast to traditional infantry units that are typically equipped with much lighter vehicles, the deployment of an armored cavalry regiment represented a considerable shift toward additional firepower and destructive potential. "…[E]ach mission was a mix of dismounted and mounted elements with tanks, Bradleys, and aviation providing overwatch." (Herrera, 127) Rather than conducting light foot patrols, the destructive capabilities amassed by the 3d ACR in Tal Afar in reality rivaled some of the most mechanized units in the U.S. Army.

After replacing the pro-insurgency mayor with a more neutral actor – a Sunni Arab from Baghdad – U.S. forces began conducting a series of reconnaissance operations to gather intelligence. However, these operations were generally highly kinetic in nature and resulted in large numbers of direct fire engagements. In the absence of local informants (Herrera, 135), intelligence had to be gathered through "cordon and search" and "reconnaissance by fire" operations – both invasive and often kinetic operations that respectively: 1) aggressively searched households for weapons and potential threats; and 2) shot live rounds into areas where insurgents are suspected of hiding in an effort to gauge their location and strength. Both of these operations put U.S. forces in harm's way into order to develop intelligence, yet remained apolitical as White House officials refrained from interfering.

McMaster and the officer corps of the 3rd ACR further worked to establish relationships with the local sheiks and tribal leaders, hoping to build trust that would translate into local assistance. Eventually, locals started sharing actionable intelligence on insurgents in the city, and the soldiers' training in "effects-based operations" resulted in the ability to root out insurgents and "clear" the city with minimal damage to civilians (Packer 2006). Shia leaders, however, were concerned about the treatment of insurgents, claiming that

the U.S. was being *too lenient*. "In a 4 June conference with nearly 80 [Shia] sheiks… many of the tribal leaders called for an assault along the lines of the 2004 attack on Falluja to destroy the insurgents… they complained that U.S. forces were too gentle in their treatment of the insurgents and that the Americans should be rougher on them." (Herrera, 134) Though U.S. forces "demurred" at the time, subsequent operations would come to closely resemble the kinds of kinetic actions associated with the assault on Fallujah in 2004.

Intelligence and "shaping" operations became increasingly kinetic and lethal as the months progressed. July and August of 2005 saw the execution of Operation SABRE UNLEASHED, where "every mission executed by 2d Squadron elements had the potential to become a squadron-level operation" (Herrera, 138), and operations often made use of the immense firepower at the disposal of the squadron. Upon the discovery of weapons and insurgents in the adjacent forest in August, 2d Squadron declared the woods a "free fire" zone – an area where they *explicitly rejected* restricted rules of engagement about enemy fire and instead reserved the right to shoot people in the forest on sight. By the end of August, the squadron had conducted 1500 reconnaissance patrols (most of which utilized "reconnaissance by fire" techniques), 111 cordon and searches, and 46 raids, destroyed over 900 enemy weapons, captured over 200 suspected insurgents, and killed over 130 people. Meanwhile, though Sunni leaders sympathetic to the insurgency asked for government relief, Shiite tribal leaders continued to call for a military campaign along the lines of PHANTOM FURY in Fallujah; in the end, the subsequent clearing operations in Tal Afar, codenamed RESTORING RIGHTS, closely resembled the 2004 assault (Herrera, 140).

Operation Restoring Rights and Pacification

Preparations for a major assault on the city of Tal Afar and the insurgent stronghold of Sarai began in mid August with the construction of an eight foot tall, 12 mile berm "reminiscent of recent barriers built by U.S. forces in Iraq," including the 2004 Fallujah assault, that encircled the city. Thousands of people fled the city as the insurgents

prepared for a bloody urban battle with Coalition forces, though many successfully fled with the civilians as the "process in determining whether those fleeing were insurgents or innocents may have been problematic." (Herrera, 140) In May, McMaster had requested and received considerable numbers of additional troops in preparation for the incursion into Tal Afar, and at the commencement of operations on 2 September 2005, U.S. forces numbered over 3,500 alongside 5,000 Iraqi army soldiers – a dramatic escalation of force when compared with the single infantry company that had previously been responsible for the city. This substantial increase in available manpower (close to ten percent of all U.S. combat forces in Iraq), combined with the firepower of an entire division, represented a massive assault on a city roughly the size of Des Moines, Iowa.

In September 2005, the regiment launched Operation RESTORING RIGHTS, which effectively cleared the city of Tal Afar of insurgents through a combination of precision fires, intelligence, and close air support with minimal collateral damage, as civilians had been warned in the preceding days to vacate the insurgent stronghold. After three days of combat operations in the city that killed over 150 insurgents and resulted in the detention of over 600 suspects, the 3d ACR and accompanying elements prepared for the thrust of the assault into the insurgent stronghold of Sarai, which was preceded by a mandatory evacuation period that lasted a full week. As insurgents realized the futility of the fight, they attempted to escape amidst the civilian population. However, rather than an Iraqi army who was "very good at sensing when something wasn't quite right" (McMaster 2005), the Iraqi "Wolf Brigade" was "poorly disciplined and ill-trained… senior U.S. commanders requested its immediate withdrawal." Further, they proved largely incompetent at detecting insurgents, and a U.S. intelligence officer reported that the enemy was "slipping to the east and behind [the Iraqi brigade] to the south, and 'somehow—we don't know how'—cutting through the screen line to…the west." (quoted in Herrera, 142) As a result, Coalition forces were unable to locate any insurgents in Sarai and "not a hostile shot" was fired as the insurgents even had time to clear their dead from the city, leaving the American soldiers "frustrated, angry, and 'embittered'" (Ware 2005).

The battle of Tal Afar concluded on 18 September 2005 as a cost of six U.S. soldiers killed in action, largely because of the effectiveness of artillery and air support during the operation. Once U.S. forces had cleared Tal Afar of insurgents, McMaster's cavalry soldiers set about "holding" the city to prevent insurgents from re-infiltrating as they had in the fall of 2004. Despite the same manpower shortage that existed the year before, the 3d ACR continued to conduct combat patrols, though these were scaled down from squadron-level operations to the platoon and squad level, reflecting the relatively low level of resistance they faced in the aftermath of RESTORING RIGHTS. This decision, however, deprived other areas of much-needed combat power – attacks along the Syrian border region doubled during the "hold" phase of Tal Afar while violence in neighboring Mosul skyrocketed just three months after Operation RESTORING RIGHTS, suggesting that the insurgents who escaped Tal Afar in the week-long evacuation simply moved on to a neighboring, more populous city that was not saturated by U.S. combat forces.

Nevertheless, the 3rd ACR continued to conduct patrols throughout the city and worked on bridging ties between the local Sunni and Shia political leaders. Reconstruction efforts began in mid to late October in preparation for the constitutional referendum that month, and involved both U.S. and Iraqi efforts. Civil affairs teams managed over $4 million in reconstruction projects that ultimately resulted in over 95% of the city enjoying electricity for more than 20 hours per day, and attacks dropped by almost 90% to under one per day. Additionally, the Iraqi government agreed to pay 150,000 dinars to each family that had suffered property damage from the two-week campaign. Despite the success of the operation in clearing inurgents, disbursement records suggest that 75% of families in Tal Afar suffered property damage from the assault – a figure on par with the level of destruction caused to the city of Fallujah in the 2004 campaign (Tyson 2005). Even with this compensation, however, many displaced people remained hesitant to move back into city, and once they did the population self-segregated into Sunni and Shia districts, with Sunnis largely occupying areas outside of the city (Chamberlain 2008). Despite their best efforts, mistrust amongst the population remained very high over the rest of the regiment's deployment, while the city police continued to harass, mistreat, and in some cases torture, Sunni residents. One Shia policeman in 2006, keeping watch over

a cell packed so tightly that there was overflow into the latrine, suggested that there were 150,000 terrorists in Tal Afar alone – about the number of total Sunnis residing in the city. At the end of his deployment, one soldier described the police force as "worthless." (Packer 2006).

In general, the operations at Tal Afar were heralded as, "the first successful counterinsurgency campaign for American forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom." (Baker 2009, 61) In an internal review of over three dozen U.S. combat units that had deployed to Iraq, military experts, "concluded that of all those units, the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment performed the best at counterinsurgency." (Ricks 2006) The utilization of "clear hold build" to win the support of the Iraqi population was hailed as an ideal example of a strategy that is "twenty per cent military and eighty per cent political. The focus of operations is on the civilian population: Isolating residents from insurgents, providing security, building a police force, and allowing political and economic development to take place so that the government commands the allegiance of its citizens" (Packer 2006).

However, the pacification of Tal Afar also reveals a story about the ability of U.S. coercive operations to project power into even the most violent and reclusive of cities when there is little to no intervention by White House officials. With reports in the immediate aftermath of the operation declaring it to be "this year's Fallujah" (Ware 2005), the operation was expected to result in large numbers of U.S. casualties – a figure largely avoided due to air support and their inability to contain fleeing insurgents. The profound increase in U.S. combat power – both in the number of soldiers and the level of artillery support that was provided – resulted in a dramatic drop in violence in a city that had formerly been an insurgent stronghold. The utilization of kinetic and coercive measures to root out insurgents in the absence of consistently reliable informants culminated in a massive coordinated assault using U.S. ground and air forces akin to the firepower amassed in Fallujah just a year before. However, in this scenario the Bush administration allowed the mission to proceed unimpeded; there were few negative political consequences to the otherwise destructive action. The evacuation of the city in

preparation for major combat operations and ensuing property damage indicates that while soldiers were concerned about the number of civilian casualties that would result from the operation, it did not deter the use of supporting fires, which played a critical role in reducing U.S. casualties.

The Political Legacy of Tal Afar and Aftermath

Though the White House played no role in influencing the timing or content of the missions in Tal Afar, they capitalized on the success of McMaster's operations almost immediately. Desperate for good news just two weeks after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, McMaster was flown to Washington, D.C. to give a press conference on the outcome of Operation RESTORING RIGHTS and detail the efforts by the 3rd ACR to eradicate insurgents from the strategically important city. As he reported on the progress of the regiment and Iraqi Security Forces, McMaster introduced a new concept into the lexicon of Iraq jargon: Clear, Hold Build. Stating that, "what gives us the ability to sort of clear-and-hold as a counterinsurgency strategy is the the capability of the Iraqi Security Forces… we've got the right strategy here, which is to build Iraqi security forces, which can secure the population" (McMaster 2005), the colonel made an impression on many senior officials looking to change the conversation about Iraq.

Shortly after McMaster's press conference about his success in Tal Afar, the White House began to institutionalize the new tactics of "clear hold build," beginning with Condoleezza Rice's testimony to Congress later that year. Repeating the phrase no fewer than three times in her testimony, she stated, "Our strategy is to clear, hold, and build…Clear areas from insurgent control, to hold them securely, and to build durable, national Iraqi institutions" (Weisman 2005). However, the military establishment had not been informed of the change in tactics – clear hold build had been a by-product of the operations in Tal Afar rather than a carefully designed change to the military campaign. When questioned by General George Casey, commander of U.S. Forces Iraq, as to what exactly "clear hold build" was, Rice replied, "It's our strategy." The new tactics, meant as a clear repudiation of Vietnam-era analogies to search and destroy, subsequently were

featured in President Bush's State of the Union address in January of 2006. "Tal Afar shows that when Iraqis can count on a basic level of safety and security, they can live together peacefully… The people of Tal Afar have shown why spreading liberty and democracy is at the heart of our strategy to defeat the terrorists" (quoted in Packer 2006).

Despite the kinetic and offensive nature of the operations, the pacification of Tal Afar served as a motivating case for the development and introduction of FM 3-24, which calls for "clear hold build' operations in order to clear insurgents, secure the population, and develop the region using reconstruction projects and security force training. This guide to military operations and tactics has been portrayed by military and civilian leaders alike as a *less violent*, more sophisticated approach to warfare, where U.S. forces work with the local population to disarm and deter would-be fighters from joining the insurgency. While initially compared to the Second Battle of Fallujah, the Battle of Tal Afar soon after was portrayed as being very different from the destructive battle of 2004. Rather than simply clearing a city with firepower, the operations at Tal Afar, was, "completely different [from Fallujah] in terms of the nature of the operation because [U.S. forces] had the active cooperation of such a large percentage of the population" (McMaster 2005). This battle would then become the operational basis for the new counterinsurgency field manual, released in late 2006, that would accompany additional U.S. forces sent to Baghdad as part of the 2007 surge.

Chapter Summary

The three battles described in this chapter represent dramatic examples of the politicization of military operations by the U.S. government at various points in time. Despite profound differences in strategic setting, organizational composition, bureaucratic preferences, geopolitical environment, and the political leadership, the battles for Khe Sanh in Vietnam and Fallujah in Iraq were both heavily influenced by electoral politics and the administration's desire to keep rising body counts out of the news in an election year. Only when Johnson had given up hope for reelection and

decided to withdraw was he able to approve Operation PEGASUS; only when President Bush had won reelection did the Marines outside Fallujah receive the go-ahead for Operation PHANTOM FURY. In contrast, despite remarkable similarities between the Battle of Fallujah and the Battle of Tal Afar, Colonel McMaster received no such political guidance from his superiors regarding Operation RESTORING RIGHTS. Allowed to develop the mission according to the strategic needs on the ground and unimpeded by political officials who had already won reelection, the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment launched a major, yet successful, offensive operation against militant Sunni extremists that had terrorized the residents of Tal Afar for over a year.

The juxtaposition of Khe Sanh, Fallujah, and Tal Afar utilizes a most different and most similar case design, respectively. When politicians were concerned about their electoral future, as Johnson was during the siege of Khe Sanh and Bush was during the Battle of Fallujah, this concern results in civilian intervention in military operations and their subsequent politicization. Despite differences on every major theoretical spectrum, we observe similarities in the timing of each offensive mission – only once the president's electoral fortune had been determined could offensive operations proceed unimpeded. By observing the same phenomenon and mechanisms across time and space, regardless of different contexts, we gain confidence in the generalizability of the politicization of military operations.

By contrast, the similarities between the operations at Fallujah and Tal Afar were apparent even during the initial stages of action. The same administration, when faced with another insurgent occupation of a major city in the province next door, declined to interfere in the timing of operations in Tal Afar in 2005. Thus, when politicians are not concerned about their electoral futures, the incentives to politicize operations are much weaker, and they are much less likely to interfere in missions on the battlefield. By observing a different outcome despite the remarkable similarities in context, leadership, and organizational structure, we gain confidence in the internal validity of the mechanisms at work when identifying politicized operations.

This does not mean that politicization does not occur outside of election years, or that every operation in an election year is politicized. The battles at Khe Sanh, Fallujah, and Tal Afar merely illustrate when and how politicization occurs and present evidence that is consistent with the theoretical expectations discussed at the beginning of the chapter. Politicization may occur whenever politicians are excessively concerned about the effect of public opinion on their electoral or legislative fortunes – this could be as straightforward as an upcoming election or as subtle as a piece of legislation an elected leader desires. Further, politicization occurs both directly and indirectly – while direct politicization is relatively easy to see in the public record, indirect politicization is much more difficult to identify as military officers adjust their own expectations and recommendations.

Additionally, the implications of politicization for both the theoretical literature and policy world are numerous and profound. When elected leaders subjugate the national interest below domestic political priorities, they also directly and indirectly affect the state's ability to negotiate a settlement. A growing literature acknowledges that bargaining does not simply stop once conflict begins, but is in fact an iterative process that reacts to information revealed on the battlefield and overall changes in the balance of power. When Johnson announced in 1968 both a temporary escalation and a stop to bombing north of the 20th parallel, the North Vietnamese accepted his calls for new negotiations due to their relative weakness on the battlefield; the failure of both the Tet Offensive and the siege of Khe Sanh revealed that NVA forces were weaker than they had ever been. When operations are delayed or altered for political reasons, information about a force's capabilities and resolve is much more difficult to ascertain, potentially resulting in a longer, more protracted conflict. Similarly, politicians who are willing to respond to domestic political concerns by intervening in military affairs are also susceptible to manipulation by their adversary – North Vietnamese forces often remarked that a major goal of the Tet Offensive was the public relations and propaganda campaign on the American people – without public support, leaders cannot pursue offensive operations without risking their own political futures.

The implications of politicization also inform theories about civil-military relations, and add yet another dimension to our understanding of the relationship between soldiers and civilians. While theories to date have emphasized the dangers in maintaining "armed servants" and the agency problems that follow, civilians can act as agents as well, and opportunistically manipulate policy in order to win favor with the electorate. This new understanding of how civilian leaders manage wartime strategy suggests a reevaluation of the assumptions inherent in the civil-military debate today. Finally, the above cases raise questions about the ability of democracies to fight wars, and whether domestic political institutions can in fact affect battlefield effectiveness. Do representative democracies face a disadvantage during conflict because their elected leaders must think about both the short-term and long-term consequences of military operations? The evidence above suggests that across time and space, democratic institutions and concerns about public opinion have influenced the timing and content of military operations during conflict, which in turn have affected the ability of forces to wage war on the battlefield. Future research should focus on the effects of in-conflict behavior on international outcomes, and understanding when and why domestic political institutions influence the conduct and consequences of war.

Chapter 5

The Politics of Operation Rolling Thunder

"If we get tagged as mindless hawks, we can lose both the election and the war…. You *were dead right when you asked me to find a good left hook to go with the military right… the only one that the whole world – and [Democratic Primary Challengers] Kennedy and McCarthy too – will call serious is a bombing halt… I think it has to last a good long time whenever it comes… Nothing less will do."*

— National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, private memorandum to the president, 22 March 1968

"Tonight I have ordered our aircraft and our naval vessels to make no attacks on North Vietnam … The area in which we are stopping our attacks includes almost 90 percent of North Vietnam's population, and most of its territory. Thus there will be no attacks around the principal populated areas, or in the food-producing areas of North Vietnam… It is to save the lives of brave men—and to save the lives of innocent women and children."

— President Lyndon B. Johnson, address to the nation, 31 March 1968.

On March 31, 1968, President Lyndon B Johnson announced via a televised address from the Oval Office that bombing operations against North Vietnam above the demilitarized zone would cease, and that the United States would pursue peace negotiations with North Vietnam in an effort to end the war. Reacting to the dramatic turn in public opinion after the Tet Offensive and the realization that the coercive bombing campaign against the North was accomplishing very little, leaders inside the administration undertook a complete strategy review in the six weeks before Johnson's address. Johnson ended the speech with a spectacular announcement that shocked the nation: "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President" (LBJ Public Papers).

This was not the first time, however, that the president had mixed electoral politics with strategy during the Vietnam War. More so than any conflict in American history, the war in Vietnam has received attention as one characterized by political manipulation and micro-managing by civilian elites far removed from the realities on the battlefield. Throughout the Vietnam War, Johnson would famously manage targeting decisions and oftentimes manipulate strategy over concerns about the domestic political consequences. Thought he eventually withdrew from the 1968 presidential election, Johnson's concern over his domestic agenda and maintaining public approval consistently informed his choice of military strategy during the war, particularly in the strategic bombing campaign. Operation Rolling Thunder thus emerges as an ideal case to study the systemic effects of electoral politics on military operations during conflict.

This chapter evaluates how election cycles affected the strategic bombing campaign during Operation Rolling Thunder – the three-year air offensive waged over North Vietnam from 1965 to 1968. I argue that the Johnson administration responded to strong incentives to manipulate military strategy around elections in order to reduce casualties and signal to the public that they were capable, competent leaders. As a result, military operations were both directly and indirectly politicized when the administration delayed high-risk offensive operations until after the 1966 midterm elections while simultaneously favoring low-risk operations that were less likely to result in casualties. Using new data made available by the Air Force Research Institute in 2013, I test this theory on strategic bombing operations and find that bombing patterns are significantly altered in the months immediately preceding and following the 1966 congressional midterm elections. On average, we observe fewer bombing operations on targets farther away from major population centers immediately before the election, while raids tend to increase in both scope and intensity immediately after. Overall, a complex picture emerges of an administration caught between two political realities – the need to satisfy hawkish Republicans yet also limit the number of American planes being shot down for a casualty-sensitive public.

Why Study Operation Rolling Thunder?

While most attention has focused on the military strategy employed on the ground (Mack 1975, Gelb and Betts 1979, Rosen 1982, Mueller 1980), Caverley 2009, for an exception see Pape 2001 Chapter 6), perhaps the most defining feature of the Vietnam War was the liberal and pervasive application of airpower throughout the conflict. It is perhaps the most well known case of coercive bombing; Pape asserts that, "the air war against North Vietnam is the most studied case of convention coercion" (Pape 2001, 175). By the end of the conflict, over seven million tons of munitions would be exploded on an area roughly the size of Texas – twice the total tonnage dropped during World War II and Korea combined (Littauer and Upoff, 9-10). Put another way, the U.S. bombing campaign over Indochina resulted in over 100 times the combined force of the atomic weapons dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[24] The devastating impact that the campaign had on the Vietnamese landscape led to substantial attention on the ethics of Rolling Thunder (Lefever 1972; Parks 1982, 1983; Falk 1969-76) and the morality of coercive bombing campaigns.

Yet despite the attention in the literature to the military campaign and its effects, relatively little scholarship has sought to analyze the factors that influenced decision-making during Rolling Thunder separate from the rest of the Vietnam War. Qualitatively, however, the air war against North Vietnam and the bombing campaign in South Vietnam bear very little resemblance. In reality, they were operated through entirely different command structures, with the U.S. Air Force predominantly responsible for Rolling Thunder and Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) responsible for air operations in South Vietnam. Further, most decision analysis of the Johnson administration during Vietnam focuses on strategic decisions made during the war – Johnson's decision to intervene after the Gulf of Tonkin, the decision to employ a strategy of gradual escalation, his refusal to mine Haiphong Harbor, etc (Saunders 2011,

[24] Given that each general-purpose bomb is about 50% explosive material by weight and the estimated combined power of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was 35,000 tons.

Gelb and Betts 1979, Caverley 2010, Downes 2008). While these are important decisions that had tremendous impact on the nature of the conflict and its duration (discussed below in some detail), the literature overall has very little to say about the decisions Johnson made specific to operations during Rolling Thunder, and what role he may have had in influencing the tremendous variation we observe in the campaign from week to week.

Why are weekly decisions made during a three-year air campaign important? Every operation has an effect on both military and civilian matters, but bombing operations can be particularly effective due to the relative advantage of planes to ground defenders. Further, the indiscriminate nature of bombing, as opposed to conventional firefights, adds to the destructive power of the coercive bombing campaign, meaning that decisions made during a single week can have an enormous impact on the war effort. I assert that Operation Rolling Thunder is therefore a classic example of how domestic political pressures can cause a commander-in-chief to substantially influence a campaign at all levels of war, from its politically-motivated beginning and end to the distance of individual targets from populated areas.

Theoretical Expectations

Bombing campaigns generally have effects on three primary groups: friendly military personnel, enemy military affairs, and non-combatants. Operations over enemy territory inevitably result in some planes, pilots, and crews being shot down and captured by adversarial forces. Service members that are killed in action during the campaign decrease morale both inside their bombing units as well as serve as a negative reminder to the public about the costs of the war. Similarly, pilots and crew members captured in enemy territory can become human enemy propaganda, advertising an adversary's strength and/or ruthlessness. Additionally, planes and equipment that are lost during operations force leaders to grapple with an increasingly expensive war and the need to finance operations and production capabilities beyond peacetime levels. As a result,

additional sorties, particularly those flown over high-risk areas, can result in additional negative attention drawn to the war effort when planes are shot down by enemy forces.

Sorties flown during a bombing campaign also affect enemy military affairs, however. In addition to eliminating forces and breaking up offensives, bombing campaigns can also unleash tremendous destruction on weapons and modes of transportation such as tanks and caravans. Further, bombing aimed at logistics lines and infrastructure can have devastating effects on an enemy's ability to mobilize forces, resupply, and continue to support offensives away from the power base. Finally, bombing that targets enemy production capabilities can theoretically stop an enemy from fighting at all – if an adversary cannot produce weapons, transportation, or supplies, it cannot fight. News of increasing damage to an enemy's capabilities, therefore, translates into positive attention for a bombing campaign. The more impact an administration can show the air campaign is having (and thus helping the war effort), the more positive the public's attitude toward the conflict, and by extension the president's handling of the war, will be. Thus, additional sorties can temporarily have a positive impact on public opinion about an air campaign, and may result in more positive attitudes toward a president.

Finally, bombing campaigns also impact non-combatants both directly and indirectly. While the indiscriminate and destructive nature of coercive bombing can have enormous effects on military capabilities, it can also result in enormous amount of collateral damage and casualties amongst non-combatants. Further, non-combatants may be indirectly harmed by the effects of a bombing campaign on housing, food production, and flooding. Civilians not involved in the war effort may therefore freeze or starve as a result of bombing activity aimed at degrading an enemy's military capabilities. As a result, enemy forces may then use evidence of collateral damage and non-combatant deaths as propaganda intended to negatively portray a bombing campaign.

The theory proposed in this dissertation asserts that in the lead up to an election civilian leaders will make decisions about operational and tactical level matters that favor their domestic parochial interests. As a result, we should observe patterns of behavior in the

Johnson administration that seek to maximize the amount of positive attention given to Operation Rolling Thunder and minimize the amount of negative attention it receives. I therefore expect the following generalized phenomena: 1) Johnson will take action to reduce the risk each plane is exposed to in the air, and thus reduce the number of casualties recording in the period leading up to an election; 2) Johnson will seek to placate a hawkish public by dropping additional tonnage on North Vietnam and flying more sorties in an effort to report increases in military capabilities destroyed; and 3) Johnson will take action to reduce the number of non-combatants deaths that result from the bombing campaign.

Rolling Thunder and the 1966 Midterm Elections

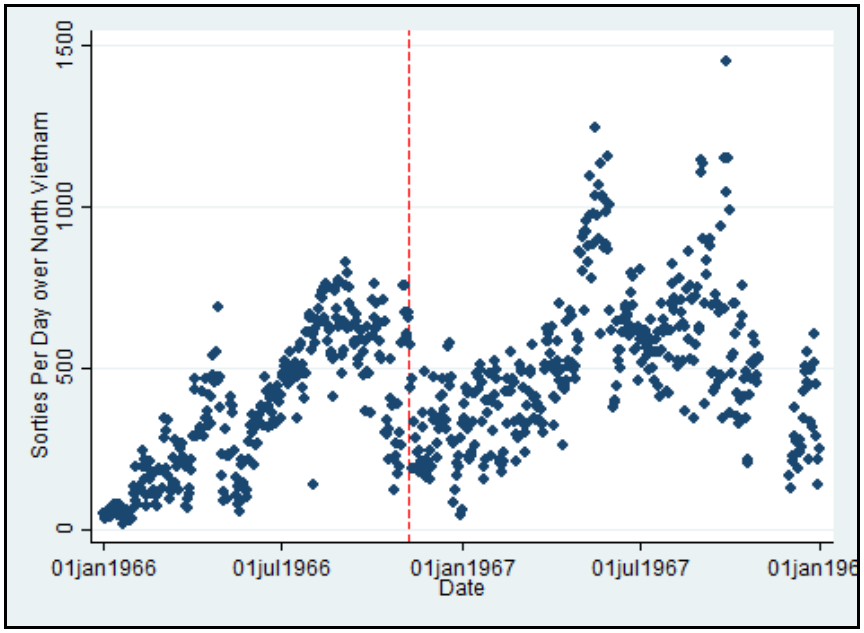
After his successful reelection in 1964 and a virtual blank check from Congress to use force against North Vietnam after the Tonkin Gulf Incident, President Lyndon B. Johnson decided on a military strategy that placed an emphasis on using just "enough" force to win, but "not too much" that it would distract from his domestic agenda, the Great Society (Graff 1970, 53). Yet, despite securing an overwhelming electoral victory in the 1964 November elections, Johnson remained insecure about maintaining the public's support for his expansive domestic legislation. After a series of provocations by the North Vietnamese, including a February attack on a Marine base in Pleiku, Congressional Republicans (and hawkish Democrats) began to exert pressure on the White House to respond to the threat by bombing North Vietnam (Bromley Smith Files 1965). The same week, Johnson announced to Congress that he intended to propose legislation that would strengthen voting rights at the federal level. On 7 February 1965, Johnson ordered operation Flaming Dart, which saw 49 sorties attack North Vietnamese bases around the demilitarized zone. This operation led the way for a more sustained bombing campaign against North Vietnam intended to force them to withdraw their support for Viet Cong insurgents in the South, and Operation Rolling Thunder officially began on 2 March 1965.

Initially designed to only be an eight-week campaign that signaled U.S. commitment to South Vietnam's fight against communist insurgents, Rolling Thunder principally targeted major industrial centers and other military zones, intending to inflict sufficient punishment upon the North Vietnamese that they would be coerced into discontinuing support for the Viet Cong (Frankum 2005, 19). Due to both the domestic and international political sensitivity of bombing North Vietnam, the White House kept extraordinary control over target lists; every potential target was compiled by the Joint Chiefs and submitted to Washington on a weekly basis, where it then needed the approval of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the State Department, and the White House (Littauer and Uphoff, 37). Strict limitations were initially placed around key civilian centers – in 1965 the White House forbade attacks within 30 miles of Hanoi, 10 miles of Haiphong Harbor, and along a buffer zone on the Chinese border (The Pentagon Papers, 29). Over time these limitations were relaxed as the JCS ran out of targets to hit due to the largely agricultural nature of North Vietnam. A November 1965 report from the Defense Intelligence Agency stated:

> What intelligence agencies like to call the "modern industrial sector" of the economy was tiny even by Asian standards… There were only a handful of "major industrial facilities." When North Vietnam was first targeted, the JCS found only eight industrial installations worth listing (Pentagon Papers, 469).

Concern over committing large numbers of U.S. soldiers to fight an insurgency in South Vietnam led to a reliance on bombing in the early years of the conflict – a pattern that continued throughout the war. Johnson's strategy of intense bombing followed by a temporary pause in order to discuss negotiations had little effect on North Vietnamese support for the southern insurgency, and may have in fact contributed to their ability to survive the damage inflicted by the air campaign. This realization that the North Vietnamese were ably adapted to the pressures exerted by the bombing led to a series of changes in strategy until the end of Rolling Thunder in 1968. After seventeen weeks of bombing with few results, July 1965 saw the targeting and destruction of almost 70% of North Vietnam's oil facilities and storage capacity (Drea 2011). Yet despite this increase in intensity, Hanoi's resolve stiffened, resulting in a gradual escalation of tonnage and missions that would consistently increased throughout the operation. Figure 1 shows the

Figure 5.1: Number of Sorties Over North Vietnam, 1966-1967



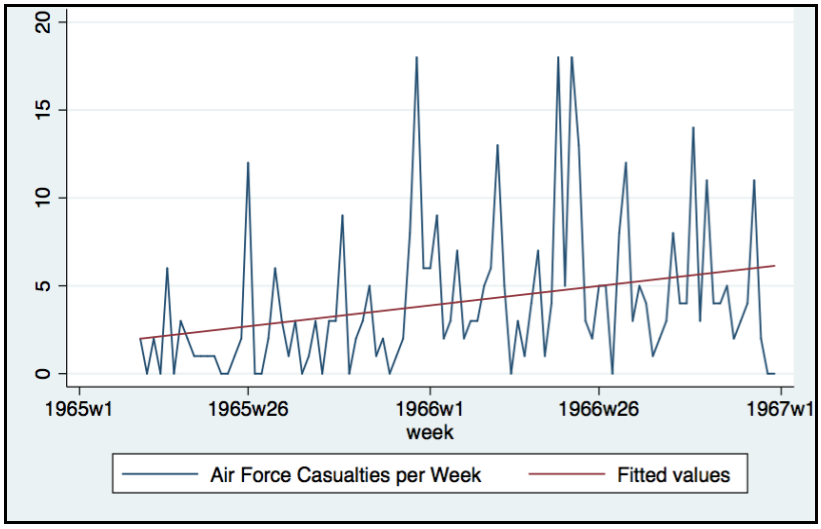
number of sorties flown per day over North Vietnam during Rolling Thunder through 1966. It is clear that while the bombing was interrupted by brief pauses – most notably around Christmas of 1965 – the campaign consistently increased in both scale and intensity over time. Ultimately used as both a substitute for and complement to ground operations in South Vietnam and a coercive lever over North Vietnam, more tons of explosives were dropped on Vietnam in the first three years of the war via Operation Rolling Thunder than on all Axis forces in World War II combined with few concrete results and no North Vietnamese concessions (McNamara 1995).

Despite the lack of success in forcing concessions from the North Vietnamese, public opinion over the conflict in Vietnam was generally hawkish throughout Operation Rolling Thunder, though the majority of Americans were less supportive of the bombing of large cities. As the U.S. escalated in 1965, a Gallup poll showed that 64%of respondents supported greater involvement despite reservations about the odds of winning a conflict, and in June 1965, a Harris poll reported that 58 percent of respondents wanted to continue bombing North Vietnam (Gelb and Betts 1979, 129-130). Even after the Tet Offensive, when the majority of Americans believed that going to war had been a mistake, over twice as many respondents identified themselves as hawks over doves –

60% of the population (Gallup 1968a). Public opinion about the way in which the bombing campaign was to be carried out, however, was more mixed. In December 1965 a Harris poll showed that just 22% of respondents favored bombing Hanoi despite overwhelming support for the war; in the same survey 93% of respondents favored continuation or escalation of current policies (Harris Survey 1965a). A Gallup poll released in January 1966 revealed that while 56% of respondents favored bombing industrial factories and plants, only 31% favored the bombing of big cities (Gallup 1965a).

These numbers suggest that the American public had specific ideas about the way in which the war should be conducted – primarily, that the bombing of cities and civilian centers was distasteful. The failure of the Christmas bombing pause at the end of 1965 to produce substantive negotiations led many to advocate for a harder line and more escalatory policies (Karnow 1983, 425). By the spring of 1966, the administration had reached a cross roads regarding Operation Rolling Thunder: the initial pattern of gradual escalation and bombing pauses appeared to only be strengthening Hanoi's resolve and required a new strategy. In June, as a response to pressure from the Joint Chiefs for a more ambitious bombing campaign, the administration authorized a series of raids on petroleum targets; while North Vietnamese capabilities dipped temporarily, they quickly adapted and resumed activities in the South (Drea, 72). The failure of the raids to do any lasting damage to North Vietnamese capabilities convinced Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara that the bombing campaign over North Vietnam was largely ineffectual, and he began to argue for de-escalation of the bombing and a focus on military targets. Due to reservations held by McNamara and other military leaders about the effectiveness of the coercive campaign, August 1966 marked an important shift toward an interdiction strategy as the Johnson administration switched their priorities away from trying to bring Hanoi to the negotiating table and instead attempted to prevent supplies and fighters from infiltrating into South Vietnam (Drea, 82). However, this division between the Secretary and the Joint Chiefs over the effectiveness of Rolling Thunder would only deepen as the war progressed, right up to McNamara's departure in 1968.

Figure 5.2: Air Force Casualties Per Week, Operation Rolling Thunder



Attrition around populated areas, and Hanoi/Haiphong in particular, was very high. In 1966 the U.S. was losing one in every 40 planes flown over the Red River Delta, while losses in the panhandle were considerably lower (Littauer and Uphoff, 41). Pilot casualties had been steadily mounting since the beginning of Rolling Thunder, at an average of almost two additional Air Force pilots killed in action per month. The raids at the end of June 1966 proved to be the most costly in the war to date – almost 40 airmen were killed in the operation, with hundreds of others wounded and captured. Figure 2 shows the raw numbers and average trends in pilot casualties through July 1966. Despite the relatively low numbers of air casualties incurred when compared with the ground war in the South, attrition and the bombing campaign over North Vietnam came with its own set of political risks. Wrote McNamara on the costs of bombing, "American pilots were lost; captured U.S. airmen provided Hanoi with hostages; the number of civilian casualties multiplied. Moreover, the continued pounding of a small nation by a superpower gave the North Vietnamese a powerful propaganda tool" (McNamara 1995, 244). The lack of success of the June raids coupled with the high number of casualties demanded that Johnson address the growing gap between expectations and results in Rolling Thunder. Escalation would both be an admission that the current strategy was not working and require additional resources in the form of troops, taxes, and aid to South Vietnam. However, given overwhelming support for the war both in Congress and

amongst the public, deescalation would have been politically unfeasible and opened Johnson up to attacks that he was "soft on communism." In the hot political climate leading up to the 1966 midterm elections, any public change to current policy was came with high political costs.

The 1966 midterm election campaigns focused on two principal issues: Johnson's Great Society legislation and the war in Vietnam. While encouraged by the major pieces of legislation passed during his first three years in office, Johnson had an additional slate of progressive legislation he aimed to pass during the final two years of his term as well. Improvements to reforms for the working poor, additional civil rights protections, and support for women's issues were at the top of Johnson's priority list for the 90th Congress. However, Johnson faced several hurdles to enacting new legislation after his first three years. His popularity had declined since 1964 due to race riots, domestic unrest, and the war in Vietnam, and he had spent much of his political capital fighting against members of his own party for civil rights legislation. Throughout the midterms, fiscally conservative Republicans campaigned heavily on ending the Great Society, painting it as irresponsible and unsustainable government regulation gone awry. Further, Republicans outside the South painted Democrats as Johnson lackeys, incapable of standing up to the imperial presidency and fighting for local interests.

As a result, keeping moderate Democrats in the Senate was of particular importance in the run-up to the 1966 midterms. There was tremendous reaction in the conservative South against Johnson's civil rights agenda while Republicans were gaining ground against other Great Society legislation aimed at affecting poverty and access to healthcare. With the support of more socially liberal Republicans, Democrats had been able to prevent filibusters in the Senate of most of the civil rights legislation opposed by Southern Democrats like Harry Byrd (D-VA), John Stennis (D-MS), and former Democrat Strom Thurmond (R-SC), while their 67 seat supermajority in the Senate prevented filibusters by Republicans against additional government spending programs. After 54 days of filibuster by 18 Southern Democrats, Harry Byrd's 14 hour and 13 minute filibuster of the compromise Civil Rights Act epitomized Johnson's reliance on

Republicans to pass his agenda – in order to invoke cloture and cut off debate on the bill, Johnson needed 23 Republican "yea" votes. As a result, between 1964 and 1966 Johnson needed the support of both liberal Democrats *and* hawkish Republicans in order to pass both his civil rights agenda and programs in support of the War on Poverty; this looked unlikely to change as the midterms approached, and a swing of just a couple of seats in the Senate could mean the difference between passing any additional social legislation over the last two years of Johnson's term. Johnson was painfully aware from the beginning of the interplay between escalation in Vietnam and his domestic agenda, stating in 1964, "If I don't go in [to Vietnam] now and they show later that I should have… [Congressional Republicans will] push Vietnam up my ass every time" (Herring, 136).

Keeping moderate Democrats in the Senate, however, would prove to be difficult. Of the 11 races decided by 10 points or less in the midterms, 10 were held by incumbent Democrats, and of those only 3 had voted in favor of Great Society legislation. Though Johnson was feeling pressure to escalate in Vietnam from Congressional Republicans, none of those exerting pressure were either up for reelection or running in close races. In fact, though Vietnam emerged as a key policy issue in about half of the close elections, concern was primarily concentrated in more dovish districts, where Republicans ran *against* involvement in the war.[25] The Democratic Party was already beginning to fracture over the issue, with some like Charles Percy (D-IL) and Lee Metcalf (D-MT) voicing opposition in order to win their districts and others standing by the current policy but running against anti-war Republican candidates, as Robert B. Duncan did in Oregon. Reported Herring, " To silence domestic and international critics… the administration modified its position a bit [on bombing] in late 1966" (Herring, 213). Johnson was forced to walk a tight line leading up to November – he needed to highlight the successes of the Great Society and publicly downplay U.S. troubles in Vietnam while still quietly appeasing the hawkish Republicans he would need support from in the upcoming legislative session.

[25] See, for example, anti-war Republican candidate Mark Hatfield, who eventually won that election.

The political strategy Johnson chose to follow, therefore, was one that systematically attempted to shield the U.S. public from the costs of the war, both in terms of human and financial capital. Public support for the war had been steadily declining since the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, and dissatisfaction with Johnson's policies – both foreign and domestic – was on the rise. When asked whether the government should raise taxes or cut domestic programs in order to fund the war, just 29% of respondents supported raising taxes (Gallup 1965b), suggesting that both the Great Society and War in Vietnam enjoyed less popular support than previously believed, even in the early years. While the public wanted either "guns" or "butter", Johnson knew he needed both, and so took a series of steps to shield the American public from both the costs of war and poor outcomes on the battlefield, hoping to maintain domestic support.

Strategically, this resulted in a refusal to call up the reserves despite numerous requests from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, delays on new taxes to pay for combat operations, a resistance to escalating the number of ground forces in South Vietnam, and a switch to an interdiction strategy in Rolling Thunder. However, Johnson also made a series of important decisions regarding military tactics and operations during Rolling Thunder in an effort to avoid additional casualties, both military and civilian. This had direct implications for the strategic bombing campaign in the North – even small alterations in tactics and targets could have dramatic effects on the number of casualties incurred by U.S. pilots over North Vietnam. By flying missions away from more heavily populated areas, pilots would be exposed to considerably less risk. Populated areas such as Hanoi were more heavily defended by the NVA in order to protect vital interests – as a result, attrition was considerably higher over the Red River Delta than over other parts of North Vietnam such as the panhandle.

Additionally, raids over Hanoi resulted in high numbers of civilian casualties and collateral damage. Aware of the limit Johnson imposed on targets within five miles of the city center, North Vietnamese forces quickly adapted to the bombing campaign by

Figure 5.3: North Vietnam

moving all war production efforts inside the limits of Hanoi (Herring, 174). As a result, any sorties flown over Hanoi with the intent of hitting military targets would also inadvertently bomb civilian centers as well, which the North Vietnamese would then use as anti-American propaganda. As a result, Johnson had strong political incentives leading up to the midterms to temporarily reduce the number of sorties flown over populated areas such as Hanoi, and increase the distance of raids from the city center. Further, Johnson's bi-weekly meetings over Northern bombing targets allowed for direct influence on bombing targets. Altering geographic restrictions, especially targets around Hanoi and Haiphong Harbor, was routine inside an administration where Johnson once boasted, "[The Air Force] can't bomb an outhouse without my approval!" (Karnow, 415).

Given the long-term nature of the bombing campaign and the desire to downplay the costs and troubles of the military campaign in Vietnam before the midterms, the data suggest that the president took action to shield pilots from additional risk in the summer and fall of 1966. Contrary to patterns of escalation that had been trending since the beginning of the campaign, raids over Hanoi stalled while the number of raids over Haiphong Harbor dropped by almost 20%. Further, the average distance to the city centers of both Hanoi and Haiphong increased by 5% and 15%, respectively.

Figure 5.4: Sorties per Week over Hanoi, pre-Election

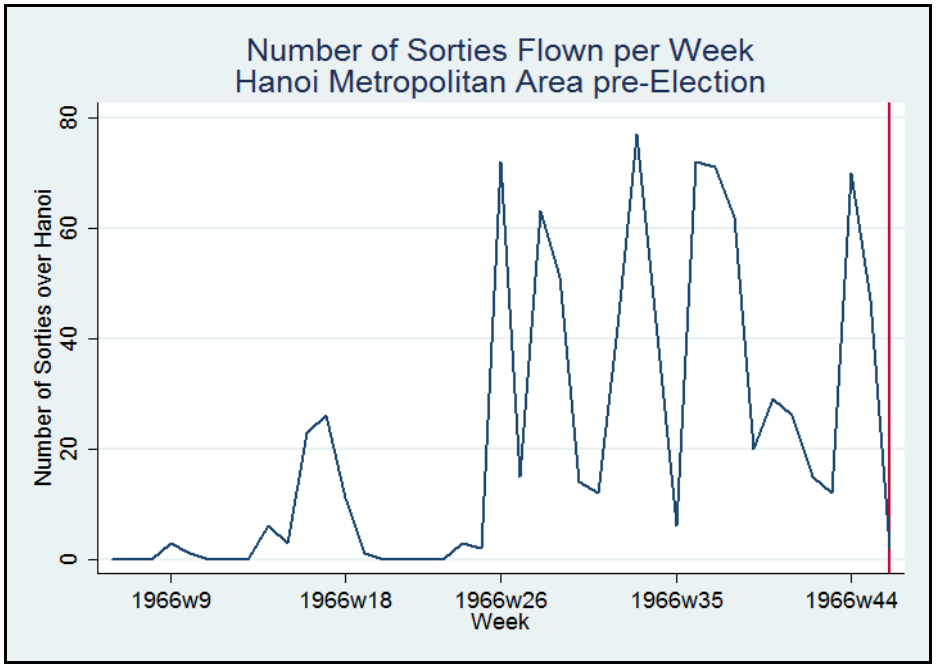
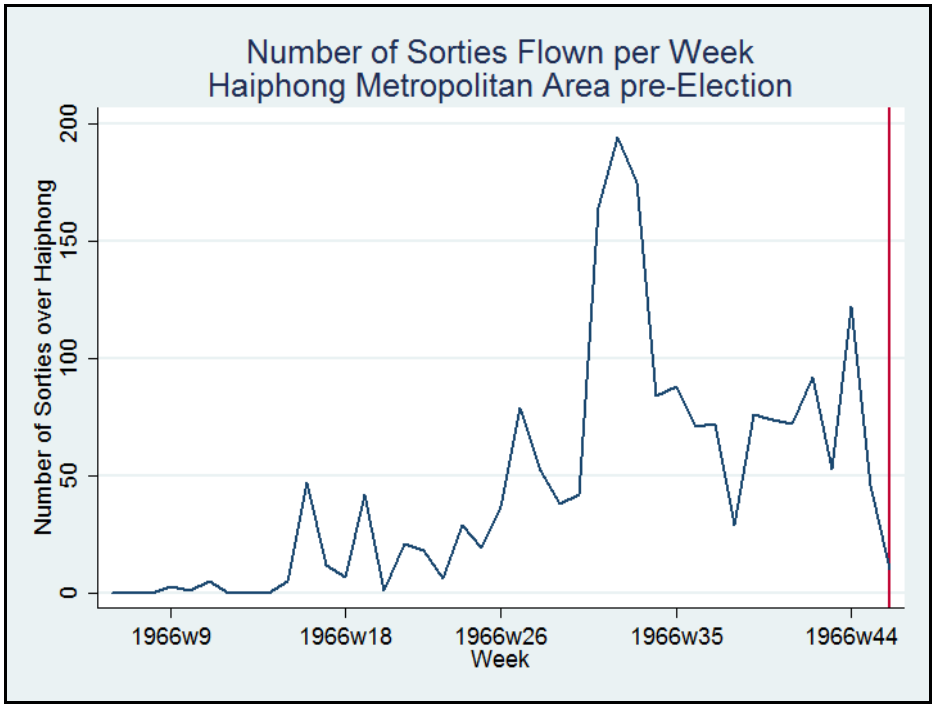


Figure 5.5: Sorties per Week over Haiphong, pre-Election

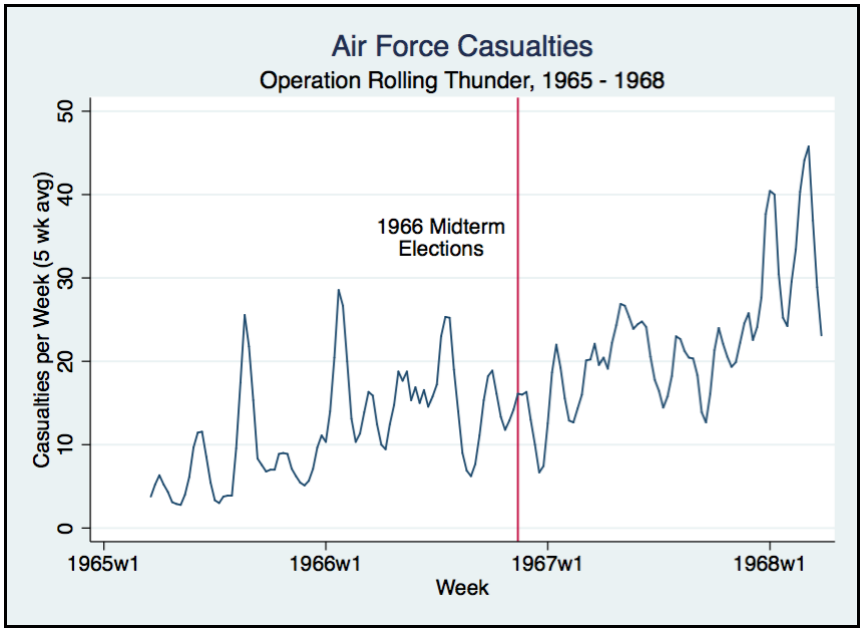


Another risk-reducing measure that Johnson took leading up to the 1966 midterms was to limit the number of daylight sorties that were flown over North Vietnam. Though precision and accuracy were much better during the day, sorties flown in daylight were much easier for North Vietnamese air defenses to track and shoot down. Daytime raids, as a result, posed a much higher risk to pilots and crew, despite their tactical advantage for targeting purposes. As a result, the percentage of daytime raids decreased in the months leading up to the 1966 midterms, especially, those raids that targeted facilities around Hanoi and Haiphong.

Despite these actions, Johnson couldn't afford to scale back the war completely. Just as he was under pressure to avoid casualties and keep the bombing campaign out of the news, Congressional Republicans were urging escalation. Knowing that he would both lose votes for his social agenda as well as leave Democrats open to attacks of "soft on communism" should he scale back the war, Johnson chose to escalate the overall number of bombing raids – but to concentrate them in areas that were less dangerous to pilots. McNamara was also concerned about the risk to pilots and casualty levels, cautioning Johnson that addition escalation in late 1966 "might raise the American casualty rate to about a thousand deaths a month" (Karnow, 481). Johnson responded, "The weakest chink in our armor is American public opinion… the people won't stand firm in the face of heavy losses, and they can bring down the government" (quoted in Karnow, 481) Yet, public attitudes remained very hawkish toward the bombing campaign over North Vietnam, and most Americans supporting continuing the campaign. Despite the lack of tangible results, public opinion consistently showed a belief that bombing the North helped to support U.S. troops in the South, even after Johnson's popularity declined and the Tet Offensive. Just a month before Rolling Thunder ended in 1968, a Gallup poll revealed that 69% of respondents wanted bombing of North Vietnam to continue even though only 35% approved of how Johnson was handling the war (Gallup 1968b).

Johnson's policies had the desired effect on military operations in Vietnam. Rolling Thunder casualties declined to 12 per week in the months leading up to the 1966 midterms – a 37 percent decrease from the previous three-month average and well below

Figure 5.6: Air Force Casualties, Rolling Thunder 1965-68



the high of 37 airmen killed in action (KIA) recorded one week in June of 1966. Further, the decline cut against the trend of casualty increases that had characterized Johnson's policies of gradual escalation – by the beginning of 1967 the average number of weekly Air Force casualties over North Vietnam would return to sixteen KIA per month and continue to climb until the end of the operation. A look at the table below reveals a gradual increase in casualties until a stagnation and decrease around August 1966; the increasing trend then resumes in January 1967 and continues through end of Rolling Thunder in April 1968. Thus, even as the number of sorties flown over North Vietnam increased, the tactical measures that Johnson took to decrease the risk to pilots of being shot down over enemy territory succeeded in reducing the number of casualties in the months before the 1966 midterms, effectively keeping Rolling Thunder operations out of the news during the hotly contested election season.

What Johnson was unable to substantially impact, however, were the outcomes of the Congressional elections. Largely reacting to what was perceived as Democratic overreach, 1966 was a year for the Republican Party, and Johnson lost substantial support in Congress for his agenda. Democrats lost 47 seats in the House of Representatives,

with losses most pronounced in California and the Midwest – states where Johnson had won just two years earlier with over 60% of the popular vote. While Democrats retained a large majority in the House with 248 seats, public opinion was clearly trending against Great Society policies and Johnson's actions in Vietnam – Democrats received just 50.9% of the overall popular vote. In the Senate, Democrats lost three seats, breaking their filibuster-proof majority and dividing Democrats deeper on issues related to the Vietnam War.

Bombing operations soon returned to normal levels after the midterm elections in November. The average target distance to the center of Hanoi decreased by almost 14% in the metropolitan area, reflecting Johnson's decision to remove many of the restrictions that had been in place over the course of 1966. Further, a decrease in concern over civilian casualties and the impact of North Vietnamese propaganda on the public may have contributed to the decision to bomb targets closer to the city center. Average distances to the center of Haiphong also decreased in the immediate aftermath of the elections, but by a far less significant amount. Frustrated by the lack of success and freed from domestic constraints after the 1966 midterms, Johnson expanded the target list in the spring of 1967, allowing for the first time the bombing and mining of dykes and rivers north of the 20th parallel.[26]

The number of sorties flying over Hanoi also increased by over 25% as pilots returned to normal levels of bombing, while the number of sorties over Haiphong and the rest of North Vietnam dropped back to pre-election levels. Average weekly sorties flown over Haiphong decreased by over 60% in the three months after the midterm elections, suggesting that the sustained fall offensive against Haiphong targets ended right after the November elections. Further, average weekly sorties over North Vietnam as a whole dropped by almost 45% - an average of 1,760 fewer flights per week.

[26] For a full account of the various strategies employed during Operation Rolling Thunder, see Pape, *Bombing to Win*.

Figure 5.7: Sortie Distance from Hanoi, 1966-1967

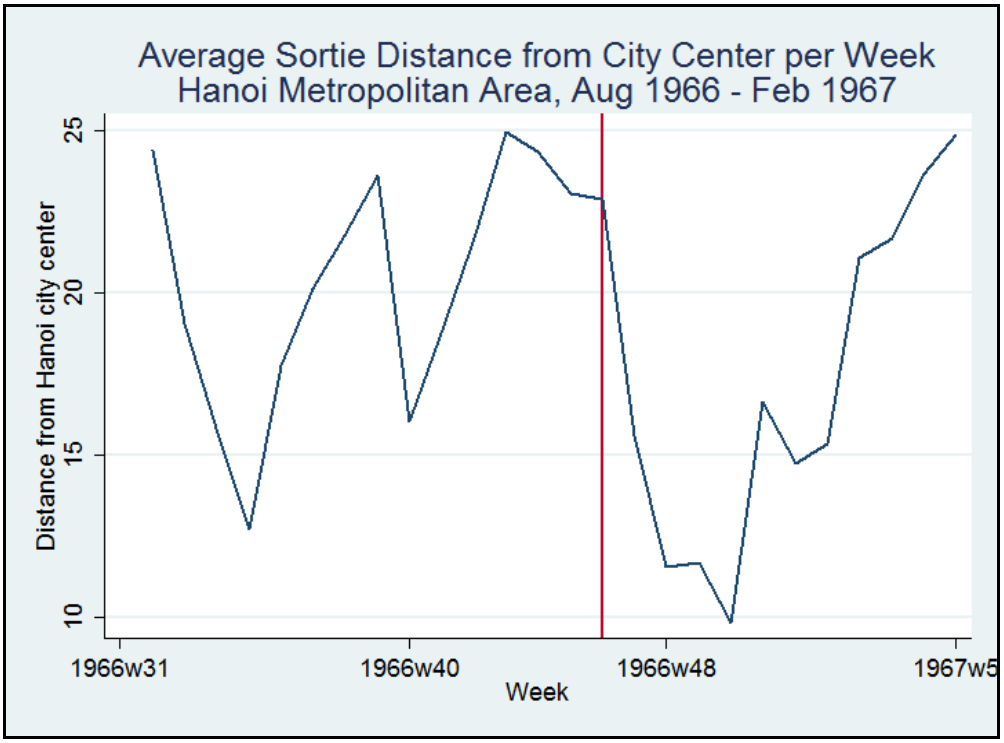
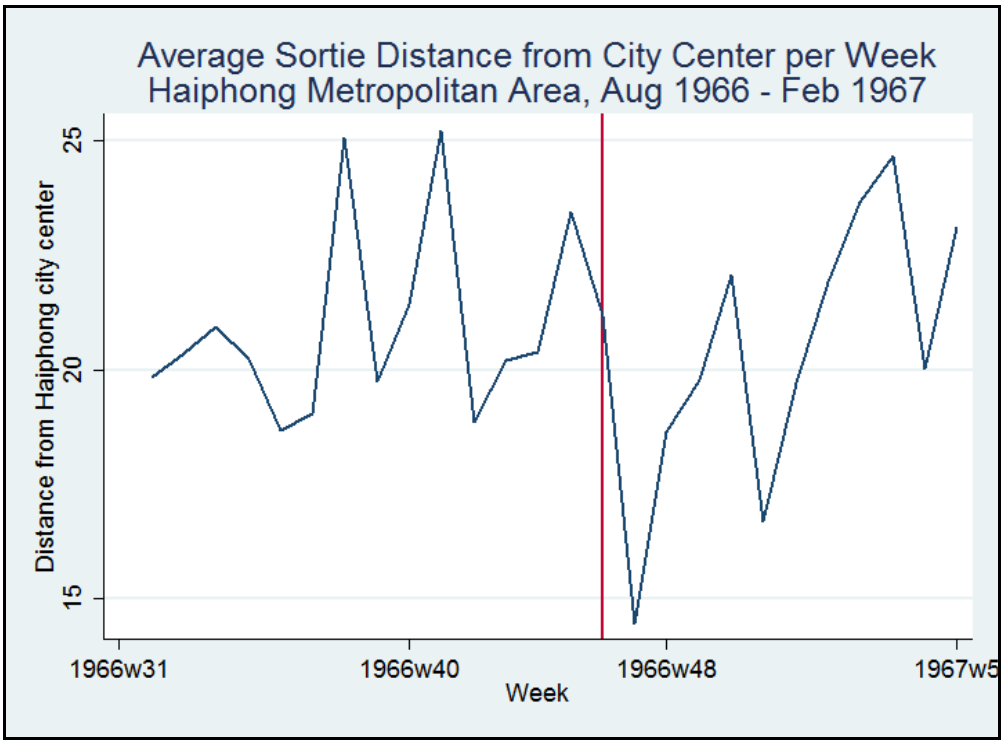


Figure 5.8: Sortie Distance from Haiphong, 1966-1967



Predictably, tonnage dropped over North Vietnam and Haiphong declined as well – by almost 75% with 30 miles of Haiphong and by almost 50% across the entirety of North Vietnam, a difference of 243 tons per week. The amount of explosives dropped over Hanoi, however, remained relatively stable, even slightly increasing after the November midterms. This again supports our expectations – free of domestic constraints, Johnson increasingly approved targets and raids over Hanoi, while sorties flown over the rest of the country returned to pre-election levels.

Regression Analysis

The evidence thus far is suggestive of changes to bombing policy over North Vietnam in the lead up to the 1966 midterm elections, and a resumption of activity once the hotly contested political environment cooled after November. The historical record certainly confirms an acute awareness by officials inside the White House of the effect Vietnam policy may have on the outcome of the 1966 elections. Further, the record indicates that the Johnson administration was willing to make changes to bombing policy and hold off on new offensives until after November 8th. However, these changes could also be explained by other factors such as seasonal patterns, daily weather changes, Vietnamese politics, or military offensives in South Vietnam. I therefore use bombing data released by the Air Force Research Institute to evaluate changes in bombing operations and tactics in relation to the 1966 electoral cycle.

Theoretical Expectations

Given political pressures to reduce U.S. and civilian casualties, we should expect bombing operations to target areas farther away from heavily populated areas, thus reducing the risk to U.S. pilots and crew as well as North Vietnamese civilians. Further, in order to decrease the risk of being shot down to pilots in general, we would expect the Air Force to fly fewer missions over North Vietnam, and particularly over heavily populated areas, in the lead up to an election. Finally, because daylight raids are much more costly to American forces due to the ability of North Vietnamese to identify and

shoot at planes, we should expect to see an increase in nighttime operations. We can thus expect the following leading up to the 1966 midterm elections:

H1: U.S. Forces should avoid targeting major cities and population centers such as Hanoi and Haiphong Harbor in the lead up to an election.

H2a: In order to reduce casualties in the most dangerous areas, U.S. Forces should conduct fewer raids over major cities and population centers such as Hanoi and Haiphong in the lead up to an election.

H2b: In order to silence the concerns of hawkish Congressional Republicans, the number of raids across North Vietnam should remain unchanged in the lead up to an election.

H3: U.S. Forces should conduct fewer daylight raids in the lead up to an election.

Data

Until recently, scholarship on the Vietnam War, and the strategic bombing debate in particular, has been limited by a lack of micro-level data with which to evaluate sweeping claims of effectiveness and strategic goals. Further, there has been almost no scholarship that uses micro-level data to evaluate the bombing campaigns over North Vietnam. The introduction of the THOR dataset to the literature thus fills a large empirical gap in the current debates. Using a large-n analysis of this kind to evaluate patterns in both the coercive campaign in the North sheds new light on the air war as a whole while maintaining internal validity. I evaluate the above hypotheses using a series of OLS and logistic regressions that test the nature of bombing operations in relationship to the U.S. electoral calendar. Using a new dataset recently published by the Air Force Research Institute, I am able to account for tactical details of almost every bombing raid in the Vietnam War that occurred from 1966 to 1973.[27] I integrate these data with local climate and weather data collected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,

[27] This dataset was a labor of effort by members of the Air Force Research Institute, and include information from over 4 million operations records from Air Force sorties flown over Vietnam. Lt Col J.A. Robertson, R. Burr, and B. Barth, (2013) USAF THOR Database; www.afri.au.af.mil/thor. Data compiled from multiple sources.

ultimately putting together, for the first time, a realistic and comprehensive look at the entire strategic bombing campaign during the war in Vietnam.

The primary data source for this analysis comes from the Air Force Research Institute's Theater History of Operations Reports (THOR) database. Published in 2013 and made available to the public in 2014, it is the most comprehensive catalogue of bombing operations during the Vietnam War to date. Each observation represents a single sortie (one plane during one mission) conducted during the war, and contains all available information recorded for the bombing operation. These data include, among others, information about local weather, the time of day and date of the sortie, coordinates of the target (and country targeted), type of installation targeted, the type and weight of munitions loaded and dropped, and type of aircraft flown. These data represent over "4.3 million airpower records from three Vietnam-era Joint Chiefs of Staff databases" and were combined to "provide a comprehensive database on bombing from October 1965 – April 1975" (Robertson et al 2013). Overall, this is the largest and most detailed compilation of data on the strategic bombing campaign in Vietnam to date.

The dataset is biased is two notable ways. First, it does not reliably include data from 1965 in its coding due to damage to the original records. As a result, though Operation Rolling Thunder begins in March 1965, I am only able to confidently evaluate bombing operations beginning ten months later, after ground forces had escalated to over 200,000 troops on the ground and the United States found itself in the midst of a major military engagement. By excluding the initial escalation in 1965, I may be statistically biasing in favor of findings due to the omission of the initial escalatory period, though the decision to begin bombing after the 1964 election yet during Congressional negotiations over the Voting Rights Act (where he needed the support of hawkish Republicans) is certainly consistent with the theory. Second, the dataset only includes raids by the U.S. Air Force, rather than other sorties flown by Marine, Navy, and Army pilots. While this is largely irrelevant for the coercive campaign in the North, it may bias against my results in South Vietnam, where the other services were responsible for a meaningful portion of the close air support operations during the war. As a result, this dataset is biased heavily toward

bombing operations that were more "strategic" rather that tactical in nature, making it less likely that there will be perceivable differences in the types of objectives targeted.

The data from THOR additional contains some omissions and mistakes due to a variety of reasons, though these mistakes can simply be coded as random noise and are not systematic. This can be caused at any point in the process – from the initial recording by pilots to mistakes made by AFRI in transcribing so many records by hand. However, these mistakes are not systematically related in any way and simply a product of local and generally random inaccuracies in the process. As a result, they should not bias the dataset in any meaningful way, except perhaps to increase the amount of variation and noise that exist in the data. The one exception to this is the absence of data for November 1967. Due to water damage in the original records, this month is missing from the dataset. While this gap does not substantially affect regressions that evaluate tactical qualities within a sortie (say, the decision to bomb at night versus day or the location of a target), a lack of data would have a substantial effect on the results for H2, which predicts the frequency of raids. This month is thus coded as missing in the regressions for H2 and dropped from the analysis.

The independent variable of interest is U.S. elections, which as in Chapter 3 I define in two ways. First is a continuous variable that identifies the number of weeks until the next midterm or presidential election. This measure allows us to understand broad trends and patterns that happen over time, and disaggregate between different phases of the electoral cycle. However, because the difference between a single week is less important 16 months before an election than a week two months before, I take the square root. As a result, the months immediately preceding an election are weighted more heavily than those farther out. The second independent variable is a binary measure of the 10 weeks immediately preceding and following an election. The variable *before* indicates that an operation occurred in the 10 weeks before the 1966 midterm elections, while *after* identifies all operations conducted in the 10 weeks immediately following November 8, 1966. This allows for a clear, discrete break in operations – because we are able to generate specific predictions about behavior immediately preceding and following an

election, with election day being the breaking point, this design allows us to test for true discontinuity in policies. In evaluating the proposed hypotheses, I restrict my sample to events after 1965 but before April of 1968. The restriction to events after January 1, 1966 is necessitated by inaccuracies and missing data from 1965, while I restrict my analysis to events before April 1968 because the thrust of Rolling Thunder ended on 1 April, 1968 after Johnson's announcement that he would not run again.

The second major source of data comes from the National Oceanic Atmospheric Association, where I collected local climate and weather data from 1965 through 1975. These data, recorded at over a hundred sites throughout Vietnam, provide the most accurate historical weather patterns available, and station locations were geo-located to coordinate with the THOR database and merged in ArcGIS. This dataset provide daily weather reports on temperature, precipitation, visibility, wind speeds, and other weather indicators that may influence the number of sorties flown in any given day, and the types of targets that were attacked. Given that weather remains one of the most important factors in determining flight safety (even today, USAF standard operating procedures after a crash require investigators to look first at the most recent weather report), having local climate data is essential to understanding and controlling for patterns in bombing operations over time.

These climate data are largely incomplete in many places – changes in territorial control, local politics, and administrative troubles result in relatively few stations in Vietnam with accurate weather reporting during the entire time analyzed. I have attempted to rectify this obvious problem using nearby station data to fill in gaps where they exist; in cases where there are no local data available (as in much of North Vietnam during the early years of the war) I use station weather from the De-Militarized Zone at the 17th parallel. While not perfect, these climate indicators remain predictive of bombing patterns and procedures. Additional control variables used in this analysis include changes in leadership in the United States, number of troops present in South Vietnam, and monthly indicators to adjust for monsoon and seasonal effects. Summary statistics are found below.

Table 5.1: Summary Statistics, Operation Rolling Thunder

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max
Number of Sorties	104	3,103.	1,514.	289	7,141
Number of Sorties over Hanoi	104	67.38	99.07	0	538
Number of Sorties over Haiphong	104	102.5	133.8	0	714
Distance from Hanoi	104	22.30	5.471	9.824	30
Distance from Haiphong	104	19.66	5.623	4.498	30
Daylight Sorties	104	2,146.	1,149.	0	5,313
Daylight Sorties over Hanoi	104	63.63	96.10	0	517
Daylight Sorties over Haiphong	104	93.64	129.1	0	712
Temperature	104	78.43	7.565	60.61	89.95
Fog	104	0.290	0.321	0	1
Rain	104	0.506	0.283	0	1

Though the entire THOR dataset covers every sortie[28] flown over Indochina from 1966 through 1975, decisions about individual sorties were not made independently of each other. Escorts, bombers, and variation in the kind of craft flown over North Vietnam were all part of a coordinated effort that was determined by both commanders at Pacific Command as well as in Washington D.C. In theater, decisions about bombing operations were made daily to reflect weather patterns, immediate priorities, and other strategic priorities. In Washington, Johnson met with Air Force planners twice a month to review bombing targets, estimated tonnage, and other operational and tactical guidelines, where he would exert considerable influence over the direction and composition of the bombing campaign. Based upon this understanding of the timing of decision-making, I therefore consolidate the THOR data to estimate weekly averages. As a result, each dependent variable explained in the empirical strategy described below records the average distance to population centers and sum of sorties flown each week. While this eliminates significant amounts of variation that may exist should the bombing data be evaluated individually or daily, a weekly estimate is a better estimate of independence, and best satisfies the conditions required in a large-n analysis using OLS.

[28] A sortie is defined as one aircraft flown on a single mission. Thus, if a raid consisted of thirty bombers escorted by five fighters, the dataset would count thirty-five sorties flown.

Empirical Strategy

To evaluate H1, I test the distance of each target from the center of North Vietnam's two largest (and most politically controversial) cities: Hanoi and Haiphong. Theoretically, in order to avoid large numbers of casualties to pilots and crews, bombing operations should avoid heavily populated areas that are better defended and make likely to shoot down a plane. Further, because politicians seek to decrease civilian casualties in the lead up to an election we should also observe fewer raids on targets close to the city center – thus, the average distance of a target to Hanoi and Haiphong should increase in the lead up to an election, while it should decrease immediately after an election when politicians are no longer restricted by public opinion. Because strategic priorities dominate the locations of targets, with political motives adjusting preferences around the edges, each test restricts the sample to targets within 30, 60, and 100 miles of Hanoi and Haiphong. Using the geo-located target coordinates provided in the THOR dataset, I therefore calculate the distance of each Rolling Thunder target from Hanoi and Haiphong and take the weekly average target distance from the city centers. These two measures then become the major dependent variables for testing H1.

To evaluate H2, I identify the number of raids conducted each week over both the entire country of North Vietnam and in the vicinity of North Vietnam's two largest population centers. These reflect two distinct predictions: First, that in order to decrease the absolute number of friendly casualties due to air operations, we should observe a decrease in sorties flown immediately before an election. Second, that in order to decrease the level of publicity around the campaign (and its lack of tangible results) in the North, we should observe a temporary de-escalation in the intensity of operations immediately before an election. I therefore collapse the total number of sorties into a count of the number of operations conducted per week both over all of North Vietnam and in the vicinity of the two major cities, Hanoi and Haiphong. As elections draw near, I expect the number of sorties per day to decrease, and then stabilize or increase as operations either resume normal levels or new bombing offensives are initiated, respectively.

To evaluate H3, I use the time of day that each raid was conducted. While the variable was originally broken up into four categories – morning, day, evening, and night – I consolidated this variable into a simple binary indicator, where the first three categories were classified as day operations (due to the presence of some daylight and thus considerably improved targeting abilities than nighttime operations). When evening operations are included in the night category, both the substance and significance of the results remain. This binary variable then allows me to evaluate the probability with which an operation will be conducted during the daylight hours. For H3, I expect that due to the steady attrition of planes over dangerous areas such as Hanoi and Haiphong (where the USAF was losing 1 aircraft in 40), sorties will be increasingly flown at night in the lead up to an election. Additionally, I expect that daytime operations will return to pre-election levels in the months after the polls close as conserving casualties becomes less politically imperative.

Results

In sum, the regression results presented below strongly support the hypotheses posited above and indicate that there was considerable variation in bombing operations around the 1966 midterm elections. The average distance from city centers increased in the lead up to the election, and significantly declined in the months after the election, indicating that target coordinates were moved much closer to the city centers after the midterms. Further, the number of sorties flown over populated areas decreased immediately before an election, while daylight raids became less common.

Table (2) estimates the effect of electoral cycles on the average weekly target distance from the city centers of Hanoi and Haiphong. I use an OLS regression to evaluate how changes from week to week in the electoral cycle are correlated with the distance of a target from the center of the city, and then use a dichotomous indicator to estimate differences pre- and post-election. I also include month indicators in the analysis to control for seasonal effects that are month-dependent, such as monsoon seasons and rainy months, which significantly affect flight patterns. Further, because not every decision

about sorties and targets are made independently, even from week to week, I cluster the analysis by month. This is a strict test of the data, as Johnson met with his air advisors every two weeks to evaluate the air war, alter targets, and make necessary changes in the campaign. As a result, clustering by month assumes that all observations in two of these two-week periods are related, making Table (2) a tough test of the significance of the results. Finally, I include a lag variable that inputs the change in distance from the previous time period. I include this because average distances to the city centers over the course of Operation Rolling Thunder are constantly decreasing as Johnson pursues gradual escalation. As a result, positive (or negative) changes in distance both reflect the logarithmic nature of decreasing the overall distance and should be highly predictive. Models (1) and (3) therefore estimate β in

$$m_t = \alpha + \beta e_t^{1/2} + \gamma z_t + \Delta d_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t \tag{1}$$

while Models (2) and (4) estimate β and χ in

$$m_t = \alpha + \beta b_t + \chi a_t + \gamma z_t + \Delta d_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t \tag{2}$$

where m is the number of miles to the city center, e is a continuous variable indicating the number of weeks until the next election, b and a are indicator variables that indicate whether t is 10 weeks before or after an election, respectively, z is a vector of control variables that include weekly weather averages, and t is the week.

Results in Table (2) support Hypothesis (1). The negative, significant coefficient in Models (1) and (3) indicates that as the 1966 midterm drew closer (and thus, the number of weeks until the election decreased), the average target distance from the center of Hanoi and Haiphong increased. This supports the expectation that in order to decrease both the risk to pilots and crew as well as reduce non-combatant deaths, Johnson would have altered the target locations around Hanoi and Haiphong to be farther away from the most densely populated areas. Models (2) and (4) provide further evidence for this hypothesis. While the average distance from the city center does not appreciably increase around Hanoi, it does decrease substantially in the 10 weeks after the 1966 midterms

Table 5.2: Distance from Cities on Election Cycles, 1966-1968

	Average Target Distance from City Center (miles)			
	Hanoi		Haiphong	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Month Indicators	Y	Y	Y	Y
Weeks Until Election (Square Root)	-0.694**		-0.817***	
	(0.276)		(0.224)	
10 Weeks Before Election		-0.987		7.214***
		(0.879)		(1.881)
10 Weeks After Election		-9.654***		-1.095
		(1.471)		(1.991)
Temperature	0.382*	0.497**	0.246*	0.266*
	(0.200)	(0.187)	(0.134)	(0.138)
Fog	4.251**	4.006*	0.483	-0.541
	(2.030)	(2.021)	(2.215)	(2.066)
Rain	3.364	4.979**	2.693	2.717
	(2.067)	(2.256)	(2.340)	(2.558)
Δ Distance (Hanoi)	0.414***	0.417***		
	(0.079)	(0.055)		
Δ Distance (Haiphong)			0.467***	0.459***
			(0.040)	(0.041)
Constant	-8.527	-18.795	5.539	-1.556
	(14.812)	(14.097)	(11.121)	(10.777)
Observations	109	109	109	109
R-squared	0.43	0.51	0.61	0.60

†Within 30 miles of city centers

Notes: Results clustered by month. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

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

elections, suggesting that once he was free from the electoral pressures of the midterm elections, Johnson felt free to reduce the limit around Hanoi. This discrete difference in policy, centered around the 1966 midterms, provides strong evidence for Hypothesis (1). Further, Model (4) suggests a similar pattern. The average distance from the center of Haiphong increases substantially in the 10 weeks leading up to the midterm election, but then returns to average levels in the 10 week immediately following the poll. In total,

each city experienced an average difference of 8 miles from pre-election to post-election policy – almost a 50% difference in distance. These substantive, significant changes overall provide support for the theory that the Johnson administration sought to decrease risk to pilots and minimize the number of civilian casualties inflicted by the bombing campaign immediately before the election, but once free from domestic parochial constraints, either returned operations to pre-election levels or increased the intensity of the campaign.

Table (3) tests Hypothesis (2) and estimates the effect of election cycles on the average number of sorties flown per week over all of North Vietnam and within 30 miles of Hanoi and Haiphong. Like in Table (2), I utilize an OLS regression, cluster the results by month, and include monthly indicators to account for seasonal effects. Again, these specifications make for a strict test of these data, as Johnson's meetings with military planners were bi-monthly. Models (1), (3), and (5) estimate β in

$$n_t = \alpha + \beta e_t^{1/2} + \gamma z_t + \Delta n_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t \tag{3}$$

while Models (2), (4), and (6) estimate β and χ in

$$n_t = \alpha + \beta b_t + \chi a_t + \gamma z_t + \Delta n_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t \tag{4}$$

where n is the number of sorties flown per week.

Results from Table (3) provide suggestive support for Hypothesis 2, and indicate that on average more sorties were flown per week the farther away Johnson was from an election. The positive, significant coefficient in Models (1), (3), and (5) show that as the months until an election decline, so do the average numbers of sorties flown per week, even when clustered by month. Model (2), however, suggests that there is little statistical difference across the 1966 midterm election in the number of sorties flown. While at face

Table 5.3: Sorties Flown Per Week on Election Cycles, 1966-1968†

	Number of Sorties Flown Per Week					
	North Vietnam		Hanoi		Haiphong	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Month Indicators	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Weeks To Election (SqRt)	224.799**		20.905***		25.30***	
	(87.164)		(4.429)		(6.277)	
10 Weeks Before Election		-152.644		-83.2***		-188.1***
		(308.420)		(23.090)		(38.105)
10 Weeks After Election		-149.563		11.673		-38.519
		(463.807)		(16.818)		(35.963)
Temperature	9.834	-10.098	0.516	-0.778	-1.421	-2.036
	(34.481)	(40.816)	(1.998)	(1.948)	(3.397)	(3.124)
Fog	-612.312	-100.848	-75.56***	-40.4***	-71.364*	-28.367
	(462.119)	(516.812)	(18.24)	(14.410)	(40.822)	(37.122)
Rain	139.725	107.599	-55.34*	-60.356*	-27.861	-21.434
	(574.253)	(573.360)	(29.89)	(31.998)	(60.139)	(62.504)
Δ Sorties	0.526***	0.497***				
	(0.051)	(0.071)				
Δ Sorties (Hanoi)			0.513***	0.519***		
			(0.019)	(0.018)		
Δ Sorties (Haiphong)					0.512***	0.506***
					(0.021)	(0.028)
Constant	-50.344	3,170.666	-62.472	180.546	16.441	259.538
	(2,897.207)	(2,981.622)	(177.531)	(149.476)	(308.44)	(257.247)
Observations	104	104	109	109	109	109
R-squared	0.67	0.56	0.75	0.58	0.63	0.57

†Within 30 miles of city centers

Notes: Results clustered by month. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

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

value this is contrary to the theoretical predictions, this result may in fact support a theory of electoral politics for reasons peculiar to the Johnson administration and public attitudes during the Vietnam War. Because the public was hawkish, and Johnson was forced to placate Congressional Republicans in order to pass his domestic legislative agenda, we may not expect the overall number of sorties to substantially decline in the lead-up to the election, but rather the number of sorties flown in areas where pilots were most likely to be shot down. Indeed, according to the theoretical expectations laid out earlier in this chapter, Johnson should have wanted to keep bombing levels relatively stable so that he could publicize successes of the campaign and advertise how Rolling Thunder was helping the U.S. war effort while still limiting risk over populated areas. Models (4) and (6) appear to confirm this. The average number of sorties flown per week before the 1966 midterm election is significantly and substantively lower than the average number over sorties flown over the conflict, while the weeks after the election display no significant difference in bombing levels. This indicates that there was a major policy shift in bombing strategy that coincided with the 1966 midterm elections, and that once the pressure from the midterms dissipated bombing raids resumed average pattern levels. This sizable shift in policy over Hanoi and Haiphong around the congressional elections, combined with the lack of difference in bombing levels over the rest of North Vietnam, provides strong support for both the empirical and theoretical expectations outlined in this chapter.

Table (4) estimates the change in the number of daylight sorties flown per week as a function of U.S. domestic electoral cycles. The independent variables are operationalized again as both a parabolic function (square root) and dichotomous variables that indicator whether an observation occurs ten weeks before or after the 1966 midterm election. As with Tables (2) and (3), the unit of analysis is the week and I include month fixed effects and cluster by month. Models (1), (3), and (5) therefore estimate β in

$$d_t = \alpha + \beta e_t^{1/2} + \gamma z_t + \Delta n_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t \qquad (5)$$

Table 5.4: Daylight Sorties on Election Cycles, 1966-1968†

	Total Sorties Flown in Daylight per Week					
	North Vietnam		Hanoi		Haiphong	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Month Indicators	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Weeks Until Election (Square Root)	547.95***		20.156***		24.706***	
	(155.70)		(4.268)		(5.882)	
Before Election		-1,583.4		-80.30***		-190.00***
		(1,493.2)		(21.33)		(37.507)
After Election		1,669.6		9.161		-36.402
		(1,507.8)		(15.43)		(34.977)
Temperature	14.779	-30.703	0.688	-0.551	-1.004	-1.536
	(70.904)	(71.179)	(1.970)	(1.882)	(3.193)	(2.927)
Fog	-2,045.6**	-1,283.0	-73.29***	-39.13***	-69.774*	-28.601
	(946.246)	(1,068.988)	(17.372)	(13.180)	(38.678)	(35.440)
Rain	-17.918	-374.135	-50.993*	-55.553*	-21.904	-15.278
	(1,141.1)	(1,198.684)	(29.005)	(30.958)	(55.512)	(58.240)
Δ Sorties	0.493***	0.471***				
	(0.075)	(0.096)				
Δ Sorties (Hanoi)			0.512***	0.518***		
			(0.019)	(0.018)		
Δ Sorties (Haiphong)					0.509***	0.507***
					(0.019)	(0.025)
Constant	1,891.049	8,690.009	-76.773	157.544	-18.089	214.059
	(6,328.041)	(5,918.120)	(174.878)	(144.762)	(288.836)	(240.960)
Observations	109	109	109	109	109	109
R-squared	0.55	0.42	0.75	0.59	0.64	0.59

†Within 30 miles of city centers
Notes: Results clustered by month. Robust standard errors in parentheses.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

while Models (2), (4), and (6) estimate β and χ in

$$d_t = \alpha + \beta b_t + \chi a_t + \gamma z_t + \Delta n_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t \quad (6)$$

where d is the number of daylight sorties flown per week.

Results from Table (4) look remarkably similar to the results in Table (3), providing support for Hypothesis (3). Like in Table (3), the positive significant coefficients in Models (1), (3), and (5) indicate that as the number of months until an election decreases (and therefore, the election gets closer), the number of daylight sorties flown over North Vietnam, Hanoi, and Haiphong decrease across the board. However, while we do not observe a significant shift in the number of daylight sorties flown over North Vietnam as a whole across the 1966 midterm, we do observe this shift around Hanoi and Haiphong. This is likely because North Vietnam's two most populous cities were also very well defended, and inflicted the largest number of casualties on American forces flying over. As a result, we would expect daylight raids to decrease leading up to the election as the Johnson administration sought to limit the public costs of the air campaign. However, we may not expect a change over North Vietnam because of the relative safety of pilots flying over the rest of the country. Further, because daylight raids are more precise, Johnson may have experienced strong incentives to keep the bombing campaign over the rest of the country as precise and accurate as possible in order to decrease the amount of North Vietnamese propaganda published about non-combatant deaths. Finally, Table (4) reveals that of the sorties that decreased in Table (3) leading up to an election, almost all were daylight sorties. This provides strong support for the theory presented here – because daylight sorties are riskier to pilots, we would expect a substitution effect and the decline in raids to principally affect the most risky missions.

In sum, the statistical evidence suggests that not only did the Johnson administration feel political pressure to act on isolated events around Hanoi and Haiphong during Rolling Thunder, but it did so in a systematic way throughout the campaign, but particularly

around the 1966 congressional midterm elections. We observe significant increases in the distance of targets from city centers and decreases in both the overall number of sorties flown over the cities as well as the number of sorties flown during day in the 10 weeks immediately preceding the election. Further, we then observe returns to average levels (or very high levels) of bombing activities immediately after the election, indicating a substantial shift in policy that coincided with the November midterms. Controlling for a host of factors including seasonal and strategic effects, we observe discrete differences in bombing operations throughout Rolling Thunder that correlated significantly with an operation's timing in the electoral calendar. Overall, the evidence confirms all three theoretical and empirical expectations outlined in this chapter, and provides support for a theory of politicization.

The End of Rolling Thunder

Ultimately, Operation Rolling Thunder ended the way it had been both begun and managed: in response to domestic political pressures. Opinions inside the administration began to fray in late 1967. Now convinced that the strategic bombing campaign against North Vietnam was accomplishing little, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara argued forcefully for a change in bombing policy through the fall and winter of 1967-8 until his departure in February 1968 (McNamara 2005). While Westmoreland repeatedly asked for additional troops to combat a resilient Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces becoming increasingly aggressive, Johnson remained hesitant about calling up the reserves and increasing the force beyond the half million already in theater. Reports were circulating in December about members of the Joint Chiefs threatening to resign over Johnson's policies, which coupled with the World Bank's offer to McNamara around the same time produced a sense of crisis within the administration's senior members (NSC meeting notes 1967). Reports about the progress of the war were further divided. CIA reports remained profoundly pessimistic about the ability of the U.S. to end the war soon in South Vietnam, while military assessments remained optimistic about the probability of victory (Karnow 1983, 503-504).

Even as early as December 1967, officials within the administration were looking ahead to the 1968 November elections. Robert N. Ginsburg wrote to Walter Rostow in December, "I believe that the [Central Intelligence] Agency is overreacting to what it feels is undue optimism at top levels of government. If [their assessment] serves to caution against an expectation of a conclusion of the war before the 1968 elections, it may serve a useful purpose" (Barrett 1997, 567). Five days later, Johnson issued a memo on the strategic bombing campaign that would "authorize and strike those remaining targets which, after study, we judge to have significant military content but which would not involve excessive civilian casualties; excessive U.S. losses; or substantial increased risk of engaging the USSR or Communist Chine in the war… [and] strive to remove the drama and public attention given to our North Vietnamese bombing operations" (Barrett 568). Concerns about the number of U.S. casualties, the publicity surrounding the bombing campaign in North Vietnam, and the number of civilian casualties being reported led to substantive changes in bombing policy in late 1967.

As Johnson's popularity declined in 1967 and the Vietnam War became increasingly costly, liberal Democrats began to seriously question whether the sitting president should be nominated again for a second full term in office. When Eugene McCarthy declared as a primary challenger to Johnson in December 1967 on an anti-war platform, the break with Johnson signaled an important shift in the mood of the Democratic Party – that dissatisfaction with his Vietnam policies was high enough to publicly explore potential replacements. Under pressure from Congressional Republicans who wanted to do more, dovish Democrats who wanted to do less, and a largely ignorant yet hawkish American public, Johnson was face with the choice of satisfying either his party (at the risk of losing his future legislative agenda and the general election) or the public (at the risk of losing his own party's nomination). On January 31, Johnson addressed the situation head on, declaring to Congressional leaders, "We have a rather hard ahead of us for this team. We have a great many domestic problems. We have our primaries coming up. We are having our conventions. We are in an election year" (Barrett, 577).

Tension in the administration and the Democratic Party reached critical mass with the initiation of the Tet Offensive at the end of January 1968. Satisfied by reports from the field of impending victory, the enormous three-pronged invasion by North Vietnam showcased the strength of the NVA – in direct contrast to what the government had been reporting over the previous three years of fighting. Despite American military victories over the NVA during the Tet Offensive, the emergence of the credibility gap left Johnson even less popular, and resulted in a deep pessimism amongst the American people. Divisions within the party deepened as Senators openly and regularly criticized the President's policies both in public and private (Barrett, 575-589). As press reports began to circulate rumors about divisions between the military and civilian leadership, Senator J William Fulbright of Arkansas and the Foreign Relations Committee began hearings on the Tonkin Gulf Incident, much to the frustration of the President (589).

February saw yet another incremental escalation of the war as Johnson approved additional forces to support the Marines trapped at Khe Sanh, a base located just south of the DMZ and under siege by NVA forces in the wake of Tet. Despite a conviction amongst many in the administration that Rolling Thunder was an important part of U.S. strategy in Vietnam, there prevailed a general uncertainty within the national security team about Vietnam policy (Barrett, 622-624). Public opinion was similarly divided. A Gallup survey revealed that though 69% of the population believed that continuing bombing was the right policy, just 35% approved of Johnson's wartime policies (Gallup 1968b). When Westmoreland requested an additional 200,000 men within three months, the national security team began to conduct a comprehensive review of U.S. strategy in South Vietnam, including the bombing campaign in the North, and by March 4, "differences of view about bombing and mining Haiphong were so profound within the group… that the bombing question was put to one side for separate and later treatment" (Barrett, 643-651).

As hearings continued in the Senate, presidential politics became increasingly intertwined with the bombing policy. At a meeting of foreign policy advisors on March 6, Secretary of State Dean Rusk remarked, "[The President] should remind [the Senate Foreign

Relations Committee] that we were not bombing Hanoi and Haiphong about six months of last year. He (Senator Fulbright) doesn't seem to give us credit for that that." The president retorted, "Well, Nixon [the presumed Republican nominee for President] has taken note of it. He has accused us of gradualism…" (Barrett, 652-653) The discussion then immediately turned to proposals of a temporary halt in bombings to jumpstart negotiations with Hanoi. As a number of letters appeared from prominent Democrats urging a change in policy, declaring intention to break with Johnson publicly over Vietnam policies for moral (and political) purposes, Senator Eugene McCarthy surprised the party with a shocking 42% of the popular vote in the New Hampshire primary, just narrowly losing to Johnson (656-658). With Johnson appearing decidedly vulnerable to primary challengers and top levels of the administration conducting a full strategy review of Vietnam policies, the opportunity was ripe for negotiated compromise within the party.

On March 14, 1968, Senator Robert F Kennedy of New York met with Defense Secretary Clifford (McNamara's successor) to discuss policies in Vietnam. According to Clifford's notes,

> "[Kennedy] felt that the policy was a failure, and both because of his conscience and pressure from others, he felt compelled to take action in this regard. He stated that one way to correct the policy would be for him to become a candidate for the Democratic nomination for President and if elected he could then change the policy. The other alternative was for him to find the means to persuade President Johnson to change the policy…
>
> [Ted] Sorenson said that if President Johnson would agree to make a public statement that his policy in Vietnam had proved to be in error, and that he was appointing a group of persons to conduct a study in depth of the issues and come up with a recommended course of action, then Senator Robert Kennedy would agree not to get into the race" (Barrett, 672).

Johnson eventually rejected the quid pro quo offer, stating that, "no matter how the arrangement was handled, it would still *appear* to be a political deal," and when Kennedy entered the primary race on March 16 he did so with enormous popularity and support from both the public and the party (Gallup 1968c). Kennedy's entrance into the race in order to protest Johnson's policies in Vietnam sparked considerable concern within a Democratic establishment focused on winning the general election in November. As a

result, members of the administration began to contemplate a temporary cessation in bombing in order to appease dovish democrats during the primary season and satisfy Kennedy and McCarthy. Campaign manager Harry McPherson advocated for "deescalating the fighting by changing [U.S.] tactics, and ultimately even brining a few Americans home" (Barrett, 680), while James Rowe, a friend and advisor to Johnson, wrote on March 19 to offer political advice on the situation at hand. The explicit tone of the memo justifies quoting it at length:

> "I am writing to you with the frankness that, I think, has always existed between us.
> (I think I should also say I talked to Clark Clifford today and asked him to 'crank into the computer of decision' my views of the domestic political factor. I told him I realized it was only one of many factors that a President and Secretary of Defense had to consider. I did feel, however, that the domestic political factor had to be expressed very strongly because it could affect the power of the President to act on the other factors.)
>
> Part of what I have to say are my own view but I think, in general, there would be no dissent by anyone in the room… Two suggestions were made:
>
> 1) The President must do something dramatic (not gimmicky) before the Wisconsin primary… Somehow or other, somewhere or other the picture of the President as the man who would go anywhere, do anything in his desperate search for Peace has been lost. McCarthy and Kennedy are the candidates of peace and the President is the war candidate…
> 2) 2) The President must change his tactics on the hard line… he should accept the fact and realize the country is divided over Vietnam…
>
> This changes the campaign from one war candidate, LBJ, and two peace candidates, Kenendy and McCarthy, to one peace candidate with knowledge, know-how and responsibility against two fuzzy-minded, somewhat irresponsible peace candidates who don't like the Vietnam policy but really don't quite know what to do about it" (686-688).

The following day, members of the cabinet met to discuss potential changes in Vietnam policy, including a bombing halt. On March 22, McGeorge Bundy wrote to Johnson, "*you* were dead right when you asked me to find a good left hook to go with the military right... the only one that the whole world—and Kennedy and McCarthy too—will call serious is a bombing halt... it has to last a good long time whenever it comes... nothing less will do" (emphasis original, 681-700). In the end, Johnson agreed to cease bombing

north of the DMZ, given its lack of success and the political advantages of a bombing halt.

The administration decided to announce the halt via televised address on March 31, 1968 – just four days before the Wisconsin primary election. Though some trepidation existed as to whether the cease would in fact prompt negotiations (Clifford suggested that the effect would be purely "psychological" and for the American people), the consensus within the administration was that a dramatic change needed to be made if the President was to stand any chance of winning reelection (Barrett, 693). Johnson's frustration with the political nature of the war management was evident by the end of the month. When General Creighton Abrams flew to Washington on March 26 to brief Johnson on a plan to liberate Khe Sanh, he decried, "[All of this] is complicated by the fact that it is an election year. I don't give a damn about the election. I will be happy just to keep doing what is right and lose the election... I will have overwhelming disapproval in the polls and elections. I will go down the drain" (FRUS, Doc 156). Though he eventually would approve the rescue operation, Johnson mused toward the end of the meeting, "How can we get this job done? We need more money in an election year, more taxes in an election year, more troops in an election year, and more cuts in an election year... We have no support for the war" (FRUS). Thus, while announcing a temporary escalation in policy that would prove unpopular, Johnson had also decided to pursue de-escalation and halt a bombing campaign that experts agreed was doing very little to support the war effort.

Johnson would in fact withdraw from the race on the same night he announced the bombing halt, but it is clear from the record that did not tell any of his advisors of his plans. The intentions of both the speech and the bombing pause were perceived in the administration as fundamentally political in nature, though Johnson chose in the days leading up to his address to remove himself from party politics and pursue the rest of the war devoid of partisan concerns.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has sought to identify and predict patterns of the bombing campaign during Operation Rolling Thunder and its relationship to U.S. electoral politics. In many cases this emerges as a most-likely case – an unpopular war where the government actively attempted to deceive the public as to the full extent of combat operations over the course of the entire campaign. Further, the strategic bombing campaign over North Vietnam was highly politicized, as it was long a vital part of the U.S.'s negotiating strategy with North Vietnam, and concerns about North Vietnamese civilian casualties was high in the United States. This chapter evaluates the strategic bombing campaign in Vietnam as a quantitative and qualitative case study, utilizing a recently released dataset containing over 4.6 million bombing operations over 8 years of the Vietnam War. Ultimately, results indicate that strategic bombing decisions at the operational and tactical levels of war during Vietnam were highly responsive to U.S. electoral cycles and changes in the domestic political landscape. Further, qualitative evidence shows that the timing, frequency, and very nature of the bombing campaign were primarily dictated not by strategic necessity but rather domestic political concerns.

Chapter 6

Bombs and Ballots: The Search for Peace in Vietnam

"You don't understand. I want to meet their terms. I want to reach an agreement. I want to end this war before the election. It can be done, and it will be done."

--National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger to his diplomatic aides, October 8, 1972

"We believe peace is at hand… We believe that an agreement is in sight."

---Kissinger to the White House Press Corps, October 26 1972

At the same time that Rolling Thunder was being discussed, analyzed, and protested, another debate inside the country was occurring about bombing and Vietnam policy. The campaign in South Vietnam, which would later extend into Cambodia and Laos, was principally designed to provide military support for American and South Vietnamese ground forces fighting the Viet Cong insurgents and, later, the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN, or North Vietnamese Army). Inextricably intertwined with battlefield outcomes and largely reflective of the various ground strategies employed over the course of eight years of conflict (1965-1973), the bombing campaign in South Vietnam was perhaps both most responsive to changes in the mood of the American public but also most insulated from influence by politicians due to its role as operational support under Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV).

Policy in Vietnam, particularly around the ground offensive and its corresponding body count, polarized the United States and resulted in mass demonstrations, a dedicated anti-war movement, and at times threatened to throw the country into systematic unrest. Anti-war protests that turned violent such as at Kent State University in 1970 offered dramatic images that galvanized public support against the war and contributed to an increasing

disillusionment with government that would continue through most of the 1970s. The search for peace in Vietnam was thus ever frustrating for American leaders. Convinced that they could not simply withdraw without appearing to have lost, yet unwilling to devote additional resources to a conflict that was so unpopular at home, Johnson and Nixon would chase a peace accord with North Vietnam for eight long years.

This chapter evaluates the bombing campaign in South Vietnam as a part of this political search for peace. Tied to military offensives on the ground, I assess how electoral politics motivated the interdiction and support campaign in southern Indochina, and the ways in which domestic parochial interests in party politics played a role in shaping the end of the war. To do this, I use bombing and casualty data from the Air Force Research Institute and the U.S. National Archives to evaluate how changes in the electoral calendar affected military strategy throughout the Vietnam War. I then take a closer look at the politics of peace in a case study of Nixon, Operations Linebacker I and II, and the 1972 general election. In sum, I find that in addition to my findings in Chapter 5 that electoral politics substantially influence Operation Rolling Thunder, that domestic parochial concerns also influenced the way in which the campaign in the South was fought, and ultimately influenced the conditions under which the war was ended.

Why Study the Bombing Campaign in South Vietnam?

Cited as "the most intense bombing campaign in military history," its immediate effects on Vietnam's population, economy, and natural landscape were enormous. Entire cities and provinces were leveled, defoliation campaigns and herbicides destroyed an estimated five million acres of forest and half a million acres of crops, hundreds of thousands civilians were killed, and almost six million Vietnamese fled for the relative safety of cities – by 1968 the size of cities had doubled and over 40% of the population lived in urban areas, making agriculturally-based Vietnam more urbanized than Sweden, Canada, and Switzerland (Miguel and Roland 2011; Littauer and Uphoff, 63).

In addition to the campaign's profound effects on the Vietnamese landscape, the bombing campaign over Indochina signaled an important shift in the deployment and use of forces by the American military. As technologies improved and American industrial power grew, the U.S. increasingly favored capital-intensive conflict. Because casualties are politically unpopular, American policymakers increasingly choose to substitute expensive, yet less precise, weapons for manpower, which while effective also comes with substantial political costs (Caverley 2009). Airpower was thus used to conduct operations that had traditionally been carried out by infantry: clearing out areas before a major offensive, eliminating trapped insurgents, performing reconnaissance activities before attacks. However, though significantly improved from World War II, bombing operations continued to struggle with precision in the difficult Vietnamese climate, and civilian casualties were estimated to be upwards of one million, or three percent of the population.[29] Interdiction strategies in both the North and the South required far more munitions to be dropped than necessary in order to compensate for poor precision, and even then enemy forces were able to quickly adjust their supply lines and/or make repairs.

Airpower further allowed forces to project power into territory that would have been logistically and strategically unfeasible just two decades before. Airlifts providing supplies eliminated the need for long supply chains, and helicopters enabled wounded soldiers to be quickly evacuated and replaced. Yet this also came with a heavy cost – anti-aircraft defenses resulted in significant attrition in heavily populated areas, and helicopters were particularly vulnerable to small arms fire and anti-aircraft artillery. It is estimated that over ten percent of all Vietnam casualties were the result of helicopter crashes. Thus, while airpower enabled U.S. forces to perform many activities that increased its ability to reduce risk to American forces and project power into traditionally inaccessible terrain, it also resulted in costs to precision and the Army's ability to effect strategic change on the ground. In the words of Arthur Schlesinger, "[O]ur strategy in

[29] For reference, an equivalent percentage in the United States today would total almost 11 million civilians.

Vietnam today is rather like trying to weed a garden with a bulldozer. We occasionally dig up some weeds, but we dig up most of the turf too" (Schlesinger 1967, 47-48).

The importance of bombing to Vietnam military strategy and its profound consequences on the natural environment and human population of Vietnam has led to a remarkable cannon of scholarship that sought to understand and explain both the strategy behind and results of the bombing campaign. These works in general focus on one of two questions: 1) How effective was the bombing campaign, and 2) What explains the strategy chosen for the bombing war? Answers to the first have largely coalesced to conclude that the bombing of civilian targets did little to help the war effort while bombing that targeted military capacity was much more effective in inducing concessions. Answers to the second have developed three competing explanations that respectively attribute the attritional strategy to organizational biases, military incompetence, and civilian mismanagement. However, neither these questions nor their explanations emerge as satisfactory in order to explain temporal and special variation in the bombing campaign. This chapter fills this gap in the literature by explaining the implementation of bombing operations through the lens of domestic politics.

How Effective Was the Bombing Campaign in Vietnam?

The bombing campaign during Vietnam was divided into two largely independent campaigns: the coercive campaign over North Vietnam against the North Vietnamese Army and the tactical support operations flown over South Vietnam to aid in fighting Viet Cong insurgents and their North Vietnamese advisors. The campaign over North Vietnam was intended to coerce the NVA into withdrawing their support for Viet Cong rebels via advisors and arms shipments. Further, it intended to create difficulties for the NVA, which was shipping supplies and fighters south via the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and force concessions from the North Vietnamese government in the peace negotiation process. The campaign in South Vietnam, by contrast, was intended to aid the military effort in the South to eradicate the Viet Cong and fight the communist insurgency being funded by the North.

Research on the bombing campaign over the North has largely come to the consensus that the gradual escalation of bombing over urban and civilian areas was ineffective at forcing concessions from the North Vietnamese during Operation Rolling Thunder. Pape (2001) suggests that the coercive campaign against the North during Rolling Thunder failed to produce major concessions both because the bombing used a punishment strategy, and thus severely underestimated the willingness of the NVA to absorb costs, and because a denial or interdiction strategy would not have worked due to the guerilla nature of the campaign. By contrast, he argues, Operations Linebacker I and II were able to force concessions by the North Vietnamese because they targeted military sites, which became more vulnerable over the course of the war as the NVA increasingly relied on conventional warfare to fight U.S. forces. Similarly, research suggests that the bombing campaign in the South was only successful when used to support military operations and target military assets. Hamlets bombed during the war on average corresponded to higher levels of Viet Cong control, suggesting that bombing was counterproductive to a counterinsurgency strategy that focused on winning the hearts and minds of the population (Kocher et al 2011). This supports numerous anecdotes from soldiers on the ground, who often complained about the uncoordinated nature of the two campaigns and inability to win local support amidst the bombing campaign. Though some research suggests that civilian victimization and random shelling during war can be an effective tool in counterinsurgency (Stoll 1993, Downes 2006, Downes 2007, Downes 2008, Lyall 2009), the conventional wisdom remains that indiscriminate violence in counterinsurgency campaigns is counterproductive to the goals of the state (Thompson 1966, Galula 1968, Kilcullen 2009, Nagl 2005, Valentino 2004, Valentino et al 2004, Kalyvas 2006, Condra and Shapiro 2012). In sum, decades of research, aided recently by new methods and better data, suggests that despite the monumental effort and expense associated with the bombing campaign during the Vietnam War, it was ultimately ineffective at both forcing concessions from the North Vietnamese and maintaining control over territory in South Vietnam.

What Explains the Bombing Strategy?

If the bombing campaign was generally ineffective, then why was it chosen? Johnson's bombing policy of gradual escalation and the strategy of attrition warfare pursued by General William Westmoreland came under heavy scrutiny in the aftermath of the conflict, with critics coalescing around three different potential explanations: bureaucratic biases, military incompetence, and civilian mismanagement. Robert Komer's (1972) seminal white paper, published in the immediate aftermath of the conflict as a lessons learned guide to the war, lays out the clearest explanation for how organizational biases prevented the U.S. from succeeding in the Vietnam counterinsurgency campaign. In "Bureaucracy Does It's Thing," he claims that military preferences for kinetic action, standard operating procedures, and chains of command prevented a full implementation of the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program that was a central part of the Vietnam counterinsurgency program. As a result, pacification was never able to truly make an impact in the countryside and alternative strategies to the war in Vietnam were never truly considered.

A second explanation suggests that the military was principally at fault for the strategy chosen in Vietnam. Taking insights out of Komer's observations, these scholars suggest that civilian leadership was unable to exert sufficient control over the military establishment, and this failure in civil-military relations contributed to a failing strategy developed by a military intent on fighting the last war (Nagl 2005, Lewy 1978, Krepinevich 1986, Cable 1986, Sorely 1999). Explanations that focus on the military's role in developing the Vietnam strategy are particularly critical of General Westmoreland and General William Momyer, who developed and oversaw the ground and air strategies in Vietnam, respectively. Westmoreland in particular, they argue, was given too much freedom in his strategy and was incapable of developing and implementing a more sophisticated strategy than attrition warfare, which resulted in too many U.S. casualties for too little gain (see Krepineich 1986). A final view of military failure suggests that the Joint Chiefs were at fault for not advocating the military's assessment vigorously enough. McMaster (1997) ultimately finds fault with civilian management, but points to a lack of

military leadership in the Joint Chiefs office, and in an unconventional civil-military argument suggests that senior officers in the military should not have been as accommodating of civilian direction as they were during the war.

The final argument indicates that the fault for an ineffective air and ground strategy lay with the civilian leadership and mismanagement of the war. One vein of scholarships suggests that the military strategy employed during Vietnam by Westmoreland was in reality the correct strategy to combat the insurgency in the South; early withdrawal and changes to command initiated by Washington led to the abandonment of a strategy that was working as planned (Carland 2004, Andrade 2008, Birtle 2008, Moyar 2006). A second vein points instead to exceptional levels of civilian control over target lists and unprecedented levels of communication between military commanders and the White House, they argue that civilian micromanagement of the conflict led to a handicapped military unable to effectively execute operations.[30] Further, civilian emphasis on reportable statistics and numbers in the conflict, in an attempt to measure progress, resulted in perverse incentives on the battlefield that hindered the military's ability to conduct operations which, though not immediately quantifiable, would have resulted in more permanent battlefield gains (Kinnard 1977). In general, scholars contend that civilian political leadership, eager to keep casualties and costs at a minimum, exerted too much influence over everyday operations and matters traditionally seen as the purview of the military. However, as the need for more troops, more bombs, and more equipment became increasingly apparent, civilians were forced to devote more resources to the conflict, resulting in a policy of gradual escalation.

A particularly prominent argument in this literature focuses on the impact of domestic politics on civilian decision-making and motives for micro-managing the war. Sensitivity to public opinion and casualty aversion led the Johnson administration to pursue a war strategy that attempted to substitute capital-intensive strategies for those which would require a heavier footprint, and thus more soldiers (Caverley 2009). The unwillingness of the Johnson (and later, Nixon) administration to commit additional human resources to

[30] This is the argument pursued by Caverley's "Myth of Military Myopia."

the conflict for fear of domestic political backlash resulted in a strategy that focused heavily on bombing and an unwillingness to fully implement a pacification program that focused on winning hearts and minds (Gelb and Betts 1979). In particular, Johnson's preoccupation with his domestic legislative agenda, the Great Society, meant that decisions about Vietnam were often made in the context of pacifying a hawkish Congress, rather than with strategic objectives in mind.

These explanations, however, prove unsatisfactory when one attempts to explain special and temporal variation in the implementation of military strategy across Vietnam. Variation in the intensity and focus of bombing campaign, in particular, are difficult to explain by simply blaming organizational biases or civil-military failures across the board. As a result, one must look for explanations that vary over time and make geographic distinctions over the course of the war to fully explain the bombing campaign over Vietnam. I thus argue that variation in election cycles and sensitivity to both U.S. and civilian casualties contributed to significant variation in bombing operations over South Vietnam. I show that the targets and tactics of bombing operations change according to the U.S. electoral calendar, and that casualties subsequently declined in the lead-up to an election and a result of changes in strategy.

Theoretical Expectations

When citizens are required to expend both human and physical capital in order to fight wars, they become casualty-sensitive and less supportive of conflict. In democracies, this results in more dovish behavior internationally as elected leaders represent the attitudes of their constituents in the government. These dovish tendencies are then amplified as elections approach; because voters are myopically retrospective, politicians seeking reelection are especially likely to pursue policies that conform to public opinion in order to win favor with the electorate. I argue that during times of war, these cyclical patterns can profoundly affect the timing and nature of military operations on the battlefield. As politicians try to emphasize positive developments and divert negative attention away from the war, they are less likely to approve high-risk, potentially costly operations. As a

result, offensive operations and assaults are delayed until after an election, when the executive is no longer constrained by public opinion about body counts.

While theories of casualty sensitivity make clear predictions about the type and timing of ground offensives, understanding how electoral pressures affect bombing campaigns requires a more nuanced understanding of public opinion and strategy. Because bombing campaigns before the advent of GPS-guided munitions were largely indiscriminate and inflicted significant levels of collateral damage through civilian casualties, displacement, and property damage, politicians had to consider the number of potential civilian casualties inflicted by each operation in addition to expected friendly losses due to air defenses. Public opinion polls consistently show that citizens are generally uncomfortable with the targeting of civilian populations and prefer bombing campaigns to be conducted with as few civilian casualties as possible. However, tactics that reduce civilian casualties often result in increased danger to pilots as they conduct operations in conditions with better visibility and at lower altitude. While this tradeoff between collateral damage and risk to friendly forces is not unique to bombing campaigns, the magnitude of potential civilian casualties from indiscriminate bombing operations from a single pilot results in more consistent concern about collateral damage from bombing operations than land offensives.

Bombing operations can be altered in several ways to limit the number of casualties incurred by friendly forces while conducting raids over enemy territory. Due to visual constraints on anti-aircraft weapons, it is easier for defenders on the ground to shoot down bombers during the daylight hours. Daylight provides better targeting capabilities, more advanced warning, and more information about the nature and capabilities of the bombers than the cover of darkness. Yet, increases in navigational abilities and safety measures in the cockpit allow pilots to fly at night with similar levels of ease and safety as flying during the day. As a result, switching bombing operations to be conducted during evening and nighttime hours, when ground visibility is lowest, is an effective way of reducing friendly casualties in the air. Additionally, flying fewer missions necessarily reduces the risk to pilots and crewmembers. Conducting fewer raids means exposing

fewer planes to enemy fire, resulting in fewer casualties. Finally, changing bombing targets to areas less contested (and thus less likely to mount serious resistance) will reduce the number of pilots and crewmembers shot down. Bombing less populated areas and restricting air operations to targets in locations with less consolidated enemy presence results in a substantially decreased risk to pilots.[31]

Politicians are naturally most sensitive and responsive to concerns over the lives of their own citizens and constituents, and thus the overwhelming emphasis in a bombing campaign will be to limit the number of casualties incurred by pilots and crew. However, when risk to pilots and aircraft is minimal and/or when steps to reduce civilian deaths would place friendly forces in no greater danger, politicians may take steps to limit the number of civilian casualties inflicted on the ground by bombing forces as well. Thus, politicians may seek to limit civilian casualties by flying fewer missions in the lead up to an election. Fewer missions on average means that there will be fewer opportunities for collateral damage, resulting in an expected decrease in civilian casualties. Finally, bombing populated areas exposes more civilians to collateral explosives, resulting in substantial numbers of killed and injured. By moving targets farther away from city centers, politicians can substantially reduce the number of civilians killed or injured in each raid, thus temporarily decreasing the amount of collateral damage inflicted by bombing missions.

Rather than attempting to achieve coercive objectives, the bombing campaign in the South was a coordinated effort between the Air Force and the Army to aid U.S. and South Vietnamese forces in combating Viet Cong communist insurgents attempting to overthrow the pro-Western government in Saigon. February 9 saw the first deployment

[31] It is worth noting here that bombing operations for either coercion or interdiction require bombing enemy territory and enemy forces. While obviously there would be no casualties at all if bombing operations were to either a) cease or b) only target forces that were not going to fire back, this is clearly unrealistic in a wartime setting. Small adjustments, however, can have large effects on the average risk to a pilot and his crew. As a result, targeting areas that are still considered enemy territory, but perhaps contain fewer people and/or secure enemy bases, can be an effective way of limiting friendly casualties.

of U.S. combat forces to Vietnam; escalation and the "Americanization" of the conflict occurred rapidly throughout 1965 and by December the Johnson administration had committed over 200,000 troops to combat the insurgency in South Vietnam. Cognizant of casualty sensitivity amongst the American public and wary of the significant costs of a counterinsurgency pacification campaign, the Johnson administration chose to deploy significant amounts of air support and firepower to substitute for "boots on the ground" (see Caverley 2010). As a result, the U.S. became heavily reliant on strategic and tactical air support throughout the entire war to reinforce and assist territorial gains on the ground, and air power became a dominant feature of the campaign. Bombing operations were announced and conducted liberally throughout South Vietnam with little interference from the White House. Unlike Rolling Thunder, civilians did not exert direct control over targets in South Vietnam, instead leaving much up to the discretion of Military Assistance Command – Vietnam (MACV), commanded by Army General William Westmoreland.[32]

Yet despite air power's critical role in providing tactical and operational support to ground forces, the vast majority of targets and munitions dropped were against targets more readily described as interdiction. Bombers routinely and liberally targeted munitions storage facilities, bridges, transportation hubs and networks, and supply depots, among others across Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in an effort to interfere with the ability of the Viet Cong to resupply and organize. The use of B-52 bombers to support ground operations in Operation Arc Light resulted in considerable clearing potential – each bomber alone had the capacity to carry 30 tons of high explosives.[33] More indiscriminate measures such as Napalm and CBU cluster bombs were also heavily

---

[32] All US Air Force operations in South Vietnam were under the direct control of MACV in order to prioritize close air support operations. Operations against the Ho Chi Minh trail in Southern Laos and inside Cambodia, however, reflected disparate chains of command and control amongst the Air Force, Army, and Marines. At no point, however, did the White House or civilian leaders exert nearly the amount of direct influence on bombing targets and operations that they did over North Vietnam.

[33] It should be noted that B-52s were not used solely against interdiction targets but were also of key importance as close air support in key battles, such as the liberation of Khe Sanh in April 1968 and An Loc in 1972.

employed against interdiction targets, while herbicides like Agent Orange cleared away hundreds of acres of foliage at a time to reveal transportation networks and enemy locations. This lopsided nature of targeting, despite the priority given to tactical support operations, suggests that any temporary reductions in close air support translated into increases in interdiction operations rather than overall reductions in bombing.

Because of its primary (if dwarfed) role in supporting troop operations, public opinion regarding the air campaign in the South was dramatically different from opinion about the North. The perception that bombing and air support in South Vietnam was both necessary and helpful to the war effort meant that the campaign was largely uncontroversial and considered primarily in connection with the ground war as opposed to a separate campaign. Even after the Tet Offensive, emergence of the credibility gap, and dramatic decline in public support for the war, not a single national poll asked specifically about bombing operations in South Vietnam, with questions focusing instead on the resumption of operations against North Vietnam or the potential for hostilities against Cambodia and Laos.[34]

As a result, predictions about the bombing campaign in South Vietnam (as well as the bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Southern Laos and the bombing of Cambodia) more closely resemble predictions about the presence of ground offensives and limiting friendly casualties. New ground offensives result in additional risk to friendly forces as they attempted to retake enemy territory – the corresponding air support operations are also far more risky as bombers fly over heavily defended and entrenched areas. As a result, as politicians limit friendly exposure to enemy fire by delaying ground offensives, we should observe a similar decrease in close air support targets and operations. Further, daytime operations are riskier to pilots and crew as defenders are better able to visualize and track incoming planes; we should thus observe an increase in operations flown at night in the lead up to an election. This can be summarized as follows:

[34] Via the Roper Center. All of these polls show considerable levels of public opposition to bombing Laos and Cambodia, with only marginal support for bombing North Vietnam contingent upon the failure of peace talks.

H1: Close air support operations should decrease in South Vietnam before an election.

H2: U.S. forces should conduct more missions at night in the lead up to an election.

H3: U.S. casualties should decrease in the lead up to an election.

Data

To evaluate the above hypotheses I use data from two distinct sources. First, I use the data from the Air Force Research Institute described in Chapter 5, which catalogues bombing operations over all of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos from 1966 through 1975. Released in 2013, it totals over 4.6 million observations of individual sorties flown during the war and their operation specifications, including but not limited to target location, target country, target type, weight of munitions loaded, type of aircraft flown, and the time of day of the operation. While in Chapter 5 I analyzed information on the location of targets, the number of sorties, and daytime operations, in this chapter I utilize the types of facilities targeted by bombing raids in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. In order to disaggregate between close air support operations and interdiction operations, I indexed each target type listed in the database and coded it as either close air support or other. Assuming that targets of enemy forces, enemy trucks, and enemy barracks could be considered close air support, while targets of bridges, dams, and roads (such as the Ho Chi Minh Trail) are more likely to be interdiction and/or denial operations, I developed a coding system that systematically categorizes whether an operation is most likely to be considered close air support or part of a larger strategic campaign in the south.

Data on casualties comes from the U.S. National Archives. Available for download online, this database catalogues each soldier, sailor, Marine, and airman who died as a result of wounds sustained from the war in Vietnam. Observations are at the individual level, and include personal information such as name, rank, hometown, age, religion, and marital status, while also including information about his branch, duty, unit, cause of death, and date of death. I edit the dataset in two major ways. First, I exclude soldiers

Table 6.1: Summary Statistics, South Vietnam

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max
Daylight Raid	4.34 E06	0.699	0.459	0	1
Close Air Support	4.34 E06	0.183	0.387	0	1
Troops in Theater	85	34,4467.	177,708.	50	536,100.
Cloudy	4.34 E06	0.087	0.282	0	1
Clear Skies	4.34 E06	0.233	0.422	0	1

who did not succumb to their injuries while in theater. Because I only have data on those killed rather than wounded, and those wounded who died as a result of wounds sustained some time after the initial injury after treatment stateside are not very different from those who recover from their injuries, I only count those casualties that occur while overseas. Further, because this is a study of decision-making about operations during war, the best way to estimate casualties is to count those incurred in the midst of the operation. Second, I collapse the dataset to the week level. Because there is considerable fluctuation from day to day on operations, and most offensives last a week or longer, I estimate weekly casualties averages rather than averages by day.

Control variables for the regressions in Southern Indochina are different than the controls used in Chapter 5 due to a lack of available weather data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association during the Vietnam War. Because of a lack of geo-located weather data from NOAA, I use reports of cloud cover and rain given in each operation log that is found in the dataset. Troop levels publicly available from the National Archives are used to control for overall levels of engagement in South Vietnam – a particularly important control given that the dependent variable in H3 is U.S. casualties. Further, because I am interested in U.S.-led offensives and decisions, I include indicator variables for the two main North Vietnamese attacks of the war – the Tet Offensive and Easter Offensive. Finally, I include month and year indicators in my analysis to control for seasonal and yearly effects.

Empirical Strategy

I test the above hypotheses using two OLS regressions that evaluate the correlation between U.S. domestic electoral cycles and bombing operations over South Vietnam, and

one that assesses the relationship between domestic elections and U.S. casualties in Vietnam. In this analysis, unlike in Chapter 5 where the focus was solely on Operation Rolling Thunder, I evaluate the entire war period, from 1966 to 1973. 1965 is omitted from the regressions due to a lack of data.

To evaluate H1, I evaluate the likelihood that a sortie is identified as close air support on two independent variables – one a parabolic function (square root) of the number of weeks left before the next election, and the other a binary variable that indicates whether a given week is ten weeks before or after an election. Keeping the data disaggregated, rather that averaging to weekly totals, allows me to identify how likely it is that a sortie flown will be a close air support missions as opposed to an interdiction mission. By contrast, simply summing close air support missions allows me to measure total sorties, but not the relative tradeoff. Theoretically, because close air support operations are most often used to support ground offensives rather than as a part of a strategic campaign, we should observe a decrease in the months leading up to a presidential election. The stagnation of activity in an effort to reduce risk to soldiers and pilots should result in a decline in new ground offensives, and with that decline and corresponding decrease in support operations. As a result, I evaluate whether the number of air operations with target types designated as close air support correlates with changes in the U.S. domestic electoral cycle.

To evaluate H2, I use data on time of day of raids to estimate the likelihood that a sortie would be flown during the day in the lead up to an election. As in my evaluation of H1, I use both the parabolic function as an independent variable and two binary indicators. Because daylight raids are more dangerous to pilots, I expect that as elections draw closer, we should observe fewer sorties flown during daylight hours.

To evaluate H3, I regress weekly casualties on domestic electoral cycles. The clearest prediction of the theory presented in this dissertation is that casualties should decline in the lead up to an election. Leaders make changes to tactics and operations in order to reduce the risk that friendly military forces are exposed to. As a result, we should

observe that in the months leading up to a domestic election, casualties are much lower than average, while casualties return to average levels, or are slightly higher, in the months immediately following an election. As in Chapter 3, I use two independent variables – months until the next domestic election (square root), and binary variables that indicate whether an observation is three months before or after an election. Casualty levels are aggregated to weekly totals for historical reasons: public announcements of local service members killed in action were made on a weekly basis. Thus, it is weekly, rather than daily, totals that are most significant.

Statistical Results and Analysis

Overall, results below indicate strong support for the hypotheses articulated above. We observed a marked decrease in the likelihood that sorties flown over South Vietnam are flown as close air support mission and during daylight hours in the lead up to an election. Further, results suggest that this effect disappears in the immediate aftermath of the election, indicating that the policy change coincides with a change in the electoral politics of the war rather than strategic offensives. Finally, efforts to reduce service member risk appear to be successful – casualties in Vietnam are significantly lower during the three months before an election, while post-election casualties maintain average levels.

Tables (2) and (3) are logit regressions that evaluate the likelihood that: 1) a sortie flown will target objectives considered close air support operations, and 2) a sortie will be flown during daylight hours. Two independent variables operationalized in Models (1) and (2) as a parabolic function and binary indicators, respectively, estimate the effect of electoral cycles on close air support missions. Control variables include measures of the number of troops in South Vietnam, indicators for the Tet and Easter Offensives, and weather/seasonal indicators. However, because decisions are individual sorties are not made independently of each other, it is important to cluster results by a unit of analysis that corresponds to decisions made by military commanders and civilian leaders. As a result, all models are clustered by week in order to account for the lack of independence between individual observations.

Table 6.2: Close Air Support Sorties on Election Cycles, South Vietnam 1965-1973

	Close Air Support	
	(1)	(2)
Year Indicators	Y	Y
Weeks Until Next Election	0.015**	
(Square Root)	(0.006)	
3 Months Before Election		-0.088***
		(0.025)
3 Months After Election		-0.015
		(0.032)
Troops in Theater	0.000***	0.000***
(in thousands)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Tet Offensive	0.182***	0.173***
	(0.050)	(0.050)
Easter Offensive/	-0.107**	-0.136**
Operation Linebacker	(0.051)	(0.055)
Cloudy Weather	0.135***	0.135***
	(0.018)	(0.018)
Clear Skies	0.169***	0.168***
	(0.023)	(0.023)
Spring Monsoon	0.016	0.008
	(0.024)	(0.024)
Constant	-1.959***	-1.794***
	(0.074)	(0.055)
Observations	2,011,582	2,011,582

Note: All models clustered by week. Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Results from Tables (2) provide support for Hypothesis 1. The positive significant coefficient in Model (1) indicates that as an election draws closer (and thus, the number of weeks until an election decreases), the likelihood a sortie will target close air support objectives also decreases. This change likely reflects the absence of offensives to support on the ground in the lead up to an election. Model (2) supports this hypothesis. We observe that in the 3 months before an election, sorties are significantly less likely to be close air support, but immediately after an election they are just as likely as other averages. That there is a discrete, significant break in outcomes that coincides within a

Table 6.3: Daylight Sorties on Election Cycles, South Vietnam 1965-1973

	Daylight Sorties	
	(1)	(2)
Year Indicators	Y	Y
Weeks Until Next Election	0.0084*	
(Square Root)	(0.0051)	
3 Months Before Election		-0.113***
		(0.036)
3 Months After Election		0.001
		(0.029)
Troops in Theater	-0.000	-0.000
(in thousands)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Tet Offensive	-0.421***	-0.444***
	(0.069)	(0.070)
Operation Linebacker	-0.258***	-0.293***
	(0.053)	(0.058)
Cloudy Weather	0.073***	0.072***
	(0.011)	(0.011)
Clear Skies	0.054***	0.054***
	(0.011)	(0.011)
Spring Monsoon	-0.007	-0.020
	(0.023)	(0.024)
Constant	1.307***	1.388***
	(0.076)	(0.064)
Observations	2,011,582	2,011,582

Note: All models clustered by week. Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

few months of a presidential or midterm election indicates that electoral politics had a significant effect on the kinds of objectives that aircraft targeted during the Vietnam War.

Similarly, results from Table (3) support Hypothesis 2. Model (1) also reports a positive, significant coefficient, which suggests that as the number of weeks until an election decreases, the number of sorties flown during daylight hours also decreases. Because daytime operations are more likely to be seen and easier to be shot down, we expect that as politicians and commanders seek to expose their pilots to less risk, daytime sorties should decline, and the data bear this out. Model (2) further confirms the expected

mechanism – while daylight sorties are significantly below average levels in the three months before and election, they are indistinguishable from average levels in the aftermath of the election. This discrete change in sortie timing coincides precisely with a U.S. domestic election, suggesting that electoral politics has a pronounced effect on tactical-level decisions made during wartime.

Table (4) is an OLS regression that estimates the effect of electoral cycles on the number of weekly casualties incurred during the Vietnam War. Models (1) and (2) operationalize two independent variables as: 1) a parabolic function that takes the square root of the number of months until an election; and 2) two binary variables that indicate whether an observation occurs three months before or after an election. While casualty data is available at the individual level, it is consolidated into weekly totals for the reasons given in the above section. Control variables include the number of forces in theater, indicators for the Easter and Tet Offensives, and an indicator for the spring monsoon, which typically brought forth the beginning of a new fighting season. To account for profound differences in yearly casualties levels, policies, and trajectory of the war, I include year fixed effects.[35]

Results from Table (4) reveal strong support for both Hypothesis 3 and the theory presented in this dissertation. The positive significant coefficient in Model (1) indicates that as an election draws closer, the number of casualties decreases likely as a result of the risk-reduction efforts taken in the months before. Model (2) provides even stronger evidence – weekly casualty levels in the three months before an election reveal an average of thirty fewer casualties per week – more than a 27% drop from average levels. *This decrease translates into almost 400 soldiers per election cycle.* Further, weekly averages return to exactly average levels in the three months immediately following an election. This dramatic, discrete difference that coincides precisely with the timing of a

[35] In this regression I chose not to cluster the data by time periods because it is already aggregated to the week level. Further, while offensives can be longer than week-long endeavors, some new assaults only last a few days. Thus, I do not subject the models to clustering. Results indicate that while the statistical significance of Model (1) decreases below conventional levels, Model (2) retains its significance.

Table 6.4: Weekly Casualties on Election Cycles, The War in Vietnam 1965-1973

	Service Members Killed in Action	
	(1)	(2)
Year Indicators	Y	Y
Months Until Next Election (Square Root)	6.640*	
	(3.782)	
Three Months Before Election		-30.035***
		(10.836)
Three Months After Election		-0.640
		(9.918)
Troops in Theater	0.001***	0.001***
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Tet Offensive	140.342***	136.996***
	(24.750)	(24.684)
Easter Offensive	-1.268	-11.762
	(20.462)	(20.705)
Spring	40.813***	38.898***
	(7.447)	(7.665)
Constant	-138.584***	-109.108***
	(23.612)	(14.720)
Observations	424	424
R-squared	0.70	0.70

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

U.S. presidential or midterm election strongly suggests that U.S. casualties are decreased in the lead up to an election as incumbents attempt to dampen bad press about an ongoing conflict.

Overall, the evidence presented strongly suggests that operations, tactics, and targets were influenced in the lead up to U.S. domestic elections, but that once the electoral moment had passed, operations returned to business as usual. This electoral influence then had very real consequences on the battlefield – Table (4) indicates that weekly casualty figures declined by almost 30% in the months leading up to November elections, but returned to typical levels once the polls closed. Over eight years of conflict and four election cycles, this translates into over 1,500 soldiers – almost the same number of total

Americans killed in action during the War in Afghanistan. These significant, substantive differences in military operations and their effects around U.S. electoral cycles suggest that electoral politics have substantive effects on the way that states fight wars.

Nixon and the Search for Peace

The Vietnam War ended in the same manner it was begun: with a presidential election. By the beginning of 1972 President Nixon's popularity had substantially and he was facing renewed pressure to end the war in Vietnam before the November election (Karnow 1983, 636). Public dissatisfaction and frustration with the war had continued to rise throughout his presidency as and increasing number of people felt betrayed by the gap in his campaign promises versus the outcomes delivered. While Nixon had pledged in 1968 to end the war within six months of his inauguration, even going so far as to suggest he had a "secret plan" to end the war, over the next three years he would secretly widen the bombing campaign to extend far inside Cambodia and later authorize an invasion of Cambodia and Laos, effectively expanding the war to include all of Indochina. While Nixon had successfully reduced the number of Americans fighting inside Vietnam through his policy of "Vietnamization," it remained that an additional 20,000 soldiers had died during Nixon's presidency. Large-scale protests on college campuses and big cities that occasionally turned violent, as at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago and Kent State University, reinforced divisions amongst the American public and threatened to re-erupt in the tense political environment of a presidential election season. Further, Nixon's secret bombing campaign inside Cambodia had antagonized an already hostile Congress, which was now actively seeking ways to limit presidential authority in Indochina, including debates on repealing the Tonkin Gulf Resolution and using congressional power in appropriations to limit funding for the war (646). With public opinion overwhelmingly against further escalation and a majority of Americans disapproving of how Nixon was handling the war in Vietnam, Nixon had run out of time to win the war outright.

Nixon was thus very concerned about his prospective opponent in the 1972 general election and the platform that he would be running against. While every serious Democratic candidate ran on ending the war in Vietnam and were highly critical of Nixon's handling of the conflict, there remained considerable differences in their visions for domestic and foreign policy, from segregationist governor George Wallace of Alabama to the very liberal Senator George McGovern of South Dakota. With early wins in Iowa and New Hampshire, however, the frontrunner for the nomination going into the New Hampshire primary in March was Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine – a very popular former governor and Humphrey's 1968 vice presidential candidate. Muskie was so popular that in August 1971, before the Democratic primaries even began, a poll taken showed that were the election to be held then, Nixon would lose his bid for reelection against the Maine politician (Gallup 1971). As a result, Nixon's campaign committee forged a letter that was printed in the *Manchester Union-Leader* just days before the New Hampshire primary asserting that Muskie had used slurs against French Canadians and attacking his wife for drinking and using off-color language on the campaign trail (Herring 2002, 291). Muskie's emotional defense of his wife, coupled with his poor showing in New Hampshire after the publication of the "Canuck letter," effectively ended the campaign, throwing the Democratic primaries wide open again. By the end of March and after five primaries, there was no clear frontrunner for the nomination – until the Wisconsin primary on April 4, the eventual nominee (George McGovern of South Dakota) had not won a single race.

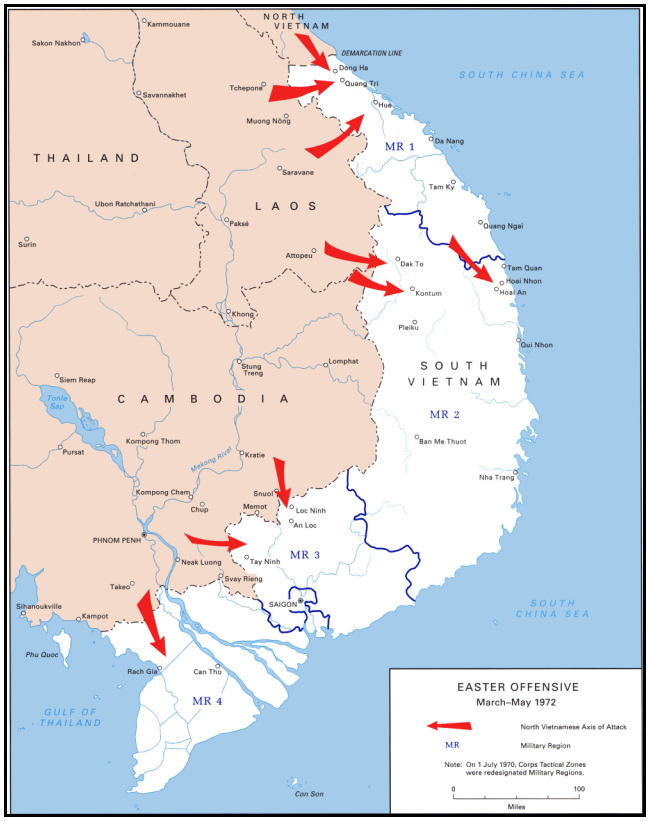
Nixon was not the only party interested in the outcome of the Democratic primaries and the 1972 general election, however. Leaders in North Vietnam were actively planning their spring offensive with an eye toward the U.S. election calendar as well. Negotiations in Paris had stalled with the stalemate on the battlefield and neither side willing to make any additional concessions (Karnow, 632). Hanoi calculated that the only way to break the logjam would be to initiate a major land grab and alter the balance of power on the battlefield (Karnow, 640). U.S. and South Vietnamese military leaders were thinking along similar lines and preparing for a new North Vietnamese offensive, but assumed that it would come around the Lunar New Year (Tet), as it had in 1968 (640). Hanoi,

however, planned the offensive for two months later in order to coincide more closely with the U.S. election and deliver a new sense of urgency to the negotiations (Herring, 304). While the Easter Offensive was not intended to win the war outright, Hanoi felt that a show of strength against a weak South Vietnamese military close to the U.S. presidential election would force Nixon and Kissinger into making additional concessions in the negotiations, regardless of the losses sustained by North Vietnam in such an operation.

Thus, on March 30, 1972, North Vietnamese forces attacked South Vietnam across the demilitarized zone (DMZ), into the Central Highlands from Laos, and south from Cambodia toward Saigon. Committing a total of 14 divisions and 26 independent regiments to the offensive – almost its entire army – the PAVN amassed an enormous force that dramatically outnumbered South Vietnamese defenders in the largest conventional military confrontation of the conflict (Herring, 304). They quickly captured territory and ran over several South Vietnamese defenses, putting front and center the weakness of Vietnamization without corresponding American air power. Within a month, PAVN forces had captured Quang Tri and most of the four northern provinces, held substantial parts of the western highlands, and had the southern city of An Loc under siege and down to a 1,000 yard perimeter (Turley 1985).

U.S. response was generally sluggish and inhibited by a lack of available resources due to the drawdown of forces. Convinced that intelligence about an impending assault had been wrong, the U.S. Commander of Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MAC-V), General Creighton Abrams, and U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker were out of the country during the initial assault, making communication and rapid responses very difficult for U.S. and South Vietnamese forces (Herring, 309). Further, monsoon weather patterns in April made visibility through the low cloud cover very difficult to navigate and forced the Air Force to rely on craft with radar targeting capabilities (Michel III, 23). As a result, the drawdown and reduction of American military presence, including close air support craft and maintenance crews, in Vietnam significantly contributed to the

Figure 6.1: The Easter Offensive



sluggish initial response. By the spring of 1972, the US Air Force had just three squadrons of F-4 Phantoms and one of A-37 Dragonflies in the country, totaling only 76 aircraft in Vietnam and supplemented by 114 fighter-bombers out of Thailand. The number of B-52s available from Guam had dropped significantly to just 83; the Air Force had very few resources to mount an immediate response through difficult weather, and were forced to redeploy aircraft from Korea and the continental United States to compensate. From April to May 1972, the U.S. would transfer 176 F-4 Phantoms and 12 F-105s from Korea and the United States to Thailand, reinforce Guam with an additional 124 B-52s bombers, and add four carrier groups off the coast of Vietnam (Michel III, 21-24).

Once the weather cleared and the Air Force had reinforced its available aircraft, the air support campaign proved devastatingly effective against a North Vietnamese Army that had switched to a conventional battlefield (Michel III, 27). PAVN assaults against Hue in May resulted in the loss of dozens of tanks and over 800 men as American air power

supplemented defending ARVN forces and destroyed armored units, supply lines, and advancing units. In July, the U.S. launched almost 5,500 tactical sorties and over 2,000 B-52 strikes in support of an ARVN counteroffensive to retake Quang Tri. In the south, American air support in defense of An Loc cost the PAVN 40 tanks and almost 800 men in May. At the height of the aerial assault, US forces were sending a B-52 strike every 55 minutes, and by mid-June, the siege was declared over at the cost of an estimated 25,000 North Vietnamese soldiers. By the end of May, US Air Forces could focus on the stalled North Vietnamese offensive in the central highlands and support ARVN defenses around Kon Tum. Helicopters firing TOW missiles and B-52 strikes again decimated large numbers of North Vietnamese forces, and by the time the North Vietnamese forces withdrew back west, an estimated 30,000 men had lost their lives advancing in the central highlands (Pape, 199-201).

Close air support operations against advancing North Vietnamese forces were quickly complemented by a retaliatory strategic bombing offensive against North Vietnam. Initially, Nixon (with the support of Kissinger) rejected a plan to attack Hanoi and Haiphong using B-52 Stratofortress bombers out of concern for ongoing negotiations with the USSR over the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, set to be formalized the following month. However, just 5 days after the PAVN invasion, Nixon authorized tactical air strikes, dubbed "Freedom Train," inside North Vietnam up to the 18th parallel, and a day later on April 5 he authorized air strikes north of the 20th parallel in an operation known as Freedom Train. These missions were largely part of a tactical interdiction effort aimed at cutting off PAVN supply lines, bridges, and other logistical lines necessary to sustain the kind of the conventional military assault launched by the PAVN. Once supply lines had largely been destroyed, the Air Force then switched to target petroleum reserves inside North Vietnam, forcing PAVN units operating south to slow and conserve resources (Michel III, 30).

Nixon was further concerned about the international politics of broadening the bombing campaign. Negotiations with the Soviet Union on the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) were ongoing and due to be finalized in May. A new bombing offensive against

North Vietnam, whom the USSR had been aiding throughout the conflict, could have been seen as escalatory during a time when the U.S. had been taking steps to reduce its presence in Indochina. Additionally, Nixon and Kissinger worried about a potential Chinese response (Karnow, 607). Just as the Chinese intervention in Korea had influenced Johnson's decision-making during Rolling Thunder, Nixon now weighed a similar dilemma. Yet international politics were also different in 1972 than they had been under Johnson. The USSR valued détente with the United States more than its ally in North Vietnam. The Chinese economy and power structure were reeling from the effects of the Cultural Revolution, and Nixon's visit just months before promised better bilateral relations between the two countries.

North Vietnamese gains during the Easter Offensive changed the balance of power between negotiators in Paris, and Nixon and Kissinger understood that without increasing pressure on Hanoi, negotiations over the summer would require more concessions than they could realistically make. On April 20 Soviet Premier Brezhnev agreed to exert more pressure on Hanoi to end the offensive, to little avail (Karnow, 608). When Kissinger met with his North Vietnamese counterpart, Le Duc Tho, in Paris on May 2, Tho made it clear the North Vietnamese were unwilling to make concessions given their battlefield success (607). With the election just five months away and advancing North Vietnamese forces threatening to derail any hope of a negotiated "peace with honor," Nixon had to restore balance between the parties. Yet at the same time, escalation without a peace agreement would have been wildly unpopular with a war-weary electorate. Trusting that the USSR and China would not respond to a new bombing campaign, Nixon decided to gamble for victory.

On 8 May 1972, Nixon announced via televised address that the United States would begin mining Haiphong Harbor to prevent new shipments of arms and aid from reaching North Vietnam. This step, explicitly rejected by Johnson during the early years of the war, signaled a dramatic escalation of hostilities and would significantly hurt North Vietnamese transportation and shipping – 85% of its imports came through Haiphong Harbor. Though the operation was politically controversial, Nixon took every precaution

to spare allies and friendly forces. Mines were set to activate three days after the drop in order to allow foreign ships time to evacuate the port. Further, Nixon altered the rules of engagement for guided missile cruisers protecting the mining aircraft and approved a free-fire zone to defend against attacks from Soviet-made MiG fighters. When it became clear that neither China nor the Soviet Union would intervene on behalf of North Vietnam, Nixon further expanded the bombing campaign.

Two days after Pocket Money, large-scale bombing operations against North Vietnam commenced for the first time since the end of Rolling Thunder in Operation Linebacker. For the first time, Nixon "took the gloves off" of bombing strategy against North Vietnam, and the operation involved air strikes against a broad set of military including logistical centers, roads, bridges, rail houses, fuel dumps, vehicles, power plants, and anti-aircraft defenses (Pape 1996, 199). The campaign was largely successful. It considerably dampened Hanoi's ability to ship military equipment and manpower south, and cut its imports by almost 75%. By July, the Easter offensive had largely stalled, and Nixon's popularity increased as he took at "tough stand" against North Vietnamese aggression (Herring, 305).

Two months after the beginning of Operation Linebacker on 13 July 1972, George McGovern accepted the Democratic Party nomination for president after a protracted and contentious convention. A very liberal Senator from South Dakota, McGovern was criticized heavily even in his own party for support for social policies that many felt were out of touch with Middle America such as abortion rights, amnesty, and drug legalization. His propulsion to the top of the field was largely fueled by a grass-roots, anti-war effort, guaranteeing that Vietnam would dominate the fall campaign season for a third presidential election unless Nixon was able to negotiate a peace agreement before election day. Like Johnson in 1964, Nixon now had the opportunity to portray himself as the reasonable, responsible leader who both brought peace to war-weary country and understood American values.

It was thus with a renewed sense of urgency that Nixon and Kissinger approached the next round of negotiations in Paris. In response to the Easter Offensive, Kissinger had dropped the demand that North Vietnamese forces withdraw from the country in May, but with the North Vietnamese retreating and the success of Operation Linebacker, there was a renewed push in September to reach an equitable agreement that allowed the United States to exit the conflict and save face. Linebacker had done considerable damage to North Vietnam's shipping and transportation, while the failure of the Easter Offensive had cost the PAVN 13 of their 14 divisions (Pape, 208). Further, October saw an increase in Air Force assignments over North Vietnam, despite the increased danger posed to pilots over Hanoi, in order to demonstrate U.S. resolve and increase pressure on Hanoi (Michel III, 39). Yet despite the troubles face by North Vietnam, it was Kissinger who was working under an every-looming deadline. Eager to wrap up negotiations by the end of the month, Kissing became increasingly willing to accede to North Vietnamese demands for little in exchange (Loi and Vu 1996, 239-272). Frustrated by the lack of progress, he exclaimed to and aide on October 8, "You don't understand. I want to meet their terms. I want to reach an agreement. I want to end this war before the election. It can be done, and it will be done" (quoted in Karnow, 648).

On October 21, the two parties reached a draft agreement to be signed within ten days. Nixon and Kissinger took to the airwaves to announce the deal to the American public and build support for it in Congress. 17 days before the November election, it appeared that Nixon had delivered on his promise of peace. Kissinger went before the American public on October 26 to announce that "peace was at hand," and public opinion toward Nixon – already ahead against an ostracized McGovern – climbed even higher, virtually guaranteeing a landslide. A war-weary public, already wary of the liberal Senator, celebrated the news by trending heavily toward the incumbent. By November 7, one in three anti-war Democrats would vote for Nixon.

Yet all was not finalized. South Vietnamese leaders expressed considerable concern over provisions in the deal, protesting that the United States had abandoned its ally in the rush to extricate itself from an unpopular conflict. With North Vietnamese troops permitted to

stay in South Vietnam and the recognition of communist forces as legitimate political actors, the U.S. had relented on many of its key demands throughout the war and exposed South Vietnam to a potentially new offensive that would leave it without American air power or support (Karnow, 648). After the disaster of the East Offensive and revelation that South Vietnamese forces could not withstand another advance by the PAVN without considerable American firepower in support, South Vietnam refused to sign the October agreement and walked away from the negotiating table. With the deadline looming, Nixon half-heartedly attempted to apply pressure to South Vietnamese President Thieu but was unsuccessful and the deadline passed without an agreement. Yet Nixon allowed the deadline to pass without a response due in large part to the upcoming election. Speaking to the American public after the October 31 deadline, Nixon reiterated his commitment to the peace process and reassured American voters that the U.S. and North Vietnam would sign a peace accord shortly (Michel III, 42). For the time, that was enough to calm nervous constituents and quiet anti-war opposition.

The 1972 election saw Nixon win in a landslide, due in large part to his announcement of the Paris Peace Accords. The peace announcement had given Nixon a bump in the polls, and as a result he won 48 states in one of the largest margins of victory in U.S. history. While the bombing campaign against North Vietnam had been unpopular, Nixon's gamble had paid off – he had been able to announce a peace deal of the eve of the election and silence anti-war critics as voters went to the polls in November. He thus went into the Christmas holidays with an enormous mandate and enjoyed a higher approval rating than at any point in his presidency.

Yet concern about the potential for reengagement in Vietnam had led the votes to elect a vehemently anti-War Congress, hostile to Nixon's foreign policy agenda and even less inclined to entertain the possibility of U.S. re-entry into the conflict. Troubled and inflamed at Nixon's actions in Cambodia and Laos, Congress had already at several points tried and failed to limit Nixon's authority over forces in Vietnam. Now that a peace deal had been announced, they would take little time to ensure that the U.S. got out and stayed out. Led by Republican Clifford Case and Democrat Frank Church, the

Senate promised to re-introduce a controversial amendment to the budget that would prohibit funds for forces in Indochina onto the Senate floor in January, where it looked to have more support with the new Congress. Remarked one Nixon aide, "We took the threats from Congress seriously… we knew we were racing the clock" (quoted in Herring, 317). As a result, Nixon knew that he only had a short time for military action before Congress pulled the plug on operations completely. If he was going to exert any more pressure on North Vietnam and convince the South to sign onto a peace deal, he had to do it before January 21, 1973.

Freed from the constraints of electoral politics yet facing a looming congressional deadline, Nixon decided to once again bomb North Vietnam until Hanoi agreed to come back to the negotiating table. Kissinger had warned Hanoi that "Nixon, having secured a landslide victory over McGovern, would not hesitate to 'take whatever action he considers necessary to protect United States interests'" (quoted in Herring, 313). Though it would have been strategically more appropriate to wait until the spring to bomb, after North Vietnam's rainy monsoon season had passed, Operation Linebacker II commenced on December 18, earning it the nickname, the "Christmas bombings." Because Nixon did not have the luxury of waiting until the end of the monsoon season and needed to coerce both North Vietnam and South Vietnam back to the negotiating table, he removed all targeting restrictions in North Vietnam and applied substantial pressure to the Thieu in order to force a deal (Michel III, 51). After 11 days of relentless bombing raids where no target was off limits, both sides came back to the negotiating table in Paris. Short on time while the North Vietnamese were teetering at the breaking point, all three sides agreed to cease fighting and sign a peace – almost the same deal that had been agreed to in Paris just three months before. One 15 January Nixon announced a suspension of offensive actions against North Vietnam, and on January 27, just six days after the new Congress began its session, the Paris Peace Accords were signed by delegations of all three combatants.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored the role of electoral politics on the offensives of the Vietnam War writ large, finding that operations were consistently and substantially affected by changes in the electoral calendar as politicians sought to decrease casualties in the lead up to an election. Using new data on bombing operations and casualty figures from the National Archives, I found that there were dramatic differences in how bombing operations were conducted before and after U.S. domestic elections from 1966 to the end of the war in 1973. Further, I found that these risk-mitigating strategies were successful in reducing casualties – on average, the three months before an election witnessed 30% fewer casualties than non-election months. Together, these statistical results suggest that election politics play an important role in how the Vietnam War was fought.

I then turned my attention to a case study of the politics and military operations leading up to the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973. It is clear that the final year of the Vietnam War was inextricably linked to presidential and congressional politics leading up to and after the 1972 election. North Vietnam initiated the Easter Offensive in large part because it was trying to influence public opinion leading up to the November elections and coerce the U.S. into making additional concessions in Paris. Nixon's decision to initiate Operation Pocket Money and Linebacker I – unprecedented escalations of the bombing war against North Vietnam – was largely motivated by pressure to achieve a tolerable peace accord at any cost. Rather than delayed offensive operations, Nixon knew that "peace with honor" would dwarf any opposition to the bombing campaigns and thus "went for broke" with Operation Linebacker. Desperate for a peace deal, Kissinger makes considerable concessions to the North Vietnamese in order to announce on the eve of the election that "peace is at hand," which enormously increased Nixon's popularity. Finally, in an effort to apply one last round of pressure on the North Vietnamese in anticipation of a hostile Congress and renewed talks in Paris, Nixon initiated Linebacker II despite a difficult strategic environment amidst the heavy monsoon rains. In the end, the Paris Peace Accords were signed just six days after the start of the new Congress, and Nixon finally extricated the country from its longest war.

Chapter 7

Electoral Politics and Strategic Bombing Operations in the Second World War

"I did not ask you last night about plans for harrying the German retreat from Breslau. On the contrary, I asked whether Berlin, and no doubt other large cities in East Germany, should not now be considered especially attractive targets."

— Prime Minister Winston S Churchill, minute to Air Minister Archibald Sinclair, 26 January 1945

"It seems to me that the moment has come when the question of bombing of German cities simply for the sake of increasing the terror, though under other pretexts, should be reviewed… The destruction of Dresden remains a serious query against the conduct of Allied bombing. I am of the opinion that military objectives must henceforward be more strictly studied in our own interests rather than that of the enemy."

— Prime Minister Winston S Churchill, rough minute to General Ismay, 28 March 1945

On the night of 13 February 1945, 796 Royal Air Force Lancaster heavy bombers dropped 2,646 tons of bombs, including 1,181 tons of incendiaries, into the heart of the German city of Dresden. The firestorm that resulted as a product of the second raid engulfed 15 square miles of the city, destroyed over a third of the homes, and killed over 25,000 civilians. The next day, 210 U.S. Army Air Corps B-17 bombers blindly dropped another 461 tons of explosives on the burning city. With almost 4,000 tons of bombs dropped on a city known as the "Florence on the "Elbe" in a period of 24 hours, U.S. and British actions in Dresden marked the most destructive and culturally costly bombing raid of World War II (Overy 2013, 391-396).

Dresden was additionally unique in the outrage that it caused amongst the British and American publics. The city's relative unimportance as a military target, yet high level of cultural significance and location as a home to tens of thousands of refugees, led many to believe that the raids were punitive rather than strategically necessary. As word about the impact of the bombings escaped the wartime censors, U.S. and British public officials and wartime commanders alike were forced to justify the bombings to their respective audiences, but debate over the bombings continued. The news and possibility that Allied forces may have decided "to adopt deliberate terror bombing" in order to "cause panic and destroy morale" resulted in public demands for action and accountability by numerous civil society groups and political figures (Overy, 395).

However, despite the joint nature of the Combined Bomber Offensive and close relationship between British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and American President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, each country reacted to the public outcry in dramatically different ways. While U.S. forces studied the impacts of the incendiaries in order to produce more effective tools for city destruction in the war again Japan, Churchill sent a memorandum to Chief of Air Staff Charles Portal six weeks after Dresden harshly criticizing the use of bombing against civilians and demanded that the policy be reviewed. While the U.S. forces moved away from a bombing policy aimed at targeting military sites toward more indiscriminate attacks, British bombing policy in contrast became more focused on tactical ground support, and by 16 April industrial areas and morale bombing were no longer approved as objectives.

Why did the U.S. and UK switch policy positions on the objectives of strategic bombing operations? Before the public outrage over Dresden, British bombing policy had consistently favored night bombing, city bombing, and other indiscriminate measures when conducting raids over the continent. By contrast, American bombers were restricted to almost exclusively daytime raids against military targets thought to impact the German transportation system. These positions essentially reversed in the aftermath of Dresden, largely due to electoral pressures on Churchill as the war came to an end while American attitudes about Japanese non-combatants provided a much more

permissive environment. Faced with the prospect of calling elections, this chapter shows that the British Prime Minister became highly sensitive to public opinion on the nature of indiscriminate bombing, and sought to curtail both the number of operations that resulted in high levels of collateral damage and the number of press reports that highlighted the costs of the bombing campaign over Germany. Across the Atlantic, however, American President Roosevelt had just won reelection in the fall of 1944 and was thus less responsive to the demands of public opinion. Further, after Roosevelt's death and Harry S. Truman assumed the presidency, public attitudes about Japanese civilians and general war-weariness contributed to an environment more permissive of non-combatant collateral damage. Though public outrage over the bombing of Dresden was greater in America than in Britain, U.S. policy nevertheless steadily increased to favor the use of incendiaries and raids that were less discriminate in nature, culminating in the fire-bombing of Tokyo and use of nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan.

This chapter explores the impact of domestic politics on military operations during the strategic bombing campaigns of World War II. Faced with an existential threat from Germany and operating in a domain that received relatively less media attention than the ground war, Winston Churchill and Franklin Delano Roosevelt had good reasons to pursue the war according to military doctrine rather than accommodating domestic political concerns. Further, the suspension of elections by Churchill upon entering the war suggests that British military operations should have been impervious to domestic electoral concerns. The liberal use of censors to shield potentially unpopular information from public consumption and generation of pro-Allied propaganda further indicates that political elites fighting the war should have been able to lead public opinion, rather than respond to it. However, public outcry after the bombing of Dresden elicited two different responses from the Allied governments that is best explained by each leader's electoral incentives, rather than strategic concern, historical preferences, or organizational biases.

Strategy and Politics during the Second World War

Politics and Public Opinion during the War

Churchill understood the realities and limitations that elections and public opinion imposed on his ability to make executive decisions during wartime, and as such suspended elections during the war. Concerned that party politics would fracture the need for unity as Britain waged total war against Nazi Germany, when Neville Chamberlain resigned Churchill formed a National Government, including members of all three major parties (Conservative, Labor, and Liberal) in the Government for the first time in British history. Second in command during the war was Clement Atlee, leader of the rival Labor Party who would go on to defeat Churchill in the 1945 election and become Prime Minister. The parties agree to prolong Parliament until after the war with Germany had concluded, and further agreed that any seats that became vacant during the war would be filled uncontested by the other two parties (Daily Telegraph 2015). Each year Parliament would extend the length of the session, with royal assent, by another year in the interest of pursuing necessary wartime strategy. This allowed Churchill and other civilian leaders to make military and political decisions during the conflict without fear of being publicly denounced by members of the opposite party and thrown out of office before policies in the long-term interest of the state could take effect. Stated one MP, "Controversy itself would be a little difficult to stimulate in a healthy sense, because the nation is essentially united on the prosecution of the war. All political parties are agreed that our first duty in this situation is to prosecute the war and to win it." (House of Commons 1942).

Despite the suspension of elections, the British government nevertheless remained concerned with public opinion throughout the war as they sought to maintain morale and represent the interests of the people. The Home Office regularly reported on the mood of the public, and the Government took pains to ensure that those adversely affected by the Blitz and Battle of Britain received full support and assistance (Overy, 126-196). Censors were employed early on in the war both to protect the people from enemy propaganda but also to control the flow of positive and negative information distributed

to the public. As a result, the unity Government was able to manipulate public opinion over wartime policies and largely shield itself from criticism of potentially unpopular wartime policies. Additionally, civilian leaders including Churchill were careful throughout the war to address the concerns of prominent figures and project to the public an air of moral superiority (Hastings, 214-216). Churchill's charisma and oratorical skills, combined with rally 'round the flag effects and an effective Ministry of Information resulted in very high approval ratings for the Government, and almost complete freedom for Churchill to pursue the policies he thought best.

In the United States, public opinion was much more relevant throughout most of the war to American president Roosevelt. Originally restricted to appeasing an isolationist public just recovered from the Great Depression, Roosevelt realized that he could not unilaterally declare war without provocation. Yet after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and German declaration of war several days later, the American public rallied to fight in both the European and Pacific theaters. Like Britain, the United States also used censors to filter out potentially classified reporting and information that may be harmful to the war effort. However, despite a desire to have politics "end at the water's edge," public opinion remained at the forefront of concern for member of the American government.[36] Unable to suspend elections, Roosevelt campaigned for members of the Democratic Party and a fourth term throughout both the 1942 midterm and 1944 general elections, respectively. Foreign affairs played a significant role in each, as dramatic victories after the Normandy invasion, including the liberation of Paris, secured a large electoral victory for Roosevelt despite serious concerns about his poor health (Weintraub 2012). Private messages in the days before the 1944 general election reveal further concerns by Democrats that a turn in wartime successes or careless words by Stalin or Churchill could have given Republican challenger Thomas Dewey a last minute edge at the polls (Prime Minister's Papers, 493). Each candidate campaigned hard for the votes

[36] See remarks by Harry Hopkins, British Ambassador to the United States, about concern amongst Democrats that Dulles had politicized the war and thus broken an unspoken rule about the 1944 election. U.K. National Archives Prime Minister's Papers, PREM File 4/27/7, Page 445.

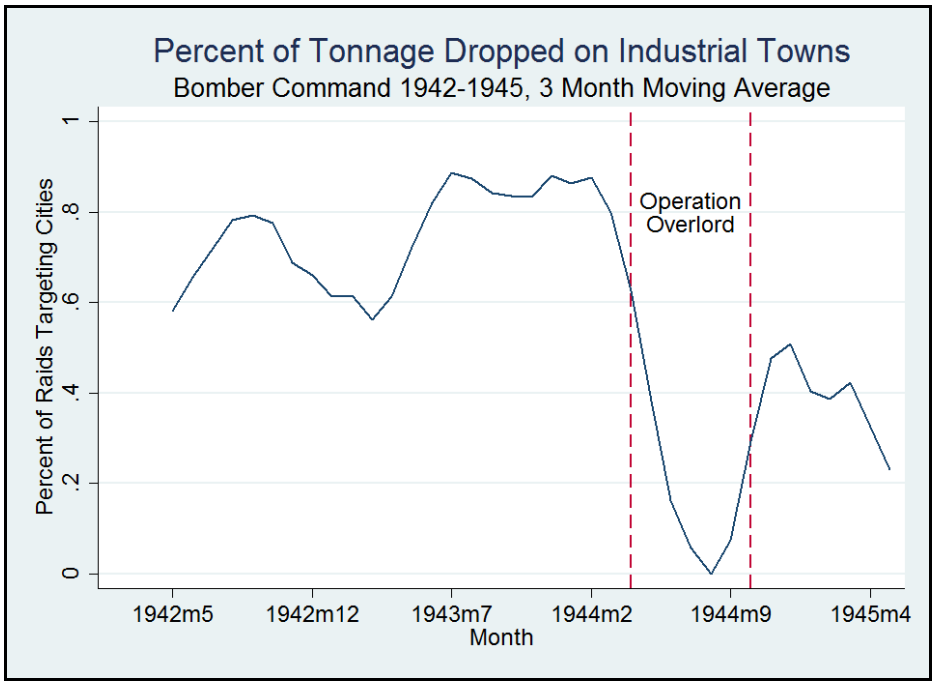
of overseas soldiers by promising both a quick end to the war and adjustment assistance for when they returned home (Weintraub, ch. 8).

Bombing Policy Before and After the Combined Offensive

British strategic bombing doctrine during the beginning of the Second World War was primarily informed by thinking that had developed during the interwar years. The early establishment of the Royal Air Force in the aftermath of the Great War resulted in a service intent on proving that it was capable of fighting and winning a war on its own; strategic bombing doctrine evolved largely independently of Army doctrine, and included few if any plans for tactical air support (Biddle 2002). Fighter escorts were considered unnecessary as late as 1943, despite taking considerable losses from opposing fighter planes and anti-aircraft defense systems (Biddle, 118-119). As a result, losses were incredibly high in the first years of the war – the average flying life of a bomber was just 40 hours in 1941 (214). These traumatic experiences, along with the Blitz over London by the German Luftwaffe, generated a series of doctrinal changes that emphasized bombing tactics and operations designed to minimize risk to RAF pilots. This involved a switch to night bombing and change in operational targets to reflect broader urban locations, regardless of risk to civilians on the continent.

Responsible for British Bomber Command during the latter half of the war was Sir Arthur "Bomber" Harris, who was a staunch advocate of area bombing and operations that would break the will of the German people in their support for the war. Writing to Churchill in June 1942, he stressed confidently, "*When it becomes possible to defeat the German army on land by United Nations' forces transported overseas, there will no longer be any need to defeat them. They will already have broken*" (emphasis original, 202). As Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command, Harris marshaled the approval of area bombing through the British Cabinet, despite objections by some members to its potential impact on civilians (Overy, 49). Emphatic in his belief that area bombing would be the deciding factor during the war, Harris insisted on including targets such as

Figure 7.1: Tonnage Dropped on Industrial Towns, 1942-1945



industrial and urban areas for "morale effects." Churchill in large part agreed with Harris's assessment despite mounting evidence that suggested area bombing was having little effect on the morale of the German people (305).

As a result, British bombing policy favored raids that were more indiscriminate in nature, both in order to manage losses and attrition as well as because Bomber Command believed that area bombing would bring the fastest end to the war. Most raids were conducted at night and over heavily populated, industrial areas where blind bombing would have the most effect. Accuracy was poor; in a 1944 raid on a ball bearings factory in Scheinfurt, Germany, only 22 bombs fell inside the city limits, and a September 1944 raid over the Ruhr saw none of the twenty RAF sorties flown over the valley hit within 1 square mile of a military target, and only three hit within five square miles (Overy, 386, Air Ministry Papers).

In contrast, American bombing doctrine focused primarily on precision bombing and strikes on military targets meant to disable the German war making machine. Without

the experience of bombing during World War I and absent an independent air service, the U.S. Army Air Force strategic bombing doctrine evolved as a support tool for the ground campaign, and as a result heavily favored the targeting of areas that would be beneficial to a land campaign on the continent (Biddle 2002). Lack of remote targeting capabilities meant that all bombing was done by visual confirmation, and as such the USAAF emphasizes day time raids, despite the large risks associated with German air defenses who could see and attack the incoming bombers. As a result, casualties and losses were also very high for the Americans once the U.S. 8th Air Force Bomber Command began to fly missions over German in 1943 (Pape 1996, 273-276).

Despite these losses, however, U.S. forces continued to target German military sites during daylight hours throughout 1943 and 1944. Led by Colonel Carl Spaatz and General Henry Arnold, the USAAF developed a plan to damage as much of the German transportation system and petroleum reserves as possible in an effort to cause considerable extra stress on the German war economy and the ability of supplies to reach troops at the front lines (Pape 1996). Further, they were often used in tactical air support for ongoing land operations, particularly in the months after the Normandy Invasion of June 1944.

In January of 1943, as the USAAF was deploying to England in order to set up an American Air presence over the European continent, Roosevelt, Churchill, and their senior military advisors met in Casablanca, Morocco to determine strategic plans for the rest of the war and ways in which Allied military forces would work together on the Western front, including a discussion on operational guidelines for a combined bombing offensive. Organizational priorities and leadership played a decisive role in the development of bombing strategy during the conference at Casablanca, where Churchill and Roosevelt determined the priorities of the Combined Offensive. Major differences between American and British Air Forces resulted in a push from American forces to convince Churchill of the merits of precision day bombing operations, which he reluctantly acknowledged could potentially produce some results (Overy, 306). As a result, the document produced from the summit at Casablanca outlined little more than

operational guidelines, as opposed to an agreed directive for the priorities of the bombing campaign (307). Further, despite some subsequent organizational shuffles as the two forces cooperated, Harris managed to retain almost complete autonomy over Bomber Command, which allowed him to pursue area bombing under the guise of targeting enemy morale and reducing industrial output write large (308-312). As a result, the Combined Offensive was little more than two independent commands with dramatically different priorities – British forces emphasized area bombing at night in order to avoid casualties while American forces attempted to destroy military targets during the day in order to cripple the German war machine.

In the spring of 1944, however, strategic priorities changed dramatically with the planning and implementation of Operation Overlord – the Normandy invasion across the channel. Recognizing the overwhelming need for tactical close air support to prepare the way for advancing Allied soldiers, Supreme Commander Dwight D Eisenhower assumed control over both Bomber Command and the 8th Air Force (Pape, 276-283). As a result, all strategic bombing priorities were temporarily set aside in order to support ground troops and Army objectives. Raids against major cities fell precipitously as Bomber Command adapted to the changing situation on the ground in Europe under the direction of Eisenhower (Pape, 283). Beginning in May 1944, bombing targets were focused almost exclusively along the French coastline as Eisenhower attempted to soften German defenses in preparation for the invasion, and as Allied forces advanced across France, bombing raids were just a step ahead of the ground troops. By the end of September 1944, Allied forces had progressed far enough inland and with enough success that Eisenhower relinquished control of Bomber Command back to Harris, with the provision that he be able to call upon British bombers for support if the strategic need arose (Overy, 383).

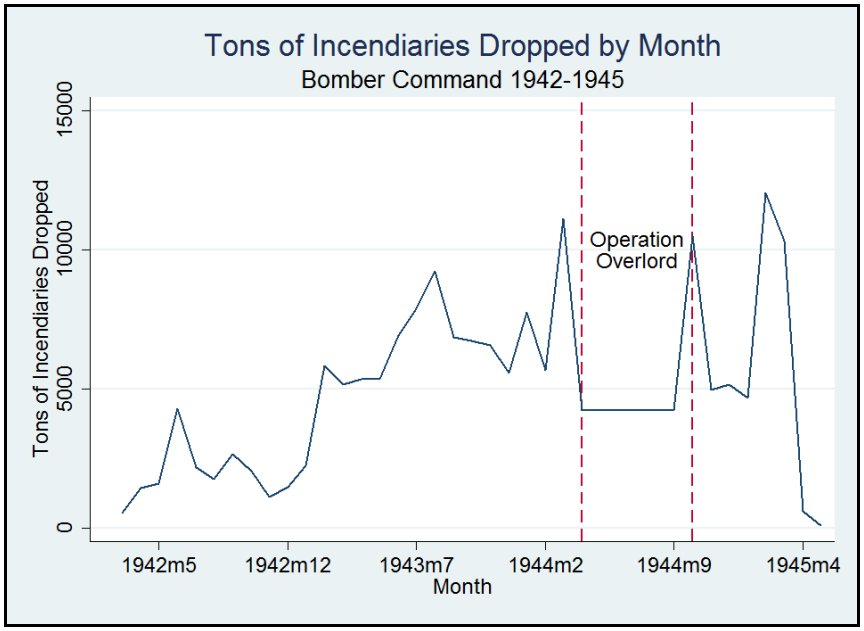
October 1944 thus witnessed the return of area bombing over German cities as Harris retook control of Bomber Command with the end of Overlord. Though Allied forces were rapidly advancing through France and Brussels with the liberation of Brussels and Antwerp, Harris and Churchill nevertheless agreed on the need to resume bombing of

industrial areas and German cities. Technological advances in December 1944 allowed for better precision capabilities at night, resulting in an increased emphasis in the winter of 1945 on nighttime operations (Grehan and Mace 2014, 356). However, despite a greatly improved ability to target military facilities at night, "morale bombing" remained Harris's number one priority through February 1945, even as the Air Ministry began to doubt its efficacy. Despite a waning interest in the strategic bombing campaign, Churchill was particularly supportive of the area bombing campaign in the aftermath of Overlord. Memos between Downing Street and Bomber Command reveal Churchill suggested additional raids on city targets, including a raid on Berlin (Biddle, 254). January 1945 saw the development of a list of targets, including Berlin, Leipzig, Chemnitz, and Dresden, to be attacked at the beginning of February under good weather (255).

February and March thus saw an enormous escalation in the amount of tonnage dropped on German cities, with a particular emphasis on industrial towns. Despite insistence by the Air Ministry that Harris give priority to oil targets in an effort to cripple the German transportation effort (transportation targets remained the official number one priority after Operation Overlord), Harris's dedication to the area offensive meant that oftentimes "poor weather" resulted in a return to city bombing (Biddle, 252). Harris's belief that transportation and oil targets were "just another panacea" led him to strongly resist any attempts to move away from morale bombing operations (252). As a result, many of the largest and most destructive bombing operations of the entire war came during this two-month period, including the bombing of Dresden.

Toward the end of March 1945, British bombing operations over Germany began to focus increasingly on military targets and took particular care to avoid hitting industrial, urban areas. Bomber Command had reached its peak capacity, and dropped the largest tonnage of bombs in March of any month during the war, almost half of which were directed at cities (Bomber Command Quarterly Review 1945, 49). However, despite the profound destruction brought on by the 30,000 tons of explosives and incendiaries dropped on German cities in March, the vast majority of these attacks occurred early in the month,

Figure 7.2: Tons of Incendiaries Dropped by Month, 1942-1945



and operations against population centers declined exponentially over the course of March (49). By the end of the month, raids against cities had virtually disappeared from Bomber Command operations logs, focusing instead on targets that were military in nature (Middlebrook and Everett 2014). A minute published on June 15, 1945 detailing the relative target priorities of Bomber Command reflects this change – while the period from October 1944 to the end of March 1945 explicitly names industrial centers in the Ruhr and Eastern Germany as priorities, the April-May 1945 period lists only naval targets and *tactical* targets "as allotted by SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force]" (Air Ministry Files 1945). By the time Germany surrendered on 7 May, the majority of bombing operations had switched to daytime raids, raids over cities were virtually non-existent, and the British were dropping far fewer incendiaries per raid than in previous months.

This change in operations coincided with a change in policy directed by the Prime Minister. By the end of March, Churchill had determined that the indiscriminate bombing of city centers were both unnecessary and undesirable in their entirety. In a minute dated 1 April to the Joint Chiefs, Churchill stated that, "the moment has come

when the question of the so called 'area bombing' of German cities should be reviewed…. We must see to it that our attacks do not do more harm to ourselves in the long run than they do to the enemy's immediate war effort." (Cabinet Papers 1945). Given Churchill's historically positive attitude toward area bombing, the memo signaled a profound change in thinking from the Prime Minister. The final minute was circulated on 1 April to his general officers and cabinet members, soliciting comments and evaluations. Yet the implication was clear – Churchill was no longer in favor of indiscriminate attacks against German cities and was ready to enact new policy regarding bombing targets. Though the Joint Chiefs agreed with Churchill's assessment, strong opposition came from Bomber Command, who vigorously defended the area bombing campaign and claimed that German morale had been considerably weakened due to the city attacks (Overy, 397). Insisting that bombing industrial areas was critical to wartime success, Commander Arthur Harris strongly opposed any changes to British bombing policy as the war came to a close. However, by 5 April the Joint Chiefs had recommended a cease in area bombing operations, and Harris had been overruled (397).

The bombing of urban and industrial areas, which had reached its height during that very month, dropped precipitously in April and May leading up to the German surrender on 7 May. Yet, traditional explanations are unable to explain the timing and purpose of this review. British Bomber Command had historically been an enormous proponent of area bombing, and despite rapid advances by Allied Forces during the winter of 1945 which resulted in fewer available targets, these operations continued to escalate into the beginning of March. Further, though technological advances in late 1944 increased the precision of nighttime operations, Bomber Command dramatically reduced the number of night operations in favor of more dangerous day bombing in order to preserve even more infrastructure and civilian lives. In reality, the evidence suggests that it was concern over the domestic political consequences of indiscriminate bombing which led Churchill to ultimately rein in Arthur Harris and reevaluate the role of area bombing in the Combined Bomber Offensive.

It was at this same time the American forces decided to escalate indiscriminate attacks in an effort to prepare for the war with Japan. Just as Churchill was growing increasingly uncomfortable with the idea of the area offensive, the U.S. began to target urban areas in both Germany and Japan. February and March saw the highest number of indiscriminate attacks carried out by the US Army Air Force of the entire war, including the firebombings of Dresden, Kobe, and Tokyo (Biddle, 258-263). Concerned about the human costs of a ground assault on the main islands of Japan and aware that the public was quickly growing war weary, Roosevelt (and later, Truman) wanted to end the war as quickly, and with as few casualties, as possible (263). These concerns culminated in perhaps the most famous indiscriminate aerial attacks in history – the detonation of atomic weapons over Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Domestic Politics of Strategic Bombing

What explains the change in British and American bombing operations? Why, over strong objections from Bomber Command, did Churchill ask for a review of area bombing policy? Why, after three years of commitment to the area bombing of cities and urban areas, did British bombing of urban areas decline considerably, while U.S. Air Forces abandoned a dedication to precision targets in favor of indiscriminate attacks? While strategy and changes in the ground offensive provided the permissive conditions for each change in bombing policy, an attention to the different domestic politics of each country provides the most comprehensive and compelling explanation. Public backlash after news of the Dresden raid made it past wartime censors resulted in a flurry of activity from both the British and American governments, each of which felt significant pressure to denounce the area bombing campaign.

In Britain, the prospect of upcoming elections and the need to defend the legacy of the RAF resulted in a shift in bombing policy and operational implementation. As the wartime coalition began to fray and members of the Conservative Party expressed a desire to hold elections while victory over Germany was fresh in the minds of the

electorate, Churchill was forced to think about defending the record of Bomber Command to the voters. As a result, despite his full cooperation leading up to the raid Churchill publicly distanced himself from it in the weeks following the firestorm. With the conflict against Japan still unresolved and war-weary voters concerned about accusations of terror bombing, Churchill then took the opportunity to shift bombing policy to remove all morale-based targets from British priorities. His concern over the impact of Dresden on the legacy of Bomber Command is further reflected in his post-war reluctance to recognize their significant contribution to the war effort.

In the United States, Roosevelt was much more concerned about ending the war in the Pacific than appealing to a public that had elected him to an unprecedented fourth term just a few months before. Informed by the fierce fighting in the Philippines against Japanese soldiers determined not to surrender, the U.S. expected heavy losses as they prepared for an assault on the islands of Iwo Jima and Okinawa, and eventually the Japanese mainland. U.S. public attitudes toward Japanese non-combatants also provided a permissive environment for U.S. leaders. Tolerant of and even supportive of inflicting collateral damage on Japan, Roosevelt and Truman would have little opposition to increasing indiscriminate attacks against the Pacific power. Free from worries about electoral security, the US continued to experiment with increasingly indiscriminate bombing tactics on the continent until German surrender May 7, despite public outcry over the bombing of German civilians.

Public Opinion and Policy

Despite public opposition in Britain to the deliberate targeting of civilians, morale bombing remained a cornerstone of British bombing policy beginning in 1942. While Arthur Harris was an active and public proponent of the bombing of urban areas and cities, his immediate superior, Charles Portal, was more determined to assure the public that Bomber Command was not engaging in terror bombing (Hastings, 212-216). Concern over British bombing operations resulted in a number of letters to the Air Chief of Staff, who regularly insisted that the RAF was only targeting areas for their value to

the German war machine, and routinely omitted references to morale effects (214). Wartime censors removed information about the number of civilian casualties and private property damage cause by the area bombing campaign, and cabinet officials repeatedly assured members of Parliament and their constituents that bombing operations in Germany and occupied territory were only targeting industries vital to the German war economy (216). In 1944 a poll revealed that two thirds of a war weary British public was amenable to the bombing of civilians if it would end the war faster – up from less than half at the beginning of the war (Overy, 378). Given the amount of information that was withheld from the public during this period, however, it is unclear whether the surveyed population could have understood that British bombers were capable of destroying entire cities overnight.

Despite concerted attempts by the British government to assure its citizens of the military value of the cities it bombed, there remained a small yet vocal contingent of citizens who regularly expressed concern over the morality and strategic value of the area bombing campaign. One particular group called the Bombing Restriction Committee emerged in the aftermath of the 1943 firestorm in Hamburg, where 42,000 Germans citizens were killed and a million refugees fled the city, and distributed leaflets and other anti-bombing propaganda to passersby in London (Hastings, 261; Brittain 1943). Religious groups were additionally against "terror from the skies" and advocated for an end to all strategic bombing operations (Hastings, 261). Perhaps the most vocal and high-profile critic of the area bombing campaign came from Richard Stokes, an MP from Ipswich, who regularly questioned both the morality and the strategic value of Harris' air campaign. Though by no means a pacifist, Stokes routinely advocated on the floor of the House of Commons for an end to the area bombing campaign, though he was often alone in his critique of War Cabinet policy (261). Letters between Air officials further reveal concern about public perception of Bomber Command and the area offensive as early as 1942 (261). In general however, widespread ignorance of the devastation wrought upon civilians by indiscriminate bombing combined with government assurances that targets were of military value contributed to a lack of support for anti-bombing advocates and public apathy about the strategic bombing campaign until Dresden.

The American government and US Army Air Force were even more proactive about convincing the public that the 8th Air Force was engaging in the precision bombing of military targets. Isolated from the threat of invasion and bombing raids against the continental United States, Americans attitudes were significantly less permissive of civilian casualties and indiscriminate bombing operations than those of British citizens. This coincided with a focus of American air doctrine on daylight raids. While British experience with heavy German resistance and versatility early in the war had led them to largely abandon daylight precision attacks, American air doctrine called for the targeting of specific military industries deemed vital to the war effort. As a result, USAAF insistence on its adherence to "precision bombing," despite operational realities that resulted in implementation difficulties, was publicly proclaim to assure the U.S. public that civilians were not being directly targeted (Biddle, 259).

Explaining the Final Days of the Combined Bomber Offensive

October of 1944 saw the return of control over Bomber Command to Harris after the completion of Operation Overlord and Allied gains into occupied France. Almost three months of heavy fighting had left the German lines exhausted, and oil supplies were running dangerously low due to the capture of Hungarian and Romanian oil fields in the east and a focus on bombing petroleum facilities and other plants in the Ruhr (Pape, 284). As poor winter weather set in, however, and Eisenhower relinquished control over Bomber Command to Harris, October saw the highest tonnage of explosives dropped on cities of the entire war (Bomber Command Quarterly, 49). However, the renewed enthusiasm for area bombing occurred just as technologies were beginning to allow for greater precision in attacks. In 1943 British Pathfinder crews made use of reflective surfaces in Operation "Window" to defeat German radar in the bombing of Hamburg, allowing RAF forces to escape the city with relatively few losses, while improvements in cockpit radars allowed pilots to see through cloud cover for the first time, enabling bombers to more selectively target their drops (Hastings, 259-261).

By late 1944, the Air Ministry began to seriously reconsider its commitment to the area offensive. This may have been due to emerging technologies, but they more likely developed a concern about protecting the reputation of Bomber Command as key officials recognized that the permissive environment of wartime public opinion would fade and that the area bombing campaign would be additionally judged on the morality of its methods and not just its results (Biddle, 247). At the end of October, deputy Chief of Air Staff Norman Bottomley sent a minute to Harris reminding him of the priority of oil facilities in targeting, and Portal relayed a memorandum from Deputy Supreme Commander Arthur Tedder that was critical of Bomber Command's effort (247). This generated an almost three month debate between Portal and Harris on the efficacy and feasibility of precision targeting inside Germany, where Harris argued vigorously in favor of the area offensive and Portal attempted to persuade him of the merits of targeting oil facilities (247). Despite his objections, however, Harris complied with the directives issued by Portal in letter if not in spirit. Bombing raids against oil targets increased substantially after October and resulted in a highly destructive campaign against the German war machine. By January, Portal dropped his objection to Harris's policies after he threatened to resign, writing, "I willingly accept your assurance that you will continue to do your utmost to ensure the successful execution of the policy laid down. I am very sorry that you do not believe in it but it is no use my craving for what is evidently unattainable." (Harris Personal Papers 1945).

This shift in the Air Ministry's attitude toward the area bombing campaign coincided with the reemergence of electoral politics in Whitehall. On 31 October 1944 Churchill addressed the House of Commons to ask for the prolongation of Parliament an additional year and the continuation of the National Unity government he had created during his first year in office. Yet he also understood that dissolution was not long in coming.

> "In asking for a prolongation of the life of this Parliament for another year, I doubt very much whether the Parliament will last so long…. Let us assume, however, that the German war ends in March, April, or May, and that some or all the other parties in the Coalition recall their Ministers out of the Government, or wish to bring it to an end from such dates…. It may therefore be taken as certain that from the moment the King gives his consent to a dissolution a period of between two and three months would be required. This also would be fair to the political parties and candidates, who have to set about one another in the usual lusty manner" (Prime Ministers Papers, 305).

Meanwhile, members of the Conservative Party began to raise potential electoral issues with Churchill and advocate for his support in ensuring members of the party would retain their seats in vulnerable districts. When General Sir E Louis Spears, a Conservative MP from Carlisle, was criticized in the press upon returning from his post in Syria in December 1944, he asked Churchill to publicly support him and Churchill responded the next month to the Conservative Party chair, "We cannot lose the seat" (Churchill Personal Papers 1944-45). A few months later he followed up with the MP, reminding him that he must win his seat in the upcoming elections. Despite the ongoing wartime offensive, it is clear that Churchill remained actively involved in and aware of party politics, particularly as the war came to a close and elections drew near.

While Churchill preferred that elections not be held until after the war with both Germany and Japan had been concluded, the Conservative Party was eager to take advantage of its status as the party that led England to victory, and began to pressure Churchill to call for elections. Official preparation for elections began on January 13 with a discussion of historical precedent for the calling of elections (Prime Ministers Papers, 305). Eager to reassure the public that the Government was preparing for the postwar world, the discussion culminated with a proposal to the House of Commons to shorten the length of time required between the dissolution of Parliament and an election (305).

In the United States, party politics had been playing out throughout the summer of 1944 and into the fall election. Because the end of the war looked to be in sight, Republicans campaigned largely on domestic issues, including a rollback of the New Deal. Concerns about Roosevelt's health resulted in a smaller margin of victory than any of his previous

three elections, but the successes of Operation Overlord and the liberation of Paris virtually ensured his success against Republican challenger Thomas Dewey (Weintraub 2012). With 53% of the popular vote and an electoral college landslide of 432-99, Roosevelt was safely reelected on November 7, 1944 with Harry S Truman as his Vice Presidential candidate. Roosevelt thus entered the new year with his final election behind him and enormous popularity throughout the country.

One month after Roosevelt's reelection, the German army launched its final major offensive on the Western front at Ardennes, Belgium, in an effort to retake Antwerp and break the advancing Allied forces in half. Initial successes, combined with the revelation of new and dangerous technologies, caught the Allies by surprise and caused significant concern that the Germans were much stronger than intelligence had suggested (Overy 388). This led Churchill to become more excited about the role that air power would play in knocking out German participation once and for all, and in late January he asked Secretary of State for Air Sinclair what might be done to hasten victory. While the air staff determined that oil would remain the top priority, they also came up with an initial list of cities to be bombed in the case of poor weather, including Berlin, Dresden, Chemnitz, and Leipzig. Writing back on January 26 to express his dissatisfaction with the plan, he stated,

> "I did not ask you last night about plans for harrying the German retreat from Breslau. On the contrary, I asked whether Berlin, and no doubt other large cities in East Germany, should not now be considered especially attractive targets. I am glad that this is "under examination". Pray report to me tomorrow what is going to be done" (Quoted in Biddle 2002, 254).

The unusually terse memo prompted the air staff to focus its attention on raiding the major cities identified in an effort to disrupt German organization and cause confusion among eastbound soldiers behind German lines, and Bomber Command was happy to comply with the prime minister's request. Harris had consistently produced target lists dedicated to "communications targets" that reliably included morale bombing options in case of bad weather (Biddle, 254). On 1 February Berlin, Leipzig, and Dresden were included on the Allied air commanders' priority lists, just below oil targets (254). The

Americans also began to become increasingly indiscriminate in their bombing tactics. In addition to increasingly participating in area attacks on the continent, the Air Force in the Pacific theater launched its first incendiary attack on the Japanese town of Kobe on February 4, causing significant damage to civilian and industrial centers of the city. Over the next two weeks, the Combined Offensive would plan a series of major area attacks on cities in East Germany, including but not limited to Dresden.

The Allied air attack on Dresden beginning 13 February was unremarkable in its conception yet exceptional in its effects both on the ground and in the press. Despite it relative insignificance as a military center, Dresden was listed as a potential sight where German forces may have congregated to launch a counteroffensive against the Red Army similar to what had occurred at Ardennes just two months before (Overy, 388). Additionally, Dresden served as a hub for the large number of refugees that had fled west to avoid the brutal Russian occupation, and an air raid would cause immense confusion behind the German lines and put additional stress on an already anemic transportation system (388). Yet it was only one target of many planned for the month of February, and attacks occurred at Chemnitz, Leipzig, and Berlin all within the same time period. When 800 Lancaster Bombers dropped over 4,000 tons of explosives and incendiaries on the city, followed by an American raid on the city's marshalling yards consisting of over 40 percent incendiaries, its execution was similar to other attacks carried out since Harris had regained control of Bomber Command in October of the previous year. Its effect on the city, however, remains one of the deadliest and most controversial parts of the Allied Air Campaign. The resulting firestorm killed over 25,000 people – primarily women, children, and elderly fleeing an already war-torn countryside – and damaged over 75% of the infrastructure of a city known for its cultural attractions (391-396). When discussed the following day at the Allied air commanders meeting however, Dresden was paid no particular attention, except to comment on the amount of smoke that had risen – up to 15,000 feet (Biddle, 255).

Shortly after the raid, however, public opinion began to turn against the operation as news of the extraordinary damage leaked through various press sources. On 17 February

British Air Commodore Colin McKay Grierson suggested that Dresden had been targeted *because* of its position as a center for refugees, sparking concern amongst journalists that the Combined Offensive was targeting civilians (Biddle, 255). That day, the Associated Press reported a story that curiously made it through the censors asserting that Allied Forces had resorted to terror bombing – a report that was quickly suppressed by the British censors. Though the British Broadcasting Company had originally put the estimated casualty figure at 20,000, German propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels used the opportunity to release a leaflet on 25 February citing the "Massacre of Refugees," and leaked the number of dead (inflated by a full order of magnitude) to press agencies in Sweden and other neutral countries (255). Thus, despite initial press reports that Dresden was a center of vital importance for German transportation and communications, subsequent reporting was notably less charitable, and public outrage over the targeting of civilians during Dresden increased dramatically over the following weeks. After first calling the raids "awe-inspiring," an editorial in the *New York Times* would later remark that "every… important German city lay in ruins" while the *London Times* referenced the historic scale of the bombing, ultimately concluding that Allied forces had reached "a new and terrifying prodigy of air power" (255). Of the 522 front-page stories run by the *New York Times* in the six weeks after Dresden, 35 mentioned the bombing (New York Times Archives, 1945). With an average of one headline story per day referencing Dresden and the destruction visited upon the city by Allied bombing, it would have been impossible for both the American and British publics to remain ignorant of the effects of the firestorm.

Dresden was the first area attack over Germany to receive sufficient notoriety as to spark profound debate amongst the population about the merits of area bombing during the war. Fear in Britain over public reaction to Dresden grew so great that the government withdrew public discussion about the bombings and censored broadcasts about the raid (Biddle, 255). Though the British public had previously been thought to be impervious to the number of civilian casualties incurred by area bombing operations, the news of so many dead civilians from a single raid (un-refuted by Allied governments, who had not compiled an official estimate) necessitated debate over the area offensive (255). Further,

the significance of Dresden as a cultural hub – a city where educated Britons knew for its art and music rather than any industrial value – struck a chord with much of the public. Here MP Richard Stokes found more support in the House of Commons as he again publicly questioned the efficacy of area bombing, citing the attacks on Dresden as "perfectly foolish policy… [who's] un-wisdom will be proved in the long-run." (House of Commons 1945). Stokes' outrage was not limited to the effect of the raids at Dresden, however. Equally disturbing to the MP and many of his colleagues were the attempts of the British government to censor the news from the British public – a public that was ultimately responsible for electing its own leaders. He remarked later that,

> "It was widely broadcast in America, broadcast on Paris Radio to Germany, but not communicated to the people in this country, who are, at least, supposed to be responsible for what is going on. If the people think it is true let them protest if they want to protest and let them endorse it if they want to endorse it, but this agreeing to put the policy out and then suppress it several hours later is not good enough…. I think we shall live to rue the day we have done this and that, in many ways, it will stand for all time as a blot upon our escutcheon" (House of Commons 1945).

After the outcry over Dresden, Churchill began to publicly distance himself from area bombing operations and Bomber Command. Harris's influence had been waning throughout 1944 – he was invited to dine with the prime minister less often and despite his enthusiasm for the raids in early February, Churchill had been growing increasingly skeptical of the effectiveness of area bombing through the winter of 1944 (Biddle, 253). Sensing the changing political climate, Churchill sought for ways to end the area offensive in a way that would preserve the post-war reputations of both the RAF and British wartime leaders.

When British bombers accidentally bombed the Bezuidenhout neighborhood of The Hague in Belgium on March 3, Churchill came under further political pressure to reassure outside observers that Bomber Command was not intentionally targeting civilians. The outrage caused by the dehousing of thousands and deaths of over 500 of friendly civilians resulted in a flurry of correspondence over the month of March between the Prime Minister, various officials from the Netherlands, and the British War Cabinet (Cabinet

Papers 1945b). Concerned about the reputation and legacy of the RAF, British officials attempted to downplay the bombing, and news of the accident was largely kept out of the press. Fury over the incident culminated in a 26 March minute from the Chiefs of Staff addressed to Churchill, regretting the loss of life at the Hague but defending the value of the area raids, stating that, "It is true that we have on several occasions carried out successful pin-point attacks on Gestapo houses in built-up areas in friendly territory but… they cannot reasonably be repeated, certainly against heavily defended areas such as the Haagsche Boshe which contained the [intended target] rocket storage and servicing sites" (Cabinet Papers 1945b). The Chiefs were not blind, however, to the immense pressure Churchill was under in the aftermath of Dresden and The Hague. The minute concluded, "If the risk of damage to civilians is unacceptable for political reasons, we can only suggest that our air attacks should be confined to harassing the railways at a safe distance from centres of Dutch population and that the consequent increases in the Rocket attacks on the U.K… should be accepted" (Cabinet Papers 1945b).

By late March it had become clear that the Government would not last to the end of the war with Japan, and Conservatives felt strongly that Churchill's presence would be much more valuable to the party for a June election rather than later in the year (Headlam 1999, 456). Unease about the legacy of the bombing campaign was prevalent throughout the Conservative Party. Wrote an MP from Newcastle of the area bombing campaign, "it is an abominable business… [and] hateful to me – and one's only consolation is the hope (a faint one) that it will sicken people of war" (447). As a result, after over a month of intense political pressure on both domestic and international fronts, and sincere efforts to distance himself from area bombing operations, Churchill finally took action to change the priorities of Bomber Command. On March 28 the prime minister wrote again to the Joint Chiefs in a draft memo that read:

> "It seems to me that the moment has come when the question of bombing of German cities simply for the sake of increasing the terror, though under other pretexts, should be reviewed. Otherwise we shall come into control of an utterly ruined land. We shall not, for instance, be able to get housing materials out of Germany for our own needs because some temporary provision would have to be made for the Germans themselves. The destruction of Dresden remains a serious query against the conduct of Allied bombing. I am of the opinion that military objectives must henceforth be more strictly studied in our own interests rather than that of the enemy.
>
> The Foreign Secretary has spoken to me on this subject, and I feel the need for more precise concentration upon military objectives, such as oil and communications behind the immediate battle-zone, rather than on mere acts of terror and wanton destruction, however impressive" (Cabinet Papers 1945c).

The inflammatory tone of the memo and its unusually frank assessment of the campaign are telling about Churchill's state of mind. Concern over both the legacy of the RAF and the impending tasks of reconstruction, Churchill made it very clear to his staff that the area offensive would no longer be tolerated by his office. With the war coming to a close, Churchill was forced to think ahead to what the next challenges would be for England: rebuilding and recovery. His focus on housing materials, and the need to save materials to be used at home rather than in Germany as a result of the de-housing campaign by Bomber Command, signals an important and clear shift to thinking about domestic matters over war strategies and priorities. Reconstruction and putting veterans back to work would be a major focus of the upcoming campaigns that spring, and Churchill wanted to ensure that there would be no hiccup or delay in the process.

Further, the memo explicitly calls out the bombing at Dresden as a concern, indicating that it is this event – rather than a culmination of other bombings or simply the natural progression of the war – that has caused such a stark reevaluation of the impacts of Bomber Commands indiscriminate campaign over Germany. Churchill expresses a frank concern over how Allied forces will be portrayed and remembered both in the immediate time period (it "remains a series inquiry") as well as for historians well after the war. The harsh language and unflattering assessment of the RAF's bombing campaign caused Portal to insist that Churchill revise the language to reflect strategic, rather than political, priorities (Biddle, 256). The final minute, sent on April 1 to the Joint Chiefs, removed all references to Dresden, replaced terror with area bombing, and inserted a note about long-

run strategy rather than destruction. Yet Churchill's motives and intentions were difficult to miss. Wrote Max Hastings in his 1976 history of Bomber Command, "It is impossible to regard this memorandum as anything other than a calculated political attempt by the Prime Minister to distance himself from the bombing of Dresden and the rising controversy surrounding the area offensive" (Hastings, 448).

British bombing policy officially changed on 6 April when morale attacks were expressly denounced and removed from directives as legitimate targets for bombing raids. Over the strong objections of Harris, the Joint Chiefs concluded that area bombing was strategically unnecessary and therefore could be removed from the campaign as the Prime Minister had suggested. Raids on industrial cities, already falling from their peak in the middle of March, plummeted in April due to the change in policy. Yet Harris remained committed to morale bombing, provoking significant ire on the part of the Joint Chiefs and the Prime Minister after a raid over Potsdam on 15 April. After the bombing, the Churchill scrawled angrily in a memo to Sinclair, "What was the point of going and blowing down Potsdam?" (Quoted in Overy, 397). The obviously indiscriminate attack incited a flurry of memos between London and Bomber Command, reminding all commanders in no uncertain terms that indiscriminate attacks were no longer sanctioned by the War Cabinet (Cabinet Papers 1945d). The harsh rebuttal was effective. By the time Germany surrendered on 7 May, the majority of bombing operations had switched to daytime raids, raids over cities were virtually non-existent, and the British were dropping far fewer incendiaries per raid than in previous months.

Churchill would continue to distance himself from Bomber Command over the following weeks and months leading up to the parliamentary elections in response to profound unease with the area offensive. As a result, despite its enormous sacrifice and role in the war against Germany, Bomber Command was neither given its own campaign medal nor mentioned in the Prime Minister's victory speech on 8 May (Biddle, 260). When Parliament dissolved on 27 May – less than three weeks after the German surrender – after a series of failed negotiations to continue the Unity Government, the date was set for a 5 July poll. Churchill would scarcely mentioned Bomber Command during the

campaign and refused to give credit to the area offensive, prompting Harris to bitterly complain in June, "[W]henever the armies succeed in doing anything more useful and spectacular than a retreat, a medal is immediately announced for them. When Bomber Command carries on the offensive alone for two years no medal is struck for them—and a share in one is only awarded as an afterthought for crews only" (261).

American bombing policy, on the hand, dramatically escalated indiscriminate attacks just as Churchill was taking pains to rein in the British area offensive. Yet the US Army Air Force was not immune from criticism by the American public over the raid in Dresden. The Associated Press report about terror bombing had circulated widely in the American press, prompting a USAAF spokesman to declare emphatically, "We have never done deliberate terror bombing… we are not doing it now… we will not do it" (Quoted in Biddle, 259). George Marshall and the Secretary of War Henry Stimson further asserted that the raid on Dresden had actually been at the request of the Russians.[37] In the end, the raid over Dresden resulted in a new press policy for the USAAF that emphasized the military nature of targets and changes in reporting mechanisms (Biddle, 259). However, while attempts were being made to convince the public that the U.S. was not involved in the bombing of cities and urban areas, it was in reality dramatically escalating its capacity for area attacks.

Deep concern about the pending offensive against Japan led Roosevelt (and later, Truman) to explore other options by which they could end the war without a ground invasion. Heavy losses in the Philippines, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa convinced both leaders that any assault on mainland Japan would result in enormous numbers of U.S. casualties. The U.S. experience at Iwo Jima in February and March, where U.S. Marines were only able to take 216 Japanese soldiers prisoner (the rest either fought to the death or committed suicide) while suffering over 25,000 casualties left a profound impression on American leaders, both civilian and military (Marston 2011). Well aware of a war-

[37] This was not, in reality accurate. Though the RAF had regularly provided air support for advancing Russian armies, Dresden was never specified as a potential target by the Russians (Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 259)

weary public now that the fight with Germany was coming to a close, yet with his last election behind him, Roosevelt was free to conduct the war as his military commanders suggested, without regard for the domestic political consequences.

The U.S. thus began to experiment with the use of incendiaries over the European continent beginning in February 1945. In addition to lobbying for a post-war survey to better understand the effects of area bombing and incendiaries on German cities and towns, American military commanders nurtured a series of programs that were increasingly indiscriminate in an effort to ease the way for ground troops and prevent unnecessary casualties amongst infantry forces on the ground. One such idea was designated the "war weary bomber project." In late 1944, US military leaders developed a strategy to use B-17 bombers scheduled for decommission as the first rudimentary "bunker busters." Concerned that ground forces would face significant opposition as they attempted to enter military bunkers that had been fortified and previously impervious to air attack, the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed to fill these "war weary bombers" to capacity with explosives, send up a skeleton crew to set the bomber on cruise control toward a bunker target, but bail out over Allied-occupied territory before the bomber crashed into the ground. Hoping that some of the planes would manage to hit their targets and penetrate through the bunkers, the plan was remarkably indiscriminate in nature. It was eventually nixed by the British, who were concerned about reprisal attacks against London (Cabinet Papers 1945e).

Studies had begun as early as 1943 to determine vulnerabilities in the Japanese cities to the effects of fire; these reports almost always contained warnings about the cost in civilian lives and the necessity of urban raids to be in proximity to military targets. By the end of 1944, however, military officials and civilians had largely justified the expected civilian casualties by stating that the use of incendiaries "held the prospect of shortening the war and saving [American] lives" (Biddle, 267). With the majority Japanese housing and infrastructure relied on wood and other highly flammable materials, firebombing became an especially attractive tactic to pressure the Japanese government in surrender. On March 10, USAAF forces launched the single deadliest raid

of the war over Tokyo, burning out an estimated sixteen square miles and killing and estimated 100,000 Japanese citizens. Though the most deadly, it was by no means the last. Over the following months, US bomber forces in the Pacific would attack sixty-six Japanese cities using incendiaries weapons (267).

In a sense the American escalation of indiscriminate attacks was overdetermined. Lacking public concern over the lives of Japanese citizens or an election period that would force moral issues into the spotlight, Truman experienced a largely permissive environment to use the bombing methods he felt would be most effective against Japanese forces. It is likely that a combination of war-weariness, the desire for vengeance over the Pearl Harbor attacks, elements of racism after years of wartime propaganda, and a desire to spare American forces any further casualties in an already costly war that was soon to end explains why the bombing campaign against the Japanese did not arouse the kind of public outcry against civilian casualties as the attacks on Dresden did in Germany. Regardless of the individual motives, the American public was considerably more accepting of Japanese civilian casualties over the summer of 1945, and the Air Force was eager to take credit for their victory. One release by the Office of Information Services revealed that American raids against Japan had "killed outright 310,000 Japanese, injured 412,000 more, and rendered 9,200,000 homeless… [in] five flaming months… a thousand All-American planes and 20,000 American men brought homelessness, terror, and death to an arrogant foe, and left him practically a nomad in an almost cityless land" (Quoted in Biddle, 269). In sharp contrast to Churchill's and the Air Ministry's desire to distance themselves from the legacy of area bombing, American forces seemed to instead delight in the destruction that its indiscriminate bombing campaign had inflicted upon Imperial Japan.

Though enemy morale was never officially listed as a priority, the USAAF recognized that their current tactics were a "radical departure from the traditional doctrine" (268). Free from concerns about elections and public opinion, Roosevelt and Truman were able to allow their military commanders in both the European and Pacific theaters to experiment with more indiscriminate bombing tactics with the intent of ending the war

sooner. It is ironic that despite such profound differences in doctrine over the first three years of the bombing war, the United States would finish the war in a fashion envision by Bomber Command's Arthur Harris. In a letter at the end of March, just as Churchill ended British policies of area bombing, Harris wrote, "Japan remains. Are we going to bomb their cities flat—as in Germany—and give the armies a walk over—as in France and Germany—or are we going to bomb only their outlying factories and subsequently invade at the cost of 3 to 6 million casualties?" (261) On August 6, 1945, the United States took the principal of indiscriminate bombing to its logical conclusion and dropped an atomic weapon on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, killing an estimated 100,000 people (Marston 2011). Three days later, Truman approved a second drop over the city of Nagasaki, killing another 60,000, and on August 14 Japan surrendered to the United States, effectively ending World War II (Marston).

Alternative Explanations

The two and a half months after the bombing of Dresden before the war's end signaled a time of enormous change in bomber tactics, operational planning and bombing policy. These changes, many made in preparation for a lengthy occupation of Germany and her allies, can each be understood through different strategic, organizational, and political lenses. To evaluate the relative roles of strategy, organizational bias, and domestic politics in explaining the changes in bombing policy made by Bomber Command and the 8th Air Force during the final months of the war, I develop some theoretical expectations that one would expect to observe in the record and in policy discussions debating changes to operational plans, then evaluate the relative merits of each explanation using the available primary evidence and secondary sources. The first and most obvious is that area bombing was no longer strategically necessary, and the change in bombing operations simply coincided with new strategic priorities as the war was coming to an end. Second, changes in organizational capacity and structure could explain why the British switched to bombing military targets during daytime hours. Other strategic factors that would influence bombing policy focus on weather-related changes and the end of the war effort.

Additionally, changes in the leadership and command could have lead to new priorities amongst Allied bombers and result in the switch away from area bombing, while new technologies may have enabled safer and more effective bombing raids against precise targets during the daytime, thus removing constraints that had led British bombers to favor night attacks against cities.

Strategic Changes

There is little doubt that bombing policy over the European continent was principally motivated by strategic considerations about the best and most efficient way to win the war. Despite profound differences between Bomber Command and the 8th Air Force on the operationalization of these priorities, each service responded to and evaluated strategic priorities as the principal motivators behind the strategic bombing campaign throughout the war. However, while battlefield strategy played an important role in determining overall policy, can it explain changes in the final months of the war? To evaluate the relative importance of strategic factors, I identify the critical strategic elements that systematically influenced bombing operations throughout the course of the war.

Weather

The principal determining factor on the efficacy, timing, and targets of bombing operations throughout the war was weather-related. Without remote sensing and GPS to guide bombs to specific locations, pilots on discriminate bombing missions were forced to navigate and drop explosives on visually-identified targets, which required clear skies and daylight. The consistently cloudy skies over England and the northern part of Europe complicated these missions dramatically, and severely limited the ability of the RAF and USAAF to conduct precision raids on specific military targets. Winter skies, on average, saw just one clear day per month, while summer skies were little better with an average of six clear days a month. As a result, operations were heavily dependent on the weather, and favored indiscriminate bombing during the rainy winter months while precision targets were more feasible during the summer months. Further, weather-related issues

caused concern about safety during flying, resulting in fewer overall bombing operations during poor visibility and potentially dangerous weather – also more prevalent during the winter.

If weather-related factors explain changes in strategic bombing operations, then we should observe the following: First, both Bomber Command and the 8th Air Force should increase the number of missions flown as the weather improves. Additionally, because both forces flying to and from bases in England, both forces should move in similar patterns with regards to discriminate and indiscriminate bombing. Thus, as the weather improved in the months between February 15 and the May 7, 1945, we should observe increasing numbers of military attacks and a decline in city raids by both USAAF and RAF bombers. Finally, the historical record should indicate that weather-related issues were driving these changes. Orders for a cease in area bombing operations should cite weather as one of the factors that makes indiscriminate attacks unnecessary for the bombing campaign moving forward.

However, weather-related patterns do not provide much insight into the sudden drop off in bombing operations against industrial cities. While area attacks do generally relatively decline during the summer months when days are longer and the weather and visibility improves, there exists considerable unexplained variation toward the end of the war. In general, the sudden peak in operations in March 1945 combined with the dramatic drop off in industrial targets in April suggests that non-weather-related factors played a much larger role in the precipitous decline in operations against German cities. Additionally, the divergence in bombing patterns between American and British forces suggests that uniform changes in weather patterns are a good explanation for bombing policy in the final months of the war. Better weather may have explained British movement toward precision bombing, but cannot explain American escalation of indiscriminate attacks during the same time period.

Availability of Targets

The constantly changing nature of the front lines after the Normandy invasion in June 1944, constant assault on German towns and cities, and ebbs and flows in German military construction and production meant that the list of targets available and worthy of bombing changed almost weekly. As the German economy slowed and struggled to keep up with Allied production later in the war, the number of military sites in operation declined, as did the number of facilities producing military hardware. As a result, the number of targets available for precision bombing declined in the final months of the war, and led to increased focus on targets that had been traditionally difficult to hit, such as fortified bunkers, which given technical limitations required more creative (and ultimately indiscriminate) bombing tactics.[38] In contrast, while area bombing was devastating to a small number of cities, production in industrial areas was, on average, not considerably affected by the indiscriminate bombing campaign. As a result, urban targets such as Berlin, Bonn, and even Hamburg remained viable targets for area bombing even in the final months of the war.

As a result, we can develop the following expectations. First, as the Allies conquer more territory, the number of strategic bombing raids should decline. This is intuitive – on average, less enemy territory means fewer targets to bomb. Second, precision attacks should decline more rapidly than area attacks as the number of military targets declines faster relative to urban targets. This has two implications: first, that the number of raids conducted by the precision-based 8th Air Force should either decline faster than the number of raids conducted by Bomber Command or refocus to include area bombing operations; second, that the number of raids conducted by Bomber Command should decline less rapidly and remain focused on area bombing operations. Finally, the historical record should indicate target availability as a limiting factor. Justifications for changes in bombing policy should reference the changing nature of targets and relative area available to bomb.

[38] See, for example, discussions about war weary bombers.

After reviewing the evidence, it is even more unlikely that the decline in area bombing beginning in March 1945 was related to the availability of bombing targets within Germany. Industrial cities such as Berlin and Hamburg remained in German control until the final days of the war and would have provided compelling targets for a Bomber Command seeking to further destroy the morale of the German people and force a faster settlement. However, the empirical evidence is mixed. A final memo to Arthur Harris on 5 May states that, "in early April 1945, as a result of the extent to which the destruction and dislocation of the enemy's industrial and economic systems had already been achieved by Allied bomber attacks, and as a result of the advance of the Armies into Germany it was agree with Supreme Allied Headquarters that the main mission of the strategic air forces had become that of direct assistance to the land campaign" (Air Ministry Papers 1945b). However, there was very little serious discussion amongst senior leaders in the War Cabinet or Bomber Command about a lack of available targets to bomb (Cabinet Papers March 1945). While most major German cities had been severely damaged over the course of the war, Bomber Command continued to advocate for the area bombing of cities and industrial areas through April 1945, and their list of potential targets remained robust.[39] Allied success in France and Belgium in the aftermath of Operation Overlord resulted in *more* bombs being dropped on urban areas, not less. Territorial gains after the German defeat at Ardennes (the Battle of the Bulge) in late January also coincided with an increased number of cities targeted in February and early March.

Bringing About an End to the War

As it became increasingly obvious to the Allies that the end of the war was near, there existed considerable debate as to the quickest way to bring about a German surrender. Inside this discussion was a serious debate about whether an intensification of morale bombing would further weaken German support for the war and lead to more urgent demands for a peace settlement. Though the German war machine had been considerably

[39] Bomber Command maintained communications targets until April 15, when the Air Ministry ordered Harris to cease all area bombing operations (Air Ministry to Bomber Command, 19 April 1945).

damaged by the Allies' "transportation plan," and thus displayed the efficacy of precision bombing operations, the consensus was that area bombing would showcase the awesome power of Allied forces and thus break the will of German leaders, citizens, and soldiers to further resist advances.[40] Were this strategic consideration a major factor in determining Allied bombing policy at the end of the war, we would expect to see both Bomber Command and the 8th Air Force increase the number of bombing raids over Germany and switch to an almost exclusively area bombing policy. Further, the historical record should indicate that a switch to indiscriminate bombing in Germany was designed to break morale and bring about a faster end to the war, perhaps in spite of the additional civilian casualties imposed.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that this was the view held by many at Bomber Command and in the War Cabinet, and that Harris was given wide latitude in late 1944 and early 1945 to target industrial areas as he saw fit (Biddle, 247). The empirical evidence supports this narrative through the middle of March 1945. However, just as serious multi-lateral preparations for German surrender began, but almost two months before the official capitulation, industrial targeting declined and Churchill ordered the end of all area bombing operations. If Churchill had remained intent on bringing about a final blow and forcing an immediate German surrender, it follows that area bombing would have continued, and perhaps escalated, as the end of the war drew to a close. Thus, it is unlikely that the dramatic decline in industrial targets beginning in March 1945 was caused by a desire to quickly end the war through strategic bombing.

Post War Planning

In addition to the desire to break the German will to resist and ensure a faster surrender, post-war considerations were discussed by the Allied leadership as the war came to a close. In particular, concern about a lengthy occupation and the ability of Europe to economically recover and sustain an occupying force took precedent in discussions about the further utility of area bombing on the continent. A desire to limit additional damage

[40] This argument eventually won out (at least in part) in the debate over using the first atomic weapons on Japan.

to cities and economic centers in Germany and the rest of Europe may then explain the changes to bombing policy that occurred in the final months of the war. Strategic considerations regarding the protection of cities and urban areas from additional damage that may additionally hinder the reconstruction effort would then have several observable implications: First, as both the U.S. and UK would be occupying forces, both countries should cease area bombing operations in the final months of the war. Second, the switch away from area bombing operations should coincide with the start of post-war planning by Allied political leaders and accelerate as the importance of post-war industry became increasingly apparent. Finally, cities with the least post-war value should be least affected, while cities with the most post-war value would be especially protected.

Serious plans for the post-war order began as early as 1942, and as the Allies made substantial progress across the continent in the aftermath of Operation Overlord concerns about the division of German and reconstruction became more pressing. Due to the immense amount of destruction that air raids caused to city infrastructure, these concerns were naturally raised in relation to the air campaign over Germany as the war was winding down, and the historical evidence supports this. Official rationale for ceasing the area bombing of industrial cities was in fact stated to be concern over the immense about of destruction caused by area bombing to industrial centers which, given the rapid advances of Allied forces into Germany, was no longer necessary to win the war (Cabinet Papers April 1945). As such, concern over post-war construction and the demand for materials to rebuild burned and damaged houses dominated the official British discussion and recommendations about implementing new bombing policy.

Empirically, it's impossible to tell how much destruction would have been deemed "too much" by the British. Rebuilding infrastructure and civil society was an enormous task in every country involved in the war. Photographs in Bomber Command's Quarterly Review regular depicted entire sections of cities leveled, and housing destruction was a major goal of the area bombing campaign (Bomber Command Quarterly Review 1945). With new technologies allowing for the complete destruction of cities in just days, showcased at Dresden, wartime leaders were understandably concerned about the costs of

rebuilding German cities after raids that were no longer considered strategically necessary.

American forces, however, were decidedly less concerned with the post-war costs of rebuilding. They continued to experiment with incendiary weapons on the continent throughout the final days of the war and carried the lessons over to the war again Japan, where sixty-six cities were firebombed and hundreds of square miles burned out. Yet there is little reason ex ante to expect the United States to care less about the costs of occupation that the British. Should objective concerns over the costs of rebuilding and occupation been important, American forces should have also deescalated their area bombing policies. Given their pronounced escalation, this suggests that post-war reconstruction provides less explanatory power than official British correspondence would suggest.

Lessons for the Pacific Campaign

The final strategic factor to consider when evaluating changes in bombing policy focuses on the impact of bombing operations in other theaters of the war. While Germany surrendered to the Allies on May 7, 1945, the war in the Pacific continued for three additional months. The bloody experience of U.S. soldiers and Marines at Iwo Jima convinced Allied leadership that any invasion of the Japanese islands would be costly, and so military and political leaders alike were searching for ways to end the war against Japan in a way that would spare as many American lives as possible. In particular, the concept of morale bombing and using strategic bombing to inflict an unsustainable amount of punishment on Japanese citizens and leaders experienced a renaissance in the latter months of the war. New tactics such as "war weary bomber" operations and improvements in firebombing techniques required testing, and U.S. forces suggested studying the effects of such tactics on targets inside Germany. Should the renewed focused on ending the war against Japan have influenced the strategic bombing campaign in Europe, we should observe the following: First, U.S. bombers should favor more indiscriminate attacks in the latter months of the war, while Bomber Command, unconcerned about additional British casualties, should be less concerned with testing

new indiscriminate tactics. Second, because U.S. forces should want to test new technologies, we should observe an increase in new tactics meant for use in Japan, including the use of "war weary" bombing operations, increased use of incendiaries, and other new bombing methods.

Bomber Command's participation in the Pacific Campaign was less involved than its American counterpart, as Britain's resources were fully devoted to the war against Germany and Italy on the continent. In 1945, however, after significant gains against Nazi forces, both Roosevelt and Churchill began to turn their attention to the Japanese in the Pacific and contemplate the best way to quickly force a Japanese surrender. Acutely aware of a war-weary public and the tenacity of Japanese soldiers after taking heavy losses at Iwo Jima in February and March, leaders on both sides of the Atlantic were eager to avoid taking heavy casualties into the summer after the surrender of Germany. In Britain, however, these concerns did not appear to influence the air campaign over the continent. Strategic bombing industrial areas in Japan would have been consistent with a desire to end the war with a blow from the air, thus reducing Allied casualties and inflicting theoretically unsustainable damage on the Japanese state. However, while the war against Japan was a topic of discussion within the British War Cabinet and between Churchill and Roosevelt, Churchill ordered the suspension of area bombing, suggesting that the decline in industrial targets was not motivated by concerns over Japan.

Organizational Changes

Changes in leadership and organizational capabilities can result in dramatically different policies in short periods of time for any organization. During wartime, when military leaders are replaced it is often to specifically change direction and signal a departure in policies that were not succeeding on the battlefield. As a result, changes to military leadership during wartime can have immediate consequences for policies and operations that are often observable both empirically and in the historical records. Further, increases in capacity over the course of the war enabled both British and American bombing forces

to refocus priorities and try new tactics that concerns about attrition prevented them from fully operationalizing in the early years of the war.

Leadership Changes in American and British Command

Major changes in leadership occurred during the springs of 1944 and 1945 for American bombing forces. A total reorganization of the structure of Bomber Command and the 8th Air Force in order to accommodate the Combined Offensive resulted in increasingly divergent policies between the two countries yet more consolidated objectives within the services. As the 8th Air Force replaced key leaders in order to better harmonize leaders' preferences on the utility of strategic precision bombing, Bomber Command remained largely the responsibility of Harris, who exercised his autonomy regularly. More changes in American leadership with the April death of Roosevelt and inauguration of Harry S. Truman may have altered U.S. bombing policy at the end of the war. Should this have been the case, we would expect to see the highest number of changes to U.S. bombing policy in the immediate aftermath of the death of FDR as Truman made changes to better reflect his own bombing priorities, while British policy remained relatively stable under the guidance of Winston Churchill.

Given the continuity of the leadership in both Bomber Command and the Cabinet, it is highly unlikely that any changes in the leadership resulted in the decline in British area bombing operations. The suspension of elections and formation of the coalition War Cabinet ensured stability under the leadership of Winston Churchill throughout the conflict. Further, after the initial reorganization of Bomber Command that placed Charles Portal in command of the RAF (check this), Harris demanded and received a large amount of autonomy regarding the conduct of the bombing campaign over the continent. After some initial adjustments, all major wartime leaders remained in their positions throughout the course of the war, particularly toward the end.

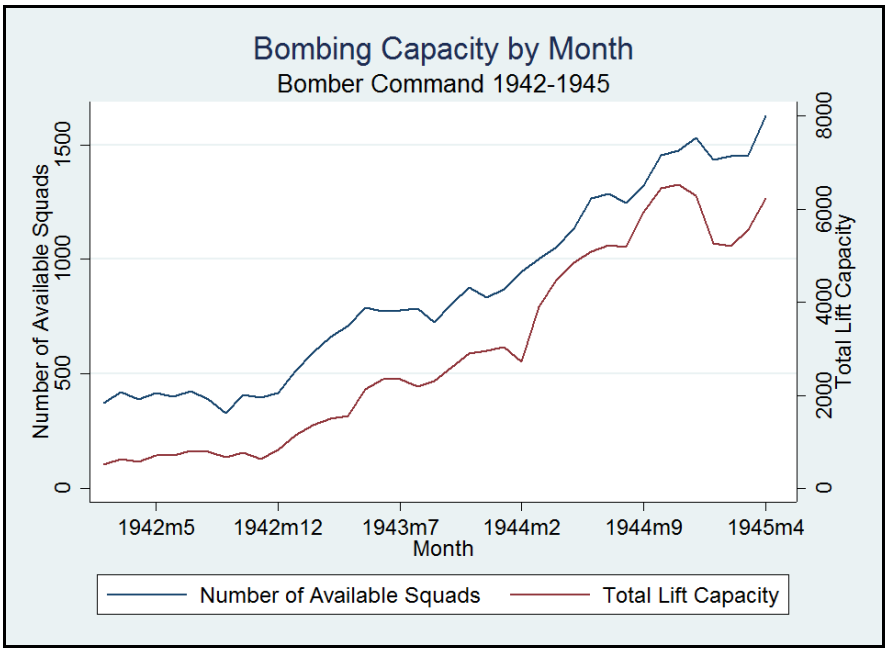
Increases in Production and Capacity

Both the British and American air forces were considerably hindered during the first years of the war by problems with capacity and production. Relatively unprepared for

the enormous demands of total war in the modern era, both the UK and US had to dramatically escalate the production of planes, munitions, and other military equipment despite economies that were based upon policies of disarmament and isolationism. As a result of the relative difficulty in converting to a war economy and limits on production potential, British and American production did not peak until 1944 and 1945. These kinds of changes in capacity may have subsequently impacted bombing policies on the continent as the USAAF and RAF were better able to satisfy competing demands and best utilize their forces for the kinds of raids that each service preferred. As losses dwindled due to improvements in tactics, escorts, and technology, and the number of available planes increased, we should expect bombing policy to increasingly favor higher-risk daylight precision attacks. Further, the focus on daytime raids should increase proportional to increases in production capabilities, and the historical record should indicate that organizational capabilities resulted in the diversification of attack types and/or change in focus.

Despite the complete mobilization of the British economy toward the war effort, rearmament took time to complete, and only reached peak production early in 1945. Nowhere was this more impactful than in Bomber Command, which until 1943 was the only service truly in combat against the Germans. As a result, while Bomber Command was originally severely limited in its capabilities, by 1944 its force had grown considerably, and was capable of conducting large raids on multiple targets in a single night (Overy, 260). This increase in capacity resulted in increases in the tonnage dropped over occupied Europe almost every month, with October 1944 and March 1945 recording the highest number of explosives released in the war, despite poor winter weather conditions (Bomber Command Quarterly Review, 49). Figure 3 shows the steadily increasing capabilities of Bomber Command and their output over the continent. However, these increases would predict an increase in operations over the continent and more raids, including attacks against cities and urban areas. Given that area bombing declined significantly in the final months – just as the British war economy reached its peak – it is unlikely that increases in the production of munitions and bombers are responsible.

Figure 7.3: UK Bombing Capacity by Month, 1942-1945



However, along with increases in available planes and explosives, new technologies made it possible for Bomber Command to engage in more precision bombing. In 1943 British Pathfinder crews made use of reflective surfaces in Operation "Window" to defeat German radar in the bombing of Hamburg, allowing RAF forces to escape the city with relatively few losses, while improvements in cockpit radars allowed pilots to see through cloud cover for the first time, enabling bombers to more selectively target their drops (Grehan and Mace, 367). In December 1944, technologies in precision bombing had improved to such a degree that Bomber Command began to seriously reconsider its commitment to night bombing. However, despite these advancements, Harris remained determined to pursue area bombing, and despite the technological advancements that allowed for greater precision bombing, between January and March 1945 raids against cities *increased* (Bomber Command Quarterly Review, 49).

Chapter Summary

Politicians face strong incentives to manipulate military strategy around elections in order to reduce casualties and signal to the public that they are capable, competent leaders. As a result, military operations become both directly and indirectly politicized when elected officials delay high-risk offensive operations until after they are considered electorally safe, while simultaneously favoring low-risk operations that are less likely to result in casualties. This will be most pronounced with a casualty-sensitive public voting regularly in elections, or when public opinion becomes very important to a government's agenda or the party's political survival.

I test this using what may be characterized as a least-likely scenario – the strategic bombing campaigns of World War II. Faced with an existential threat from Germany and operating in a domain that received relatively less media attention than the ground war, Winston Churchill and Franklin Delano Roosevelt had good reasons to pursue the war according to military doctrine rather than accommodating domestic political concerns. This chapter uses a comparative case design to examine top-down changes in bombing operations in the United States and United Kingdom during the same relative time period. I employ a most different case design to suggest that it was the timing of elections, rather than any other factor, that explains why both the U.S. and UK switched strategies in the fall of 1944 and winter of 1945 – the U.S. from precision bombing to indiscriminate operations and the UK from area bombing to industry-focused targets. Rather than learning through experience and coalescing around one strategy, or being affected by weather/operational constraints, or simply finally conforming to stated doctrine, the remarkable switch in bombing strategy can be attribute to the fact that Roosevelt won reelection in November of 1944, while Churchill was forced to begin planning for the reinstatement of elections in the winter of 1945.

Chapter 8

Conclusions and the Future of Politicization

This dissertation sought to demonstrate that civilians systematically politicize military operations when their electoral prospects are in jeopardy, and that domestic political factors play a large role in determining the timing and structure of military operations on the battlefield. I began by addressing a series of historical puzzles: Why did the Johnson administration decide to end Operational Rolling Thunder years after it had become clear that the bombing campaign was not achieving its goals? Why was the Second Battle of Fallujah delayed for two months in 2004? Why did the U.S. and UK strategic bombing policies during the Second World War diverge after the bombing of Dresden? I found that domestic politics and electoral incentives played a decisive role in determining both when these military operations were initiated and the way in which they were conducted.

I argued that democratically elected civilian leaders face strong incentives to intervene in military operations when their electoral future is at stake. Because politicians are primarily concerned with retaining power, they are willing to manipulate and alter policy in the short-term, even if there are long-term consequences later down the road. These incentives, however, apply not just to domestic policy but additionally to foreign policy and military strategy when the country is at war. Because the public is casualty-sensitive and evaluates the relative success of the commander-in-chief through casualty counts, among other criteria, leaders are regularly pressured to reduce the number of casualties in a conflict. However, because voters are myopically-retrospective, these pressures increase significantly as an election draws closer. As a result, democratic leaders face strong incentives to shirk their responsibilities as an agent of the national interest, responsible for pursuing the most effective strategy for winning the war as quickly as possible, in favor pursuing their parochial political interests by appeasing a casualty-sensitive electorate.

Operations are then politicized both directly and indirectly. I show that direct politicization occurs when politicians give explicit orders to their military commanders that alter the timing and/or context of operations on the battlefield. In order to personally intervene, civilian leaders rely on direct means of communication, the ability to monitor and alter targeting priorities, use their prerogatives in approving promotions, and make changes to the rules of engagement on the battlefield. These changes, which affect military affairs from strategic vision to battlefield tactics, can have an enormous impact on the amount of risk soldiers are exposed to at any given time during combat, resulting in variation in casualty levels. Further, military officers are not blind to the domestic political consequences of war, and will subsequently indirectly politicize the advice and options that they present to the executive. These motivations can be bureaucratic in nature, reflect organizational procedure, or be the result of personal political ambitions. As senior officers adjust their recommendations to the civilian leadership in order to fit with their domestic political preferences, they necessarily change battlefield tactics and operations based upon a politician's parochial interests.

I then developed a series of testable empirical expectations regarding the deployment of force during conflict. In general, I hypothesized the following patterns:

1. High-risk, large ground operations should be less common in the months immediately preceding a domestic election. These delays then result in an increase in offensive operations in the months following an election.
2. Military operations (both air and ground) will be modified to reduce risks to soldiers and pilots in the months leading up to an election. These restrictions will then be lifted shortly after an election has passed.
3. If it poses no greater risk to friendly soldiers, politicians will seek to alter operations to protect non-combatants in the lead up to an election, while after an election civilian leaders will be unconstrained by public concern over non-combatant collateral damage.

I tested these hypotheses over five chapters – three statistical analyses and two comparative case studies. In Chapter 3 I evaluated the influence of electoral cycles on troop deployments and violence levels during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. To accomplish this, I introduced two new datasets that catalogued U.S. and Coalition troop locations over a five-year and eight-year period of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, respectively. These represent the first and most thorough effort to systematically analyze patterns in military operations from 2004 to 2012. Ultimately, I found that troops during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were more likely to conduct operations in districts with large, well-fortified bases that could be easily defended, while violence levels declined dramatically as a result of fewer offensive operations and patrols.

In Chapter 4 I investigated the mechanisms behind the statistical findings presented in Chapter 3 and conducted a comparative case study of offensive military operations during the Vietnam War and the Iraq War. Using both most similar and most difference case designs, I found that differences in the U.S. electoral cycle best explain the timing of offensive military operations that were expected to result in large numbers of casualties. I show that the rescue mission at Khe Sanh was only approved once President Lyndon Johnson had decided to withdraw from the 1968 presidential election, and the initiation of the Second Battle of Fallujah was approved only after President George W. Bush won reelection in November 2004. In contrast, I find no evidence of civilian intervention over a remarkably similar battle fought just a year later in Tal Afar. I conclude that electoral incentives resulted in civilians exerting more control over military operations when they are electorally vulnerable, while military operations are conducted free of civilian intervention in off-election years.

Chapter 5 turned to evaluate the influence of electoral incentives on the strategic bombing campaign Operation Rolling Thunder during the Vietnam War. I analyzed patterns in targets and tactics, including target locations, number of sorties flown, and the time of day of every raid from over two and a half years of the operation. To evaluate changes in strategic bombing operations, I utilized a recently-released dataset that catalogues the details of every sortie flown from 1965 to 1975. Using these data, I

analyzed patterns in the coercive bombing campaign over North Vietnam. I found that in the lead up to the 1966 election, fewer bombing operations were conducted and targeted areas farther away from well-defended population centers and places where large numbers of civilian casualties would occur. Further, raids were conducted increasingly at night in order to reduce risk to pilots and crew. These statistical results, combined with two case studies of the politics of Operation Rolling Thunder, strongly suggest that electoral politics played a large and substantive role in influencing bombing operations over North Vietnam.

Chapter 6 evaluated the bombing campaign over South Vietnam as a part of the ground counterinsurgency campaign. Using the same dataset analyzed in Chapter 5, I developed three testable hypotheses about the expected operational patterns and their effects on casualty levels from 1966 through the peace accords in January 1973. I found that the number of daylight sorties flown per day decreased substantially in the lead-up to an election, and that the number of operations traditionally performed as close air support also declined, suggesting a decrease in the number of offensive operations that ground forces were conducting. Finally, using casualty data available from the U.S. National Archives, I found the casualties during Vietnam decreased by almost 30% in the three months before a domestic election, but then assumed average levels in the three months after an election. This substantial, discrete break in policy strongly supports the theory proposed in this dissertation. The statistical evidence, combined with a case study of Operations Linebacker I and II and the Paris Peace Accords, confirmed my hypotheses about politicization during the Vietnam War.

I finally investigated the mechanisms behind the third hypothesis in a comparative case study of strategic bombing operations during World War II. I identified a puzzle in the relative bombing policies of the U.S. and UK – why, after four years of war, did each side switch targeting priorities after the February 1945 bombing of Dresden? Why did Prime Minister Winston Churchill order a halt to the British area offensive while President Franklin Roosevelt permitted American forces to escalate indiscriminate attacks against industrial urban areas? I found that the public outcry after the

controversial bombing of Dresden played an important role in how Churchill perceived the area offensive – not because of underlying moral qualms but due to concern about the upcoming Parliamentary elections and the legacy of the Royal Air Force. In contrast, because Roosevelt had won reelection in November of the previous year and public opinion was more permissive of civilian casualties, the U.S. Army Air Forces were given leeway (and even encouraged) to escalate indiscriminate bombing – first against Germany and then against Japan.

In this study I use evidence from public opinion and anticipation of public support in the lead up to an election as evidence that politicians influence battlefield strategy for domestic political reasons. I assert that a politician's immediate concerns about reelection will override existing incentives to pursue military operations according the advice of his or her military commanders. That operations resume their previous nature in the immediate aftermath of an election suggests that the leader's interests are parochial rather the strategic in nature. Put simply, the more concerned a politician is about maintaining power, the more susceptible he or she is to intervening in operations in order to reduce potential casualties in the lead up to an election. By evaluating public opinion polls and assuming casualty sensitivity amongst the public, I am thus able to predict what form civilian intervention will likely take as a domestic election approaches.
However, not every strategic decision made that takes domestic political factors into account is necessarily for parochial purposes. Part of the task of elected leaders in democracies is to interpret public opinion and pursue policies that reflect the will of the people. Thus, strategic decisions that are made in order to bring policy realities closer to the preferences of the electorate can be reasonably understood as a politician acting within his or her capacity as a representative of a constituency. Further, maintaining high public support for a war is critical to being able to sustain a long fight and win – should the legislative branch lose confidence in the war effort it could very well limit the funding available for military operations. Public support can signal resolve to the adversary and communicate a willingness to continue fighting even after absorbing high costs. Decisions made by politicians, therefore, in order to maintain public support for a conflict in order to pursue the war more effectively can be classified as strategic rather

than parochial. As a result, however, these decisions should be largely uncorrelated with a politician's electoral fortunes; strategic incentives to be responsive to public opinion should not be related to a state's domestic electoral cycle.

Implications for Effectiveness

The primary contribution of the theory therefore lies in its ability to predict across time and space when battlefield offensives are more or less likely to be pursued, and the kind of operations that are favored as a function of a country's electoral calendar. I evaluate the factors that affect the initiation of military operations, the types of objectives targeted, and the nature of operations pursued in the months immediately preceding an election. This analysis is therefore focused on the "supply side" of military operations – it evaluates their causes rather than effects. The natural question, then, is to ask what impact electoral incentives have on effectiveness – are these patterns simply inefficiencies, or do they in fact affect how effective a state is in fighting combat? While there is already a vast cannon of scholarship on battlefield effectiveness and a growing literature that explains effectiveness as a function of civil-military relations (Biddle 2006, Brooks 2008, Talmadge 2015), there are nevertheless some observations that can be made about the impact of electoral incentives on effectiveness. Specifically, while the obvious implications of this theory suggest that civilian intervention for parochial reasons results in negative battlefield outcomes and may cost a state more casualties in the long-term, electoral politics may also enable a politician to override existing organizational biases and can contribute to a more rational, just policy during combat.

The desire to cater to public opinion at the expense of a leader's military advisors can have significant negative effects on a state's ability to wage war. When operations are delayed to accommodate an election, it provides enemy forces additional time to prepare, re-arm, flood the area with forces, and fortify their positions in preparation for the oncoming assault. The element of surprise – an important factor for the offense in many battles – is lost, leaving an assaulting force with fewer advantages and increasing the

probability that even more casualties will occur. Inefficiencies in the way that a state wages war can prolong a conflict and even result in adverse outcomes on the battlefield.

We observed clear drawbacks to politicization during the Second Battle of Fallujah during the Iraq War, and siege of Khe Sanh in Vietnam. In Fallujah, Iraqi insurgents were given an additional two months to fortify their positions inside the city, setting booby-traps, increasing their arms supplies, and importing additional fighters into the city in preparation for the battle. As a result, the soldiers and Marines who eventually stormed the city five days after the general election faced far more resistance in November than they would have just two months earlier. Though it is impossible to know for certain, the delay likely resulted in additional friendly casualties, but they were incurred *after* the election. Similarly, the Johnson administration's decision to delay an offensive operation to liberate the besieged Marine base at Khe Sanh undoubtedly resulted in additional casualties to the outnumbered defending forces; these casualties, however, would have been lower than the number of expected dead from a rescue mission launched immediately after the Tet Offensive during the presidential primaries.

However, despite these obvious negative implications, electoral interests can in fact have positive effects on battlefield outcomes as well. When left unchecked, the military can develop organizational pathologies that may not serve the overall interests of the state. When civilian leaders become incentivized to exercise oversight over an organization – even if for domestic political purposes – it can stymie and prevent negative routines and poor outcomes. Further, public sensitivity to non-combatant deaths can force states to fight more just wars – against the preferences of an organization that favors stability over change and prioritizes operations and tactics that keep soldiers safe. Finally, public outcry can force elected leaders to reevaluate entire programs that are not achieving their intended outcomes.

In 1968 Johnson stopped all bombing operations north of the 18th parallel, effectively ending Operation Rolling Thunder, in large part because public opinion had turned against the war after the Tet Offensive. In a tough primary race with Eugene McCarthy

and Robert F Kennedy, Johnson needed to appease anti-war Democrats in the primaries and speculated with his national security team and political advisors that a bombing halt would satisfy dovish voters leading up to the Wisconsin primary. Though the empirical evidence had for years shown that Rolling Thunder had had very little impact on North Vietnamese capabilities, Johnson waited until the electoral politics forced a change in policy. Thus, domestic parochial interests in fact forced Johnson to end a wasteful and destructive military operation. Similarly, public outcry over Dresden and the prospect of upcoming elections incentivized Churchill to overrule Bomber Command's Arthur Harris and end the British area offensive. While just two months prior Churchill had been encouraging indiscriminate attacks, public outrage over the deliberate targeting of non-combatants combined with the upcoming elections that would focus on domestic reconstruction caused Churchill to reverse positions, distance himself from the area offensive, and call for an end to "terror bombing." Here, we observe that Churchill's sensitivity to public opinion ended a largely ineffective campaign that deliberately targeted foreign non-combatants – a decidedly positive outcome that was effected due to domestic parochial concerns.

Scope Conditions and Outliers

The argument put forward in this dissertation asserts that electoral politics influences military operations on the battlefield. I provide a variety of cases across time and space to support this theory, yet there exist important scope conditions and outliers that merit discussion. The most obvious and contradictory case is the Normandy Invasion in June of 1944. This theory would predict that Roosevelt would have pressured Eisenhower to hold off on the invasion until after the November 1944 election rather than initiate such a high-risk event, certain to result in tremendous numbers of casualties, so close to a U.S. presidential election. Indeed, the tremendous loss of life that occurred during the first days of the assault could have, according to the theory described here, been of serious concern to Roosevelt's electoral prospects. Yet D-Day is perhaps the exception that proves the rule. The size and scale of the Normandy Invasion makes it fundamentally unique in history; an invasion of that size does not suggest weakness, but rather strength

and careful planning. Further, World War II saw more casualties than any other great power conflict in the 20th century, and public opinion was far more casualty-tolerant than during other conflicts. In reality, while eager to prove to the American public that the end of the war was at hand, Roosevelt may have felt comfortable with the timing of such an enormous offensive because the nature of the operation itself shows considerable progress in the conflict.

I assert in this dissertation that politicians anticipate public reaction and adjust their behavior accordingly. In its simplest form, this theory assumes that the causal arrow runs in a single direction – from public preferences to the actions of the politicians. This is of course a problematic assumption, as in reality political elites have the ability to manipulate and shape public opinion about military operations and battlefield progress. Because leaders, particularly in foreign policy, control how much information is released to the public, they are often able to promote optimism about conflicts that are going badly. Further, elite leadership may be able to frame increases in casualties to voters as a temporary but necessary increase in order to pursue good policy. We saw this occur in Vietnam, where the optimism of the Johnson administration about U.S. prospects in Vietnam was shattered after the Tet Offensive and the emergence of the credibility gap. Overall, however, the assumption that leaders follow public opinion close to elections should not negatively affect this analysis, even accounting for information asymmetries and elite leadership. As elections draw nearer, research suggests that voters increasingly form their opinions about matters immediately before the election – that most voters, when making their decision about a candidate, are more influenced by stochastic or notable events in the three months before an election than elite leadership over the previous two years (Zaller 2002). This explains why the starkest differences in my results come immediately before an election: politicians, out of time to convince the voters of their competence, must avoid large events that might draw negative attention to their policies and decrease noisy, inaccurate measures of trouble for a casualty-sensitive public.

But what about when the public is casualty-tolerant? Casualty aversion amongst democratic public is a primary assumption in this theory and project. Casualty tolerance amongst the public removes incentives for politicians to reduce the risks to their soldiers in the lead-up to an election. Yet even when the public accepts large numbers of dead and wounded, I assert that large shock factors can still turn a public against a war leader. The World Wars are the examples that spring to mind. Despite the large numbers of casualties incurred by both sides, large events such as the Normandy Invasion and the Battle of the Bulge still drew people's attention to the conflict and provoked serious discussion about the war policies being pursued. Had D-Day not been successful, it is unlikely that the American and British publics would have remained content with their leaders' wartime policies. While casualty acceptance may give leaders a wider latitude when pursuing policies, I contend that the rope is not without limits.

This study covers conflicts that occur outside of a state's natural borders. The strategic bombing campaigns over Germany, U.S. actions in Vietnam, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, while major military interventions, where not fought on or inside the territory of the countries that I've analyzed. Because of this, it may be tempting to say that this analysis only applies to wars that are fought abroad or wars of choice, but this misses the phenomenon. In order to evaluate my theory, I need three criteria to be filled: 1) a consolidated democracy; 2) regular election periods; and 3) an inter-state conflict that lasts long enough to cover an election period. This essentially reduces the historical pool from which to draw cases to a very select few, and reason suggests that it has not, nor will ever, cover a war that is fought within a state's borders. When a country has been invaded, it is highly unlikely that the state would continue to have elections due to the existential nature of the crisis. Knowing that election create perverse incentives amongst leaders, I would expect states to enact emergency measures, much like Britain did during World War II, to limit the influence of public opinion and create the most unified government possible tasked with fighting the conflict. Should elections continue during a contest for a state's territory, I have no reason to expect different behavior – if anything, because information is easier for the public to obtain about the war, the incentives to reduce bad news increase considerably.

Normative Implications and Cautions

There are additionally some significant normative implications of this study that deserve mention. It is easy to ascribe a connotation of "good" or "bad" around the patterns that I've reviewed in this project, and to judge whether a civilian should or should not engage in the kind of influence and intervention described in the theory. It is further tempting to take quick policy lessons from the case studies without appreciating the overall picture, which is at its core complex. This dissertation neither argues for a theory of normal civil-military relations nor suggests that the normal theory is flawed in any way other than some of the assumptions it make about civilian agency. As the cases described have shown, politicization can have both positive and negative consequences on battlefield outcomes. It is thus neither good nor bad in the traditional sense, but rather an unintended consequence of the electoral system. The only two ways to respond to the dilemma I've identified are to either fix the politics (by withholding information or reducing casualties) or fix the system (by eliminating elections). We observed in this dissertation countries and situations where both occurred. Policymakers should thus be cautious to take normative lessons from this study; politicization, even for parochial reasons, can have both good and bad effects on war fighting.

Yet civilians must also understand that manipulating strategy and casualties on the battlefield is not always a winning strategy. The research and interviews that I conducted for this project reveal an enormous bias against the idea of politicizing military affairs in order for a politician to be reelected, and there clearly exist strong norms amongst both the both and elites against operational intervention for domestic parochial reasons. Understandably, then, officials are tight-lipped about any involvement that may be construed as political lest they be accused of "playing politics" with the lives of service members. Thus, news breaking of delayed operations or alterations in tactics in preparation for a reelection campaign would be much worse for a president than any

marginal increase in casualties. As Johnson discovered after the Tet Offensive, voters do not respond well to presidents who consistently attempt to manipulate public opinion.

Additionally, it is unclear how much effect a decrease in casualties may have on a presidential election campaign. Again, Johnson was a master of manipulating public opinion yet ultimately withdrew from the reelection campaign because of his wartime policies. Harry S. Truman, after the stalemate in Korea, also withdrew from the 1952 election. George W. Bush lost control of Congress in 2006 after three years of failing policy in Iraq. The counterfactuals are difficult to know – in the absence of risk-reducing strategies, how many more may have died? What kind of operations and offensives may have been conducted absent electoral pressures? Would it have, in fact, made any difference in the outcome of the election? All of these questions suggest that civilian influence on military operations may not have the effect desired by political leaders, and that efforts to win votes may not always work.

There are also costs to overriding civil-military relations norms. While civilians always have the "right to be wrong" in a democracy based on civilian control, too much influence in areas that the military considers its purview may sour relationships between commanders and the president. Consistently overriding military preferences for domestic political purposes may contribute to distrust inside the military and result in bad civil-military relations during an administration, which then may contribute to bad policy. Ultimately, the military are trained as experts in the management of violence, while civilians are responsible for understanding the political environment in which a war is conducted. Overriding the norms of non-intervention may result in preferable policy in the short-term, but may also come at a cost to long-term relationships.

Yet military officers should also not take this dissertation as condoning a realm that is exclusively military-dominated. We've seen that the military can develop organizational pathologies that can result in poor outcomes, as in Vietnam, where Army preferences for kinetic action, firepower, and conventional combat was unsuited for the counterinsurgency campaign being waged in the jungles and highlands of South Vietnam.

Similarly, individual leaders with a firm belief in the efficacy of a particular strategy, absent any empirical validation, can hijack a key part of the war effort and steer it toward ineffective policies, as we saw Arthur Harris do while in charge of Bomber Command. Civilian oversight and influence is critical in these situations to force the military to adapt to and adopt strategies that they may otherwise be unwilling to pursue. Further, the military is overtimes blind to the political arena in which it operates. If "war is politics by other means," then it follows that politics must inherently be a part of war fighting. There may be scenarios, as during Rolling Thunder, where including targets too close to the Chinese border would spark an intervention and irrevocably escalate the conflict. In these cases, the civilian must reach down and alter tactics and operations in order to pursue the war according to his strategic priorities. In the end, only civilians can determine when the time is right to end a conflict, or when a negotiated peace is preferable to unconditional surrender. Only an elected civilian has the authority and capability of deciding how much the public is willing to pay for a particular war. Influence and intervention are thus both the civilian's prerogative and at times critically necessary for successful battlefield strategy.

Conclusions and the Future of Politicization

The world is changing in important ways today that may have tremendous impacts on the politicization of operations. Advances in technology, transparency, and information are dramatically altering not only the way in which powerful states fight conflicts but also the way in which the public experiences events during war. Over the last thirty years, the United States and others have developed technologies that better protect combatants and allow for the projection of power at a dramatically reduced cost. Further, advances in information technology and the rise of instant communications have changed the way that civilians leaders, soldiers, and non-combatants interact during times of war. Understanding how and whether these trends increase or decrease the likeliness of politicization is important for the relevance of the theory over time.

Advances in technologies have revolutionized the way that great powers fight wars. Improvements in body armor, field medicine, and Medevac capabilities, along with improvements in training, firepower, weapons systems, and precision munitions means that service members are far less likely to die in combat than at any point in history. What does this mean for politicization? Fewer deaths per war may have an effect on public casualty sensitivity. If fewer soldiers are killed per month, then the need for leaders to influence operations may be reduced because the overall numbers are already low. However, research suggests that the public responds to casualties on a logarithmic scale. Thus, fewer deaths per war may actually mean that the public is, counter-intuitively, *more* casualty sensitive to wars today than in decades past.

Advances in communication technologies and increases in the transparency of military operations enabled by the Internet and increased reporter access on the battlefield have contributed to increased public awareness of operations on the battlefield. This makes it far more difficult for civilian leaders to dramatically alter operations in the lead up to an election without detection. As technology advances and the public becomes more attuned to individual movements on the battlefield, the information asymmetries that I assert make it more likely we observe politicization will continue to decrease. As a result, both the incentives and ability to influence military conflicts may decline as a result of advances in information technology. However, these same factors may also create additional incentives to influence operations for domestic purposes. Because technology allows the United States and other great powers to project power across the globe with relatively few costs, we may see an increase in covert and classified operations, which by definition are shielded from the public eye. As a result, the act of politicization may increasingly appear like the act of classification as, in the run-up to an election, leaders seek to hide the fact that there are any operations occurring at all.

Finally, the all-volunteer draft has resulted in a general population that is more removed from the costs of war than ever before, and this can in turn have dramatic effects on public casualty sensitivity. The principle behind a dovish public lies in the assumption that the general population evenly feels the costs of a war – more so than the relatively

insulated political elite. As a result, democratic voters are more skeptical of conflict and exert pressure on their leaders to avoid wars, or only choose wars that will be short and winnable. The existence of a military that is a) all-volunteer, and b) increasingly separated from the public at large, decreases the casualty sensitivity of the public. We have observed already that this may make states more likely to engage in conflict, as the costs of entering a war are reduced. Therefore, casualty-acceptance by a public that no longer feels the human cost of war may put less pressure on civilian leaders to decrease casualties before an election. Further, the emergence of a corps of military legacies who increasingly bear a disproportionate share of the human cost of conflict may generate additional pressure toward non-intervention, and contribute to a decrease in civilian influence on military operations.

This dissertation is fundamentally a study of the politicization of warfare. It has sought to identify and explore the causes of civilian intervention in military operations and tactics, and traces the influence of electoral incentives on outcomes and processes on the battlefield. I have demonstrated over five empirical chapters the ways in which electoral politics motivate and alter decision-making amongst both civilian leaders and military commanders. These methods of politicization – both direct and indirect – are enormously important for understanding the costs of war and causes of tactical changes. A key finding from this dissertation is that not only are the mechanisms of politicization observable, but that these mechanisms then have tangible effects of the number of casualties that are suffered in the build up to and election and afterward. In Vietnam, we observed a 30% decrease in casualties leading up to an election, and in Iraq and Afghanistan evidence suggests that there was a 27% swing in monthly deaths from immediately before to immediately after an election.

These kinds of tangible, substantive effects bring this dissertation beyond the realm of the academic and into the policy arena. There are very real implications in this theory for the nature of civil-military relations, causes of battlefield effectiveness, and the impact on the personal lives of soldiers and their families. Leaders must think carefully about the reasons for influence and the effects that intervention may have on the ability of the state

to effectively prosecute a conflict. Similarly, military commanders must also recognize that civilian oversight, while sometimes guided by domestic parochial concerns, is essential for stymieing organizational pathologies that may also lead to poor security outcomes. As the world changes, becomes more transparent, and generally less deadly, the politicization of military operations may fade into a distant memory of wars past, though recent events suggest otherwise. Yet, the leaders of today must still deeply consider their choices and incentives during times of war, and the unintended consequences of democratic institutions.

References

Air Ministry Files, UK National Archives at Kew Gardens.. A13C1/143/2C – "Ruhr Area: Targets Intelligence – Germany." AIR 14/1220

Air Ministry Files, UK National Archives at Kew Gardens. Loose minute from target policy file – AIR 14/1220

Air Ministry Files, UK National Archives at Kew Gardens. page 80A, AIR 14/1220

Aldrich, John, John Sullivan, Eugene Borgida. "Foreign Affairs and Issue Voting: Do Presidential Candidates 'Waltz Before a Blind Audience?'" *American Political Science Review* 83(1): 123-141. 1989.

Allison, Graham. *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. New York: Little Brown. 1971.

Allison, Graham and Morton Halperin. "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications." *World Politics* 24 (1972): 40-79.

Almond, Gabriel. *The American People and Foreign Policy*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt. 1950.

Andrade, Dal. "Westmoreland Was Right: Learning the Wrong Lessons from the Vietnam War," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 19:2 (2008)

Arnold, Douglas. *Congress, the Press, and Political Accountability.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 2004.

Avant, Deborah. "Are the Reluctant Warriors Out of Control? Why the U.S. Military is Averse to Responding to Post-Cold War Low-Level Threats." *Security Studies* 6 (2): 51-90. 1996-1997.

David M Barrett, *Lyndon B. Johnson's Vietnam Papers: A Documentary Collection*, College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997

Bartels, Larry. *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 2008.

Bennett, Lance. "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations in the United States." *Journal of Communication* 40 (2): 103-127. 1990.

Bennett, D. Scott and Allan Stam. "The Duration of Interstate Wars: 1816-1985." *American Political Science Review* 90(2): 239-257. 1996.

Bennett, D. Scott and Allan C. Stam. "The Declining Advantages of Democracy: A Combined Model of War Outcomes and Duration." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42(3): 344-366. 1998.

Betts, Richard. *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1977.

Biddle, Stephen. *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 2006.

Biddle, Stephen and Stephen Long. "Democracy and Military Effectiveness: A Deeper Look." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48:4 (2004): 525-546.

Biddle, Tami Davis. *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas about Strategic Bombing, 1914-1945*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2004

Birtle, Andrew J. "PROVN, Westmoreland, and the Historians: A Reappraisal," *Journal of Military History* 72:4 (2008): 145-181.

Bomber Command Quarterly Review. "Review of Operations." June 1945.

Brittain, Vera. "Stop Massacre Bombing! An Appeal to all Belligerents." 1943.

Brody, Richard and Catherine Shapiro. "A Reconsideration of the Rally Phenomenon in Public Opinion." In *Political Behavior Annual*, edited by S. Long. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 211-247. 1989.

NS File, Bromley Smith Files, Box 1, LBJ Library, January 21 1965,

Brooks, Risa. *Shaping Strategy: The Civil-Military Politics of Strategic Assessment*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 2008.

Brooks, Risa and Elizabeth Stanley. *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 2007.

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce and Randolph Siverson. "War and the Survival of Political Leaders: A Comparative Study of Regime Types and Political Accountability." *American Political Science Review* 89(6): 841-855. 1995.

Bush, Sarah. 2011. The Democracy Establishment. Ph.D. diss., Princeton University.

Cabinet Papers, UK National Archives at Kew Gardens. CAB 121/3, "Allied Bombing Policy." Minute No. D89/5.

Cabinet Papers, UK National Archives at Kew Gardens. CAB 79/31, page 31. Chiefs of Staff 79th Meeting, 28 March 1945.

Cabinet Papers, UK National Archives at Kew Gardens. CAB 121/3: "Allied Bombing Policy" Withdrawn memo, Churchill to Ismay. 28 March 1945.

Cabinet Papers, UK National Archives at Kew Gardens. See Cabinet Papers on "Allied Bombing Policy" from April 15-20.

Cabinet Papers, UK National Archives at Kew Gardens. Churchill to Truman, 14 April 1945. CAB 121/3: "Allied Bombing Policy"

Cabinet Papers, UK National Archives at Kew Gardens. See Cabinet Papers on "Allied Bombing Policy," March 1945.

Cabinet Papers, UK National Archives at Kew Gardens. Churchill to Joint Chiefs, 1 April 1945. CAB 121/3: "Allied Bombing Policy"

Cable, Larry. *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, New York: New York University Press, 1986

Caforio, Giuseppe and Marina Nuciari, "The Officer Profession: Ideal-Type." *Current Sociology* 42 (1994): 33-56.

Campbell, Angus, Philip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald Stokes. *The American Voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1960.

Carland, John M. "Winning the Vietnam War: Westmoreland's Approach in Two Documents," *Journal of Military History* 68:2 (2004): 533-574

Caverley, Jonathan. "The Myth of Military Myopia: Democracy, Small Wars, and Vietnam." *International Security* 34 (3): 119-157. 2010

Choi, Ajim. "The Power of Democratic Cooperation." *International Security* 28:1 (2003): 142-153.

Churchill Personal Papers, Cambridge University.

Christia, Fotini. *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2012.

Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1989.

Cohen, Dara. "Explaining Rape During Civil War: Cross-National Evidence (1980-2009)." *American Political Science Review* 107:3 (2013): 461-477.

Cohen, Eliot. *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime*. New York: Anchor. 2002.

Condra, Luke and Jacob Shapiro, "Who Takes the Blame? The Strategic Effects of Collateral Damage," *American Journal of Political Science* 56:1 (2012):167-187.

Cook, Timothy. "Domesticating a Crisis: Washington Newsbeats and Network News after the Iraq Invasion of Kuwait." In *Taken By Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War*, edited by Lance Bennett and David L Paletz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1994.

Daily Telegraph. "Obituary of Wing Commander Ernest Millington." May 10, 2009. Available at http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/politics-obituaries/5304594/Wing-Commander-Ernest-Millington.html. Accessed 15 February 2015.

Desch, Michael. *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1999.

Desch, Michael. "Democracy and Victory: Why Regime Type Hardly Matters." *International Security* 27:2 (2002): 5-47

Desch, Michael. "Democracy and Victory: Fair Fights or Food Fights?" *International Security* 28:1 (2003): 180-194.

Desch, Michael. *Soldiers in Cities: Military Operations on Urban Terrain*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute. 2001.

deToqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America*. New York: Penguin Classics. 2003.

Downes, Alexander. "Desperate Times, Desperate Measures: The Causes of Civilians Victimization in War," *International Security* 30:4 (2006): 152-195

Downes, Alexander. "Draining the Sea by Filling the Graves: Investigating the Effectiveness of Indiscriminate Violence as a Counterinsurgency Strategy," *Civil Wars* 9:4 (2007).

Downes, Alexander. "How Smart and Tough are Democracies? Reassessing Theories of Democratic Victory in War." *International Security* 33:4 (2009): 9-51.

Downes, Alexander. *Targeting Civilians in War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 2008.

Doyle, Michael. "Liberalism and World Politics." *The American Political Science Review* 80 (4): 1151-1169. 1986

Drazen, Allan. *Political Economy in Macroeconomics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 2000.

Drea, Edward J. *McNamara, Clifford, and the Burdens of Vietnam, 1965-1969*. Secretaries of Defense Historical Series, Vol 6. Washington, DC: Office of Secretary of Defense. 2011.

Fair, Ray. "The Effect of Economic Events on Votes for President." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 60: 159-173. 1978.

Falk, Richard A., ed. *The Vietnam War and International Law*. 4 volumes. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1969-1976.

Fearon, James. "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes." *American Political Science Review* 88(3): 577-592. 1994.

Fearon, James. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49(3): 379-414. 1995.

Fearon, James. "What is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?" Stanford University Working Paper 1999.

Feaver, Peter. "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control." *Armed Forces and Society* 23 (1996): 149-178.

Feaver, Peter. *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 2003

Feaver, Peter and Christopher Gelpi. *Choosing Your Battles: American Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force.* Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2004.

Feaver, Peter and Richard Kohn. *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 2001.

Fiorina, Mo. *Retrospective Voting in American Elections*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. 1981.

Foreign Relations of the United States, Document 156

Frankum Jr. Ronald B. *Like Rolling Thunder: The Air War in Vietnam 1964-1975*, New York: Rowand and Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2005

Gallup Organization. Gallup Poll, Dec, 1965. USGALLUP.65-722.R005. Gallup Organization [producer]. Storrs, CT:Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Apr-8-2015.

Gallup Organization. Gallup Poll, Dec, 1965. USGALLUP.65-722.R003B. Gallup Organization [producer]. Storrs, CT:Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Apr-8-2015.

Gallup Organization. Gallup Poll (AIPO), Feb, 1968. USGALLUP.757.Q014. Gallup Organization [producer]. Storrs, CT: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Apr-8-2015.

Gallup Organization. Gallup Poll (AIPO), Feb, 1968. USGALLUP.757.Q016. Gallup Organization [producer]. Storrs, CT:Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Apr-8-2015.

Gallup Organization. Gallup Poll (AIPO), Feb, 1968. USGALLUP.757.Q016. Gallup Organization [producer]. Storrs, CT:Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Apr-8-2015.

Gallup Organization. Gallup Poll (AIPO), Feb, 1968. USGALLUP.758.Q008. Gallup Organization [producer]. Storrs, CT:Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Apr-8-2015.

Gallup Organization. Gallup Poll (AIPO), Aug 1971. USGALLUP.773.Q013. Gallup Organization [producer]. Storrs, CT:Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Aug-10-2015.

Galula, David. *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, Westport, CT: Praeger Security International

Gartzke, Eric. "The Capitalist Peace." *American Journal of Political Science* 51(1): 166-191. 2007.

Gates, Robert. *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War*. New York: Knopf. 2013

Gelb, Leslie and Richard Betts, *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked,* Washington, DC: Brooking Institution, 1979.

Gelpi, Christopher, Peter Feaver, and Jason Reifler. "Success Matters: Casualty Sensitivity and the War in Iraq." *International Security* 30 (3): 7-46. 2006

Golby, James. "Duty, Honor, Party? Ideology, Institutions, and the Use of Military Force." PhD Diss, Stanford University. 2011.

Gowa, Joanne. "Politics at the Water's Edge: Parties, Voters, and the Use of Force Abroad." *International Organization* 52 (2): 307-324. 1998.

Graff, Henry. *The Tuesday Cabinet: Deliberation and Decision on Peace and War under Lyndon B Johnson*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc, 1970.

Grehan, John and Martin Mace, Bomber Harris; Sir Arthur Harris' Despatch on War Operations 1942-1945. London: Pen and Sword. 2014. Pp 356.

Harries-Jenkins, Gwyn. "The Concept of Military Professionalism," *Defense Analysis* 6 (1990): 117-130.

Harris Personal Papers. Portal to Harris, 20 January 1945, in PP 10C.

Harris & Associates. Harris Survey, Dec, 1965. USHARRIS.120665.R3C. Louis Harris & Associates [producer]. Storrs, CT:Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], accessed Apr-8-2015.

Hastings, Max. Bomber Command. London: Pan Books. 1976. Pp 214-216.

Headlam, Sir Cuthbert Morley. Parliament and Politics in the Age of Churchill and Atlee: The Headlam Diaries 1935-1951. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1999. Pp 456.

Herring, George. *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975.* New York: McGrew-Hill. 2001.

Hess, Leon, and Michael Nelson. "Foreign Policy and the Evaluation of Presidential Candidates." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 35(2): 333-355. 1985.

House of Commons Deb 30 September 1942. Volume 383 cc 811. "Order for the Second Reading of the Prolongation of Parliament Bill."

House of Commons, 6 March 1945, col 1900

Howell, William and Jon Pevehouse. *While Dangers Gather: Congressional Checks on Presidential War Powers.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 2007.

Huntington, Samuel. *The Soldier and the State*. New York: Belknap Press. 1954.

Jackson, Colin. Defeat in Victory: Organizational Learning Dysfunction in Counterinsurgency. PhD Diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology. 2008

Janowitz, Morris. *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*. New York: Free Press. 1960.

Kagay, Michael R. and Greg A. Caldeira. "I like the looks of his face: Elements of electoral choice, 1952-1972." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco CA. 1975.

Kalyvas, Stathis. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2006.

Karnow, Stanley. *Vietnam: A History*. New York: Penguin Books. 1983.

Key, V.O. *The Responsible Electorate*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1966.

Kilcullen, David. *The Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*; New York: Oxford University Press. 2009.

Kinnard, Douglas. *The War Managers*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England. 1977.

Kocher, Matthew, Thomas Pepinsky, and Stathis Kalyvas, "Aerial Bombing and Counterinsurgency in the Vietnam War," *American Journal of Political Science* 55:2 (2011): 201-218

Komer, Robert. *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on U.S. – GVN Performance in Vietnam*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. 1972

Kramer, Gerald. "Short-Term Fluctuations in U.S. Voting Behavior, 1896-1964." *American Political Science Review* 71(2): 131-143. 1971.

Krepinevich, Andrew F. *The Army and Vietnam*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1984.

Kreps, Sarah, and Geoffrey Wallace. "International Law and U.S. Support for Drone Strikes." *Open Democracy*. Available at https://www.opendemocracy.net/openglobalrights/sarah-kreps-geoffrey-wallace/international-law-and-us-public-support-for-drone-stri. Accessed 14 August, 2015.

Lau, Richard R. and David P. Redlawsk. "Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making." *American Journal of Political Science* 45(5): 951-971. 2001.

Lee, Carrie. "Counterinsurgency: Myths and Methods." Stanford University Working Paper. 2015.

Lee, Carrie and John Kendall. "Use It or Lose It: The Political Economy of Counterinsurgency Strategy." Presented at the International Studies Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA, 4 April, 2013.

Lefever, Ernest. *Ethics and World Politics: Four Perspectives*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1972.

Lewy, Guenter. *America in Vietnam*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978

Levy, Jack. "Domestic Politics and War." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18 (4): 653-673. 1988.

Light, Paul C. and Celinda Lake. "The Election: Candidates, Strategies, and Decision." In *The Elections of 1984*, ed Michael Nelson. Washington: Congressional Quarterly. 1985

Lippmann, Walter. *Public Opinion*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt. 1922.

Littauer, Raphael and Norman Uphoff, editors, *The Air War in Indochina*, Air War Study Group, Cornell University, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1972.

Loi, Luu Van and Nguyen Anh Vu. *Le-Duc Tho – Kissinger Negotiations in Paris*. Hanoi: Gioi Publishers. 1996.

Long, Austin. First War Syndrome: Culture, Professionalization, and Counterinsurgency Doctrine. PhD Diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology. 2010.

Lupia, Arthur. "Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections." *American Political Science Review* 88(1): 63-76. 1994.

Lupia, Arthur and Matthew McCubbins. *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1998.

Lyall, Jason. "Does Indiscriminate Violence Incite Insurgent Attacks? Evidence from Chechnya," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53:2 (2009): 331-362.

Lyall, Jason and Isaiah Wilson. "Rage Against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars." *International Organization* 63 (1): 67-106. 2009.

Mack, Andrew. "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict," *World Politics* 27:2 (1975): 175-200.

Daniel Marston, The Pacific War: From Pearl Harbor to Hiroshima. Osprey Publishing. 2011.

McMaster, HR. *Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam*, New York: Harper Perennial, 1998.

McNamara, Robert. *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*. New York: Random House, 1995.

Mearsheimer, John. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. 2001

Mearsheimer, John and Stephen Walt. "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy." *Middle East Policy* 8(3): 29-87. 2006.

Mermin, Jonathan. *Debating War and Peace: Media Coverage of U.S. Intervention in the Post-Vietnam Era.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1999.

Merom, Gil. *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2003.

Michel III, Marshall L. *The Eleven Days of Christmas: America's Last Vietnam Battle.* New York: Encounter Books. 2001.

Middlebrook, Martin, and Chris Everett. The Bomber Command War Diaries: An Operational Reference Book 1939-1945. London: Pen and Sword. 2014.

Miguel, Edward and Gerard Roland, "The long-run impact of bombing Vietnam," *Journal of Development Economics* 96 (2011): 1-15

Milstein, Jeffrey S. *Dynamics of the Vietnam War: A Quantitative Analysis and Predictive Computer Simulation*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press. 1974.

Milstein, Jeffrey S. and William C. Mitchell. "Dynamics of the Vietnam Conflict: A Quantitative Analysis and Computer Simulation." Peace Research Society (International) Papers, No. 10. 1968.

Morgenthau, Hans. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Peace and Power*. New York: A.A. Knopf. 1954.

Moyar, Mark. *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Mueller, John. *War, Presidents and Public Opinion*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons. 1973.

Mueller, John. "The Search for the 'Breaking Point' in Vietnam: The Statistics in a Deadly Quarrel," *International Studies Quarterly* 24:4 (1980): 497-519.

Nagl, John. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

National Security Council meetings notes, Dec 1 1967, cited in David M Barrett, *Lyndon B. Johnson's Vietnam Papers: A Documentary Collection*, College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997, page 558-559

Nordhaus, William. "The Political Business Cycle." *Review of Economic Studies* 42: 169-190. 1975.

Ormerod, Paul, Bridget Rosewell, Peter Phelps. "Inflation/Unemployment Regimes and the Instability of the Phillips Curve." Economics Discussion Paper No 2009-43. 2009.

Richard Overy. The Bombing War. New York: Penguin Books. 2013. Pp 391-396.

Owen, John. *Liberal Peace Liberal War: American Politics and International Security*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 2000.

Pape, Robert. *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996.

Parks, Hays W. "Rolling Thunder and the Law of War." *Air University Review* 33 (1982): 2-23.

Parks, Hays W. "Linebacker and the Law of War." Air University Review 34 (1983): 2-30.

The Pentagon Papers as published by the New York Times, New York: Bantam Books, 1971, Gravel Edition

Phillips, William. "The Relation between Unemployment and the Rate of Change of Money Wage Rates in the United Kingdom, 1861-1957." *Economica* 34: 254-281. 1958.

Prime Ministers Papers, UK National Archives at Kew Gardens. PREM 4/65/2: "Candidates, Agents, and Elections." Page 305.

Posen, Barry. *Sources of Military Doctrine*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 1984.

Powell, Colin. "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead." *Foreign Affairs*, 71 (5): 36- 41. 1992-93.

Powell, Robert. "War As a Commitment Problem." *International Organization* 60(1): 169-203. 2006.

Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1968-69. Volume I, entry 170, pp. 469-476. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1970. Accessed online at http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/680331.asp. 8 April 2015

Quinlivin, James T. "Coup-proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East." *International Security* 24. 1999.

Reiter, Dan and Allan C. Stam. "Democracy, War Initiation, and Victory." *American Political Science Review* 92(2): 377-389. 1998.

Lt Col J.A. Robertson, R. Burr, and B. Barth, (2013) USAF THOR Database; www.afri.au.af.mil/thor retrieved on 30 September 2014. Data compiled from multiple sources.

Rosen, Stephen Peter. "Vietnam and the American Theory of Limited War," *International Security* 7:2 (1982): 83-113.

Rosen, Stephen. *Winning the Next War; Innovation and the Modern Military*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 1994

Rummel, R.J. "Democracy, Power, Genocide, and Mass Murder." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 39: 1 (1995): 3-26.

Russett, Bruce. *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1994

Russett, Bruce, and John Oneal. *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. 2001

Sagan, Scott and Benjamin Valentino. "Use of Force: The American Public and the Ethics of War." Open Democracy. Available at https://www.opendemocracy.net/openglobalrights/scott-d-sagan-benjamin-valentino/use-of-force-american-public-and-ethics-of-war. Access 14 August 2015.

Saunders, Elizabeth. *Leaders at War: How Presidents Shape Military Interventions*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 2011.

Schlesigner, Arthur. *The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy, 1941-1966*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1967, pp 47-48.

Schmitt, Eric and Thom Shanker. "A Nation Challenged: Body Count: Taliban and Qaeda Death Toll in Mountain Battle is a Mystery." *New York Times* 14 March 2002.

Schultz, Kenneth. "The Politics of the Political Business Cycle." *British Journal of Political Science* 25 (1): 79-99. 1995

Schultz, Kenneth. *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2001

Schultz, Kenneth. "Domestic Politics and International Relations," in *Handbook of International Relations, 2nd ed*, edited by Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth Simmons. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 2013.

Selznick, Philip. 1949. *TVA and the Grass Roots: A Study in the Sociology of Formal Organization*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Shapiro, Robert and Benjamin Page. "Foreign Policy and the Rational Public." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 32 (2): 211-247. 1988.

Slantchev, Branislav. "The Power to Hurt: Costly Conflict with Completely Information States." *American Political Science Review* 47(1): 123-133. 2003.

Slantchev, Branislav, and Bahar Leventoglu. "The Armed Peace: A Punctuated Equilibrium Theory of War." *American Journal of Political Science* 51(4): 755-771. 2007.

Snyder, Jack. The *Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914*. Itahca, NY: Cornell University Press. 1984

Snyder, Jack. *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 1991.

Sorely, Lewis. *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and the Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999.

Sorley, Lewis. *Vietnam Chronicles: The Abrams Tapes, 1968-1972*. Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press. 2004.

Stoll, David. *Between Two Armies in the Ixil Towns of Guatemala*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993

Stoll, Richard. "The Guns of November: Presidential Re-Elections and the Use of Force, 1947-1982." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 28(2): 231-246. 1984.

Thompson, Robert. *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, New York: FA Praeger, 1966

Tufte, Edward. *Political Control of the Economy, 2nd ed*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1978.

Turley, Col. Gerald H. *Easter Offensive: The Last American Advisors, Vietnam, 1972*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press. 2010.

Valentino, Benjamin. *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press

Valentino, Benjamin, Paul Huth, and Dylan Balch-Lindsay, "Draining the Sea: Mass Killing and Guerilla Warfare," *International Organization* 58:2 (2004)

Wagner, Harrison. "Bargaining and War." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(3):469-484. 2000.

Waltz, Kenneth. *Man: The State and War*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1959.

Waltz, Kenneth. *Theory of International Politics*. New York: Waveland Press Inc. 1979.

Weeks, Jessica. "Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve." *International Organization* 62 (1): 35-64. 2008.

Weinstein, Jeremy. *Inside Rebellion: The Political of Insurgent Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2006.

Stanley Weintraub, Final Victory: FDR's Extraordinary World War II Presidential Campaign. New York: Da Capo Press. 2012.

West, Francis J. *No True Glory: Fallujah and the Struggle in Iraq: A Frontline Account*. New York: Bantam Books. 2005.

Wood, Elisabeth. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2003.

Zaller, John. "Elite Leadership of Mass Opinion." In *Taken By Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War*, edited by W. Lance Bennett and David L. Paletz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1994.

Zaller, John. "Floating Voters in U.S. Presidential Elections, 1948-2000." In W. E. Saris and P.M. Sniderman (eds) *Studies in Public Opinion: Attitudes, Nonattitudes, Measurement Error, and Change*. Pp 166-212. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 2004.