The Cult of the Persuasive:
The U.S. Military's Aversion to Coercion in Security Assistance

by

Rachel Elizabeth Tecott
B.A. Wesleyan University (2011)

Submitted to the Department of Political Science
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

At the

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

September 2021

© 2021 Massachusetts Institute of Technology. All rights reserved.

Signature of Author

……………………………………
Department of Political Science
September 2021

Certified by:

……………………………………
Barry Posen
Ford International Professor of Political Science
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by:

……………………………………
Fotini Christia
Ford International Professor in the Social Sciences
Chair, Graduate Program Committee

The Cult of the Persuasive:
The U.S. Military's Aversion to Coercion in Security Assistance

By

Rachel Elizabeth Tecott

Submitted to the Department of Political Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on September 3, 2021 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

ABSTRACT

Why does the United States struggle to build stronger militaries in partner states? The fundamental challenge of security assistance is that of influencing recipient political-military decision-making. How does the United States aim to influence recipient leaders? Which strategies of influence work best? Why does the United States choose the strategies of influence it chooses? I conceptualize U.S. influence strategies in security assistance as an influence escalation ladder with four rungs: teaching, persuasion, bargaining, and direct command. I develop Influence Strategy Theory (IST), arguing that the United States is more likely to successfully influence partners and build better partner militaries when it employs the full escalation ladder. It is less likely to succeed when it relies exclusively on teaching and persuasion.

Moving a link back in the causal chain, I offer two competing models of strategy selection—the rational actor model, and the Cult of the Persuasive. I argue that the rational actor model sufficiently explains U.S. strategy in pre-Vietnam security assistance efforts, but cannot explain U.S. advisors' persistent reliance on persuasion in Vietnam and thereafter. In Vietnam, the U.S. Army untethered from its civilian principal in Washington to instead pursue its parochial bureaucratic interests. An institutional ideology—"the cult of the persuasive"— preaching the normative and causal superiority of persuasion over coercion evolved within the U.S. Army to minimize disruption of its bureaucratic machinery. The ideology continues to guide U.S. security assistance today because the U.S. military has no institutional incentive to change course.

I test these arguments within and across three critical cases of U.S. security assistance, with chapters examining the U.S. effort to build the Republic of Korea Army (1948 – 1953), the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (1955 – 1973), and the Iraqi Army (2003 – 2011). I draw from thousands of archival documents, over 500 oral histories collected from former U.S. advisors, and over 150 original interviews. I find strong support for the expectations of the study. The findings provide new theoretical and empirical insights for students of security assistance and military strategy, as well as practical lessons for policymakers and military advisors.

Thesis Supervisor: Barry R. Posen
Title: Ford International Professor of Political Science

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT **3**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS **5**

Chapter 1: Introduction **5**

1.1 Puzzle, Framework, and Questions 7
1.2 Arguments 11
1.3 Evidence 16
1.4 Findings 16
1.5 The Plan of the Study 18

Chapter 2: Theory **20**

2.1 Defining Security Assistance and Establishing the Scope of Inquiry 21
2.2. Effectiveness of Security Assistance: Insights and Limitations of Existing Scholarship 23
2.3 Strategies of Influence in Security Assistance 31
2.4 Influence Strategy Theory: Consequences of Influence Strategies 44
2.5 The Puzzle: Vanishing Rungs on the Escalation Ladder 56
2.6 Existing Explanations of Strategy Selection 62
2.7 The Cult of the Persuasive: Causes of Influence Strategies 68
2.8 Research Design 75

Chapter 3: Building the Republic of Korea Army (1948 – 1953) **90**

3.1 Background: The Evolution of the U.S. Advisory Effort in Korea 93
3.2 Coding U.S. Influence Strategies in Korea 106
3.3 Testing Influence Strategy Theory 132
3.4 Testing the Rational Actor Model 159
3.5 Alternative Explanations 179
3.6 Summary 186

Chapter 4: Building the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (1954 – 1973) **188**

4.1 Background: The Evolution of the U.S. Advisory Effort in Vietnam 190
4.2 Coding U.S. Influence Strategies 198
4.3 Testing Influence Strategy Theory 221
4.4 Testing The Cult of the Persuasive 241
4.5 Alternative Explanations 269
4.6 Summary 275

Chapter 5: Building the Iraqi Army (2003 – 2011) **277**

5.1 Background: The Evolution of the U.S. Advisory Effort in Iraq 280
5.2 Coding U.S. Influence Strategies 287
5.3 Testing Influence Strategy Theory 306
5.4 Testing The Cult of the Persuasive 327
5.5 Alternative Explanations 355
5.5 Summary 365

Chapter 6: Conclusion **366**

6.1 Summary of Arguments and Findings 367
6.2 External Validity 370
6.3 Remaining Questions and Future Research 374
6.4 Contributions 384

Bibliography **387**

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I extend my gratitude to my dissertation committee. Barry Posen was a phenomenal committee chair. His breadth and depth of knowledge, ability to cut through the noise, and attention to every clause and footnote improved my scholarship beyond measure. He has given me the tools to succeed in this business, and I am proud to be his student. Roger Petersen's skill as a theorist and expertise in the Iraq War strengthened every page. Vipin Narang, besides his intellectual contributions to my work, was a ready source of practical advice about navigating the academic world outside MIT.

Caitlin Talmadge has shaped me as a scholar and professional as much as my committee. This work builds directly on hers. Her combination of intellectual horsepower, analytical rigor, mentorship, and engagement with the key questions of our time make up the model I aspire to emulate as I set out as a professor. Steve Van Evera inspired me with his "big swing" questions of war and peace, and, even more importantly, his clarity of purpose: our job as scholars is to pursue truth, help people learn, and make the world better.

I am indebted to Michael McNerney and Ben Connable of the RAND Corporation. Mike helped me understand the nuts and bolts of Defense Department security cooperation and security force assistance. Ben helped me understand the Iraqi Army, facilitated my access to Iraqi general officers, and sharpened my thinking in our sparring sessions over subjects ranging from the United States' agenda in the Middle East to the challenges of causal inference in a messy world.

The MIT Security Studies Program is an extraordinary place. SSP's secret sauce is its students. I was lucky to overlap with Lena Andrews, Emma Campbell-Mohn, Fiona Cunningham, Suzanne Freeman, Andy Halterman, Marika Landau-Wells, Phil Martin, Tim McDonnell, Aidan Milliff, Kacie Miura, Cullen Nutt, Rachel Odell, Reid Pauly, Sara Plana, Apekshya Prasai, Erik Sand, Tim Wright, and Ketian Zhang, all of whom made me a smarter, happier graduate student. I look forward to watching them do big things in the decades to come. The culture of collegiality, collaboration, and curiosity makes SSP the ideal environment to rewire the brain and build firm foundations for future scholarship.

I completed this dissertation while a predoctoral fellow at the George Washington University Elliot School of International Affairs. Elliot School faculty and students provided a welcoming home away from home, sharpened my thinking, and strengthened this project. For additional financial support, I thank the Smith Richardson Foundation, the MIT Seminar XXI program, the MIT Department of Political Science, the MIT Center for International Studies, and the MIT Security Studies Program.

I am grateful to each of the individuals—American and Iraqi—who shared their time and experiences in interviews. Their voices were crucial not only to the findings presented in the Iraq chapter, but to my understanding of the broader project of contemporary U.S. military assistance. My thanks also to the U.S. military advisors who participated in the oral history projects that

informed the Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq chapters, and to the archivists who helped me navigate key collections. Manisha Vepa provided valuable research assistance.

My parents encouraged me to pursue my interests and made it possible for me to do so. My deepest debt is to Justin, my partner. We met before the strange idea of pursuing a PhD had entered my mind. It was Justin who first saw a professor in me. His limitless faith in me, innumerable accommodations, and respect for “deep work mode” made this dissertation possible. His love and good humor make me happy.

I wrote most of these pages during the Covid-19 pandemic. I dedicate this dissertation to those we lost.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Puzzle, Framework, and Questions

In August 2021, the Afghan National Security Forces—organized, trained, equipped, and advised by the United States for almost two decades—melted away to the Taliban.[1] Just a few years earlier, Iraqi Security Forces trained and equipped by the United States collapsed to the Islamic State.[2] 40 years before that, the U.S.-built Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) evaporated to the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN).[3] From the Fall of Saigon, to the Fall of Mosul, to the Fall of Kabul, the United States failed to build local militaries capable of managing local threats. Why, despite the massive investments and the centrality of local security forces to U.S. counterinsurgency strategy and exit plans, does the United States struggle to build better militaries in partner states?

Security assistance has been a central dimension of U.S. foreign policy and military strategy since World War II and has emerged today a pillar of the United States' touted return to great power competition.[4] The United States intends security assistance to improve the capacity of partner militaries to manage local security threats, freeing the U.S. military to shift its weight to China and Russia. Though the core of U.S. military planning remains preparation for war, the vast majority of what the U.S. military is actually doing outside of the United States on a given

---

[1] David Zucchino, "Kabul's Sudden Fall to Taliban Ends U.S. Era in Afghanistan," *The New York Times,* August 15, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/15/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-kabul-surrender.html.
[2] Michael Knights, "The Long Haul: Rebooting U.S. Security Cooperation in Iraq," *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, (2015).
[3] Hosmer, Stephen T. Hosmer, Konrad Kellen, and Brian Michael Jenkins, *The Fall of South Vietnam: Statements by Vietnamese Military and Civilian Leaders*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation), 1978. https://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R2208.html.
[4] John Amble, "Modern War Podcast: Security Force Assistance in an Era of Great-Power Competition," *Modern War Institute*, West Point, July 8, 2020, https://mwi.usma.edu/mwi-podcast-security-force-assistance-era-great-power-competition/.

day is some form of cooperation to build stronger partners. Between 1999 and 2016, the United States trained some 2,390,080 trainees from virtually every country in the world.[5] In February 2018, the first U.S. Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB) was born, institutionalizing security assistance as an enduring, core competency of the U.S. Army.[6] And the United States is not the only player in the game. The United States encourages its allies to strengthen the militaries in their own backyards, and eyes the People's Liberation Army warily as it trains and equips soldiers around the world.[7]

The trouble is, though, that security assistance does not actually seem to work all that well.[8] Few of the militaries the United States tried to build demonstrated any clear improvement.[9] Despite the emergence of security assistance as a foundation of United States foreign policy and a ubiquitous feature of international relations, few scholars have examined how the United States goes about building partner militaries, the relative effectiveness of varying approaches, or the forces shaping U.S strategy.[10] This study takes on these questions.

---

[5] Theodore McLauchlin, Lee J.M. Seymour, Simon Pierre Boulange-Martel, "Tracking the Rise of US Foreign Military Training: A New Dataset," unpublished working paper. Available upon request.
[6] Staff Sgt. Sierra A. Melendez, "1st Security Force Assistance Brigade holds activation ceremony," *Army News Service*, February 9, 2018, https://www.army.mil/article/200403/1st_security_force_assistance_brigade_holds_activation_ceremony; Sean Kimmons, "SFABs look to grow force, expand missions around the world," *Army News Service*, May 7, 2020, https://www.army.mil/article/235370/sfabs_look_to_grow_force_expand_missions_around_the_world; Tim Ball, "Replaced? Security Force Assistance Brigades vs. Special Forces," *War on the Rocks*, February 23, 2017, https://warontherocks.com/2017/02/replaced-security-force-assistance-brigades-vs-special-forces/.
[7] See, for example, Paul McLeary, "Army's SFAB Trainers Go Head to Head with Chinese in Asia, Africa," *Breaking Defense*, October 13, 2020, https://breakingdefense.com/2020/10/armys-sfab-trainers-go-head-to-head-with-chinese-in-asia-africa/.
[8] This assessment focuses on the effectiveness of security assistance projects intended to improve the battlefield effectiveness of the recipient. Security assistance can serve a wide range of alternative objectives, such as signaling commitment to a third-party adversary, or collecting intelligence—the effectiveness of security assistance for advancing such objectives is outside the scope of this study.
[9] U.S. efforts to build the Hellenic Army in Greece and the Republic of Korea Army are widely recognized as rare examples of clear success stories for U.S. security assistance. The three largest-scale security assistance efforts in U.S. history—Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq—are broadly understood as abject failures. Most smaller scale security assistance efforts have escaped systematic evaluation.
[10] For several important exceptions, see Mara Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States: Challenges for the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); Stephen Biddle, Julia MacDonald, and

Security assistance is tricky for reasons familiar to students of military effectiveness. After a certain resource threshold is met, military effectiveness depends largely on military organizational practices around personnel, command structures, training, and resource allocation.[11] Local political and military leaders are not always interested in building militaries that can fight, and may instead implement policies optimized to coup-proofing, consolidating political power, or lining their own pockets.[12] The United States tends to provide the most assistance to nations that need it most desperately—nations whose leaders are often less motivated to build them in the first place.[13] These leaders may welcome huge infusions of cash, equipment, and assistance from the United States, while simultaneously ignoring U.S. advice and implementing policies that keep their militaries weak.

Fundamentally, then, the core challenge of security assistance is *influence*. The success or failure of large-scale U.S. security assistance projects depends less on the amount of assistance the U.S. pours into recipient nations than on the decisions of recipient leaders about what to do with U.S. assistance. The United States builds better militaries when it successfully influences recipient leaders—it fails when U.S. influence fails. U.S. influence fails a lot.

Ryan Baker, "Small Footprint, Small Payoff: the Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41, 1-2 (2018), pp. 89-142; and Hijab Shah and Melissa Dalton, "The Evolution of Tunisia's Military and the Role of Foreign Security Sector Assistance," *Carnegie Middle East Center*, April 29, 2020, https://carnegie-mec.org/2020/04/29/evolution-of-tunisia-s-military-and-role-of-foreign-security-sector-assistance-pub-81602.

[11] A mature military effectiveness literature has demonstrated that after a certain resource threshold is met, military effectiveness hinges on the decisions political and military leaders make. The scholarship that most directly informed the framing of this dissertation is Caitlin Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2015).

[12] Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army*, pp. 12-40.

[13] Several scholars highlight how the United States adversely selects its largest security assistance recipients. See, for examples Biddle et. al, "Small Footprint, Small Payoff," p. 9; Walter C. Ladwig III, "Influencing Clients in Counterinsurgency: U.S. Involvement in El Salvador's Civil War, 1979-92," *International Security* 41, 1 (Summer 2016), pp. 99-146; Walter C. Ladwig III, *The Forgotten Front: Patron-Client Relationships in Counterinsurgency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

This study offers a novel conceptualization of U.S. influence strategies in security assistance based on inductive analysis of U.S. security assistance projects since World War II. In conducting security assistance, the U.S. military has historically employed an influence strategy "ladder" comprised of four rungs: teaching, persuasion, bargaining, and direct command. Teaching refers to the transmission of information and expertise to recipient decision-makers. This didactic approach hinges on the assumption that recipients are actually interested in building stronger militaries, and only insufficient knowledge stands in their way. Persuasion, bargaining, and direct command each begin with recognition of interest misalignment between provider and recipient. Persuasion aims to reshape recipient preferences through a variety of mechanisms including inducements (no strings attached) designed to spur reciprocal concessions, conversation and argumentation to change minds, demonstration of "what right looks like" to inspire emulation, and the development of interpersonal relationships and rapport to motivate compliance on the basis of personal friendship. Bargaining, in contrast, refers to the use of conditionality—carrots and sticks tied to compliance or defiance—to overcome interest divergence. Finally, the U.S. may take direct command of partner militaries or military units, exercising influence directly by replacing partner decision-makers with Americans.

In early examples of U.S. security assistance—to China during World War II, to Greece in the 1950s, and to South Korea in the 1940s and 1950s—the United States taught and persuaded, but it also escalated to bargaining and direct command to push partners to purge incompetent officers, root out corruption, follow the chain of command, and implement other professional military practices necessary for military effectiveness. In contemporary security assistance, however, persuasion has emerged the overwhelming rule. A review of U.S. security assistance doctrine reveals a strong emphasis on relationship building and argumentation as the

preferred tools of influence in security assistance. Advisory efforts have been redefined as the *absence* of direct command, and bargaining is explicitly discouraged.[14] Practice matches doctrine: in the post-9/11 period, U.S. military personnel frustrated with Afghan and Iraqi leaders for the politicization and corruption rotting the militaries they were trying to build nonetheless remained generally committed to persuasive tactics and eschewed conditionality or command.

Building from the premise that the fundamental challenge of security assistance is influence, and observing the prevalence of persuasion in the contemporary period, this study asks and answers the following two questions:

1) *How do different U.S. influence strategies in security assistance affect recipient military effectiveness?*
2) *What explains U.S. strategy selection?*

1.2 Arguments

This study proposes and tests two theories. The first theory examines the *consequences* of U.S. security assistance influence strategies for recipient military effectiveness. The second theory moves a link back in the causal chain and examines the *causes* of United States strategy selection.

Causes of Influence Strategies → *Influence Strategies* → *Consequences of Influence Strategies*

[14] For examples of doctrine that emphasize persuasion in SFA, see Department of the Army, *FM 3-22: Army Support to Security Cooperation* (Washington, DC: US GPO, 2013); Department of the Army, *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: US GPO, 2006); and Department of the Army, FM 31-20-3: Foreign Internal Defense Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Special Forces (Washington, DC: GPO 1994), I-3. FM 31-20-3, for example, cautions advisors against "bribery or coercion, since results achieved from these actions are only temporary."

Influence Strategy Theory (Consequences)

I argue that teaching and persuasion on their own will not suffice—the United States is more likely to influence partners to build better militaries when it employs the full escalation ladder. Teaching is unlikely to succeed because motivation, not lack of expertise, is almost always the reason recipient leaders make decisions that undermine the development of their militaries. Persuasion, bargaining, and direct command are all logical improvements over teaching because they begin from the more realistic premise that recipient decision-makers may not be interested in—and may actively oppose—the development of a more effective military. The persuasion strategy on its own, however, is ill-suited to the security assistance context, because the United States tends to provide the most assistance to states whose leaders are least likely to be receptive to normative or personal entreaties by U.S. personnel.

Conversely, the ingredients necessary for successful bargaining—recipient dependence, iterated interactions, and the availability of calibrated carrots and sticks—*are* met in the context of security assistance. Direct command works because it removes the influence challenge altogether as American decision-makers replace partner decision-makers. United States influence strategies are by no means the only factor that affect security assistance outcomes. The United States might employ bargaining and direct command and still fail to build more effective partner militaries for a whole host of reasons. Though bargaining or direct command are *not sufficient* for effective security assistance in cases where interests between provider and recipient diverge (i.e. almost all cases of security assistance), I argue that they are *necessary.* I call this theory of influence strategy consequences "Influence Strategy Theory," or, IST.

Influence Strategy Theory				
Explanatory Variable: *U.S. Strategy of Influence*		**Intervening Variable:** *Recipient Receptivity to U.S. Advice re Military Organizational Practices*		**Dependent Variable:** *Recipient Military Effectiveness (RME)*
Teaching and persuasion	→	Defiance	→	Stagnant or deteriorating
Teaching, persuasion + bargaining and/or direct command	→	Compliance	→	Improved

The theory is intuitive. It combines insights from the military effectiveness literature and from the robust literature on the exercise of conditionality in alliance management. More puzzling, however, is the United States' pattern in contemporary security assistance of relying persistently and almost exclusively on teaching and persuasion.

The Cult of the Persuasive (Causes)

Why has persuasion emerged the predominant U.S. strategy of influence in security assistance despite its relative ineffectiveness? Why do advisors so often continue to rely exclusively on teaching and persuasion, even when partners repeatedly ignore their advice and implement policies that undermine the militaries they are deployed to build? An emerging academic consensus, holds that the United States' struggle to secure compliance from security assistance recipients stems from a lack of bargaining power. In this formulation the United States relies on teaching and persuasion when it lacks the visibility into partner (mis)behavior or the leverage necessary to incentivize compliance. The theory implicitly assumes that the United States more or less behaves as a rational unitary actor in security assistance and wields its

leverage when it has leverage to wield. I argue that while the rational actor model provides sufficient explanation for U.S. strategy selection in Korea, it cannot explain U.S. strategy selection in subsequent cases. The United States almost always has sufficient visibility to detect recipient policies that undermine the security assistance mission, *and* sufficient leverage to incentivize recipients to take steps to improve their militaries. The rational actor model cannot explain the U.S. approach to the influence problem in advising.

This study presents and tests an alternative theory of U.S. strategy selection that I call "The Cult of the Persuasive."[15] It begins by cracking open the black box of the state to focus on the institution with near-complete autonomy in the design and implementation of security assistance—the U.S. military.[16] Building from organizational theory (and its civil-military relations and military innovation strands), I argue that in conducting security assistance since Vietnam, the United States military has not diligently pursued the goal set by its civilian principal in Washington. Instead of aiming to build a better partner military, the U.S. military instead prioritizes its parochial interests, optimizing its approach to its *institutional* goals of keeping the bureaucratic machinery of security assistance running smoothly and minimizing disruption from its local partner and civilian principal.

Inside the military, in a form of "ideational Darwinism," ideas that threaten the military's institutional objectives are selected out, while ideas that advance institutional interests win the competition for survival and harden into ideology. Reliance on teaching and persuasion serves the military's interests in keeping its standard operating procedures running smoothly and

---

[15] An allusion to the cult of the offensive credited with World War I. See Stephen van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security* 9, 1 (Summer1984), pp. 58-107.
[16] Throughout this study I refer to the "U.S. military," even though the U.S. Army conducted the majority of the SFA examined in this study. I refer to the U.S. military rather than the U.S. Army because the other services participate in SFA and security cooperation as well and operate according to the same logic animating the U.S. Army. The cult of the persuasive evolved first within but did not remain localized to the U.S. Army.

minimizing disruption from external sources. Over time, ideas that the U.S. military should escalate to bargaining or direct command were stamped out, while ideas that the U.S. military should rely exclusively on teaching and persuasion became ideology. A *cult of the persuasive* took hold of the United States military.

The cult of the persuasive (like the cult of the offensive) consists of both normative and causal beliefs about the superiority of teaching and persuasion over bargaining and direct command in security assistance. The normative belief holds that teaching and persuasion are the *appropriate* strategies of influence to shape the behavior of allies, partners, and "friends." This belief, which is closely associated with anti-colonialism and sovereignty norms, carries a corresponding distaste for "bribery," "transactionalism," "imperialism," "coercion," and "bullying." The causal belief is that persuasion is a more *effective* strategy of influence than bargaining or direct command. The U.S. military has embraced the myth that partners are more likely to follow U.S. guidance and build more effective militaries if the United States relies exclusively on teaching and persuasion, than if the U.S. were to condition carrots and sticks on compliance and defiance or take direct command of partner militaries or units. Servicemembers systematically and dramatically underestimate U.S. bargaining power and overestimate the risk that bargaining will backfire.

Once deployed, advisors' professional incentives to conform and genuine internalization of the ideology combine to drown out even the most overwhelming evidence that they should change course. When U.S. officers occasionally exercise leverage and use carrots and sticks to shape partner behavior, it has little to do with any increase in U.S. visibility or leverage at the national level, and much to do with idiosyncratic individuals willing to buck the institutional norm.

1.3 Evidence

This study tests these arguments through three controlled comparisons of U.S. security assistance in war: to the Republic of Korea Army (1948 – 1953) to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (1954 – 1973), and to the Iraqi Army (2003 – 2011). The research design is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, but in general the methodology relies on case studies because they enable the most precise measurement of the key variables, as well high resolution into the causal processes that shaped U.S. and partner decision-making. For the historical cases, I draw on primary source archival documents, as well as oral histories given by former U.S. advisors embedded in partner military units. For the Iraq case, I combine analysis of recently declassified documents and oral histories with original interviews with subjects ranging from the commanding generals of Multi-National Force-Iraq to Iraqi general officers, interviewed over the course of fieldwork in Iraq, Jordan, and Washington, DC.

1.4 Findings

Evidence from the cases supports both Influence Strategy Theory (IST) and the Cult of the Persuasive. In Korea, the United States military employed the full escalation ladder to influence Korean political and military leaders to implement policies to improve the Republic of Korea (ROK) Army. In keeping with the central predictions of IST, ROK leaders largely complied with U.S. guidance, and the ROK Army improved significantly between June 1950 and The Korean Armistice Agreement of July 1953. As expected, the U.S. military in Korea operated largely according to the expectations of a basic rational actor model. In keeping with direction from Washington, the U.S. military embraced the objective of building a better Republic of Korea Army. When teaching and persuasion failed to move the ROK to take steps necessary for

the development of the ROK Army, the U.S. military escalated to bargaining and direct command as needed to accomplish the mission.

In Vietnam, however, the United States military relied exclusively on teaching and persuasion to move Government of Vietnam (GVN) political and military leaders to take steps necessary to strengthen the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). As predicted by Influence Strategy Theory (IST), GVN leaders largely ignored U.S. military advice, and continued to implement policies that kept the ARVN weak. Because the U.S. military continued to rely on teaching and persuasion despite the ineffectiveness of the approach, I expect to find that the United States military was *not* operating in Vietnam as a loyal agent of its Washington principal, and instead designed its approach to the advisory effort to advance its own institutional interests. Indeed, and in keeping with the expectations of the Cult of the Persuasive, the U.S. military in Vietnam set out not to build a better ARVN, but to minimize disruption from internal and external sources. U.S. military leadership found teaching and persuasion effective for advancing its institutional objectives, and indoctrinated and incentivized the advisors under their command to conform to the institutionally advantageous approach. By the end of Vietnam, an ideology of persuasion—a cult of the persuasive—had taken hold of the U.S. military.

Fast forward 30 years. The U.S. military invaded Iraq, dismantled the institutions of the Iraqi state, and set out to build a new Iraqi Army from scratch. Over the course of the advisory period, the U.S. military in Iraq relied almost exclusively on teaching and persuasion to influence Iraqi political and military leaders to implement policies necessary for the development of the Iraqi Army. In keeping with IST, Iraqi leaders largely ignored U.S. advice, and continued to implement policies that kept their army weak. Also as expected, the cult of the persuasive persisted from Vietnam through to the present day. The U.S. military in Iraq continued to

embrace an ideology of influence in security assistance that advanced its institutional interests, even though teaching and persuasion were clearly failing to move Iraqi leaders to take actions the U.S. military recognized as necessary for the development of the Iraqi Army.

Today, the United States does not lack bargaining power, the U.S. *military* eschews bargaining. The U.S. military relies on teaching and persuasion because it continues to embrace an ideology—the cult of the persuasive—that serves its parochial institutional interests, even as it undermines the national goal of building better militaries in partner states.

1.5 The Plan of the Study

This rest of this study proceeds in five additional chapters. Chapter 2 elaborates on the two theories just presented, detailing the challenge of influence in security assistance and discussing how to conceptualize and measure influence strategies, their causes, and their consequences. Chapter 2 also discusses existing scholarship in more depth and fully explains the study's methodology. The next three chapters implement the methodology. Chapter 3 focuses on the U.S. effort to build the Republic of Korea Army from 1948 to 1953. Chapter 4 focuses on U.S. efforts to build the Army of the Republic of Vietnam from 1954 to 1973. Chapter 5 examines U.S. efforts to build the Iraqi Army from 2003 to 2011.

Each of these three empirical chapters is divided into five sections. The first section of each chapter provides relevant background information. The second section codes U.S. strategies of influence in the advisory effort. The third section tests Influence Strategy Theory, examining how influence strategies shape recipient receptivity to U.S. advice, and how receptivity in turn shapes recipient battlefield effectiveness. The fourth section turns to the question of strategy selection, testing the relative power of the Cult of the Persuasive against a rational actor model to

explain U.S. strategy selection. The fifth section of each chapter examines alternative explanations in more detail.

Chapter 6 concludes the study. It summarizes the central findings, examines external validity, discusses remaining questions and areas for future research, and explores the implications of the study for theory and practice.

Chapter 2: Theory

Why does the United States sometimes succeed but more often fail to build stronger militaries in partner states? This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I define key terms and delineate the scope of inquiry. Second, I review existing explanations of security assistance success and failure and argue that while the literature has rightly identified U.S. influence over recipient decisions as the central challenge of security assistance, the prevailing explanation of U.S. influence failure in security assistance—which treats the United States as a rational unitary actor and focuses on U.S. monitoring capacity and bargaining power—does not adequately explain the contemporary U.S. approach. Third, I present a novel conceptualization of U.S. influence strategies in security assistance as an influence escalation "ladder" with four rungs: teaching, persuasion, bargaining, and direct command. Fourth, I present "Influence Strategy Theory," which argues that the U.S. military is more likely to influence recipients to take costly steps to improve their militaries when it employs all four rungs of the ladder. Conversely, when the U.S. military relies exclusively on teaching and persuasion, recipients are more likely to ignore U.S. advice and continue to implement policies that keep their militaries weak.

Fifth, I describe a monotonic pattern of temporal variation in U.S. strategy selection over time—the United States employed the more coercive approaches (bargaining and direct command) in early cases of U.S. security assistance but has largely eschewed coercion since Vietnam. The United States' abandonment of coercion despite its success in Korea, and its persistent reliance on persuasion despite its failures in Vietnam and Iraq present a puzzle from the perspective of strategy selection. Sixth, I review existing explanations of U.S. strategy selection, and argue that the question would be more productively interrogated through the lens of organizational theory, and its civil-military relations and military innovation branches.

Seventh, I offer a theory of strategy selection that I call "The Cult of the Persuasive." I argue that the United States' shift from the full ladder to an exclusive reliance on teaching and persuasion occurred in Vietnam when the United States Army institutionalized an ideology optimized to serving its own institutional interests, rather than the goal of building stronger militaries in partner states. Eighth and finally, I present the research design I will use to test these theories in the subsequent chapters.

2.1 Defining Security Assistance and Establishing the Scope of Inquiry

There is confusion in the lexicon around Security Force Assistance (SFA). SFA, security assistance, security cooperation (SC), building partner capacity (BPC), foreign internal defense (FID), defense institution building (DIB), train-and-equip, advise-and-assist, and by-with-and-through all refer to efforts by one nation to improve the capacity of another nation's security sector. Within the United States government, these terms are attached to different legal authorities, different funding sources, and different strictures with respect to the agencies—civilian or military—responsible for implementation. The terms refer to an eclectic set of activities, ranging from educational programs like the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET), to personnel exchanges, to unit-level training, to unit-level advising, to wholesale efforts to build militaries from scratch. The byzantine nature of security assistance and security cooperation terminology, authorities, agencies, and activities has caused confusion and sparked criticism among the growing community of policymakers and scholars trying to better track it, understand it, and improve it.[17]

---

[17] For examples, Melissa Dalton, "Reforming Security Cooperation," *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, July 15, 2016, https://www.csis.org/analysis/reforming-security-cooperation; Hijab Shah, Melissa Dalton, and Erol Yayboke, "Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation in Action for Security Sector Assistance," *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, June 27, 2019,

This study uses interchangeably the terms security assistance and Security Force Assistance (SFA), defined by U.S. Army Field Manual 3-07.1 as "the unified action to generate, employ, and sustain local, host-nation, or regional security forces in support of a legitimate authority."[18] SFA technically refers to efforts to build the entire security sector of a partner—including their police, National Guard, and gendarme. This study focuses, however, exclusively on efforts by the United States to build the partner's *military* (the largest subset of SFA activities), and excludes analysis of efforts to build non-military security forces.[19] SFA, in turn, is the largest subset of SC, which refers to "all Department of Defense interactions with foreign defense establishments to build defense relationships that promote U.S. security interests."[20]

SFA projects vary broadly in scale. Some SFA efforts are small-scale, consisting only of a small deployment of advisors for brief periods. Other SFA efforts focus principally on arms sales and involve little by way of training or institutional design. This study does not examine small-scale or sales-predominant SFA efforts, and focuses instead on cases in which the United States has taken primary custody for the development of another nation's military from near scratch, or has embarked on an overhaul of an existing military with the intent to significantly improve the capacity of the military. Examples of cases that fit within this scope condition include United States efforts to develop the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the 1930s, the German and Japanese militaries in the aftermath of World War II, the South Korean military in the 1940s and 1950s, the South Vietnamese military over the course of the Vietnam War, and the Afghan and Iraqi militaries over the last two decades.

---

https://www.csis.org/analysis/assessment-monitoring-and- evaluation-action-security-sector-assistance; Melissa Dalton, Hijab Shah, Shannon Green, Rebecca Hughes, "Oversight and Accountability in U.S.

[18] Department of the Army, *FM 3-07.1: Security Force Assistance* (Washington, DC: US GPO, 2009), v.

[19] The cases of SFA examined in this study focus on U.S. efforts to build partner armies. The logic of the study extends to U.S. efforts to build partner navies and air forces as well.

[20] Department of the Army, *FM 3-07.1: Security Force Assistance* (Washington, DC: US GPO, 2009), 1-3.

This study also focuses as a first step exclusively on SFA projects conducted by the United States. Though there is interesting work to be done on colonial European SFA, contemporary efforts by France in Francophone Africa, and on contemporary Chinese and Russian SFA, this study leaves these aside for future study to facilitate focused attention on the experience of the United States since the 1930s. As the largest provider of SFA in the world, and as the exemplar that many other states seek to imitate in their own SFA efforts (for better or for worse), the United States is worthy of extended treatment.

2.2. Effectiveness of Security Assistance: Insights and Limitations of Existing Scholarship

Why do some militaries that receive assistance from the United States improve, while others stagnate or even deteriorate? As Mara Karlin notes in the opening pages of *Building Militaries in Fragile States*, the conventional wisdom within government around SFA can be been summed up in one word: *more*. More money, more training, more equipment, and more time are considered the keys to more military competence in recipient nations.[21] The disappointing results in Iraq and Afghanistan despite enormous expenditure over two decades have shaken faith in this conviction.

Indeed, faith in "more" belies a mature academic literature that has demonstrated that military effectiveness depends not only on what states *have*—or what they are given—but on what states *do* with what they have. The combatant with greater resources and more advanced equipment does not always win the fight. Falls of Goliaths to Davids have long fascinated scholars and practitioners alike, giving rise to a large literature devoted to explaining why the

---

[21] Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States*, p. 2.

weak win wars—and why the strong lose (or, more precisely, why resources may not translate to strength).[22]

One critical theme unites this voluminous and varied military effectiveness literature—human decision-making. Political and military leaders up and down the chain of command may have access to resources but misallocate them, they may have large populations but implement personnel practices that fail to bring the best and brightest to key commands, they may have advanced equipment but neglect to invest in sustainment. They may fail to develop doctrine suitable to the task at hand. Though the list of decisions is long and varied, the central conclusion is clear. The patterns of decisions of civilian and military leaders around personnel, investment, training, command structures, and information management— "military organizational practices"[23]—determine military effectiveness.

And leaders may not choose wisely. Poor decisions could be, and in some cases certainly are, a matter of expertise. Civilian and military leaders may be deeply committed to building a more competent military, and yet lack the expertise to make the optimal decisions. They may invest in the wrong equipment. Doctrine may evolve around mistaken assumptions. Exercises

---

[22] Prominent examples include Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006); Caitlin Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army*; Risa Brooks and Elizabeth Stanley, *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness* (California: Stanford University Press, 2007); Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, *Democracies at War* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002); Jasen J. Castillo, *Endurance and War: The National Sources of Military Cohesion* (California: Stanford University Press, 2014); Stephen Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (New York: Cornell Studies in Security Affairs, 1996); Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999); Kenneth Pollack, *Armies of Sand: The Past, Present, and Future of Arab Military Effectiveness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Risa
Brooks, "An Autocracy at War: Explaining Egypt's Military Effectiveness, 1967 and 1973," *Security Studies*, 15, 3 (Summer 2006), pp. 396-430. For additional exploration of the relationship between civil-military relations and military effectiveness, see canonical texts Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil- Military Relations* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1957), and Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (Glencoe III: Free Press, 1960).
[23] Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army*, p. 13.

may stress the wrong core competencies. After all, war is complex and unpredictable, and preparing for it commensurately challenging.[24] In short, even political and military decision-makers deeply motivated to build a more capable military may make the wrong decisions. In such cases, the implication for security assistance is simple—transmission of expertise to recipient leaders should translate to improved recipient political- military decision-making and enhanced military effectiveness.

However, civilian and military leaders are *not,* in fact, always motivated to build stronger militaries. They may make suboptimal decisions around personnel, training, command structures, information management, and doctrine, not in error, but in pursuit of parallel or even directly competing objectives. Academic scholarship has identified a range of motivations behind political-military decision-making that compromise military effectiveness. Scholarship focusing at the level of the organization explains adherence to and deviation from optimal political military-decision-making as a function of organizational interests, the biases that justify them, and the standard operating procedures produced to optimize them.[25] Other scholars focus on cultural explanations for suboptimal political-military decision- making, arguing for instance that commanders operating within cultures that privilege hierarchy over initiative will resist the imperative of devolving decision-making authority to the degree necessary for battlefield

---

[24] Perhaps the most influential analysis of the role of chance in warfare can be attributed to Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976).

[25] Scholarship exploring these questions includes Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine* (Ithaca: Cornell Studies in Security Affairs, 1984); Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca: Cornell Studies in Security Affairs, 1989); Chester I Bernard, *The Functions of the Executive*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968); James March and Herbert Simon, *Organizations* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958); James D. Thompson, *Organizations in Action* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967); Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision* (Boston: Little, 1971); Herbert Simon, "Rationality and Administrative Decision-Making," *Models of Man, Social and Rational* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1957).

effectiveness, or for nimble training regimens.[26] Scholarship has also identified domestic politics as a contributing factor to suboptimal political-military decision-making, as civilian leaders make decisions they think will help them win elections, even if those decisions undermine the military.[27]

Civil-military relations variables feature prominently in recent military effectiveness scholarship. Civilian leaders may fear a coup more than they fear losing a war against an external adversary, and their decisions around training and personnel may consequently optimize to coup-proofing the military, rather than improving its effectiveness on the battlefield.[28] Beyond coup concerns, civilian leaders may also fear loss of political support, and transform the military into a tool designed to advance their political interests rather than a professional fighting force focused on external or internal foes.[29] In addition to civilian leadership, military commanders are positioned to help or hurt the development of their militaries. And, like civilian leaders, military commanders are also motivated by a range of objectives sometimes compatible and sometimes incompatible with the development of a more effective military. Military commanders may be motivated by professional or political ambition, rent-seeking, personal security, autonomy, or opposition to what they perceive to be an illegitimate government, to name several of many complex and interrelated motivating forces. Moral hazard may further exacerbate the interest

[26] Pollack, *Armies of Sand*. For additional analysis of culture as a determinative factor, see also Elizabeth Kier, "Culture and Military Doctrine: France between the Wars," *International Security* 19, 4 (Spring 1995), pp. 65-93.
[27] A large body of scholarship examines the ways in which domestic politics shape political-military decision-making, ranging from domestic politics as a factor in decisions to go to war, to a factor in defense spending. On the former, see, for example Jack S. Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 653-673. On the latter, see, for example, Rebecca U. Thorpe, *The American Warfare State: The Domestic Politics of Military Spending* (Ithaca: University of Chicago Press, 2014).
[28] Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army*.
[29] Brooks, "An Autocracy at War."

divergence problem, as local partners may be tempted to rely on the United States to provide security and neglect their own security forces.

In short, political and military leaders within the nations that receive SFA from the United States may not be deeply, exclusively, or in some cases even remotely interested in building more competent militaries. Indeed, they may actively oppose the objective. Consequently, they may welcome the largess of SFA, and yet continue to make decisions vis-à-vis personnel or training that compromise the development of military capacity in pursuit of parallel or competing objectives. This interest misalignment between the U.S. provider of SFA and its recipients has the potential to render even the largest infusions of U.S. cash, equipment, training, and advice, moot—or counterproductive.

Fundamentally, then, the challenge of SFA is the challenge of *influence*. SFA succeeds when the United States successfully influences the decisions of recipient leaders, and SFA fails when U.S. influence fails. In some exceptional cases, interests between provider and recipient may be perfectly, or close to perfectly aligned. In such cases, the United States would need only provide the information and resources necessary to *teach* recipients to make decisions they are already inclined to make.

Interests between provider and recipient, however, are rarely perfectly—or even closely— aligned. Management of even the closest alliance relationships "involves pursuing both common interests and competitive interests and thus is essentially a process of bargaining, either tacit or implicit."[30] And SFA recipients are not typically among the U.S.' closest allies. On the contrary, the level of United States SFA investment in a nation correlates much more closely

---

[30] Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell Studies in Security Affairs, 1997), pp. 165-200. Snyder's "Alliance Management" chapter remains the most extended treatment of alliance management in what remains a thinly theorized area of international relations.

with the level of security risk emanating from the country than from alliance closeness. Not by coincidence—and in classic adverse selection[31]—the United States tends to provide the most significant SFA to countries in the most desperate need of it. Countries in desperate need of SFA are often run by civilian and military leaders motivated by complex and competing objectives that might incline them against the development of more professional and effective militaries.[32]

The small group of scholars who have addressed the question of SFA effectiveness directly recognize the central challenge of interest divergence between provider and recipient. Leveraging the Principal-Agent (PA) model, Stephen Biddle, Julia MacDonald, and Ryan Baker, and Eli Berman and David Lake all attribute the United States' difficulties developing competent partner militaries to interest divergence between provider and recipient, monitoring challenges, and to a lack of leverage sufficient to overcome interest divergence.[33] According to the logic of the PA model as employed by these scholars, U.S. SFA should fail when interests are misaligned and the U.S. lacks visibility into recipient decision-making and/or lacks the leverage (or bargaining power) necessary to bring the recipient's decisions into compliance. Conversely, SFA should succeed in the rare cases of interest alignment, or when the United States has both the visibility and the leverage necessary to influence recipient decisions.

This scholarship makes an important contribution by emphasizing interest divergence as the critical challenge of SFA, and in emphasizing conditionality (or bargaining) as an important

[31] The term adverse selection was first developed in the context of the insurance business, to refer to the tendency of those in dangerous jobs or high-risk lifestyles to purchase products like life insurance. Several scholars have used the term to capture the tendency of the U.S. to provide SFA to the countries most likely to have competing motivations. See, for examples Biddle et. al, "Small Footprint, Small Payoff"; Stephen Biddle, "Building Security Forces & Stabilizing Nations: The Problem of Agency," *Daedalus* 146, 4 (2017), pp. 126-138; Walter C. Ladwig III, "Influencing Clients in Counterinsurgency: U.S. Involvement in El Salvador's Civil War, 1979-92," *International Security* 41, 1 (Summer 2016), pp. 99-146.
[32] Stephen Biddle, Julia MacDonald, and Ryan Baker, "Small Footprint, Small Payoff: the Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41 1-2 (2017), p. 42.
[33] Ibid, pp. 7-13; Eli Berman and David Lake, *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Violence through Local Agents* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019).

ingredient for successful SFA. The PA framework as applied by these scholars to SFA, however, is problematic in several respects. First, the framework recognizes the PA problem between the provider principal and the recipient agent, but it makes the simplifying assumption that both the provider and the recipient can be usefully conceptualized as rational, unitary actors. All theories necessarily simplify reality—the question is whether the simplifications are useful or whether they obscure the determinative dynamics. In the case of U.S. SFA, I will show that the United States cannot be usefully conceptualized as a rational unitary actor in SFA. Rather, a second PA problem—between the U.S. civilian principal in Washington, and its military agent in the field—fundamentally shapes the conduct and consequences of U.S. SFA.

Second, existing explanations of U.S. influence failure in SFA focus largely on U.S. bargaining (conditionality) as the United States' preferred strategy of influence, and do not acknowledge the much wider toolkit of strategies that the United States military has historically employed to shape recipient decision-making besides bargaining. Indeed, even while noting the emphasis in U.S. SFA doctrine on relationship-building and discouragement of conditionality, Biddle et. al still generally assume that bargaining is the preferred—indeed the only—strategy of influence the United States employs in SFA. This assumption neglects a voluminous international relations literature dedicated writ large to interrogating the causes and consequences of the many different strategies of influence states use to shape the behaviors of adversaries, allies, and partners. These scholars emphasize the bargaining approach from the rationalist school of international relations theory, and do not consider that the United States might exercise the kinds of power over recipient decision-makers emphasized in constructivist and liberal schools of thought, such as productive power or communicative action.[34] In fact, as

[34] Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, "Power in International Politics," *International Organization*, 59, 1 (Winter 2005), pp. 39-75; Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the*

this study will demonstrate, the United States relies *primarily* on other tools of influence besides conditionality in the conduct of SFA. Otherwise put, the PA model assumes that the United States *uses its leverage when it has it* and does not permit the possibility that the United States may choose *not* to exercise leverage in favor of an alternative approach.

Third, the argument that the United States lacks bargaining power in SFA hinges on the assertion that extreme recipient dependence on the United States is eclipsed by the United States' struggle to make its threats and promises credible. This assertion is dubious, however, because SFA partnerships are not only characterized by the high client dependence so central to a patron's bargaining power,[35] they are as conducive a context for the establishment of *credibility* as is likely to be found in international relations. SFA relationships are not binary, all-or-nothing alliance commitments in which the only stick is the nuclear option of complete abandonment and the only carrot unwavering support and the promise of suicidal collective defense. In SFA relationships, the United States certainly has the nuclear option (install a new leader or pull out entirely) at its fingertips, but it can also turn the dial down up or down and target specific units, individuals, or contingencies.[36] Moreover, SFA relationships are typically long-term, involving iterated interactions between provider and recipient. An extended shadow of the future permits the United States to establish the credibility of its threats and promises through consistent follow

---

Rationalization of Society, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985); Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Boston: Beacon, 1985); Thomas Risse, "'Let's Argue!': Communicative Action in World Politics," *International Organization* 54, 1 (Winter 2000), pp. 1- 39.

[35] Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell Studies in Security Affairs, 1997), pp. 165-200. Snyder's "Alliance Management" chapter remains the most extended treatment of alliance management in what is still an surprisingly thinly theorized area of international relations. Snyder emphasizes dependence as one of the primary determinants of bargaining power.

[36] This is a crucial point, as many scholars who argue that patrons lack bargaining power over their highly dependent clients focus on the difficulty of making "extreme" threats such as total abandonment credible given how much patrons often invest. The option to calibrate less extreme carrots and sticks should commensurately reduce the credibility challenge.

through[37]—if it chooses to do so. Otherwise put, proponents of the bargaining power approach as an explanation of SFA failure miscode monitoring capacity and bargaining power, its two key variables. When properly coded, the bargaining power approach actually predicts success where the empirics show failure.

Finally, the PA approach does not explain why the United States so often neglects to exercise its leverage to incentivize compliance, relying instead on rapport-based persuasion (see Section 2.6).

2.3 Strategies of Influence in Security Assistance

This section presents a novel conceptualization of this study's central variable—influence strategies in security assistance—based on inductive analysis of U.S. efforts to strengthen militaries in partner states since World War II. In every major case of security assistance, U.S. advisors have tried to influence the political and military leaders of recipient nations to take steps to improve their militaries. U.S. commanding generals try to influence partner heads of state, ministers of defense, and senior general officers to implement meritocratic personnel policies, root out corruption, delegate authority and abide by the chain of command, and permit and encourage rigorous and realistic training regimens. At the operational and tactical levels, teams of American advisors attached to partner military units try to influence their counterpart division, brigade, and battalion commanders to recommend the relief of incompetent or corrupt officers, to enforce discipline within their units, to take initiative, and to train hard and often. From the commanding generals down to the embedded advisers, U.S. military personnel have employed

[37] Kenneth Oye explains how the shadow of the future incentivizes rational actors to make concessions in the present in order to secure benefits or to avoid sanction in the future. See Kenneth Oye, "Explaining Cooperation under Anarchy," *World Politics*, 38, 1 (October 1985), pp. 1-24.

four strategies of influence: *teaching, persuasion, bargaining,* and *direct command.*

Teaching

A *teaching* strategy of influence in SFA aims to influence recipient decisions through information provision. The theory of influence behind a teaching strategy rests on the presumption of interest alignment between provider and recipient. Under conditions of interest alignment, the only barrier to improved recipient decision-making is information, rather than competing motivations. As noted above, civilian and military leaders may be motivated to build stronger militaries but may lack the expertise to develop and implement the military organizational practices necessary to improve military effectiveness.

Teaching in security assistance aims to influence recipient decision-making by providing recipient leaders with the information they need to improve the effectiveness of their militaries. Information could include training in how to use new equipment, advice in the development of curriculum for officer training, provision of logistics manuals (and translation into the language of the recipient nation), instruction in the U.S. Military Decision Making Process (MDMP), and any other assistance designed to provide recipient decision-makers with information that could help them improve the effectiveness of their militaries. Security assistance providers often build schools for partner personnel with curriculum intended to convey information necessary for effective military decision-making.

A teaching strategy of influence in SFA can only logically succeed in the context of strong interest alignment. When recipient political and military leaders are motivated to build more effective militaries, and lack only the expertise to do so, the provider of SFA need only

facilitate the improved recipient decision-making, and through improved decision-making improved military effectiveness, through the transmission of information and expertise.

<u>Persuasion</u>

In cases of interest misalignment between SFA provider and recipient (i.e. most cases of SFA), influence is much more challenging. On the broadest level, scholarship addressing the nature and exercise of influence in international relations is bifurcated in two—scholarship that focuses on strategies to overcome interest misalignment by raising the costs of defiance and the benefits of compliance, and scholarship focusing on the realignment of interests through strategies of persuasion.

The second rung on the influence escalation ladder centers on preference formation (or persuasion). Whereas teaching assumes interest alignment, and bargaining aims to overcome preference divergence by tying recipient decisions to carrots and sticks, the *persuasion* approach to power and influence aims to reduce divergence of interests by influencing preference formation. In a sense, persuasion may be considered chronologically prior to bargaining. Whereas bargaining aims to get an actor to do something that it does not want to do, a persuasive strategy aims to change what an actor wants.

Persuasion is an umbrella strategy that covers a variety of approaches to shaping an actor's preferences. This study defines persuasion broadly as the effort by one actor to shape the preferences of another. This definition is most closely akin to Joseph Nye's definition of "soft power," defined as the ability of one actor to cause another to "want what it wants."[38] In the context of United States SFA, strategies of persuasion have generally fallen into four categories.

[38] Joseph Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), p. 84.

First, the United States may provide *inducements*, defined as carrots with no conditions attached, intended as "persuasive measures to cajole the recipient into changing its behavior."[39] The strategy of inducement relies on norms of reciprocity as the mechanism of persuasion. As defined by Alvin Gouldner, norms of reciprocity are beliefs that "people should help those who have helped them, and people should not injure those who have helped them."[40] The key distinction between inducement as a strategy of persuasion and carrots as a strategy of bargaining is conditionality—inducement belongs in the persuasion category because it does not rely on explicit or heavily implied conditionality. Rather, it relies on norms of reciprocity as its mechanism of persuasion. The concept is similar to Keohane's conceptualization of "diffuse reciprocity."[41] Inducements are frequently used as a tool of influence in international relations in contexts ranging from nonproliferation, to international trade, to counterinsurgency. In the example most closely related to SFA, Ladwig III documents the U.S.' frequent use of inducements to influence the decisions of the El Salvadorian government during the 1979-1992 civil war against the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) insurgents.[42]

For an illustration of inducement as a tactic of persuasion in the context of SFA, consider the following scenario. A recipient brigade commander is concerned principally with personal enrichment rather than building the competence of his brigade. The brigade commander uses his command to steer military contracts to family members and friends, and neglects the training of the brigade. An American in-theater commander tasked with improving the competence of the

[39] Celia L. Reynolds and Wilfred T. Wan, "Empirical Trends in Sanctions and Positive Inducements in Nonproliferation," in Etel Solingen, ed., *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 58.
[40] Cicero, quoted in Alvin Gouldner, "The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement," *American Sociological Review*, 25, 2 (April 1960), pp. 161-178.
[41] Robert Keohane, "Reciprocity in International Relations," *International Organization*, 40, 1 (Winter 1986), pp. 4-5, 19-24.
[42] Ladwig III, "Influencing Clients in Counterinsurgency," pp. 109–144.

partner brigade is aware of the malfeasance and its deleterious impact on the development of the recipient brigade, and decides to use an inducement strategy to persuade the recipient decision-maker to implement a more rigorous and realistic training regimen. This U.S. commander would first communicate her request for a more robust training program to the partner commander. She would then work her chain of command to steer additional ammunition and desired equipment to the partner brigade commander, in the hopes that the gesture would stir the brigade commander's instinct to reciprocate. If the brigade commander is moved by a desire to reciprocate, he would decide to make a greater effort with respect to the training of the brigade out of a sense of obligation to reciprocate the gesture of the U.S. commander.

Second, U.S. civilian and military personnel conducting SFA may use *communicative action* to persuade civilian and military leadership in recipient nations to do what is being asked of them. Communicative action, conceptualized by German sociologist Jurgen Habermas[43] and adapted to international relations by Thomas Risse,[44] refers to a process of deliberation and argumentation whereby participating parties seek to arrive at consensus views. Communicative action may include efforts to reach consensus regarding what is the "right" course of action from a normative perspective, or from an instrumental perspective. The mechanism of persuasion in communicative action is argumentation, in which the arguers outline and debate the values and logic behind their proposed courses of action. Communicative action can only work if the participants' normative and efficacy positions are not fixed, but open to modification through exposure to new ideas and arguments. Communicative action is a ubiquitous tool of influence in international relations, and is indeed the fundamental instrument of international negotiations.

---

[43] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1.*
[44] Risse, "Let's Argue!," pp. 1-39.

Risse, for instance, emphasizes the argumentative process that culminated in President Mikhail Gorbachev's agreement to German unification.[45]

Consider the same scenario outlined above, wherein a recipient brigade commander is motivated by opportunities for personal enrichment, and is busy siphoning contracts to families and friends while neglecting the training of his brigade. A U.S. commander implementing a communicative action tactic of persuasion might meet repeatedly with the brigade commander and attempt to convince him that his role is to put his country before himself (a normative appeal), and that focusing on the development of the brigade would likely get him noticed by the division commander to whom he reports, which could help him to secure a promotion at a later date (an instrumental appeal). If the brigade commander is moved by the normative appeal, he would reconceptualize his purpose within his organization and his country and proceed accordingly with the development and implementation of a rigorous and realistic training regimen for his brigade. If the brigade commander is moved by the instrumental appeal, he may calculate that his own interests are better served by improving the competence of his brigade than they would be if he continued to neglect his duties.

A third tactic of persuasion is *demonstration* (or, socialization), wherein a U.S. provider may aim to persuade a recipient to make better decisions with respect to the development of the military by exposing the recipient to "what right looks like."[46] The demonstration tactic's presumed mechanism of persuasion is imitation—recipient military and political leaders observe the behaviors of the U.S. military, and seek to imitate those behaviors. Recipient political and

---

[45] Ibid., p. 23.

[46] The phrase is a common refrain among military personnel involved in security force assistance. See, for example, Col. Philip Battaglia and Lt. Col. Curtis Taylor, "Security Force Assistance Operations: Defining the Advise and Assist Brigade," *United States Army*, July 22, 2010, https://www.army.mil/article/42643/security_force_assistance_operations_defining_the_advise_and_assist_brigade.

military leaders may seek to imitate U.S. military behaviors for normative reasons or instrumental ones. The normative mechanism behind emulation finds theoretical grounding in Finnemore and Sikkink's theory of norm diffusion, in which "norms held by states widely viewed as successful and desirable models are more likely to become prominent and diffuse."[47] The instrumental mechanism behind emulation has roots in Kenneth Waltz's conceptualization of competitive imitation, whereby powers look to the strongest powers in the international system, and imitate them in hopes that so doing will increase their own power.[48]

Returning to the scenario of the rent-seeking brigade commander, a U.S. commander implementing a demonstration strategy of persuasion might arrange for a U.S. brigade to conduct training exercises in the partner brigade commander's area of operation. The training exercises would be intended to showcase the American military skill and professionalism upon which American military power rests. The watchful partner brigade commander may decide, despite his primary interest in rent-seeking, that he should strive to develop a brigade that mirrors the behaviors of the American brigade.

Fourth and finally, the United States places heavy emphasis on the development of interpersonal *relationships* between American and partner personnel as a critical tactic of persuasion. Provider-recipient relationships, which should be characterized by trust and rapport, could advance persuasion through two routes. First, close relationships between provider and recipient personnel could lead recipient leaders to bring their decisions into compliance with U.S. requests in the simple spirit of friendship. Second, close relationships could serve as an expedient

---

[47] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization*, 5, 4 (Autumn, 1988), pp. 887-917.
[48] Stephen Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979), Chapter 6 "Anarchic Orders and the Balance of Power."

for the other three tactics of persuasion—norms of reciprocity may be stronger between friends, friends may be more receptive to each other's arguments, and friends may be more interested in emulating the behavior of friends than strangers or adversaries. Although U.S. SFA doctrine places heavy emphasis on the importance of relationships as the foundations of a persuasion strategy, this theory of influence has little theoretical grounding in international relations scholarship.

Returning one last time to the scenario of the rent-seeking brigade commander, a U.S. commander implementing a relationships-based strategy of persuasion might aim to dine frequently with the brigade commander, ask about his family, share personal details of her own life, and through these interactions establish trust and rapport. Then the U.S. commander might then broach the topic of training, and explain that it would mean a lot to her if the brigade commander made a stronger effort to train the brigade (a spirit of friendship appeal). She might also seek to explain over meals or tea why developing a stronger brigade is so important to the development of the army more broadly, and why it is in the best interests of the brigade commander to demonstrate progress in the development of the brigade (relationships as an expedient for communicative action).

Persuasion Tactics	
Tactic	***Mechanism of Influence***
Inducement	Norm of reciprocity
Communicative action	Receptivity to argumentation (normative and causal)
Demonstration	Desire to imitate and emulate
Relationship-building	Compliance on the basis of personal friendship

Bargaining

Moving now to the third rung of the influence escalation ladder. A *bargaining* strategy of influence aims to overcome interest misalignment through the promise of carrots and sticks conditional on compliance and defiance. The concepts of influence, power, bargaining, and compulsion have generated a great deal of substantive and semantic debate in the international relations field. Though this study uses the term bargaining, in keeping with the preferred terminology in the alliance management literature,[49] the term is synonymous with Barnett and Duval's conceptualization of "compulsory power,"[50] and with leverage (the term employed by scholars and practitioners of SFA),[51] and is closely related to the concept of coercion.[44] Coercion is a subset of bargaining because coercion by most definitions must include implicit or explicit threats of punishment for defiance, whereas a strategy of bargaining may rely exclusively on positive conditionality.

The defining feature of the bargaining approach is the use of conditionality to influence decisions. Bargaining need not rely exclusively on material carrots and sticks—promises of actions that could boost or undermine prestige may be equally or more effective than promises to provide or withdraw material aid.

A bargaining strategy of influence in SFA begins with the recognition of interest misalignment between the provider, who aims to increase the military effectiveness of the recipient military, and the recipient civilian and military leaders who, for instance, may aim to

---

[49] Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, pp. 165-200.
[50] Barnett and Duvall, "Power in International Politics," pp. 39-75.
[51] Biddle et. al, "Small Footprint, Small Payoff;" Ladwig III, "Influencing Clients in Counterinsurgency." [44] Though Biddle and Ladwig usually use the word leverage, at times they also use the terms bargaining power and coercive power. For an analysis of the state of the field with respect to coercion, see Kelly M. Greenhill and Peter Krause, *Coercion: The Power to Hurt in International Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

insulate themselves against coups, or to pursue opportunities for personal enrichment. SFA providers employing bargaining strategies aim to influence recipient decisions by conditioning carrots and sticks on compliance and defiance with best military practices.

In the international relations literature, scholars tend to emphasize “all or nothing,” binary, high-stakes carrots and sticks such as promises to guarantee security and continue providing aid, and threats to revoke security guarantees and cut aid altogether.[52] SFA relationships, however, involve continuous iterations of interactions between providers and recipients, in which the provider may employ a large and diverse range of carrots and sticks that vary greatly in kind and degree. The provider can threaten to cut aid altogether or even oust the head of state, but it can also threaten smaller sticks, like reducing aid, or cutting aid in one specific area (perhaps cease provision of one particular weapon), or cutting aid to one specific unit of a military. A provider can threaten to remove a civilian leader from power, or the provider can threaten to criticize a civilian leader publicly, or praise his or her main political adversary, or engage in an activity within the nation’s borders that will cause political problems for the leader. The point is that in SFA, carrots and sticks need not be an all or nothing affair—the provider can turn up or down the dial on its promises and threats in an iterative, interactive process. See below for examples of carrots and sticks the United States could employ (and in some cases has employed) to influence the decisions of SFA recipients. This list is far from exhaustive.

---

[52] Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, pp. 165-177.

Bargaining Tactics		
Object of Influence	***Carrots***	***Sticks***
	Modest increase in aid ($ and/or equipment)	Modest decrease in aid ($ and/or equipment)
	Substantial increase in aid ($ and/or equipment)	Cessation of aid ($ and/or equipment)
	Provision of requested high-value item	Refusal to supply requested high-value item
	Endorsement of regime	Criticism of regime
	Provision of assistance (e.g. intelligence, troops) to support regime security	Refusal to provide assistance (e.g. intelligence, troops) to support the security of the regime
	Regime survival guarantee	Withdrawal of assistance for regime security
Recipient Military Leadership	Endorsement of an officer for promotion	Recommendation against promotion of an officer
	Direct assignment of an officer to higher command	Direct removal of an officer from command
	Endorsement of a unit for additional aid	Criticism of a unit and recommendation against additional aid
	Provision of additional aid to a unit	Disbanding of a unit
	Selection of a unit for elite training*	Rejection of a unit for elite training*
	Selection of a unit for a lead role in battle*	Sidelining of a unit in battle*[53]

Direct Command

Fourth and finally, the United States can exercise the most coercive influence option and take direct command. Whereas teaching, persuasion, and bargaining are indirect forms of influence, direct command (as the name implies) is the direct exercise of influence through an institutionalized command structure. Direct command can take two ideal-type forms. U.S.

[53] * Some levers may serve as carrot or stick, depending on the context. For instance, an increase in troop presence could be a carrot if additional troops are desired by the recipient, or a stick if they are not.

personnel might be placed in command of partner units, or partner units might be placed under the command of U.S. units. In this model, U.S. personnel directly hire and fire partner personnel, manage their compensation, direct their training, and otherwise control their decisions and behaviors. In a sense, the direct command approach to influence resolves the interest divergence problem between U.S. military personnel and partner military personnel by replacing the partner military leaders with American military leaders, who then take the steps necessary to build more effective militaries themselves.

In sum, the key distinction between teaching on the one hand, and persuasion, bargaining, and direct command on the other is that teaching assumes that information is the barrier to progress, whereas bargaining, persuasion, and direct command recognize interest divergence as the primary hurdle. Whereas a persuasion strategy of influence in U.S. SFA aims to change the preferences of the recipient decision-makers through inducement, communicative action, demonstration, and relationship-building, a bargaining strategy of influence in U.S. SFA aims to overcome interest divergence by conditioning carrots and sticks on recipient compliance or defiance with U.S. guidance. Direct command resolves the influence dilemma by replacing partner decision-makers with Americans. The table below summarizes the escalation ladder of influence strategies outlined above. (NEXT PAGE)

Influence Escalation Ladder – Summary	
Strategy Rung	**Description**
Teaching	Aims to increase the capacity of the decision-makers to make the right decisions, through the transmission of information and expertise
Persuasion	Aims to reduce interest divergence by influencing recipient preferences through inducement, communicative action, demonstration, and relationship-building
Bargaining	Aims to overcome interest divergence by raising the relative benefits of compliance and costs of defiance through conditional application of carrots and sticks
Direct Command	Replace partner decision-makers with American officers

It bears repeating: teaching, persuasion, bargaining, and direct command are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are best understood as a four-rung escalation ladder of influence strategies. U.S. personnel seeking to shape counterpart decisions might begin by providing leaders with information about the best course of action. If they encounter resistance, they might try to persuade recipient leaders to follow their guidance. If persuasion fails, they might try to use conditionality to incentivize compliance. Conditionality may cast a shadow—if frustrated advisors use carrots and sticks a few times, the recipient might come to understand the coercive leverage behind the advisors' advice, and the advisors' might find they no longer need to exercise their leverage explicitly. They might also escalate to direct command at the top of a military hierarchy, while continuing to employ teaching, persuasion, and bargaining to influence partner behavior at lower levels.

2.4 Influence Strategy Theory: Consequences of Influence Strategies

This study presents and tests two theories. The first theory takes U.S. influence strategies as the independent variable and focuses on the consequences of U.S. influence strategies for security assistance outcomes. The second theory moves a link back in the causal chain, taking U.S. influence strategies as the dependent variable, and examining strategy selection. This section focuses on the consequences half of the causal chain.

To summarize the framework described above, military effectiveness hinges on the decisions political and military leaders make around hiring and firing, training, resource allocation, command structures, information management, and other critical military organizational practices. Civilian and military leaders, particularly in countries adversely selected by the United States for large-scale security assistance projects, are not always motivated to build stronger militaries. It follows that the success or failure of U.S. efforts to build partner militaries hinges in part on the strategies the United States employs to shape the decisions of recipient civilian and military leaders.

The critical intervening variable linking U.S. influence strategies to recipient military effectiveness is recipient receptivity to U.S. advice regarding their military organizational practices. In the *Dictator's Army*, Caitlin Talmadge demonstrates that military effectiveness varies principally as a function of military personnel practices, training regimens, command structures, and information management.[54] United States security assistance should therefore succeed in building more effective partner militaries to the extent that the United States is able to influence the recipient civilian and military leaders to implement meritocratic personnel practices, rigorous and realistic training regimens, unitary and delegated command structures,

[54] Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army.*

efficiency-based resource allocation, and fluid information management practices. When the United States fails to dissuade recipients from implementing loyalty-based personnel practices, lackadaisical training regimens, disjointed command structures, arbitrary or rent-seeking resource allocation, and compartmentalized information management, recipient military effectiveness stagnates or deteriorates.

With this framework in mind, what explains the success or failure of United States efforts to influence recipient military organizational practices, and through military organizational practices recipient military effectiveness?

Influence Strategy Theory (IST) comprises two main hypotheses. First, IST hypothesizes that variation in United States SFA influence strategies is an important determinant of recipient military effectiveness. This argument contradicts the persistent conviction in government that the quantity or duration of assistance is the key determinant of SFA outcomes, as well as the emerging academic consensus that monitoring challenges and a lack of leverage are the critical barriers to successful influence in SFA as opposed to the U.S. choice to exercise its leverage.

A strategy of SFA premised on the conviction that increased quantity or duration of assistance will lead to increased military effectiveness is unlikely to succeed because motivation is more often the limiting factor than resource constraints. A mature military effectiveness literature has already demonstrated that after a certain threshold of resources is met, it is not what states have, but what states do with what they have, that determines their military effectiveness. If civilian and military leaders in recipient nations are not motivated to build a more effective military, or are in fact motivated to sabotage the development of a more effective military, they may welcome the largess of SFA, yet misallocate resources, neglect training, and implement loyalty-based personnel policies designed to undermine the development of the military. Indeed,

cursory examination of the empirical record of U.S. SFA suggests strongly that the quantity and duration of assistance is a poor predictor of recipient military effectiveness. The largest recipients of United States SFA were South Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. United States SFA in all three countries can hardly be characterized as successful.

This study's emphasis on the United States' agency to choose between different influence strategies also runs counter to the PA-school assertions that interest divergence, monitoring capacity, and bargaining power predict SFA outcomes. The PA school begins, correctly, with the premise that interests between provider and recipient are often misaligned, and that this interest misalignment is the fundamental barrier to successful SFA. It goes on to argue that the difficulties of monitoring recipient behavior make it difficult for providers to detect malfeasance, and that the provider often lacks the bargaining power to enforce compliance even if it does detect malfeasance.

I argue, conversely, that the presence of advisors on the ground in recipient states usually provides sufficient visibility for providers to identify recipient malfeasance, and that it is not bargaining power, *but the choice to bargain*, that determines the effectiveness of United States efforts to influence recipient decision-making, and through recipient decision-making, recipient military effectiveness. A review of available contemporaneous reporting from the field in South Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq reveals that United States personnel were aware in real-time of egregious military organizational practices in each case. The power differential between the United States and South Vietnam and Iraq, and the iterated nature of SFA relationships, begs the question—*if the United States lacked bargaining power in these contexts, does the United States ever have bargaining power?* United States SFA doctrine suggests strongly that the United States does not fail to bargain because it lacks bargaining power; rather, the United States often fails

even to *consider* employing conditionality, so deeply has it internalized the institutionally advantageous ideology of persuasion. (I discuss this ideology in Section 2.7).

The United States has the agency to choose between different strategies of influence in the conduct of SFA. But which influence strategy is most effective?

The second prediction of IST is that the United States is more likely to build better militaries in partner states when it makes use of the full escalation ladder. Conversely, the United States is less likely to build stronger militaries in partner states when it relies exclusively on teaching and persuasion. When the United States relies exclusively on teaching and persuasion to influence recipients to take steps to improve their militaries, recipient leaders are more likely to ignore their advice, and to continue to implement military organizational practices that keep their militaries weak. Conversely, when the United States supplements teaching and persuasion with bargaining and direct command, recipients are more likely to follow U.S. direction and implement policies that improve their militaries.

A teaching strategy of influence in SFA is unlikely to successfully shape the recipient decisions (military organizational practices) central to military effectiveness, because motivation, not lack of expertise, is usually the predominant barrier to progress. Teaching should only work in cases of near-perfect interest alignment between provider and recipient with respect to the development of the military. Interest alignment is very rare, however, as interest misalignment plagues even the closest security force assistance and security cooperation relationships, where allies may share goals (for instance, to deter a Russia or North Korean invasion) but prefer different strategies for achieving those goals.

The United States provides the most significant SFA to the countries that need it the most. The countries that need SFA the most tend to be countries with leadership already inclined

against professional military organizational practices (otherwise their militaries would be in better shape). Due to this adverse selection, U.S. SFA relationships are often plagued by much deeper interest misalignment than close United States alliance relationships. United States personnel may therefore inform recipient civilian leaders that members of their officer corps are corrupt and incompetent, but this information will not move the civilian leader to remove the underperforming officers if they were carefully selected by the civilian leader not for their military acumen, but for their loyalty, and commitment to guarding against a coup.

And civilian leaders are not the only decision-makers within the recipient state with the power to shape military organizational practices. United States personnel may instruct recipient brigade commanders in how to develop and implement rigorous and relevant brigade-level training exercises, but this instruction may fail to move brigade commanders motivated principally by the opportunity to use their position for personal enrichment. In short, teaching is an ineffective strategy of influence in SFA because motivation, not information, is usually the sticking point. Teaching is therefore likely to fail for the same reason that quantity of assistance is a poor predictor of recipient military effectiveness—teaching does not address the fundamental problem of interest divergence between provider and recipient.

Persuasion and bargaining are both logical improvements over teaching because both strategies begin from the much more realistic premise that interests between provider and recipient are not perfectly—or even closely—aligned.

Persuasion, however, is unlikely to successfully influence recipient decision-making in cases of SFA. The persuasion tactics of inducement, communicative action, and demonstration each find grounding in international relations theories. However, the conditions for successful persuasion outlined in these theories are not met in the context of SFA. Meanwhile, the

relationship-building tactic of persuasion—the persuasion tactic stressed most heavily in United States SFA doctrine—has almost no grounding in international relations theory at all, while the logic of relationship-building suggests the provider is as likely to make concessions to recipients as the recipients are to make concessions to the provider. Two additional factors further undermine United States strategies of persuasion in SFA—the design of United States SFA, and the problem of adverse selection.

INDUCEMENT. Existing scholarship identifies several conditions for successful inducement. One critical condition for successful inducement based on reciprocity norms is the establishment of a pattern of tit-for-tat exchange.[55] In the context of SFA, however, the United States often provides inducements repeatedly, without waiting for intervening concessions. Far from bolstering a norm of reciprocity, the repeated provision of inducements without answer would logically erode any existing norm of reciprocity, establishing a norm of no-strings patronage in its place.

ARGUMENT. The conditions necessary for effective communicative action outlined in the international relations literature are not met in the context of SFA. Stacie Goddard and Ronald Krebs, for instance, identify five key factors—(1) who speaks; (2) where/when they say it; (3) to whom they say it; (4) what they say; (5) how they say it—as the critical determinants of effective argumentation (in their words "legitimation").[56] Scholars of communicative action emphasize that for the speaker's words to carry weight with the intended audience, the audience must view the speaker as both authoritative and legitimate. If recipients do not perceive the speakers as authoritative or legitimate, they are much less likely to consider their arguments.

---

[55] Gouldner, "The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement," pp. 161-178; Keohane, "Reciprocity in International Relations," pp. 4-5, 19-24.
[56] Stacie Goddard and Ronald Krebbs, "Rhetoric, Legitimation, and Grand Strategy," *Security Studies*, 24, 1 (March 2015), p. 26.

The design of U.S. SFA undermines both the authoritativeness and the legitimacy of the speakers. Most emissaries of communicative action in United States SFA are inexperienced personnel with little understanding of the country in which they are operating, little training for the advisory mission, and whose very presence in the country may be resented by the local population, including military and civilian leaders. Moreover, deployment calendars are such that personnel deployed for SFA roles tend to spend between nine and twelve months at most in theater, and are unlikely upon redeployment to return to the same country or mission. These are not speakers likely to be received as authoritative and legitimate in the eyes of recipient decision-makers, and they are unlikely to have the local expertise or advising expertise necessary to develop a rhetoric that resonates with local military and political leaders.

DEMONSTRATION. There is reason for skepticism regarding the demonstration tactic of persuasion in the context of United States SFA. The international relations literature suggests that the most powerful states in the international system tend to be the states others imitate and from which norms diffuse. As the United States remains the most powerful state in the system, it is plausible (according to the expectations of existing theory) to expect SFA recipients to seek to emulate the United States example.

On the other hand, however, Waltz' conceptualization of imitation focuses on competition between great or aspiring great powers, and may not extend to the context of extreme asymmetry that characterizes SFA. Civilian leaders in states like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Liberia do not seek to compete with the United States for great power status. There is therefore reason to question the assumption that civilian leaders in recipient nations will believe that they should seek to emulate the example of the United States. Civilian leaders in these states may be more concerned with securing their regime against internal threats than competing on the world

stage, and, for their purposes, they may not view the American model as the system to emulate. Moreover, the United States military has struggled to demonstrate competence in the conduct of counterinsurgency, calling into question the expectation that recipients of United States SFA focused principally on securing their countries against insurgent threats would view the American model as the one to emulate.

RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING. The confidence in relationship-building as a tactic for persuasion has little grounding in international relations theory, and there appears to be no evidence beyond anecdote that strong interpersonal relationships lead to significant concessions in international relations. The logic behind the relationships approach to persuasion is questionable. For one thing, relationships go both ways, and there is little reason to believe that a close relationship between an SFA provider and an SFA recipient would lead only the recipient to make concessions. Indeed, concern that diplomats may "go native"[57] suggests that the United States personnel aiming to influence the behaviors of foreign counterparts may ultimately be the ones who make the concessions to accommodate their local friends. The study of personal diplomacy among diplomatic historians does not strengthen the case for relationships-based strategies of influence. Franklin Roosevelt may have developed a personal rapport with Joseph Stalin that helped lead to the conference in Yalta, but at Yalta FDR handed over much of Eastern Europe to the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the chemistry between Richard Nixon and Mao Zedong (and Henry Kissinger and Zhao Enlai) helped to transform the United States-China

[57] This phrase is often used in military circles to express concern that U.S. advisors embedded with local hosts will begin to pursue the interests of the hosts more than the interests of the U.S. See, for example, "Strengthening the Bridge: Building Partnership Capacity," *Military Review: The Professional Journal of the U.S. Army* (January- February 2010), p. 68.

relationship and the Cold War balance of power. In short, the record of personal diplomacy does not provide clear support for the U.S. confidence in relationship building as a tool of influence.[58]

Secondly, if close relationships between SFA providers and recipients are maintained even in the absence of the concessions the relationships are ostensibly intended to advance, the recipient may see no connection whatever between the relationship, and the concessions. On the contrary, SFA doctrine repeatedly cautions against jeopardizing the relationship with local forces, all but ensuring that recipients learn that there is no connection between their defiance of U.S. advice and their ability to maintain close relationships with their American benefactors.

Even setting aside skepticism regarding the logic underpinning relationship building as a tactic of persuasion, United States SFA is simply not set up for relationship building. First and foremost, deployment calendars effectively preclude the development of strong relationships between United States personnel and their local counterparts. A nine- to twelve-month deployment of United States personnel, even if it is spent interacting on a daily basis with local counterparts, is likely insufficient to build bonds strong enough with the local leaders to achieve the ambitious objective of shaping their preferences and behaviors. Local forces receive wave after wave of American advisors, starting up relationships from scratch with each new deployment. Local forces understand that American personnel are temporary.

Secondly, the United States personnel tasked with SFA are, as previously mentioned, not selected on the basis of strong interpersonal skills or demonstrated skill in advising, nor are they effectively trained for the mission. There is no reason to believe that they will be well suited to the task of relationship building. Taking a step back, there is no reason to believe that the U.S.

---

[58] Robbie Gramer and Michael Hirsh, "It's Not Personal. It's Just Diplomacy," *Harvard Belfer Center*, March 15, 2009, https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/its-not-personal-its-just-diplomacy.

military writ large is well suited to the task of relationship building, or the task of persuasion more broadly.

Finally, and most fundamentally, the adverse selection of United States SFA recipients undermines the persuasion strategy of influence. The United States tends to provide the most SFA to countries that need it the most. The countries that need SFA the most tend to be weak states, led by civilian and military leaders with complex and contradictory motivations, facing the most urgent security threats. Under such circumstances, norms of reciprocation and relationships with US personnel are unlikely to be the most salient forces governing recipient decision-making. Civilian leaders facing serious coup threats are unlikely to be receptive to U.S. appeals regarding the benefits of meritocratic promotion patterns. Brigade commanders who view the prevailing regime as deeply corrupt and therefore seize the opportunity to enrich themselves are unlikely to be interested in emulating U.S. training regimens, or to be moved by U.S. appeals to nationalism. Few proponents of persuasion in international relations would argue that persuasion would be sufficiently powerful to convince leaders not to pursue their most immediate, powerful, and directly contradictory interests.

In short, teaching and persuasion—on their own—are ill-suited to the challenge of influence in security assistance.

Recipients are more likely to follow U.S. direction when the United States combines teaching and persuasion with bargaining and/or direct command. Bargaining is well suited to the context of SFA. Bargaining is in a sense a much simpler, less ambitious influence strategy than persuasion. This study argues that the United States has ample bargaining power in most cases of security assistance, and is therefore well-positioned to wield carrots and sticks to shape recipient decision-making. Bargaining power, in Glenn Snyder's framework, varies as a function of the

two sides' relative dependence, commitment, and interest in the object of bargaining.[59] Lumpy (each variable could be further subdivided into many constituent pieces), subjective, and consequently hard to measure as those variables are, the argument that recipients of United States SFA, particularly in the context of severe internal threats, have more bargaining power than the United States, does not hold up to scrutiny. Recipients of SFA may not always depend for their survival on the United States, but they are almost always far more dependent on the United States than the United States is on them. With respect to relative commitment, SFA recipients often view the U.S. commitment to an SFA partnership, or to the leaders themselves, as fickle. In such cases, the United States' relative lack of commitment should be a bargaining *asset,* because it should help increase the credibility of its threats to withdraw support or to replace the leadership.

Moreover, SFA is as conducive to the establishment of credibility with respect to promises of carrots and threats of sticks as any international partnership can be. Providers need not rely on the nuclear threats of complete support or total abandonment. Rather, SFA relationships create myriad opportunities for the application of calibrated carrots ranging from the provision of additional ammunition to a particular unit, to a dramatic increase in the scale of U.S. assistance to the recipient military as a whole, and calibrated sticks ranging from the disbanding of a particular unit, to a dramatic decrease in assistance, to the ouster of the civilian leader. SFA relationships are also typically long-term, and involve iterated interactions between provider and recipient. There is, therefore, an extended shadow of the future,[60] and opportunities

[59] Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, pp. 166-171.
[60] Kenneth Oye explains how the shadow of the future incentivizes rational actors to make concessions in the present in order to secure benefits or to avoid sanction in the future. See Oye, "Explaining Cooperation Under Anarchy," pp. 1-24.

for the United States to demonstrate the credibility of its promises and threats through consistent follow-through.

These two features of SFA relationships—the opportunities for calibrated carrots and sticks, and the shadow of the future—should help to resolve the credibility problem that plagues, for instance, the challenge of extended nuclear deterrence. In the context of SFA, threats to decrease support to a unit or increase support to a unit, or even to support or oust a civilian leader, are far less difficult than the challenge the United States faced in its efforts to convince the Soviet Union that it would trade New York for Paris. SFA is the United States trying to convince brigade commanders that their interests are better served following U.S. direction to remove a corrupt battalion commander than ignoring that direction. It may not be an easy task, but the United States certainly has the carrots and sticks to do it, and the context of SFA is more conducive than most.

Direct command is less an effective approach to the influence challenge than it is an outright elimination of the challenge. By replacing recipient decision-makers with American ones, the United States effectively seizes direct control over recipient military organizational practices. If U.S. officers in direct command of recipient divisions learn of defiant partner brigade commanders, the U.S. officers can simply relieve those officers of command and elevate more cooperative replacements. Indeed, this is how the United States resolved the influence challenge in the case of the Republic of Korea Army. The United States directly controlled ROKA personnel, and were thus able to eliminate defiant ROKA officers altogether, and ensure that only cooperative officers held key commands.

The United States may employ all four strategies of influence—teaching, persuasion, bargaining, and direct command—at once, or weight one or two more heavily than the others.

This study’s principal claim is that bargaining and direct command are important tools in the influence strategy toolkit. The United States is more likely to achieve influence over partner military organizational practices and build better recipient militaries if it escalates to the bargaining or direct command rungs of the influence ladder. The table below summarizes Influence Strategy Theory.

Influence Strategy Theory				
Explanatory Variable: *U.S. Strategy of Influence*		**Intervening Variable:** *Recipient Receptivity to U.S. Advice re Military Organizational Practices*		**Dependent Variable:** *Recipient Military Effectiveness*
Teaching and persuasion	→	Defiance	→	Stagnant or deteriorating
Teaching and persuasion + bargaining and/or direct command	→	Compliance	→	Improved

The preceding section theorized the consequences of different strategies of influence in SFA. Given the theory’s assessment that the United States is more likely to secure compliance from partners and build improved partner militaries when it combines teaching and persuasion with bargaining or direct command, one might expect a rationally acting SFA provider to implement bargaining and direct command with some frequency. This does not appear to be the case in contemporary SFA.

2.5 The Puzzle: Vanishing Rungs on the Escalation Ladder

In order to develop a broad picture of how the United States has exercised influence in security assistance missions over time, this section summarizes U.S. influence strategies across the six largest, most holistic cases of U.S. Army efforts to organize, train, equip, advise, and

assist partner armies against active internal or external threats since World War II:

1) China, National Revolutionary Army (1942 – 1946)

2) Greece, Hellenic Army (1947 – 1949)

3) South Korea, Republic of Korea Army (1949 – 1953)

4) South Vietnam, Army of the Republic of Vietnam (1954 – 1973)

5) Afghanistan, Afghan National Army (2001 – 2014)

6) Iraq, Iraqi Army (2003 – 2011).

Within each case, I examine U.S. influence strategies at the level of the individual commanding generals responsible for the design and implementation of security assistance strategy, and at the level of the individual advisors embedded with partner units at the operational and tactical levels. Drawing on archival data and oral histories for the first four cases, and archival data, oral histories, and original interviews for the two contemporary cases, I code each individual commanding general at the highest rung in the influence escalation ladder that they reached. For example, if a general relied exclusively on teaching to influence recipient leaders for the duration of his command, I code that general as having employed a "teaching" strategy of influence. If generals rely mostly on teaching but escalates to persuasion, I code them "persuasion." If generals ever used conditionality to influence recipient military organizational practices, I code them bargaining. This coding rule biases systematically towards over-coding the more coercive rungs of the influence escalation ladder, which serves as a robustness check to a starting assertion of this article—that the United States rarely bargains in contemporary security assistance. The table below aggregates the individual-level coding exercise to characterize the strategies of influence employed by the U.S. military at the level of the overall security assistance project:

U.S. Influence Strategies – Variation Over Time	
Recipient of U.S. Security Assistance	**U.S. Influence Strategies**
China: National Revolutionary Army (1942 – 1946)	Full escalation ladder – teaching, persuasion, bargaining, direct command
Greece: Hellenic Army (1947 – 1949)	Teaching, persuasion, bargaining
South Korea: Republic of Korea Army (1949 – 1953)	Full escalation ladder – teaching, persuasion, bargaining, direct command
South Vietnam: Army of the Republic of Vietnam (1954 – 1973)	Teaching and persuasion are the rule, bargaining the rare exception (never direct command)
Afghanistan: Afghan National Army (2001 – 2014)	Teaching and persuasion are the rule, bargaining the rare exception (never direct command)
Iraq: Iraqi Army (2003 – 2011)	Teaching and persuasion are the rule, bargaining the rare exception (never direct command)

The results paint a stark temporal picture. In early cases of security assistance, the United States climbed the full escalation ladder. Beginning in and ever since Vietnam, however, the United States has relied almost exclusively on teaching and persuasion.

In the three earliest cases—U.S. military assistance to China during World War II, to Greece during the Greek Civil War, and to South Korea in the lead-up to and aftermath of the North Korean invasion—the U.S. military climbed the full escalation ladder, using bargaining and direct command when teaching and persuasion failed to move recipient leaders to follow U.S. advice. In China, General Joseph "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell quickly grew frustrated with the limitations of persuasion and advocated a bargaining approach to influence in security assistance: "In order to carry out my mission of increasing the combat efficiency of the Chinese Army, trading must be the basis of action. Logic and reason, or personal influence, will not produce

satisfactory results. Pressure and bargaining are the means that must be relied on."[61] The general officer sent to build the Greek and then the South Korean militaries—General James Van Fleet—was more discreet in his language but no less firm in his emphasis on the need for incentives (and in Korea direct command) to push partners to take steps to strengthen their militaries. Van Fleet established rapport with Greek leadership, but he also used threats of cessation of U.S. assistance to the Greek military to convince them to purge their senior officer corps of incompetent generals.[62]

In South Korea, Van Fleet developed a close personal friendship with President Syngman Rhee and used logical argument to encourage compliance, but he also took direct command of the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA), completely controlled ROKA personnel, and threatened Rhee with a severance of American support to the ROK Army if he meddled in ROKA military organizational practices.[63] The chiefs of the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG) instructed the advisors under their command to begin by developing rapport, setting an example, and using logical arguments to influence their ROKA counterparts. However, they also instructed advisors to use their control over ROKA supplies and personnel policies as leverage to incentivize compliance if persuasion failed.[64] (See Chapter 3 for thorough analysis of the Korea case).

Beginning with security assistance to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), however, teaching and persuasion became the rule, and carrots and sticks the rare exception. The

---

[61] Memo from Stilwell to War Department, 1942, quoted in Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater—Stilwell's Mission to China*, (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1987), p. 179.
[62] Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States,* pp. 43-48.
[63] Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet to Ambassador John J. Muccio, 3 May 1951, ROK Correspondence #1-9, 1951-1953, Box 86/4, Van Fleet Papers.
[64] See, for example, Alfred H. Hausrath, "The KMAG Advisor: Role and Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea," Operations Research Office, (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University, February 1957), pp. 84-85.

U.S. military has not taken direct command of a partner military since South Korea in 1950. In South Vietnam, Generals O'Daniel, Williams, Harkins, Westmoreland, and Abrams all broke from the recent (and successful) precedent set by Van Fleet in South Korea, electing against direct command of the ARVN. They also consistently declined to exercise leverage to incentivize South Vietnamese leaders to improve their military organizational practices. Robert "Blowtorch Bob" Komer succinctly summarizes the U.S. approach to influence in Vietnam as "persuasion but not pressure."[65] (See Chapter 4 for thorough analysis of the Vietnam case).

"Persuasion but not pressure" has been the rule ever since. The U.S. military pulled its punches in Afghanistan, refusing to exercise leverage to curb even the most outrageous corruption or to remove the most incompetent officers within the Afghan National Army (ANA).[66] The story in Iraq is largely the same. As put by one General Officer (Ret.), "We had all the guns and treasure and never used it to try to force our way."[67] Colonel Frank Sobchak, co-author of *The US Army in the Iraq War* noted: "On the topic of coercion, it seemed to us surreal how rarely we used that tool."[68] (See Chapter 5 for thorough analysis of the Iraq case).

Beyond Iraq and Afghanistan, the contemporary military doctrine that guides U.S. advisory efforts prescribes teaching and persuasion and proscribes bargaining and direct command. Field manuals—FM-3-07.1, FM 31- 20, FM 3-24, and FM 3-22—all heavily

---

[65] Robert Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on U.S.-GVN Performance in Vietnam*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1972), p. 124.
[66] For a discussion of the U.S. military's unwillingness to exercise its leverage to compel Afghan leaders to curb the most rampant corruption, see Sarah Chayes, *Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2015), pp. 41, 45-47. For discussion of the U.S. reticence to remove incompetent ANA officers, see John F, Sopko, "Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," *Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction*, September 2017, especially pp. 107-141.
[67] Author interview with a General Officer (Ret.) who served in Iraq, telephone, September 2019.
[68] Email correspondence with the author, Frank Sobchak, September 6, 2019. Sobchak's "Rarely" is a more accurate description of variation in influence strategies than the general officer's "never." Several U.S. officers did, in fact, exercise leverage to secure Iraqi compliance—but they were the rare exception.

emphasize the importance of building relationships, rapport, and trust, demonstrations of cultural understanding, and people skills. FM 31.20-3 explicitly discourages advisors from using "bribery or coercion, since results achieved from these actions are only temporary." The forward to FM 3-07.1 states: "Advising establishes a personal and a professional relationship where trust and confidence define how well the advisor will be able to influence the foreign security force."[69] FM 3-22 instructs advisors to "accomplish their mission by building relationships and rapport" because it is through "their interpersonal skills and rapport that they will positively affect counterpart action." It goes on: "the measure of effective rapport is whether Soldiers can inspire foreign counterparts to take the desired action and guide them to succeed." But be careful, FM 3-22 warns, "genuine rapport is developed slowly, but it can be ruined in an instant."[70]

The monotonic pattern of temporal variation in U.S. influence strategies in security assistance missions is difficult to square with theories emphasizing the role of interest divergence, monitoring capacity, and leverage. The pattern is also inconsistent with theories of rational adaptation in response to revealed information. Contemporary security assistance doctrine discouraging "bribery" and "coercion" and exalting rapport-based persuasion does not evince a military eager to use its monitoring capacity and leverage to secure the compliance necessary to improve the partner military. Rather, the pattern of variation and the content of the doctrine suggests a military that developed a preferred way of doing business.

Why did the bargaining and direct command rungs of the influence escalation ladder disappear? More broadly, what explains U.S. influence strategy selection in security assistance?

---

[69] Department of the Army, *FM 3-07.1, Security Force Assistance* (Washington, DC: GPO 2009), pp. 2-8.
[70] Department of the Army, *FM 3-22: Army Support to Security Cooperation* (Washington, DC: US GPO, 2013), pp. 6-2.

2.6 Existing Explanations of Strategy Selection

I mine two literatures relevant to explaining U.S. strategy selection in SFA. The first is the nascent literature that examines U.S. difficulties building militaries in partner states. The second literature is the scholarship exploring military doctrine innovation.

The SFA literature touches only tangentially on the question of provider strategy selection. In *Building Militaries in Fragile States*, Mara Karlin emphasizes the centrality of recipient decision-making around personnel to SFA outcomes, and illustrates how United States intrusion into the sensitive political-military affairs of recipients is necessary to shape the decisions that make or break military professionalization.[71] Karlin stops short, however, of explaining *why* the United States sometimes intrudes and sometimes does not.[72] Similarly, in "Influencing Clients in Counterinsurgency: U.S. Involvement in El Salvador," Walter Ladwig III demonstrates the effectiveness of a strategy of conditionality relative to a strategy of inducement, and then notes that "Why a patron chooses one particular influence approach over another and under what conditions these approaches would be more or less effective are extremely important questions for future research, but answering them is beyond the scope of the present research design."[73] In *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Violence Through Local Agents*, Berman and Lake argue that the principal must use carrots and sticks to incentivize compliance in SFA, and describe U.S. seeming unwillingness "to employ adequate rewards and punishments" in Iraq as evidence of "principal failure." They conclude that the United States' "failure to act effectively as a principal

[71] Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States.*
[72] Whereas Karlin argues that intrusion is necessary to improve partner militaries, she does not specify whether the intrusion must involve conditionality or direct command. Influence Strategy Theory specifically predicts that differences in the *forms* of intrusion (teaching, persuasion, bargaining, or direct command) are the key to recipient behavior and SFA outcomes.
[73] Ladwig III, "Influencing Clients in Counterinsurgency," p. 101.

remains a puzzle from the point of view of the theory posed in this volume."[74] Section 2.7 offers a theory to explain this puzzle.

The primary explanation for United States strategy selection in SFA in the existing literature focuses on U.S. bargaining power. The principal-agent (PA) approach best expressed by Biddle, MacDonald, and Baker in "Small Footprint Small Payoff" attributes the United States' difficulties developing competent partner militaries to interest divergence between provider and recipient, to monitoring challenges, and to a lack of leverage sufficient to overcome interest divergence.[75] According to the logic of the PA model, the United States bargains when it is able to observe recipient malfeasance, and when it has bargaining power. This approach ignores strategies of influence besides bargaining, and the agency of the United States to choose between them (see Section 2.2).

The bargaining power explanation of United States strategy selection in SFA is logically unsatisfactory for the three reasons outlined previously: 1) bargaining is not the only strategy of influence the U.S. employs; 2) the U.S. often has a great deal of bargaining power; and 3) the U.S. choice not to exercise its leverage is closer to the rule in contemporary SFA than the exception. The bargaining power explanation is also suspect because it does not address the fact that U.S. SFA is designed and implemented almost entirely by the U.S. military, which, when it comes to SFA, operates with a great deal of freedom from civilian guidance or intrusion. The bargaining power explanation of U.S. strategy selection is contingent on the assumption that the U.S. military optimizes its strategies to meet the objectives of U.S. civilian leadership—as opposed to its own institutional interests—and that U.S. SFA can thus be treated as the project of a rational, unitary, state actor. This assumption, however, belies a voluminous security studies

[74] Berman and Lake, *Proxy Wars*, p. 244.
[75] Biddle et al, "Small Footprint Small Payoff," p. 6.

literature devoted precisely to the tensions between civilian principals and their military agents, and the myriad reasons militaries may not always design and implement strategies that advance the goals of the state.

The second literature I examine is the scholarship on military doctrine and military innovation. The U.S. military is the organization responsible for the design and implementation of U.S. SFA, and it does so with limited civilian oversight or interference. An effort to explain United States strategy selection in SFA is therefore incomplete without close attention to the peculiar dynamics within the U.S. military.

In order to explain the evolution of United States security assistance strategies over time and variation within a given period, it is helpful to turn to the literature on military stagnation and innovation.[76] This literature begins from the premise that organizations, and in particular military organizations, are designed to *resist* change.[77] Organizations are predisposed to stasis because they are primarily interested in reducing uncertainty, preserving and expanding their autonomy, and preserving and expanding their resources.[78] In order to advance these objectives, militaries develop standard operating procedures (SOPs), ideologies, and doctrines designed to perpetuate existing patterns of behavior that may "hang on long after they have outlived their usefulness."[79]

---

[76] See, for example: Harvey Sapolsky, *The Polaris System Development Bureaucratic and Programmatic Success in Government* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972); Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine;* Rosen, *Winning the Next War,* Owen Cote, "The Politics of Innovative Military Doctrine: The U.S. Navy and Fleet Ballistic Missiles," Doctoral Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996; Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Deborah Denise Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons from Peripheral Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Allan Reed Millett and Williamson Murray, eds., *Military Effectiveness,* 3, 3 vols. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Biddle, *Military Power.*

[77] Although some recent scholarship disputes this proposition, the general assessment that organizations are generally resistant to change remains uncontroversial.

[78] See, for example, Barry R. Posen, "Foreword: Military Doctrine and the Management of Uncertainty," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39, 2 (2016), pp. 161-162.

[79] Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine*, p. 44.

Change is viewed with skepticism, because change risks loss of autonomy or reduction in resources.[80]

Building from the fundamental premise that militaries (as organizations) are generally averse to change, the literature on military learning centers on two main debates: wartime learning versus peacetime learning, and internally driven learning versus civilian-imposed learning. The proponents of wartime learning argue that the stakes of conflict raise the imperative "adapt or die,"[81] increase the flow of information that could precipitate course correction,[82] and increase civilian oversight and the likelihood of externally imposed change. According to the wartime learning proponents, the peacetime environment lacks three important catalysts for change: pressing security threats, civilian attention, and information against which to evaluate existing operational concepts. Other scholars argue, however, that the mechanisms cited by the wartime change scholars as catalysts of change actually push instead towards stasis. The stakes of fighting may *discourage* the risks of change mid-fight, while the overwhelming torrents of information in battle flood the system and provide no clear direction for change.[83]

The second debate in the military innovation literature focuses on internally versus externally driven innovation. The civilian intervention school focuses on the role of civilian elites in forcing change within the military.[84] These scholars emphasize civilian intervention during wartime, since civilians pay closer attention to the military when the stakes are raised in war. Wartime raises the stakes of failure for civilian leadership, incentivizing their intervention in

---

[80] Ibid, pp. 45-46.
[81] Williamson Murray, *Military Adaptation in War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 7-12; Rosen, *Winning the Next War*.
[82] Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War,* 3rd Edition (New York: Free Press, 1988); Murray, *Military Adaptation in War*.
[83] Clausewitz, *On War;* Murray, *Military Adaptation in War;* Rosen, *Winning the Next War*, p. 25.
[84] See, for example, Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine;* and Colin Jackson, "Defeat in Victory: Organizational Learning Dysfunction in Counterinsurgency" Doctoral Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2008.

military affairs. Other scholars emphasize innovation from *within* the military. The most prominent variant of thinking in this vein emphasizes the role of military leaders as entrepreneurs.[85] Senior military officers are able to leverage three key resources in service of promoting a change in the organization: (1) control over personnel promotion pathways, (2) control over training, and (3) and control over attitudes. By controlling promotion pathways, senior military leaders can incentivize up and coming officers to endorse their proposed innovations. Military leaders can also shape the design and implementation of training in order to push for new ideas. Finally, leaders may use their personal status and prestige to lend credibility to a proposed innovation. A related body of thought emphasizes the dissemination infrastructure within the military allows for the reinforcement of existing patterns of thinking or the transmission of new ideas.[86]

An important strand of literature examines the question of military innovation in the context of U.S. military doctrine. The study of military doctrine gained traction in the 1980s and was devoted principally to the interrogation of the offensive doctrines that contributed to the outbreak of WWI, and the variation in the military doctrines of the different European powers between the world wars. Most (if not all) academic studies of military doctrine focus on doctrine developed to guide the military in waging war. However, just as the military develops a set of principles about how to fight other militaries, the military has also developed a set of principles about how to build other militaries. It is thus sensible to turn to the literature on the origins of military doctrine for insights into the origins of SFA influence strategies.

---

[85] See for example, Rosen, *Winning the Next War;* Murray, *Military Adaptation in War*; John A. Nagl and Peter J. Schoomaker, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
[86] Eric Heginbotham, "The British and American Armies in World War II: Explaining Variations in Organizational Learning Patterns," Defense and Arms Control Studies Program Working Paper (Cambridge: MIT Center for International Studies, 1996).

The academic literature interrogating the sources of military doctrine can be divided into two general categories of theories. In the first category are what may be called rationalist theories, which attribute the evolution of military doctrine to fluctuations in the balance of power, to attributes of geography or technology, or to learning precipitated by information revealed in war. For instance, in *Sources of Military Doctrine*, Barry Posen evaluates the relative explanatory power of organizational factors and balance of power factors, and though he emphasizes the ways that both sets of factors shaped doctrine and change, he concludes that "balance of power theory is a slightly more powerful tool than organization theory for the study of military doctrine."[87]

The second theory category breaks open the state and emphasizes the organizational interests, dynamics, and machinations of the militaries that produce the doctrines. There are two principle theories of doctrine operating at the organizational level. The first, perhaps best expressed by Posen in *Sources of Military Doctrine* and Jack Snyder in *Ideology of the Offensive*, examines how the interests of the military as an organization, rather than the objectives of the state responsive to balance of power dynamics, create incentive structures and biases that shape the development of military ideologies and doctrines in self-reinforcing spirals. Organizations have preferences for reduction of uncertainty, autonomy, and stasis, and these preferences may explain the development of doctrine and go a long way to explaining its stickiness once formed. The theory I advance in the subsequent section is quite similar to Snyder's expression of organizational ideology. The second organizational-level doctrine explanation focuses on culture as the causal force. Elizabeth Kier argues that military organizations have different worldviews and ideas about how best to conduct their mission, and it is differences in military culture that

[87] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, p. 239.

shapes doctrine.[88] Similarly, Austin Long makes the case that organizational culture shapes the evolution of military doctrine and operations.[89]

SFA has not, to-date, been examined through the lens of military doctrine and innovation. The emerging scholarship examining the ineffectiveness of United States SFA either does not interrogate the sources of United States strategies of influence in SFA, or treats the state as a rational unitary actor and attributes U.S. strategies to U.S. bargaining power, papering over the interests and ideology of the institution responsible for designing and implementing SFA strategy—the United States military.

2.7 The Cult of the Persuasive: Causes of Influence Strategies

Why has persuasion emerged and remained the predominant strategy of influence in U.S. SFA? Why does the United States continue to prefer persuasion and eschew coercion despite the demonstrable and consistent inefficacy of the approach? More broadly, what explains U.S. strategy selection in SFA? Whereas Influence Strategy Theory examined influence strategies as the key explanatory variable for recipient military effectiveness, this section moves a link back in the causal chain and examines influence strategies as the dependent variable.

I offer a theory of strategy selection—The Cult of the Persuasive—that focuses on the institutional interests and resulting ideology of the U.S. Army. The cult of the persuasive theorizes a causal pathway that begins with civilian delegation of the security assistance mission to the U.S. Army, and ends with the strategies of influence employed by individual U.S. Army advisors.

---

[88] Kier, *Imagining War.*
[89] Austin Long, *First War Syndrome: Military Culture, Professionalization, and Counterinsurgency*, Doctoral Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2010.

Washington delegates the security assistance mission to the U.S. Army. In every large-scale case of wartime security assistance, Washington controls the purse strings, but otherwise permits the military broad leeway. After all, what could fall more squarely within the purview of the military than organizing, training, equipping, and advising a partner military? As previously discussed, however, building a partner military is a deeply political project, and one that requires the traditionally civilian competency of achieving influence over partner leaders through non-violent means. While the predominant approach to the security assistance problem in the existing literature identifies the PA problem between the U.S. provider and its local recipient, I highlight a second, crucial PA problem *within* the PA problem—between the U.S. civilian principal in Washington, and its military agent in the field.[90]

Drawing from organizational theory and the military innovation and military doctrine literatures, I argue that the U.S. Army's primary interest in security assistance missions is not to advance its principal's goal of building a stronger partner military, but to minimize disruption of its own bureaucratic machinery. Security assistance is an unpopular task within the U.S. Army—advise and assist missions are dissonant with the military's core identity of fighting and winning the nation's land wars. Security assistance wins the Army no prestige, and because advise and assist missions are relatively low cost, does not secure the Army any resource windfalls. The best the Army can hope for, and the institutional interest the U.S. Army pursues in a given security assistance project, is the smooth function and minimal disruption of its bureaucratic machinery. Security assistance requires the U.S. Army to perform an array of difficult logistical feats, including cycling its personnel in-and-out of theater, disbursing equipment, and putting partner troops through abbreviated basic training. The U.S. Army seeks to get these logistics up and

[90] I thank Associate Professor Theodore McLauchlin (Universite de Montreal) with suggesting this framing.

running with sustainable standard operating procedures (SOPs), and then to keep those SOPs running without headache. The Army also aims to minimize the risk of disruption from two external sources: its security assistance partner, and its civilian principal in Washington.

The U.S. Army has come to rely almost exclusively on teaching and persuasion and to eschew bargaining because teaching and persuasion minimize internal and external disruption, whereas escalation to bargaining risk increased disruption. In security assistance, disruption can come from three sources—from within the Army, from the partner, or from the civilian principal in Washington. Within the U.S. Army, advisors are reluctant to threaten the partner to withdraw forms of assistance because actually following through on the threat would require them to directly disrupt their own painstakingly established SOPs. Better to keep the SOPs running, even if partner defiance renders the SOPs a bridge to nowhere, than to disrupt them in hopes of reconnecting them to the ostensible objective. Pushing hard on the partner to rein in problematic military organizational practices could lead the partner to take action to disrupt U.S. training and advising SOPs.

Coercion of the partner could also lead the military's civilian principal in Washington to disrupt the advisory effort. Coercive episodes could cause ugly conflagrations with the partner that could reach the American press. U.S. security assistance missions are publicly promoted as U.S. efforts to help partners help themselves. News of the partner engaging in rampant corruption, abuse of prisoners, or refusal to fight against the threat U.S. resources are expended to combat, or news of conflict between the U.S. and its "partner," all puncture the U.S. narrative legitimating the assistance in the first place. Such headlines could cause the public to question the wisdom of the mission, to redirect Washington's attention to the advisory effort, and precipitate Washington's intrusion into and disruption of the military's approach to the problem.

Indignant local partners could also complain about U.S. advisors' pressure tactics directly to the U.S. ambassador or to other civilian leaders, which could also put the advisory mission back on the civilian desk.

In contrast, by relying on the teaching and persuasion rungs of the influence escalation ladder, the U.S. Army can avoid disrupting its own SOPs, can avoid provoking the partner to disruptive action, and can maintain an appearance of comity with the partner in order to preserve the perception in Washington that all is well, thus maintaining low interest by a civilian principal that tends to assume the U.S. Army has the project well enough in hand unless confronted with front-page reasons to think otherwise.

Over time, in a kind of "ideational Darwinism," ideas are debated within the institution, ideas that threaten the institutional interests of the Army are selected out, and ideas that advance institutional interests survive and harden into doctrine.[91] Proponents of persuasion within the Army espoused the normative belief that teaching and persuasion are the *appropriate* strategies of influence to shape the behavior of allies, partners, and "friends." Proponents of persuasion poison the strategies of bargaining or direct command by associating them with normatively bad concepts such as colonialism, "bribery," "transactionalism," "imperialism," "coercion," and "bullying." Proponents also promote the causal belief that rapport-based persuasion is an *effective* strategy of influence, and that escalation to bargaining is likely to backfire. Over time, proponents of bargaining and direct command are sidelined, while proponents of teaching and

---

[91] Definitions of doctrine vary widely, but they all boil down to guiding ideas about how to organize military behavior in pursuit of military objectives. Many scholars define doctrine as ideas about how to fight. These definitions are problematically restrictive, however, given that most of what militaries actually do is cooperate with partner militaries, and militaries have developed ideas to guide cooperation just as they have developed ideas to guide war. Doctrine may later evolve into ideology. The line between doctrine and ideology is fuzzy. I conceptualize the distinction as an imperviousness to information that suggests innovation. Doctrine embraced despite evidence suggesting its efficacy has become ideology. For a helpful conceptualization and precise definition of "ideology," see Teun A. Van Dijk, "Ideology and Discourse Analysis," *Journal of Political Ideologies,* 11, 2 (2006), pp. 115-140.

persuasion are rewarded.

As implied by the evolution metaphor, this theory does not rely on deliberate instrumentalism by key leaders within the organization. Rather, ideas bounce around, and leaders consciously or unconsciously elevate those that advance the interests of the guild. As the proponents of persuasion win the competition of ideas within the Army, they institutionalize their ideas through a variety of informal mechanisms ranging from briefings to recommended readings, and they enshrine them in doctrine. The period of debate fades into the past, and doctrine evolves into reflexive gospel—*the cult of the persuasive*.

The ineffectiveness of a persuasion-only approach relative to the full escalation ladder does not lead the U.S. Army to innovate (escalate up the ladder) because failure to coax partner militaries to take necessary steps to improve their militaries does not threaten the Army's institutional interests. Rampant corruption and coup-proofing at the highest echelon of the partner's political-military establishment may fundamentally destroy prospects for any real progress in the security assistance mission mandated from Washington, but these issues are largely irrelevant to the military's objective of sustaining its SOPs without disruption. The military insulates itself against civilian intervention by generating metrics designed to project an *appearance* of security assistance progress to Washington, and, when that appearance is punctured by undeniable and dramatic failures (as in Iraq in 2014), by leaning on a permission structure for failure: consider the refrain "It is up to Iraqis to build Iraq," or, more generally, "We can't want it more than they do."

For their part, civilian leaders in the executive and legislative branches may express skepticism or even frustration, but norms of deference to the commander in the theater and to the military generally, information asymmetries between civilians and military leaders, and a

political appetite for happy talk, all combine to mute the civilian intrusion necessary for meaningful military innovation. An additional, crucial permissive condition for continued civilian deference to the military has to do with the relatively low stakes of security assistance. Civilians tend to pay closer attention and maintain tighter control of military strategy the higher the stakes involved (consider civilian efforts to keep control of nuclear strategy). In security assistance, the worst-case scenarios are not existential. If the partner military fails, the United States can intervene directly to manage the threat that motivated the security assistance. Alternatively, it can decide that the threat is not worth further attention, distant as it is from American shores. With a civilian principal disinterested in delving into the details, even in cases of clear security assistance failure, the military has no incentive to introspect and change course. Bureaucracy does its thing.

Given the pattern of variation described in the previous section—the disappearance of bargaining and direct command in Vietnam and thereafter—this study expects to see the cult of the persuasive take hold in Vietnam. In cases of security assistance before Vietnam, it expects U.S. strategy selection to operate largely according to the logic of a rational actor framework: U.S. military advisors tasked with building partner militaries before Vietnam should respond to revealed information suggesting the ineffectiveness of persuasion in the absence of bargaining or direct command, by escalating to bargaining and/or direct command. In Vietnam and thereafter, in contrast, U.S. military advisors tasked with building partner militaries should prioritize the institutional interests of the U.S. Army over the national objective of building a stronger partner military, doubling down on the persuasion approach despite clear and consistent information revealing its ineffectiveness.

Otherwise put, this study pits the rationalist model against the cult of the persuasive,[92] and expects the rationalist model to better explain strategy selection in pre-Vietnam cases, and the cult of the persuasive to better explain strategy selection in Vietnam and thereafter.

This study does not argue that any generalizable theory can explain the precise timing of the U.S. shift from the rationalist model to the Cult of the Persuasive between Korea and Vietnam. Conclusive explanation for the shift is beyond the scope of the study. However, initial research suggests several plausible hypotheses to explain why the cult of the persuasive took root in Vietnam and not before: the U.S. Army's transformation in response to the acute institutional threat posed by the Eisenhower Administration's "New Look" in the 1950s, the scale and duration of the advisory effort in Vietnam, and the increasing volume of U.S. Containment legitimation strategies over the course of the late 1950s and 1960s. I explore these hypotheses in more depth in the concluding chapter of the study. For the empirical chapters, I focus on testing the rationalist model against the cult of the persuasive within in each individual case.

In summary, the Cult of the Persuasive theory outlines a causal pathway that begins with Washington's delegation of the security assistance mission to the U.S. military and ends with the strategies of influence employed by U.S. military advisors. The United States does not fail to influence partners to build better militaries because it lacks visibility, bargaining power, or clear information regarding the ineffectiveness of persuasion. The U.S. Army eschews conditionality because it has embraced an ideology of persuasion that evolved to serve and continues to serve its institutional interests.

---

[92] This "horse race" approach to theory-testing resembles Barry Posen's approach in Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine*.

2.8 Research Design

This study highlights the centrality of U.S. influence strategies to security assistance outcomes, defines a four-rung influence escalation ladder, and theorizes the consequences and then the causes of United States choices to escalate up the ladder. Influence Strategy Theory argues that escalation to bargaining or direct command is an important ingredient for effective influence over recipient military organizational practices and improved recipient military effectiveness. With respect to strategy selection, I argue that while a rational actor model best explains pre-Vietnam U.S. security assistance strategy, the United States' puzzling preference for persuasion beginning in Vietnam and persisting through the contemporary period is best explained by the development of an institutionally advantageous ideology within the U.S. military—The Cult of the Persuasive.

Case Selection and Method of Inference

I test both theories against alternative explanations with structured case comparisons of U.S. efforts to build the Republic of Korea Army (1948 – 1953), the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (1954 – 1973), and the Iraqi Army (2003 – 2011). I select these three cases on the basis of several criteria. First, they span the entire post-WWII period, permitting me to test my temporal predictions regarding a period preceding and a period following the development of an institutional ideology within the United States military. Second, these cases are selected because in each case, the objective of building a stronger recipient military was of great importance to the United States. SFA was not necessarily the most important objective in the theater at the time (though often it was), but the United States placed greater value on the improvement of partner military forces in these cases than in most others. This matters for the theory, because the greater

civilian concern for the outcome of SFA, the harder the test of a theory that begins from the premise of civilian delegation and deference. A finding in support of the cult of the persuasive in Vietnam and Iraq is stronger evidence for the theory than in cases where U.S. civilian leadership paid much less attention, where military institutional interests are even more likely to go unchecked.

Third, the cases are most-different cases in the sense of regional and temporal diversity, as well as diversity in terms of the threats the recipient militaries were built to combat. By examining hard tests and most-different cases, I thoroughly probe both the internal and the external validity of the cult of the persuasive. The fourth criterion was data availability. The fifth and final criterion was the intrinsic importance of these cases. The Iraq case is of particular importance from a policy perspective, because current security assistance efforts in the Department of Defense draw heavily from the experience of advisors in Iraq. One ambition of this study is thus to help the United States Government guard against mislearning the lessons of Iraq and surface useful insights.

I apply the George and Bennett structured, focused approach of applying standardized question sets to each case. So doing permits me to "standardize data collection, thereby making systematic comparison and cumulation of findings of the cases possible."[93] By being explicit about the kinds of evidence that would strengthen or weaken the theories relative to alternative theories, I guard against coding bias that might otherwise derail the analysis. By diving deeply into three cases, I am able to conduct rigorous process tracing in order to assess the explanatory power of the cult of the persuasive against alternative explanations. In each within-case analysis, critical junctures in which U.S. bargaining power and U.S. institutional ideology predict different

---

[93] Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Belfer Center Studies in International Security, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), p. 67.

observable implications permit me to determine which theory has more explanatory power in the given case, while holding all of the theater-specific variables constant. In the parlance of case study analysis, I supplement the most-different case design approach of the between case comparison, with the most-similar case design of each within-case comparison.

I employ the congruence method to test Influence Strategy Theory in each case. As previously noted, IST connects U.S. influence strategies to recipient battlefield effectiveness through two predicted links. First, it predicts that when the U.S. military relies exclusively on teaching and persuasion, recipients are more likely to ignore U.S. advice, whereas when it employs the full escalation ladder, recipients are more likely to follow U.S. advice and take steps to improve their military organizational practices. Second, it predicts that recipient defiance of U.S. advice should lead to poor performance on the battlefield, whereas recipient implementation of U.S. advice regarding best military organizational practices should improve the performance of their militaries on the battlefield.

In each case, I code U.S. influence strategies, recipient compliance or defiance with U.S. advice regarding military organizational practices, and recipient battlefield effectiveness. I then establish congruence across both predicted links in the causal chain. By testing for congruence across both links in the causal chain across three most-different cases, I strengthen confidence in the explanatory power of IST.

Measurement and Coding

Before I can test the two theories outlined above, I must first establish a systematic approach to measuring the key variables. I develop an approach to coding the four rungs of the influence escalation ladder, and I adopt and adapt Caitlin Talmadge's operationalization and

measurement strategy for both military organizational practices and battlefield effectiveness variables.[94]

INFLUENCE STRATEGIES

The four rungs in the influence escalation ladder are teaching, persuasion, bargaining, and direct command. I distinguish one rung from another by asking the following series of simple, standardized questions:

CODING INFLUENCE STRATEGIES
Teaching
1. Do U.S. personnel provide information intended to inform and educate recipient leaders as to the military organizational practices that will best advance military effectiveness?
Persuasion
2. Do U.S. personnel seek to convince recipient leaders that making better decisions with respect to military organizational practices is a) the "right" (in a normative sense) thing to do or; b) in their own personal or professional interests?
3. Do U.S. personnel provide no-strings carrots designed to encourage recipients to improve their military organizational practices?
4. Do U.S. personnel seek to show recipients "what right looks like" to inspire emulation?
5. Do U.S. personnel aim to build relationships with recipient leaders in the hopes that these relationships will cause recipients to implement more military organizational practices?

[94] Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army*.

CODING INFLUENCE STRATEGIES (CONTINUED)
Bargaining
6. Do U.S. personnel promise carrots if recipients demonstrate improved military organizational practices?
7. Do U.S. personnel threaten sticks if recipients do not demonstrate improved military organizational practices?
8. Do U.S. personnel make good on their promises to provide carrots?
9. Do U.S. personnel make good on their threats to impose sticks?
Direct Command
10. Do U.S. officers replace partner officers to take direct command of partner military units or militaries?

I conceptualize these influence strategies as logically akin to an "escalation ladder." If, in a given episode of bargaining (for instance, a U.S. theater commander seeks to convince a recipient division commander to remove an incompetent brigade commander), I find I can answer "yes" only to Question one, I will code the influence strategy for that particular episode of bargaining as teaching. If I answer "yes" to Question one, and to any of Questions two through five but not questions six through ten, I will code that strategy as a persuasion strategy of influence. If I answer "yes" to questions six through nine (but not ten), then I will code the strategy as bargaining, even if persuasion is also employed.

I aggregate specific episodes of bargaining up in order to code larger periods of U.S. influence in SFA as teaching, persuasion, bargaining, or direct command. I would code a period of influence as a persuasion period if, upon examination of key episodes of bargaining within that period, I answered "yes" to questions two through five but "no" to questions six through nine for most of the episodes. I would code a period of influence as a bargaining period if

examination of constituent bargaining episodes led to a majority of "yes" answers for questions six through nine.

Further complicating the coding of influence strategies is the layered nature of U.S. influence in SFA. To simplify the complexity, the U.S. exerts influence over recipients at the commander level and at the advisor level. At the commander level, U.S. general officers may aim to teach, persuade, or pressure recipient heads of state and senior military commanders to implement professional military organizational practices. At the advisor level, embedded U.S. advisors may aim to teach, persuade, or pressure recipient brigade, battalion, and division commanders to implement professional military organizational practices. The approaches at the strategic level and at the tactical level may differ.

RECEPTIVITY TO U.S. ADVICE

Recipient receptivity to U.S. advice regarding military organizational practices is the critical intervening variable linking provider influence strategies to recipient battlefield effectiveness. In SFA, the U.S. seeks to influence the personnel patterns, training regimens, command structures, and information management implemented by recipient political and military leaders. Otherwise put, improved recipient military organizational practices are the object of U.S. teaching, persuasion, bargaining, or direct command.

I adapt Talmadge's system for coding recipient receptivity to U.S. guidance regarding military organizational practices. Talmadge provides a systematic framework for measuring and coding military organizational practices on a spectrum from "worst" to "best."[95]

[95] Caitlin Talmadge, *Explaining Military Effectiveness: Intervention and Battlefield Performance*, Doctoral Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2011, p. 45.

Coding Military Organizational Practices[96]
Promotion Patterns
What are the primary criteria for promotion in the senior officer corps, junior officer corps, NCO corps, and among enlisted personnel?
What is the relative weight given to political loyalty versus demonstrated military competence in the promotion process?
How important are sectarian background and/or ideological credentials for advancement?
Is a strong performance in training or on the battlefield good, bad, or irrelevant for an officer's prospects for advancement?
Are there mass firings that amount to purges, and if so, how large and how often?
Resource Allocation
To what extent are critical decisions regarding defense budgeting and procurement process based on operational need versus opportunities for graft?
Are resources distributed down the chain of command according to need or hoarded for personal enrichment?
Command Structures
Are there clear, institutionalized procedures for decision-making during training and fighting? Are they followed?
To what extent does senior leadership violate the official chain of command and directly command operations on the battlefield?
To what extent are commanders responsive to others outside their chain of command? Or unresponsive to their own chain of command?
How many layers of approval are required before commanders can make tactical decisions in training or on the battlefield?
Training Regimens
Is training rigorous and intensive, or largely perfunctory?
Is training realistic? How closely does it mirror the battlefield environment?
Is training discipline exercised? Are junior officers or enlisted punished for absenteeism or perfunctory training? Are more senior commanders punished for perfunctory training regimens?
Does the content of the training remain static, or does it evolve in response to evolving need?

[96] See Talmadge, *Explaining Military Effectiveness*, p. 45.

Building from this starting point, I conceptualize the IST intervening variable as the extent to which recipient civilian and military leaders comply with or defy U.S. guidance with respect to personnel practices, resource allocation, training regimens, command structures, and information management. I code compliance on defiance as a simple binary. The key distinction between recipient defiance and compliance is whether or not the individual that receives advice from a U.S. advisor actually implements that advice. The term "defiance" is thus an umbrella that includes the range of individual responses from open and adversarial refusals to follow U.S. advice, to individuals who might nod their heads as if in agreement, but then quietly neglect to follow through. If the individual does not implement the advice, I code that individual "defiant," and U.S. influence efforts as having failed. If the individual does implement the advice, I code the individual "compliant," and the advisor's influence strategy as having succeeded.

If recipient civilian and military leaders comply with U.S. efforts to convince them to promote meritocratically, root out corruption, train rigorously, follow the chain of command, and flow information across the organization, U.S. influence strategies, I consider U.S. influence strategies successful. If recipient civilian and military leaders defy U.S. efforts in these areas, I code U.S. influence strategies as unsuccessful. When U.S. influence strategies are unsuccessful, recipient military organizational practices will be poor and battlefield effectiveness will stagnate or deteriorate. When U.S. influence strategies are successful, recipient military organizational practices will improve and battlefield effectiveness will improve.

It is important to flag an important premise built into this framing—that the U.S. actually seeks to shape recipient military organizational practices. If the U.S. does not instruct, cajole, or pressure recipient leaders to promote meritocratically, then it would not make sense to discuss recipient compliance with or defiance of U.S. guidance in this area. I will demonstrate in my

empirical work, however, that in fact the U.S. does often seek to shape recipient military organizational practices.

It is also important to recognize that military organizational practices are not the only sets of recipient decisions that the U.S. might try to shape. For instance, U.S. civilian and military leaders might seek to convince recipient leaders to contribute units to particular battles, or to share intelligence with the U.S. Although there is no reason the logic of IST should not apply to these sets of decisions, they fall outside the scope of this particular study, which focuses exclusively on the recipient decision-sets that determine the effectiveness of their militaries and the success or failure of U.S. SFA efforts.

BATTLEFIELD EFFECTIVENESS

The battlefield effectiveness of recipient militaries is the ultimate outcome motivating this study. With respect to measurement of battlefield effectiveness, I adopt and adapt the measurement strategy employed by Caitlin Talmadge. Talmadge develops the following series of "yes no" questions to determine whether military units exhibit unit cohesion, tactical proficiency, and capacity to conduct complex operations:

Coding the IST Outcome Variable: Battlefield Effectiveness[97]
Unit Cohesion
Do units stand and fight when they encounter the enemy?
What are the rates of surrender? Desertion from the battlefield?
Do soldiers follow orders under fire?
Does the severity of enemy attacks or the privations of the battlefield environment affect the answers to the above?
Tactical Proficiency
Do units demonstrate the ability to handle their weapons properly?
Are units familiar with their equipment?
Are soldiers able to use terrain for cover and concealment?
Can the unit execute an ambush? A static defense? Orderly retreats? A pre-planned attritional offense?
Complex Operations
Can the unit conduct combined arms operations? Inter-service operations? Division-size or larger operations?
Among defensive operations, is the unit able to conduct a defense-in-depth? Fighting withdrawals? Counter-attacks?
Among offensive operations, is it able to conduct maneuver operations? Small unit special forces operations?
To what extent does the unit demonstrate a capacity for both low-level initiative and high-level coordination?

Militaries and military units are excellent if they are coherent, tactically proficient, and able to engage in complex operations. Militaries and military units are adequate if they are coherent and demonstrate basic tactical proficiency, but lack the ability to conduct complex operations. They are mediocre if they remain coherent but do not demonstrate basic tactical competence. Militaries and military units are poor if they do not remain coherent in battle, quickly collapsing or retreating upon encountering the enemy.

[97] See Talmadge, *Explaining Military Effectiveness,* p. 18.

Building from this coding framework, U.S. SFA is successful to the extent that recipient militaries move up the rungs from poor, to mediocre, to adequate, to excellent. SFA fails when recipient leaders remain stagnant at the same level of effectiveness or drop one or more rungs on the ladder.

There is an important question of durability when it comes to measuring the effectiveness of U.S. SFA. If the U.S. is able to help a recipient military move from poor to adequate, but then that military deteriorates back to poor after the U.S. ceases to provide assistance, does that "count" as successful SFA? I scope analysis of U.S. SFA to the period of actual assistance. If the U.S. is able to help a recipient military move up a rung in the ladder, I code that a success, even if the military quickly deteriorates after U.S. withdrawal. To illustrate, if I were to find that the Iraqi Army had moved from poor military effectiveness in 2006 to adequate effectiveness in 2011 (prior to U.S. withdrawal), and deteriorated back to poor only in the 2011-2014 period, then I would code U.S. SFA in the 2006-2011 period a success. I therefore err systematically in my coding towards generously coding the success of U.S. SFA. As the empirical chapters of this study suggest, there are relatively few success stories in U.S. SFA by even this sympathetic metric.

To conduct a decisive test of the Cult of the Persuasive against a rationalist alternative explanation in each case, I subject each case to a standardized set of five questions.

Testing Theories of Strategy Selection Rational Actor Model Versus Cult of the Persuasive		
Indicator Question	**Rational Actor Model Expectation**	**Cult of the Persuasive Expectation**
1. *Do the senior officers in theater optimize the advisory effort to goals set in Washington?*	Yes	No
2. *How do the senior officers instruct the advisors under their command?*	To do what is necessary to accomplish the mission	To do what is necessary to maintain comity with the counterpart
3. *How do the advisors evaluate the progress of the advisory mission?*	Aggressively, rigorously, objectively	Sparingly and in a manner designed to project an appearance of progress
4. *Does the U.S. military innovate in response to evidence of ineffective influence strategies?*	Yes	No
5. *How do the advisors explain their influence strategy selection?*	In strategic terms	In normative and/or careerist terms

The questions generate conflicting sets of observable implications, permitting a test of the relative explanatory power of the rational actor model against the Cult of the Persuasive.

<u>Data</u>

First coding and then testing the consequences and causes of U.S. influence strategies in security assistance requires high-resolution qualitative data. There is a great deal of archival material available for analysis in each case. I draw on the papers of General James A. Van Fleet and the records of the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG) to inform analysis of U.S. security assistance in Korea. The Pentagon Papers provide a critical window into U.S. strategy in Vietnam, and oral histories of former embedded advisors in Vietnam provide insights into the minds of the advisors.

For the Iraq case, I draw on tens of thousands of documents recently declassified with the 2016 publication of the *UK's Chilcot Report* and the January 2019 publication of the U.*S. Army in the Iraq War* histories, still largely untapped by social science researchers.[98] The *Combat Studies Institute's* Operational Leadership Experiences (OLE) oral histories project provides insight into the experiences of the embedded advisors in Iraq. I reviewed 317 oral histories given by former embedded advisors in Iraq for the OLE project.[99] For the Iraq case, I conduct over 150 original, semi-structured interviews with subjects including the commanding generals of Multi-National Force-Iraq, embedded U.S. advisors, and Iraqi general officers, over the course of fieldwork in Iraq, Jordan, Washington, DC, and over the Zoom virtual platform.

<u>*Alternative Explanations*</u>

Within each case study, I examine several additional alternative explanations. In the Korea case, I explore the possibility that Republic of Korea (ROK) compliance with U.S. advice had less to do with U.S. influence strategies than with interest convergence between the United States and the ROK. I find that unusual convergence of influence in Korea did make the U.S. military's task of influencing ROK leaders to implement U.S. advice easier than it would be in subsequent cases, but that escalation to bargaining and direct command were still necessary to

---

[98] The *Iraq Inquiry* and all of the associated documents can be found and reviewed here: https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123123237tf_/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/. *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1: Invasion – Insurgency – Civil War, 2003-2006*, can be found and reviewed here: https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1373. *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal*, can be found here: https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1376.
The CENTCOM Iraq Papers are available for review here: https://ahec.armywarcollege.edu/CENTCOM-IRAQ- papers/index.cfm.

[99] These oral histories are available digitally through the Ike Skelton Research Library Digital Library and can be found and reviewed here: http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p4013coll13. Using a variety of search terms, I have identified and reviewed 317 oral histories with American personnel involved in US SFA, most of them embedded advisors with the advisory teams.

incentivize President Rhee in particular to refrain from undermining the development of the ROK Army. I also examine the possibility that the U.S. Eighth Army's efforts to build the ROKA were motivated largely by the immediate stakes of ROKA competence for the physical survival of U.S. Eighth Army units on the frontlines.

In the Vietnam and Iraq cases, I examine four alternative explanations of strategy selection, each of which argues that the United States military does, in fact, operate as a loyal agent of its civilian principal in the conduct of security assistance (contrary to the expectations of the Cult of the Persuasive). First, I examine the possibility that the U.S. military lacked the capacity to observe the ineffectiveness of persuasion in Vietnam and Iraq and thus had no reason to change course. I find strong evidence against this possibility in both cases. Second, I explore the argument that the U.S. military had no choice but to rely on persuasion in Vietnam and Iraq because interest divergence between the United States and recipient leaders was too high and U.S. bargaining power too limited for the U.S. military to bargain effectively. I find that though interest divergence was indeed high in both Iraq and Vietnam, the United States squandered its leverage by consistently choosing to assure its highly dependent clients of its support, rather than leveraging its clients' dependence to incentivize compliance. The relevant question is not whether the United States could have gotten everything it wanted from the GVN and the Iraqi governments. I do not argue that it could. Rather, I argue that, had it bargained, it would likely have secured significantly more compliance with respect to the development of the ARVN and the new Iraqi Army, which would likely have translated into significantly better battlefield performance by both armies.

Third, I examine the possibility that while persuasion may indeed have been suboptimal for the development of the partner military, it was necessary to rely on persuasion in order to

advance the United States' larger objectives in the broader theater. In Vietnam, I find evidence against the argument that rationally acting generals could have concluded that reliance on persuasion was necessary to advance the counterinsurgency effort in Vietnam, or the United States' Cold War strategy of Containment more broadly. In Iraq, I find evidence against the argument that a rationally acting general could have concluded that eschewing coercion was critical to advance the so-called "antibodies" theory of third-party counterinsurgency.

The fourth and final possibility I explore is that indeed the U.S. military was not inclined to build stronger militaries in Vietnam or Iraq, but its disinclination did not mark a *departure* from the interests of its civilian principal, but in fact *served* its civilian principal's domestic political interests. In both Vietnam and Iraq, much ink has been spilled to illustrate how U.S. presidents were highly concerned about the domestic political consequences of developments in the wars, and sought to project an appearance of progress to the electorate. However, while Presidents Nixon and Obama aimed primarily (if not solely) to leave Vietnam and Iraq (respectively), Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Bush (and their secretaries of defense) actually wanted the U.S. military to accomplish its objectives, particularly the goal of building local security forces capable of shouldering the burden of security themselves. In both Vietnam and Iraq, there were repeated disputes between theater commanders on the one hand, and secretaries of defense and presidents on the other. Civilians pressed theater commanders for a more coercive approach to the local partner. Theater commanders doubled down on persuasion, and the civilians ultimately deferred to the theater commanders. The discord between civilian principal and military agent, but ultimate deference by the former to the latter, aligns with the expectations of the Cult of the Persuasive.

Chapter 3: Building the Republic of Korea Army (1948 – 1953)

The United States' effort to build an army in the Republic of Korea (ROK) is a security assistance success story. The Republic of Korea Army that bore the brunt of the Chinese Summer Offensive in May and June 1953 was far superior to the ROK Army that took flight in the June 1950 invasion, and much of the change was attributable to U.S. assistance. Although the scale of the U.S. advisory effort in South Korea was substantial, it paled in comparison to subsequent, far larger, far longer, far less successful U.S. advisory efforts in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. What explains the United States' success building a military in South Korea?

This study argues that an overlooked determinant of U.S. security assistance outcomes is the U.S. military's approach to the central problem of interest divergence between provider and recipient. Recipients of U.S. assistance are often not deeply, exclusively, or in some cases even remotely interested in building militaries that can fight, and may choose to take U.S. assistance but ignore U.S. advice, implementing policies that keep their militaries weak. As outlined in Chapter 2, Influence Strategy Theory predicts that when U.S. advisors rely exclusively on teaching and persuasion to influence recipient leaders, recipient leaders are more likely to ignore U.S. advice and their militaries are less likely to improve. In contrast, when U.S. advisors escalate from teaching and persuasion to bargaining and direct command, recipient leaders are more likely to comply with U.S. advice, and recipient militaries are more likely to improve.

Chapter 2 then moved a step back in the causal chain to theorize U.S. strategy selection. The chapter laid out two alternative models of strategy selection—a rational actor model, and the Cult of the Persuasive. U.S. advisors selecting strategies according to the logic of the rational actor model operate as dedicated servants of their civilian principal in Washington, implementing the strategies of influence that best advance the national goal of building a

stronger recipient military. In contrast, the Cult of the Persuasive expects the military to pursue its parochial institutional interests, to develop doctrine and to institutionalize an ideology of persuasion that advances those interests, and for individual advisors to rely on persuasion out of conformity or genuine subscription to the ideology that ideology. Observing the frequent exercise use of coercion in China, Greece, and South Korea, and the disappearance of coercion in Vietnam and subsequent cases, Chapter 2 theorized that the cult of the persuasive took hold in Vietnam. This study therefore expects strategy selection in Korea to conform to the expectations of the rational actor model.

This chapter tests the explanatory power of IST and the rational actor model in the case of the U.S. effort to build the Republic of Korea Army.

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. First, I provide an overview of the advisory effort in Korea to contextualize analysis of the U.S. approach to the influence problem. Second, I code the influence strategies employed by the U.S. advisors in Korea. I find that the most senior U.S. advisors in Korea—the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG) Chiefs and the Eighth Army Commanders—began with persuasion but also escalated to bargaining and direct command. Likewise, the KMAG advisors that embedded down to the battalion level within the ROK Army began with teaching and persuasion but escalated to coercion as necessary to secure compliance.

Third, I test the central predictions of IST. The evidence from Korea is largely congruent with IST's central predictions: ROK leaders largely complied with U.S. advice delivered via escalation ladder, ROK military organizational practices improved, and the ROK Army improved on the battlefield. As this chapter will illustrate, interests between the United States and President Syngman Rhee were more closely aligned between June 1950 and May 1951 than

U.S.-recipient interests in subsequent advisory efforts (or in Korea before and after this brief period). For this reason, Rhee complied with persuasion more often than IST would expect. He invited an extraordinary degree of American control over the ROK Army after the invasion, because he understood his total reliance on the United States for the survival of the ROK, and had less reason to fear the development of a competent national army than leaders in Vietnam and Iraq later would. However, there were plenty of disagreements between the United States and Rhee regarding the development of the ROK Army, particularly after the initiation of negotiations, and, in keeping with IST, the U.S. military still had to escalate to bargaining and direct command to secure ROK cooperation.

Fourth, I examine U.S. strategy selection, testing the relative explanatory power of the rational actor model against the Cult of the Persuasive. I find that a nascent ideology of advising emphasizing the normative and effective superiority of persuasion over coercion permeated the KMAG. However, and in keeping with the expectations of the rational actor model, U.S. advisors in Korea prioritized the national objective of building a stronger ROK Army above any ideological leanings, escalating from persuasion to coercion as they judged necessary to advance their mission. Fifth, I explore an alternative argument for ROK compliance—that ROK compliance with U.S. advice had less to do with U.S. influence strategies than with the overriding shared interest between patron and client in preventing the fall of Seoul. I find that shared interest indeed contributed to Rhee's willingness to follow U.S. advice, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the invasion, but that U.S. escalation to bargaining and direct command was still necessary. I also examine the possibility that the behavior of the U.S. Eighth Army had less to do with diligent implementation of Washington's direction, than with the direct, physical threat collapse of ROKA units posed to U.S. units. I find support for this possibility, and argue

that this motivation does not contradict, but in fact complements the rational actor argument for U.S. strategy selection. The chapter concludes with summary and discussion.

3.1 Background: The Evolution of the U.S. Advisory Effort in Korea

This study examines the U.S. effort to build the Republic of Korea (ROK) Army between the founding of the Republic of Korea in August 1948 and the Korean Armistice Agreement of July 1953. The purpose and contours of the U.S. advisory mission shifted abruptly in the wake of the invasion from the north and transformed again after the entrance of the Chinese and the war's evolution into slower, limited war to maximize political leverage in stalled negotiations. A thorough accounting of the Korean War is beyond the scope of this study. This section provides only that context most directly pertinent to this study's focus on U.S. efforts to influence ROK political and military leaders to build a better army.

The Genesis: USAMGIK and the Birth of the Constabulary (September 1945 – August 1948)

The Republic of Korea Army evolved from a small constabulary developed under the U.S. occupation in the wake of World War II. On September 9, 1945, Lieutenant General John Reed Hodge landed at Incheon to receive the surrender of all Japanese forces in Korea. Hodge served as military governor of southern Korea until ROK independence on August 15, 1948. He set up the Department of National Defense (soon renamed the Department of Internal Security to appease Soviet sensitivity to the word "National") and appointed Colonel Arthur Champeny its first director. USAMGIK walked a difficult tightrope. On the one hand, the United States sought to build defense forces in Korea capable of maintaining internal security and deterring external aggression. On the other hand, Washington sought to avoid the charge from the Soviet Union

that the United States was building a separate regime in the south. Secretary of State George C. Marshall thus directed USAMGIK to develop defense forces in Korea, but not to use the word "army." To that end, Hodge directed Champeny to develop and implement a plan to establish the nucleus for a Korean national defense force and "prepare for the eventual independence of Korea" without provoking the Soviet Union. Champeny's "Bamboo Plan" laid out a vision for a "Constabulary" of 25,000 men to assist the local police in maintaining internal security. The Constabulary, under the command of American Lieutenant Colonel Russell Barros, began activating units in January 1946.[100]

Barros, Champeny (and in May his successor Lieutenant Colonel Terrill Eyre Price) and a team of several dozen American advisors—most notably Captain James Hausman—managed the recruitment, organization, equipment, and training of the new Constabulary. Champeny focused his energies in particular on producing South Korean officers. He established an Officer Training School (OTS), and hurriedly rushed recruits through. The Constabulary grew quickly, from approximately 5,000 men in August 1946, to 10,000 in April 1947, to 15,000 by July 1947.[101] Most of the officers in the new Constabulary and some of the recruits had service in the Japanese Army. During this period, Hodge began to transition command authority from the Americans to the Koreans—Barros stepped aside as chief of the Constabulary in November 1946 to make room for south Korean Lieutenant Colonel Song Ho-song. Meanwhile, the number of American advisors fell to around ten—one per regiment.[102]

---

[100] Bryan Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War: The American Advisory Mission from 1946-53* (Doctoral Thesis, Ohio State University, 2004, p. 30.
[101] Ibid, pp. 53-54; Headquarters, United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea, Historical Report, 2, U.S. Army in Korea and Military Advisory Group Korea, Historical Reports, 1949, Army – AG Command Reports, 1949-1954, Record Group 407, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland; KMAG Historical Report 2; Robert K. Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War* (Washington DC: US Army Center for Military History, 1962), p. 26.
[102] Allen R. Millett, "Captain James H. Hausman and the Formation of the Korean Army, 1945-1950," *Armed Forces & Society*, 23, 4, July 1, 1997, p. 514.

The nascent Constabulary was engaged in near-constant combat from its inception to its reconstitution as the Republic of Korea Army in August 1948. Escalating social unrest in 1946 erupted into the Autumn Harvest Uprising across the southern provinces of Korea. In the rush to produce Constabulary officers, USAMGIK abandoned any effort to screen recruits for competence or loyalty to the occupation government. Soon, Constabulary units sympathetic to the communist resistance joined the anti-USAMGIK forces.[103] Unrest and political violence percolated over the next 18 months and escalated into civil war in the Spring of 1948. In early April, guerillas, with inside help from within the Constabulary, conducted coordinated attacks on twenty-four police stations on the island of Cheju-do, killing dozens of policemen. A loyal Constabulary company reinforced the police and managed to put a lid on the disorganized rebellion, brutalizing the civilian population in the process.[104]

In December 1947, General Douglas MacArthur (then-Commander in Chief of the United States Far East Command) and General Hodge decided to transform the Constabulary into a proper army. Their decision stemmed from their assessment that the Constabulary was ill-prepared to maintain security within southern Korea or to defend against external aggression once American combat forces completed their planned withdrawal in 1949. With a national army in mind, MacArthur and Hodge aimed to expand the Constabulary to 50,000, to equip it with heavy infantry weapons, light artillery, and light armored vehicles, and to reorganize and retrain it to fight as divisions in modern conventional combat.[105] Plans to reorganize and retrain the Constabulary were continually disrupted, however, by insurrection and guerilla warfare throughout 1948. As the South Korean Labor Party (SKLP) orchestrated attacks and raids against

---

[103] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 50.
[104] Millett, "Hausman," pp. 519-521.
[105] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 54.

factories, the police, and voter registration facilities, the Constabulary set training aside for near-continuous counter-guerilla combat.

In the midst of this political violence, newly elected president Syngman Rhee proclaimed the inauguration of the Republic of Korea on August 15, 1948. The USAMGIK terminated its operations, Hodge left Korea, the advisors of the DIS were reassigned to the Provisional Military Advisory Group (PMAG) under the command of Brigadier General William L. Roberts, and the Constabulary (which had grown to approximately 30,000 men) was absorbed into a Republic of Korea Army.

Independence to Invasion (August 1948 – June 1950)

This study starts the clock on analysis of the U.S. advisory effort in Korea with the independence of Republic of Korea and the termination of USAMGIK in August 1948. With Korean independence, the Americans no longer wielded direct control over the administration of the country or the development of its security forces. Song Ho-song had already replaced Lieutenant Colonel Barros as head of the Korean Constabulary, and now Rhee replaced Hodge as the final authority below the 38th parallel. Beginning in August 1948, then, American influence over the development of the ROKA was indirect. In the 22 months between the inauguration of the Republic of Korea and 25 June 1950, the PMAG and its successor the U.S. Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea (KMAG) tried to transform the Constabulary into a modern army—the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA). During this period, American leadership in Washington continued to try to maintain a delicate balance—the United States wanted a ROKA equipped for conventional defense, but not one strong enough to feed President Rhee's ambition to reunify the peninsula under Seoul.

The United States took a number of steps to cap the strength of the ROK Army. Chiefly, it refused to supply the ROK with anti-tank weapons, and limited the size of the ROK Army to eight divisions.

With the withdrawal of the last American combat troops on 1 July 1949 (a withdrawal President Rhee vociferously opposed), the PMAG was reconstituted as the KMAG, with a strength of approximately 500 advisors. KMAG Chief Roberts impressed upon the advisors that their primary mission was to train ROKA officers and soldiers.[106] Still, however, training was disrupted, by the ROKA's engagement in near-constant combat operations. In October 1948, resistance to the American occupation and then the Rhee regime boiled over into rebellion in Korea's South Jeolla province. Approximately 2,000 men of the Constabulary-turned ROKA joined the resistance. Guerilla activity continued through 1948 and peaked in late 1949, as ROKA units clashed in the south with "People's Guerrilla Units" controlled by Pyongyang. At the same time, ominous incidents along the 38th parallel kept the ROKA chasing North Korean security forces. During this period, most KMAG advisors spent their time accompanying ROKA units in battle, giving operational advice and guidance, and providing support services. As summarized by Korean War military historian Bryan Gibby, "Training as recognized in the United States Army simply did not occur."[107]

Nevertheless, the KMAG shepherded the growth of the ROKA from 50,000 in August 1948 to almost 100,000 by June 1950 and reorganized it into eight divisions. The KMAG supervised a purge of subversives from the officer corps, set up schools and training bases, and tried to wring training lessons from live operations. It was during this period that the U.S. Army established the "counterpart system," which would become a mainstay of American advising.

---

[106] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 80.
[107] Ibid, p. 95.

The counterpart system consisted of American advisors pairing with ROKA commanders down to the battalion level, and sticking on their counterparts like glue. These advisors served as advisors, mentors, and exemplars, as well as intelligence collectors for the KMAG.[108]

In June 1950, the ROKA basically functioned less like an army than a large constabulary. Although it was organized into divisions on paper, the ROKA never fought as divisions, and rarely even as regiments. It lacked the ability to maintain or support modern conventional operations, it had no experience with combined arms, and it was too small to organize for defense of the 38th parallel. Although the ROK army had managed to protect the Rhee regime (a success attributable in no small part to the incompetence of the resistance), it was ill-prepared for conventional invasion from the north.

From Invasion to Negotiations (June 1950 to June 1951)

In the early hours of June 25th, 1950, North Korean artillery, infantry, and tank units sliced quickly through ROK defenses, plowed over the ROK 2nd and 7th Division counterattack, and took Seoul within the week.[109]

The intensity and strength of the invasion shocked President Rhee, the ROK Army, the KMAG, and Washington. The ROKA and its KMAG advisors found themselves suddenly engaged in direct and high-intensity combat operations. As they fought desperately to delay the Korean People's Army's (KPA's) advance, Washington rushed to determine its response. When Washington affirmed its commitment to defend Seoul, MacArthur swung the weight of United

[108] Ibid, p. 105.
[109] For detailed discussion of the invasion and its immediate aftermath, see Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010), pp. 85-106.

Nations Command from Japan to southern Korea to help the ROK Army reclaim Seoul and beat the North Korean army back to the 38th parallel.[110]

A new command structure took shape for the fight. MacArthur put General Walton Harris Walker in command of the Eighth Army, and the Eighth Army in command of the KMAG. Brigadier General Francis W. Farrell took command of the KMAG. On 15 July, President Rhee (on his own initiative) placed the ROK Army under the operational command of the Eighth Army to unify the chain of command for the fight against the North, but he kept personnel, administration, organization, and training—the functions responsible for developing the military effectiveness of the ROK Army—in the hands of the ROKA Staff Headquarters.[111] The KMAG had no command authority over the ROKA but was tasked by the Eighth Army with ensuring that the ROKA followed directives passed down from the Eighth Army.[112] The KMAG was to serve as enforcer of Eighth Army directives, combat advisor, and trainer. The KMAG was also tasked with monitoring and reporting on the ROK Army's behavior and performance to the Eighth Army.[113]

The invasion from the north marked the beginning of an eventful twelve months. After its initial victories punching through the ROK Army and seizing Seoul, Pyongyang was surprised to find a ROK regime intent on reclaiming its capital, and a United States intent on backing it. After MacArthur's famed Incheon Landing, the ROK Army and the American-led coalition pushed northwards, turning the momentum of the war in favor of Seoul. The character of the war

---

[110] Recall that Secretary of State Dean Acheson had recently given a speech at the National Press Club that conspicuously omitted Korea and Formosa (Taiwan) from the "defense perimeter" of the United States. Washington's commitment to defend Seoul was by no means a given, and was as nasty a surprise to the north as it was a lifeline to the ROK.

[111] Korean Institute of Military History, *The Korean War, Volume 1* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), pp. 346-348.

[112] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 148.

[113] *Advisor's Handbook*, United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea, Office of the Chief, 1 March 1951, p. 2.

changed again and decisively in October 1950, when the ROK Army and the Eighth Army crossed the 38th Parallel, precipitating the entrance of the People's Volunteer Army. Chinese intervention in October shocked Washington, shattered the ROK Army (again), and ended any ambitions Washington had entertained about decisive military victory. In December 1950, Walker died in a jeep accident and General Matthew Ridgway replaced him in command of Eighth Army. In April 1951, Truman fired MacArthur, Ridgway took command of UNC, and General James Van Fleet took command of the Eighth Army.

During these action-packed months, efforts to build a professional ROK Army took a backseat to the exigencies of high-intensity combat. The KMAG doubled in size from 492 in July 1949 to 1,308 by September 1951, but they focused less on training than on advising the ROK Army in combat and replacing ROK Army casualties with new soldiers.[114] In the initial days and weeks after the invasion, many KMAG advisors took *de facto* direct command of the ROKA units they were supposed to advised, issuing orders to keep the ROKA from disintegrating into chaotic flight.[115] Once the wartime command structure took shape, KMAG advisors returned to the role of ROK Army combat advisor (as opposed to commander).

The United States immediately lifted the eight division limit on the size of the ROK Army and permitted the ROK to scour the countryside for as many men and boys aged 14 and up as it could find.[116] As a result, Korean manpower grew from less than 50,000 men in July to 250,000 in July 1951.[117] In an effort to keep the ROK Army units—continually mauled by North Korean and Chinese forces—manned, and to provide replacements with at least some training before sending them to the front lines, the KMAG set up Replacement Training Centers (RTCs)

[114] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 149.
[115] Ibid, pp. 37, 149; Millett, *The War for Korea*, p. 199.
[116] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, pp. 150, 225.
[117] Ibid, pp. 158.

to receive incoming soldiers, process them into the army, train them in basic soldier skills, and then replace ROK Army casualties or constitute new units. The KMAG advisors detailed to the RTCs sprinted about to peel construction materials, training aids, weapons, ammunition, and transportation from the Eighth Army and get them to the RTCs.[118] President Rhee and General MacArthur also set up the Korean Augmentation to the United States Army (KATUSA) system, which placed Korean soldiers in U.S. Eighth Army units to help the Americans understand Korean geography, to distinguish between North Korean and ROK Army troops, and to serve as interpreters. Some of the KATUSAs volunteered—many were dragged off the streets of Pusan and Taegu by impressment teams.[119]

The Transformation of the ROK Army (June 1951 – July 1953)

Between June 1951 and July 1953, the U.S. Army transformed the ROK Army into a highly competent, professional, modern army.[120] The transformation of the ROK Army occurred in a significantly changed political and military context. China's entrance into the Korean War killed Washington's (though certainly not Rhee's) dreams of decisive military victory and political reunification of the peninsula. In June 1951, the Soviet ambassador to the United Nations broadcast his government's readiness to support truce negotiations to end the war in Korea, and Ridgway announced the UNC's commitment to do the same. The negotiations quickly degenerated into a protracted ordeal, and both sides dug in for a slow tempo, limited war

[118] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 151.
[119] David Curtis Skaggs, "The KATUSA Experiment: The Integration of Korean Nationals into the U.S. Army," *Military Affairs*, 38, 2 (1973).
[120] See Section 3.3 for the analysis underpinning this assessment.

for political leverage. Washington placed renewed emphasis on the development of the ROKA.[121]

The accession of General James Van Fleet as commander of the Eighth Army coincided with the initiation of negotiations, the reduction in the tempo and intensity of the fighting, and with the elevation of the advisory mission as a core operational objective of the Eighth Army. It also coincided with the collapse of the ROK Army under the weight of the Chinese Third, Fourth, and Fifth Offensives in the spring and summer of 1951.[122] In this context, Van Fleet made the transformation of the ROKA the central operational objective of his command. In May 1952, Van Fleet's efforts were supercharged by new UNC Commander General Mark Clark, who championed a policy of Koreanization (though they did not call it that)—improve the capacity of the ROK Army so that the Americans could go home.

Van Fleet began by tasking KMAG Chief Farrell with conducting a thorough assessment of the ROKA. From that assessment, Van Fleet concluded that "nothing less than a full reformation of the ROK Army's training, organization, and leadership would suffice."[123] Van Fleet replaced Farrell with Colonel Cornelius Ryan as KMAG chief, and together the two set out to revitalize the KMAG and transform ROK Army. The revitalization of the KMAG had several main elements: expansion of manpower, increased quality of manpower, and shifted focus from combat advising and casualty replacement to its original mandate of training and advising.[124] With respect to manpower, Van Fleet and Farrell expanded KMAG personnel from approximately 1,000 to a peak of approximately 2,800. With respect to quality, Van Fleet gave

[121] National Security Memorandum 48/5, "United States Objectives, Policies, and Courses of Action in Asia, 17 May 1951," Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, Asia and the Pacific, Volume VI, Part 1, available https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951v06p1/d12.
[122] See Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* pp. 2, 5, 138, 169-173.
[123] Ibid, p. 182.
[124] Ibid, p. 190.

KMAG Chief Ryan the first pick of officers from Eighth Army, in order to ensure that KMAG was manned with the most competent available personnel for the advisory function. With respect to the mission shift, KMAG advisors continued to advise ROK Army units in battle, but the weight of their efforts swung to training and advising outside of live operations. Ryan provided all KMAG advisors with detailed instructions to clarify their mission and guide their efforts.[125]

Van Fleet and Ryan embarked on three main lines of effort to transform the ROKA into a competent modern army: education, field training and advising, and frontline operations advising. With respect to education, the KMAG set out to establish centralized control over the 12 service schools and two training centers that had previously operated independently. To that end, Van Fleet established the Replacement Training and School Command (RTSC) to standardize the training and education of the ROK Army for the first time by pushing training regulations, standard tactics, and training manuals.[126] Van fleet established a second Replacement Training Center "to provide Korean Army basic trained infantrymen who were trained as infantry replacements and in all military subjects common to all arms and services," and lengthened training from four to twelve weeks.[127] Van Fleet transferred high caliber Eighth Army officers to run and supervise the schools, illustrating the shift in Eighth Army priorities from fighting to building the ROK Army. With Ridgway's concurrence, Van Fleet placed a premium on improving the ROK Army's officer corps. To that end, Van Fleet sent hundreds of ROK Army officers to service schools in the United States and established the Korea Military

[125] Ibid, p. 312; Alfred H. Hausrath, "The KMAG Advisor: Role and Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea," Operations Research Office, (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University, February 1957), p. 15.
[126] Jongnam Na, "The Transformation of the Republic of Korea Army: Wartime expansion and doctrine changes, 1951-1953," in John Blaxland, Michael Kelly, and Liam Brewin Higgins, *In From the Cold* (Canberra, Australia National University Press, 2020), p. 102.
[127] Ibid, p. 103.

Academy and the Command and General Staff College in Korea with a six-month curriculum based on Fort Leavenworth. With guidance from the KMAG advisors supervising the ROK Army units, Eighth Army officers determined which ROK Army officers were selected for these coveted slots, and also monitored their performance in the programs.

With respect to field training, Van Fleet focused on preparing the ROK Army to fight as divisions. To that end, he stood up a Field Training Centre program and directed all ROK Army divisions to complete the nine-week program. The program was directed by the KMAG and supervised by selected U.S. division officers and non-commissioned officers. Then field training centers turned into unit training centers in late 1952, and U.S. Eighth Army corps took charge of newly organized ROK unit training programs. This put U.S. Eighth Army in direct control not only of ROK Army personnel, but also of how ROK Army divisions were organized, equipped, trained, and prepared to go to the front. With respect to frontline advising, Ryan tasked KMAG advisors attached down to the battalion level with maximizing the combat effectiveness of the ROK Army units to which they were assigned, and with reporting thoroughly on ROK Army performance.

Throughout this period, Van Fleet lobbied Washington (via Ridgway and to President Rhee's delight) effectively for an increase in the firepower and size of the ROK Army. In early 1951, ROK Army divisions had no tanks, heavy mortars, or aircraft, and only one 105-millimetre howitzer battalion. In the wake of the invasion, the United States provided some artillery and heavy weapons, but the ROK Army failed to use them effectively and lost most of them in the fighting of summer 1951, leading Ridgway to suspend further support. At Van Fleet's urging, Ridgway opened the taps back up to equip the ROK Army with artillery and armor. While the KMAG bore the principal responsibility for training and advising ROK artillery units, artillery

units from the U.S. Eighth Army trained the newly organized ROK units, then provided direct and close supervision of their activities. Additionally, Van Fleet directed U.S. officers to rotate from U.S. Eighth Army units to the KMAG and ordered ROK units to be integrated into the U.S. Eighth Army's strategic and operational plans.

The question of the ROK Army's size was the subject of repeated debate in Seoul and Washington. Since the Bamboo Plan of 1946, the United States had carefully controlled the size of the ROKA to avoid provoking the Soviet Union and to throw cold water on Rhee's ambitions to reunify the peninsula. President Rhee advocated repeatedly for the expansion of the ROK Army. In his words, "We do not want you to sacrifice your own boys. All we ask for is that you give us equipment and that you train our own people. It is much better for Asians to fight Asians."[128] Rhee's logic appealed to the new UNC Commander, General Mark Clark, who was acutely conscious of the American public's increasing frustration with the sacrifice of American boys in Korea. Clark concurred with Van Fleet that the ROKA should expand so that the United States could shift the brunt of the war to Korean boys. To that end, the United States agreed to expand the ROKA from 10 to 12 divisions, then from 12 to 14, and finally to the 20 division, 655,000-man army Rhee had long sought. Washington's support for the expansion was driven in part by hopes that giving Rhee his large army might convince him not to spoil the coming Armistice.

Between summer 1951 and summer 1953, the ROK Army gradually assumed defense of the front and bore the brunt of the Chinese offensives. The ROK Army that fought in the summer of 1953 was far superior to the ROKA that retreated in disarray in the onslaught of 1951 and the June 1950 invasion. The U.S. security assistance mission accomplished its objective of building

---

[128] Na "In from the Cold," p. 113.

a ROK Army sufficient to bear the burden of American security interests. The withdrawal of American combat troops from Korea did not cause China to calculate it had military advantage in Korea. Although the People's Volunteer Army found ROK Army units remained weaker than the American ones, they were strong enough to convince Beijing it could achieve no further significant military gains. As summarized by Gibby: "the UNC achieved its political objectives; the ROKA was key to the UNC's success in 1953; and, KMAG was responsible for the reformation of the ROKA and its improved combat capabilities – therefore, KMAG held the key for success or failure of the UNC in Korea."[129]

3.2 Coding U.S. Influence Strategies in Korea

For the duration of the advisory effort, U.S. officials recognized that building a stronger ROK Army would require the cooperation of ROK leadership. This section codes the strategies the U.S. advisors used to convince Korean political and military leaders to implement their military advice between August 1948 and July 1953. To briefly summarize the universe of variation laid out in Chapter 2, U.S. influence strategies in security assistance missions are best understood as an influence escalation ladder with four rungs of escalating coerciveness: teaching, persuasion, bargaining, and direct command. Teaching refers to advisor efforts to change recipient behavior by presenting recipients with information about how best to build their militaries. Persuasion is a "bucket" rung comprised of four tactics: argumentation; demonstration; no-strings inducements; and relationship-building. Bargaining refers to the conditional threat or application of rewards and punishments tied to recipient compliance with

[129] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 15.

U.S. advice. Finally, the U.S. can take direct command of recipient militaries, resolving the interest divergence challenge by replacing recipient decision-makers with American ones.

This section codes U.S. influence strategies within the period of study at two levels. First, it codes the approaches employed by each of the nine American military officers positioned to influence President Syngman Rhee, to influence the most senior ROKA military leaders, and to direct the KMAG advisors under their command. Although U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson and U.S. ambassador to Korea John J. Muccio devoted considerable energy to influencing President Rhee, they did not focus specifically on convincing Rhee to take steps to improve the ROKA, so their efforts are thus outside the scope of this coding exercise. Second, it characterizes the strategies employed by the advisors of the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG) to influence ROKA corps, division, regiment, and battalion commanders. KMAG chiefs provided detailed direction and exercised careful oversight of the advisors under their command. Nevertheless, I provide an overall characterization of the influence strategies employed by the KMAG advisors, in order to determine whether the advisors on the whole aligned their approach with their commanders or pursued the influence problem independently.

Coding Influence Strategies at the Strategic Level – The Commanding Officers

Between August 1948 and July 1953, the following nine American officers sought to influence President Syngman Rhee and/or his most senior military officers (ROKA Chiefs of Staff and corps commanders) to follow U.S. advice regarding the development of the ROKA and provided direction to the KMAG advisors under their command to guide their influence efforts.

Name	Dates	Role
Brigadier General William Roberts	May 1948 – Jun 1950	PMAG/KMAG Chief
Captain James Hausman	Aug 1946 – 1950	Senior advisor
General Walton Harris Walker	Jun 1950 – Dec 1950	CG U.S. Eighth Army
General Matthew Ridgway	Dec 1950 – Apr 1951; Apr 1951 – May 1952	CG U.S. Eighth Army; CG United Nations Command
Brigadier General Francis W. Farrell	Jun 1950 – Jun 1951	KMAG Chief
General James Van Fleet	Apr 1951 – Feb 1953	CG U.S. Eighth Army
Colonel Cornelius Ryan	Jun 1951 – Jul 1953	KMAG Chief
General Mark W. Clark	May 1952 – Jul 1953	CG United Nations Command
General Maxwell Taylor	Feb 1953 – Jul 1953	CG U.S. Eighth Army

To preview the findings, overall influence strategies across officers varied widely. Roberts relied largely on persuasion, but he used language that was likely interpreted by senior ROK leaders as veiled threats. Hausman relied exclusively on persuasion. After the invasion, the U.S. Eighth Army took direct command of the ROK Army, and the Eighth Army commanders (Walker, Ridgway, Van Fleet, and Taylor) issued direct orders to the ROKA Chief of Staff regarding not only the ROKA units' operational employment, but also ROKA military organizational practices including personnel policies, training regimens, and command structures. Walker, focused as he was on exigencies of high-intensity combat, did not interact much at all with Rhee nor concern himself with the professionalization of the ROKA. Ridgway focused principally on the prosecution of the war, but backed Van Fleet in his efforts to influence President Rhee with respect to the development of the ROKA.

Captain Hausman and then KMAG Chiefs Farrell and Ryan relied largely on persuasion to influence ROKA Chiefs of Staff, while directing the KMAG advisors under their command to escalate to coercion as needed to secure compliance from their ROKA counterparts.

Van Fleet was the crucial figure in the transformation of the ROK Army. Van Fleet coaxed, cajoled, and carefully cultivated personal relationships with Rhee and senior ROK Army commanders. He also took direct and total control of the ROK Army. He issued direct orders to the ROKA Chief of Staff, who was under his direct command. After the collapse of the ROK III Corps in May 1951, Van Fleet dissolved the entire corps, sending a strong message to the rest of the ROK Army. He also (with Ridgway's blessing) directly threatened Rhee with a severance of American assistance to the ROK Army in order to secure Rhee's non-interference with the ROKA officer corps.

By the time Clark replaced Ridgway as UNC Commander and Taylor replaced Van Fleet as Eighth Army commander, total U.S. Eighth Army control over the development of the ROKA had become standard operating procedure, and there was essentially no need to interact with Rhee on any issue related to the development of the ROKA. On the whole, then, the influence strategies employed by the senior U.S. military leaders in Korea to convince ROK political and military leaders to follow U.S. advice varied widely, but spanned the full escalation ladder.

BRIGADIER GENERAL WILLIAM L. ROBERTS

Brigadier General William L. Roberts served in Korea as the chief of the Provisional Military Advisory Group (PMAG) from July 1948 to July 1949, and then as the first chief of the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG), from July 1949 to July 1950. Roberts' task was to transform the Constabulary into a proper army. To that end, he lobbied Washington for more aid

and equipment, expanded the PMAG/KMAG, and tried to jumpstart its training mission. He found himself obliged, however, to focus his attention on the subversion problem within the Constabulary, rebellion in the south, and the border incursions in the north.

Roberts was the senior American officer in theater at the birth of the Rhee regime. Roberts largely delegated interactions with Rhee and the ROKA Chief of Staff to the young Captain James Hausman, and focused his own advisory efforts primarily on the ROKA officer corps.[130] Roberts wanted the ROKA to root out rampant corruption (including the sale of American equipment on the black market), report truthfully rather than conceal problems within their units, exercise initiative when the initial plan or idea obviously no longer applied to the situation, invest in training subordinates, and follow the chain of command.

Roberts' approach to influencing the senior officers of the ROKA to implement more professional military organizational practices can perhaps best be described as a paternalistic "tough love" approach. He met frequently with the ROKA officer corps and delivered stern rebukes and demands for improvement. In April 1950, for example, Roberts began his critique: "By this time you too know that I do not pull punches, that I call spades. You [will] know what I mean when I'm thr[ough]." For the next half hour, Roberts admonished the senior leadership of the ROKA to use resources efficiently, to respect civilians, to improve relations with the local and national police, to promote based on merit, to ensure that officers receive the same technical education as the soldiers, stamp out graft and dishonesty, to prioritize training, to report accurately, to coordinate with other units, and train staffs. Roberts concluded:

> I must finish now. I may have talked about many things which are wrong. Believe me when I tell you I have seen more correct things than wrong, and I know there is vast improvement…I see great strides in training' every month sees a graduation from our

---

[130] Allan Millett, "Captain James H. Hausman and the Formation of the Korean Army, 1945-1950," *Armed Forces & Society*, 23, 4 (Summer 1997), p. 521.

> many schools…every unit is hard at work daily. Our troops operating against guerrillas are successfully terminating those operations; there are very few guerrillas left today…all these add up to progress and excellence. I think you have reason to be proud.[131]

When Roberts felt his instructions were being ignored, he emphasized to ROKA leadership the expense of the American investment in the ROKA and his personal responsibility to oversee that investment and maximize its payoff. For instance, with respect to the corruption problem in the ROKA, he reminded them that he personally had to account for all U.S. government issue on a semi-annual basis, and that the amount of sanctioned graft among the officer corps was professionally embarrassing to both KMAG and the ROKA.[132] More broadly, he told the ROKA Chief of Staff: "Your office knows the correct way. If your army is to become efficient, you should listen to and correct advice by those who are more experienced. The U.S. is furnishing some 200 advisors at great expense, but their usefulness is being curtailed by the necessity of ironing out needless difficulties put in their way by such practices throughout the Korean Army."[133]

Strictly speaking, Roberts' language was more "guilt-trip" (which this study would code persuasion) than explicit threat (bargaining). However, at the same time Roberts was delivering these rebukes, Secretary of State Dean Acheson was explicitly threatening Rhee with reductions in American support if Rhee refused to cooperate with U.S. direction, threats Rhee communicated to his senior military leaders. Roberts was well aware of the threats Acheson was delivering. Given this context, it is perhaps plausible to interpret Roberts' tactic of reminding the ROKA of American generosity as more implicit threat than persuasion. However, there are no

[131] Gibby *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 113.
[132] Ibid, p. 111.
[133] Ibid, p. 112.

indications in the available record that Roberts ever explicitly linked American assistance to ROKA compliance, or that he ever explicitly or implicitly threatened Rhee.

Roberts directed the PMAG/KMAG advisors under his command to teach, persuade, and if necessary, coerce their counterparts to take steps to strengthen the ROKA. Roberts began to clarify and disseminate guidance to the advisors in the summer of 1949. He delivered an "Orientation speech" to specify their mission and responsibilities, and then consolidated his philosophy of advising in the first *Advisor's Handbook*, which he issued to all advisors beginning in June 1949. In addition to a great deal of administrative minutiae, the *Handbook* provided guidance on how to increase Korean receptivity to advisor advice.

Roberts impressed upon his advisors that "Advisors do not command – they ADVISE."[134] He instructed them "teach as much by example as by expert knowledge."[135] Koreans "could be expected to learn only what the Americans demonstrated."[136] For example, if the KMAG advisor made a visible effort to use his noncommissioned officer as an extension of his own authority, then it was likely that the Korean counterpart would be willing to do the same. If the KMAG advisor "show[ed] that officers would not lose face by getting close to the ground and dirty," the Korean officers would be willing to do the same. Roberts directed advisors to pay attention to the smallest detail. Advisors needed to exert all their powers of logic and demonstration to encourage marching fire.[137]

In order to gain the respect of the ROKA and make Korean officers more receptive to U.S. advice, the advisors needed to be intimately familiar with all weapons in the Constabulary

---

[134] Office of the Chief of the United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea, *Advisor's Handbook*, 17 October 1949, p. 2.
[135] Ibid, pp. 3-6.
[136] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 110.
[137] William L. Roberts, Memo, "Various," Inclosure 1 to *Advisor's Handbook* (1949).

inventory. The advisors should not settle for appearances, and should "sneer at their parade ground tactics" and emphasize realistic training.[138] Roberts also emphasized teaching in the classical sense, supporting Captain Hausman in his efforts to shepherd a program to send high quality Korean officers to U.S. Army schools, where they would learn American tactics and serve as exemplars upon their return.[139] Roberts established the advising counterpart system (or "buddy system"), instructing his advisors to stick like glue on their Korean counterparts in training and battle, and to "Get under the skin of your counterpart – get his confidence by your honesty, your ability, your guidance – this may become a 'command' team even if not in name."[140]

Crucially, Roberts also told advisors that they should not accept Korean disregard for their advice on any issues of importance. If ROKA officers continued to engage in unauthorized travel, personal service to high ranking officers, black marketing, and other behaviors that reflected poorly on the officer corps as a whole, undermining the KMAG's mission to foster a professional army and officer corps, PMAG/KMAG advisors should report these officers to him so that he could secure their relief. For example, on 19 April 1949, Major Arno Mowitz, the senior advisor to the 2nd Brigade, wrote Roberts to recommend the relief of the ROKA brigade command, Colonel Chae Wan-gai, for his "continuous failure to perform his duties as Brigade Commander." Mowitz reported that Chae's lack of interest in his responsibilities as a commander manifested itself in apathy, absenteeism, and a preoccupation with "social gatherings." Roberts forwarded Mowitz's recommendation with his concurrence to the ROK

---

[138] Ibid.
[139] Gibby *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 111.
[140] Ibid, p. 106, citing Brigadier General William L. Roberts Speech to All Tactical Advisors – KMAG, 23 June 1949, Roberts's Speeches to Americans and Koreans, AG File 333 1949, Provisional Mil. Adv. Group (1948) and Korean Mil. Adv. Group (1949-1953), RG 554.

defense minister the same day, adding, "Last summer I made an inspection of the [2nd] Brigade in [Taejon] and found it in the poorest condition in the army…I believe that 'Colonel Chae] has shown he is not deserving of this or any other command." The ROK defense minister replaced the colonel.[141]

CAPTAIN JAMES HAUSMAN

Captain James H. Hausman, a 27-year-old infantry captain who fought the Germans in Europe, arrived in Korea in August 1946. First assigned to be the commander of the 8th Regiment, Constabulary Chief Barros soon plucked him out of Chunchon and made him his executive officer. For the next four years, Hausman served as the primary American advisor to the south Korean leadership. Roberts delegated his advisory duties to President Rhee and the ROK Chief of Staff almost entirely to the young captain.[142] While Roberts focused his own efforts on advising the ROK officer corps and on structuring the PMAG and the KMAG, Hausman advised the first south Korean constabulary chief Lieutenant Colonel Song Ho-song, then each successive ROK Army Chief of staff, and President Rhee himself on the development of south Korea's security forces. Hausman was the only American to attend Korean cabinet meetings as advisor to then-ROK Minister of Defense Shin Song-mo, and it was Hausman, not Roberts, who met regularly with Rhee to discuss the development of the ROKA and advise steps to improve it.[143]

---

[141] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 107, citing Brigadier General William L. Roberts to ROK Defense Minister Shin Ung-kyun, 19 April 1949, Box 8, Mowitz Papers.
[142] Millett, "Hausman," pp. 530-31.
[143] Millett, "Hausman," p. 521, citing Hausman interview, 1995; Lt. Gen. (Ret.) W.H. Sterling Wright to the author, 22 September 1995; Brig. Gen. W.L. Roberts to M.G. H.B. Lewis, 7 March 1949, Hausman 201 File; Syngman Rhee to P.M. Goodfellow, 21 September 1948, Preston M. Goodfellow Papers, Hoover Institution for War, Revolution and Peace.

During his tenure, Hausman shepherded the Constabulary's expansion to 50,000 men and attempted to build eight respectable light infantry divisions from the six brigades of the old Constabulary. He helped purge its ranks of communist subversives, secured its relief from non-military duties, negotiated for the "lease" of American weapons and ammunition, and navigated the tensions between the rising Syngman Rhee, the Korean National Police, and the American Military Government.[144] Hausman was also the central American influence on the suppression of rebellions in the south.[145]

In his advisory capacity, Hausman focused particular attention on convincing the leadership of the Constabulary and the new ROKA, and on convincing President Rhee, to purge the officer corps of individuals loyal to the opposition and to elevate competent officers to key positions. After the cooperation of members of the Constabulary with the rebels in Cheju-do, Hausman made countersubversion and the elevation of loyal, competent officers his first priority. It was Hausman who persuaded Constabulary chief General Song to bring Colonel Paik Sun-yup, a refugee from Pyongyang, from his regimental command in Pusan to become the Department of Internal Security G-2. At the encouragement of Hausman, Paik then proceeded with an energetic campaign to unmask and remove subversives. [146] Hausman met regularly with President Rhee to persuade him to remove subversives from key commands, to elevate Hausman's handpicked officers to key positions, and to resist his temptation to politicize the officer corps.[147] Hausman advised the ROKA Chiefs of Staff in almost every possible area, from personnel, to their overly

---

[144] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 50, citing Headquarters, Provisional Military Advisory Group (PMAG) to the Korean Constabulary, Staff Study on Plans to Increase Present Strength of Korean Constabulary, 6 November 1948, Hausman Papers; Millett, "Hausman," p. 520.
[145] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 132; Millett, "Hausman."
[146] Millett, "Hausman," p. 527, citing Brig. Gen. W.L. Roberts to Maj. Gen. H.B. Lewis, 7 March 1949, CG PMAG-Korea to CG USAFIC, "Award of the Legion of Merit; recommendation for," 20 Dec 1948, Toland Files"; Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 56.
[147] Millett, "Hausman," p. 528.

ambitious yet poorly planned operational planning, unsound budgeting; failure to train subordinates, and misuse of basic equipment and supplies. Hausman did not press hard, however, on the ROKA to curb their abuses of the civilian population in their counter-rebellion suppression campaigns, nor did he pressure Rhee to slow the pace of combat to permit time for more deliberate planning.[148]

Hausman relied on persuasion. He sought to influence President Rhee and senior ROKA officers by developing close interpersonal relationships with them, earning their respect, and convincing them of the logic of his advice. Hausman learned Korean, studied Korean culture, ate, drank, and fought with his Korean counterparts, developed close personal relationships with the ROK leadership, and effectively persuaded ROK leaders to follow his advice. According to Millett, "only Hausman had the patience and quiet good humor to deal with the dinners (with mandatory heavy drinking), ceremonies, parades, and extended discussions that characterized military business in Seoul…Having shared the desperate hours of 1948 with his Korean contemporaries, he had a stature with the Koreans unmatched by any other American officer."[149] Hausman developed personal friendships with the ROKA officer corps and made a special effort to check on the family condition of the Korean generals and to arrange access to U.S. Army facilities at the American base at Yongsan if he found a Korean officer in special need."[150] Hausman also stood up a program to send Korean officers to U.S. Army schools so that they could see the high standard in America and bring it back to Korea.[151]

Roberts would later write the following of Hausman, in a letter of support for Hausman's application for a regular army commission:

---

[148] Ibid, p. 531.
[149] Ibid, pp. 530-31.
[150] Ibid, p. 531.
[151] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* pp. 136-137.

> He earned the confidence of the Koreans, learned their language and, by his degree of intelligence, leadership and integrity, contributed invaluably to the success of the United States Army Forces in Korea. The respect and esteem which the military and people of Korea hold Captain Hausman reflects great credit upon him and the United States Army, and it is believed his presence and sound advice at Yosu will be remembered and appreciated by the Korean people for many years to come.[152]

Although Hausman himself relied exclusively on personal diplomacy and force of personality to move Rhee and the ROKA to implement his advice, when persuasion failed on matters he judged important, Hausman sometimes attempted to use KMAG chief Roberts as a sort of "bad cop." Hausman kept Roberts thoroughly abreast of all developments in the Constabulary and the ROKA. When ROKA leaders refused to follow Hausman's advice on matters he considered critical, Hausman relayed the information to General Roberts, "who then attempted to implement corrections through the apparatus of the formal advisory group."[153] Roberts explained that Hausman kept him "informed of Korean projects soon enough to enable me to modify or stop them if they were without merit."[154]

Overall, however, the Roberts-Hausman advisor team of the pre-invasion advisory period relied largely on persuasion to influence senior ROK political and military leaders to implement policies to improve the ROKA.

GENERAL WALTON WALKER

General Walton Harris Walker took command of the Eighth Army in the aftermath of the invasion. In July 1950, President Rhee placed the ROKA under the command of UNC

---

[152] Millett, "Hausman," p. 527, citing Brig. Gen. W.L. Roberts to Maj. Gen. H.B. Lewis, 7 March 1949, CG PMAG-Korea to CG USAFIC, "Award of the Legion of Merit; recommendation for," 20 Dec 1948, Toland Files."

[153] Peter Ethan Clemens, *The Intelligent Man on the Spot, Captain James H. Hausman in South Korea, 1946-1948,* Masters Thesis, Kansas State University, 1988, p. 87.

[154] Ibid, p. 77.

Commander General Douglas MacArthur, who promptly placed the ROKA under the command of Walker and the U.S. Eighth Army. Walker thus gained direct command over the ROKA. During his first two months as Eighth Army commander, Walker focused principally on commanding Eighth Army operations against the north and had little bandwidth left for efforts to develop the professional competence of the ROKA. Walker proposed and received approval in Washington for an expansion of the ROKA to a ten-division army, and he issued directives instructing the ROKA to standardize personnel, logistics, and operations reporting in accordance with accepted American practices. During Walker's tenure, the KMAG was placed under the command of the Eighth Army, and Walker used the KMAG advisors as liaisons to the ROKA to ensure that his directives were carried out. He also used the KMAG to stiffen ROKA units in battle, and as his eyes and ears on the ground. Five months after he took command, Walker died in a jeep accident in December 1950.

GENERAL MATTHEW RIDGWAY

General Matthew Ridgway took command of the Eighth Army after Walker's death in December 1950, and then replaced MacArthur in command of U.S. forces in Korea in April 1951. As Eighth Army commander, Ridgway focused principally on American-led operations and delegated concern for the development of the ROKA to Van Fleet. When Ridgway became UNC commander, Van Fleet took command of the Eighth Army, and National Security Council (NSC) Report 48/5 identified the development of the ROK Army as an operational objective the of Eighth Army, Ridgway delegated the advisory effort to General Van Fleet and empowered him to throw his weight behind the task.

Ridgway's primary concern regarding the ROKA was the quality of its leadership. Ridgway told Rhee that the performance of the ROKA illustrated how Rhee's practice of "political interference" undermined the ROKA's ability to develop competent commanders, which in turn adversely affected unit training and the organization of the army as a whole.[155] When asked by the Department of the Army what was needed to make the ROKA effective, Ridgway replied that they needed an effective officer corps, and to achieve this, they would need improved training, as well as "Pressure on the Republic of Korea Government to insure disciplinary measures against incompetent, corrupt, or cowardly ROK officers and governmental officials."[156] Ridgway delegated the problem of influencing Rhee to improve ROKA leadership to General Van Fleet, and supported Van Fleet's escalation from persuasion to explicit threat to withdraw American assistance to ensure Rhee's cooperation with Eighth Army control over ROKA personnel.

BRIGADIER GENERAL FRANCIS W. FARRELL

Brigadier General Francis W. Farrell succeeded Roberts as KMAG chief in July 1950. In the aftermath of the invasion, Farrell's KMAG focused more on combat operations than transforming the ROKA into a competent army. Between July 1950 and May 1951, the KMAG's mission shifted to advising ROKA units in battle, standing up Replacement Training Centers (RTCs) to replace Korean casualties, and gathering information on the course of the war and the performance of the ROKA units to relay up the Eighth Army chain of command.[157] Farrell

---

[155] Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War* (Boston: De Capo Press, 1986), p. 176; Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, pp. 227-228; Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea*, pp. 175-176.
[156] Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea*, p. 176.
[157] Office of the Chief of the United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea, *KMAG Advisor's Handbook*, 1 March 1951, p. 2.

focused his energy on securing resources for the KMAG and directing the advisors under his command, and did not often interface with or seek to influence the behaviors of President Rhee or senior ROKA leadership.

Farrell encouraged the advisors under his command to climb the influence escalation ladder in their efforts to convince their ROKA counterparts to take their advice and provide the requested information. In March 1951, Farrell released a new edition of the *Advisor's Handbook* previously issued by Roberts in July 1949. The *Handbook* familiarized the advisor with the KMAG's missions, objectives, organizational structure, and set out procedures covering administration, supply, and interpreter services. The *Handbook* also provided instructions designed to help the advisors secure cooperation from their ROKA counterparts. It instructed the advisors to lead by their example, because their "prestige" in the eyes of the ROKA would make the ROKA more receptive to their advice. Advisors should be neat, clean, and soldierly in appearance at all times no matter how difficult it may be to maintain yourself so. Remember that no one respects a sloven." KMAG advisors "do not exercise command in any sense," so, to get ROKA counterparts to take their advice, advisors should first establish a "spirit of mutual trust, respect, and cooperation," and then communicate their recommendations "with finesse and intelligence…so logically and effectively" that ROKA counterparts will willingly follow it.[158]

The *Handbook* also stressed, however, that the advisors must see to it that the ROKA cooperated with their advice and instruction: "Senior field Advisors are directly responsible to their United States superior officers for the accomplishment of the above mission. They alone are responsible that communications are always open, never closed down."[159] Advisors must not content themselves merely with providing advice, they had to see to it that their advice was

[158] *KMAG Advisor's Handbook* (1951), p. 2.
[159] Ibid.

followed. If the spirit of mutual trust, power of example, and logic of argument proved insufficient to convince ROKA counterparts to take advice and provide information, Farrell advised coercion. His *Handbook* reminded the advisors that they could use U.S. money, supplies, and equipment as a lever to influence their Korean counterparts. "Keep this in mind," the *Handbook* said, "but use it seldom."[160] In summary, Farrell did not himself seek to influence Rhee and senior ROKA leadership, but in his direction to the KMAG advisors under his control, he encouraged them to do their best to secure compliance through teaching and persuasion, but, if persuasion failed, to escalate to coercion as needed to get the compliance necessary to accomplish the mission.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAMES VAN FLEET

Van Fleet replaced Ridgway in command of the Eighth Army in April 1951. Van Fleet's command coincided with the collapse of the ROKA III Corps, slowed fighting, the initiation of negotiations, and an emphasis from Washington on the development of a competent ROKA. Together with Ridgway and the new KMAG Chief Cornelius Ryan, Van Fleet poured his energy into rebuilding the ROKA. Van Fleet shared Ridgway's conviction that the central obstacle to a more effective ROKA was the lack of a professional officer corps. To remedy this problem, Van Fleet set up the school system and training programs referenced above. He and his subordinates also closely monitored the performance of ROKA officers, and exerted direct control over their advancement up the ranks of the ROKA. From time to time, President Rhee interfered with ROKA personnel policies, seeking to sideline politically threatening officers or shuffle them around to different commands to limit their power.

---

[160] Ibid; Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 166.

Usually, Van Fleet relied on rapport and argumentation to influence Rhee's behavior with respect to the ROKA. Van Fleet is well known for the close relationship he developed with President Rhee, and the two remained friends long after Van Fleet's departure from Korea. Crucially, however, when Van Fleet attributed the collapse of the ROKA III Corps to poor ROK Army leadership, and poor leadership in part to Rhee's meddling, Van Fleet escalated from persuasion to direct threat. Van Fleet told Rhee that what the ROK Army needed most was not more soldiers, but competent leadership. "They don't have it, as is clearly evidenced by repeated battle failures."[161] Then Van Fleet issued an explicit threat: the United States would not be willing to continue providing American equipment and weapons to the ROKA until the ROKA demonstrated leadership and training worthy of that support.[162] Essentially, Van Fleet was telling Rhee to butt out and let the Eighth Army exert complete control of ROKA personnel or risk losing the American support upon which he depended for survival.

Van Fleet had no compunction exerting the command authority of the Eighth Army over the ROKA. After the ROKA III Corps disintegrated in the Chinese Spring Offensive of May 1951, Van Fleet promptly disbanded the entire ROK Army III Corps, sending a clear message to the rest of the ROKA. From the start, Van Fleet controlled the operational employment of the ROKA, but, after the collapse of the ROK III Corps, he also reduced the ROKA headquarters to a shell, and took over control of ROKA organization, the advancement of ROKA officers in the officer corps, and the content of ROKA training. Van Fleet placed American officers in charge of Korean training centers, and American artillery units in charge of newly constituted ROKA artillery units. He also encouraged Ryan to see to it that the KMAG advisors did what was

---

[161] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 180.
[162] Ibid, p. 174, citing Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet to Ambassador John J. Muccio, 3 May 1951, ROK Correspondence #1-9, 1951-1953, Box 86/4, Van Fleet Papers.

necessary to secure compliance from their ROKA counterparts, and reported up any noncompliance that could undermine the development of the ROKA.[163]

Historical accounts of Van Fleet's efforts to build militaries in Greece and Korea, and Van Fleet's own presentation of his approach, emphasize personal diplomacy as his primary strategy of influence to cultivate a "will to win" in partner armies. Van Fleet did develop a close personal relationship with President Rhee, and often used rapport and argument to shape Rhee's thinking and behavior. However, these accounts overlook the fact that Van Fleet exerted direct command authority over the ROKA, threatened the ROK president with a cessation of American assistance if he interfered with that authority, dissolved entire ROK Army corps at will, and instructed the advisors under his command to secure ROKA compliance through whatever means necessary.

BRIGADIER GENERAL CORNELIUS E. RYAN

In May 1951, Van Fleet replaced Farrell with Brigadier General Cornelius Ryan. Together, Van Fleet and Ryan turned the attention of the KMAG from casualty replacement, combat advising, and battlefield reporting back to its original mission of transforming the ROKA. To that end, Ryan's KMAG stood up officer development schools and developed the ROKA training focused at the division level. The KMAG also continued to support the ROKA in the ongoing combat operations and continued its battlefield reporting.

Ryan's counterparts within the ROK were ROK Army Chiefs of Staff Lee Chong-chan and then his successor Paik Sun-yup. Both chiefs of staff, hand selected as they were by American officers, were highly solicitous of Ryan's advice regarding the professionalization of

---

[163] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 195.

the ROKA. Still, Ryan sought to increase their receptivity to his advice by developing mutual respect and rapport. Given the predisposition of his American-selected counterparts, Ryan never needed to escalate beyond persuasion to secure their cooperation.[164]

Ryan believed in influence through teaching and persuasion by example, as illustrated in his efforts to send Korean officers to American schools:

> We are counting heavily on the hope that the standards they have seen at schools like Benning [Infantry] and Sill [Artillery], and which can be learned only by first-hand contact, will be placed in effect in Korea by the Koreans themselves when they return. If they do, it is logical to expect that those standards will 'snowball' throughout the ROK Army and its training centers. We can expect them to reach the point where the Army will become more nearly self-supporting in training than it has in the past, with a consequent decreased drain on the American manpower now needed for advice and supervision.[165]

Crucially, he also viewed these training programs as opportunities for the KMAG "identify and weed out incompetent officers early, before they had a chance to make serious errors in combat."[166] This statement illustrates the direct authority American officers had over ROKA personnel policies.

As Farrell had before him, Ryan encouraged the KMAG advisors under his command to climb the influence escalation ladder as needed to encourage their ROKA counterparts to take their advice. Ryan conveyed his philosophy of advising to the KMAG advisors through orientation lectures, conferences with senior KMAG officers at KMAG HQ, and through written guidance. Ryan issued an *Advisor's Procedure Guide* to the KMAG that opened with a passage entitled the "Ten Commandments." Notable "Commandments" included:

---

[164] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 192; Paik Sun-yup, *From Pusan to Panmunjon: Wartime Memories of the Republic of Korea's First Four Star General*, (Lincoln: Potomac Books, 2007), pp. 211, 214, 223.
[165] Kenneth W. Myers, *KMAG's Wartime Experiences*. Camp Zama, Japan: Office of the Military History Officer, 1958 (copy available at the U.S. Army Center of Military History, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.), pp. 180-81.
[166] Hausrath, "The KMAG Advisor," p. 47.

(1) Take the initiative in making observations and rendering advice. Without waiting to be asked, I will give advice for such corrective action as I would take if I were the unit commander.
(2) Advise my counterpart forcefully, yet not command his unit.
(3) Follow up to insure that advice has been acted upon. If it has not, take it up with next higher KMAG-ROK Army Echelon for decision and action.
(8) Report deficiencies promptly to the next higher KMAG level; follow up on necessary corrective action. (Corps Senior Advisors will keep Chief, KMAG, personally informed of existing deficiencies and necessary corrective action within their purview in order that failures may be prevented rather than corrected.)

The Ten Commandments closed: "I realize that I stand or fall with my counterpart. I share in credit for his successes and in blame for his failures."[167] The *Advisor's Procedure Guide* goes on to encourage the advisors to spend as much time as possible with their counterparts, to know everything about the units' operations, to criticize without embarrassing, and to lead by example.[168] The guide reads "It is therefore incumbent upon each Advisor to set an outstanding example at all times."[169] Ryan also conveyed to the advisors that the United States had invested heavily in the ROKA, and it was the job of the advisors both to report on the status of the investment, and to do everything they could to see to it that the investment was paying off.[170] When ROKA leaders did not take their advice, Ryan encouraged the advisors to escalate from persuasion to bargaining as necessary to enforce compliance.[171] Specifically, the advisors were instructed to threaten or actually refuse to countersign for equipment, and threaten or actually report noncompliance up the KMAG and U.S. Eighth Army chain of command so that the American higher-ups could direct the ROKA higher-ups to take action against their uncooperative subordinates.

[167] Ibid, p. 15.
[168] Ibid, p. 37.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid, p. 19.
[171] Ibid, p. 21, quoting KMAG Chief Cornelius Ryan.

In summary, Ryan encouraged the advisors under his command to escalate up the influence ladder as needed to secure the compliance necessary for mission accomplishment.

GENERAL MARK CLARK

General Mark Clark commanded United Nations forces in Korea from May 1952 until the armistice was signed on 27 July 1953. Clark managed negotiations and the war closely, forbidding even local attacks unless approved by him. Clark sought to extricate American forces from Korea by increasing the capacity of the ROKA to shoulder an increasing share of the front. In pursuit of this policy, Clark supported Van Fleet in all his efforts to transform the ROKA, and, in a break from his predecessor, he lobbied effectively in Washington for President Rhee's and Van Fleet's vision of a twenty-division ROK Army.[172] Clark did not interact with President Rhee with respect to the development of the ROKA, or provide direction to the advisors under his command regarding their approach to the influence problem.

GENERAL MAXWELL TAYLOR

General Maxwell Taylor commanded the Eighth Army from February 1953 through the Armistice. In those final months of the Korean War, Taylor focused principally on managing coalition operations against the PVA, though he continued to support the initiatives Van Fleet had established towards the ROKA. Taylor inherited the total Eighth Army control over the ROKA established under Van Fleet, and did not disrupt KMAG Chief Ryan's management of the KMAG. By this time, Rhee had largely given up involvement in the development of the ROKA and permitted the Eighth Army to manage ROKA military organizational practices.

---

[172] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* pp. 247-249.

Taylor thus had no cause to influence Rhee's behavior with respect to the development of the ROKA.

<u>Coding Influence Strategies at the Ground Level – the KMAG Advisor Teams</u>

Below the UNC commanders, the Eighth Army commanders, and the KMAG chiefs, several thousand KMAG advisors attached themselves to ROKA corps, divisions, regiments, and battalions. The advisors operated according to the counterpart system. After advisors arrived in Seoul, they were divvied out to individual officers within the ROKA. Corps advisors attached to corps commanders, division advisors to division commanders, all the way down to the battalion level. Advisors also attached to ROKA units' G-1 (personnel), G-4 (logistics), G-2 (intelligence), and G-3 (operations) officers.

The primary objectives and functions of the advisors evolved from ROK independence to the Armistice. Between August 1948 and June 1950, the advisors focused principally on establishing a school system to produce ROK officers, disbursing American materiel, providing basic training, and accompanying and advising their units in operations against the guerillas in the south and the incursions in the north. Advisors also served as the eyes and ears of the PMAG/KMAG in the field, observing the activities of their units, of guerrillas and northern incursions, and reporting back up the chain of command. In the immediate aftermath of the invasion, the advisors took *de facto* direct command of their ROK units to stiffen their resolve for the delaying actions necessary to buy time for the Eighth Army counterattack. Although the advisors quickly transitioned from brief direct command back to their advisory positions, until the summer of 1951, most KMAG advisors operated in practice much more as combat support and liaisons to the Eighth Army than as advisors tasked with transforming the ROKA. Other

KMAG advisors assigned to the RTCs focused on pushing new recruits out to the field to replace ROKA casualties. Van Fleet and Ryan reoriented the KMAG advisors to their original advisory and training roles.

KMAG advisors advised their counterparts about how to train, how to fight as divisions, how to maintain equipment, and how to plan for operations. They gave advice in battle about when to stand ground, when to retreat, and when to take the initiative. They advised against the sale of American equipment on the black market. They advised the elevation of noncommissioned officers, investment in the training of subordinates, and the importance of truthful reporting. Hardly anything the ROKA did escaped American advice. Aside from the brief period of *de facto* command in the immediate aftermath of the invasion, all this advice was just that—advice. The defining feature of an advisor is the absence of command authority. How did the advisors encourage their ROKA counterparts to follow their advice?

For the first year of the advisory effort, the advisors received little instruction to guide their approach to advice giving, or their mission more generally. Beginning in the summer of 1949 and continuing through the Armistice, KMAG chiefs Roberts, Farrell, and Ryan conducted briefings and disseminated materials to inform the KMAG advisors of their mission and how best to accomplish it. The advisors were told to improve the competence of the units to which they were attached, and to monitor the battlefield and report developments up the chain of command. Roberts' 1949 *Advisors Handbook*, Farrell's March 1951 edition of the *Handbook*, and Ryan's July 1953 *Advisor's Procedure Guide* with its "Ten Commandments" all instructed the advisors to do their best to teach, inspire, and persuade their ROKA counterparts to take their advice.

Each set of instructions also instructed the advisors to escalate to pressure as needed to secure compliance. The instructions identified two main ways advisors could exert pressure. First, because of Eighth Army's total control over ROKA personnel, advisors controlled the advancement prospects of their counterparts, and could promise positive or negative reports to incentivize their counterparts to implement their advice. The Eighth Army commanders and KMAG chiefs encouraged their field advisors provide frank assessments of the ROKA commanders up the KMAG chain of command so that they could secure their relief or promotion.[173] Second, advisors controlled the flow of supplies to their ROKA units, and could grant, or refuse to countersign supply requisitions. Thus, although advisors lacked command authority, their ability to manipulate carrots and sticks gave them "control authority," which they were encouraged to use as necessary. [174]

The advisors followed the clear instruction they received. They began with teaching and persuasion, but if teaching and persuasion failed to move their ROKA counterparts to comply with their advice on matters of importance, the advisors escalated to the pressure tactics. A study conducted by the Operations Research Office at Johns Hopkins University commissioned by the U.S. Army captures the influence strategies employed by a representative sample of 255 KMAG advisors deployed to Korea in the twelve months leading up to the Armistice.[175] The study consisted of a survey questionnaire completed by the 255 advisors as well as extended interviews

---

[173] Jongnam Na, *Making Cold War Soldiers: The Americanization of the South Korean Army, 1945-1955,* Doctoral Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006, pp. 65-66; Hausrath, "The KMAG Advisor," pp. 83-85.
[174] Hausrath, "The KMAG Advisor," p. 20.
[175] Of these, 21 percent were attached to ROKA corps headquarters, 62 percent to divisions (including the smaller units within the divisions, such as infantry regiments and field artillery battalions), p percent were with various separate security and training units, and the remaining 8 percent were serving at ROKA or KMAG Hq. See Hausrath, "The KMAG Advisor," p. 12.

with many of the respondents. The questionnaire asked advisors to indicate the "Frequency of Necessity of bringing pressure to bear on counterpart."

Table 27

FREQUENCY OF NECESSITY OF BRINGING PRESSURE TO BEAR ON COUNTERPART

Frequency of need	Percent of 255 respondents	Frequency of need	Percent of 255 respondents
Never	30	Frequent	5
Very rare	36	No answer	5
Once in a while	24	Total	100

Because "pressure" is a vague term that different advisors conceptualized in different ways, the study further asked advisors to specify precisely what "Kinds of Pressure" they used.

Advisors indicated their use of "Argument and persuasion," "referring the matter to higher ROKA or KMAG echelons," "Refusing to countersign ROKA supply requisitions," "threatening to take the matter to higher echelons," and, very rarely, "Giving counterpart direct orders or countermanding his orders." Advisors conveyed their conviction that pressure tactics should not be used unless persuasion had failed and the issue at stake was important. However, they understood their task as securing compliance from their counterparts, one way or another, so, "when subtle means fail and an important issue is at stake, the advisor must apply pressure—in the least irreparable way possible—to assure the counterpart's compliance."[176]

[176] Ibid, p. 85.

A senior advisor described his subordinate advisors' approach to the influence problem as follows: "It was necessary to exert pressure many times. [ROK officer] was not very truthful. KMAG inspectors found that he had a warehouse full of batteries and signal equipment for distribution to the ROK Army while he kept submitting requisitions for additional material. The Advisor refused to sign the requisition for a whole month, forcing the ROK to distribute the material on hand."[177] Gibby's characterization of KMAG influence strategies paints the same picture. KMAG advisors showed the Korean soldiers how to take care of their equipment and told them not to sell it on the black market, but then enforced compliance by "visiting the local markets to check for unauthorized sale of military supplies, spot-checking individual units, and at times even withholding authorization for supplies as a means to 'encourage' compliance with an advisor's 'suggestions.'"[178]

In the end, Hausrath concluded, "Some form of pressure was quite usual."[179] Overall, the questionnaire results and extended interviews indicated that advisors began with persuasion, and then escalated up a "pressure scale" as needed to secure compliance. As summarized by Hausrath:

> In ascending order, therefore, a pressure scale would start only after suggestion and indirect methods have failed. The sequence might be: (a) persuasion, (b) refusal of the advisor to perform some act that would facilitate the counterpart's plan, (c) reminder that the advisor will have to report the situation to his superiors, (d) direct threat to take the matter up with higher echelons of command through the advisor's own channels, (e) the actual referring of the matter to higher echelons, (f) giving direct orders to the counterparts in lieu of the counterpart, and (g) countermanding the counterpart's orders (if he can make them succeed).[180]

---

[177] Ibid, p. 84.
[178] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 124.
[179] Hausrath, "The KMAG Advisor," p. 84.
[180] Ibid, pp. 84-85.

In summary, the advisors tasked with influencing the senior leaders of the Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea Army to build a stronger ROK Army employed all rungs in the influence escalation ladder.

3.3 Testing Influence Strategy Theory

This section tests the predictions of Influence Strategy Theory (IST) laid out in Chapter 2 in the case of South Korea. IST predicts that when the United States relies exclusively on teaching and persuasion to build partner militaries, the effort is likely to fail. In contrast, when the United States teaches and persuades, and also escalates to bargaining and direct command, the effort is more likely to succeed. IST theorizes a two-part causal chain linking the influence strategies U.S. advisors employ, to recipient receptivity to U.S. direction, to the performance of the recipient military on the battlefield.

SUMMARY - Influence Strategy Theory (IST)				
Advisor Influence Strategy	→	**Recipient Receptivity**	→	**Recipient Military Effectiveness**
Teaching and persuasion	→	Recipient defiance	→	No or minimal improvement in military effectiveness
Teaching and persuasion + bargaining and/or direct command	→	Recipient compliance	→	Improved military effectiveness

The key distinction between recipient defiance and compliance is whether or not the individual that receives advice from a U.S. advisor actually implements that advice. Whether the defiance is open or surreptitious, the coding is the same.

It is important to emphasize that any specific coercion "treatment" cannot be examined as if it occurs in a vacuum. In advisory missions, U.S. advice and recipient responses are best understood as an iterated game. In calculating whether to follow or ignore U.S. advice, recipients are likely to consider previous episodes. If U.S. advisors only ever teach and persuade recipients to follow U.S. advice, recipients are more likely to expect this gentle approach to persist. If U.S. advisors escalate to threats or actual punishments, recipients are likely to bear this in mind when considering compliance or defiance in subsequent episodes. A ROKA officer who has observed advisors punish other ROKA officers for defiance in the past, is likely in the present to understand an advisor's coaxing quite differently than a ROKA officer who has only ever observed the advisor coax and cajole. The expectation of the theory is not that ROK Army officers will defy *all* U.S. efforts to persuade, but rather, that they will defy U.S. efforts to persuade when persuasion is the *only* approach the advisors employ. When U.S. advisors escalate to coercion a few times, recipients will not only be more likely to follow U.S. guidance when delivered with a threat, but they will also be more likely to follow U.S. guidance delivered more gently, recognizing the latent possibility of coercion behind the smiling request.

The next theorized link in the causal chain takes us back to the larger puzzle of the project—the success and failure of U.S. efforts to build stronger militaries in partner states. This link connects recipient compliance with U.S. advice to significant improvement in military effectiveness, and defiance to an absence of significant improvement in military effectiveness. This link relies on the assumption that the advice offered by the United States would improve the

effectiveness of the military if implemented. I scope analysis of U.S. advice to that pertaining to recipient military organizational practices as laid out by Caitlin Talmadge in her PhD thesis and book *The Dictator's Dilemma*. I feel comfortable in the assumption that U.S. advice to recipients to promote based on merit rather than political loyalty, and to train rigorously and realistically, for instance, is "good advice" from the perspective of recipient battlefield effectiveness. I draw again from Talmadge for criteria for coding change in military effectiveness, focusing on changes in ROK Army unit cohesion, performance of basic tactics, and ability to conduct complex operations.[181]

On the whole, the results of the U.S. advisory effort in Korea align with the expectations of Influence Strategy Theory. The United States employed the full escalation ladder to influence ROK leaders to take steps to strengthen the ROKA, ROK leaders largely complied with U.S. advice with respect to the development of the ROKA, and the ROKA improved significantly. A more granular look at ROK receptivity reveals and explains why President Syngman Rhee was more receptive to advisor persuasion in the period preceding the invasion than IST would have predicted. Overall, the Korea case strengthens Influence Strategy Theory.

Receptivity of President Syngman Rhee to U.S. Advice

IST predicts that President Syngman Rhee should comply less often with advice delivered via persuasion by Captain Hausman and General Roberts, and he should comply more often with advice given by General Van Fleet in the wake of Van Fleet's threat to sever U.S. assistance unless he cooperated fully. This expectation is largely borne out. Rhee complied with some while ignoring other U.S. advice regarding the development of the ROKA in the August

[181] Talmadge, *Explaining Military Effectiveness*, pp. 15-21.

1948 – July 1950 period, and, though Rhee famously poked the U.S. in the eye with his attempts to sabotage negotiations in 1953, he became far more cooperative with Van Fleet's program to develop the ROKA after Van Fleet's threat to cut assistance in the thick of the fighting.

In the period before the invasion, President Rhee permitted Roberts, Hausman, and the other senior U.S. advisors to design the ROK Army's training program without interference, and he listened carefully to Hausman's advice on personnel and on the operational employment of the ROKA in the counter-rebellion campaigns of the period. Rhee's record of actual compliance with Hausman's advice, however, is mixed. Acting on Hausman's advice, Rhee removed officers from the ROKA that Hausman had identified as disloyal. Rhee also complied with Hausman's advice to ignore efforts by the National Police to get competent ROKA officers removed (the National Police competed with the ROKA for resources and missed no opportunity for sabotage).

On the other hand, Rhee did not act on Hausman's reports that General Song Ho-sung was unfit for the critical Chief of Staff position he held, nor did he heed Hausman's reservations regarding the eventual elevation of Song's replacement, General Chae Pyong-duk ("Fat Chae"). General Song Ho-Sung proved a liability in the Yosu-Sunchon rebellion of late 1948, and General Chae sent the ROKA off on a barely planned and ultimately catastrophic counteroffensive after the North Korean invasion. Nor did Rhee heed Hausman's advice for noninterference, or at least for operational patience and planning in the Yosu-Sunchon rebellion. Rhee hastily threw local units of the ROKA into uncoordinated counterattacks to suppress the rebellion without adequate planning or preparation. Rhee did, however, generally give Roberts and Hausman a green light to implement ROKA training as they saw fit and to shape ROKA personnel below the Chief of Staff level. In short, Rhee's compliance with the advice of U.S. military advisors—delivered during this period largely via persuasion—was mixed.

Rhee complied with U.S. advice during this period more frequently than IST would expect. Close inspection of U.S. *civilian* efforts to influence President Rhee during this same period suggest an explanation. Throughout 1948 and 1949, Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Ambassador to Korea John J. Muccio at Acheson's direction—explicitly warned Rhee that the American support upon which he depended for survival was contingent on his full cooperation.[182] Rhee registered the threat and communicated Acheson's demands for cooperation to the senior leadership of the ROKA.[183] Viewed in this context, Roberts' repeated reminders to the ROKA leadership of the great expense of American support take on a more threatening valence. Rhee and his senior military leaders' receptivity to Hausman's personal diplomacy are likely shaped in part by the threats communicated by civilian leadership in Washington. Rhee, acutely cognizant that his survival hinged on American support, and with the explicit threat of withdrawal of that support front of mind, made sure to accommodate the United States and limit, for instance, his meddling in ROKA personnel policies to a level that the U.S. military advisors could accept.

Beginning with Van Fleet's tenure as Eighth Army commander, and in keeping with the expectations of IST, Rhee's compliance with the American program to develop and employ the ROKA verged on perfect. Rhee essentially handed the Americans total control over his army. In the wake of the invasion, Rhee proactively offered UNC Commander General MacArthur operational control of the ROKA, and he did not direct or attempt to direct operations outside the official chain of command. Rhee also permitted the KMAG to develop and implement a rigorous and realistic training regimen for his officer corps and entire army. Crucially, Rhee ceded

[182] Muhammed Cihad Kubat, *Ambassador at War: John J. Muccio and the Korean War (1948 – 1952)*, Master's Thesis, Ihsan Dogramaci Bilkent University, 2019, p. 60.
[183] Ibid.

ROKA's personnel appointments to the U.S. Eighth Army. From Spring 1951 through the Armistice, each ROKA Chief of Staff and nearly every corps commander and division commander was suggested by American advisors and personally approved by Van Fleet.

A rare instance in which Van Fleet did *not* sanction the promotion of two ROKA division commanders is the exception that illustrates the rule of total ROK deferral to American control of ROKA personnel. Writing in his commander's journal in May 1952, Van Fleet recounted how ROKA Chief of Staff General Lee:

> said that two of the division commanders had been promoted, these being Ham (2nd Division) and Choi (8th Division)…General Lee was extremely embarrassed, shamed, and apologetic for having submitted the recommendations without prior submission to the CG Eighth Army for approval. [CG] stressed the necessity that Eighth Army must concur in the promotions and assignments of senior officers to key positions…[CG] told General Lee [he] was going to see the President concerning these same matters, but since he had submitted the promotion recommendations I would support him in these present cases.[184]

It should be noted that Rhee's compliance was not quite perfect, even during this period. Rhee kept careful watch over his officer corps and did what he could to minimize the power of those he considered political threats or those who would not follow his direction. His main tactic was to shuffle commanders across ROKA units to keep them from developing too strong a base of power, which interfered with their ability to effectively command their units.[185] Rhee also fired the competent and respected Lee Chong-chan as Chief of Staff after Lee refused to follow Rhee's politically motivated orders to impose martial law in May 1952.[186] Even in this instance, however, Rhee permitted the Americans to replace Lee with their favorite—the highly competent

---

[184] James Van Fleet, Commanding General's Journal, May 1952, Van Fleet Papers at the George C. Marshall Library.
[185] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 175.
[186] Ibid, pp. 218-219.

and cooperative Paik Sun-yup.[187] Overall, however, Rhee's increased compliance with U.S. advice regarding the development of the ROKA during the Spring 1951 – July 1953 period (compared to the preceding period in which Roberts and Hausman relied on persuasion) is congruent with the expectations of Influence Strategy Theory.

Receptivity of ROKA leaders to KMAG Advice

Because the KMAG exercised the full escalation ladder to influence ROKA leaders, Influence Strategy Theory expects ROKA leaders from the Chiefs of Staff down to the battalion commanders to generally comply with KMAG military advice. This expectation is borne out.

Between 1948 and 1950, when Roberts and Hausman relied almost exclusively on persuasion to influence ROKA Chiefs of Staff to implement their advice (particularly in relation to operational planning), Generals Ho-song and "Fat Chae" largely brushed them off. The picture changed from Spring 1951 through the Armistice, when Van Fleet exercised direct command of the ROKA and Rhee let him select ROKA Chief of Staffs. Van Fleet selected ROKA Chiefs of Staff on the basis of feedback from the KMAG regarding their competence *and cooperativeness*. Van Fleet exercised direct command over the ROKA Chiefs of Staff and gave them direct orders. These ROKA Chiefs of Staffs—Lee Chong-chan and then Paik Sun-yup—were, unsurprisingly given their route to the position, quick to implement Eighth Army directives and highly solicitous of and compliant with KMAG advice regarding the development of the ROKA. When U.S. Eighth Army commanders issued directives, Lee and then Paik promptly passed the directives down to the ROKA. When KMAG advisors identified instances of non-compliance at lower levels of the ROKA and reported these issues up the Eighth Army chain of command, Lee

[187] Ibid, p. 126.

and Paik were notified, and promptly forced correctives or relieved the uncooperative ROKA officers.[188]

From 1948 until the invasion, neither the U.S. Eighth Army nor the KMAG had direct authority over the ROKA and relied on indirect influence strategies to convince ROKA officers to take their advice. Rhee gave the ROKA over to MacArthur's command after the invasion, and MacArthur put the ROKA under the command of the Eighth Army. The KMAG was made a subordinate unit of the Eighth Army, and was given no command authority over the ROKA. Rather, KMAG advisors used teaching, persuasion, *and bargaining* to convince ROKA corps, division, regiment, and battalion commanders to implement Eighth Army directives and also to follow their advice regarding how to maximize battlefield effectiveness. Because KMAG advisors escalated to bargaining as needed for the duration of the advisory period, Influence Strategy Theory expects ROKA officers generally to follow KMAG advice. This expectation is borne out.

Allen Millet, a military historian and authority on the Korean War, and Bryan Gibby, a military historian and authority on the U.S. effort to build the ROKA and the ROKA's performance over the course of the war, both characterize ROKA leaders (and indeed soldiers) as solicitous of and cooperative with U.S. advice in almost every area.[189] The ORO questionnaire did not explicitly ask advisors to report on the degree to which their ROKA counterparts implemented their advice. However, the phrasing of the survey question regarding the "frequency of necessity of bringing pressure to bear on counterpart" and the accompanying extended interviews shed light on the question. Advisors interpreted "necessity of bringing pressure to bear" to mean—how often were you able to secure compliance through persuasion

---

[188] Ibid, p. 217, 156, citing Weekly Report 25 February 1951, 4.
[189] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* Millett, *The War for Korea*.

alone, and how often did you need to escalate to coercion to secure compliance? The 30 percent of officers who reported that they never found it necessary to bring pressure to bear meant that they achieved 100-percent compliance through persuasion. The 24-percent of respondents who indicated that they escalated to coercion "once in a while" meant that they secured compliance most of the time through persuasion alone, and secured compliance through coercion "once in a while." On matters of importance, however, they always secured compliance one way or another.

The following quote typifies the approach of the KMAG advisors: "I tried to use polite means of getting cooperation from the ROKs. When I really had to bring pressure to get results, I referred the matter to higher echelons who would handle the matter through ROK channels."[190] By "handling the matter," the advisor meant that American commanders at higher levels would report the uncooperative ROKA officer to his own ROKA superiors, with direction to relieve the uncooperative officer or set him straight. Because Van Fleet directly controlled the advancement prospects of ROK Army officers at the highest levels, they had good reason to follow senior U.S. Eighth Army commander direction. The fact that "polite means" often worked to "get results," or, compliance, does not contradict the expectations of IST. The hard backdrop of coercion meant that "polite means" were interpreted by the ROKA officers as a first step. Polite requests would only remain polite requests if the ROKA officers complied. Moreover, because the Americans controlled advancement, they were able to select for officers who were more inclined to cooperate in the first place. In sum, and as expected by IST, the U.S. made use of the full escalation ladder, and ROK political and military leaders from top to bottom largely implemented U.S. advice.

---

[190] Hausrath, "The KMAG Advisor," pp. 83-84.

The Second Link: South Korean Receptivity → Improved ROK Army Battlefield Performance

Influence Strategy Theory (IST) argues first that U.S. influence strategies shape recipient receptivity to U.S. advice, and second that recipient receptivity in turn shapes recipient battlefield effectiveness. The second link in the chain is essentially the connection between military organizational practices and battlefield effectiveness that Caitlin Talmadge theorizes and tests in her MIT PhD thesis and book, *The Dictator's Army.* Both this study's IST and Talmadge's theory of battlefield effectiveness predict a correlation between ROK receptivity to U.S. advice, and improved ROKA performance on the battlefield. Simply put, both theories expect to see significant improvement from the beginning of the U.S. advisory period to the Armistice.

I adopt Talmadge's approach to judging battlefield effectiveness, analyzing changes in the ROKA's ability to maintain unit cohesion, execute basic tactics, and conduct complex operations. I assess changes in the effectiveness of the ROKA across four operations spanning the advisory period: the Yosu-Sunchon Rebellion (October-November 1948); the North Korean Invasion (June – July 1950); the Chinese Spring Offensive (May 1951); and the Chinese Summer Offensive (May 1953). For each battle, I assess the relevant ROK Army units' ability to maintain unit cohesion, execute basic tactics, and conduct complex operations. I draw on data presented by several of the most thorough and rigorous military histories of the ROK Army's performance in the Korean War, including: Allen Millet's *The War for Korea* trilogy, military historian Bryan Gibby's *The Will to Win: American Military Advisors in Korea* and his doctoral thesis *Fighting in a Korean War*, and the Korea Institute of Military History, *The Korean War*.

Below I summarize and code each of the four battles in turn. I find strong support for IST's expectation that the ROK Army improved significantly over the course of the advisory

effort, and particularly between the collapse of the ROKA in the Chinese Spring Offensive of May 1951 (after which Van Fleet escalated to bargaining and direct command at the strategic level), and the stiff resistance of the ROKA against the enormous and unexpected Chinese Summer Offensive of 1953.

YOSU-SUNCHON REBELLION (October - November 1948)

The ROK Army was busy in the years preceding the June 1950 invasion. The young ROKA fought to suppress the Yosu-Sunchon mutiny in October – November 1948, the Cheju-do rebellion in April 1948 – August 1949, the border war in the summer and fall of 1949, and the guerrilla suppression campaigns in the fall and winter of 1949 – 1950. The ROKA's suppression of the Yosu-Sunchon mutiny represents the first real test of the ROKA since the inauguration of the independent Republic of Korea.

On October 1, the peasant guerrillas of the *inmin-gun* (People's Army) erupted into large-scale rebellion on the island of Cheju-do. The guerillas had a broad base of support among the local population, and numerous caches of weapons, ammunition, and supplies left behind by the Japanese. The local Constabulary unit—the 9th Regiment—refused to confront the guerrillas. Seoul ordered the 14th Regiment, stationed at the nearby port city of Yosu, to prepare one reinforcement battalion for movement to Cheju-do. On the eve of the regiment's deployment (October 19), approximately 40 men from the regiment killed their officers, took over the city, proclaimed a national uprising, and dispatched elements of the regiment to Sunchon and other nearby villages, clashing with and sweeping away National Police forces in their path. During

the first 24 hours of the mutiny, the PMAG G-2 reported at least 1,000 soldiers participating in the rebellion.[191]

The response from Seoul was slow. KMAG First Lieutenant Minor Kelso, advisor to the 4th Regiment, was the first American to report the munity. In the absence of direction from Seoul, General Roberts ordered Captain Hausman to oversee the Korean effort to suppress the rebellion. Roberts convinced the Chief of the Constabulary, Song Ho-song to declare martial law for the Yosu-Sunchon region and to organize and deploy a new command, the Counter-rebel Combat Command to suppress the rebellion. The Counter-rebel Combat Command formed from loyal units from the 5th Brigade, and Hausman and Colonel Paik Sun-yup convinced General Song to put the American-recommended Colonel Kim Pak-il in charge of the new command.[192]

Kim directed the convergence of six loyal battalions of the 5th Brigade from the west and north into the Yosu region. The units forced the rebels from Sunchon by the evening of October 22nd. On the 23rd, these same units, under pressure from Seoul, attempted simultaneous assaults against Yosu, Posong, and Kwangyang. The assaults were under-planned and poorly executed. In Yosu, defenders easily repulsed the battalion's assault. In Sunchon, the 5th Brigade eventually managed to break the mutiny into three separate parts and overpowered each in turn. However, the poorly-planned attacks permitted many of the rebels in Sunchon to escape into the mountains.[193] On October 25, the ROK Army (elements from four different regiments) tried again to destroy the rebels in Yosu. The units made little progress until the 1st Reconnaissance Troop, the only force possessing weaponry heavier than that of the rebels, arrived from Seoul. After three days of heavy fighting, the Troop's firepower overwhelmed the isolated defenders.

---

[191] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 49, citing Diary of First Lieutenant Minor L. Kelso, transcribed copy with comments provided to author.
[192] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, pp. 60-61.
[193] Ibid, p. 61.

Casualties were high, and Yosu lay in ruins. At the end of October, the ROK declared an end to the rebellion, but the surviving rebels fled into the Chiri mountains where they continued to resist.[194]

Overall, the ROKA performed quite poorly in the Yosu-Sunchon rebellion. Open rebellion and the slaughter of officers surely reflects badly on unit cohesion. The units that did respond to direction from Seoul did not maintain unit cohesion in the counter-rebellion operations, applied firepower indiscriminately, and failed to effectively employ weapons such as mortars and machine guns, illustrating their poor tactical proficiency. Efforts to coordinate complex operations first came too slowly from Seoul, prompting General Roberts and Captain Hausman to step in to coordinate operations themselves, and then too quickly, with President Rhee ordering hasty assaults without adequate planning and preparation. In the chaos, ROKA units failed to coordinate their movements and often fired at each other. The eventual success of the young ROK Army was attributable not to battlefield competence, but to a preponderance of firepower on the government side relative to the outnumbered, lightly armed rebels.

NORTH KOREAN INVASION (June 1950)

In the early hours of June 25, 1950, elements of seven North Korean divisions crossed the 38th parallel. Supported by a North Korean air force of about 200 aircraft and a three-regiment 105th Tank Brigade (with approximately 150 T-34 tanks), North Korean assault divisions set out to open three corridors to Seoul and the Han River valley. Three more Korean People's Army (KPA) divisions with an additional 80 T-34 tanks followed behind the assault divisions. On the

[194] Ibid.

Republic of Korea side, four divisions of the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) spread across the 38th parallel received the invasion.[195]

The KPA exploited a number of advantages over the ROKA. The element of surprise meant that the ROKA divisions were understrength and otherwise ill-prepared for the attack. The ROKA was not large enough to organize for defense in depth across the 210-mile parallel. The ROKA lacked anti-tank weapons to stop the KPA tanks. Focused on guerilla warfare, the ROKA had not trained for defensive war of maneuver and counterattack, and lacked the necessary artillery, engineers, and logistics. The ROKA had little concept of mobile defense, no doctrine for conventional war, and were unfamiliar with concepts such as "delay," "strategic withdrawal," and "clever maneuver." ROKA leadership was inexperienced. Although the KPA had its own weaknesses (similarly inexperienced leadership, for one thing), it was, on the whole, a far better-equipped and better-trained army.[196]

Under these circumstances, it is unsurprising that the ROKA failed to demonstrate basic battlefield effectiveness in defense against the invasion. Divisions failed to perform complex operations, constituent units did not exhibit tactical proficiency, and units quickly broke down into disorderly retreat. The counteroffensive launched by ROKA Chief of Staff General Chae Pyong-duk ("Fat Chae") is illustrative of the ROKA's deficiencies in June 1950. Fat Chae sent the ROKA 7th, 2nd, and 3rd Divisions on a two-division frontal attack to block the Communist thrust coming south along the line of Tongduchon-Uijongbu-Seoul. Chae made no provisions for unified or overall command, unit coordination, or communication. The counterattacking divisions lacked leadership, firepower, tactical mobility (troops of the 2nd Division got off the

[195] Allen Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951: They Came From the North* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010), pp. 85-106.
[196] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 143; Millett, *The War for Korea,* pp. 85-106.

trains in Seoul, marched all night towards Uijongbu, where many collapsed from exhaustion), troop control, and any anti-tank weapons. The KPA tanks sliced quickly through the ROKA counteroffensive and pushed on to Uijongbu and then for Seoul.[197]

What is surprising is that the ROKA put up any organized resistance at all. Under the excellent leadership of Hausman's hand-picked Colonel Paik Sun-yup, the ROK Army 1st Division fought well. It managed an organized retreat, reconstituted on the move, and took up position to protect the northwest bulge of Pusan Perimeter, where it conducted several critical battles for the corridor in front of Taegu that significantly slowed the KPA advance.[198]

In all, however, coordination across units was almost nonexistent, infantry units failed to stand ground, and units broke in disorderly retreat. "With few exceptions, North Korean artillery, infantry, and tank units quickly punched through ROK defenses and plowed over the only genuine counterattack by the ROK 2nd and 7th Divisions. Within a week, Seoul had fallen to the Communists and the ROKA appeared to be destroyed as a fighting force."[199] In only slight exaggeration, MacArthur reported back to Washington the "complete and disorganized flight" of the South Korean soldiers."[200]

In summary, the performance of most (though not all) ROK Army to defend against the KPA invasion of June 1950 was poor, albeit, understandably so.

---

[197] Millett, *The War for Korea*, pp. 92-94; Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, pp. 146-147.
[198] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, pp. 144-45.
[199] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, pp. 140-141.
[200] Ibid, p. 141, citing Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 332.

CHINESE SPRING OFFENSIVE (May 1951)

The Korean War changed entirely with the entrance of the Chinese in October 1950. In Spring 1951, China launched an all-out offensive intended to drive UNC out of Korea and unify the peninsula for the communists. The offensive came in two main thrusts. The Chinese People's Volunteer Army (PVA) launched the first assault on April 22 in the west against the U.S. I Corps and U.S. IX Corps. The PVA and the Korean People's Army (KPA) launched the second assault on May 15 in the east against the ROKA III Corps and the U.S. X Corps. UNC forces stopped the assaults on April 30 and May 22, respectively, denying China its objective of driving them from the peninsula.

The ROK Army's performance in the Chinese Spring Offensive was extremely poor. On the western front, the entire ROK 6th Division, experienced and reasonably well equipped, panicked and disintegrated. The division commander, Brigadier General Chang Do-yong had ordered his regiments to prepare defensive positions and secure their flanks with the U.S. 24th Division to the west and the U.S. 1st Marine Division to the east. The 6th Division had been caught in a disadvantageous tactical position before the Chinese assault began, but regiments then failed to develop the basic defensive positions ordered by their commander, permitting Chinese infantry to penetrate the gaps and fire at the ROK units from behind. The reserve regiment (the 7th Regiment) had positioned itself directly behind one of the forward regiments, causing avoidable difficulties in command and control as two different units occupying the same space tried to fight an enemy skilled in night movement and fighting. When the forward battalions panicked and broke into an uncontrolled retreat, they overran the 7th Regiment, which immediately joined the retreat. The pursuing Chinese then overran the ROK 27th Artillery

Battalion and Company C of the U.S. 2nd Chemical Mortar Battalion, which had taken up positions behind the reserve regiment.[201]

The next day, U.S. IX Corps Commander Lieutenant General William M. Hoge ordered Chang to reorganize his division and defend just south of Sachang-ri along Line KANSAS. Chang and his staff gathered up around 2,500 men to defend the line. The reconstituted division, as summarized by Gibby, made “no effort to resist. The division simply melted away and abandoned all of its heavy equipment and much of its basic weaponry.”[202] The collapse of the 6th ROK Division meant that the British 27th Brigade had to dig in and stop the Chinese drive in three days of heavy fighting. Hoge reported to Van Fleet the “rout and dissolution of the [Korean] regiments,”[203] and wrote a blistering letter to the 6th Division commander General Chang, concluding that only future successes could “blot out the memory of this disgraceful occasion.”[204]

The entire ROKA III Corps collapsed in the second assault of China’s Spring Offensive. Beginning May 16, the PVA and the KPA focused their second assault not in the western sector as Van Fleet expected, but in the east, away from the American divisions in order to exploit the weakness of the ROK divisions. They massed against the rough terrain of the central and eastern sector, held by six ROK divisions organized into two corps. China’s aim was to penetrate the ROK divisions, isolate the ROK divisions to the east, and envelop the U.S. X Corps to the west.[205] As summarized by Gibby:

---

[201] Korea Institute of Military History, *The Korean War*, vol. 3 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), pp. 612-649.
[202] The ROK 6th Division abandoned 14 howitzers, 2352 M-1 rifles, 852 carbines, 88 machine guns, 45 pistols, 42 mortars, and 86 trucks. See Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 171, citing Message IXCCG 76, Memorandum for Commanding General, EUSAK, ROK Correspondence #1-9, 1951-1953, Box 86/4, Van Fleet Papers.
[203] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 172.
[204] Ibid, p. 173.
[205] Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953* (New York: Times Books, 1987), p. 871.

> From the ROK 5th Division (part of U.S. X Corps) on the western-most sector under attack to the ROK 3rd Division on the eastern flank of the ROK III Corps, the story was essentially the same. The collapse of one unit inevitably uncovered the line of retreat of a neighboring unit, prompting a massive and wholesale rout that did not abate until a new line formed nearly forty miles to the south. Soldiers abandoned weapons and officers removed insignia of rank. Where units did maintain some cohesion, they bunched up into clusters, which offered minimal resistance that the Chinese easily bypassed.[206]

On May 17th, ROK III Corps commander, Major General Yu Jai-hung, ordered his two divisions to attack and break through the Chinese block at Omachi, which was defended by just one Chinese infantry battalion. The attack was a disaster. General Yu made no effort to lead the divisions, provide additional fire support, or coordinate and control the actual attack. He put his the 3rd Division commander in charge of the corps-level operation and headed back to his headquarters. At the first sign of Chinese resistance, the ROK 3rd Division commander called off the whole attack, making no attempt to maneuver other units or request fire support to break through the enemy block force. By the early hours of May 18th, the entire corps fell back in disorderly retreat, small Chinese units on their heels. As summarized by an official history:

> There were no commanding officers to control the situation nor was it controllable, for those who escaped enemy pursuit and assembled in total disorder in the Pangdae-san area were unable to identify their own assigned units . . . the ROK 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th Divisions responsible for about 40 kilometers of the frontline . . . were paralyzed due to [their] inability to command and control, and were penetrated on the main line of resistance, thus unable to exercise their combat capabilities. Incapable of overcoming the enemy's night infiltration attacks, [and] overwhelmed by the enemy's superiority in manpower, and unable to dislodge the enemy and recapture Omach'i, the ROK III Corps finally [was] encircled by the enemy.[207]

The U.S. units, facing envelopment and mass assault, managed to protect the U.S. X Corps' exposed flank and stop the Chinese assault.[208]

---

[206] Gibby, Fighting in a Korean War, p. 177, citing Donald K. Chung, *The Three Day Promise: A Korean Soldier's Memoir* (Tallahassee: Father and Son Publishing, 1989), p. 202.

[207] Korea Institute of Military History, *The Korean War*, vol. 2 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), p. 682.

[208] Ibid, pp. 666-68.

The ROK 6th Division had performed poorly under difficult circumstance. The entire ROK III Corps fallen to pieces under favorable circumstances. Defending a narrow area of defensible terrain, it had proven itself utterly incapable of organized resistance. The ROKA had abjectly failed to coordinate complex operations. More basically, the ROKA had demonstrated a lack of tactical proficiency, often failing to establish communications, disseminate fire plans, and maintain proper fire control and discipline on both offense and defense.[209] Most damningly, the ROKA had failed to demonstrate unit cohesion, with the vast majority panicking quickly and fleeing in disorderly retreat, leaving their weapons behind.

The collapse of the ROK 6th Division and entire ROK III Corps prompted Van Fleet to take aggressive action to take control of the ROKA. He dissolved the ROK III Corps entirely, limited the functions of the ROK Army staff to manpower inductions and took full ownership not only of ROK operational employment, but also of ROK personnel policies. To ensure that ROK President Rhee would not intrude, Van Fleet told Rhee he would not provide any more equipment and weapons to the ROK Army until their leadership (as selected and judged by him personally), improved.[210] With total control of the ROKA, Van Fleet also initiated a wholesale program to transform it into a professional modern army (see Section 2).

BATTLE OF WHITE HORSE MOUNTAIN (October 1952)

On October 3, 1952, a captured lieutenant from the Chinese People's Volunteer Army (PVA) revealed an imminent Chinese attack on White Horse Mountain. The mountain, then-held by the ROK 9th Division, was key terrain dominating the western approaches to Chorwon and

---

[209] Hausrath, "The KMAG Advisor," p. 158.
[210] Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet to Ambassador John J. Muccio, 3 May 1951, ROK Correspondence #1-9, 1951-1953, Box 86/4, Van Fleet Papers.

overlooking the entire Yokkik-chon Valley. Loss of the mountain would require the U.S. IX Corps to reposition itself further south and cede control of Chorwon.

The ROK 9th Division prepared to defend the mountain against a coming onslaught by three Chinese divisions. The U.S. IX Corps reinforced the ROKA 9th Division with 22 tanks from the 53rd Tank Squadron and the U.S. 73rd Tank Battalion's C Company, artillery, rocket launchers, and antiaircraft weapons. The battle, however, was a Korean one, commanded by 9th Division commander Major General Kim Jong Oh.

Kim ordered two battalions of the 30th Regiment to entrench on the mountain (Hill 395) and held one battalion back as a local reserve. He held back the other two regiments as division reserve. Kim's staff developed a detailed counterattack plan for the 28th Regiment. Kim lined the flanks of the mountain with American tanks and anti-aircraft batteries to cover the valley approaches and to guard against envelopment. He rounded out the defensive preparations with searchlights and flares. He also coordinated the division's fire and air support with the U.S. IX Corps.[211]

The Chinese assault began on October 4th, when the division's forward units received heavy artillery fire. The fire peaked and the Chinese infantry began their assault on October 6th, when at least 1,291 rounds of artillery pounded the ROK units. Through the evening of the 6th, the forward Korean battalions withstood three assaults by two Chinese battalions, counterattacking to eliminate enemy penetrations. The Chinese attacked again in the early hours of October 7th before withdrawing. They had having inflicted 300 casualties while suffering an estimated 1,500 killed and wounded. The Chinese returned in the afternoon with four battalions and managed to take the crest of the hill before losing it to a nighttime counterattack from two

[211] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 244.

battalions of the ROK 28th Regiment. For ten days, the PVA and the ROKA fought over the hill, attacking and counterattacking. The hill changed hands numerous times before the Chinese eventually withdrew.[212]

The ROK 9th Division fought well in the Battle of White Horse Mountain. The initial defense of the hill was well-planned, highly coordinated, and effectively executed. The ROK 9th Division withstood 50,000 artillery and mortar shells and fended off 28 separate Chinese assaults. The division kept tight troop control and fire discipline. In a coordinated tactical plan, it effectively employed and coordinated infantry, armor, artillery, and combat engineers. The battalions fought as coherent units, gave ground as necessary, and returned to counterattack. The division effectively employed fire, with the 1st Field Artillery Group (ROK) controlling the fires of four Korean artillery battalions, one American rocket battery, and one American heavy mortar company. Korean officers led their troops well, defending, advancing, and counter-attacking on command. [213]

The division staff effectively planned the initial defense of the hill, the day's fight, and action for the next day. It also effectively coordinated streams of reinforcements. Taking over 3,000 casualties in the ten days of fighting, personnel officers helped the division receive and integrate 3,743 replacements during the battle. The ROKA also kept its units supplied with ammunition, weapons, food, and medical supplies.[214] The Americans had judged the 9th Division a mediocre unit just 18 months earlier. Yet, at the Battle of White Horse Mountain, the division

---

[212] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 244-47.
[213] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean* War, p. 247, citing X Corps AAR Hill 395, 29; KMAG Command Report, October 1952, 9th Division, p. 2.
[214] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 246-247, citing IX Corps AAR Hill 395, 29; KMAG Command Report, October 1952, 9th Division, 2.

demonstrated unit cohesion, tactical proficiency, and the ability to conduct complex operations. And in the end, the ROKA held the mountain.

SUMMER OFFENSIVE (May 1953)

In 1953, the burden of the war shifted largely to the ROK Army. "Koreanization" (although the term was not used) was in full swing. In January of 1953, twelve ROK Army divisions held 59 percent of the frontline.[215] The Chinese directed most of their attention to the ROK divisions, but the ROK were holding the line, and doling out severe punishment to Chinese and North Korean troops. As the ROK Army assumed a greater share of the front, the Eighth Army was able to pull U.S. divisions back into corps reserve without giving significant ground.

By May 1953, the United Nations Council believed an armistice was imminent. After an initial prisoner exchange, plenary negotiations had resumed at Panmunjom. The UNC had made clear—and the Chinese understood—that it would not risk spoiling negotiations with any further offensive actions. The UNC did not expect any major offensive actions from the Chinese. The Chinese, however, were planning a major offensive that they hoped would bring about a significantly more favorable settlement.

The Chinese planned a three-stage final offensive. In the preparatory phase, they planned to coordinate infantry and artillery assaults in sudden attacks to seize exposed positions. This would pave the way for the decisive fighting in phase two, which itself comprised two stages. First, the Chinese would attack the U.S. and ROK troops in the far western and eastern sectors to pin down UNC reserves in a feint to distract attention from the Kumsong sector in the center. Then the Chinese would direct its main effort to attack the boundary between the ROK II and

[215] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 258, citing KMAG Command Report, December 1952, Section I, 1.

U.S. X Corps on the eastern side of the Kumsong salient along the Pukhan River valley. In the exploitation phase, Chinese reserve troops would push between the two corps and destroy significant parts of the ROK Army and force a withdrawal from the Kumsong salient. The Chinese intended each phase to last about ten days with a five day pause between phases.[216]

With few exceptions, the ROK Army performed well against the Chinese Summer Offensive. In the west, the Capital Division and the ROK 9th Division employed accurate artillery well-planned counterattacks to fend off and inflict heavy casualties on the Chinese attackers in three separate engagements.[217] In the east, the ROK 20th Division defended against Chinese attacks from May 16 to May 25. The ROK 20th Division made effective use of American artillery and air support, and ROK troops managed to contain and eventually repulse a Chinese penetration on May 18th. This division relied heavily on its KMAG advisors and American support.[218]

The ROK 5th Division, which defended the mouth of the Pukhan River valley, bore the brunt of Chinese attacks during the first phase. It was vital for ROK to stand ground here, as breakthrough would have put the U.S. X Corps (hanging back in reserve) in a bad spot. The heaviest fighting occurred at Hill 689, Obong Ridge, and Hill 973, key strongpoints for the division. The Chinese 180th Division tried twice to take Hill 689 and Obong Ridge in order to lay the groundwork for seizing Hill 973. After a grueling fight in which Hill 689 changed hands eight times, China's 181st division entered the battle and captured the hill.[219]

---

[216] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, pp. 268-69.
[217] Ibid, p. 269.
[218] Ibid, 270.
[219] Korea Institute of Military History, *The Korean War*, vol. 3 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), p. 593.

Phase Two of the Chinese Summer Offensive began on May 27th. The Chinese massed the 60th, 67th, and 68th armies in reserve against the ROK II Corps. Nine Chinese divisions lined up against three ROK divisions (the 8th, 5th, and 20th). The Chinese had significant numerical superiority and substantial reserves to reinforce with fresh troops. The fiercest fighting occurred for the outposts on the flank sectors of the ROK II Corps. Two outposts in the 5th Division sector fell to the Chinese, while the ROK 8th Division lost two positions on Hill 549 and Hill 647, and failed to dislodge the Chinese from these positions in counterattacks.[220]

In the 6th Division sector, two companies of Chinese attacked a small ROK company (78 soldiers) defending Hill 424. The ROK company was heavily outnumbered, but decided to hold the position. After three hours of close combat, the company held its ground and finally forced the Chinese to withdraw under barrage of Korean artillery. The company killed 110 Chinese soldiers. Only 10 from the ROK company escaped the fighting unharmed.[221]

The Chinese concentrated their strength at the Kumsong salient, reinforcing the 60th and 67th armies with the 68th army—enough to conduct frontal assaults and infiltration attacks to surround and destroy ROK units. The ROKs were thinly spread, even considering the rugged terrain. The three front-line divisions of the ROK II Corps defended an average of 8,000 meters each. The ROK 20th Division (under the command of the U.S. X Corps) stood just east of the ROK 5th Division. The Chinese concentrated their attack along this division and corps boundary in the Pukhan River valley.[222]

The ROK 20th Division stopped a major Chinese attack for control of Hill 1090 and its associated outposts. From June 10-17, the ROK 1st Battalion, 61st Regiment fought two Chinese

---

[220] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 273.
[221] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 275, citing KMAG Combat Operations Command Report, May 1953, 11-12.
[222] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, pp. 275-76.

regiments for the crest of nearby M-1 Hill. After a bloody week in which the hill changed hands over 20 times, the Chinese eventually fell back, leaving the ROK 20th Division to control the Hill 1090 complex. This was an important victory for the ROK because it freed the U.S. X Corps commander to focus on the caving flank of the ROK II Corps, rather than permitting the Chinese to penetrate into the western flank of the U.S. X Corps and push it away from the Pukhan River.[223]

The ROK 5th Division endured a heavy barrage of over 10,000 artillery and mortar rounds, before two regiments of the Chinese 60th army attacked its positions. The attack overwhelmed the division, and the Chinese took the outpost line and pushed reinforcements forward to attack Hill 973. Chinese infantry also attacked the nearby positions of Hill 949 and 884. Loss of the area would mean the destruction of the ROK 27th Infantry Regiment and would free the Chinese to push deep down the river valley. Under a heavy defensive bombardment from ROK division and corps artillery, the Chinese continued the attack, achieving two regiment-sized penetrations by the early morning of June 11th.[224]

ROK 5th Division commander Brigadier General Choi Hong-hee immediately ordered counterattacks to reclaim the lost positions. Limited transportation and communications capabilities undermined the counterattacks. China's 60th Army marshalled its forces in depth with fresh waves of reinforcements. Small Chinese elements infiltrated ROK lines, complicating troop movements and artillery.[225]

ROK II Commander Lieutenant General Chung Il-kwon decided to send one of his reserve regiments, the 22nd Regiment (from the ROK 3rd Division) to shore up the 5th Division

[223] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, pp. 276-77.
[224] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, pp. 277-78.
[225] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, pp. 278-279.

sector. Despite the quick and aggressive corps level-coordination that facilitated the support from the reserve regiment, the ROK lost Hill 973 and Hill 883. However, the action prevented the situation from getting much worse. The 27th regiment dug in south of the Chinese breakthrough and the two battalions of the 35th Regiment closed off the exits from Hill 973. Despite the magnitude of the Chinese attack, The ROK 5th Division did not break.[226]

The Chinese turned west to attack the ROK 8th division in an effort to take Capital Hill and Finger Ridge. The 8th Division did not acquit itself as well as the other ROK elements, breaking quickly and engaging in an "anemic counterattack," ultimately abandoning its positions and leaving the 5th Division's flank open.[227]

The Chinese then hit the ROK 5th Division from both flanks at once. The ROK 5th Division found itself fighting elements of four Chinese divisions. After three more days of high casualties and continuous operations, the 5th Division finally broke. Two Chinese divisions, the 180th and 203rd, broke through the division's left flank and drove the 27th Regiment towards the river and temporary bridge leading to safety. On the division's right, the 22nd regiment broke after attempting to defend against attacks by five Chinese battalions. Then 35th regiment also collapsed under the weight of the Chinese attack.[228]

The 5th Division fell back southward while the 8th Division withdrew to the southwest, opening a gap between the two divisions. The corps commander authorized both the 5th and 8th Divisions to withdraw to a new defensive line on the south and west side of the Pukhan, and ordered the 3rd Division to assume a defensive position between the 8th and 5th divisions. The retreat was orderly, and officers managed to reassemble their units across the river. Corps

---

[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid, pp. 280-81.
[228] KIMH, *KW*, vol. 3, p. 614.

engineers blew the bridges over the Pukhan River, preventing the Chinese from further penetration southwards. Once the ROK Army was safe behind the bridge and the weather cleared, UNC air forces "pounded the Chinese with 2,143 sorties."[229]

Although they gave ground in the face of massive and unexpected attack, the ROKA had performed very well. They demonstrated exceptional unit cohesion under overwhelming pressure. They did not run. They were also tactically proficient, and they effectively managed complex, corps level operations. The ROK 5th Division fought and held an enemy three times its size in close and brutal combat, and valiantly and repeatedly counterattacked. "Only after four days of uninterrupted pressure, without significant reinforcement in the face of overwhelming enemy superiority, did the division give up its sector of resistance and fall back southwards."[230] The retreat was orderly, and the destruction of the bridge stopped further Chinese attack.

ROKA II Corps commander Chung il-kwon and his division commanders managed complex issues of command, control, supply, and fire support on a broad scale involving multiple divisions. The ROKA managed its own command, control, communications, fire and air support, logistics and intelligence. With the exception of the UNC sorties (and a few field artillery), the battle was entirely planned and executed by the ROKA. No American ground combat units were involved.

***

In the end, the ROKA that defended against the Chinese attacks in summer 1953 was not only larger and better equipped than the ROKA of late 1948, of June 1950, and of Spring 1951, it was also far more competent. Military historian Allan Millet lauds the "redemption" of the

---

[229] Ibid, pp. 614-15.
[230] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 284.

ROKA between 1951 and 1953.[231] Military historian Bryan Gibby ranks the "transformation" of the ROKA alongside the Inchon Landing, the entrance of China, and initiation of negotiations as a major turning point in the Korean War.[232] In the end, Gibby concludes, "The Republic of Korea Army stood up to the greatest Communist offensive in two years and convinced its enemy that military action was no longer profitable."[233]

In summary, the results of the U.S. effort to build the ROK Army align with the expectations of Influence Strategy Theory. Over the course of the advisory period, the U.S. military climbed the full escalation ladder in its efforts to influence ROK leaders to implement U.S. advice regarding the development of the ROKA. ROK leaders largely complied, and the ROKA demonstrated remarkable improvement.

3.4 Testing the Rational Actor Model

Chapter 2 of this study outlined two potential explanations of U.S. influence strategy selection in security assistance, a rational actor model, and the *cult of the persuasive*. The rational actor model theorizes that the U.S. military operates in security assistance as a faithful agent of its principal in Washington, taking pains to design and implement an advisory effort that advances the actual mission objectives and adapts in accordance with new information. The cult of the persuasive theorizes that the U.S. military's approach to influence in security assistance reflects not the strategic objectives of the United States Government, but instead the institutional interests of the U.S. military, and an ideological preference for persuasion that evolved to advance those institutional interests. Chapter 2 observed the disappearance of coercion in

[231] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 1, quoting Allen Millett.
[232] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* pp. 1-2.
[233] Ibid, p. 6.

Vietnam and theorized that the cult of the persuasive took root in Vietnam and has shaped the U.S. military's approach to influence in SFA ever since. In contrast, Chapter 2 theorized that U.S. advisory efforts *before* Vietnam, operated according to the logic of the rational actor model. This study thus expects U.S. strategy selection in Korea (1948 – 1953) to align largely with the expectations of the rational actor model.

The data supports the theoretical expectations outlined in Chapter 2. U.S. strategy selection in Korea largely followed the expectations of the rational actor model. The U.S. military in Korea did show signs of an ideological preference for persuasion above coercion that persisted through the advisory effort, complicating the story. However, it developed an advisory program designed to advance the national objective of developing a more effective ROK Army, and escalated up the influence ladder as needed to secure the ROK compliance upon which the objective depended. KMAG chiefs instructed the advisors under their command to begin with teaching and persuasion, but also impressed upon them the importance of securing compliance from their ROK Army counterparts and told them to escalate to bargaining as needed to get it. The U.S. generals in Korea began with persuasion in their encounters with President Rhee, but in response to the June 1950 invasion and the May 1951 Chinese Spring Offensive, Generals Ridgway and Van Fleet responded rationally to the exigencies of the war and the failures of the ROK Army, escalating to direct command and bargaining to take total control of ROK military organizational practices. Although this finding may seem banal, the contrast between the U.S. advisory effort in Korea and subsequent advisory efforts is striking.

To test the relative explanatory power of the rational actor model and the cult of the persuasive in Korea, I subject the data to the following series of standardized questions. These questions generate falsifiable, conflicting predictions. SEE NEXT PAGE.

Testing Theories of Strategy Selection Rational Actor Model Versus Cult of the Persuasive		
Indicator Question	**Rational Actor Model Expectation**	**Cult of the Persuasive Expectation**
1. *Does the U.S. military in Korea respond to direction from Washington?*	They follow the direction and seek to advance national objectives.	They ignore the direction and seek to advance institutional objectives.
2. *How do the commanding officers in Korea instruct the advisors under their command?*	To do what is necessary to accomplish the mission.	To do what is necessary to generate an appearance of progress while maintaining comity with the counterpart.
3. *How does the U.S. military in Korea evaluate the progress of the advisory effort?*	Rigorously and objectively.	In a manner designed to generate an appearance of progress.
4. *Does the U.S. military in Korea innovate in response to evidence of ineffective influence strategies?*	Yes.	No.
5. *How do the advisors in Korea explain their influence strategy selection?*	In strategic terms.	In normative and/or careerist terms.

The remainder of this section proceeds systematically through each of the five indicator questions listed above.

1. The Military Set Out to Accomplish Goals Set in Washington

The rational actor model expects the United States commanders in theater to align their advisory efforts with objectives set in Washington. Evidence that the commanders in theater were responsive to shifts in policy from Washington would strengthen the rational actor model, whereas evidence that commanders brushed off direction from Washington and pursued their own parochial interests would weaken it. The evidence from the South Korean advisory mission aligns with the expectations of the rational actor model.

Direction from Washington regarding the advisory effort shifted with the changing strategic landscape in Korea. Prior to the June 1950 invasion, Washington provided little explicit direction to the advisors regarding the mission and purpose of the advisory effort. What direction Washington did provide focused on ensuring that the Korean army did not cross any lines that could create geopolitical risk for Washington. Specifically, Washington directed Hodge in 1946 to make sure the Korean security forces would not provoke the ire of the Soviet Union (hence the title "Constabulary"), and would not embolden Rhee to make a move north. Washington managed the latter concern itself, by placing limits on the size of the ROK Army and refusing to provide the ROK Army heavy equipment. Accepting this direction from Washington, Hodge and then Roberts focused on developing modest Korean security forces designed to suppress rebellion and manage incursions across the parallel. Washington's low interest in the development of the ROK Army was also reflected in the Army's assignment of personnel to the PMAG/KMAG. In August 1948, "the majority of advisors were from varied backgrounds and branches with one common trait. Most were recently commissioned lieutenants without combat experience. They knew nothing about running armies."[234]

Everything changed when the north invaded in June 1950. In the aftermath of the invasion, Washington directed UNC Commander Douglas MacArthur to push the North Koreans back to the 38th parallel. Washington authorized an infusion of weapons to the ROK Army and left MacArthur responsible for its employment and development, a responsibility MacArthur delegated to Eighth Army Commander Walton Walker. It was up to Walker to maximize the effectiveness of the Eighth Army to advance the U.S. goal of pushing the North Koreans north to the 38th parallel as quickly as possible. Walker's focus with respect to the ROKA, a

[234] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 115.

subcommand of the Eighth Army, was to maximize its immediate utility in the press north. To that end, Walker supported KMAG Chief Farrell's focus on the Replacement Training Centers and the use of the KMAG advisors to stiffen ROKA units in battle, to provide battlefield intelligence, and to ensure that Eighth Army directives regarding the employment of the ROKA were followed. Walker's emphasis on the immediate employment of—rather than long-term investment in—the ROK Army reflected Washington's focus on the fighting itself.

The Korean War changed fundamentally once again when China entered the war in October 1950. The entrance of the People's Volunteer Army into the Korean War led Washington to review its policies in Korea. Washington determined that decisive military victory was no longer possible, that the U.S. should carefully avoid military action that would risk provoking general war with the USSR, and that the conflict would be settled through political negotiations. The National Security Council, with considerable input from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, developed a new directive to guide the U.S. military in Korea. On May 17, President Truman approved National Security Council directive 48/5, instructing UNC Commander Ridgway to:

> Inflict maximum personnel and materiel losses on the forces of North Korea and Communist China operating within the geographic boundaries of Korea and adjacent waters, in order to create conditions favorable to a settlement of the Korean conflict which would as a minimum:
> a. Terminate hostilities under appropriate armistice arrangements.
> b. Establish authority of the ROK over all Korea south of a northern boundary so located as to facilitate, to the maximum extent possible, both administration and military defense, and in no case south of the 38th Parallel.
> c. Provide for withdrawal by stages of non-Korean armed forces from Korea.
> d. Permit the building of sufficient ROK military power to deter or repel a renewed North Korean aggression.[235]

---

[235] National Security Memorandum 48/5, "United States Objectives, Policies, and Courses of Action in Asia, 17 May 1951," Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, Asia and the Pacific, Volume VI, Part 1, available https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951v06p1/d12.

NSC 48/5 further emphasized that it was the policy of the United States to "Develop dependable South Korean military units as rapidly as possible and in sufficient strength eventually to assume the major part of the burden of the UN forces there."[236] It continued:

> The United States should give special attention at all stages of the settlement of the Korean problem to the development of a strong ROK military establishment for continuation of the struggle against Communist forces (in case of a stalemate), and for the organization of a strong barrier to defend the ROK against future aggression. Particular emphasis should be placed on training capable Korean officers.[237]

The NSC also instructed Ridgway to submit to the JCS his plans for developing as rapidly as possible dependable ROK units capable of assuming the major burden of the United Nations forces in Korea.[238] In short, in May 1951, Washington elevated the advisory mission to a position of high priority.

Ridgway fully accepted the direction from Washington and passed it along directly to Eighth Army Commander Van Fleet. Ridgway made the avoidance of escalation and the transformation of the ROK Army the top objectives of the U.S. military in Korea. With respect to the former objective, Ridgway placed careful limits on Van Fleet's movements of the Eighth Army and instructed him to seek explicit permission if he wanted to seize any objective that could potentially provoke escalation.[239] With respect to the development of the ROK Army, Ridgway immediately tasked Van Fleet (and Van Fleet tasked KMAG Chief Farrell) with an evaluation of the state of the ROK Army and the performance of the KMAG. Next, Van Fleet replaced KMAG Chief Farrell with a trusted, though relatively junior trainer of troops, Colonel Cornelius Ryan. Van Fleet and Ryan set out to reassign larger numbers and higher quality personnel from other units of the Eighth Army to the KMAG. When Ryan arrived in Korea in

---

[236] Ibid, para 23.
[237] Ibid, para 24.
[238] Joseph Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969), p. 302.
[239] Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War* (Cambridge, MA: De Capo Press, 1967), pp. 186-192.

July 1951, the KMAG had 920 advisors. The number grew to 1,308 advisors in September 1951, to 1,182 by January 1952, and to a peak strength of 2,800 in February 1953. More telling with respect to the shift in focus from frontline fighting to the development of the ROK Army, Van Fleet gave Farrell first priority for "superior, experienced infantry officers with the tact and personality requisite for dealing with Koreans and the enthusiasm and drive necessary to carry out very difficult assignments."[240] A colonel assigned as deputy assistant division commander was reassigned abruptly to chief of Field Training Command.[241] Another colonel in command of a regiment of the 3rd Infantry Division was reassigned to be the senior advisor to the ROK I Corps. When the colonel asked Van Fleet to reconsider the reassignment, Van Fleet replied, "that would be impossible."[242] These reassignments illustrate the priority Ridgway and Van Fleet placed on the advisory mission, once Washington directed them to do so.

Ryan's aide-de-camp, Captain John B. Blount, described the transformation of the KMAG into an Eighth Army priority in the second half of 1951. Blount recounted a phone conversation between KMAG chief of staff Colonel Dick Mayo and an Eighth Army staff officer, "who had not realized the tectonic shift that had taken place between Eighth Army and KMAG." Frustrated by an Eighth Army officer slow on the uptake, Mayo interjected: "Wait a minute, do you know who you're talking to? You're talking to Colonel Mayo and I'm the chief of staff of KMAG and I want this done and I want it just done this way, and I want it done now. Do you understand?" General Ryan nodded: "Looks like we're on the right road."[243] The anecdote is illustrative of the senior officers' in Korea's responsiveness to direction from Washington. When Washington directed them to make the ROKA (and thus the KMAG) a

---

[240] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 193.
[241] Ibid, pp. 192-193.
[242] Ibid, p. 194.
[243] Ibid, pp. 194-195.

priority, they immediately took costly steps (such as the reassignment of quality personnel from other Eighth Army units to the KMAG) to follow that direction.

The responsiveness of the U.S. military officers tasked with building the ROKA to direction from Washington conforms to the expectations of the rational actor model.

2. Instruction to the Advisors

The rational actor model expects the commanding generals in theater to instruct and incentivize the KMAG advisors to accomplish their mission—maximizing the battlefield effectiveness of the ROKA units they advised. In contrast, the cult of the persuasive would expect the commanding generals to direct their advisors in the normative and causal superiority of persuasion no matter its (in)effectiveness, in order to insulate the military against internal or external disruption. The evidence from Korea is mixed, but ultimately aligns with the expectations of the rational actor model. The Eighth Army commanders and the KMAG chiefs took pains to encourage the advisors under their command to cultivate relationships of mutual respect and rapport with their ROKA counterparts, and to try to teach and persuade them through example and logical argument to follow their guidance. However, the commanders also made clear to the advisors under their command that it was their responsibility to improve the ROKA units to which they were attached and to report thoroughly and accurately on the progress of the ROKA. To that end, they instructed the advisors to see to it that their counterparts implemented the advice they gave and provided the information they requested. If the advisors needed to escalate from persuasion (the preferred starting point) to coercion, so be it. They had a job to do.

Beginning in July 1949, the KMAG chiefs and Eighth Army commanders instructed the advisors under their command through orientation lectures when the advisors arrived in Seoul,

the *Advisor's Handbook* (first issued in July 1949 and reissued in March 1951), the *Advisor's Procedure Guide* with its "Ten Commandments," and repeated meetings with senior advisors, who then passed instruction along to the field advisors.[244] Most advisors reported that they received clear instruction regarding commander intent, their mission, and the methods they were to employ to accomplish it.

Through these briefings and materials, the generals instructed the advisors to recognize the ROKA as an investment of American taxpayer dollars, and to meet their responsibility to ensure that the investment paid off. As a result, "Many advisors defined their mission in terms of the US investment in the ROKA. By and large all weapons and other military equipment are furnished to the ROK by the US, and many advisors felt that they had a personal as well as official obligation to see that this materiel was effectively utilized."[245] The "investment" concept also suffused the commanders' instructions regarding accurate reporting of ROKA battlefield performance. As KMAG Chief Cornelius Ryan explained:

> Since the US has a heavy investment in the advised army and in the aided country it is sound economy—and in the national interest of the contributor—to keep informed of the status of that investment. The prospects that justify continued support and the nature of this support are, or may be assumed to be, related in part to the local situation. The advisor is the contributor's local representative, and as such advisors recognized their obligation to pass along pertinent information through report channels.[246]

The commanders made clear to the advisors that they were responsible for maximizing the military effectiveness of the ROKA units they advised. In addition to reports on training and operations, Roberts instructed KMAG advisors to keep him informed with respect to whether ROKA officers resisted or disregarded advice, or if they used military supplies for other than military purposes. Any disregard for KMAG advice or deviations from professionalism "had to

[244] Hausrath, "The KMAG Advisor," p. 37.
[245] Ibid, p. 18.
[246] Ibid, p. 19, quoting KMAG Chief Cornelius Ryan.

be reported and eliminated," because if permitted to endure, such "practices would undermine the credibility of KMAG and the legitimacy of the military mission to foster a professional army and officer corps."[247] KMAG Chief Farrell impressed upon the advisors that "they alone are responsible that communications are always open, never shut down."[248] Farrell hammered the responsibility of the advisors to improve their units:

> The American advisor in the field, or in a headquarters, or wherever he may be is faced with many difficulties. The solution to some of these difficulties may appear impossible. As a result of this feeling, advisors often take the line of least resistance. This attitude does not get the job done. To quit is to let down the other advisors in KMAG. Remember that there are American officers and men serving in all levels of the Korean Army. They are faced with the same problems that you are. The amount of effort expended by you as an individual to secure accurate, timely information will increase the effectiveness of the advisors operating adjacent to you. Lack of effort may result in unnecessary loss of American lives. The combat effectiveness of a Korean unit is directly proportional to the efficiency and enthusiasm of the American advisor.[249]

The commanders used a variety of techniques to incentivize the advisors to follow their instructions. Roberts, for instance, used public praise to incentivize thorough reporting. For instance, when Roberts received a particularly thorough report on the performance of a ROKA regiment in an anti-guerilla operation from a senior advisor, he distributed the report with his endorsement:

> [This] report itself indicates a number of things. First, it shows that the advisor was actually on the ground, where the action was taking place. Second, it is obvious that kept his eyes open and made complete, comprehensive notes. Third, he was always thinking of the training value to be obtained from this combat experience. And finally, he 'kept the Boss informed.'[250]

---

[247] Brigadier General William L. Roberts Speech to All Tactical Advisors – KMAG, 23 June 1949, Roberts's Speeches to Americans and Koreans, AG File 333 1949, Provisional Mil. Adv. Group (1948) and Korean Mil. Adv. Group (1949-1953), RG 554.
[248] *KMAG Advisor's Handbook* (1951), p. 2.
[249] *KMAG Advisor's Handbook* (1951), p. 3.
[250] William L. Roberts, Memo, "Operations Report," Inclosure 3 to *Advisor's Handbook* (1949).

Commanders also impressed upon the KMAG advisors that they would be evaluated on the basis of the performance of their units in training and combat. As the ORO report put it, “The KMAG advisor was held responsible for the performance of the local unit he advised.”[251] Advisors understood that “The showing of the unit was taken as a direct reflection on the advisor.”[252] In summary and as expected by the rational actor framework, the commanders instructed and incentivized the KMAG advisors under their command to accomplish their mission.

Advisors received the message loud and clear. Advisors reported sentiments such as: “The KMAG advisor is accountable for a successful mission;” “In an American Corps the Senior Division Advisor better feel responsible, for the Corps Commander certainly considers him so;” “the showing of the unit was taken as a direct reflection on the advisor.”[253] The commanders made clear and the advisors understood that their mission was to improve the military effectiveness of the ROKA units they advised, and that they would be evaluated according to the performance of those units.

How to accomplish this mission? The commanders told their advisors to begin with teaching and persuasion—the preferred approaches—but then to escalate as needed to secure compliance.

Contrary to the expectations of the rational actor model, U.S. commanding officers in Korea began to express and to indoctrinate the KMAG advisors with a normative preference for persuasion and an aversion to forms of influence that they considered in tension with respect for Korean sovereignty. For example, when the ROKA III Corps collapsed, Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs suggested that they place KMAG officers in direct

---

[251] Hausrath, “The KMAG Advisor,” p. 19.
[252] Ibid, p. 20.
[253] Ibid, p. 20.

command of ROKA units. Ridgway and Van Fleet both opposed the suggestion, on the ground that the move would violate Korean sovereignty.[254] Their explanation cites normative rather than strategic reasons for an eschewal of direct command and is thus a data point against the rational actor model. However, the fact that Ridgway and Van Fleet achieved near complete authority over ROKA personnel through direct command of the Eighth Army and liberal use of coercion by the KMAG suggests that there was little strategic imperative to take the extra step of placing KMAG advisors in direct command of ROKA units. Otherwise put, strategic calculation did not require the KMAG to take direct command (given that the Eighth Army had already done so), so there was no reason to further subordinate the ROKA.

The commanders' guidance to the KMAG advisors likewise stressed the normative importance of respecting cultural differences, the intelligence of the Korean people, and Korean sovereignty. The message was received by the advisors, some of whom reported sentiments such as: "Americans shouldn't try to impose their ways on the ROKS or on any other nation."[255]

Commander guidance asserted that building relationships of mutual respect, setting an example, and effectively explaining the logic of the advice would help advisors to secure the compliance of their ROK Army counterparts. For instance, Farrell's March 1951 edition of the *Advisor's Handbook* asserts that "with finesse and intelligence many advisors have made recommendations to their counterparts so logically and effectively that United States military doctrine stands out clearly in the issuance and execution of orders by Korean counterparts. Advisors should establish cordial relationships with counterparts; and are cautioned to avoid issues over authority."[256] It continued,

---

[254] Paik Sun-yup, *From Pusan to Panmunjon: Wartime Memories of the Republic of Korea's First Four Star General*, (Lincoln: Potomac Books, 2007), p. 160; Collins, *War in Peacetime*, p. 314.
[255] Hausrath, "The KMAG Advisor," p. 84.
[256] *KMAG Advisor's Handbook* (1951), p. 3.

> The manner in which you provide advice to your unit officers is extremely important. If you give advice in an indifferent, lackadaisical manner, they will accept it as such and react to it in the same manner. Therefore it can be said that your first job is to study your officers, learn to understand them, and lend every effort to establish a spirit of mutual trust, respect, and cooperation…Even though you are not in a position of command, try to be a leader – set an example for your officers. You must be neat, clean, and soldierly in appearance at all times no matter how difficult it may be to maintain yourself so. Remember that no one respects a sloven.[257]

Similarly, Ryan's *Advisor's Procedure Guide* stated that "The KMAG must be ever-mindful that his Korean counterpart, and all other officers and enlisted men of the ROK Army with whom he is in daily contact, will emulate his military bearing, appearance, efficiency, industry, even his personal and moral habits. It is therefore incumbent upon each Advisor to set an outstanding example at all times."[258] All guidance, however, stressed that advisors should begin with persuasion, but if persuasion failed, the advisors were fully authorized and indeed obligated to escalate to coercion as needed to secure compliance.

Significantly, the guidance to the advisors emphasized persuasion's potential for effective influence but did not explicitly acknowledge in writing that the effectiveness of persuasion might be contingent on the credible threat of coercion. Certainly, many ROKA officers were responsive to persuasion in specific instances. Their responsiveness to persuasion, however, came in the context of an advisory program fully empowered to control their resources and prospects for professional advancement. Existing histories and analyses of the U.S. advisory effort in Korea all assert that the KMAG advisors secured the compliance of their ROKA counterparts by establishing relationships built on mutual trust, with minimal attention to how

---

[257] Ibid, Appendix 2, pp. 1-2.
[258] Hausrath, "The KMAG Advisor," p. 23, citing Cornelius Ryan, *Advisor's Procedure Guide,* 1953.

the coercive backbone of total American control over ROKA personnel and resources contributed ROKA receptivity.[259]

In keeping with the rational actor model, however, the commanders instructed and empowered the KMAG advisors to do whatever was necessary to secure compliance. The commanders told their advisors that they should not confuse their lack of *command* authority over the Korean counterparts for a lack of authority. Advisors were to establish and exercise "control authority." The advisor must "not only see to it that his advice is offered; he must see to it that his advice is taken, and his role becomes in effect that of a 'commander,' although a commander with no command authority."[260] Ryan described the attitude and approach he (as well as his predecessor Farrell) had instructed the KMAG advisors to take as follows:[261]

> Advisors had ample authority. While they had no command over their ROK counterpart or ROK Army units, they were directed to report to next higher commanders, US or ROK, any dereliction or serious departure from advised procedures. Eighth Army commanders were prepared to back up the advisory function when needed, by issuing orders through command channels to insure appropriate military performance.[262]

In addition to referring non-compliance up the chain of command, the commanders instructed advisors to refuse to countersign for supplies if necessary to coerce compliance. In keeping with the expectations of the rational actor model, the commanders impressed upon the advisors that their job was to see to it that their advice was followed, that they had plenty of coercive leverage to use as needed, and indeed, the correct course of action was to use it as needed.

In summary, the commanding generals told the KMAG advisors that their job was to improve their ROK Army units. They told the advisors that they would be evaluated according to

---

[259] For example, although Brian Gibby's history of the KMAG mentions the direct control the KMAG attained over ROKA personnel and resources, Gibby attributes the compliance of the ROK Army to mutual respect and rapport, and does not acknowledge the conditioning factor of coercive control. Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, pp. 49-50, 313.
[260] Hausrath, "The KMAG Advisor," p. 19.
[261] Ibid, p. 20.
[262] Ibid, p. 21, quoting KMAG Chief Cornelius Ryan.

the performance of their ROK Army units, and that it was up to them to secure improved performance. To accomplish this objective, advisors were told to build rapport and mutual respect with their ROKA counterparts and to try first to leverage these relationships to secure compliance. Although the advisors espoused a normative aversion to coercion and confidence in the effectiveness of rapport-based persuasion, they still escalated to coercion as needed to secure compliance. The United States had made an investment in the ROKA, and it was the advisors' job to see to it, through whatever means necessary, that that investment paid off.

3. Evaluations of Progress

A rationally acting advisory effort should make a serious effort to evaluate the progress of the mission. The evidence from Korea aligns with this expectation.

In the aftermath of NSC 48/5, Ridgway asked Van Fleet to conduct a thorough review of the ROKA and of the KMAG. Van Fleet tasked KMAG Chief Farrell with the inquiry, and Farrell took no shortcuts and hid no warts. His report highlighted inadequate training, the ill-effects of rapid wartime expansion, and the limited tactical capability of the ROKA. KMAG did not take the bureaucratically easy path, arguing that simply increasing the amount of artillery or heavy weapons would solve the ROKA's problems, emphasizing instead that "ROK Divisions have repeatedly demonstrated their inability to employ effectively or protect additional fire support weapons of their own."[263] Farrell concluded his review of the ROK Army's performance and capability by indicating that in its current condition not much ought to have been expected from ROKA. Van Fleet promptly passed this wholly negative assessment along to Ridgway.

---

[263] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 181, citing KMAG to EUSAK, 25 May 1951, ROK Correspondence #1-9, 1951-1953, Box 86/4, Van Fleet Papers.

Farrell's review was a discreet example of what was really a continual effort by the advisory effort to rigorously self-evaluate. Beginning in July 1949, the KMAG made evaluation of the ROKA and prompt and accurate reporting up the chain of command a core responsibility of the advisors.[264] By attaching KMAG advisors to ROKA units down to the battalion level, instructing them observe their units closely, and instructing them to report what they saw, Roberts was able to "keep his finger on the pulse of the ROKA by monitoring both the progress of training and by getting a continuous stream of field reports of combat operations."[265] Roberts told his advisors to "Get with your unit. You cannot find out what is going on if you stay at your desk." He instructed advisors to send him a "full and factual report" after any experience in the field."[266] Any advisor who visited Seoul reported to the Chief on the status of training, the competence of his unit.[267]

The emphasis on continual observation, honest evaluation, and reporting up the chain of command continued from Roberts through KMAG Chiefs Farrell and Ryan, who passed their reports along to Ridgway and Van Fleet. "Commandments" five, seven, and eight all emphasized the reporting responsibilities of the advisors:

- (5) Keep abreast of the tactical situation by frequent personal contact with all units of the command, using the presence of myself and my counterpart to motivate the troops and give them confidence. A minimum of my time will be spent in the unit command post. (This applies particularly to Senior Advisors and G2, G3 Advisors.)
- (7) Report all tactical information promptly to the next higher KMAG level regardless of reports initiated through ROK Army channels.
- (8) Report deficiencies promptly to the next higher KMAG level; follow up on necessary corrective action. (Corps Senior Advisors will keep Chief, KMAG, personally informed of existing deficiencies and necessary corrective action within their purview in order that failures may be prevented rather than corrected.)

---

[264] Gibby *Fighting in a Korean War,* p. 84.
[265] Ibid, p. 85.
[266] Ibid, p. 107, citing Inclosure 3 to *Advisors Handbook* (1949).
[267] Ibid.

The commanders warned the advisors that though Koreans had a tendency to mask problems in an effort to "save face," it was the responsibility of the advisor to understand and report the full picture. As Ryan put it:

> It is well known that a Korean officer did not like to report failures. For example, if they lost a hill they would make every effort to retake it before reporting it. Since it was essential that commanders in the chain of command know the situation in order to take prompt action with their own reserves, I directed that KMAG advisors use their KMAG communications to see that higher commanders were informed in any such case. For example, the regimental advisor should report promptly to the division advisor over KMAG communications whether or not the ROK regimental commander reported the situation.

Unsurprisingly, then, advisors viewed constant evaluation of the ROKA and thorough reporting to their superiors a core dimension of their mission.[268]

The commanders did not rely exclusively on their advisors to keep them up to speed on the progress of the ROKA. Roberts and Hausman, Ridgway and Van Fleet, Farrell and Ryan all met regularly with their counterparts at the senior levels of the ROK to assess progress for themselves. Roberts met frequently with the division commanders and made frequent visits to all of the field units.[269]

In summary and in keeping with the expectations of the rational actor model, rigorous evaluation of the progress of the ROKA was a central pillar of the advisory effort in Korea.

4. Innovation

A rationally acting military assistance mission should not only evaluate progress and the lack thereof. It should also innovate—that is, it should take steps to change its approach as needed to improve performance. In contrast, a military acting to advance its institutional interest

---

[268] Hausrath, "The KMAG Advisor," p.16.
[269] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 191.

would likely maintain its approach, and advocate only for increases in the scale of the assistance. The evidence from Korea aligns with the expectations of the rational actor framework. From the commanding generals down to the field advisors, the assistance mission in Korea changed strategy nimbly and at times dramatically when battlefield developments revealed the inadequacy of existing approaches.

When the entire ROKA III Corps collapsed in the Spring Offensive of May 1951, Ridgway and Van Fleet recognized the ineffectiveness of the advisory effort and took steps address the problem. Specifically, they identified poor leadership as the fundamental weakness of the ROK Army, and recognized that their previous efforts to merely suggest ROK officers for key positions to President Rhee had been insufficient to convince him to take the leadership of the ROKA seriously. Recognizing that they would need to take a firmer line, Ridgway and Van Fleet explicitly threatened Rhee with a cessation of American supplies and equipment if Rhee did not immediately permit the U.S. Eighth Army to take what steps it deemed necessary to improve the senior leadership of the ROK Army.[270] This is a clear and significant example of advisor escalation to bargaining when it became clear that persuasion had failed.

Van Fleet also took the drastic step of disbanding the entire ROKA III Corps, rather than simply funneling replacements into the shell. [271] This action sent a clear message to the rest of the ROK Army—shape up, or face dissolution. Van Fleet also turned over all ROK divisions (except for those in the ROK I Corps in the east) to American command. He further limited the functions of the ROK Army staff to manpower induction, training, and administration. The Eighth Army would directly control ROK military organizational practices from that point on.

[270] Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet to Ambassador John J. Muccio, 3 May 1951, ROK Correspondence #1-9, 1951-1953, Box 86/4, Van Fleet Papers.
[271] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, p. 180.

Van Fleet did not react to the failure of the ROKA III Corps by advocating for increased quantities of American assistance (as subsequent theater commanders would do when their wards collapsed). Rather, he recognized that inadequate U.S. control over ROKA military organizational practices had led to the collapse, and he took immediate steps—bargaining and direct command—to seize control.

Van Fleet and Ryan also reacted to the collapse of the ROKA III Corps with a series of smaller but significant steps to increase the capacity of the KMAG to strengthen the ROKA. Rather than merely increasing the number of advisors assigned the KMAG, Van Fleet gave KMAG priority for securing the highest quality personnel for the advisory role. Instead of calling on Washington to simply turn up the taps of assistance so that the Eighth Army could do more of the same (an institutional tendency that would characterize subsequent advisory efforts), Van Fleet dismantled and set out to rebuild the ROKA from scratch. But this time, with total American control.

The influence escalation ladder prescribed and implemented by the commanding officers to the advisors is itself a form of innovation *as* standard operating procedure. Advisors were instructed to befriend and earn the trust of their ROKA counterparts and to try to convince them to implement their advice through the power of their example and the logic of their arguments. If their advice went unheeded, however, advisors did not simply continue fruitless efforts to secure compliance through rapport. Rather, advisors sought better results through change, or, innovation—they escalated to coercion.

5. Self-Reported Explanations of Influence Strategy Selection

The rational actor model expects the advisors to explain their choice of influence strategies in strategic terms. They should describe choosing the strategies that "work," that are "necessary," that "get results." In contrast with the expectations of the rational actor model, many advisors expressed a normative preference for persuasion over coercion in their advisory duties, as they had been taught. However, and in keeping with the rational actor model, advisors explained that they began their influence efforts with persuasion, and stuck with persuasion so long as their counterparts were receptive. If their counterparts refused to implement their advice on important matters, however, they escalated to coercion. When their counterparts refused to implement their advice on matters less important to mission accomplishment, advisors sometimes let the matter go rather than escalate. As one advisor explained:

> I found it constantly necessary to check up on my counterpart. Although I could not give direct orders to troops, I could apply pressure to my counterpart—either through recourse to higher echelons or control of supplies. I was aware of my counterpart's Oriental concern with 'saving face.' When I had to discuss a serious problem with him or argue him into reversing an order, I saw to it that his discussion was a completely private one. This way, I could tell him what was on my mind without anyone else knowing about it, and the General could keep his dignity intact. He appreciated this as an act of consideration and, as a matter of fact, doing it this way increased his willingness to be cooperative and frank…I occasionally had to use the countersigning of supply requisitions as a weapon—to apply pressure to prevent over-requisitioning, stock piling, black marketing, and so on.[272]

The advisor sought to win his protect his counterpart's appreciation by respecting his dignity and to persuade him to follow his advice. However, when he "had to," as in, when persuasion failed to secure the compliance necessary to advance his mission, he escalated to pressure tactics to secure compliance. Another advisor, similarly, explained that he "tried to use polite means of getting cooperation from the ROKs. When I really had to bring pressure to get results, I referred

[272] Hausrath, "The KMAG Advisor," p. 83.

the matter to higher echelons who would handle the matter through ROK channels."[273] The advisors wanted results, and though they started with polite means, they escalated to coercion when they "had to."

Advisors did not always escalate to coercion when persuasion failed. Many advisors explained that they let some things go. However, it was only acceptable to accept defiance "if it didn't affect me or the American taxpayer...The important aspect for me was seeing that they used the equipment and material as well as possible."[274] One advisor described how he permitted a certain level of black market activity, but would not permit abuses above a certain threshold:

> One constant problem we face is the black market operations that go on all through the ROK Army. I found it impossible to discourage this completely; their pay is so low and the practice is so universal. I did reach unofficial agreement with my counterpart to keep it under control…When abuses seemed to have gone too far, the advisor would step in. if we couldn't reason with the commander, we would threaten to refer the entire matter to higher echelons. It was only occasionally necessary to do this.[275]

This advisor describes a rational approach to enforcing compliance with American preferences. The advisors essentially put an acceptable ceiling on black market activities ("kept it under control"), tried to "reason with the commander," but, if it was "necessary," escalated to a threat.

3.5 Alternative Explanations

This chapter examined the consequences and then the causes of U.S. influence strategies in the case of the U.S. effort to build the Republic of Korea Army (1948 – 1953). In keeping with Influence Strategy Theory, the chapter found that the U.S. military escalated up all four rungs of the influence escalation ladder to influence ROK military organizational practices, the ROK largely complied, and the ROK Army improved significantly. The chapter then tested the power

[273] Ibid, pp. 83-84.
[274] Ibid, p. 22.
[275] Ibid, p. 77.

of a simple rational actor model to explain U.S. strategy selection. In keeping with a rationalist explanation of strategy selection, the U.S. military followed direction from Washington, instructed and empowered their advisors to do what was necessary to improve their ROK units, evaluated their progress, innovated in response to battlefield information, and explained their strategy selection in strategic terms.

In this section, I explore two alternative arguments. The first alternative argument challenges Influence Strategy Theory and suggests that it was not U.S. influence strategies, but interest convergence between the ROK and the United States, that explains ROK compliance with U.S. direction. The second alternative argument suggests that it was the Army's existential interest in avoiding physical annihilation in battle, and not Washington's aim of building a better ROK Army, that led the U.S. military to escalate up the influence escalation ladder.

Interest Alignment

The extent to which President Synghman Rhee and the United States shared the same vision with respect to the development of the ROK Army varied over the course of the advisory effort. From independence in August 1948 to the invasion, interests diverged significantly, with Rhee advocating for a greatly expanded army equipped with anti-tank weapons capable of defeating the north, and the United States keeping a careful lid on the size of the ROK Army and restricting it to light arms in order to blunt Rhee's ambitions. The United States' focused during this period on building a ROKA capable of defeating internal insurgency and repelling small-scale border raids. Rhee, concerned about his hold on power, also attempted during this period to cultivate an officer corps that would be personally loyal to him. He preferred to place close loyalists in key commands and to turn a blind eye to corruption to increase their stake in his

regime. The KMAG preferred a technocratic officer corps. Furthermore, Rhee tried desperately to convince his American protectors to keep combat troops in Korea to deter an invasion from the north. The Americans, however, withdrew their remaining combat troops from Korea in July 1949.

The invasion brought ROK and United States interests into close alignment. Rhee was forced to flee Seoul and take his government south. He lost his capital city within a week. He was acutely aware that his survival depended entirely on the strength of American support. The Truman Administration decided that the United States could not permit the loss of the Korean peninsula. The overriding imperative of both was to preserve the south against immediate and existential threat. Once the front stabilized, U.S. ambitions grew to match Rhee's, and the United States—led by UNC Commander General Douglas MacArthur—set out to reunify the peninsula. During this period, both the ROK and the United States wanted to strengthen the ROK Army so that it would make more meaningful contributions to the fighting, but the more immediate imperative was the fighting itself, the bulk of which fell to the U.S. Eighth Army. The ROK Army during this period was less an independent army than a funnel of fresh, untrained legs to the front lines of the U.S.-led UNC war, and President Rhee had no objections.

China's entrance into the war in October 1950 spelled the end of close interest convergence for the United States and its Korean client. By April 1951, the United States abandoned ambitions of decisive military victory and reunification and sought to end the war by negotiated settlement. President Rhee wanted the United States to help the ROK Army defeat the Chinese and take the entire peninsula. Rhee wanted a much larger and more generously equipped ROK Army than the United States was willing to support. Rhee resumed efforts to use the ROK Army for domestic political purposes. In May 1952, President Rhee, increasingly unpopular with

members of the ROK National Assembly, decided to force a vote to amend the Korean Constitution to allow for his direct re-election by popular vote. When the Assembly refused his demand, Rhee declared martial law and ordered ROKA Chief of Staff General Lee Chong Chan to cooperate by providing combat troops from the front. General Lee refused, infuriating President Rhee. Concerned for Lee's life, Van Fleet hustled Lee out of the country, and placed Paik Sun-yup (an American favorite since 1948) assumed the duties of ROKA Chief of Staff.[276]

If interest convergence (as opposed to U.S. influence strategies) explains ROK compliance with U.S. direction regarding the development of the ROKA, the expectation would be that Rhee would generally defy U.S. guidance with respect to the development of the ROKA in the August 1948 – June 1950 period, accept U.S. control in the June 1950 – May 1951 period, and then defy U.S. advice again in the May 1951 – July 1953 period. The strongest evidence in support of the interest convergence explanation is President Rhee's immediate step in the wake of the invasion of proactively placing the ROK Army under MacArthur's direct command. The United States did not need to cajole or threaten Rhee into taking this significant step—Rhee volunteered the ROK Army to U.S. control, illustrating a degree of comfort with U.S. control that the United States would not see again in future advisory efforts.

However, Rhee's compliance with U.S. direction in the period preceding the invasion, and his continued deference to U.S. control of his army throughout the 1951 – 1953 negotiations despite significantly divergent visions for the ROKA, cannot be explained interest convergence.

The United States had to use carrots and sticks to incentivize Rhee to subordinate his vision of the ROKA to the American vision. In the period preceding the invasion, Ambassador John Muccio (at U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson's direction), explicitly told Rhee that

[276] Gibby, *Fighting in a Korean War*, pp. 218-219.

American support for the ROK Army was contingent on his cooperation with U.S. direction. Rhee had every reason to consider the U.S. threat credible. The United States had removed combat troops from Korea despite Rhee's pleas, suggesting that America considered its interests on the peninsula limited and was willing to treat it that way. The United States refused to extend Seoul a security guarantee as it exited. Acheson's January 1950 speech at the National Press Club did not mention Korea as part of "defense perimeter" of the United States. The actions the United States took thus corroborated the words spoken. Rhee had every reason to believe that American support hinged on his cooperation, because United States policy, in word and deed, conveyed that message clearly.[277]

Rhee had learned the hard way that he could not take American commitment for granted. He had failed to convince Washington not to withdraw its last combat troops in 1949, he had failed to convince Washington to extend Seoul a security guarantee, and, for a few panicked days after the North Korean invasion, he waited as Washington debated whether it would come to his rescue.

In the wake of the invasion and the United States' decision to defend Seoul, ROK-U.S. interests aligned more closely. However, Rhee's recognition of his dependence on the United States to save Seoul did not lead inevitably to his compliance with American direction with respect to the development of his military. Following the logic of moral hazard, Rhee might have calculated that he could rely on American troops for the security of his regime, while meddling with the ROKA to serve his political interests. Indeed, future recipients of U.S. military

[277] Rhee's assessment of the credibility of U.S. threats to sever assistance to the ROK appears to stem largely from the United States' withdrawal of American troops in 1949 and refusal to grant a security guarantee to the ROK despite Rhee's pleas, Acheson's speech at the National Press Club that did not put Korea within America's "defense perimeter," and from the initial hours of June 25,1950 when Rhee desperately pleaded with UNC Commander MacArthur for the United States to save Korea. U.S. commitments in Europe and the ceiling on commitments in Korea do not appear to have factored significantly into Rhee's thinking.

assistance would do just that. Ngo Dinh Diem in Vietnam and Nouri al-Maliki in Iraq were just as dependent on the United States for their survival, yet they did not cede control of their militaries to the Americans, they ignored American military advice, and they implemented policies that kept their militaries weak. A key difference in Korea was that the Americans had illustrated the limits on their support for Rhee in the pre-invasion period, and had emphasized to Rhee that America's commitment to rescue him was contingent on his cooperation. In subsequent, similar scenarios, the Americans chose instead to bend over backwards to assure their clients of their unbounded commitment. Rhee viewed America's commitment to his survival as contingent on his cooperation with their plans for the development of the ROKA, because U.S. words and actions told him so.

Despite relatively high levels of interest convergence, Ridgway and Van Fleet still found it necessary to threaten Rhee with a cessation of American support to the ROK Army until ROK Army leadership improved. The timing of the threat—May 1951—helps to arbitrate between interest convergence and U.S. influence strategies as competing explanations of Rhee's compliance. Ridgway and Van Fleet made the threat just before the United States issued NSC 48/5, and communicated to Rhee that the U.S. Eighth Army no longer intended to help him reunify the peninsula. That is, just before interest divergence *increased* between the United States and the ROK. And yet, Rhee's willingness to cede control of the ROK Army to the United States increased after the threat, despite the increase in interest divergence. After the threat, Rhee permitted Van Fleet to reduce the functions of the ROK Army staff to manpower induction, and to take total control of the ROK Army, including its personnel policies from the most junior officer to the Chief of Staff level. The U.S. Eighth Army (first Van Fleet and then his successor

Lieutenant General Matthew Taylor) maintained total control over the ROK Army through to the Armistice, despite Rhee's increasing frustrations with American policy and political concerns.

In sum, interest alignment between Rhee and the United States is, on its own, insufficient to explain Rhee's willingness to defer to the United States in the development of the ROK Army. U.S. escalation to coercion was necessary to secure compliance.

Physical Survival of the U.S. Eighth Army

This chapter argued that the U.S. Army behaved "rationally," in the sense that it behaved as a loyal agent of its principal in Washington, setting out to accomplish Washington's goal of building a better ROK Army as best it could, and modifying its approach according to new information.

Alternatively, the U.S. Eighth Army might simply have wanted to build a better ROK Army because its own physical survival depended on it. When ROK Army units panicked and disintegrated, KMAG advisors got killed. When ROK Army units collapsed on the flanks, U.S. Eighth Army units were encircled by the enemy. The more competent the ROK Army, the safer the KMAG advisors, and the less likely the U.S. units were to find themselves under unexpected assault. Otherwise put, the number of American soldiers in harm's way was inversely proportionate to the military effectiveness of the ROK Army. In Korea, as in Vietnam and Iraq, building a better partner military was the ticket to American withdrawal from unpopular wars. Only in Korea, however (of the three cases examined in this study), did the effectiveness of the partner military have immediate consequences for the physical integrity of entire U.S. Army divisions. It was thus in the immediate, physical interest of the U.S. Eighth Army to build a more competent ROK Army.

I do not argue that this possible explanation for the U.S. Eighth Army's effective approach to the advisory effort in Korea is false. On the contrary, there is strong evidence to support the argument that concerns for the physical survival of the U.S. Eighth Army units influenced Van Fleet's decisions to take command of the ROK Army. Rather, I argue that this explanation for U.S. Army behavior in Korea is not competitive with a rational actor model, but *complimentary*. The physical consequences for the U.S. Eighth Army of failure in the advisory mission were so high, that there could be no daylight between direction from Washington to strengthen the ROK Army, and the U.S. Eighth Army's desires to strengthen the U.S. Eighth Army. There was, thus, no divergence of interest between civilian principal and military agent. In subsequent advisory efforts, the consequences of recipient military collapse on the battlefield would be far less immediately catastrophic than in Korea. Indeed, the connection between success in the advisory mission and the physical survival of U.S. Eighth Army units suggests a potential explanation for the timing of the entrance of the Cult of the Persuasive in Vietnam. I return to this hypothesis in the concluding chapter of the study.

3.6 Summary

This chapter sought to test the two theories presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 presented Influence Strategy Theory, which linked the influence strategies employed by U.S. advisors in security assistance to the effectiveness of the recipient militaries, and predicted that recipient leaders would largely ignore U.S. efforts to teach and persuade them to build better militaries, and would be more likely to comply with U.S. efforts when the United States escalates to bargaining or direct command. The evidence of ROK compliance with U.S. military advice delivered through the full escalation ladder is congruent with theoretical expectations. Chapter 2

also presented two competing models of influence strategy selection—the rational actor model, and the cult of the persuasive. Chapter 2 theorized that the cult of the persuasive took root in Vietnam, and thus expects U.S. strategy selection in Korea to align with the expectations of the rational actor model. This chapter tested five sets of observable implications and found that although advisors expressed a normative preference for and causal faith in persuasion, they escalated rationally to secure the compliance upon which they understood their advisory mission to depend. The chapter concluded with discussion of potential alternative arguments.

Chapter 4: Building the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (1954 – 1973)

The United States' effort to build a military in Vietnam remains the largest and most spectacular security assistance failure in U.S. history. Between 1954 and 1973, the United States spent billions of dollars and deployed hundreds of thousands of personnel to the task of organizing, training, and advising the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). Despite the massive investment, the ARVN on the whole failed to demonstrate basic competence in counterinsurgency operations against the Viet Cong (VC) in the 1950s and early 1960s, or in the conventional fighting against the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and VC that followed. Had the United States succeeded in its original objective of building an ARVN capable of handling the insurgents within its borders and the specter of northern invasion, the succession of presidential administrations would have seen no need to escalate the U.S. commitment to the task of preventing South Vietnam's fall, with all of the cost—calculable and incalculable—this effort eventually incurred.

A central obstacle to effective security assistance in South Vietnam was the disinterest of most South Vietnamese leaders in building an ARVN that could fight. South Vietnamese leaders sought to consolidate political power, prevent coups, and self-enrich. In pursuit of these objectives, they implemented military organizational practices that kept their army weak.[278]

U.S. advisors recognized this fundamental problem from the beginning and for the duration of the 19-year advisory effort. They understood that South Vietnamese disregard for training, overlapping chains of command, and loyalty-based personnel policies were rotting the army they were deployed to build. Accordingly, the advisors also recognized that to make

[278] See especially, Talmadge, *Explaining Military Effectiveness*, pp. 103-180.

meaningful progress, they would need to influence Government of Vietnam (GVN) political-military decision-making. What strategies did the U.S. military employ to influence GVN political and military leaders to take steps to strengthen the ARVN? How effective were those strategies? Why did the U.S. military rely on certain strategies of influence and eschew others?

This chapter proceeds in six sections. First, it provides the context necessary for analysis of the U.S. approach to influence in South Vietnam. Second, it codes the influence strategies the U.S. advisors used to try to shape GVN behavior. Unlike their predecessors in Korea, the U.S. advisors deployed to build the ARVN relied almost exclusively, and for the entirety of the advisory effort, on teaching and persuasion. Advisors only occasionally escalated to conditionality. They never took direct command.

The third section examines the consequences of U.S. influence strategies for the advisory mission in Vietnam, testing the predictions of Influence Strategy Theory (IST). In keeping with theoretical expectations, U.S. reliance on teaching and persuasion correlated with South Vietnamese disregard for U.S. advice and ARVN stagnation. In contrast, the advisors of the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program escalated to conditionality and more frequently secured compliance.

The fourth section addresses the puzzling question of U.S. strategy selection and finds strong support for the argument laid out in Chapter 2: the institutional interests of the U.S. military led to the development of a doctrine and then an ideology of persuasion—*the cult of the persuasive*—that prescribed persuasion and forbid coercion. The fifth section addresses alternative explanations of U.S. strategy selection in Vietnam. The sixth section concludes.

4.1 Background: The Evolution of the U.S. Advisory Effort in Vietnam

This study examines the U.S. attempt to build a competent army in Vietnam between the founding of the Republic of Vietnam in 1954 and the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973. The advisory efforts examined in this chapter occurred within the fabric of a long and complex war, which this study does not attempt to summarize in full. This section provides only the context most directly pertinent to U.S. efforts to influence South Vietnamese political and military leaders to build a better military.

The Genesis: Deciding to Gamble on Security Assistance (1953 – 1954)

The United States' decision to train Vietnamese armed forces followed from the broader foreign policy of containment and discontent with French military policy during the Indochina War. In May 1953, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) decided to send Lieutenant General John W. O'Daniel on a military mission to Indochina. O'Daniel's mission, at core, was to buck up the French and to evaluate whether they had a shot at success in Vietnam.[279] As the French lost steam, O'Daniel became a forceful advocate for a larger American role in the development of a competent South Vietnamese army.[280] The proposal met resistance from the JCS, which feared that South Vietnam lacked the political stability requisite for effective military assistance.[281] Other influential constituencies, however, including General Lawton Collins and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, made the case that a small effort to strengthen the South Vietnamese military was admittedly a gamble, but one with low value chips for high stakes. As put by

[279] Ronald Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years, 1941-1960* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2005), p. 174.
[280] Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force (the "Pentagon Papers"); U.S. National Archives. August 15, 2016. The complete, unredacted report. https://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers. Part IV-A-4, pp. 2-3.
[281] Pentagon Papers, Part IV-B-3, p. 4.

General Collins to the National Security Council: "I cannot guarantee that Vietnam will remain free, even with our aid. But I know that without our aid Vietnam will surely be lost to communism."[282] The gamblers won the argument (if not, in the end, the gamble). The JCS grudgingly accepted the mission to develop an army in Vietnam focused on internal security.[283] In February 1955, responsibility for the military assistance mission in Vietnam officially transferred to Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) Indo-China under MAAG chief O'Daniel. So began the ill-fated U.S. effort to build an army in South Vietnam.

The subsequent 18 years of the U.S. advisory effort can be divided into three main phases: the early years (1955-1961), the build-up (1961-1968), and the final years of Vietnamization and withdrawal (1968-1973).

The Early Years: Beginning to Build the ARVN (1954 – 1960)

The initial purpose of the U.S. advisory mission as directed from Washington was to build an army in South Vietnam capable of providing internal security.[284] From the start, however, the MAAG concerned itself primarily with the perceived threat from the Vietnamese People's Army of North Vietnam, and only secondarily with internal threats from the dissident sects within the borders of South Vietnam. When repeatedly pressed on the matter, MAAG chief Samuel Williams (O'Daniel's successor) maintained that internal security was a "lesser included capability" of forces structured for external security.[285] Official mission statements soon evolved

[282] Ibid.
[283] Ibid.
[284] The precise language of NSC 5429/2 paragraph 102/1 instructed the JCS to prepare a "long-range program for the reorganization and training of the minimum number of Free Vietnamese forces necessary for internal security." Pentagon Papers, IV-A-4, p. 5.
[285] Pentagon Papers, IV-A-4, p. 24. MAAG Vietnam's emphasis on conventional defense in the 1950s has been widely criticized by diplomatic and military historians as a central error of the United States in Vietnam. This study does not dispute this assessment, but it does make the case that the MAAG's and later the MACV's approach to influencing its Vietnamese counterparts was a fundamental and comparatively overlooked

to align with the activities of the MAAG. As early as 1956, the strategy of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) identified defense against external aggression as its primary purpose, with defense against internal "guerrilla and clandestine activities" relegated to the background.[286]

The Vietnamese National Army (VNA)[287] of 1955 consisted of an estimated 170,000 regulars and 10,000 auxiliaries. In practice, total numbers were smaller due to desertions, and the army as a whole was judged "incapable of executing occupation and pacification operations in areas formerly under Viet Minh control." The VNA was poorly organized, all units in need "of intensive training and reorganization to bring them up to strength and improve their effectiveness," and logistics and technical services nonexistent. Americans attributed these problems largely to "French failure to train and develop qualified leaders."[288]

O'Daniel set out to expand, reorganize, and retrain the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). He pursued a target size and structure of 184,000 men, organized into five divisions of light infantry, including one light artillery battalion per division; 12 regiments, gendarmerie,

---

mistake. Even if the MAAG had followed direction from Washington and set out to develop an ARVN focused on internal security, its inability to secure cooperation from South Vietnam's leaders would have precluded meaningful progress to that end. This study argues that both the focus on conventional defense and the reliance on ineffective strategies of influence stem from the same upstream cause: the military's pursuit of its institutional objectives.

[286] Ibid, pp. 24, 20, quoting the MAAG in 1955, which emphasized the development of the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps to provide internal security, so that they could "Afford necessary relief of army units for necessary combat training, thus greatly increasing the potential of Free Vietnam to resist armed aggression from without, coordinated with guerrilla and subversive action from within."

[287] The VNA was reorganized and renamed the ARVN by the new administration of President Ngo Dinh Diem on December 30, 1955.

[288] National Intelligence Estimate Number 63-7-54 "Probable Developments in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia Through July 1956," 23 November 1954, approved for release January 2005, Central Intelligence Agency, Freedom of Information Act Reading Room, paras. 23-26. Available https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001166371.pdf.

headquarters, services and support forces, a militia of 50,000, and a small air force and navy.[289] Between 1955 and 1960, the MAAG also stood up 26 training centers for ARVN officers.[290]

In these early years, MAAG Vietnam consisted of just a few hundred advisors because the Geneva Accords had limited the number of military personnel in Vietnam to 342.[291] In response to O'Daniel's demands for additional personnel, and in a thinly veiled guise to get around the Geneva cap, the United States created the Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission (TERM), which authorized an additional 350 military personnel responsible for redistributing equipment, starting up an RVNAF logistical support system, and collecting intelligence.[292] TERM effectively doubled the scale of the advisory mission to 685 personnel, a number that would remain stable through 1960.[293] Most advisors were assigned to ARVN headquarters in Saigon and to the training centers, while large numbers of South Vietnamese officers were sent to the United States for training. Small numbers of advisors were also assigned to ARVN corps, divisions, and regiments.[294] During these early years, the advisors focused principally on training ARVN officers and assessing their preparedness.

On paper, the South Vietnamese military gained considerable strength by 1959. The MAAG had reorganized the ARVN into a general headquarters, field command, six military region headquarters, two corps headquarters and corps troops, one provisional corps headquarters, and seven standard divisions of 10,450 men each, divided into three regiments.[295] The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) also now included a small naval and air force

---

[289] Pentagon Papers, IV-A-4, p. 4.
[290] Ibid, p. 39.
[291] Ibid, p. 34.
[292] Ibid, p. 19-20.
[293] For scale, recall that the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG) peaked at approximately 2,800 advisors.
[294] Ibid, p. 39.
[295] Ibid, p. 26.

of approximately 5,000 men each. In light of this expansion and reorganization, the MAAG proclaimed that "The combat posture of the Vietnamese Armed Forces has improved to a marked degree in the past few years. At the end of CY 1958, the Vietnamese Army, compared with other army forces in Southeast Asia, reached a relatively high degree of combat effectiveness." The MAAG judged the ARVN "capable of maintaining internal security and of providing limited initial resistance to any renewed aggression from the north."[296]

The Buildup: Expansion of the Advisory Effort and Direct Intervention (1960 – 1968)

This assessment proved overly optimistic, however, as the security situation in Vietnam deteriorated with the rise of terrorist and guerilla activity between 1959 and 1961, and the Diem regime stood on the brink of collapse.[297] Two things became crystal clear in Saigon and Washington. First, the ARVN was engaged in an unconventional, internal war of counterinsurgency rather than a conventional struggle against an external adversary. Second, the ARVN, despite several years of U.S. support, was far from equal to the task of putting this insurgency down. The Kennedy Administration debated and ultimately decided against deploying combat troops to get control of the deteriorating situation. Almost by default, an advisory buildup emerged the more palatable alternative.[298]

Washington and Saigon considered an increase in the quantity of advisors the key to the improvement of the ARVN.[299] Between May 1961 and 1962, the number of U.S. advisors deployed to South Vietnam increased from 685 to approximately 3,150. The additional advisors

[296] Ibid, p. 21, citing MAAG Vietnam Narrative Statement, November 1958, revised to include 11 changes through November 1959.
[297] Pentagon Papers, IV-B-3, p. 14.
[298] Ibid, p. 13.
[299] Ibid, p. 54. There was little discussion, at this point, of *how*, precisely, the presence of more advisors would translate to improved ARVN performance. It appears to have been an unacknowledged assumption.

went mostly to ARVN corps, divisions, and battalions, and to the province levels of GVN administration.[300] Battalion level advisors served as combat advisors—a significant change of role. After the assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem in November 1963 and the whirlwind of coups and general upheaval that followed, the advisory effort expanded by another 1,065 personnel, reaching a total in-country advisor count of 4,215 by 1964.[301]

The structure of command in Saigon also changed during this period. To manage the growing advisory effort, the United States stood up the Military Assistance Advisory Command, Vietnam (MACV) in February 1962, with General Paul D. Harkins at the helm. MAAG Vietnam, still commanded by Lionel McGarr, remained a subordinate command of MACV until its dissolution and absorption into MACV in May 1964. At that time, McGarr's job disappeared, and General William C. Westmoreland replaced Harkins at commanding general of MACV (COMUSMACV).

In the mid-1960s, North Vietnamese fighters poured into South Vietnam and a U.S. destroyer clashed with a North Vietnamese fast attack craft in the Gulf of Tonkin. The ARVN absorbed a crushing sequence of defeats, revealing itself incapable of maintaining internal security, still, despite the decade of U.S. advice and assistance it had received.[302]

This time, debate in Washington resolved in favor of direct intervention. The Johnson Administration blanketed the north with a million tons of missiles, rockets, and bombs, and deployed hundreds of thousands of combat troops to South Vietnam. By 1968, the number of U.S. troops under Westmoreland's command skyrocketed to over 500,000. As the 1960s wore

---

[300] Ibid, p. 32.
[301] Ibid, p. 54.
[302] Ibid, pp. 55-56.

on, the bulk of the fighting shifted to conventional combat operations led by the United States (with the ARVN in tow) against the PAVN and the Viet Cong.

The Johnson years in Vietnam are remembered principally for the massive commitment of U.S. combat troops. Though the advisory effort may have taken a back seat relative to direct operations during this period, the number of Americans deployed to advise the ARVN quietly leapt from 4,215 in 1964 to 11,900 in 1969.[303]

Vietnamization and Withdrawal (1969 – 1973)

On January 31st, 1968, 246 Americans were killed in North Vietnam's Tet Offensive. The American public had enough. In the spring of 1969, President Richard M. Nixon initiated "Vietnamization," a policy that emphasized turning the ground war over to a more capable ARVN so that the Americans could withdraw "with honor." Over the next two years, COMUSMACV Creighton Abrams, after a period of intense combat operations against the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and the bloodiest year of fighting over the entire war,[304] shifted the weight of MACV's effort from direct combat operations back once more to the advisory mission.

As the United States withdrew combat troops in 1969 and 1970, the number of advisors rose to a peak of 14,332 in 1970.[305] The massive flow of advisors into South Vietnam landed mostly with ARVN battalions. Beneath MACV, the advisory effort was organized across three main areas: advising South Vietnamese combat troops, advising in the province pacification programs, and serving in the training centers. COMUSMACVs (Creighton Abrams and finally

---

303 Jeffrey D. Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, 1965-1973 (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1988), p. 372.
304 Ronald H. Spector, *After Tet: The Bloodiest Year in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage, 1994).
305 United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam "Command History, 1970," Vol. 2, pp. VII-63-79.

Frederick Weyand) and their staffs advised the senior political and military leadership of the GVN, and commanded the advisors embedded at every level of South Vietnamese command from the four corps down to the battalions. Advisory teams varied in size at different levels of South Vietnamese command. Teams of eight to twelve U.S. Army personnel advised at the regimental level, while battalion advisory teams were usually comprised of just one or two specialists in their areas (e.g. cavalry, intelligence, engineering).[306]

In its final year, MACV, under the command of General Frederick C. Weyand, focused on developing the ARVN's logistical systems and the other support systems it would require once the United States completed its withdrawal.[307] The advisors served mostly in combat support coordination and assessment roles.

This study focuses on the U.S. effort to build the ARVN. Beyond Vietnam's army, however, the United States also trained, equipped, and advised a variety of security forces in Vietnam. These forces included the Regional Forces / Popular Forces (RF/PF), the National Police, and the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG). These paramilitary forces, which were organized separately from the ARVN, operated locally, using light-arms (and sometimes no arms) to defend towns, villages, hamlets.[308]

On paper, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces at the time of the Paris Peace Accords had grown from a 150,000-man force in the early 1960s to over a million men by the early 1970s, with a whole new corps, as well as additional independent regiments and divisions attached to

---

[306] Cao Van Vien, Ngo Quang Truong, Dong Van Khuyen, Nguyen Duy Hinh, Tran Dinh Tho, Hoang Ngoc Lung, and Chu Xuan Vien, *Indochina Monographs: The US Adviser* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1980), p. 49.
[307] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, pp. 493-96.
[308] For more information on the RF/PF, see, for examples: Brian M. Jenkins, A People's Army for South Vietnam: A Vietnamese Solution (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1971); Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, pp. pp. 37-39.

existing corps. U.S. advisors had organized, trained, equipped, and advised these forces for almost twenty years.

In the end, however, the ARVN proved a paper tiger. As it had in the Battle of Ap Bac in 1963 and the Battle of Binh Gia in 1964-1965, the ARVN fell apart in the invasion of Laos in 1971 (Operation Lam Son 719). Only extensive U.S. firepower rescued the ARVN from catastrophe in the Easter Offensive of 1972. This U.S. rescue operation gave Nixon the pretext he was after to proclaim peace with honor.

When the Americans finally withdrew, they left behind a relatively benign security environment. The Viet Cong and the PAVN main force units in the south had not been entirely destroyed, but were in a severely weakened state. Just two years later, however, North Vietnamese forces scattered the ARVN and took Saigon.[309]

4.2 Coding U.S. Influence Strategies

For the duration of the advisory effort in Vietnam, U.S. military and civilian leaders in Vietnam and Washington recognized that a fundamental barrier to improvement of the ARVN was the disinclination of most South Vietnamese leaders to actually follow U.S. advice. U.S. advisors understood that South Vietnamese leaders were more interested in coup-proofing, power consolidation, and self-enrichment than in developing an effective ARVN, and that to those ends, they implemented personnel practices, command structures, and training regimens that kept their army incompetent despite the fact that it was large and well-armed. Contrary to

[309] For detailed analysis of ARVN military effectiveness, see Talmadge, *Explaining Military Effectiveness,* pp. 103-180.

some characterizations of the U.S. advisory effort in Vietnam, the United States was acutely aware of the interest divergence problem and its centrality to the advisory mission.

Also contrary to some characterizations of the U.S. advisory effort, most MAAG and MACV advisors did not simply throw up their hands. Most commanding generals (with several notable exceptions) and the advisors under their command tried to influence South Vietnamese leaders to take U.S. advice and change the policies that were undermining the ARVN. In particular, they sought to convince South Vietnamese political and military leaders to follow a unified chain of command, prioritize training, and, above all, to implement more meritocratic personnel practices.

This section codes the strategies the U.S. advisors used to convince Vietnamese political and military leaders to take their advice. To briefly summarize the universe of variation laid out in Chapter I, U.S. influence strategies in SFA missions are best understood as an influence escalation ladder with four rungs of escalating coerciveness: teaching, persuasion, bargaining, and direct command. Teaching refers to advisor efforts to change recipient behavior by presenting recipients with information about how best to build their militaries. Persuasion is a "bucket" rung comprised of four tactics: argumentation; demonstration; no-strings inducements; and relationship-building. Bargaining refers to the conditional threat or application of rewards and punishments tied to recipient compliance with U.S. advice. Finally, the U.S. can take direct command of recipient militaries—as it did in South Korea—resolving the interest divergence challenge by replacing recipient decision-makers with American ones.

This section codes U.S. influence strategies at two levels. First, it codes the strategies employed by each of the eight commanding generals of MAAG and MACV between 1954 and 1973 to influence South Vietnamese political and senior military leadership to take steps to

improve the ARVN. Second, it characterizes the strategies employed by the thousands of advisors under MAAG and MACV command to influence South Vietnamese corps, division, regiment, and battalion commanders.

I focus attention on the commanding generals of the MAAG and MACV because these were the U.S. officials who most directly developed and implemented U.S. influence strategies in the advisory effort. The commanding generals in Saigon effectively elbowed out the civilian members of the Saigon team, and resisted guidance from their chief executive in Washington. The MAAG and MACV commanders had near-complete autonomy in the design and implementation of U.S. strategy with respect to the development of the ARVN, including the crucial matter of influence. When deliberations over U.S. influence strategies occurred and disagreements between MACV commanders in Saigon and the JCS and Presidents in Washington arose, MACV commanders won, and implemented advisory strategy as they saw fit.[310] In addition to the MAAG chiefs and COMUSMACVs, I provide an overall characterization of the influence strategies employed by the embedded advisors under their command. It was no easy feat for the commanding generals to control the behavior of the tens of thousands of advisors, flung across Vietnam. Thus, it is worth examining whether the advisors on the whole aligned their approach with their commanders or pursued the influence problem independently.

Breaking from precedent set in China, Greece, and South Korea, the generals tasked with building a military in South Vietnam relied almost exclusively on teaching and persuasion, rarely bargained, and never took direct command. The advisors largely followed suit, relying almost exclusively on teaching and persuasion to influence the behavior of the South Vietnamese

---

[310] See, for example, Robert Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on U.S.-GVN Performance in Vietnam*, R-967-ARPA (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1972), p. 76.

officers they were deployed to advise. Despite the many twists and turns of the Vietnam War, including the back-to-back assassinations of President Ngo Dinh Diem and President John F. Kennedy, the massive inflow and withdrawal of U.S. combat troops in the latter part of the 1960s, and the shifting character of the war from counterinsurgency to conventional operations, the U.S. approach to influence in the advisory mission remained remarkably consistent for the duration of the war.

Coding Influence Strategies at the Strategic Level – the Commanding Generals

Between 1954 and 1973, eight American general officers commanded the U.S. advisory effort in Vietnam:

Name	Dates	Command
Lieutenant General John W. O'Daniel	Apr 1954 – Oct 1955	Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) Indo-China
Lieutenant General Samuel Tankersly Williams	Nov 1955 – Sep 1960	MAAG Vietnam
Lieutenant General Lionel C. McGarr	Sep 1960 – Jan 1962	MAAG Vietnam
General Paul D. Harkins	Jan 1962 – Jun 1964	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV)
Major General Charles J. Timmes	Mar 1962 – Jul 1964	MAAG Vietnam
General William C. Westmoreland	Jun 1964 – Jun 1968	MACV
General Creighton W. Abrams	Jul 1968 – Jun 1972	MACV
General Frederick C. Weyand	Jun 1972 – Mar 1973	MACV

These generals sought to influence the thinking and behavior of South Vietnam's senior political and military leadership with respect to the development of the ARVN. Overall, the MAAG chief and COMUSMACV commanders are marked more by their internal and comparative

consistency than by their differences. The generals relied almost entirely on teaching and persuasion, rarely escalated to bargaining, and never took direct command.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL JOHN. W O'DANIEL (1954-1955)

Lieutenant General John W. O'Daniel was the first commander of the U.S. advisory effort in Vietnam. O'Daniel established the Training Relations Instruction Mission (TRIM), which organized the training mission into two parts: a staff echelon at the level of the South Vietnamese armed forces headquarters and a field and school echelon assigned to specific units and agencies of the South Vietnamese Army.[311] Although TRIM's basic aims were to develop the efficiency of the South Vietnamese armed forces, most of its activities during the first three months were devoted to aiding Diem in asserting the authority of the South Vietnamese government over areas which had formerly been under Viet Minh control, including the Ca Mau peninsula and the central coastal provinces of Binh Dinh and Quang Ngai.[312]

O'Daniel's primary points of disagreement with South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem centered on Diem's prioritization of confrontation with the sects above training. Diem sent ARVN units out to crush the Binh Xuyen and eliminate the private armies of the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects. O'Daniel objected to operations he saw as delaying the training of many South Vietnamese units, the enrollment of officers at staff or specialist schools, and the planned deployment of units to various parts of the country and their concentration into divisional formations.[313] A secondary point of contention between O'Daniel and the new GVN President had to do with the French. Diem wanted the remaining French troops gone as quickly as

---

[311] Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years,* p. 240.
[312] Ibid, p. 242.
[313] Ibid, pp. 246-253.

possible. O'Daniel wanted a small contingent of French troops on hand to support the ARVN while it got off the ground.[314]

O'Daniel relied on persuasion to influence Diem on these two policy disagreements. Specifically, he sought to change Diem's mind by conveying to Diem over the course of meetings the superior logic of his proposed policies. O'Daniel tried to convince Diem that "it would be a mistake to allow a few bandits to hold large numbers of troops away from training."[315] With respect to the French, O'Daniel argued that if the Viet Minh were to attack, "two or three French divisions would look mighty good," and "an early French pullout would leave a military vacuum which the South Vietnamese Army could not hope to fill before 1956."[316] To which Diem replied that the French "would be more of a hindrance than a help," and the Viet Minh were exploiting their stay for propaganda purposes.[317] O'Daniel tried to assuage Diem's concerns by suggesting that the French remain in Vietnam under the auspices of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, making them subject to the SEATO high command. When Diem remained unmoved, O'Daniel did not escalate from persuasion to coercion.[318]

LIEUTENANT GENERAL SAMUEL T. WILLIAMS (1955-1960)

Lieutenant General Samuel Tankersly Williams took command of MAAG-Vietnam in October 1955 and remained MAAG chief for the next five years.[319] History remembers Williams

---

[314] Ibid, p. 253.
[315] Ibid, p. 253, citing Memo, O'Daniel for Ambassador Reinhardt, 10 September 1955, sub; Meeting With President Diem on 9 September 1955.
[316] Ibid.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Political History*, (Boston: International Thomson Publishing, 1968), pp. 414-15.
[319] MAAG Indo-China had covered MAAGs for Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam. MAAG Vietnam was officially established in November 1955, as the scale of the U.S. advisory effort in Vietnam began to grow.

principally for his bull-headed commitment to developing an ARVN optimized to conventional defense and for his inflated progress reports, even as escalating guerilla activity in the country made plain the fallacy of a conventional response and penetrated the illusion of progress he sought to project. Williams should also be remembered, however, as an early exemplar of the rapport-based strategy of influence that came to characterize the advisory effort in Vietnam. The primary areas of disagreement between Williams and Diem with respect to the development of the ARVN were Diem's continued indifference towards training (he continued to disrupt training to send ARVN units off on operations against the sects and other dissidents), disregard for the chain of command (he had a tendency to leap frog subordinates to direct units himself), and interference with the officer corps to encourage political loyalty over competence.

Williams sought to address these disagreements with Diem through a strategy of persuasion. He aimed to establish a close, personal relationship with Diem and his most senior subordinates, and then to convince them through the logic of his arguments to change policies. Williams took pride in his close relationship with Diem, which he built over hours of rambling conversations and cigarettes in Diem's palace.[320] And indeed, Diem (and several senior South Vietnamese officers) came to trust and confide in Williams to a striking degree.[321] In an effort to capitalize on this relationship and influence Diem's thinking and behavior, Williams held a "very frank conference" with Diem and urged him to implement a series of reforms. In particular, Williams asked Diem to abide by the chain of command, to cease interfering in the assignment

---

[320] William's relationship with Diem irritated the civilian side of the Saigon team, particularly Ambassador Elbridge Durbrow, who felt that Williams' was edging him out. See, for instance, Frederick W. Schneider, *Advising the ARVN: Lieutenant General Samuel T. Williams in Vietnam, 1955 – 1960*, Master's Thesis, University of North Texas, 1990, pp. 28, 47-49.

[321] Spector, *Advice and Support: the Early Years*, p. 275, citing Interview, Charles B. MacDonald and Charles V. P. von Luttichau with Lt. Gen Samuel T. Williams, San Antonio, Tex., 13 Nov 70; Interview, author with Col Nathaniel P. Ward, 16 Aug 79; both in Historians files, U.S. Army Center of Military History.

and promotion of commanders, and to encourage his division commanders to place a premium on training.[322] Williams' strategy of influence, in short, relied on requests made in the context of personal friendship. He did not attempt to condition U.S. assistance on Diem's compliance with his advice, nor did he advocate direct U.S. command over South Vietnamese forces. Comparing the Korean advisory effort to the task in Vietnam, Williams stated that "Possibly the greatest difference in results is that every thing I do must be by persuasion."[323]

LIEUTENANT GENERAL LIONEL C. MCGARR (1960 – 1962)

Lieutenant General Lionel C. McGarr commanded MAAG Vietnam from September 1960 until January 1962, during a period of transition from a conventionally-focused, small-scale advisory effort, to a counterinsurgency-focused advisory buildup. McGarr effectively advocated in Washington for an increase in the size of the advisory mission, and, in contrast with his predecessor, sought to reorganize the ARVN for counterinsurgency operations.

The primary area of disagreement between McGarr and Diem centered on command arrangements. McGarr pushed several changes that Diem opposed. First, McGarr wanted to place all South Vietnamese security forces—the ARVN, the Civil Guard, and the Self Defense Corps)—under a unified chain of command.[324] Second, McGarr (like Williams before him) wanted Diem to stop bypassing the chain of command to control operations directly. McGarr communicated his concerns to Washington *and to Diem* in the Counterinsurgency Plan (CIP) in late 1960:

---

[322] Ibid, p. 339, citing Msg, CHMAAC to ClNCPAC, 040931z Feb 60, Williams Papers; Memo of Conversation, Cen Williams with President Diem, 1 Feb 60, Williams Papers.
[323] Schneider, *Advising the ARVN*, p. 27, citing, Williams to General James A. Van Fleet, USA (Ret.), 8 September 1958, Box 4, Personal Correspondence, Williams Papers.
[324] Pentagon Papers, IV-B-3, p. 9-10, citing Saigon to State 276, 4 January 1961, Counter Insurgency Plan for South Viet-Nam (S) (CIP).

> The military chain of command has usually been violated at the expense of unity of effort and command. No adequate operations control or overall planning system presently exists…The President has exercised arbitrary control of operations, by-passing command channels of the JGS [Joint General Staff] and often Corps and Division staff. Resources have been fragmented to provincial control. The above practices appear to have been designed to divide responsibility in order to guard against the possibility of a military coup through placing too much power in the hands of a single subordinate.[325]

McGarr, in short, saw poor command arrangements as the critical barrier to the development of an ARVN capable of providing internal security. As McGarr acknowledged in the CIP itself, Diem instituted command arrangements designed to insulate himself against a coup.

McGarr relied on persuasion to influence Diem to accept and implement his proposed reforms. He "consistently (and persistently) recommended the establishment of a single chain of military command to guide all three forces. He also pushed for steps which would free ARVN from static security (pacification) missions in favor of offensive operations against the Viet Cong."[326] McGarr hoped that the logic of the propositions as articulated in the CIP and meetings between him and Diem would resonate with Diem, who would then set aside his concerns about a coup and implement the proposed changes. McGarr also tried to use additional American assistance as a *no-strings* inducement. He hoped that by providing Diem with the additional support he sought, Diem would reciprocate by implementing MAAG's proposed reforms. McGarr (and General Taylor) opposed the use of explicit conditionality proposed by the Ambassador Elbridge Durbrow,[327] arguing that the key to influencing Diem would be to gain his

---

[325] Ibid.
[326] Pentagon Papers Part IV-B-3, p. 9.
[327] Ambassador Durbrow noted that a number of the indispensable reforms proposed to Diem would "probably not be particularly palatable" to the Government of Vietnam, but that the United States should consider what steps "we are prepared to take to encourage, or if necessary to force, acceptance of all essential elements of the plan." See Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/1-461. Secret. The Country Team Staff Committee was chaired by Mendenhall and composed of officers from MAAG, USOM, USIS, OSA, and the Embassy. Transmitted as enclosure 1 to despatch 276 from Saigon, January 4, available https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v01/d1; Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years*, p. 368, citing Durbrow to Secretary of State, 5 Sep 60, 751k.SMSP/9- 560, records of Department of State.

trust through assurances of America's commitment.[328] During this period, "What the U.S. should do if no reforms materialized was apparently a subject too unpleasant to be considered."[329]

GENERAL PAUL D. HARKINS (1962 – 1964)

United States Pacific Command formed Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) in February 1962, and appointed General Paul D. Harkins its first commander. MACV maintained the MAAG as a subordinate command, with McGarr's former deputy Major General Charles Timmes the new MAAG chief. Harkins' tenure in command was marked by the further deterioration of the security situation in South Vietnam and an increase in the scale of the advisory effort. Harkins' command spanned Kennedy's assassinations in November 1963, Diem's assassination that same month, and the political chaos that followed.

Harkins presents a strange case from an influence strategy perspective. The military organizational practices implemented by GVN leadership during this period were abysmal, and the ARVN demonstrated alarming incompetence in a series of engagements with the Viet Cong. Harkins, however, stuck his head deep in the sand, refused to acknowledge the ARVN's poor performance or the GVN policies that caused it, and essentially made no effort to change South Vietnamese behavior with respect to the ARVN.[330] He ignored reports from his advisors in the field, accepted at face value assessments of ARVN performance by Diem and his successors, and remained uninterested in influencing their behavior with respect to the development of the ARVN.[331] Contemporary analyses often caricature American advisors in security assistance

[328] Pentagon Papers, Part IV-B, p. 25.
[329] Pentagon Papers, Part-IV-B, p. 15.
[330] Neil Sheehan, *A Bright and Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1988), pp. 283-289.
[331] Ibid.

missions as oblivious to the motivations of the recipient and the crucial link between motivation, military organizational practices, and military effectiveness. Harkins is the rare U.S. general officer who appears to fit this mold.

MAJOR GENERAL CHARLES J. TIMMES (1962 – 1964)

Major General Charles J. Timmes succeeded McGarr as MAAG chief in March 1962 and maintained command until the MAAG was dissolved in May 1964. Timmes reported to Harkins, commander of the new MACV. In his capacity as MAAG chief under MACV, Timmes was less focused on influencing South Vietnamese leaders than in directing the teams of advisors under his command.

GENERAL WILLIAM C. WESTMORELAND (1964 – 1968)

General William C. Westmoreland commanded MACV from June 1964 through June 1968—the escalation years. During the early 1960s, the ARVN suffered a series of near catastrophic defeats that laid bare—again—the failure of the advisory effort. The Pentagon Papers summarized the performance of the ARVN in the spring fighting of 1965 as follows:

> ARVN units were defeated in most cases by their own tactical ineptness, cowardice, and lack of leadership rather than by overall weight of numbers or inferiority of firepower. The U.S. advisory effort had sought to strengthen precisely these military intangibles, in addition to equipping, training and generally supporting ARVN troops. These skills and qualities are, of course, difficult to teach or impart, but a successful advisory effort must at some point produce a force capable of engaging the enemy and defeating him when the ratios of strength and firepower are roughly equal.[332]

---

[332] Pentagon Papers, Part-IV-B, p. 56.

Despite a decade of U.S. advice and assistance, the ARVN remained entirely unequal to the task of securing Vietnam. In direct consequence, President Johnson decided to initiate the massive increase in the American commitment in Vietnam.

COMUSMACV William Westmoreland commanded hundreds of thousands of troops in Vietnam, most of which engaged in direct combat operations against the PAVN and the VC. However, Westmoreland also directed and carefully supervised an expanding and evolving advisory effort. Westmoreland instructed his commanders to concentrate on two "co-equal objectives:" first, "grind down the enemy," and second, "build up the Vietnamese armed forces… fighting qualities, logistic capabilities, and confidence."[333] To accomplish the second objective, MACV added U.S. advisors at almost every level of the ARVN hierarchy from the Joint General Staff down to the battalion level, and even below that on an "as needed" basis.

Unlike his COMUSMACV predecessor General Harkins, Westmoreland was acutely aware that GVN policies were the root cause of the ARVN's weakness on the battlefield, and he sought to influence GVN leadership to change tack. Westmoreland focused in particular on the issue of leadership. He understood that South Vietnam's leaders—President Nguyen Van Thieu, Air Marshall Nguyen Cao Ky, and GVN Joint General Staff Chairman Cao Van Vien—were guarding against coups and jockeying for political power, and that their decisions regarding who to promote and who to sideline at the corps and division level were motivated primarily by these concerns rather than competence. In consequence, Westmoreland lamented, the ARVN officer corps was "completely inadequate to do the task at hand."[334]

Westmoreland tread softly. Regarding himself as an advisor to Thieu, Ky, and Vien, he sought not to dictate but to develop trust and rapport, and, initially, to make his preferences

---

[333] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 281.
[334] Ibid, p. 245.

known only when consulted. Westmoreland initially held out hope that his counterparts would come to see the wisdom of competence-based personnel appointments on their own. His hopes soon dashed, Westmoreland began to offer General Vien his own personal evaluations of key South Vietnamese officers down to the battalion level, suggesting some officers for dismissal and others for promotion. He also suggested to General Vien that he implement a systematic evaluation of all South Vietnamese commanders.[335]

When persuasion failed to move the GVN to implement meritocratic personnel practices, Westmoreland fell back on teaching. In 1967, MACV developed criteria for officer promotion and presented it to the GVN, published materials to guide GVN leaders in the performance of their duties, and even replicated in South Vietnam the U.S. elite officer schooling system—a four-year Vietnamese Military Academy, enlarged Command and General Staff College, and a National Defense College.[336]

Westmoreland explicitly rejected the bargaining approach to influence, even as GVN leadership continued to ignore his advice, and even as Robert Komer, director of the new Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program, began to employ bargaining with relative success and to proselytize the approach in Washington and Saigon.[337] Westmoreland considered, but ultimately decided against using Military Assistance Program (MAP) support as a lever to coerce policy changes. MACV staff conducted an inquiry into the poor performance of the ARVN 5th and 25th ARVN Divisions, and concluded that if other measures failed to improve these units, COMUSMACV should withdraw U.S. advisors and MAP support. General Westmoreland excised the recommendation for the withdrawal of MAP

[335] Ibid, p. 245.
[336] Pentagon Papers, IV-B-3, p. 107.
[337] Pentagon Papers IV-B-3, p. 98, citing Msg, State to Saigon 30023, 31 August 1967.

support from the report and directed that sanctions against the ARVN units be avoided.[338] In January 1967, Westmoreland ordered the MACV MAP Directorate to review all South Vietnamese forces to identify units "not contributing effectively to GVN and United States objectives." If Saigon failed to take measures to improve these units, MACV would cease supporting them. Westmoreland considered using this threat to force the South Vietnamese to redeploy some of their units in order to "get more military mileage out of them." In practice, however, Westmoreland did not employ the approach. He only ever withdrew MAP support for two ex-fishing boats in the South Vietnamese Navy.[339] Although Westmoreland considered wielding the enormous leverage his control of MAP support gave him, he ultimately eschewed the sanctions approach and relied instead exclusively on his powers of persuasion. In the end, MACV "scrupulously avoided withholding MAP support from the military units, regardless of circumstances."[340]

Westmoreland also declined to experiment with different forms of combined command that would have put Americans in charge of ARVN units. He preferred to rely instead on the informal status quo—efforts to achieve cooperation through persuasion.[341] In lieu of direct command, Westmoreland suggested the small measure of combining a coordinating staff at the national level, but when the GVN balked, Westmoreland dropped it quietly.[342]

The only area in which Westmoreland did occasionally exercise explicit conditionality was in the allocation of U.S. material support. Westmoreland had complete control over the purse strings for the ARVN. On rare occasions, he used this authority to compel the GVN to

---

[338] Pentagon Papers, IV-B-3, 95.
[339] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 244.
[340] Ibid, p. 31.
[341] Pentagon Papers, IV-B-3, p. 61, citing COMUSMACV message 1566 on 21 March 1965.
[342] Pentagon Papers, IV-B-3, p. 62, citing 1965 MACV Command History, p. 101.

allocate cash to particular projects. For instance, Westmoreland opened specific taps to the GVN on the condition that the funds go to purchase barrier material for territorial outposts, to raise Popular Forces salaries, to increase allowances for military rations, to procure additional rations and clothing, and to increase funds for dependent housing and locally manufactured items. Westmoreland used the immense power of the purse strings as a lever of influence sparingly, however, and only in minor matters specifically related to the use of American funds, as opposed to the leadership issues that he himself identified as central to the fate of the ARVN.[343]

Westmoreland articulated his theory of influence in the military assistance mission more clearly and more often than the other Vietnam generals. As Westmoreland understood it, the task of the advisor (himself included) was "to appraise the situation and…give sound advice…based on an objective analysis grounded on fundamental military knowledge." Whether the advice was taken depended, according to Westmoreland, on the "knowledge, past experience, and common sense" of the advisor. In his view the foundation of the advisory effort was "the personal relationship between the advisor and his counterpart, and both the quality of the advice and the receptivity of the individual being advised were measures of the advisers' worth." Success was a measure of each advisor's "military acumen, dedication, selflessness, and perseverance."[344]

GENERAL CREIGHTON W. ABRAMS (1968 – 1972)

General Creighton W. Abrams succeeded General Westmoreland in June 1968, after serving since March 1967 as Westmoreland's deputy for the advisory effort. Abrams took charge in Saigon during the transition from the apex of direct American combat operations under

[343] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 167.
[344] Ibid, p. 58, citing Westmoreland's preface to MACV, Combat Fundamentals for Advisors, 1 October 1964, Southeast Asia Branch (SEAB), Center of Military History (CMH) Vietnam War Records. Collection.

President Johnson to Nixon's policy of Vietnamization. Abrams' central task was to turn the ground war over to the South Vietnamese. He had to simultaneously direct continuing combat operations against the PAVN and VC, manage the withdrawal of American forces, and improve the competence of the ARVN. Abrams came to command with a very different set of directions from Washington than Westmoreland. Westmoreland was supposed to win the war. Abrams was supposed to leave it.

Like Westmoreland before him, Abrams noted a series of deficiencies in the ARVN and identified politicized ARVN personnel practices as the root cause of those problems. Abrams considered ARVN training, command arrangements, and even desertion control measures satisfactory.[345] "Poor leadership," however, remained the critical deficit.[346] In mid-1970, Abrams told visiting Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird that success in Vietnamization "depends in a large measure on the availability of sound GVN leadership."[347] Abrams wanted President Thieu, Vien, and defense minister Nguyen Van Vy to get rid of the corps, division, and regiment commanders who acquired and retained their commands on the basis of political loyalty, and to promote competent and aggressive officers in their place.

Abrams relied exclusively on persuasion to convince Thieu, Vien, and Vy to "clean house."[348] Abrams explained to a frustrated Defense Secretary Laird that he conferred regularly with GVN leadership on the subject of leadership, shared his views, and advocated for the relief of particularly abysmal division commanders. But that was it. Abrams never escalated from

---

[345] Ibid, p. 377-385.
[346] Ibid, pp. 354, 507.
[347] Ibid, p. 355.
[348] Ibid, pp. 424-425.

persuasion to the exercise of U.S. leverage, preferring to rely from start to finish and exclusively on his personal influence.[349]

GENERAL FREDERICK C. WEYAND (1972 – 1973)

The job of commanding MACV during the last months of the withdrawal fell to General Frederick Carlton Weyand. In the final sprint, Weyand threw the weight of the advisory effort into equipping the ARVN and improving ARVN logistics. Weyand focused his energies on the mechanics. He provided clear-eyed assessments of ARVN military organizational practices to Washington, but did not seek to influence GVN leadership to improve them.

In his final assessment, Weyand was cautious. He hoped that the American withdrawal would create a sense of urgency in Thieu and his senior subordinates that would lead them to take steps necessary to strengthen the ARVN. If the ceasefire failed, however, Weyand feared that "we will be faced with the difficult decision of US reinvolvement and the inevitable questioning of the validity of our past involvement."[350]

---

[349] Ibid, pp. 356-57.
[350] Ibid, p. 493.

INFLUENCE STRATEGIES SUMMARY -- MAAG Chiefs and COMUSMACVs	
Name	**Strategy of Influence**
MAAG chief Lieutenant General John W. O'Daniel (Apr 1954 – Oct 1955)	*Persuasion* (argumentation)
MAAG chief Lieutenant General Samuel Tankersly Williams (Nov 1955 – Sep 1960)	*Persuasion* (personal relationships and argumentation)
MAAG chief Lieutenant General Lionel C. McGarr (Sep 1960 – Jan 1962)	*Persuasion* (argumentation and no-strings inducements)
COMUSMACV General Paul D. Harkins (Jan 1962 – Jun 1964)	None
MAAG chief Major General Charles J. Timmes (Mar 1962 – Jul 1964)	None
COMUSMACV General William C. Westmoreland (Jun 1964 – June 1968)	*Teaching* and *persuasion* (personal relationships and argumentation)
COMUSMACV General Creighton W. Abrams (Jul 1968 – Jun 1972)	*Persuasion* (argumentation)
COMUSMACV General Frederick C. Weyand (Jun 1972 – Mar 1973)	None

The Advisor Teams under MAAG and MACV Command

This section characterizes the influence strategies employed by the tens of thousands of advisors deployed to Vietnam under MAAG and MACV command to build the ARVN.

Tens of thousands of advisors cycled through Vietnam under the command of the MAAG and then MACV. These advisors embedded at almost every level of South Vietnamese

command, from the headquarters down (eventually) to the battalion level. The thrust of the advisors' efforts shifted over the course of the war and varied depending on their assigned level within the ARVN hierarchy. The several hundred advisors deployed during the early years of the advisory effort were mostly assigned to the new training centers and to the ARVN headquarters in Saigon. Over the course of the 1960s build-ups, tens of thousands (and eventually hundreds of thousands) of advisors were deployed to every level within the ARVN hierarchy. Under COMUSMACVs Harkins, Westmoreland, and Abrams (for his first year), the advisors were tasked, broadly speaking, with improving the battlefield effectiveness of the ARVN, serving as liaison teams to coordinate American support for ARVN operations, intelligence collectors, and reporters on ARVN progress. During the final months of the withdrawal period, the remaining advisors were tasked more narrowly with combat support coordination.

Although the advisors served many purposes, their primary purpose in the eyes of most American leaders in Washington for most of the war was to wield their influence to build the military effectiveness of the ARVN. While the MAAG chiefs and COMUSMACVs sought to influence the Diem regime and later the Thieu regime as well as their most senior subordinates, the advisors sought to influence South Vietnamese division, regiment, and battalion commanders to take steps to increase the effectiveness of ARVN units at the operational level and tactical levels.

Advisors tried to change a wide range of ARVN behaviors. Advisors expressed near-constant frustration with apathetic South Vietnamese commanders who refused to take aggressive action against the Viet Cong.[351] Advisors were also concerned with their

---

[351] Gerald Cannon Hickey, *The American Military Advisor and His Foreign Counterpart: The Case of Vietnam* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1965), pp. x, 10, 15-16.

counterparts' disregard for training and operational planning.[352] They lamented systemic corruption,[353] and the refusal of officers to take any initiative in the most trivial matters absent explicit direction from superiors.[354] These concerns often boiled down, in advisors' minds, to leadership.[355] Advisors at the regimental level and above often beseeched their ARVN counterparts to dismiss the apathetic, incompetent, or corrupt battalion commanders under their command. Advisors paired with unsatisfactory battalion commanders wanted the regimental commanders to get rid of them.

During the first decade of the advisory period in Vietnam (the MAAG under O'Daniel, Williams, and McGarr), the advisors received relatively little direction regarding how to go about influencing their South Vietnamese counterparts to take their advice regarding aggressive action, training, operational planning, corruption, initiative, and leadership. These advisors received no advisor-specific pre-deployment training and little in the way of in-country briefings.[356] They were not told what to do if their counterparts ignored their advice. What little direction they did receive emphasized their roles as teachers and exemplars, and the importance of developing positive interpersonal relationships.[357]

The strategies of influence the advisors actually employed in the early years reflected the direction they did—and did not—receive from the MAAG and MACV. The several hundred advisors scattered across the training centers simply taught their counterparts how to perform

---

[352] Ibid, p. 10.
[353] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, pp. 229-231; 503.
[354] Hickey, *The American Military Advisor and His Foreign Counterpart,* pp. 10, 15.
[355] Ibid, p. x.
[356] Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years,* p. 57; Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, pp. 61-62, 510.
[357] Schneider, "Advising the ARVN," p. 28; Oral history transcript, Charles Timmes, Interview 1 (I), 11/6/1985, Interview by Ted Gittinger, LBJ Library Oral Histories, LBJ Presidential Library, available https://www.discoverlbj.org/item/oh-timmesc-19851106-1-13-16.

their duties, while the advisors embedded at the division and regimental levels relied principally on teaching and demonstration.

During the early 1960s, when the advisory buildup outpaced the direction the advisors received, there was some debate among the advisors about how to go about their mission. Most advisors reported their belief that personal relationships were the key to influencing their counterparts to take their advice, while others thought it better to maintain some personal distance and to use carrots and sticks to incentivize compliance.[358] The advisors of the early 1960s relied primarily on personal relationships to influence their ARVN counterparts to take their advice. A minority escalated to bargaining to incentivize reticent counterparts to implement their advice.[359]

The frustrations of the legendary (and notorious) John Paul Vann help to illustrate the broader advisory approach during the early 1960s. Colonel John Paul Vann was assigned to South Vietnam in 1962 under COMUSMACV Harkins as an advisor to Colonel Huynh Van Cao, commander of the ARVN IV corps. Over the course of his tour, Vann grew increasingly frustrated with Cao's incompetence, particularly his refusal to take aggressive action in battle and his general apathy towards the war effort. Vann first sought to move Cao to more aggressive action against the Viet Cong through persuasion. He worked on developing trust and rapport with Cao by fighting alongside him, eating with him, meeting with him constantly to discuss strategy and operations, and by taking every opportunity to elevate him in the eyes of his men. He then sought to leverage the interpersonal relationship he effectively built with Cao to get him to follow his advice. Vann's efforts to suggest, cajole, coax, and berate Cao into action, however, fell on deaf ears. Cao ignored Vann's repeated pleas for more aggressive action, and,

---

[358] Hickey, *The American Military Advisor and His Foreign Counterpart*.
[359] Ibid.

increasingly frustrated himself, reminded Vann that *he* was the general, and Vann the mere advisor. Recognizing the futility of persuasion, Vann escalated on several occasions to de facto direct command over Cao's unit, and on several other occasions sought to incentivize Cao to greater efforts through threats to report Cao's incompetence to his superiors.[360]

Vann understood, however, that his escalation to bargaining and direct command made him an exception to an overwhelming rule. Observing the approach of the advisors more broadly, Vann concluded that so long as the advisors continued to rely on personal relationships, South Vietnamese leaders would continue to ignore their advice, and the ARVN would never get off the ground. Vann pushed MACV to reconceptualize the advisory effort altogether. Only by abandoning the "advisory" philosophy and forcing the South Vietnamese into action through coercion or direct command, would the United States have a real chance at reforming the ARVN and winning the war.[361]

The so-called Chinh-Hunnicutt affair also provides a window into the advisory effort of the mid-1960s. Colonel Cecil F. Hunnicutt, senior advisor to the ARVN 25th Division, initially sought to influence his ARVN counterpart, General Phan Trong Chinh, by developing rapport and explaining the logic of his advice. When Chinh continued to ignore Hunnicutt's advice regarding the relief of incompetent commanders, Hunnicutt escalated, informing Chinh that the United States would not support apathetic and ineffective operations, and threatened to withdraw the advisors under his command from particularly weak units. He followed through with the threat, pulling his advisory team from the 25th division's reconnaissance company following several incidents of Vietnamese drunkenness and misbehavior.[362] An incensed Chinh told his

---

[360] Sheehan, *A Bright and Shining Lie*.
[361] Ibid, pp. 267-386.
[362] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 189.

troops that Hunnicutt—and the Americans more broadly—had overstepped their authority and disrespected the Vietnamese.

When the American press picked up the story, COMUSMACV Westmoreland dealt with the fallout.[363] He concluded that Hunnicutt "may have been a little too aggressive in his approach to this supersensitive, complex ridden, apprehensive, unsure, and relatively weak division commander."[364] He also directed MACV staff to examine MACV advisory "techniques, procedures and regulations."[365] The staff's report concluded that most advisors develop "highly personal" relationships with their counterparts, believing that "success…at any level depends to a large degree on the rapport established between the two individuals concerned."[366] The report also zeroed in on MACV guidance permitting senior advisors to withdraw subordinate teams from South Vietnamese units if their security was endangered unnecessarily. Hunnicutt, and other advisors on occasion, used this provision as a threat to coerce counterparts into following their guidance.[367] The Chinh-Hunnicutt affair prompted Westmoreland to issue the new guidance prohibiting the advisors from using leverage to influence their South Vietnamese counterparts, and further emphasize rapport and interpersonal relationships as the preferred strategy of influence in the advisory effort.

From the late-1960s through to withdrawal, instances of advisors exercising leverage to incentivize ARVN commanders to implement their advice became even rarer than they had been in the earlier years. Assessments of the advisory effort are generally consistent in their characterization of the advisory approach, from top to bottom, as persuasion rather than coercion.

---

[363] Ibid, p. 191.
[364] Ibid.
[365] Ibid.
[366] Ibid.
[367] Hickey cites other instances of advisor escalation to bargaining in his report. See Hickey, *The American Military Advisor and His Foreign Counterpart.*

According to CORDS evaluators in 1967, the advisor at the division level and below relied on "his own personality and persuasive powers and on the receptiveness of his counterpart."[368] As summarized by Robert Komer, director of CORDS:

> Despite America's massive contribution to the combined effort, its relationship to the GVN remained – from top to bottom – almost wholly advisory… We made an all-out effort to train, equip, and organize the GVN and RVNAF to enable them to perform better, but generally drew the line at measures aimed at requiring them to perform better. This was more than failure to use leverage. It was fundamental to our concept of how to advise – persuasion but not pressure.[369]

VIETNAM INFLUENCE STRATEGIES SUMMARY -- Advisor Teams	
Period	**Strategy of Influence**
The Early Years	*Teaching* and *persuasion* (demonstration)
The Buildup Years	*Teaching and persuasion* (relationships and argument), occasional *bargaining*
Vietnamization and withdrawal	*Teaching and persuasion* (relationships and argument), almost zero bargaining

4.3 Testing Influence Strategy Theory

This section tests the predictions of Influence Strategy Theory (IST) laid out in Chapter 2 in the case of Vietnam. IST expects recipient leaders to generally ignore U.S. efforts to teach and persuade them to build better militaries, and to continue to implement policies that keep their militaries weak. In contrast, IST expects that when the United States escalates to bargaining and/or direct command, recipient leaders are more likely to follow U.S. guidance and implement policies that improve their militaries. IST is thus comprised of a two-part causal chain linking the

---

[368] Clarke, *Advice and Support: the Final Years*, p. 239, citing CORDS Field Evaluation Rpt, Maj Stanley]. Michael. 29 Aug 67, sub: 18th ARVN Division in Support of Ro, SEAS, CMH.
[369] Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing*, p. 94.

influence strategies U.S. advisors employ, to recipient receptivity to U.S. direction, to recipient military effectiveness.

SUMMARY - Influence Strategy Theory (IST)				
Advisor Influence Strategy	→	**Recipient Receptivity**	→	**Recipient Military Effectiveness**
Teaching and persuasion	→	Recipient defiance	→	No or minimal improvement in military effectiveness
Teaching and persuasion + bargaining and/or direct command	→	Recipient compliance	→	Improved military effectiveness

The key distinction between recipient defiance and compliance is whether or not the individual that receives advice from a U.S. advisor actually implements that advice. The term "defiance" is thus an umbrella that includes the range of individual responses from open and adversarial refusals to follow U.S. advice, to individuals who might nod their heads as if in agreement, but then quietly neglect to follow through. If the individual does not implement the advice, I code that individual "defiant," and U.S. influence efforts as having failed. If the individual does implement the advice, I code the individual "compliant," and the advisor's influence strategy as having succeeded.

This section uses the method of congruence to test the validity of these divergent predictions against evidence from the advisory effort in Vietnam.[370] The following findings would strengthen the theory:

- A correlation between advisor reliance on teaching and persuasion, recipient defiance, and minimal improvement in the ARVN.
- A correlation between bargaining and/or direct command, recipient compliance, and improved ARVN performance would strengthen the theory.

The following findings would weaken IST:

- No correlation between influence strategies, recipient behavior, and recipient military performance.
- Correlation between teaching and persuasion, recipient compliance, and recipient military improvement.
- Correlation between bargaining and/or direct command, recipient defiance, and minimal recipient military improvement.

I examine both links in the causal chain in turn. To test the first link in the chain (influence strategies → recipient receptivity), I examine how the Diem regime and the Thieu regime responded to the advice of the MAAG and MACV commanders. I also provide a broad characterization of the responsiveness of the ARVN commanders to the influence efforts of the advisor teams down to the battalion levels. The second link of the chain is, essentially, the theory of military effectiveness laid out by Talmadge in her PhD thesis and book, *The Dictator's Army*. I summarize her thorough analysis, which establishes precisely the expected link between

[370] Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), Chs. 3, 8; Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), Ch. 2.

recipient willingness to follow U.S. advice regarding military organizational practices, and ARVN performance on the battlefield.

Advisor Influence Strategies → Recipient Receptivity

The United States military relied almost exclusively on teaching and persuasion to influence South Vietnamese leaders to improve their military organizational practices. IST expects to see South Vietnamese leaders largely ignore U.S. persuasion attempts and continue to implement military organizational practices that undermine the performance of the ARVN on the battlefield.

To test this link in IST's theoretical chain, I code the receptivity of President Ngo Dinh Diem (1954 – 1963) and President Thieu (1965-1973) and his senior subordinates to MAAG and MACV advice. I code these two regimes on a simple binary. Regimes are compliant when they implement the policies recommended by the MAAG and MACV commanders. Regimes are defiant when they fail to implement those policies. The MAAG and MACV commanders wanted the GVN to implement a wide range of policies related to the development of their militaries, ranging from the implementation of desertion control policies, to salary increases for the soldiers, to personnel practices. I scope analysis of GVN receptivity to U.S. advice exclusively related to those sensitive military organizational practices the MAAG and MACV commanders viewed as central to the development of the ARVN—personnel practices, training regimens, and command arrangements. I focus primarily at the strategic level because South Vietnam's most senior leaders wielded considerable control and were most directly responsible for the military organizational practices shaping the effectiveness of the ARVN down to the tactical level. Although defiance of U.S. advice at lower levels of GVN command adversely affected the U.S.

advisory effort, ultimately, GVN leadership had the authority to require their subordinates to follow U.S. advice—or not. For that reason, their defiance of U.S. advice at lowers levels is itself a reflection of defiance at the most senior level. Nevertheless, for the sake of thoroughness, this section also characterizes ARVN officers' receptivity to U.S. advice at the operational and tactical levels.

THE DIEM REGIME IGNORES MAAG AND MACV

In keeping with theoretical expectations, Ngo Dinh Diem largely ignored U.S. efforts to persuade him to change his policies with respect to the development of the ARVN. As noted above, MAAG and MACV commanders sought repeatedly to persuade Diem to prioritize rigorous training for the ARVN, to enforce a unified chain of command, and to implement personnel policies that rewarded merit over loyalty. Diem ignored U.S. advice in each area, even as U.S. advisors lamented that Diem's failure to implement corrective measures would significantly stymie the development of the ARVN.

Diem never followed MAAG and MACV advice to prioritize training. Very little rigorous, realistic, large- or small-unit training of any type occurred under his leadership. Despite O'Daniel's and Williams' repeated pleas that Diem direct his subordinates to hold ARVN units back for basic training, he instead continued to send them out after the bands and sects across the country, precluding their participation in the training programs the United States had set up for the them.[371]

Nor did Diem follow MACV advice regarding command arrangements. Against COMUSMACV Williams' and McGarr's advice, Diem maintained tight control over his corps

[371] Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years, 1941-1960*, pp. 267-68.

and division commanders, refusing to delegate authority that might lead them to conduct operations that could result in casualties.[372] Although Diem eventually purported to comply with McGarr's pleas that he place all security forces under a unified chain of command, the change only occurred on paper. In practice, Diem continued to maintain parallel command structures and to violate the official chain of command as he saw fit, persisting for the entirety of his tenure to skip the chain to direct battalion commanders at the tactical level.[373]

Finally, Diem ignored U.S. advice regarding personnel practices. Diem maintained personal control over the promotion of all high-level officers and others in positions he considered important, promoting and demoting on the basis of political loyalty, not merit. Despite his repeated efforts to persuade Diem to reward merit, Williams lamented in 1957 that "Officers who are performing their duties efficiently are relieved and transferred to other duties."[374] Performing well in battle remained at best a secondary consideration for the duration of Diem's presidency, and at worst a demerit—officers realized that demonstrating too much battlefield competence could result in demotion. Appointments under Diem were largely made according to the "Three D's:" Dang, Dao, and Du. Diem only elevated commanders who shared his party (Dang), religion (Dao), and birthplace (Du).[375]

Military historian Ronald Spector summarizes Williams' inability to influence Diem as follows:

> He enjoyed President Diem's trust and confidence to an extent probably equaled by few other Americans, yet Williams' remark that 'I can't remember one time that President

---

[372] James Lawton Collins, Jr., *The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 1950-1972* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1975), p. 75.
[373] Ibid, pp. 10-11, 90.
[374] Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years*, p. 301, Citing, Memo, Williams for Tran Trung Dung, Assistant Secretary of State for National Defense, 31 Jul 58, sub: Long-Range Military Planning, Folder 35, Williams Papers.
[375] Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brig. Gen. Tran Dinh Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society*, Indochina Monograph (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), p. 129.

> Diem ever did anything of importance concerning the military that I recommended against' is surely an exaggeration. General Williams was unable to induce Diem to abandon favoritism in the appointment of officers, to rationalize the chain of command, or to abandon the project to create ranger battalions out of existing army formations. Moreover, Williams' closeness to Diem inclined him, in the view of some observers, to identify so closely with the president that he resisted and attempted to blunt all criticism of Diem, whether well founded or otherwise.[376]

It is worth emphasizing that Williams did not fail to influence Diem because he failed to develop rapport with Diem. In fact, Williams did succeed in winning "President Diem's trust and confidence." The problem was that trust and confidence did not translate to compliance. In fact, the relationship itself seemed to do more to move Williams' behavior in line with Diem's wishes than Diem's behavior in line with Williams' wishes. Many observers, from Komer to Ambassador Durbrow, believed that the direction of influence had reversed—that President Diem was effectively wielding the relationship he had built with Williams to get Williams to advocate for his preferred policies, rather than the other way around.[377]

In sum, from O'Daniel, to Williams, to Harkins, "Though eager for U.S. aid, [Diem] proved basically resistant to advice."[378]

THE THIEU REGIME IGNORES MACV ADVICE

American leaders in Washington and Saigon were initially optimistic that the regime eventually consolidated under Nguyen Van Thieu would prove more receptive to MACV advice than the Diem regime had been. Their hopes, however, were soon disappointed. COMUSMACVs Westmoreland and Abrams sought to persuade President Thieu, Air Marshall Ky, and JCS Chairman Vien to take a series of steps to improve the ARVN's poor performance

---

[376] Ibid, p. 379.
[377] See, for example, Schneider "Advising the ARVN," p. 48.
[378] Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing*, p. 20.

on the battlefield. They focused particular attention on persuading the GVN to address the still-problematic personnel practices in the officer corps, which they considered the root cause of all other policies undermining the effectiveness of the ARVN. Thieu, Ky, and Vien largely ignored MACV advice. When Thieu did eventually oust the worst of the officer corps in 1968, he did so not because of advice from MACV, but because his threat perception had shifted in the wake of his consolidation of political power and the Tet Offensive.

Thieu ignored MACV advice on personnel and continued to promote officers that would help him protect and consolidate his political power rather than competent officers dedicated to improving the battlefield performance of the ARVN. In 1967, American advisors assessed the commanders of the 5th, 18th, and 25th Divisions wholly incompetent.[379] In a pattern that was to repeat itself throughout Thieu's tenure, MACV advised the GVN of this assessment, the GVN promised to remove the incompetent officers, and then never followed through.[380] Officers who fled the battlefield or never showed up at all retained their commands. In fact, Thieu actively sought to weed out officers who might be competent enough to threaten him: "Thieu did not want good men in leading military positions because he was afraid that once they were in such positions they would mount a coup against him."[381] An internal Pentagon reported noted as late as October 1969 that "RVNAF commanders in the field appear to be least favored in terms of promotion."[382] As put by researcher Allan Goodman in 1970, "The portrait of the RVNAF officer of a decade ago remains essentially unchanged…Political loyalty, not battlefield

---

[379] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 245.
[380] Ibid.
[381] Tran Van Don, quoted in Stephen Hosmer, Konrad Kellen, and Brian Jenkins, *The Fall of South Vietnam: Statements by Vietnamese Military and Civilian Leaders*, R-2208-OSD (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1978), p. 45.
[382] "RVNAF Leadership," October 1969, section from *A Systems Analysis View of the Vietnam War: 1965-1972,* V*ol 6: Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces,* in the unclassified collection of The Southeast Asia Analysis Report, available at the Center of Military History, Fort McNair, Washington, DC, p. 165.

performance, has long dominated the promotion system in the officer corps, with the result that there is often an inverse relationship between rank and military skill."[383]

Thieu's standard response to MACV pressure with respect to personnel was to impress upon MACV the political difficulties of the proposed changes, then, if MACV continued to press, Thieu would promise action and then fail to follow through. For instance, after Westmoreland's repeated pleas for dismissals of incompetent officers, JGS Chairman Vien finally came to Westmoreland with a list of about forty "corrupt, incompetent or old and tired" senior officers that he said he intended to discharge after the coming South Vietnamese presidential elections, promising in particular that he would find replacements for the notorious Chinh (of the Chinh-Hunnicutt affair), Thuan, and possibly ARVN 3rd Division commander Vu Van Giai. Westmoreland presented these promises to Washington as evidence of his influence over GVN leadership decisions. After the elections, however, Vien never followed through with the promised replacements.[384] In similar vein, Thieu purported to accept Westmoreland's advice regarding the development of a promotion system with systematic criteria that placed a premium on combat performance. MACV advisors dutifully passed along their assessments of ARVN commanders' performance according to these criteria. In practice, however, the criteria were entirely ignored, and JCS promotions continued to serve political purposes.[385]

Westmoreland was also frustrated in his efforts to persuade the Thieu regime to take meaningful steps to root out corruption. He acknowledged that "corruption is everywhere" in the South Vietnamese army, and even sent Vien a copy of the U.S. Army Code of Ethics in hopes that it might spark a higher standard of conduct among the Vietnamese. When the GVN was

---

[383] Allan E. Goodman, *An Institutional Profile of the South Vietnamese Officer Corps* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corp., 1970), p. 26.
[384] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 246.
[385] Ibid.

unresponsive, Westmoreland concluded that the problem had to do with Vietnamese culture and tradition, and "Americans would just have to live with the situation and hope for more success on the battlefield."[386]

COMUSMACV Abrams fared no better. Abrams consistently identified ARVN leadership as the critical deficit stymying the development of the ARVN in all areas. He consistently provided MACV assessments of ARVN officers to Thieu and Vien and urged them to replace demonstrably incompetent officers with those who had proven themselves on the battlefield. Thieu and Vien played the same game with Abrams that they had played with Westmoreland, first informing him of the political difficulties associated with his suggestions, then, if he continued to press, making empty promises of action they never pursued. Abrams acknowledged his profound concerns about ARVN leadership multiple times each year of his tenure. In the face of GVN intransigence on the pivotal leadership issue, Abrams effectively shrugged his shoulders, saying, "We've done what we can."[387] This statement is revealing. Abrams understood that persistently poor GVN leadership remained a fatal flaw of the ARVN. He also understood that his first priority as directed by the Nixon Administration was to extract the U.S. military from Vietnam. Abrams was to leave behind conditions as favorable as possible, but if the U.S. military had to withdraw while the ARVN remained weak, so be it.

ARVN COMMANDERS IGNORE ADVISOR TEAMS

The advisor teams of the MAAG and MACV did no better than their commanding generals in Saigon. Relying on teaching and persuasion, the advisor teams found ARVN division, regiment, and battalion commanders unreceptive to their advice. A study conducted by

---

[386] Ibid, p. 231.
[387] Abrams quoted in Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 487.

the Army Staff into the advisory effort in 1965 reported widespread concern among the advisors regarding their lack of influence over their South Vietnamese counterparts.[388] Robert Shaplen, reporter and author of *The Lost Revolution*, characterized the ineffectiveness of the advisors' persuasion approach as follows:

> The advisory program, while it had been a tribute to the politeness of both parties, had failed in its primary aim of persuading the Vietnamese officers to get their men out into the countryside and to stay there, if necessary, day and night, for weeks on end in order to beat the Communists at their own game. This view of the failure of American efforts at persuasion was privately expressed to me by most of the advisers I spoke with during my trip through the vital plateau area, and was reinforced by what advisers from other battle areas told me. The consensus was that the system was inherently anomalous and unworkable in that it reflected the American predilection for trying to get a difficult and probably impossible job done in what a British friend of mine described as 'your typical nice American way.'[389]

A CORDS evaluation conducted in 1967 found that the advisors, relying on his "own personality and persuasive powers and on the receptiveness of his counterpart," was generally unable to persuade Vietnamese commanders and officials to accept his advice, especially in the many areas that had political ramifications.[390] Several senior advisors spoke out about the ineffectiveness of the persuasion approach. Lieutenant General Arthur S. Collins, Jr., advisor to the ARVN II Corps, for example, reported that he was fed up with "buttering up" the Vietnamese and "telling them how great they are," pointing out that "we've been doing that for about ten years and it hasn't been very effective."[391] John Paul Vann's crusade to shift American strategy in the war centered on his assessment that an influence strategy of persuasion had and would continue to fail. Only by forcing the South Vietnamese to follow U.S. advice, preferably through direct

---

[388] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 64, citing Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations, DA, "A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam" (hereafter cited as PROVN Study), March 1966.
[389] Robert Shaplen, *The Lost Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 329-330.
[390] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 239.
[391] Ibid, p. 368.

command and alternatively through coercion, could the United States hope to build an ARVN that could hold its own.[392]

The correlation between teaching and persuasion and South Vietnamese defiance is imperfect. Occasionally, South Vietnamese leaders complied with advisor attempts to persuade them. These instances "off the regression line" tended to fall into three categories. First, GVN and ARVN leaders sometimes made trivial concessions to U.S. advisor requests that cost them little yet scored gratitude from the Americans. Second, every once in a while, idiosyncratic ARVN officers were solicitous of U.S. advice and open to implementing meaningful changes even at personal cost.

Third, South Vietnamese leaders appeared at times to make meaningful concessions to MACV requests, but their concessions had less to do with the persuasive powers of the advisors than entirely unrelated GVN motivations. For example, in 1966, Thieu appointed the highly competent General Ngo Quant Truong to command the ARVN 1st Division, and permitted him to appoint other competent leaders to key commands within the unit (most notably Tran Ngoc Hue to command the Hac Bao, or "Black Panther" unit), and to train the division rigorously. President Thieu also made a series of important personnel changes during Tet that Westmoreland had been pleading with him to make for years.

These choices—which still marked the exception to the general rule—did not reflect the effectiveness of U.S. persuasion efforts. Westmoreland's reliance on persuasion was consistent from 1964 through 1968. In 1966, Thieu was simply sufficiently confident in the loyalty of General Ngo Quant Truong to give him command of the 1st Division and more than usual leeway in its development. During Tet, Thieu's relative threat perceptions shifted Thieu had effectively

---

[392] Sheehan, *A Bright and Shining Lie*, pp. 287-386.

consolidated political power in the intervening years and had come to perceive the threat from within the GVN and ARVN as less urgent, giving him more freedom to relieve the most egregious commanders. Meanwhile, the Tet Offensive created an appearance (and indeed reality) of military necessity that made it possible for Thieu to dismiss corps commanders who had performed poorly without causing any uproar.[393]

Often, however, those who lauded the advisory effort as a success had quietly moved the goalposts. Rather than measure success by the effectiveness of the ARVN, or the receptivity of GVN and ARVN officers to U.S. advice, advisors came to measure their effectiveness in terms of the rapport they were able (or unable) to establish with their South Vietnamese counterparts. MAAG chief Williams, for instance, evaluated himself as an effective advisor, on the grounds that his “relations with the Vietnamese, I believe, are satisfactory.”[394] He likewise judged the progress of the advisory mission as satisfactory, on the grounds that “Our relationship with [the South Vietnamese] is excellent.”[395] It is unsurprising that advisors at times conflated rapport with effective advising, given the direction they received through MACV (see Section IV below).

Overall, and in keeping with a central prediction of Influence Strategy Theory, the influence strategy of persuasion failed to move South Vietnamese political and military leaders to action. GVN leaders had different priorities than the United States. GVN political leaders focused on personal and political survival. ARVN commanders focused on self-enrichment, and avoiding physical and professional risk. When the United States carried the weight of the war in the late 1960s, the GVN had especially little incentive to invest in the development of the

---

[393] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 309; Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing*, pp. 142-143. Thieu was, essentially, omnibalancing. See Steven R. David, “Explaining Third World Alignment,” *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (January 1991), pp. 233-256, https://doi.org/10.2307/2010472.
[394] Schneider, “Advising the ARVN,” p. 28.
[395] Ibid, p. 27.

ARVN. Over the 19-year advisory effort, U.S. efforts to coax and cajole GVN leaders to take costly steps to strengthen the ARVN went nowhere.

CORDS – CONDITIONALITY SCORES A BETTER BATTING AVERAGE

Although the MAAG chiefs and COMUSMACVs relied on persuasion and directed the advisor teams under their command to do the same, the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program escalated to bargaining. Influence Strategy Theory examines the efforts of U.S. military advisors to convince recipient leaders to take steps to build more effective *militaries*. Strictly speaking, then, CORDS is outside the scope of the theory, as the CORDS advisors focused on encouraging GVN leaders to improve governance. There is no reason to presume, however, that the GVN leaders' receptivity to advisor direction is systematically biased in such a way as to cloud within-case comparison. CORDS' escalation to bargaining thus makes possible a within-case comparison of the relative effectiveness of an influence strategy reliant exclusively on persuasion, contrasted with an influence strategy that escalated to the conditionality rung of the ladder.

In 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson gave Robert Komer broad authority to fight "The Other War" in Vietnam. Komer set up CORDS, an interagency, combined command program with a parallel command structure under COMUSMACV Westmoreland. Komer set out to improve GVN governance and win the hearts and minds of the South Vietnamese population. Komer believed that rampant corruption was fatally damaging the pacification program, so he set out to convince GVN leaders to take the steps necessary to root it out. In particular, Komer focused on convincing GVN leaders to remove corrupt leaders from power.

Like COMUSMACV Westmoreland, Komer found senior GVN leaders unreceptive to his powers of persuasion. Unlike Westmoreland, however, Komer decided to escalate from persuasion to conditionality to secure the compliance he considered crucial for progress. Komer implemented a systematic approach to monitoring the quality of GVN leaders and, after successfully using U.S. financial resources as a lever "to force removal" of several corrupt province chiefs in late 1967, approved a standard operating procedure for his advisors to exercise financial leverage to coerce GVN leaders to implement their guidance or force their removal. CORDS controlled financial aid to the provinces, and Komer not only permitted the pacification advisors to use the cash as a lever, he made sure they controlled their own funding streams specifically so that they could use it as a carrot and stick to incentivize GVN leaders to follow their guidance. When GVN leaders remained unreceptive, Komer exercised financial levers to coerce more senior GVN leaders into dismissing their problematic province and district chiefs.[396] CORDS' systematic use of conditionality to incentivize GVN leaders to take U.S. advice contrasts sharply with MACV's consistent refusal to use the power of the purse.

In keeping with the predictions of Influence Strategy Theory, CORDS' use of persuasion combined with conditionality got better results. GVN leaders more often complied with CORDS advisors' advice—delivered with a threat to cut off the resources upon which they relied—than with the military advisors' rapport-based approach. As a result, GVN pacification leadership improved between 1968 and 1971. In Komer's self-assessment, the more coercive approach "didn't always work, but CORDS' batting average during 1967-1972 has been respectable."[397] He continued: "The author, who instituted this system, found top GVN officials reasonably

---

[396] Clarke, *Advice and Support*: *The Final Years*, pp. pp. 238-239, 366-67; Komer, *Bureaucracy Does its Thing*, pp. 30-36, 110-117.
[397] Komer, *Bureaucracy Does its Thing*, p. 32.

responsive, and believes that the U.S. could and should have insisted more vigorously on removal of unsatisfactory officials and commanders. It might have made more of a difference than anything else."[398]

It is worth noting that even CORDS' architect and chief promoter, Robert Komer, did not claim CORDS had performed any miracles. The CORDS approach to the interest divergence challenge "didn't always work." The point, though, was that CORDS exercise of leverage achieved a "respectable" record, whereas MACV's reliance on persuasion did not. Certainly, there are reasons to be wary of comparing CORDS' efforts to influence GVN province and district chiefs to MACV's efforts to influence ARVN division commanders. Most importantly, province and district chiefs generally posed less of a threat to the Thieu regime than division commanders. For this reason, it is quite possible that CORDS' successful exercise of leverage to incentivize compliance may not have been replicable with the ARVN.

That said, the critical point (which I will examine further below) is that MACV consistently refused even to try to implement CORDS' approach. This study does not claim that MACV could have secured perfect compliance and built an effective modern Army in America's image if only it had escalated to bargaining or direct command. There is no reason, however, to reduce evaluation of the U.S. advisory effort on a simplistic, binary (succeed versus fail) metric. The question is not whether MACV could have achieved compliance *all* of the time had it escalated to bargaining and direct command, the question is whether MACV could have achieved compliance *more* of the time. CORDS' example suggests that if MACV had attempted to exercise leverage to incentivize GVN political and military leaders to improve the ARVN, it could have achieved more "respectable" results. CORDS' example also raises a puzzle—why,

---

[398] Ibid, p. 160.

given the relative effectiveness of the bargaining approach under CORDS to influence GVN province and district chiefs, did Westmoreland and Abrams choose not to experiment with bargaining to influence the leadership of the ARVN?

The Second Link: GVN/ARVN Defiance → Poor ARVN Battlefield Performance

The second link in IST is, essentially, the theory of military organizational practices and battlefield effectiveness that Talmadge theorizes and thoroughly tested in the case of Vietnam in her PhD thesis and book, *The Dictator's Army*. Both IST and Talmadge's theory of political intervention predict ARVN defiance of U.S. guidance with respect to ARVN military organizational practices to lead to persistently poor ARVN battlefield effectiveness. In short, both theories expect ARVN battlefield effectiveness to remain poor for the duration of the U.S. advisory period. Both theories also predict that the ARVN 1st Division should perform better than the rest of the ARVN, due to President Thieu's uncharacteristic decision to appoint a competent division commander and to permit the commander to run his division without detrimental political meddling.

Talmadge's analysis of the battlefield performance of the ARVN between 1963 and 1975 provides strong support for her theory of military organizational practices and battlefield effectiveness, and thus provides strong support for the second link in the IST causal chain. Most ARVN units failed to demonstrate basic competence in the battle of Ap Bac in 1963, the battle of Binh Gia in 1964-65, the Tet Offensive of 1968, the invasion of Laos in 1971 (Lam Son 719),

the Easter Offensive in 1972; and, ultimately, in the Fall of Saigon in 1975. As expected, the ARVN 1st Division performed significantly better than the rest of the ARVN.[399]

BATTLE OF AP BAC (January 1963)

The battle of Ap Bac (January 1963) represents an opportunity to examine the effectiveness of the ARVN at a baseline level before the United States significantly escalated both the scale of the advisory effort and its own direct involvement in combat operations. In the battle of Ap Bac, the ARVN 7th Division tried to ambush approximately 300 soldiers of the People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF) in a three-pronged armor-infantry assault against the PLAF's prepared defensive position. Despite a 4:1 manpower advantage and far greater firepower, the ARVN units involved performed very poorly. According to both the U.S. advisors, and to the PLAF as reported in their own internal after-action reports, the ARVN units showed no ability to conduct complex operations, virtually no tactical proficiency, and no unit cohesion.[400] The performance of the ARVN units involved in the 1964-65 Battle of Binh Gia—the Rangers, the Armor units, the Marines, and the Airborne—was similarly poor.[401]

THE TET OFFENSIVE (January 1968)

In January 1968 the PAVN and the PLAF launched the Tet Offensive, conducting coordinated, near-simultaneous attacks in 36 of South Vietnam's 44 provincial capitals, five of its six major cities, 64 of its 242 distract capitals, and more than 50 hamlets. The performance of

[399] For detailed analysis of ARVN military effectiveness in battles from 1962 to 1975, and the connection between persistently suboptimal military organizational practices and poor battlefield effectiveness, see Talmadge, *Explaining Military Effectiveness*, pp. 102-114.
[400] Talmadge, *Explaining Military Effectiveness*, pp. 111-13.
[401] Ibid., pp. 119-121.

the ARVN in the Tet Offensive offers an opportunity to examine the military effectiveness of the ARVN after years of extensive American support. Overall, the performance of the ARVN units in Tet was quite poor. Most ARVN units operating without considerable American support showed little unit cohesion, tactical proficiency, or capacity for complex operations. Many ARVN units that managed to inflict substantial casualties on the PAVN did so only with heavy logistical and air support from U.S. forces.

In an important exception, the ARVN 1st Division performed well in its defense of the Citadel at Hue during Tet. The strong performance of the 1st Division aligns with the expectations of the expectations of IST, as President Thieu had deviated from his norm of implementing worst military organizational practices, permitting the competent General Ngo Quang Truong to run the ARVN 1st division without detrimental political interference. Truong's subsequent efforts to promote commanders based on merit and train rigorously thus predicts a strong performance from the 1st Division uncharacteristic of the ARVN as a whole.[402]

LAM SON 719 (Feb – March 1971)

The ARVN's invasion of Laois in 1971 (Lam Son 719) offers an opportunity to evaluate the ARVN in full-scale conventional warfare, in both offensive and defensive operations. As summarized by Talmadge, "Lam Son 719 was a nearly unmitigated disaster for the ARVN, which other than the 1st Division demonstrated virtually no battlefield effectiveness." The ARVN 1st Armor brigade, 3 Ranger battalions from I Corps, the Airborne division, and two Marine brigades "generally proved themselves incapable of unit cohesion, tactical proficiency, or complex operations, whether on the offense or the defense."[403]

---

[402] Ibid., pp. 129-131.
[403] Ibid., pp. 133, 137-140.

THE EASTER OFFENSIVE (1972)

The ARVN performed poorly once again in the Easter Offensive in 1972, the most widespread conventional fighting of the entire war. Although it is difficult to isolate the battlefield effectiveness of the ARVN given the deep involvement of American advisors and overwhelming role of American airpower, available evidence again supports IST. As Talmadge summarizes, the ARVN, again with the exception of the ARVN 1st Division, "generally continued to demonstrate serious deficits in basic cohesion and proficiency, and virtually no ability to conduct complex operations." Victory against the North Vietnamese in Quang Tri, Kontum, and An Loc "occurred despite rather than because of ARVN battlefield effectiveness, and because the PAVN were severely overmatched by U.S. firepower."[404]

THE FALL OF SAIGON (April 1975)

The ARVN "self-destructed" in the Fall of Saigon in 1975. Almost without exception, the 14 ARVN divisions in total, independent regiments, and specialty units set to defend against the North Vietnamese invasion essentially turned and ran. As Talmadge recounts,

> what is so striking about the South Vietnamese performance in 1975 was how little fighting actually occurred. The ARVN essentially self-destructed, with such a collapse of cohesion as to make consideration of tactical proficiency and the ability to conduct complex operations almost irrelevant to evaluation of the campaign. In both MR-1 and MR-2—the two key arenas in which the ARVN had at least a fighting chance to resist the North Vietnamese—ARVN soldiers repeatedly chose to stop fighting, take off their uniforms, drop their weapons, and blend in with the fleeing civilian population. Although even the best armies sometimes need to withdraw from engagements in which they are outnumbered, the ARVN's retreats were so disorderly that most of the forces never reconstituted as combat units.[405]

---

[404] Ibid., pp. 157-159.
[405] Ibid., p. 170.

Two decades after the U.S. advisory effort began, the ARVN revealed itself a paper tiger. U.S. security assistance to the GVN had failed.

***

Returning full circle now, to where this chapter began: the United States' effort to build a competent army in South Vietnam failed by any reasonable metric, as demonstrated by the ARVN's failure to demonstrate basic battlefield competence in any major battle from 1954 through the Fall of Saigon, with the exception of the ARVN 1st Division. One important reason the security assistance mission failed was the GVN's persistent implementation of deeply problematic military organizational practices. The U.S. advisors tasked with building the ARVN recognized the centrality of GVN political-military decision-making to ARVN battlefield effectiveness, and sought to influence that decision-making. The advisors relied, however, on persuasion—a strategy of influence that did not work.

4.4 Testing The Cult of the Persuasive

Why did the MAAG and MACV advisors—from top to bottom and beginning to end—rely exclusively on teaching and persuasion? Why, when GVN political and military leaders consistently ignored U.S. advice, did the advisors *still* persist with persuasion, despite the successful exercise of leverage by their recent predecessors in Korea? Why, when CORDS illustrated the potential of the bargaining approach, did Westmoreland and Abrams continue to refuse even to experiment with escalation?

The prevailing explanation of U.S. influence failure in security assistance and security assistance failure more broadly holds that interest divergence must be too high and U.S. bargaining power too low for the United States to effectively incentivize recipient leaders to

follow its direction. This approach frames security assistance as a Principal Agent (PA) problem between the U.S. principal and its recipient agent. In this formulation, the U.S. principal is conceptualized as a rational unitary actor doing its best to accomplish its mission but constrained by unfavorable structural realities. Chapter 2 theorized and Chapter 3 illustrated that the rational actor model effectively explains the U.S. approach to the influence challenge in security assistance in Korea. In Korea, the U.S. military set out to build a stronger Republic of Korea Army per the direction of its principal in Washington.

However, Chapter 2 theorized and this chapter will test an alternative explanation of strategy selection in Vietnam: The Cult of the Persuasive. The Cult of the Persuasive highlights a *second* PA problem—between the U.S. civilian principal in Washington, and its military agent out in the field attempting to build the partner military. The theory suggests that beginning in and ever since Vietnam, Washington's military agent untethered from its principal's goal of building better partner militaries. Instead, the U.S. Army began in Vietnam to optimize its efforts to 1) presenting an appearance of professionalism and progress to its civilian principal, 2) maintaining predictable relations with its local partner regardless of whether its partner was predictably cooperative or predictably defiant, and 3) setting up internal standard operating procedures and sustaining them without disruption, regardless of whether those SOPs actually advanced the ostensible objective. The U.S. Army came to rely exclusively on teaching and persuasion, never escalating to bargaining or direct command, because it found that teaching and persuasion served its institutional interests in Vietnam, whereas escalating to coercion threatened them.

Over the course of the advisory effort in Vietnam, in a kind of "ideational Darwinism," calls from within the military for escalation to bargaining and direct command were considered but were ultimately ignored and stamped out by MACV commanders. When civilian leadership

pressed on MACV to experiment with bargaining or direct command, the MACV commanders dismissed their direction. MACV formalized persuasion as the guiding doctrine of advising. To defend and promote the doctrine, MACV adapted U.S. Cold War legitimation strategies (and indeed far older themes of American foreign policy legitimation), conceptualizing the advisors as shining examples and helping hands to a free people, and the Vietnamese as free to take or leave U.S. advice. MACV also made use of civilian deference to the "man on the ground," arguing that immersion in Vietnam made plain to MACV what civilians could not understand in Washington—that escalating to bargaining or direct command would only backfire.

Beyond formalizing doctrine, MACV promoted a nascent ideology of persuasion (a "cult of the persuasive") down command channels to guide the behavior and thinking of the advisors. In Korea, the KMAG chiefs told KMAG advisors to begin with teaching and persuasion but to escalate as necessary to secure compliance and accomplish their mission of improving their partner units. As in Korea, MACV instructed advisors to try to teach and persuade their ARVN counterparts to follow their advice. In stark contrast with Korea, however, MACV conveyed to advisors that escalation to bargaining or direct command would be both inappropriate and causally ineffective, and absolved the advisors of responsibility for improving the effectiveness of their ARVN units. Instead of demanding advisors improve the effectiveness of their units, MACV instructed the advisors to cultivate and carefully preserve interpersonal rapport with their ARVN counterparts and to avoid taking any steps that could damage those relationships—regardless of whether the ARVN took or ignored their advice. The advisors of Vietnam received the message loud and clear: their job was to build relationships with their ARVN counterparts and to offer advice for their ARVN counterparts to take or leave. They were not to rock the boat.

Over the course of the advisory effort, GVN and ARVN leaders consistently ignored MACV efforts to coax and cajole them into taking steps to improve the ARVN. MACV was not blind. From top to bottom, U.S. military personnel in Vietnam understood that GVN intransigence was destroying the ARVN. Still, rather than experiment with doctrinal modifications, escalating to bargaining or direct command as their predecessors had done in Korea, MACV instead doubled down. The succession of MACV commanders presented progress reports to Washington that focused on quantitative metrics masking the rot inside the ARVN. They continued to defend and promote the normative and causal superiority of persuasion, and they continued to resist internal and civilian calls for experimentation with escalation. For its part, Washington grew frustrated with MACV's unwillingness to put the screws to the GVN, but continued for the duration of the advisory effort to defer to the theater commander. Its institutional interests met, the U.S. Army never had any incentive to change course. By the withdrawal of American forces in 1973, the doctrine of persuasion had hardened into ideology within the U.S. Army. Few of the proponents and purveyors of persuasion were consciously and instrumentally advancing the interests of the Army at the expense of the advisory mission. Rather, they genuinely subscribed to the ideology that had evolved within the Army to serve those institutional interests.

To test the argument summarized above, I apply the standardized question set outlined in Chapter 2 that I applied in the Korea case (Chapter 3) to the Vietnam case. I add two questions (questions 2 and 3) specific to the Vietnam case. The rational actor model and the cult of the persuasive generate conflicting answers to the indicator questions, permitting me to test the relative explanatory power of two competing explanations for U.S. influence strategy selection in Vietnam.

Indicator Question	Rational Actor Model Expectations	Cult of the Persuasive Expectations
1. *Does the U.S. military in Vietnam follow direction from Washington or optimize to its bureaucratic interests?*	The U.S. military should follow direction from Washington.	The U.S. military should aim to advance its institutional interests, even when they conflict with direction from Washington.
2. *Does MACV find that reliance on persuasion advances its institutional interests?*	No prediction. The answer to this question should not factor significantly into strategy selection.	Yes. It is because persuasion advances the military's institutional interests that the military comes to rely on persuasion
3. *Does persuasion emerge the prevailing strategy through a process of intra-institutional and civil-military debate?*	No prediction. The rational actor model puts decision-making in a black box, and expects no significant divergence in positions within the military or between the military and its civilian principal.	Yes. Advocates of escalation to coercion within the military should be ignored. Civilian pressure to escalate to coercion should be rebuffed by MACV, and civilians should continue to permit themselves to be rebuffed and to defer to MACV.
4. *How do the commanding officers in Vietnam instruct the advisors under their command?*	To begin with teaching and persuasion but to escalate as needed to secure compliance and accomplish the mission.	To rely on teaching and persuasion, and to do what is necessary to generate an appearance of progress while maintaining comity with the counterpart.
5. *How do the advisors in Vietnam evaluate the progress of the advisory mission?*	Continually, rigorously, objectively.	In a manner designed to create an appearance of progress.
6. *Does MACV innovate in response to evidence of influence strategy (in)effectiveness?*	Yes. Evidence suggesting the ineffectiveness of persuasion should precipitate escalation to bargaining or direct command.	No. MACV should continue to rely on the institutionally advantageous approach even when there is clear evidence that the approach is failing to secure the compliance upon which the advisory mission depends.
7. *How do the advisors explain their influence strategy selection?*	In strategic terms. They do what is necessary to accomplish mission.	In normative and/or careerist terms. They do what they "should" do, and what they are "supposed" to do.

The remainder of this section proceeds systematically through each of the seven indicator questions listed in the table above. The data provides strong support for the theorized process of strategy selection—a cult of the persuasive took root in Vietnam.

1. MAAG and MACV Sought to Minimize Bureaucratic Disruption

> *It seems to me that many of our difficulties in Vietnam have turned out to be conceptual failures; and almost all of our concepts, the military ones as well as some of the traditional liberal ones, have really failed, and failed for two reasons. One of these reasons is that many of them were irrelevant to the situation. Secondly, they failed for a reason that requires careful study: the degree to which our heavy, bureaucratic, and modern government creates a sort of blindness in which bureaucracies run a competition with their own programs and measure success by the degree to which they fulfill their own norms, without being in a position to judge whether the norms made any sense to begin with.*[406] – Henry Kissinger

The Cult of the Persuasive expects the U.S. military in Vietnam to prioritize its institutional interest in minimizing bureaucratic disruption above its stated mission of building a stronger partner military. Evidence that the advisors tasked with building the ARVN optimized to reducing disruption from within, from Washington, and from the GVN would strengthen the theory. Evidence suggesting that the U.S. military in Vietnam risked disruption from these sources to develop an effective approach to the advisory mission would weaken the theory. The evidence from Vietnam supports the theory. The decisions made by the MAAG chiefs and COMUSMACVs with respect to the advisory mission are consistent with a military aiming to minimize bureaucratic disruption, and inconsistent with a military actually aiming to strengthen the ARVN.

From the earliest days of the advisory effort, the U.S. military optimized its efforts to the path of least bureaucratic resistance, rather than to the national objectives set by Washington. One of the most well-known manifestations was the MAAG's organization of the ARVN for conventional defense, despite direction from Washington to focus on internal defense, and despite a threat landscape that called for a highly mobile ARVN specially organized and trained

[406] Henry Kissinger, quoted in Komer, *Bureaucracy Does its Thing*, p. 17.

for unconventional operations.[407] The MAAG organized the ARVN for conventional defense because it was the easier thing to do—it cut with the grain instead of against it. The U.S. Army was itself organized for conventional defense in the aftermath of WWII and in preparation for the Soviet Union, and the U.S. Army had just organized and equipped an army in Korea for conventional operations. The path of least bureaucratic resistance in Vietnam was to recycle the same SOPs. Organizing the ARVN for unconventional operations, in contrast, would have required intellectual creativity, experimentation, and interruption of existing SOPs. By developing the ARVN for conventional operations, the MAAG compromised the strategic objective (build an ARVN capable of providing internal security), but advanced an institutional interest: minimize bureaucratic headache.

Beyond the conventional focus, MAAG and MACV took a series of additional steps that illustrated its focus on establishing sustainable SOPs, even if those SOPs were disconnected from the strategic objective of building an ARVN capable of providing security in the south. For instance, MAAG instituted a rotation system that limited advisors in theater to 12-month deployments. This system optimized to sustainability, but it worked against the military's own theory of influence in security assistance, which placed a premium on the establishment of personal relationships—which take time to develop—between the U.S. advisors and their ARVN counterparts. MACV also focused on replicating in Vietnam the routines to which it was accustomed: distributing equipment, teaching marksmanship, setting up academies. Although MACV repeatedly emphasized that poor leadership and the related problems of corruption and

---

[407] For discussion of the MAAG's organization and equipping of the ARVN for conventional defense, see Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing*, pp. vi-vii; Pentagon Papers IV-A-4, pp. 3.1-5.1; 15, 24; Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years,* pp. 272-274.

apathy rendered these inputs moot, it nonetheless focused on maximizing the smooth delivery of inputs.

In addition to optimizing its efforts to minimizing internal bureaucratic headache, the Cult of the Persuasive also expects to see indications that the U.S. military took pains to keep its civilian principal happy by projecting a narrative of comity with the GVN and progress with the development of the ARVN. In keeping with theoretical expectations, MACV emphasized empty but measurable metrics like the body count and comparative kill ratios as evidence of the ARVN's progress, and masked evidence of the ARVN's fundamental stagnation.[408]

General Harkins was ridiculed by the press for his tendency to dismiss the failures and inflate the performance of the ARVN and the war effort more broadly. Perhaps most egregiously, Harkins characterized the Battle of Ap Bac a success for the war effort and evidence of the improved competence and aggressiveness of the ARVN.[409] This characterization was of course quite misleading, as the ARVN's 7th Division had essentially fallen to pieces in the battle.[410] Reporters frustrated with Harkins' happy talk nicknamed him "General Blimp," and wrote parody song to the tune of the Christian hymn "Jesus Loves Me:"

We are winning, this I know, General Harkins tells me so.

In the mountains, things are rough,

In the Delta, mighty tough,

But the V.C. will soon go, General Harkins tells me so.[411]

---

[408] The military's tendency to report meaningless metrics to create an appearance of progress is well known in the Vietnam literature. See, for example, Alain C. Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much Is Enough? Shaping the Defense Program, 1961-1969* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1971), pp. 299-300; Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing*, pp. 70-74; Sheehan, *A Bright and Shining Lie*; Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, pp. 48, 103, 158-159, 241-244.
[409] Sheehan, *A Bright and Shining Lie*, pp. 283-289.
[410] Talmadge, *Explaining Military Effectiveness*, pp. 111-114; Sheehan, *A Bright and Shining Lie*, pp. 201-265.
[411] Lee Griggs, "Saigon: Memories of a Fallen City," *Time,* May 12, 1975, available http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,917415-2,00.html.

Although Harkins gained more notoriety for his overly optimistic reports than any other general, his assessments may actually have reflected wishful thinking and willful ignorance more than outright and deliberate deception.[412] Regardless of how consciously or subconsciously Harkins inflated the effectiveness of the advisory mission to the press and to Washington, the inflation served the military's institutional interest of deflecting criticism, and possible intrusion and disruption, from Washington. Subsequent MACV commanders—particularly Westmoreland and Abrams—likewise inflated progress reports to Washington.

The U.S. Army's prioritization of minimizing disruption above advancing the mission also generates predictions with respect to the military's overriding concern with shoring up and stabilizing the GVN regime. The MAAG and MACV sought at almost every opportunity—from the earliest days of the Diem regime to his ouster, to the post-Diem interregnum, to Thieu's accession and consolidation of power—to help GVN leaders keep power, and put the brakes on any policies they thought might destabilize their partner. When Diem told Williams that proposed reforms could weaken his grip on power, Williams relayed Diem's arguments to Washington and advised a gentler approach. When the Kennedy Administration tried to condition assistance on a series of reforms, McGarr sought instead to assure Diem of the United States' commitment and helped convince Washington to shore him up. MACV's "go-slow" approach might have made strategic sense in 1964 following the post-Diem chaos, but the obsession with GVN stability after Thieu's consolidation of power is more difficult to square with a rational actor model of military strategy.[413]

The military's overriding preference for GVN stability aligns well, in contrast, with its interest in minimizing the disruption. Why would you prefer the stability of a regime that

---

[412] Sheehan, *A Bright and Shining Lie*, pp. 283-289.
[413] Ibid, p. 25.

consistently ignores your direction to the detriment of your strategic objectives? Because GVN power shuffles meant shifting GVN priorities, unpredictable GVN-MAAG/MACV relations, and possible disruptions of advising SOPs. Predictably, then, the MAAG and MACV preferred to take steps to stabilize the GVN, rather than take steps they believed would risk destabilizing GVN leadership, with all of the uncertainty GVN instability would entail for the bureaucratic machinery of the advisory effort. This preference for stabilizing GVN's leaders took precedence even when the COMUSMACVs acknowledged that GVN leaders were consistently ignoring their advice, implementing policies they considered fatal to the development of the ARVN.

This is by no means the first study to argue that the U.S. military's interest in minimizing bureaucratic disruption from internal and external sources can explain much about its behavior in Vietnam. The study is novel, however, in the connection it draws between this bureaucratic interest, and the reluctance of the U.S. advisors in Vietnam and thereafter to exercise U.S. leverage to convince those who receive U.S. security assistance to follow U.S. advice.

2. Persuasion Smooths, Bargaining Disrupts

The cult of the persuasive links the bureaucratic interest of the U.S. military (minimizing disruption) to the advisors' preference for persuasion over bargaining in Vietnam. Evidence that the teaching and persuasion strategies of influence protected bureaucratic stability in Vietnam, whereas bargaining risked disruption, would strengthen the theory. Evidence that the bargaining strategy of influence was no more disruptive than teaching and persuasion to the military's bureaucratic machinery in Vietnam would weaken the theory.

The evidence from Vietnam supports the theory. Reliance on teaching and persuasion helped the MAAG and MACV to preserve an appearance of comity with the GVN. Comity, for

the purposes of this study, refers to the degree to which representatives of each government are pleased with the other's behavior. Comity with the GVN, and an appearance of comity in Washington, was helpful from the perspective of a military seeking to preserve the smooth function of the bureaucratic machinery of the advisory effort in Vietnam. It was helpful to keep the GVN happy with the American advisory mission, because a happy GVN would permit the process to continue uninterrupted.

In contrast, an unhappy GVN might interrupt or force changes in the process. It was helpful to maintain at least an appearance of comity with the GVN in the eyes of the American public, because antipathy would be difficult to square with the U.S. rhetoric of anti-colonialism, defense of freedom, and aid to nations in defense against tyranny that provided the moral high ground for the effort as a whole. If the press reported that the Americans were bullying their supposed friends, public objections to the effort would likely intensify, and Washington might take a microscope to the advisory effort—and possibly intervene to redirect it. By plying the GVN with assistance while relying exclusively on rapport-based persuasion to influence GVN leaders to take their advice, the advisors kept the GVN happy. A happy GVN permitted the advisors to carry on their activities undisturbed. A GVN happy with the American effort also reinforced—or at least did not puncture—the rhetoric that justified the war to the American people. America was in Vietnam to help a friend help itself.

The Chinh-Hunnicutt affair helps to illustrate how relying on persuasion helped MACV minimize disruption, whereas escalation to bargaining caused headache. The American press picked up the story and made hay of Chinh's accusations of American bullying, damaging the narrative promoted from Saigon and Washington of an amicable partnership in the war against communism. The stories caused "a sensation" in Washington and severe scrutiny of the advisory

effort.[414] Westmoreland did not doubt Hunnicutt's accounting of events and assessment of Chinh's poor leadership, but he nonetheless took a swift series of steps to prevent the advisors from stirring things up again. Specifically, he authorized a review of MACV advisory techniques and procedures, and then eliminated MACV guidance that permitted the advisors to use threats to withdraw advisor teams as leverage. He issued a new MACV directive explicitly prohibiting the advisors from using the threat of relief or the threat of withdrawal of advisor teams as threats to incentivize compliance, and further emphasized rapport and interpersonal relationships as the preferred strategy of influence in the advisory effort.[415] In keeping with theoretical expectations, when coercion disrupted, the military took steps to stamp it out.

3. Persuasion Wins the Debate of Ideas

The cult of the persuasive expects ideas that advance the military's institutional interests to prevail in competition against ideas that threaten the military's institutional interests. Evidence that there was debate about the influence strategy question within the military and between military agent in the field and civilian principal in Washington, that the MACV advocated persuasion, and that persuasion won the day, would strengthen the theory. Evidence that the military did not prefer persuasion, did not advocate for persuasion, or did but lost the debate, would weaken the theory. The evidence supports the theory.

The preference for persuasion emerged MACV policy through a series of intra-institutional and civil-military debates over the course of the advisory effort in Vietnam. The succession of MAAG chiefs and COMUSMACVs argued that persuasion was the normatively appropriate approach to influence in the effort to build the ARVN. The intervention in Vietnam

---

[414] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years,* p. 190.
[415] Ibid, p. 191.

occurred in the context of a global turn against empire, intense U.S. sensitivity to allegations that it had replaced the French as the colonial power of Southeast Asia, and the United States' own rhetorical justification for their intervention in Vietnam on the grounds that it was helping a free government stay free from communist tyranny. In January 1961, Nikita Khrushchev announced the Soviet Union's support for wars of national liberation and imperial oppression,[416] and President Kennedy pledged to "bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of Liberty."[417] The Kennedy and Johnson administrations trumpeted a legitimation strategy for the Cold War broadly and Vietnam specifically premised on American support for "free" people.

The U.S. generals in Vietnam adapted this legitimation strategy to the advisory context, arguing that coercing their South Vietnamese partner would violate the very purpose of American intervention in Vietnam. In response to a 1966 Army staff study that encouraged MACV to use its leverage more aggressively entitled "A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam" (PROVN), MACV replied: "Excessive U.S. involvement may defeat objectives of U.S. policy: development of free, independent non-communist nation…U.S. manipulation could easily become an American takeover justified by U.S. compulsion to 'get the job done.' Such tendencies must be resisted."[418] The response is telling—the "compulsion" to "get the job done" is portrayed by MACV as the bad impulse. More important than getting the job done, is remaining true to the United States' normative rhetoric of

---

[416] For President Kennedy's reactions to the speech, see, for example, "95. Paper Prepared in the Department of State, Talking Points Reviewing Conversations Between President Kennedy and Chairman Khruschev (June 3-4, 1961), Washington, June 12, 1961, available https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v05/d95.
[417] John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address of John F. Kennedy," January 20, 1961, *Yale Law School, The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, available https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/kennedy.asp.
[418] Pentagon Papers IV-B-3, p. 97, citing Message, MACJ33 18244, 12 May 1966.

promoting "free" and "independent" partners. Westmoreland argued against combined command on the grounds that it would "give credence to the enemy's absurd claim that the United States was no more than a colonial power."[419] As summarized by Komer, "Whenever combined command was considered, the chief argument against it was essentially political—it would smack of colonialism."[420] In short, MACV promoted the normative argument that persuasion was the appropriate strategy of influence for the security assistance mission.

It is important to clarify that the generals may have fully believed the arguments they were making. The lines between instrumental and deliberate deception, motivated reasoning, and genuine and whole-hearted conviction are always fuzzy, and, in the absence of truth serum, nearly impossible to distinguish with high confidence. The key for the theory is that the arguments the generals made aligned with the institutional interests of the military, and that they kept making those arguments—and indeed likely believing those arguments—despite mounting evidence that should have prompted innovation.

Within the military, the loudest calls for escalation to bargaining and/or direct command came from Colonel John Paul Vann. As advisor to General Huynh Van Cao, the incompetent commander of the ARVN IV Corps, Vann grew incensed with his counterpart's refusal to take aggressive action against the Viet Cong, Vann argued to all within earshot—which included COMUSMACV Harkins, the Joint General Staff in Washington, and the press in Saigon—that persuasion alone would never suffice to move South Vietnamese leaders to action. He repeatedly called on MACV to take direct command of the ARVN, or to exercise the leverage afforded by

[419] Komer, *Bureaucracy Does its Thing*, p. 100, citing Report on the War in Vietnam, by CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1969, p. 104.
[420] Komer, *Bureaucracy Does its Thing*, p. x; see also Pentagon Papers, Part IV-B-3, p. 61, citing COMUSMACV Message 1566, 21 March 1965.

the immense support the U.S. provided to coerce them to comply with U.S. direction.[421] MACV's position never changed—persuasion, not pressure, would be the basis of influence in the advisory effort. The military closed ranks—in keeping with norms of professional courtesy, the JCS consistently deferred to MACV and backed up its positions in Washington. The military presented a united front to civilian leadership.[422] Through intra-institutional debate, the military position thus solidified—persuasion, not pressure.

Perhaps counterintuitively, the military's civilian principals—the individuals actually responsible for considering questions of Cold War legitimation strategies—disagreed with the military, and consistently pressed MACV to escalate to coercion. The fact that the civilian leaders pushed against the military's arguments for reliance on persuasion suggests that the position the military took was not obviously correct. Perhaps the military made a normative argument to defend the bureaucratically convenient path.

The influence strategy question was also the subject of civil-military debate. The specific subject of precisely how the MACV should influence the GVN to reform the ARVN was debated at the highest levels throughout the 1960s. The subject was first raised at high levels in 1961, after it had become clear to all that the initial advisory effort had failed. Although the primary subject of debate was whether or not the United States should send U.S. combat forces to South Vietnam, the influence question was also discussed. At this point, everyone "agreed GVN must be persuaded to take certain necessary steps. Just how such persuasion was to be achieved was a prime subject for discussion. Who was to persuade whom and in what organizational framework was another such subject."[423] The MAAG chief, General Williams, opposed explicit

[421] See especially Sheehan, *A Bright and Shining Lie*, pp. 267-386.
[422] Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing*, pp. 92-93.
[423] Pentagon Papers, Part IV-B-3, p. 14.

conditionality, preferring to provide the additional assistance as a no-strings inducement for reciprocal cooperation. President Kennedy and Ambassador Durbrow, in contrast, wanted to tie the assistance explicitly to Diem's compliance with a specific list of reforms. Kennedy and Durbrow made a list of quid pro quos, but then, on Williams' and later McGarr's urging, proceeded to provide the assistance despite Diem's failures to follow through.[424] Diem took the assistance, but, with assurances from the MAAG, declined to implement the reforms. The assistance continued.

Throughout 1964 various Washington civilian officials suggested ways of pushing the GVN harder, such as seeking a greater U.S. role in the GVN machinery and tying U.S. aid to GVN commitments. But the Saigon team generally opposed increased pressure on the GVN. For instance, in May Deputy Assistance Secretary of State William H. Sullivan urged integrating Americans into the GVN civil and military structure at all levels, but Westmoreland squashed the proposal in the June 1964 Honolulu conference.[425]

Debate in early 1965 centered on whether the United States should form a combined command with the republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) so that the United States could exercise formal and direct control of the ARVN. President Johnson himself suggested experimentation with different forms of combined command, such as encadrement. Westmoreland rejected the suggestion, preferring to rely instead on the informal status quo—cooperation through persuasion.[426] The subject came up again later that year, with Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara favoring "unity of command," while COMUSMACV Westmoreland opposed any form of combined command on the grounds that it would raise GVN sensitivities

---

[424] See, for example, Schneider, "Advising the ARVN," p. 62.
[425] Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing*, p. 25.
[426] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 90.

about sovereignty and neo-colonialism, and argued instead for the maintenance of information cooperation and coordination.

The subject of escalation from persuasion to bargaining was debated several times in the late 1960s. In 1967, CORDS direct Robert Komer strongly advised Westmoreland to follow CORDS' example and exercise financial leverage to secure GVN compliance on personnel policies.[427] In a June 1967 report entitled "U.S. Influence – The Necessity, Feasibility and Desirability of Asserting Greater Leverage," CORDS lamented that

> Present US influence on Vietnamese performance is dependent upon our ability to persuade, cajole, suggest, or plead…However, the factors of corruption, antique administrative financial procedures and regulations, and widespread lack of leadership probably can be overcome in the short run only if the US increases its influence on Vietnamese performance. The increasing magnitude of corruption and its damage to any program make the need for developing and applying a system of leverage which forces the Vietnamese to take US views into account is greater now than ever before.[428]

CORDS then forwarded to Saigon its conclusion that "the US should find ways to exercise leverage with the Vietnamese government which are more commensurate in degree with the importance of the US effort to South Vietnam's survival which reflects the climate of growing restiveness in the US…To be effective, US leverage must be exercised in the context of a relationship of mutual respect and confidence, and in ways commensurate with the objective sought. It must also be backed by credible sanctions."[429] Westmoreland did not take Komer's advice. He doubled down on the persuasion approach and directed the tactical advisor teams under his command to do the same.

In 1969, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird prodded Abrams to adopt Komer's approach to reform ARVN leadership.[430] He asked Abrams to reassess MACV efforts to reform GVN

[427] Pentagon Papers, Part IV-B-3, p. 98.
[428] Ibid.
[429] Ibid.
[430] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 355.

leadership, and reminded him of the high priority he had given to improving South Vietnamese leadership.[431] Abrams deflected the pressure from Laird and continued to eschew bargaining and to rely instead on persuasion. When Laird followed up with Abrams on the leadership question on his second visit to Saigon in mid-February 1970, Abrams repeated his previous, unchanged position—success in Vietnamization depends on GVN leadership and MACV was having a positive impact on personnel policies. The secretary of defense communicated his disappointment.[432]

MACV got its way. The victory of the military in the civil-military debate over how to influence the GVN to build a better ARVN is consistent Washington's tendency to defer to the man in the field and the inability of the Ambassador to muscle past the military in Saigon.[433] As put by Enthoven and Smith, there was "a deep resistance to trying to run the war from Washington. Except for setting political limits on out-of-country operations and determining the level of manpower and resource allocations, Washington left the conduct of the war mostly to Saigon. And there the U.S. Ambassador, though the titular head, in practice left the military side of the war entirely to COMUSMACV."[434] "In effect, the military war inside South Vietnam was accorded 'full autonomy,' without much supervision from Washington. 'Westmoreland was the field commander and, in accordance with the traditional dictates of professional courtesy, Washington would not attempt to second-guess him."[435]

---

[431] Ibid, p. 366.
[432] Ibid, p. 356 citing: Draft Memo, Laird to President, 14 Feb 70, sub: Trip to Vietnam and CINCPAC [with General Wheeler], 10-14 February 1970, file VIET 333 LAIRD, 15 Feb 70, which includes resumes of talks with Thieu, Ky, Khiem and Vy; Briefing for SECDEF and CJCS, in Briefing Book no. 2, file VIET 333 LAIRD, 11 Feb 70. Both in box 13, accession no. 76076, RG 330, WNRC.
[433] Ambassador Durbrow frequently butted heads with MAAG chief Williams, yet it was Williams' preferences that won the day. Subsequent ambassadors fared no better. See Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years*, p. 276; Komer, *Bureaucracy Does its Thing*, pp. 85-86.
[434] Enthoven and Smith, *How Much is Enough?,* p. 307.
[435] Townsend Hoopes, *The Limits of Intervention: How Vietnam Policy was Made—and Reversed—During the Johnson Administration* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc, 1987), pp. 62-63, p. 147.

Outside the United States, MACV allies also proposed U.S. escalation from persuasion to coercion. For instance, Sir Robert Thompson, head of the British Advisory Mission to South Vietnam, suggested combined command to top Pentagon leaders—he was rebuffed.[436] Most interestingly, in fact, was the appetite among some senior South Vietnamese leaders for a more assertive U.S. role. Prime Minister Quat proposed combined command to Chief of Staff General H.K. Johnson on a visit to Vietnam in in early1965.[437] John Paul Vann also reported that informal soundings with the Vietnamese suggested a general consensus that direct command would be desirable.[438]

In the end and as predicted by the cult of the persuasive, the preference for persuasion became the preferred policy of the military and the military's preferences won the day.

4. Persuasion Institutionalized through Ideology and Incentives

The cult of the persuasive expects the military leaders of Vietnam to institutionalize the persuasion approach by propagating the normative and causal beliefs in the superiority of persuasion through formal and informal mechanisms, and by providing incentives for advisors to conform. As expected, the generals—especially COMUSMACV Westmoreland—took pains to institutionalize the preferred approach by incentivizing advisors to report positive relations with their ARVN counterparts, and by promoting through briefings, assigned readings, and formal directives the normative belief that persuasion was the appropriate tool of influence, and the efficacy belief that relationships were the key to effective influence in the advisory role.

---

[436] Robert Thompson, *No Exit from Vietnam* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc, 1970), p. 135.
[437] Pentagon Papers, IV-C-9(a), pp. 68-69.
[438] Komer, *Bureaucracy Does its Thing*, p. 102.

Williams directed the approximately American advisors under his command to influence South Vietnamese military organizational practices through teaching, the power of their example, and personal relationships. Williams repeatedly pressed on his advisors the importance of developing positive relationships with their South Vietnamese counterparts. He brought his advisors together regularly in Saigon to meet with an ARVN colonel—Colonel Tran Van Don—who, having collected impressions of the Americans from his subordinates, "would tell the Americans what the Vietnamese officers thought of them, tactfully pointing out methods and mannerisms which needed correcting."[439] He also instructed his advisors not to look down on local forces, and to avoid taking too much control of the situation.[440]

Timmes encouraged advisors to influence their South Vietnamese counterparts by demonstrating cultural sensitivity, building rapport, and building trust, and then "selling" the advice. Describing his philosophy of advising (which he communicated to the advisors under his command), Timmes explained: "to be a good adviser, of course we had to win the confidence of our counterpart. We had to sell him, as it were, on our ideas. It was often difficult for us to realize to do that. As soldiers, we felt they had to do what they're supposed to do, and they didn't need us to command them to do it since we had no command. That was the problem."[441]

Harkins did little by way of indoctrinating advisors in the superiority of persuasion, but he strongly incentivized advisors to report only positive assessments of their counterparts' performance and their relations with their counterparts. Under Harkins, MACV shelved negative reports, and gave their authors poor efficiency reports. Advisors interested in advancing their careers gave only happy talk.[442]

---

[439] Schneider, "Advising the ARVN," p. 28.
[440] Ibid, p. 20.
[441] Timmes, Interview, available https://www.discoverlbj.org/item/oh-timmesc-19851106-1-13-16.
[442] Guenther Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p 168.

Westmoreland took more steps than any other MAAG chief or COMUSMACV to ensure that the thousands of advisors under his command relied exclusively on teaching and persuasion to influence their South Vietnamese counterparts down to the battalion level. Westmoreland wrote a preface to MACV, Combat Fundamentals for Advisors, a small card issued to advisors that instructed them to "provide the ingredients necessary for your counterpart to make valid judgments and then encourage his decision-making prerogatives," and to rely on their "personality and persuasive powers."[443] In March 1965, Westmoreland circulated a RAND report to the advisors that began from the premise that interpersonal relationship between advisor and advised was the basis for effective influence:

> There are great variations in the extent to which advisors and counterparts understand each other's personalities, motives, and problems, and therefore in the degree to which the Americans are successful in exercising their advisory function. The purpose of this study is to suggest ways in which the relationship could be improved, so that Vietnamese military authorities would be more likely than they are at present to understand, accept, and act upon American advice.[444]

The report then proceeds to identify barriers to and steps to improve rapport between advisors and advised—for instance, making sure the advisors do not turn up their noses to Vietnamese cuisine, replacing the phrase "You should…" with "wouldn't it be a good idea if someone did…?"[445] The report never defends its starting assertion, that more rapport would indeed lead Vietnamese commanders to "act upon American advice." The report also warns against carrots ("bribes"), and sticks, which "could prejudice the long-term relationship."[446] Here, the relationship itself has become the overriding goal.

---

[443] Ibid.
[444] Hickey, *The American Military Advisor and His Foreign Counterpart,* p. 1.
[445] Ibid, p. 26.
[446] Ibid, p. 26-27.

In addition to encouraging advisors to employ a relationships-based strategy of influence, Westmoreland also took explicit steps to discourage them from exercising their leverage. In January 1967, shortly after the Chinh-Hunnicutt affair, Westmoreland issued a MACV directive that prohibited advisors from using the threat to withdraw advisor teams from South Vietnamese units to coerce South Vietnamese officers into complying with their guidance. The directive also forbid advisors from threatening problematic ARVN officers with threats to go over their heads to recommend their relief.[447] It also listed the same RAND study as a recommended reading.[448] In a Commanders Conference in February 1966, Westmoreland discouraged advisors from even *notifying* the MACV chain of command of instances of South Vietnamese disregard for their advice, on the basis that issues "involving non-compliance with directives, apathy on the part of the command, etc., are to be resolved in RVNAF channels."[449] In short, Westmoreland took pains to cultivate an ideology, or, a doctrine of persuasion, within MACV. He promoted the normative and causal beliefs in the superiority of persuasion over coercion in the advisory mission.

By the time Abrams took command of MACV, the persuasion approach had been effectively institutionalized as guiding doctrine. Abrams issued no new directives or reading materials to encourage the advisors to rely on persuasion, and merely reinforced the general philosophy of advising he inherited from Westmoreland through briefings. He encouraged the advisors to befriend their counterparts and establish rapport with them. ARVN commanders should then be more receptive to their advice and more attracted to the American military way of

---

[447] MACV Directive 525-20, 26 Jan 67: sub: Combat Operations, Guidance for US Advisors, SEAB, CMH.
[448] Ibid; Hickey, *The American Military Advisor and His Foreign Counterpart.*
[449] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 187, citing MFR, Jones, 10 Mar 66, sub: MACV Commanders Conference, 20 February 1966, History file 4-C1; 10 May 66, sub: MACV Commanders Conference, 24 April 1966, History file 6- A1. Both in Westmoreland Papers, Historical Records Branch, Center of Military History.

thinking. Advisors were not to use coercion to compel ARVN commanders to follow their advice.[450]

5. Arbitrary Metrics and Optimistic Progress Reports

The Cult of the Persuasive expects MAAG and MACV to optimize systems of evaluations of the advisory effort to presenting an appearance of ARVN progress, no matter the reality. In contrast, the rational actor model expects MAAG and MACV to conduct rigorous assessments and present honest reports of progress and problems. The evidence from Vietnam supports the Cult of the Persuasive.

Until 1967, assessments of the ARVN consisted of monthly reports written by the advisors of ARVN units and submitted up the chain of command to MACV. In 1968, MACV set up the System for Evaluating the Effectiveness (SEER), and advisors began to feed standardized, quarterly reports into the SEER system. The reports were based on a multiple-choice questionnaire with 157 questions divided into a variety of subject areas including counterpart relations, composition and employment of units, unit capabilities and effectiveness, leadership, discipline and morale, training, equipment, combat support, and staff operations. SEER reports aggregated advisor assessments of ARVN units across a wide range of metrics.[451]

The SEER was flawed in several fundamental respects. First and foremost, the system never established useful metrics to gauge the combat effectiveness of the ARVN. The closest SEER got to standardized indicators of combat effectiveness were accountings of the number of combat operations ARVN units conducted, and kill ratios and weapons captured ratios for each operation. In the search for effectiveness metrics, SEER made the cardinal evaluation sin of

[450] Ibid, p. 509.
[451] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, pp. 324-25.

conflating inputs with outcomes. For instance, many advisors cited the arrival of new equipment, especially M16 rivals, as evidence of improved combat effectiveness of their units, regardless of actual combat performance. These metrics were easy for MACV to quantify, but they had little to do with the actual ability of the ARVN to provide security in Vietnam.

Second, advisor ratings of ARVN units were highly subjective, and reflected their professional incentives. Advisors deployed for twelve-month tours tended to assess their counterpart ARVN units harshly in their first quarterly SEER reports, and then more positively in subsequent SEER reports. The best predictor of ARVN unit regression (according to SEER) was the arrival of a new advisor. Across the board, there was a strong bias towards overly optimistic reporting across all categories. As Deputy COMUSMACV, Abrams observed that "the preponderance of outstanding ratings throughout the RVNAF…appears inconsistent with on-the-ground observations and results," and recommended a close look at the evaluation process.[452]

In practice, SEER was less a system for rigorously evaluating the ARVN than a tool for collecting data that permitted the MACV to present whatever picture it wanted.

In keeping with the expectations of the cult of the persuasive, MACV used SEER to support overly optimistic progress reports to Washington.

Overly optimistic reports to the JCS papering over ARVN problems quickly became bureaucratic ritual for MACV. Under Westmoreland and then Abrams, MACV produced reports for Washington that selectively used SEER data to provide narratives of progress to the JCS. The reports MACV sent to Washington referenced problem areas, such desertions and logistics, but overall the reports skewed positive, painting a picture of an increasingly competent ARVN with

---

[452] Ibid, p. 330, citing Quoted words from Abrams to Weyand, 23 May 68, sub: Evaluation Reporting. See also DF, MACJ-14, to CofS, MACV, circa April 1968, sub: RVNAF Evaluation. Both in SEAB, CMH.

some roughness around the edges. In March 1968, for example, Westmoreland submitted an assessment of the ARVN's performance in the Tet Offensive to the secretary of defense. Although Westmoreland's assessment contained some critical comments to give it a "veneer of objectivity and truth," it read like a public relations-oriented assurance to Washington that "all was well."[453] Abrams' reports followed Westmoreland's formula. His January 1970 report to the Joint Chiefs of Staff emphasized progress, while noting a few problem areas to, in the words of military historian Jeffrey Clarke, give the "evaluations an aura of authenticity because it implied a balanced treatment."[454]

Contemporaneous assessments of the ARVN by the Central Intelligence Agency were far more pessimistic, and, according to Talmadge's analysis, much closer to reality. In December 1968, the CIA produced a report that emphasized the ARVN's poor leadership, politicization, rampant corruption, poor training, inadequate fire power, and total dependence on the United States. The CIA disputed MACV's claim that the ARVN had performed well in the Tet offensive, attributing any apparent ARVN successes in Tet to increased U.S. fire support and other American assistance, without which "the south Vietnamese military establishment would crumble rapidly."[455]

In keeping with the expectations of the Cult of the Persuasive, MACV treated the CIA's report as an institutional threat, and set out to discredit it. COMUSMACV Abrams attacked the CIA's "distorted picture" of the ARVN. Abrams conceded that "poor leadership, corruption, desertion, and political favoritism are problems endemic to South Vietnam," but, like Westmoreland before him, he asserted that MACV was "working on them and progress is being

---

[453] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 329.
[454] Ibid, p. 390.
[455] Intelligence Memorandum 68-152, Directorate of Intelligence, CIA, December 1968, sub: South Vietnam's Military Establishment: Prospects for Going it Alone, SEAB, CMH.

made."[456] Abrams did not, however, specify how he intended to improve ARVN leadership or stem corruption.

It is also important to note here the role of the Joint General Staff (JCS). The JCS made no effort to interrogate MACV assessments of the progress of the advisory effort or of the war effort more broadly. Instead, JCS

> viewed their role as supporters of the commanders in Vietnam and the Pacific. They used the vast flow of data from Vietnam as input material for keeping themselves informed of daily events in the war so that they could better argue General Westmoreland's case to top civilian officials…the JCS had no desire to second-guess General Westmoreland. The president and the Secretary of Defense always consulted the JCS before making decisions, but the advice was absolutely predictable: do whatever General Westmoreland and Admiral Sharp ask, and increase the size of the remaining forces in the United States.[457]

Finally, the buck stopped with the commander in chief. President Johnson and his key advisors sought candid assessments of the war. Secretaries of Robert McNamara and then Melvin Laird were highly skeptical of the positive reports from MACV. They poked holes in MACV's assessments, and chided COMUSMACVs for presenting too rosy a picture. However, when MACV doubled down to defend their evaluations and their broader approach to the advisory effort, Washington deferred.[458]

6. No Escalation to Coercion, Only Incremental Change

If MACV were operating in accordance with the expectations of a rational actor model, it should have responded to evidence of the ineffectiveness of its approach to the influence challenge by experimenting with alternatives. It should have recognized the effectiveness of an

[456] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 336, citing Quoted words from Msg, Wheeler JCS 14581 to Abrams, 122217 Dec 68, sub: RVNAF Capabilities. See also Msg, Abrams MAC 17134 to Wheeler, 151112 Dec 68. Both in Abrams Papers, HRB, CMH.
[457] Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing*, pp. 73-74.
[458] Enthoven and Smith, *How Much is Enough?*, p. 70.

advisory effort in Korea that made use of the full escalation ladder, and it might tried to implement the systematic approach to leverage that Komer institutionalized in CORDS for the broader advisory effort. The cult of the persuasive, in contrast, expects MACV to continue with the institutionally advantageous approach—persuasion but not pressure—to advising despite clear and consistent evidence that the approach was not working. More broadly, it expects MACV to behave according to the expectations of organizational theory, advocating for the preservation of standard operating procedures and welcoming only incremental increases in the scale of existing efforts. Evidence from Vietnam aligns with the expectations of the cult of the persuasive.

As presented in Section 4.2 "Coding U.S. Influence Strategies," MAAG and then MACV continued to rely on teaching and persuasion, and to eschew bargaining and direct command, for the entirety of the 19-year advisory effort. Beyond the matter of influence strategies, MACV resisted significant changes to the structure or philosophy of the advisory effort, and consistently proposed and accepted instead only incremental additions of advisors, assistance, and equipment. As summarized by Komer, "In true bureaucratic fashion," the MACV "preferred to do more of what it was already used to doing rather than change accepted patterns of organization or operation."[459]

7. Advisors Default to Persuasion, Reflexively Eschew Escalation

The cult of the persuasive expects that most advisors, by the end of Vietnam, should rely on teaching and persuasion by default, rarely even consider escalation, discount evidence that persuasion is ineffective, and reflexively implement the approach prescribed in doctrine. These

[459] Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing*, p. 74.

expectations are borne out in Vietnam. By the late 1960s, it is difficult to find examples of advisors, from the commanding generals at the top down to the battalion advisors in the field, who seriously considered escalating to bargaining and direct command when GVN and ARVN leaders ignored their advice. Even when pressed by Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, Abrams would not consider deviating from the approach of his predecessors, an approach that had "become gospel among American officials."[460] When Laird expressed his disappointment that Abrams had been unable to secure the removal of incompetent ARVN officers, Abrams merely repeated his previous, unchanged position—success in Vietnamization depends on GVN leadership and MACV was having a positive impact on personnel policies.[461] Komer describes the nonuse of leverage as "fundamental to our concept of how to advise."[462]

At the ground level, advisors conformed to the prescribed approach. In the words of one advisor, it was "obvious to anybody what you must do in order to succeed as an advisor." Being an advisor was, in fact "possibly the easiest job in the army." If things were not going well, "You can always keep up the statistics, turn in your reports, say you enjoy good relations with your counterpart, go on the operations. If somebody says that there aren't enough operations, you can say that you tried to get them to conduct more."[463] This glib accounting illustrates the systematic incentive structure at work for the advisors. Advisors were rewarded for maintaining "good relations" with partners, not partner compliance with their direction and the improvement of partner units.

---

[460] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 424.
[461] Ibid, p. 356 citing Draft Memo, Laird to President, 14 Feb 70, sub: Trip to Vietnam and CINCPAC [with General Wheeler], 10-14 February 1970, file VIET 333 LAIRD, 15 Feb 70, which includes resumes of talks with Thieu, Ky, Khiem and Vy; Briefing for SECDEF and CJCS, in Briefing Book no. 2, file VIET 333 LAIRD, 11 Feb 70. Both in box 13, accession no. 76076, record group 330, Washington National Records Center.
[462] Komer, *Bureaucracy Does its Thing,* p. 94.
[463] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 66, citing MFRs, MACV J- 3, 29 May 65, sub: Debriefing of Departing Advisor, pp. 1-2, 5,9- 10, and, 19 Apr 65, same sub, p. 5, SEAB, CMH.

This language does not describe U.S. advisors learning rationally on the battlefield, it describes a military with an established way of doing business.

4.5 Alternative Explanations

This section examines three explanations of U.S. strategy selection in Vietnam that challenge the Cult of the Persuasive. The first alternative explanation focuses on the stakes of the advisory effort in Vietnam, as weighed by the chief executive of the United States. Perhaps MACV relied on persuasion because its principal in Washington did not much care whether the ARVN held its own or not. The second alternative explanation focuses on whether the United States may have neglected to exercise leverage in Vietnam because it lacked sufficient monitoring capacity and bargaining power to enforce compliance. Perhaps interest divergence was simply too high and U.S. credibility too low for the United States to bargain effectively. The third alternative explanation for MACV's persistent reliance on persuasion focuses on the broader context. Perhaps MACV relied on persuasion, knowing that doing so undermined the development of the ARVN, in order to avoid creating the perception among the local population that the GVN was a puppet of the United States. Zooming out to the broader Cold War context, MACV may have calculated that it was necessary to rely on persuasion in order to avoid fueling Soviet propaganda painting the United States as neo-colonial imperialists. I walk through each alternative explanation in turn below and conclude that they do not match the empirical record.

Stakes of the Advisory Effort from Washington's Perspective

The argument that MACV persisted with a suboptimal approach to advising because its civilian principal was not invested in the success of the advisory effort is unconvincing. United

States presidents (rightly or wrongly) considered Vietnam a critical domino in the Cold War, and believed American prestige was on the line in Vietnam. As the Kennedy and then the Johnson Administrations escalated the American commitment in Vietnam, they repeatedly told the American people that local security forces would ultimately shoulder the burden of Vietnam's defense. As the United States sank blood and treasure into the war and public opinion turned violently against it, a capable ARVN became Washington's only ticket out of the war. The Nixon Administration's primary goal in Vietnam was to leave, but the administration's objective while still in theater was to do what it could to build the capacity of the ARVN to maintain security after the United States' withdrawal. Although MACV units did not have to worry that the collapse of an ARVN unit would lead an entire U.S. division to face envelopment and mass casualties as the U.S. Eighth had in Korea, the stakes of success from Washington's perspective were as high, if not higher, than they had been in Korea.

Monitoring Capacity and Bargaining Power

Maybe the MAAG and MACV relied on persuasion because visibility was too poor, interest divergence too high, and U.S. bargaining power too low for them to effectively exercise leverage to incentivize GVN leaders to follow U.S. guidance with respect to the development of the GVN.

Monitoring capacity was simply never a limiting factor in Vietnam. The MAAG chiefs and commanding generals of MACV were acutely aware of the leadership issues, corruption, neglected training, and parallel command structures rotting the ARVN for the duration of the advisory effort in Vietnam. Their awareness is reflected in their repeated efforts to persuade GVN leaders to take remedial steps. Under MAAG and MACV command, the advisor teams

directly observed their counterparts' apathy, corruption, and general incompetence in the field, and reported their frustrations up the MACV chain of command.

Nor did the United States lack the bargaining power necessary to overcome interest divergence. Bargaining power is a slippery concept that defies easy measurement and relies on counterfactual analysis of what might have happened had the advisors pressed harder. Nevertheless, within-case contrast between Westmoreland, director of the military advisory mission, and Robert Komer, civilian director of the late-arriving pacification program, suggests strongly that MACV could have used conditionality to secure substantial concessions from the GVN in the development of the ARVN had it made any systematic effort to do so. CORDS systematically escalated from persuasion to conditionality to force GVN leaders to relieve incompetent leaders. CORDS controlled financial aid to the provinces, and Komer not only permitted the pacification advisors to use the cash as a lever, he made sure they controlled their own funding streams specifically so that they could use it as a carrot and stick to incentivize GVN leaders to follow their guidance. Komer himself exercised financial levers to coerce senior GVN leaders into dismissing their problematic province and district chiefs.[464] CORDS' systematic use of conditionality to incentivize GVN leaders to take U.S. advice contrasts sharply with COMUSMACV Westmoreland's consistent refusal (to Komer's frustration and incredulity) to use the power of the purse.[465] GVN leaders acceded more frequently to CORDS requests for the relief incompetent and corrupt province and district chiefs—which were backed by carrots and sticks—than they did MACV rapport-based requests for the relief of incompetent division, regiment, and battalion commanders.[466]

---

[464] Ibid, pp. 31-36; Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, pp. 211-212, 238-239, 245, 366-67.
[465] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, p. 245.
[466] Komer's more coercive approach to influence certainly correlated, and in most assessments caused, the GVN to comply with U.S. personnel advice, removing officers the CORDS advisors identified as corrupt or

The within-case contrast between the COMUSMACV-controlled advisory effort and the civilian-led advising effort is revealing. It suggests that the United States indeed *did* have sufficient bargaining power to secure compliance in even the sensitive matter of personnel policies, it exposes the inadequacy of national-level explanations of influence in SFA, it highlights the agency of the leaders in theater to choose their strategies of influence, and it illustrates the reluctance of the military (compared to civilian leaders) to escalate from persuasion to bargaining.

The historical record reveals additional reasons to suspect that the United States' reliance on persuasion in Vietnam had little to do with inadequate bargaining power. GVN Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem was animated by his desire to maintain political power and secure himself and his family against violent removal. Far from reducing U.S. leverage, Diem's existential fears gave the United States the ultimate bargaining chip—the power to protect Diem's position (as it did in 1960) or to permit his ouster (as it did in 1963). Rather than use this leverage to coerce Diem into reforming the ARVN, however, the MAAG and MACV instead undermined U.S. leverage by repeatedly assuring Diem of the United States' unwavering support.

The United States further squandered its leverage over the Diem regime in 1961, when the Kennedy Administration decided not to follow through on its promises to condition further assistance on Diem's compliance with a series of long-sought reforms, at the urging of the MAAG and the JCS.[467] Rather than emphasizing that Diem's very survival hinged on U.S.

---

incompetent. In Komer's words, CORDS' "it didn't always work, but CORDS' batting average during 1967-1972 has been respectable." Komer, *Bureaucracy Does its Thing*, p. 32; for an outside assessment of the relative effectiveness of the escalation to bargaining, see Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, pp. 238-239, 366-67.

[467] Pentagon Papers, Part IV-B-3, pp. v-6, 25.

cooperation, Diem came to concluded that the United States needed him more than he needed the United States.[468] This was not an inevitable conclusion. The United States did not lack leverage, the United States briefly bargained badly, and then stopped bargaining altogether. As put by Komer, the United States would never "use fully the weight of the leverage provided by its massive aid to impel the GVN to better performance."[469] In consequence, "We became their prisoners rather than they ours; the GVN used its weakness far more effectively as leverage on us than we used our strength to lever it."[470]

A Higher Priority

The third alternative explanation for MACV's persistent reliance on persuasion expands the outlook outside the advisory effort. Perhaps MACV relied on persuasion, knowing that doing so undermined the development of the ARVN, as part of a coordinated United States effort to encourage the perception among the local population that the GVN was a sovereign, independent regime beholden to no external authority. Or, widening the aperture still further, Washington might have directed MACV to rely on persuasion and avoid the temptation to coerce the GVN, in order to undermine Soviet propaganda championing wars of national liberation, and painting the United States as the neo-colonial imperialist.

Washington repeatedly emphasized to MACV that the development of the ARVN was the first priority of the United States in Vietnam, with the notable exception of the 1965-1969 escalation of direct U.S. combat operations. Given the priority Washington placed on building

[468] Komer, *Bureaucracy Does its Thing*, pp. 22-23.
[469] Ibid, p. 28.
[470] Ibid, p. vi.

proficient indigenous security forces, MACV's subordination of the advisory effort to any other end would illustrate a gap between civilian principal and military agent.

Moreover, there was plenty of available evidence to make clear to MACV that whether or not MACV exercised leverage over the GVN or took direct command of the ARVN would have little bearing on local perceptions of the U.S.-GVN power dynamic. The heavy American troop presence in Vietnam was more than sufficient to convince most of the population that the GVN was a puppet of the Americans. The population generally assumed the GVN did the Americans' bidding because of the escalation of America's visible commitment in Vietnam. MAAG and MACV thus enjoyed the worst of both worlds—they were perceived by local population and as the new colonial power, but, by refusing to use incentives to secure compliance, they minimized their actual influence.

Further, the failures of the advisory effort undermined U.S. efforts to build the legitimacy of the GVN in the eyes of the population. Even if coercing the GVN might have come with some legitimacy costs (and there is little empirical evidence to support this concern), MAAG and MACV might reasonably have calculated that these costs were small in comparison to the legitimacy costs associated with the unreliability, corruption, and abusiveness of the ARVN. They might have calculated that they had more legitimacy to gain by using incentives to remove abusive or corrupt officers, than they had to lose.

MACV commanders—Westmoreland in particular—did in fact defend their reliance on persuasion despite its ineffectiveness by arguing that coercion would create the appearance of American colonialism in Vietnam, undermining the legitimacy of the GVN in the eyes of the local population, and aiding Soviet propaganda around the world.[471] However, in making these

---

[471] General William Westmoreland repeatedly expressed the concern that the United States might be "cast in the role of the French." Quoted words from Msg, Westmoreland MAC 3240 to Wheeler, 241220 Jun 65. See

arguments, *MACV repeatedly broke from and disregarded direction from Washington,* thus weakening the argument that a master strategy required MACV to sabotage the advisory effort. It is also interesting how far outside its lane MACV veered in making these arguments. The military's civilian principals were acutely conscious of the ideological dimensions of the Cold War, and carefully calibrated their rhetoric and actions to fight it. However, these same civilian principals did not consider the act of attaching strings to copious U.S. assistance to incentivize a very problematic ally to cooperate, at odds with that ideological war. In interpreting conditionality as neo-colonialism, MACV took American legitimation strategies much further than the civilians did. And when the civilians, taken aback by MACV's unwillingness to manipulate GVN dependence on enormous American assistance to secure compliance, pressed on MACV to escalate, MACV doubled down.

4.6 Summary

This chapter tested Influence Strategy Theory (IST) and the Cult of the Persuasive in the case of the U.S. effort to build the Army of the Republic of Vietnam from 1954 to 1973. IST expects recipient leaders to generally ignore U.S. efforts to teach and persuade them to build better militaries, and to continue to implement military organizational practices that keep their militaries weak. Evidence from Vietnam supports IST. The U.S. military relied exclusively on teaching and persuasion for the duration of the advisory effort, GVN leaders ignored U.S. pleas

---

also Msg, Wheeler JCS 2331-65 to Westmoreland, 230144 Jun 65. Both in COMUSMACV Message file, Westmoreland Papers, HRB, CMH. He objected to civilian suggestions that he exert heavier pressure in the GVN, or create a combined command with the GVN, on the grounds that doing so would be perceived as a violation of GVN sovereignty. See, for examples, Memo, MACV, sub: Meeting—100830 Mar 65: Advisors in the Support Role, History file 14-28, Westmoreland Papers, HRB, CMH; Msg, Westmoreland MAC 3275 to Wheeler, 26100 Jun 65, COMUSMACV Message File, Westmoreland Papers, HRB, CMH.

to improve personnel policies, root out corruption, follow the chain of command, and train rigorously, and the ARVN generally performed poorly in every significant battlefield test for the duration of the advisory effort.

The chapter then moved back one link in the causal chain, to explain the U.S. military's persistent reliance on persuasion, despite the demonstrable ineffectiveness of the approach. The chapter tested two alternative theories of strategy selection: the rational actor model, and the Cult of the Persuasive. Testing seven sets of observable implications, this chapter concluded, as expected, that a cult of the persuasive took root in Vietnam. The chapter also explored and found little support for three additional alternative explanations of MACV's approach to advising.

This chapter demonstrates the inability of the rational actor model to explain U.S. strategy selection in Vietnam, and establishes in detail the explanatory power of the cult of the persuasive. However, the arrival of the cult of the persuasive in Vietnam begs a question that this chapter does not address: why did the cult of the persuasive take root in Vietnam? Why did the U.S. Army behave as a faithful agent of its principal in Korea, but ignore direction from Washington and optimize to its own parochial interests just a few years later in Vietnam? The concluding chapter of this study elaborates this puzzle and offers several hypotheses for testing in future research. The hypotheses center on the institutional threat to the U.S. Army under the Eisenhower Administration's "New Look," the evolution of U.S. legitimation strategies during the Cold War in the 1960s, and the scale and duration of the advisory effort in Vietnam.

Although the cult of the persuasive does not offer or test a clear prediction regarding the precise timing of the entrance of the ideology, it does predict that once the ideology takes root, it should stick. The next chapter tests the persistence of the cult of the persuasive in an advisory effort that began three decades later: the U.S. effort to build the new Iraqi Army.

Chapter 5: Building the Iraqi Army (2003 – 2011)

In March 2003, the United States invaded Iraq, overthrew Saddam Hussein, and dismantled the institutions of the Iraqi state. Over the course of the next decade, a U.S.-led coalition would seek to build a stable, democratic, U.S.-allied Iraq,[472] while wrestling to put down insurgency and civil war. A critical—and comparatively overlooked—element of both the state-building and counterinsurgency dimensions of the Iraq War was the U.S. effort to build competent Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). U.S. presidents, secretaries of defense, and coalition commanders highlighted the development of competent indigenous security forces as the key to internal security and honorable U.S. exit from Iraq. The United States spent over $25 billion and deployed tens of thousands of U.S. personnel to the training and advisory mission, focusing in particular on the development of the Iraqi Army.[473] Despite the centrality of the objective and the enormity of the expenditure, the Iraqi Army never developed the capacity to manage its threat environment.[474]

A fundamental obstacle to effective security assistance in Iraq was the fact that many Iraqi political and military leaders had other priorities that took precedence over building an effective national army. Political leaders focused on regime (and in some cases personal) survival and consolidation of power put loyalists in key commands instead of experienced and competent officers. They skipped the chain of command to directly control company-level units, weakening command and control and encouraging paralysis at the lower levels. Many senior Iraqi Army

---

[472] President George W. Bush, "Transcript from Bush Speech on American Strategy in Iraq," *The New York Times*, May 24, 2004, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/24/politics/transcript-from-bush-speechon-american-strategy-in-iraq.html
[473] Stuart W. Bowen, "Learning from Iraq: A Final Report from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction," Hearing Before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, One Hundred Thirteenth Congress, First Session, July 9, 2013.
[474] See Section 5.3 for the analysis that underpins this assessment.

commanders used their commands as vehicles for personal enrichment, selling American equipment on the black market, or arranging inflated military contracts for family members. Others simply had no interest in defending the state, neglected training, and refused to deploy.

Influence Strategy Theory expects the success or failure of U.S. security assistance to depend in part on how the United States goes about influencing such leaders to stop undermining and begin taking steps to improve their militaries. When the United States relies exclusively on teaching and persuasion, recipient leaders with competing priorities often ignore U.S. advice and continue to implement military organizational practices that keep their militaries weak.[475] In contrast, when the United States combines teaching and persuasion with bargaining (conditionality) or direct command, recipient leaders more often take U.S. advice, implementing policies that improve their militaries.

As in Korea (Chapter 3) and Vietnam (Chapter 4), evidence from Iraq supports IST. For the duration of the advisory effort in Iraq, the U.S. military relied almost exclusively on teaching and persuasion to move Iraq's political and military leadership to take steps to improve the Iraqi Army. As expected by IST, Iraqi political and military leaders largely ignored U.S. advice and continued to encourage sectarianism, rampant corruption, loyalty-based personnel practices, and parallel command structures. As expected by IST and by Talmadge's theory of political intervention and military effectiveness, the Iraqi Army never became a competent and professional military service, as demonstrated in its poor performance in counterinsurgency operations throughout the advisory period.

---

[475] Influence Strategy Theory combines key concepts from the military effectiveness literature and the alliance management literature. With respect to military effectiveness, the work builds most directly from Talmadge, The Dictator's Army and Talmadge, *Explaining Military Effectiveness*. With respect to alliance management, the work builds most directly from Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, pp. 165-200.

Why did the U.S. military rely on teaching and persuasion in Iraq despite precedents in Korea and Vietnam that should have encouraged the full escalation ladder? Why did the U.S. military continue to eschew the incentives-based approach, despite the clear and consistent refusal of Iraqi leaders to take steps necessary to put the Iraqi Army on the right track? Why, when several key U.S. officers broke the institutional norm and achieved better results through bargaining, did the institution still fail to update its approach to the problem? I argue that the United States had sufficient visibility and bargaining power to secure more meaningful cooperation from Iraqi leadership with respect to the Iraqi Army. U.S. advisors relied on teaching and persuasion to convince Iraqi leaders to build a better military not because they had no alternative, but because they subscribed to the U.S. military's ideology of advising—"the cult of the persuasive"—that took root in Vietnam and persists today because it continues to serve the bureaucratic interests of the U.S. military.

The rest of this chapter proceeds in five parts. First, I provide background information on the U.S. effort to build the Iraqi Army in order to contextualize the U.S. approach to the influence problem. Second, I code the influence strategies employed by U.S. advisors in Iraq, finding that most relied exclusively on persuasion. Likewise, the coalition Military Transition Teams (MiTTs) that embedded in the Iraqi Army down to the battalion level relied almost exclusively on teaching and persuasion, very rarely escalating to bargaining. At the senior level, there were several important exceptions to the persuasion rule. MNSTC-I and then MNF-I commander General David Petraeus, and MNSTC-I commander General James Dubik exercised U.S. leverage more often to incentivize Iraqi political and military leaders to follow U.S. guidance. Moreover, U.S. Special Forces (USSF) directly commanded and controlled Iraqi Special Operations Forces from 2004 to early 2008.

Third, I test Influence Strategy Theory. The evidence from Iraq is largely congruent with IST's central findings. Iraqi political and military leaders largely ignored U.S. military advice delivered exclusively through teaching and persuasion and continued to implement counterproductive military organizational practices, and the Iraqi Army performed poorly in counterinsurgency operations in 2006, 2008, and 2010, despite its growing strength on paper. Petraeus and Dubik—who escalated to bargaining—more often secured compliance from senior Iraqi leaders than other U.S. advisors. These instances were too few and far between to bring about improvement across the Iraqi Army, but they suggest that a more consistent exercise of leverage across the U.S. advisory effort could have yielded more significant results. Also in keeping with IST, Iraqi Special Operations Forces demonstrated significant improvement while under direct USSF command, and deteriorated after Maliki took control of ISOF and USSF reverted to persuasion.

Fourth, I examine U.S. strategy selection, testing the Cult of the Persuasive against the rational actor model. I find strong support for the Cult of the Persuasive—U.S. advisors relied persistently on teaching and persuasion not because they misunderstood the interest divergence challenge or lacked leverage, but because they subscribed to an ideology of persuasion that evolved and persists today to serve the institutional interests of the U.S. military, at the expense of the advisory mission. The fifth section addresses additional alternative explanations for U.S. strategy selection in Iraq. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

5.1 Background: The Evolution of the U.S. Advisory Effort in Iraq

This study examines the U.S. effort to build the Iraqi Army between the United States' invasion of Iraq in March 2003 and the withdrawal of the last U.S. combat troops from Iraq in

December 2011. Thorough discussion of the Iraq War, Iraqi society post-Saddam Hussein, and coalition operations across the country beyond the scope of this study to address in full. This section provides only the background information most directly pertinent for analysis of U.S. efforts to influence Iraqi leaders to build a better Iraqi Army.

The Genesis: Dismantling the State and Modest Visions for the New Iraqi Army (2003 – 2004)

The United States built the new Iraqi Army from scratch after dismantling what remained of its predecessor. After defeating the Iraqi Army in the invasion, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) issued orders CPA 1 and CPA 2 in May 2003,[476] dismantling the remnants of Saddam Hussein's security forces, and prohibiting members of the Ba'ath Party who had held "positions in the top three layers of management" from service in the institutions of the new government, including the new Iraqi Army. The United States then set out to build a new Iraqi Army from scratch.

The United States had not anticipated that the new Iraqi Army would play an important role providing security within Iraq's borders. The United States had (notoriously) not expected the violence Saddam's ouster would unleash, and, relatedly, the inadequacy of the Iraqi police for the task.[477] Consequently, early plans for the new Iraqi Army envisioned a small, externally-oriented force that would rely on a U.S. security guarantee for the foreseeable future.[478] The initial budget for the embryonic new Iraqi Army—a mere $173 million—illustrated the low

[476] Paul Bremer, "Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 1: De-Ba'athification of Iraqi Society," 16 May 2003, available https://web.archive.org/web/20040621014307/http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030516_CPAORD_1_De- Ba_athification_of_Iraqi_Society_.pdf; Paul Bremer, Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 2: Dissolution of Entities," 23 May 2003, available https://web.archive.org/web/20040701202042/http://iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030823_CPAORD_2_Dissoluti on_of_Entities_with_Annex_A.pdf.
[477] Author interview with Major General (Retired) Paul Eaton, telephone, August 2019.
[478] Ibid; Author interview with General (Retired) George Casey, zoom, April 2020.

priority the U.S. placed on the project in 2003.[479] Responsibility for this small project fell to an organization called the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team (CMATT), under the command of Major General Paul Eaton. With only $173 million and a skeletal PowerPoint presentation from CENTCOM as guidance, General Eaton spent the better part of the next year scrambling to "pry money loose from the Pentagon," to build barracks and other facilities for the new army, and to arrange for contractors to recruit and train Iraqi soldiers.[480]

The Casey Years: Escalating Insurgency, and Security Assistance as Top Priority (2004 – 2006)

The U.S. approach to the security assistance project in Iraq changed in Spring 2004, when three things became clear. First, the security situation in Iraq was devolving. Second, the Iraqi Army would need to play a role providing security in Iraq in order for the U.S. to leave the country in a stable state. Third, after a year of training, the Iraqi Army remained wholly incapable of contributing meaningfully to the internal security mission. When General Eaton tried to send Iraqi Army units to help put down the insurgents in Fallujah and Ramadi in Spring 2004, many of the soldiers refused to deploy, and the units that did disintegrated under fire.[481]

The U.S. effort to build the Iraqi Army began in earnest in June 2004. General George W. Casey Jr. took command of Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) in June 2004, where he would remain until February 2007. Casey's strategy for Iraq was to develop the capacity of the Iraqi Security Forces—including the Iraqi Army—to provide security internally so that the U.S. could

[479] Donald Wright and Timothy Reese, *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign: The United States Army in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, May 2003-January 2005*, Contemporary Operations Study Team, 2008), 87-88, 433, 567-568; Eaton confirmed his receipt and interpretation of the PowerPoint in the August 2019 interview with the author.
[480] Author interview with Major General (Ret.) Paul Eaton, telephone, August 2019.
[481] Author interview with MG (Ret.) Paul Eaton, telephone, August 2019; Joel D. Rayburn and Colonel Frank K. Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, (The Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2019), p. 341.

withdraw.[482] The development of the Iraqi Army became the highest priority for the U.S. military in Iraq. The new priority placed on the development of the Iraqi Security Forces is evident not only in rhetoric but in price tag: Casey and his then-subordinate General David Petraeus reprogrammed $1.8 billion from the Iraqi Relief and Reconstruction Fund to expedite the development of the Iraqi Army.[483]

The U.S. organized two formations under Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I): Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I), which would manage coalition operations across the country, and Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I). MNSTC-I, under the command of General Petraeus from June 2004 until September 2005, would be responsible for organizing, training, advising, and equipping the Iraqi Security Forces, and for developing the institutional capacity of the new Iraqi Ministry of Defense and Ministry of the Interior for the rest of the advisory period.[484]

Under Commanding General (CG) MNF-I General Casey and CG MNSTC-I General Petraeus, the U.S. military established a critical element of the security assistance effort: the role of embedded advisors within Iraqi units. After Iraqi soldiers were recruited to coalition bases and graduated from basic training, Iraqi units were paired with American advisor teams of approximately ten.[485] First called Advisory Support Teams (ASTs) and then Military Transition Teams (MiTTs), these small teams embedded with Iraqi units at the division, brigade, and battalion levels. Based on MiTT assessments of Iraqi readiness, Iraqi units were supposed to

---

[482] Author interview with General (Retired) George Casey, Zoom, April 2020; George W. Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom* July 2004 – February 2007 (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2012), p. 29; Joel D. Rayburn and Colonel Frank K. Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, (The Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2019), p. 384.
[483] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1*, p. 325.
[484] Ibid, 314.
[485] Although the advisory teams were supposed to have ten people, many ended up with only eight or nine.

transition gradually from follow-behind roles in coalition operations, to shoulder-to-shoulder operations, to leading coalition operations, to independently planning and conducting operations and controlling battlespace.

The Surge: Direct Intervention, Expansion of Advisory Effort (2007 – 2008)

The civil war that wracked Iraq in 2006 force a second rethink of the U.S. effort to build the Iraqi Army. As violence escalated across Iraq, the Bush administration assessed that Casey's strategy of transitioning coalition control to Iraqi Security Forces had failed. In January 2007, President Bush announced a 30,000-soldier (five additional brigade combat teams) reinforcement of the U.S. presence in Iraq, placed General David Petraeus in command of MNF-I, and authorized a new strategy for Iraq.[486] Petraeus shifted the focus of coalition forces from transition to direct provision of population security, emphasizing that the immediate priority would be reducing levels of violence. Petraeus dispatched the BCTs to secure Baghdad and the surrounding belts, and, in stark contrast with his predecessor, emphasized a heavy forward presence.[487] Under Petraeus, Generals Raymond Odierno commanded MNC-I and James Dubik commanded MNSTC-I.

During the surge, the advisory effort was second priority relative to population security. Although MNSTC-I and MNC-I remained coequal units on paper, Dubik subordinated MNSTC-I

---

[486] For the text of President George W. Bush's announcement of the surge, see George W. Bush, "President's Address to the Nation," Office of the Press Secretary, January 10, 2007, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html.

[487] For articulation of the surge strategy in General Petraeus' words, see "Iraq Commander Nomination Hearing," *C-Span*, January 23, 2007, https://www.c-span.org/video/?196316-1/iraq-commander-nomination-hearing. See also, Joel D. Rayburn and Frank K Sobchak, with Jeanne F. Godfroy, Matthew D. Morton, James S. Powell, Matthew M. Zais. *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal, 2007 – 2011* (Carlisle: United States Army War College Press, 2020), pp. 98-100.
See also Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey A. Friedman, and Jacob N. Shapiro, "Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007?" *International Security* 37, no. 1 (Summer 2012), pp. 7-8.

to MNC-I, and focused first on supplying ISF units for immediate coalition operations, and second on investing in their long-term development.[488] Although it declined in relative importance, MNSTC-I's advisors numbers grew significantly in absolute terms during the surge. New MiTTs embedded with Iraqi units as training advisors, operational advisors, and liaisons to the BCTs. In early 2007, the ISF stood at 136,000 soldiers, 135,000 police, 24,400 National Police, and 28,400 border troops, for a total force of 323,800.[489] By the end of 2008, the ISF's overall strength had grown to 565,000 soldiers and police.[490] The performance of the ISF in coalition operations during this period, however, revealed the distance between paper and practice (see Section 5.3).

The security conditions across Iraq improved dramatically over the course of the surge. Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey Friedman, and Jacob Shapiro summarize the improvement as follows:

> From 2004 to 2007, civilian fatalities averaged more than 1,500 by August 2006, and by late fall, the U.S. military was suffering a monthly tool of almost 100 dead and 700 wounded. By the end of 2007, U.S. military fatalities had declined from their wartime monthly peak of 126 in May of that year to just 23 by December. From June 2008 to June 2011, monthly U.S. military fatalities averaged fewer than 11, a rate less than 15 percent of the 2004 and mid-2007 average and an order of magnitude smaller than their maximum. Monthly civilian fatalities fell from more than 1,700 in May 2007 to around 500 by December; from June 2008 to June 2011, these averaged around 200, or about one-tenth of the rate for the last half of 2006.[491]

Many researchers and policymakers credited the surge with the reduction in violence.[492] Others attribute the improvement of security conditions to the Anbar Awakening,[493] to the completion of

---

[488] Author interview with Lieutenant General (Ret.) James Dubik, telephone, August 2019; Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1*, p. 278.
[489] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2*, p. 115.
[490] Ibid, p. 461.
[491] Biddle et al., "Testing the Surge," p. 7.
[492] See, for examples, Kimberly Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History* (New York: Encounter Books, 2009); John McCain and Joe Lieberman, "The Surge Worked," *Wall Street Journal*, January 10, 2008; Max Boot, "The Truth about Iraq's Casualty Count," *Wall Street Journal*, May 3, 2008.
[493] See, for example, Austin Long, "The Anbar Awakening," *Survival* 50, no. 2 (April/May 2008), pp. 67–94.

ethnic cleansing,[494] and to the combination of multiple factors.[495] Regardless, as the last surge brigades left Iraq in June 2008, the security environment in Iraq (as measured in civilian and military casualties) was quiet.

Iraqization Redux and Withdrawal (2008 – 2011)

General Raymond Odierno took command of MNF-I in September 2008 in a remarkably improved security environment. Levels of violence were nearing record lows, and the Iraqi Government had reclaimed territory that had been under Jaysh al-Mahdi and AQI control. Given the improved conditions, Odierno's task was to shift MNF-I's priority back to the development of the ISF. The Iraqi Army had grown to 175 combat battalions (in addition to 5 special forces battalions and 5 infrastructure security battalions). The entrance of the Obama administration in January 2009 heralded the beginning of U.S. withdrawal from Iraq.

In January 2010, MNF-I was replaced with United States Forces – Iraq (USF-I) to reflect the withdrawal of the other members of the coalition. In September 2010, General Lloyd Austin replaced Odierno in command of USF-I and Operation Iraqi Freedom transitioned to Operation New Dawn. New Advise and Assist Brigades (AABs) replaced the combat brigades deploying to Iraq since 2003. The deployment of the AABs reflected the U.S.' near-exclusive focus on the development of ISF capacity in the final years of the war.[496]

---

[494] See, for example, Nils B. Weidmann and Idean Salehyan, *International Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (March 2003), pp. 52-64.

[495] For example, Biddle, Friedman, and Shapiro argue that it was the combination of the surge and the Anbar Awakening that best explains the reduction in violence. See Biddle et. al, "Testing the Surge."

[496] Colonel Joel D. Rayburn and Colonel Frank K Sobchak, with Lieutenant Colonel Jeanne F. Godfroy, Colonel Matthew D. Morton, Colonel James S. Powell, Lieutenant Colonel Matthew M. Zais, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal, 2007-2011*, (Carlisle: United States Army War College Press, 2020), p. 492.

As the U.S. withdrew, the political situation in Iraq deteriorated sharply. After losing the March 2010 election to the secular party of Ayad Allawi, Maliki demanded a recount and ultimately refused to leave office. He set out on a campaign to purge the government of political opponents (mostly Sunnis), and took steps to seize direct control of key units of the ISF.

At the time of withdrawal in December 2011, the security situation in Iraq was relatively calm. The absence of violence in the March 2010 election was heralded as a success for the ISF (despite the absence of any significant electoral violence), violence levels across the country remained low, and the Iraqi Security Forces appeared large enough to sustain security after U.S. withdrawal.

5.2 Coding U.S. Influence Strategies

What strategies of influence did the United States employ to encourage Iraqi political and military leaders to improve the military organizational practices essential to battlefield effectiveness? As in the Korea and Vietnam cases, I code U.S. influence strategies in Iraq as teaching, persuasion, bargaining, or direct command, at the general officer level and the advisor level, over the entirety of the U.S. advisory period (2003 – 2011).

Coding Influence Strategies at the Strategic Level – The Commanding Officers

First, I code the influence strategies employed by the nine key U.S. general officers who sought to influence Iraqi political leadership and most senior Iraqi military leadership. These general officers were the MNF-I commanders and the MNSTC-I commanders, and are listed in the table below. Although the total number of general officers in the table below is 12, I omit General Sanchez, General Eaton, and General Schwitters from the analysis because efforts to

influence Iraqi leaders to implement improved military organizational practices fell outside their purview.[497] I therefore code the influence strategies employed by a total of nine U.S. general officers.[498]

Name	Dates	Role
Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez	Jun 2003 – Jun 2004	CG MNF-I
General Paul Eaton	Jun 2003 – Jun 2004	CG CMATT
General George W. Casey Jr.	Jun 2004 – Feb 2007	CG MNF-I
General James Schwitters	Jun 2004 – Jun 2005	CG CMATT
Lieutenant General David Petraeus; General David Petraeus	Jun 2004 – Sep 2005; Feb 2007 – Sep 2008	CG MNSTC-I; CG MNF-I
Lieutenant General Martin Dempsey	Sep 2005 – Jun 2007	CG MNSTC-I
Lieutenant General James Dubik	Feb 2007 – Sep 2008	CG MNSTC-I
General Raymond Odierno	Sep 2008 – Jan 2010	CG MNF-I
Lieutenant General Frank Helmick	Jul 2008 – Oct 2009	CG MNSTC-I; NTM-I
General Lloyd Austin	Jan 2010 – Dec 2011	CG USF-I
Lieutenant General Michael Barbero	Oct 2009 – Jan 2010	CG MNSTC-I; NTM-I
Lieutenant General Michael Ferriter	Jan 2010 – Oct 2011	Deputy Commander USF-I for Advising and Training

In order to code the influence strategies employed by U.S. general officers, I draw on original interview data with the relevant general officers, interviews with retired Iraqi general officers who worked with coalition forces, oral histories and memoirs, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War Volumes 1* and *2*, recently declassified archival documents in which influence strategies are discussed, and credible, secondary accounts. In order to code the

[497] Author interview with Major General (Ret.) Paul Eaton, telephone, August 2019; Interview, Steven Clay, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Brigadier General James Schwitters, 13 December 2006.
[498] General David Petraeus served as CG MNSTC-I, before going on to serve as CG MNF-I.

influence strategies employed by the embedded advisors, I draw principally on original interview data with 22 former embedded advisors, as well as 317 oral histories in which embedded advisors discuss their approach to influencing their Iraqi counterparts.

If a general officer exercises conditionality to shape Iraqi political or military decisions around personnel, training, command structures, resource allocation, or information management, I code their strategy as bargaining, even if they usually relied on persuasion.

Out of the nine MNF-I and MNSTC-I general officers who sought to influence Iraqi leaders at the strategic level, three of them—Generals David Petraeus, James Dubik, and to a lesser extent General Michael Barbero—employed any conditionality to shape Iraqi military organizational practices. The other six commanding generals—Generals George Casey, Martin Dempsey, Raymond Odierno, Frank Helmick, Lloyd Austin, and Michael Ferriter—eschewed conditionality and sought instead to persuade Iraqi political and military leadership by developing interpersonal relationships and making logical arguments. The embedded advisors—with few exceptions—followed suit. From 2004 through 2011, the embedded advisors sought to influence Iraqi division, brigade, and battalion commanders by developing close relationships with them, demonstrating what right looks like, and appealing to their reason, pride, and self-interest.

From June 2004 through February 2007, the three American general officers who sought to exert influence over Iraqi political leadership and most senior military leadership were Commanding General (CG) MNF-I George Casey (July 2004 – February 2007), CG MNSTC-I David Petraeus (June 2004 – September 2005), and CG MNSTC-I Martin Dempsey (September 2005 – June 2007). During this period, only MNSTC-I Commander Petraeus ever used

incentives to shape Iraqi military organizational practices—General Casey and General Dempsey relied exclusively on persuasion.

GENERAL GEORGE CASEY

While in command of MNF-I, General George Casey aimed to transition responsibility for security in Iraq to the ISF. Casey identified the development of the ISF, not direct U.S. combat operations against enemy targets or population security, as the key objective for U.S. forces in Iraq. For the duration of his command, General George Casey sought to persuade senior Iraqi civilian and military leaders to implement more professional military organizational practices. Casey sought in particular to shape Iraqi personnel practices, command structures, and resource allocation—he focused less on Iraqi training regimens and information management practices.[499] In an interview with the author, Casey explained that he used "relationships" and "cunning and guile, and not carrots and sticks," to influence Iraqi senior political and military leadership.[500] Casey's self-reported reliance on persuasion was corroborated by other U.S. general officers who served in Iraq,[501] by a frustrated Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld,[502] and by three retired Iraqi general officers who served with Casey in Iraq. As one retired Iraqi general officer reported, "I talked often with Casey about corruption and the treatment of Sunnis. He always said 'yes, yes, I know about that, I talk to Maliki but it is up to Maliki, I am just an

[499] Author interview with General (Ret.) George Casey, Zoom, April 2020.
[500] Ibid.
[501] Author interview with General (Ret.) Michael Barbero, Zoom, April 2020; Author interview with Lieutenant General (Ret.) James Dubik, telephone, August 2019.
[502] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1,* p. 640; Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2,* p. 5.

advisor.' I told him to push, to put pressure on Maliki, but he explained to me that he could not, he was just a military advisor. Maliki was in charge of a sovereign Iraq."[503]

With respect to personnel policies, Casey discouraged first Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Ja'afari's and then Nouri al-Maliki's efforts to exclude and purge competent Sunnis from the officer corps in favor of appointments based on ethnosectarian identity and political loyalty. Casey encouraged them to develop an officer corps representative of the Iraqi population, to reward officers who performed well, and to punish officers who performed poorly.[157] With respect to command structure, Casey tried to convince Maliki not to violate the chain of command by skipping the Iraqi Ministry of Defense and issuing direct orders to Iraqi units.[504] He also tried to convince Iraqi President, Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani, not to develop a special unit outside the national chain of command committed exclusively to presidential protection.[505]

Casey sought to shape these military organizational practices through tools of persuasion. He sought to develop close interpersonal ties with key leaders through regular (thrice weekly in Maliki's case) meetings, and efforts to demonstrate understanding of the pressures they were under.[506] When points of contention came up around military organizational practices, Casey sought to convince these leaders that following his guidance would ultimately serve their interests better than their own preferred approach. For instance, in his efforts to encourage Maliki to permit Sunnis to serve in the officer corps, Casey tried to convince Maliki that Ba'athist resurgence was not a serious threat, that the serious threat came from the range of insurgent

[503] Author interview with an Iraqi General (Ret.) who served with Casey, Erbil, Iraq, February 2020.
[504] Rayburn and Sobchak, *U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1*, p. 627.
[505] Ibid, p. 412.
[506] Author interview with General (Retired) George Casey, Zoom, April 2020. Casey also describes his efforts to build a relationship with Maliki in *Strategic Reflections*. See Casey, *Strategic Reflections*, pp. 98-100.

groups, some Sunni and some Shi'a, and that only a professional military with a professional officer corps would be able to mitigate that threat.[507] Casey also tried to "get them [Iraqi senior political and military leadership] to think whatever I was suggesting had been their idea all along."[508]

Similarly, Casey sought to explain the importance of the chain of command to Iraqi leaders (teaching) and to convince them that abiding by the chain of command would serve their own interests (persuasion). Characterizing Casey's didactic approach, Odierno recalled how Casey "talked [the Prime Minister and his senior advisors] through the importance of his Army and his police and using them to not having everybody giving them orders but forming a chain of command, having somebody in charge."[509] When the didactic approach failed to deter Iraqi leaders from violating the chain of command, Casey turned to persuasion. For instance, In July 2005, Iraqi President, Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani began to establish an official all-Kurd Presidential Security Brigade outside of the Iraqi security forces. In response, Casey "sent a formal letter strongly warning him against the move." Although the letter expressed coalition displeasure, it did not threaten to sever resources to Talabani or otherwise punish him if he were to ignore Casey's admonition.[510]

Nor did Casey employ conditionality to incentivize Maliki to abide by the chain of command. By the fall of 2006, it had become routine for the Prime Minister's office to ignore the chain of command to release prisoners without explanation or to conduct operations.[511] In

---

[507] Ibid.
[508] Author interview with General (Ret.) George Casey, Zoom, April 2020.
[509] Interview, [Name Redacted], the Multinational Corps-Iraq historian with Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno, Commanding General of Multinational Corps-Iraq, U.S. Army Center of Military History, p. 24 June 2007, CENTCOM Iraq Documents.
[510] Rayburn and Sobchak, *U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1*, p. 412.
[511] Ibid, p. 627.

October 2006, for example, the Prime Minister directed a group of 17 Iraqi soldiers on a secret mission to raid a Sunni residence. In response to this particularly brazen operation,

> Casey confronted Maliki…When the Prime Minister unapologetically acknowledged his office's role in the operation, the MNF-I commander pointed out just how ugly perceptions of this incident could be. The Prime Minister was essentially orchestrating raids out of Sadr City against Sunni enclaves in the capital. Sectarian overtones aside, the practices of circumventing the Ministry of Defense and the chain of command undermined the military institutions that so desperately needed to be solidified. When Maliki dismissed Casey's concern as 'no big deal,' the MNF-I commander pushed back more fervently—enough for the Prime Minister to ask if the general was threatening him.[512]

The general, however, was not threatening Maliki. In an interview with the author, General Casey stated that he did not threaten Maliki with any reduction in assistance or any other stick in this case or in any other.[513] Even in response to this severe violation of the chain of command that, according to the *U.S. Army History* "struck a nerve with Casey," Casey never threatened to punish Iraqi leaders for their violations of the chain of command, nor did he actually punish them when they defied his guidance.[514]

With respect to resource allocation—in particular the rampant corruption rotting the Iraqi Security Forces from the top down—Casey took a hands-off approach. Casey was acutely aware of the ghost soldier problem rotting the Iraqi Security Forces. In a May 2005 conference attended by General Casey as well as other senior coalition leaders prove real-time awareness that the number of ghost soldiers on the Iraqi payroll, estimated conservatively, numbered between 15,000 and 30,000, a figure representing between 10 and 20 percent of the entire Iraqi security

---

[512] Ibid.
[513] Author interview with General (Retired) George Casey, Zoom, April 2020.
[514] Ibid.

forces at the time.[515] Although aware of the rampant corruption in the Iraqi military, Casey did not focus his attention on the issue.[516]

In short, Casey was acutely aware of how problematic Iraqi military organizational practices undermined the ISF, and when he did seek to influence them, he relied on teaching and persuasion—he did not use carrots and sticks to incentivize Iraqi compliance with U.S. guidance.

GENERAL MARTIN DEMPSEY

General Martin Dempsey served under Casey as MNSTC-I commander from September 2005 through June 2007. During this period, available information suggests that General Dempsey relied largely on teaching and persuasion to shape Iraqi military organizational practices and did not exercise U.S. leverage to incentivize compliance.[517] Dempsey summarized his philosophy of security assistance in the forward to the updated Stability Operations field manual, FM 3-07.1, released in May 2009, in which he stated that "Conducting foreign security assistance requires great skill in building relationships and 'leading from behind.'" The same manual goes on to emphasize that "Advising establishes a personal and a professional relationship where trust and confidence define how well the advisor will be able to influence the foreign security force."[518]

---

[515] Rayburn and Sobchak, *U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1*, p. 473.
[516] Author interview with General (Retired) George Casey, zoom, April 2020.
[517] I rely principally on four main data points to support this coding. First, in an interview with the author, General Dubik described his and General David Petraeus' willingness to use carrots and sticks as exceptions, explaining that their predecessors (which would include General Dempsey) and successors were unwilling to use carrots and sticks. Second, in an interview with the author, Iraqi Army expert Kenneth Pollack likewise characterized Dubik and Petraeus as unusually willing to exercise U.S. leverage, also contrasting them with their predecessors and successors. Third, in an interview with the author, General Barbero described the pre-surge period as a period in which the U.S. was especially gentle with Iraqi leadership. Fourth and finally, both the Biddle et al. article and the Berman and Lake Iraq chapter note the willingness of Petraeus and Dubik to use conditionality to incentivize Iraqi compliance as an exception to an overall absence of U.S. conditionality in Iraq.
[518] Department of the Army, *FM 3-07.1, Security Force Assistance* (Washington, DC: GPO 2009), 2-8.

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS AND GENERAL JAMES DUBIK

General David Petraeus and General James Dubik escalated to bargaining to influence Iraqi military organizational practices. General Petraeus served as CG MNSTC-I June 2004 to September 2005, and as CG MNF-I February 2007 to September 2008. In email correspondence with the author, General Petraeus explained that as both MNSTC-I and MNF-I commander, he used an "escalation ladder" of influence, beginning with persuasion, and then escalating to conditionality if persuasion failed. As CG MNSTC-I, Petraeus focused his influence efforts on the Iraqi command structure. Specifically, he focused on preventing interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi from taking control of the elite Iraqi special operations forces (then called the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Forces, or the ICTF). These were the only units the U.S. had maintained direct control over after the transfer of sovereignty in June 2004. Petraeus explained that Allawi "wanted to put the ICTF directly under him. I told him that I would withdraw support for the ICTF if that was done."[519] It is important to note here that Petraeus calibrated threats below the level of complete abandonment—he targeted particular units. This is significant, because most arguments that the United States cannot make credible threats in security assistance rest on the assumption that the only threat available to the United States is the threat of withdrawing U.S. support completely.

As CG MNF-I from February 2007 to July 2008, Petraeus focused particular attention on Iraqi personnel practices. Petraeus explained that as "MNF-I Commander, I had a huge issue with the leaders of the Police Commando forces (one three-star, two two-star division commanders, and at least 6 brigade commanders, plus a number of battalion commanders), each

[519] Email correspondence with the author, General David Petraeus, 19 February 2020.

of whom had proven incompetent or intimidated or corrupt or unprofessional during the year or so leading up to the Surge. Once again, I refused resources (for the formal reconstitution of each brigade – which we took about a month to do, pulling the unit off line to do so – unless the commanders were replaced and removed from the service."[520]

Petraeus' self-reported exercise of leverage is corroborated by other U.S. servicemembers and expert observers' perceptions of his approach. In "Small Footprint Small Payoff," Biddle et al. note that Petraeus used conditionality, making him "atypical" among his peers. They explain that Petraeus would withhold gasoline, ammunition, water, and spare parts from ISF units until Maliki complied with their demands that sectarian brigade commanders be replaced. They explain that Maliki was entirely dependent on the U.S. for "essential logistical support," and this provided sufficient leverage to coerce Maliki to make the personnel changes demanded.[521] Similarly, Berman and Lake also note Petraeus' willingness to restrict aid flows to Maliki as a tool of influence.[522]

As CG MNSTC-I under Petraeus, General James Dubik was similarly willing to exercise leverage to shape Iraqi military organizational practices. In an interview with the author, Dubik explained that "[General Petraeus] and I were wiling to use our leverage. Certain things could not continue as they were. We used the leverage we had when we had to."[523] Dubik recounted a series of examples in which he used leverage to shape Iraqi decisions around military organizational practices. For instance, Dubik recounted how he found that an Iraqi brigade commander was sending groups of young men from local militias who were not on the military payroll, not in uniform, and had not attended received any training, off on conduct cordon and

[520] Ibid.
[521] Biddle et al., "Small Footprint Small Payoff," p. 41.
[522] Berman and Lake, *Proxy Wars*, p. 239.
[523] Author interview with Lieutenant General (Ret.) James Dubik, telephone, August 2019.

search operations. Dubik told the brigade commander that he would cut off the coalition food supply to the brigade if this continued. He explained that this was not a draconian measure, because he had been encouraging the brigade commander to work his own supply system for months.[524]

The *U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2* likewise recounts how Petraeus and Dubik used the September 2007 release of the Jones Commission Report—a report by an independent commission that essentially advocated for the disbanding of the Iraqi National Police due to operational incompetence and sectarianism—as leverage to push Iraqi Minister of the Interior Jawad Bolani and other Iraqi leaders to accept politically difficult reforms. They told Iraqi leaders that if personnel reforms did not come, Washington would be sure to cut off funding and assistance.[525]

GENERAL RAYMOND ODIERNO

After the surge, each MNF-I and MNSTC-I commander with the exception of CG MNSTC-I Michael Barbero relied almost exclusively on persuasion to shape Iraqi military organizational practices. Both CG MNF-I commanders Odierno and Austin reported their reliance on persuasion to shape Iraqi military organizational practices.

General Odierno's main line of effort was to influence Maliki to incorporate the Concerned Local Citizens (CLCs) and other Sunni groups that had participated in the Awakening into the Iraqi Security Forces. Instead of using carrots and sticks to influence Maliki's personnel practices, Odierno and his political advisor Emma Sky sought persuade Maliki that incorporating Sunnis into the ISF was in Maliki's own interest. In contemporaneous, now declassified

---

[524] Ibid.
[525] Rayburn and Sobchak, *U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2*, pp. 283-285.

interviews with U.S. Army historians, Odierno described his efforts to forge close personal ties to Maliki through thrice-weekly meetings, and repeatedly emphasized his understanding of Maliki's concerns of Ba'athist resurgence and his efforts to "help them to understand that, in fact, that is not the case. In fact, this is better for you, if they drop their arms and come on your side and help fight Al Qaeda."[526]

One vignette offered by a U.S. advisor to the Iraqi Minister of Defense who worked closely with Odierno helps to illustrate the MNF-I commander's reliance on persuasion to shape Iraqi military organizational practices. In an interview with the author, the former U.S. advisor explained that it was Odierno's "toughness" that he most admired. He described a meeting in which Odierno castigated an American brigade commander for failing to demonstrate competence in his role. "Odierno stood up—and you know what Odierno looks like, right? He's a big guy. He stood up and he slammed his hand down on the table, probably as hard as he could. And he said- if you can't do the job, I'll find someone who can." I asked "is that how General Odierno would try to manage incompetence in the Iraqi officer corps?" He responded: "oh definitely not, he would never do that in a sovereign partner military instance, this was one of his officers."[527] Otherwise put, carrots and sticks were for Odierno's own chain of command. Odierno, admired for his toughness, did not use carrots and sticks to shape *Iraqi* decisionmaking. Other U.S. general officers' and academics' emphasis on Petraeus and Dubik as exceptions to the overall U.S. unwillingness to exercise leverage in Iraq corroborate Odierno's self-reporting and his colleagues' reporting of his reliance on persuasion.

---

[526] Interview, [Name Redacted], the Multinational Corps-Iraq historian with Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno, Commanding General of Multinational Corps-Iraq, U.S. Army Center of Military History, 24 June 2007, CENTCOM Iraq Documents.
[527] Author interview with a former U.S. advisor to the Iraqi Minister of Defense in 2008-2009, telephone, April 2020.

In short, MNF-I commander Odierno, like MNF-I commander Casey, restricted himself to persuasion strategies of influence and eschewed the bargaining approach.

GENERAL LLOYD AUSTIN

General Lloyd Austin served as MNF-I commander from January 2010 to September 2010, and then as commander of United States Forces – Iraq (USF-I)[528] from September 2010 through the December 2011 withdrawal. Prior to his MNF-I command, he had been commander of MNC-I from February 2008 to the September 2010 change of command. During his tenure as MNF-I and USF-I commander, Austin relied largely on teaching and persuasion to shape Iraqi military organizational practices and did not exercise U.S. leverage to incentivize compliance.[529]

GENERAL FRANK HELMICK

General Frank Helmick served as MNSTC-I commander from July 2008 through October 2009. During this period, he focused principally on convincing Iraqi leadership to purchase American equipment rather than equipment from competitors such as Italy, China, and Russia.[530] He noted that the purchase of American equipment would help to make the Iraqis self-sufficient

[528] The name changed from MNF-I to USF-I after Maliki demanded that the name reflect the withdrawal of U.S. allies from Iraq.
[529] I rely principally on four main data points to support this coding. First, in an interview with the author, General Dubik described his and General David Petraeus' willingness to use carrots and sticks as exceptions, explaining that their predecessors (which would include General Dempsey) and successors were unwilling to use carrots and sticks. Second, in an interview with the author, Iraqi Army expert Kenneth Pollack likewise characterized Dubik and Petraeus as unusually willing to exercise U.S. leverage, also contrasting them with their predecessors and successors. Third, in an interview with the author, General Barbero described the pre-surge period as a period in which the U.S. was especially gentle with Iraqi leadership, and indicated that General Austin was more tolerant of Iraqi disregard for U.S. advice than Petraeus had been. Fourth and finally, both the Biddle et al. article and the Berman and Lake Iraq chapter note the willingness of Petraeus and Dubik to use conditionality to incentivize Iraqi compliance as an exception to an overall absence of U.S. conditionality in Iraq.
[530] Author Interview with Lieutenant General (Retired) Frank Helmick, telephone, May 2020.

after the American withdrawal, to bind the Iraqis to the U.S. in a "strategic relationship," and would help to stave off unwanted influence from U.S. competitors. Secondarily, Helmick focused on Iraqi training, encouraging Iraqi leaders and soldiers to train more rigorously. Helmick did not focus on influencing Iraqi leadership to root out corruption, implement more meritocratic personnel practices, or to abide by the chain of command. Although he was aware of serious problems in these areas, noting at one point that "Iraqi leaders made choices about the Iraqi military that were good for them personally, not for the nation Iraq"), he identified these issues as "outside his purview," adding that "U.S. complaints fell on deaf ears anyways." [531]

Helmick's strategy for convincing Iraqi leaders to purchase American equipment centered on explaining to Iraqi leaders why they would be better served buying American, emphasizing in particular the comprehensiveness of American sales packages—which included maintenance, training, and spare parts—compared to the bare bones deals the Iraqis would get from American competitors. Helmick's strategy for convincing Iraqi leaders and soldiers to train more rigorously was classic persuasion via rapport and demonstration. Helmick sought to build interpersonal relationships with Iraqi military leaders over meals, and sought to demonstrate the importance of physical fitness by exercising with them. Helmick mentioned one instance in which he exerted U.S. leverage to encourage more rigorous training: the U.S. had set up a training course for bomb dismantling, and when he found that the Iraqi graduates of the course were not doing the job they were trained to do, he threatened to shut down the course. He noted that this was "a small thing," and an "exception" to an approach centered principally on "inspiring Iraqis through example."[532]

[531] Ibid.
[532] Ibid.

GENERAL MICHAEL BARBERO

General Michael Barbero, like Petraeus and Dubik, relied on an escalation ladder of influence, and used conditionality to shape Iraqi military organizational practices on multiple occasions. Compared to Petraeus and Dubik, however, Barbero leaned more heavily on persuasion, and did not use conditionality as liberally as they did. He himself noted the distinction, explaining that "he might have drawn his line a little further than they did and was a little more tolerant."[533] Barbero worked hard to understand his Iraqi counterparts and to build relationships with them, and he sought to use those relationships to convince them to take his guidance. For instance, he explained to them the poor state of their maintenance, and that they were in a "death spiral" that only serious Iraqi effort would correct. Barbero also recounted several instances in which he used threats of withdrawal of various elements of U.S. support, such as maintenance support and intelligence support to secure Iraqi compliance with his guidance. He said that sometimes he "would clear the room and put my foot down. I'd tell them what would disappear if they didn't get their act together."[534]

***

Nine U.S. commanding generals of MNF-I and MNSTC-I sought to shape Iraqi military organizational practices. Of these nine, only three—General Petraeus and General Dubik, and to a lesser extent General Barbero—used bargaining to shape Iraqi military organizational practices. The remaining six—MNF-I commanders Casey, Odierno, and Austin, MNSTC-I commanders Dempsey and Helmick, and USF-I deputy commander training Michael Ferriter—all relied on persuasion to shape Iraqi military organizational practices and eschewed conditionality.

---

[533] Author interview with Lieutenant General (Ret.) Michael Barbero, Zoom, April 2020.
[534] Ibid.

Coding Influence Strategies at the Tactical Level: Embedded Advisors

Below the MNF-I and MNSTC-I commanders, responsibility for shaping Iraqi military organizational practices rested squarely on the shoulders of teams of the advisor teams (first the ASTs and then the MiTTs) embedded within Iraqi Army units. These advisor teams embedded within Iraqi divisions, brigades, and battalions, and sought to influence their Iraqi division, brigade, and battalion commander counterparts to take steps to improve the military effectiveness of their units.

Though motivations among Iraqi military leaders varied widely over time and across the country, it is uncontroversial to say that few Iraqi military commanders believed the U.S. goal of building a competent, national Iraqi Army to be either important or desirable. Rather, many Iraqi Army officers viewed themselves as players in an ongoing struggle for political power, while others viewed their commands as opportunities for employment, and still others sought opportunities to use their commands to line their pockets through graft and corruption. As put by one retired Iraqi general who remained an advisor to the Iraqi Army and runs the Iraq center at an American think tank—"No one in the new Iraqi Army actually wanted a strong Iraqi Army."[535]

The U.S. advisor teams faced a difficult challenge. How to influence Iraqi military leaders with little interest in improving their units, to do so. As put by the *U.S. History of the*

---

[535] Author interview with retired Iraqi Army officer and scholar of the Iraqi Army, Washington, DC, July 2019. Two of the foremost American Iraqi Army experts—Ben Connable and Kenneth Pollack—though they characterize the blanket statement quote above as an overgeneralization—concur generally that many (if not most) Iraqi political leaders and most Iraqi battalion, brigade, and division commanders, for the bulk of the U.S. occupation of Iraq, were apathetic or opposed to the U.S. objective of creating a strong national army. This assessment was shared by 14 former Iraqi general officers I interviewed for this study in Jordan and Iraq, by former commanding generals of MNF-I and MNSTC-I I interviewed for this study in Washington, DC and over Zoom, and former embedded advisers who recorded their impressions of their Iraqi counterparts in the oral histories recorded in the "Operational Leadership Experiences" project of the *Combat Studies Institute*.

Army in Iraq, "the transition teams had been tasked to rebuild the very sinews of the Iraqi military…it was on the shoulders of these transition teams…that the MNF-I campaign plan rested."[536]

Almost uniformly, embedded advisors from the earliest deployments of 2004 to the last deployments in 2011, sought to *persuade* Iraqi division, brigade, and battalion commanders to implement more professional military organizational practices. Embedded advisors encouraged Iraqi officers to reward merit and punish incompetence, corruption, and sectarianism, beseeched Iraqi officers to abide by the formal chain of command and to delegate authority and take initiative, encouraged them to introduce more realism and urgency to training regimens, and tried to convince them to crack down on corruption. Embedded advisors sought to influence Iraqi decision-making by cultivating interpersonal relationships with Iraqi leaders, explaining the merits of more professional practices in an effort to convince Iraqis that abiding by U.S. advice was in their own interests, and by demonstrating "what right looks like."

The quotes below, pulled from the oral histories compiled the Operational Leadership Experience project at the Combat Studies Institute, are illustrative of the embedded advisors' approach to influencing their Iraqi counterparts across every province and for the duration of the U.S. advisory effort in Iraq.

[536] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1*, p. 475.

Name/Rank	Deployment Dates	Description of Influence Strategy
COL Toby Hale	2004	It was an advisor mission. It was live with an Iraqi unit day in and day out and when they conduct combat operations, you conduct combat operations...We were mentoring them through the planning, preparation and execution of that training, but I made the assessment early on, that was only a small portion of our mission set. Our primary mission was to advise them at the officer and NCO level on what right looks like.[537]
MAJ Paul Esmahan	2005	We were supposed to advise, coach, train and assist – and the training was supposed to be played down to a minimum. We were supposed to respect the fact that they were a sovereign nation... I think I served mostly to track what they were doing and to implore them to do things we wanted them to do that they didn't necessarily want to do. For example, the soldiers would take their helmets and vests off outside the base. We would tell them the danger of doing this and ask them to put their gear on. They would complain that it was hot and take it off.[538]
MAJ Don Stewart	2007	After a couple meetings with him [the Iraqi battalion commander he was paired with], we were best friends. We did some things to help him out and we took to each other pretty quickly, all of us. I think it went pretty well. Some of the border police, it took a little bit longer to gain their trust and confidence and for them to realize that we were not there just to force them to do certain things. We wanted to really help make them better.[539]
MAJ Matthew Cox	2007-2008	We'd go over and do physical training (PT) with them, have breakfast with them, lunch, go back after dinner and play cards with them at night just trying to build that relationship and it was great. It was a little weird when you had guys running up to hold you by the hand to walk you into places and stuff; the personal space thing I'm sure you've heard before but it was great.[540]

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

[537] Interview, Contemporary Operations Studies Team at the Combat Studies Institute, with Colonel Toby Hale, 24 January 2006.
[538] Interview, John McCool, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Paul Esmahan, 2 November 2006.
[539] Interview, Jessica Trussoni, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Don Stewart, 9 October 2008.
[540] Interview, Jenna Fike, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Matthew Cox, 31 July 2012.

Name/ Rank	Deployment Dates	Description of Influence Strategy
MAJ John Atilano	2007-2008	You're introduced to everybody and go through all the paperwork involved with going through the RIP process and then it was really about building relationships. We spent as much time as we could with our Iraqi counterparts. I advised the Iraqi battalion commander and I had intelligence, fires, logistics, communications, and maintenance. I had an officer and a noncommissioned officer (NCO) for each of those and a medic. Everyone covered down on one of the staff sections, either the primary officer or primary NCO. We built those relationships and tried to do our best to guide them and help them make their systems better vice trying to force them to use American systems for doing that.[541]
MAJ Dion Freeman	2010-2011	Well from the train-up and in some of the training we got, especially the culture and language training was that we would go over and build relationships, rapport and really get an understanding of our counterparts from my area, Signal, of where they were and where they wanted to go and some of the issues and challenges that they were dealing with; to the best of our ability, to assist them in working with them and reaching their goals.[542]

***

In this section, I coded U.S. influence strategies in Iraq over the 2003 – 2011 period. From the general officers commanding coalition forces in Iraq down to the majors embedded within Iraqi battalions, U.S. personnel relied almost exclusively on teaching and persuasion to influence Iraqi military organizational practices. Escalation to bargaining was the rare exception. Taken on the whole, the preference for persuasion was overwhelming. In the words of one general officer (retired) who served in Iraq, "we had all the guns and treasure and never used it to try to force our way."[543] As put by Colonel (Ret.) Frank Sobchak, former special operations

[541] Interview, Angie Slattery, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major John Atilano, 1 March 2012.
[542] Interview, Jenna Fike, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Dion Freeman, 18 October 2011
[543] Author interview with a General Officer (Ret.) who served in Iraq, telephone, September 2019.

officer and co-author of the two-volume *U.S. Army in the Iraq War,* "On the topic of coercion, it seemed to us surreal how rarely we used that tool."[544]

5.3 Testing Influence Strategy Theory

This section tests the predictions of Influence Strategy Theory (IST) laid out in Chapter 2 in the case of the U.S. effort to build the Iraqi Army. IST predicts that exclusive reliance on teaching and persuasion will be unlikely to move recipient leaders to follow U.S. guidance and take costly steps to improve their militaries. In contrast, IST expects that when the United States supplements teaching and persuasion with bargaining and/or direct command, recipient leaders are more likely to follow U.S. advice and take steps to improve their militaries. IST is thus a two-part causal chain linking the influence strategies U.S. advisors employ, to recipient receptivity to U.S. direction regarding military organizational practices, to the performance of the recipient military on the battlefield.

[544] Email correspondence with the author, Frank Sobchak, September 6, 2019.

SUMMARY - Influence Strategy Theory (IST)				
Advisor Influence Strategy	**→**	**Recipient Receptivity**	**→**	**Recipient Military Effectiveness**
Teaching and persuasion	→	Recipient defiance[545]	→	No or minimal improvement in military effectiveness
Teaching and persuasion + bargaining and/or direct command	→	Recipient compliance	→	Improved military effectiveness

The results of the U.S. advisory effort in Iraq align with the expectations of Influence Strategy Theory. The United States relied almost exclusively on teaching and persuasion to influence Iraqi political and military leaders to take steps to strengthen the Iraqi Army, Iraqi leaders largely ignored U.S. advice with respect to the development of the Iraqi Army, and the Iraqi Army failed to show any significant improvement, despite its growing numbers, budget, and equipment. Petraeus and Dubik secured more compliance when they escalated to bargaining (in keeping with IST), but their exercise of leverage was not consistent enough to bring about the significant and lasting changes to Iraqi military organizational practices necessary for improved Iraqi Army battlefield performance.

Within-case variation lends further support to IST. From May 2004 to early 2008, U.S. Special Forces (USSF) employed the full influence strategy toolkit to build the Iraqi Special

[545] Recall that the term "defiance" is an umbrella that includes the range of individual responses from open and confrontational refusals, to individuals who might nod their heads as if in agreement, but then quietly neglect to follow through.

Operations Forces (ISOF). Maliki took control of the ISOF in 2008, and USSF reverted to persuasion. As expected by IST, ISOF military organizational practices were more professional and the ISOF outperformed the rest of the Iraqi Army during the period of USSF control, and then deteriorated after Maliki took control and USSF reverted to persuasion. I elaborate both links in the causal chain below.

Receptivity of Iraqi Political Leaders to U.S. Advice

IST expects Iraqi political leaders to largely ignore efforts by most U.S. general officers in Iraq to teach and persuade them to take steps to improve the Iraqi Army. It expects Iraqi leaders to make some concessions to Petraeus and Dubik when they combined persuasion with bargaining, and then to return to defiance when Odierno and the other post-surge U.S. generals returned to reliance on teaching and persuasion. These expectations are borne out.

Iraq's heads of state over the course of the advisory period—Ayad Allawi, Ibrahim al-Jaafari and Nouri al-Maliki—were largely unresponsive to advice from the MNF-I and MNSTC-I general officers regarding the development of the Iraqi Army. These leaders were principally motivated to preserve and consolidate their fragile political power while maintaining their personal and regime security.[546] They dismissed Casey's arguments that a professional and representative Iraqi Army was in their interests, and continued to exclude Sunnis from the officer

[546] This assessment is uncontroversial. It is the consensus view among 14 Iraqi generals (retired) and three U.S.-based Iraqi academics interviewed for this project, as well as the preponderance of U.S. practitioners and academics focused on Iraq. This study makes no normative judgment regarding the motivations and behavior of Iraqi political leaders. Given the recent political history of Iraq, the circumstances of the U.S. invasion, and the chaos that followed, their motivations were unsurprising. As explained by Biddle, McDonald, and Baker in "Small Footprint, Small Payoff," "In a country whose political history was dominated by violent, winner-take-all struggles for control wherein second-place finishers often faced a noose, many Iraqi elites…saw the fluidity of the post-Saddam system as a struggle to dominate the instruments of state coercive power before their rivals could." This was the context within which U.S. military leaders tried to cajole, coax, and convince Iraqi leaders to implement policies to strengthen the new Iraqi Army.

corps and appoint loyal Shi'a to key commands irrespective of experience or competence.[547] Allawi and Maliki continued to ignore the chain of command and commanded units themselves, often directly via personal cell phone.[548] When Casey confronted Maliki and tried to persuade him to stop sending small groups of Iraqi Army soldiers on raids against his political opponents, Maliki simply waved Casey off and carried on. A succession of American generals encouraged Maliki to take steps to curb the corruption rotting the Iraqi Army, and yet Maliki continued to pay lip service to the corruption problem.[549]

It is worth emphasizing the lack of influence the United States achieved over Iraqi Army personnel policies in particular (in contrast with the total control the U.S. Eighth Army established in Korea). Maliki continuously chose key commanders on the basis of political loyalty over the objections of U.S. MNF-I and MNSTC-I commanders. For example, in December 2006, Maliki passed over three Iraqi generals Casey recommended for the position of Iraqi Ground Forces Commander, and instead named General Abud Qanbar, a loyalist with little relevant experience or demonstrated competence, to the position.[550] Maliki put Lieutenant

[547] Ja'afari and Maliki's efforts to exclude Sunnis from the officer corps and willingness to permit incompetent and corrupt Shi'a leaders to maintain commands so long as they were loyal was well-known by coalition leaders in real-time. See, for examples, Rayburn and Sobchak, *U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2,* p. 416; Joshua Partlow, "Maliki's Office is Seen Behind Purge in Forces, *The Washington Post*, April 30, 2007, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2007/04/29/AR2007042901728.html?referrer=email; Email correspondence with the author, General David Petraeus, 19 February 2020; Author interview with Lieutenant General (Ret.) James Dubik, telephone, August 2019; Author interview with Iraqi General (Retired) who served under Maliki, February 2020; Author interview with Iraqi General (Retired) who served under Maliki, February 2020; Author interview with Iraqi General (Retired) who retired prior to the U.S. invasion but remains in close contact with many of the Iraqi general officers who served under Maliki.

[548] Rayburn and Sobchak, *U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1*, p. 627, Rayburn and Sobchak, *U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2*, pp. 283, 358-363.

[549] Author interview with Lieutenant General (Ret.) James Dubik, telephone, August 2019; Author interview with Iraqi General (Retired) who served under Maliki, February 2020; Author interview with Iraqi General (Retired) who served under Maliki, February 2020; Author interview with Iraqi General (Retired) who retired prior to the U.S. invasion but remains in close contact with many of the Iraqi general officers who served under Maliki.

[550] Rayburn and Sobchak, *U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2*, p. 46.

General Mohan al-Freiji, whom MNSTC-I commander Dempsey called “a bad piece of work,” and who Odierno judged an officer with “extreme Shi’a views” incapable of leading fair and balanced operations, in command of the Basra Operations center.[551] This latter appointment would come back to haunt the coalition in the March 2008 Charge of the Knights (see below).

As expected by IST, Petraeus and Dubik had better success securing concessions from Iraqi political leaders when they combined persuasion with carrots and sticks. While he was CG MNSTC-I in 2004, Petraeus tried to convince interim Prime Minister Allawi not to modify the command structure to put the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Force (ICTF) under his direct command. When it became apparent that Allawi was unmoved by Petraeus’ argument, Petraeus threatened to withdraw American support for the ICTF. The threat worked. In Petraeus’ words, Allawi “was dissuaded by my pledge to cut off funding and resources if that took place.”[552] Several years later, as CG MNF-I during the surge, Petraeus set out to clean up Iraq’s Police Commando Forces, suggesting to Maliki the removal of “incompetent or intimidated or corrupt or unprofessional” division, brigade, and battalion commanders. When Maliki expressed little interest in cleaning up shop, Petraeus “refused resources (for the formal reconstitution of each brigade – which we took about a month to do, pulling the unit off line to do so – unless the commanders were replaced and removed from the service.”[553] After Petraeus’ threat, Bolani and other senior leaders within the Maliki government acceded to Petraeus and Dubik’s demands, purging many of the most egregious police and military commanders.[554]

In “Small Footprint Small Payoff,” Biddle et al. observe that Petraeus successfully leveraged the Iraqi Army’s complete dependence on the United States for logistical support to

---

[551] Ibid, p. 354.
[552] Email correspondence with the author, General David Petraeus, 19 February 2020.
[553] Ibid.
[554] Rayburn and Sobchak, *U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2*, pp. 283-285.

"coerce Maliki to make the personnel changes demanded."[555] Berman and Lake likewise emphasize how Petraeus' practice of restricting aid flows to Maliki to incentivize him to "remove his most sectarian military and police commanders" was effective in securing cooperation.[556] It is worth noting that both of these accounts focus exclusively on Petraeus' use of conditionality *during* the surge, while Petraeus himself reports exercising leverage not only during the surge but *also before* the surge, while he was CG MNSTC-I in 2004-2005. This is an important point because it suggests that there was something about *Petraeus*—and not something about the surge—that explains Petraeus' willingness to escalate to bargaining (I return to this point in Section 5.4 and 5.5).

As previously discussed, the commanding generals of MNF-I and MNSTC-I in the post-surge period (September 2008 – December 2011) reverted to the institutional mean and relied almost exclusively on persuasion to influence Maliki to take steps to strengthen the Iraqi Army. In keeping with IST, Maliki reverted to open defiance. Despite Odierno's and Austin's thrice-weekly meetings with Maliki, in which they sought to convince him that it was in his interest to implement more professional military organizational practices, in the 2008 – 2011 period Maliki increasingly implemented loyalty-based personnel practices, ignored the chain of command, freely misused units for extra-judicial operations, and encouraged rampant corruption.[557]

Receptivity of Iraqi Military Leaders to U.S. Advice

The picture was similar at the operational and tactical levels. MiTTs that relied on

[555] Biddle et al., "Small Footprint Small Payoff," p. 41.
[556] Berman and Lake, *Proxy Wars*, p. 239.
[557] For discussion of Maliki's authoritarian turn during the final years of the U.S. advisory period and the steps he took to undermine the ISF, see *U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2,* p. 551; Mariska Sullivan, "Maliki's Authoritarian Regime," Middle East Security Report No. 10, Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, April 2013, p. 16.

teaching and persuasion (the vast majority) generally failed to move their Iraqi counterparts to take significant steps to improve their units. Iraqi commanders remained uninterested in maintaining the balanced ethnosectarian unit composition favored by the coalition, instead permitting or actively encouraging soldiers to reshuffle units until they were homogenized.[558] Homogenized units continued to operate independently and were mostly unresponsive to the nominal chain of command. Commanders continued to be responsive to patronage networks within the military that had little to do with the structure on paper.[559] Commanders continued to use their commands as vehicles for personal enrichment, keeping AWOL soldiers on payroll in order to pocket their salaries, or siphoning contracts to family members.[560] Commanders remained apathetic to the training of their units, and expressed little interest in disciplining soldiers for failing to materialize for training.[561] These fundamental problems persisted for the duration of the advisory effort.

The expected correlation between teaching and persuasion and Iraqi defiance is imperfect. As in Vietnam, Iraqi military leaders occasionally complied with advisor attempts to persuade them. These instances "off the regression line" tended to fall into two main categories.

---

[558] Author interview with Lieutenant General (Ret.) James Dubik, telephone, August 2019; Author interview with Lieutenant General (Ret.) Michael Barbero, Zoom, April 2020. Author interview with a former embedded advisor, telephone, July 2019. The advisor reported that the Iraqi battalion in which he was embedded "apparently started out mixed, but by the time I got there was all Shi'a, maybe 90 percent." There is reason to believe that the coalition's emphasis on ethnosectarian quotas on Iraqi Army units was misguided, ultimately harming the development of the Iraqi Army more than it helped.

[559] Dozens of former embedded advisors interviewed for the Operational Leadership Experiences project described the units in which they were embedded as operating without regard for any centralized chain of command, pursuing their own agenda instead.

[560] The "ghost soldier" problem in the Iraqi Security Forces is well-known. As described by Rayburn and Sobchak, *U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2*, p. 114, "The well-known practice of padding unit rolls with 'ghost soldiers' allowed unit commanders to pocket the government salaries of troops who existed only on paper." Dozens of former embedded advisors interviewed for the Operational Leadership Experiences project discussed the corruption in their counterpart units.

[561] Dozens of former embedded advisors interviewed for the Operational Leadership Experiences project reported the seeming lack of interest in training of their counterpart commanders (and their soldiers).

First and most commonly, Iraqi leaders often made trivial concessions to U.S. advisor requests that cost them little yet scored them gratitude from the Americans. For instance, they might agree to spend some time teaching fire discipline to their troops, or, they might agree to refrain from corporal punishment as a disciplinary technique. Second, every once in a while, idiosyncratic Iraqi Army officers were solicitous of U.S. advice and open to implementing meaningful changes even at personal or professional cost.

Often, however, those who lauded the advisory effort as a success had quietly moved the goalposts. Rather than measure success by the effectiveness of the Iraqi Army units to which they were assigned (as the KMAG advisors had done), advisors came to measure their effectiveness in terms of the trivial concessions they managed to secure, and in terms of the rapport they were able to establish with their Iraqi counterparts. (See Section 5.4).

Iraqi Defiance → Iraqi Army Stagnation

Influence Strategy Theory (IST) expects U.S. influence strategies to shape recipient receptivity to U.S. advice, and that recipient receptivity in turn shapes recipient battlefield effectiveness. The second link in the chain adapts Talmadge's theory of political intervention and battlefield effectiveness, articulated in her MIT PhD thesis and book, *The Dictator's Army.* Both this study's IST and Talmadge's theory of battlefield effectiveness predict a positive relationship between Iraqi refusal to follow U.S. advice regarding military organizational practices, and poor Iraqi Army performance on the battlefield. Otherwise put, both theories expect to see little meaningful improvement in the Iraqi Army from the beginning of the U.S. advisory period to U.S. withdrawal in December 2011. Although U.S. officers occasionally deviated from the institutional norm and exercised U.S. leverage to incentivize compliance, these deviations were

too few and far between to translate to wholesale improvement in Iraqi military organizational practices (as in Korea) and therefore did not translate to improved performance of the Iraqi Army on the battlefield.

I assess the performance of the Iraqi Army in counterinsurgency operations in 2006, 2008, and 2010.[562] I adopt Talmadge's approach to measuring the battlefield effectiveness of the Iraqi Army, analyzing changes in the Iraqi Army's ability to maintain unit cohesion, execute basic tactics, and conduct complex operations. As expected by IST (and by Talmadge), the Iraqi Army failed to demonstrate basic competence on the battlefield for the duration of the U.S. advisory period.

THE TESTS OF 2006

In February 2006, al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) bombed the al-Askari Mosque in the city of Samarra. The bombing ignited a wave of Shi'a reprisals against Sunnis followed by Sunni reprisals against Shi'a. Tensions and violence had wracked Iraq since the spring fighting of 2004, but after the Samarra Mosque bombing the violence erupted into civil war. In April, then-Prime Minister Jaafari initiated Operation SCALES OF JUSTICE, a plan intended to reduce violence and establish security in and around Baghdad. The major provisions of the operation included a 9pm–6am curfew, checkpoints and patrols, restrictions on carrying weapons, and raids against suspected AQI locations.[563]

---

[562] I omit discussion of the collapse of the new Iraqi Army in the spring fighting of 2004 because the outcome was overdetermined. The United States had hardly begun to train and equip the new Iraqi Army, and its collapse is thus unsurprising. Persistently poor performances in 2006, 2008, and 2010, however, cannot be attributed to alternative explanations such as the size of the army or the amount of cash and equipment the U.S. had devoted to it.
[563] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1*, pp. 539-40.

After Operation SCALES OF JUSTICE failed to establish security in Baghdad, newly installed Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki initiated Operation TOGETHER FORWARD in June 2006. Coalition forces were to implement a "clear, hold, build" concept in Baghdad, with the Iraqis in the lead. Coalition forces partnered with Iraqi Army soldiers would "clear" Baghdad neighborhoods, Iraqi police were to "hold" the cleared areas, and the Iraqi ministries and local governments to "build," with coalition assistance. MNF-I's guidance for the operation emphasized transitioning authority to the Iraqis. Security measures also included an increased number of checkpoints and patrols, a citywide curfew, and targeted raids against terrorist networks.[564] When the security situation in Baghdad continued to decline through Operation TOGETHER FORWARD, the coalition launched the follow-on TOGETHER FORWARD II in August – October 2006.[565]

The Iraqi Army failed the tests of 2006. Only 2,000 of the promised 11,000 Iraqi Army troops materialized for Operation SCALES OF JUSTICE. An entire Kurdish Iraqi Army brigade refused to deploy to Baghdad in April 2006, illustrating that the Iraq Army was not a national army at all, but a hodgepodge of sectarian units with loyalties entirely outside the chain of command.[566] The units that did deploy to Baghdad were full of ghost soldiers and severely understrength. They were indiscriminate in their targeting of Sunnis, and in keeping with direction from Maliki, refused to target Shi'a factions contributing to the chaos. Even in legitimate operations, understrength and poorly trained Iraqi Army units demonstrated poor fire discipline and failed to maintain cohesion under fire. Even the most basic tasks exceeded their capabilities. MND-B Commander Major General James Thurman described the Iraqi Army

[564] Ibid., pp. 569-70.
[565] Ibid., pp. 584-87.
[566] Ibid, p. 542.

soldiers manning the checkpoints as "poorly equipped, undisciplined, [and] running around in their skivvies,"[567] while the Iraqi Minister of Defense admitted after inspecting the checkpoints that the enemy would have to be quite bad not to be able to bypass or get through the barriers.[568]

The picture was similar in Operation TOGETHER FORWARD and TOGETHER FORWARD II. Iraqi Army units were "loath to leave their home bases and battle space unsecure, Iraqi commanders opted to leave, on average, a quarter of their combat power behind when ordered to deploy their units elsewhere for a time."[569] This time, two Kurdish Iraqi Army brigades failed to materialize, while the units that did appear were similarly understrength, deserted under pressure, and lacked fire discipline. Homogenous Shi'a Iraqi Army units again targeted Sunnis indiscriminately and left legitimate Shi'a targets untouched. Units that attempted raids against suspected militia targets lacked basic tactical proficiency. Beyond basic tactics, the Iraqi Army of late 2006 "lacked tactical staying power or sufficient capability to surge forces locally."[570] In the words of then-MNSTC-I commander Martin Dempsey, the Iraqi Army had "nothing—I mean literally nothing—to support that" in the areas of communications, intelligence, logistics, and transportation.[571] Three years into the U.S. advisory effort, the Iraqi Army revealed itself in 2006 still wholly incapable of providing security in Iraq.

THE TESTS OF 2008 (THE BATTLE OF BASRA AND THE BATTLE OF SADR CITY)

The Iraqi Army did no better in the tests of 2008. In March 2008, Maliki launched Operation Charge of the Knights (Sawlat al-forsan) to drive the Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) out of

---

[567] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1*, p. 542.
[568] Ibid., p. 542, citing Frank Sobchak and Steven Gribschaw interview with Major General James D. Thurman, commander of MND-B, April 16, 2014.
[569] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2,* pp. 115-116.
[570] Ibid., p. 116, citing MNSTC-I, In-Stride Assessment, May 30, 2007, pp. 8, 44.
[571] Ibid.

Basra, a city in British-controlled MND-SE. Under pressure from Whitehall to avoid casualties, the British forces in Basra had refused to engage with the Shi'a insurgents on the grounds that denying JAM a British target would resolve the problem. In practice, the British watched passively as the Iranian-controlled Mahdi Army took control of the city. Frustrated with the British and sufficiently confident in his hold on power to take on Shi'a challengers, Maliki decided to take matters into his own hands. Against coalition admonitions for patience, Maliki launched Operation Charge of the Knights to retake Basra.

Charge of the Knights envisioned 10,000 Iraqi police and soldiers of the 14th Iraqi Army (IA) Division convoying into militia-controlled districts in Basra to cordon them off and search suspected JAM locations. Both the police and the 14th Iraqi Army Division were heavily infiltrated, giving the 600 or so JAM fighters plenty of lead time to prepare complex small arms and IED ambushes for the government convoys.[572] As soon as the 14th Iraqi Army Division columns encountered resistance, they halted their advance and their units fell into disarray and chaotic retreat. Approximately 1000 Iraqi soldiers deserted or refused to fight.[573] A wholly dysfunctional chain of command complicated adaptation under fire. At the Basra Operations Center, Lieutenant General Freiji (Dempsey's "bad piece of work") used several mobile phones and a map to issue orders, while Maliki flew down and issued orders over mobile phone from Basra Palace. As the operation fell apart, Maliki announced he was relieving Freiji of command. Freiji continued to issue orders, confusing matters still further. Via cell phone, Freiji and Maliki simultaneously directed uncoordinated attacks with little thought for logistics or troop strength.

---

[572] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2,* p. 360.
[573] Marisa Cochrane, "The Battle for Basra: March 2003-May 31, 2008," *Institute for the Study of War*, p. 9.

The Iraqi forces were also incapable of calling in air or artillery support.[574] When the British asked for precise targets, Freiji pointed at the entire map of the city.[575]

By the end of March 25th, 2008 (the first day of the operation), JAM had lost an estimated 40 fighters, and had killed 50 Iraqi soldiers, wounded another 120, and destroyed dozens of vehicles. JAM prevented the Iraqi Army from securing the city, and also seized some provincial government buildings.[576] As soon as it encountered resistance, the 14th Iraqi Army Division's 52nd Brigade had broken cohesion and began to desert. Nearly two-thirds of the Iraqi police either deserted or switched sides to join JAM.

Petraeus reported to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates "at this point, my assessment is that Prime Minister Maliki has bit off more than he can chew in Basra."[577] Deciding not to risk the political consequences of a high-profile defeat, the coalition decided to swing its weight from Baghdad to Basra to rescue Maliki's operation. MNC-I dispatched four AH-64 Apaches and two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters to provide attack and medevac support, flooded Basra with reinforcements, flew in elements of the Iraqi special operations forces (ISOF) Brigade with their Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) advisors, and provided critical logistical and air support.[578]

Arriving coalition reinforcements were impressed by the 14th Iraqi Army division's total lack of planning, lack of logistical capabilities, and disregard for civilian life. A CJSOTF advisor to the ISOF brigade observed:

> There is no logistical resupply or support plan. The majority, if not all Iraqi forces are critically short of food, fuel, water, and ammunition. In several cases, units have none of

[574] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2,* p. 360.
[575] Tim Ripley, *Operation Telic: The British Campaign in Iraq 2003-2009*. Lancaster, UK: Telic-Herrick Publications, November 2014.
[576] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2,* p. 360.
[577] Ibid.
[578] Ibid., pp. 361, 363-64.

> the previous supply items mentioned. The reported average ammunition stores in the IA [Iraqi Army] are 4 magazines per man, but it is likely less than that. All of the commanders appear to understand that they are being led to disaster.[579]

Iraq Army units relied on local markets and private gas stations. When these closed down in the fighting, the Iraqis turned to the coalition. Iraqi forces requested U.S. and British air support to stem the rout of their forces, but as before, the Iraqis' lack of situational awareness and disregard for civilian casualties led the coalition to refrain from conducting the strikes.[580]

On April 2, Iraqi troops managed to clear militia roadblocks and seize key intersections while coalition air support destroyed militia fighters defending in the open. Charge of the Knights eventually succeeded in spite of the Iraqi Army's performance, not because of it.

***

Just as Maliki was launching Charge of the Knights in Basra, JAM launched assaults against 11th Army Division checkpoints around Sadr City, marking the beginning of the Battle of Sadr City. The Iraqi Army's 44th Brigade, then responsible for checkpoints within Sadr City, as well as the National Police brigade, which maintained the checkpoints on its outskirts, evaporated. Most Iraqi forces abandoned these checkpoints without a fight, either from fear of or sympathy with JAM. In the Iraqi Army's neighboring 4th Brigade, 10th Mountain Division (4-10 BCT) sector, "all hell broke loose."[581] Meeting little resistance, the Sadrists proceeded to launch a barrage of indirect fire into the Green Zone.

In response, Maliki directed the Iraqi Army and coalition forces on March 25 to stop the rocket attacks and defeat the militias of Sadr City. American Colonel John Hort, commander of

---

579 Ibid., p. 362, citing Sitrep, MNF-I Liaison Cell to MNF-I and CJSOTF, 1450 hours [2:50 pm], March 28, 2008.

580 Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War, Volume 2*, p. 362.

581 David E. Johnson, M. Wade Markel, Brian Shannon, *The 2008 Battle of Sadr City: Reimagining Urban Combat*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), p. 41, quoting Lieutenant Colonel Robert S. Ballagh III, interview with M. Wade Markel, the Pentagon, February 8, 2011.

the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division took the lead, planning an American-led operation with a significant role for the Iraqi Army in what coalition commanders hoped would be a validation of its capability after four years of training and assistance. Iraqi Army units accompanied American units in the fighting, while the 3rd Battalion, 42nd Iraqi Army Brigade maneuvered south to secure the heavily defended Al-Quds Street (Route Gold). Control of Route Gold would permit the coalition to control infiltration and deny JAM launch sites.[582]

Overall, the performance of the participating Iraqi Army units was quite poor. Many Iraqi soldiers deserted the battle before it started. In an army rife with insurgent infiltration, unit commanders feared that the IEDs they encountered along Route Gold had been laid by their own troops.[583] Iraqi unit planning for the mission had been haphazard and incomplete. The Iraqis lacked critical enablers, including fires, reconnaissance, and logistics. Crucially, they lacked route clearance packages, and engineer elements specializing in clearing IEDs. At the most basic level, the Iraqis lacked discipline. Many exposed themselves to unnecessary risks by standing up to light a cigarette or take a look around without their helmet and body armor, resulting in avoidable casualties. The general incompetence of the Iraqi battalion allowed JAM elements to maneuver freely and attack them at will.[584]

The Iraqi Army battalion did, however, maintain cohesion under constant fire. The Iraqi Brigade commander took initiative and exerted all his powers of influence to keep his soldiers from deserting. At the platoon level, some Iraqi soldiers did well. Major Brian North, the advisor to the 42nd Brigade, remembers one particularly effective Iraqi platoon leader seizing the

---

[582] Ibid., pp. xvi; Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War, Volume 2*, p. 376.
[583] Johnson et. al, *The 2008 Battle of Sadr City*, p. 44.
[584] Ibid., p. 68.

principal terrain feature on Route Gold.[585] In the end and with considerable American support, the Iraqi battalion did accomplish its mission.

What is perhaps most instructive about the Battle for Basra and the Battle for Sadr City is that these operations are generally considered the high-water mark for the Iraqi Army. Although the coalition advisors understood their Iraqi counterparts as wholly incompetent and reliant on the U.S. at every step in both operations, they considered these Iraqi performances above average, heavily emphasized occasional demonstrations of competence, and generally presented the results in an optimistic tenor. For instance, General Hammond would say of the Iraqi Army's performance in Sadr City, "what was more important was that they believed they had won, and could win again."[586] Charge of the Knights was heralded as a turning point for Maliki, who had demonstrated a new determination to take on the Shi'a militias challenging the state.

THE TESTS OF 2010

From mid-2008 through the withdrawal, true tests of the Iraqi Army were few and far between. Conditions across the country had gone relatively quiet. Although some laud the Iraqi Army 10th Division in the Maysan Province for passing the test of election security in March 2010, the role of the Iraqi Army in securing the election was limited to simple vehicle searches, first aid, and crowd control. The 10th Division was not seriously tested in the election. Good thing, too. Major Robert Heffington, an intelligence advisor on a MiTT to the 10th Iraqi Army Division from September 2009 until August 2010, was asked by his Operational Leadership

[585] Ibid., p. 66.
[586] Ibid., p. 68.

Experiences interviewer "What was the level of proficiency of this division you were advising?" His response is informative:

> An interesting question. By Iraqi standards they were probably average. By our standards they were more or less incapable of performing their mission. Much of our job was just trying to help them understand what their problem set was and then develop some very basic tactics, techniques, and procedures to try and address their problem set. When we left about 11 months I felt like we made some progress but not as much as I wanted to say. There were no real standard operating procedures (SOPs). Everyone was just kind of doing their own thing. There wasn't a lot of integration on the division staff. I didn't feel like the Iraqi division commander was on the home team, for lack of a better term. I think he was very much for himself and I know that's not unique to him; it's part of the culture. I got that. If there's one thing I understand it's their culture; it's what I studied. When you have a commander who's really out for personal gain and you have a staff that is each trying to protect itself and there isn't a lot of integration and then the Americans are there—it gets to be like herding cats to try and get everybody to go in the same direction it was really an exercise in frustration.[587]

By 2010, American forces were under orders to remain on the sidelines in order to encourage Iraqi Army units to take the lead in preparation for the withdrawal of the remaining American troops. In September 2010, local residents of an agricultural area about 50 miles from Baghdad notified Iraqi Army soldiers that a group of AQI fighters had gathered in the palm groves to build bombs.[588] Approximately 200 Iraqi Army soldiers of the 5th Iraqi Army division launched an assault against a group of AQI insurgents likely as small as a squad. When the soldiers failed to destroy the targets, at least seven different Iraqi Army units responded to the scene. A number of senior Iraqi officials, including the commander of Iraqi Ground Forces Command General Ali Ghaidan, arrived and watched the Iraqi Army units mount a series of unsuccessful assaults.[589]

---

[587] Interview, Jenna Fike, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Robert Heffington, 9 May 2011.
[588] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War, Volume 2,* p. 525.
[589] Ibid., 525-26.

U.S. soldiers from the local AAB (2d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division) responded to the scene with rotary wing reconnaissance, close-air support, and indirect fire. U.S. F-16s dropped two 500-pound bombs on the AQI position—the first such airstrike since June 2009.[590] Iraqi troops then maneuvered into the palm grove to find the AQI fighters gone. The Iraqi troops had failed to establish a cordon around the area, allowing the AQI fighters to escape. The debacle illustrated that even under the most favorable conditions, the Iraqi Army remained incapable of the simplest independent action. As put by the *U.S. Army in the Iraq War*, "The Battle of Palm Grove left U.S. commanders with the unsettling sense that years of training and billions of dollars of expenditure might have accomplished little."[591]

Iraqi Special Operations Forces

Within-case variation in the United States' approach to building security forces in Iraq lends further support to Influence Strategy Theory. In May 2004, U.S. Special Forces (USSF) created the Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF) from the merger of two USSF-trained Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) battalions.[592] USSF aimed to build a brigade capable of independently planning and conducting high-intensity counterterrorism missions such as hostage rescues, raids, and ambushes.

Unlike MNSTC-I in its approach to the development of the Iraqi Army, USSF employed the full influence strategy toolkit to build the ISOF. Between May 2004 and early 2008, USSF exercised complete control of the ISOF. Although the United States formally placed all Iraqi Security Forces under the control of the Government of Iraq in September 2006, in practice

[590] Ibid., p. 526.
[591] Ibid., p. 527.
[592] David Witty, "The Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service," *Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings*, 2016, p. 7.

USSF maintained total control of ISOF until early 2008. USSF officers commanded the ISOF brigades directly in training and in operations until June 2006, and then transferred leadership to hand-selected Iraqi officers. After transferring command authority to Iraqi leadership, USSF maintained veto power over ISOF personnel from entry level to leadership and used it to maintain a balanced ethnosectarian composition and to ensure competence in key posts. USSF modeled ISOF training directly on USSF training, held ISOF officers to the USSF standard, even when it meant attrition rates of up to 50 percent. USSF-designed ISOF training emphasized high-intensity counterterrorism tactics, while also heavily socializing the ISOF to engender nationalist (as opposed to sectarian) identity.[593]

USSF employed every tool in the influence strategy toolkit to build a competent and professional ISOF. In practice, between May 2004 and early 2008, USSF completely controlled the ISOF, and kept it outside the influence of Iraqi political leadership. Indeed, the degree of USSF control sparked concern within the U.S. military regarding the normative implications of "a deadly, elite, covert unit, fully fitted with American equipment, that would operate for years under U.S. command and be unaccountable to Iraqi ministries and the normal political process."[594] On the other hand, proponents of the USSF-controlled ISOF considered its independence from and insulation against Iraq's Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior the critical ingredient for ISOF's success. The reasoning of the proponents aligns precisely with IST.

In keeping with IST's central predictions, ISOF consistently and significantly outperformed the Iraqi Army during the period of USSF control. ISOF participated in counterterrorism operations almost every night, and played important roles in every key

---

[593] Ibid, pp. 5-12, 30-33.
[594] Shane Bauer, "Iraq's New Death Squad: America has built an elite and lethal counterterrorism force. But who's calling the shots?" *The Nation*, June 3, 2009.

operation in 2007 and 2008. In stark contrast with the collapse of the 14th Iraqi Army Division in the Charge of the Knights, the ISOF elements flown in to reinforce the Iraqi Army to retake Basra "fought fundamentally better than other ISF units and gained the reputation as the best Iraqi force." ISOF never quite achieved the level of competence USSF set out to build. ISOF missions rarely exceeded 24 hours, remained at the company level and below, and continued to lean on USSF for critical enablers. ISOF's unit cohesion and tactical proficiency, however, were far superior to that of the Iraqi Army.[595]

Maliki took a series of steps to secure control over the Iraqi Security Forces' most effective unit. In late 2006 and through the spring of 2007, Maliki issued a series of executive orders that placed ISOF under a new Counter Terrorism Center controlled by him directly.[596] Despite these steps on paper, Maliki did not directly undermine USSF efforts to build the ISOF in practice until 2008.[597] Over the course of 2008, and accelerating through 2009, 2010, and 2011, Maliki sidelined USSF and took ownership of ISOF. He removed USSF-approved leaders from top leadership positions and, ignoring USSF objections, replaced them with loyalists.[598] Shi'a officers with ties to Maliki but little or no special operations experience began to replace experienced ISOF officers. USSF advisors observed the "punitive reassignments of officers [and] ethnically oriented organizational changes," and concluded that Maliki was cementing personal control of the brigade with these actions.[599]

In keeping with IST expectations, when USSF lost control of the ISOF and began to rely on persuasion to influence ISOF military organizational practices, Iraqi political and military

[595] Witty, "The Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service," pp. 12-21.
[596] Ibid., p. 10.
[597] Ibid., p. 9.
[598] Ibid., pp. 22-28; Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2*, pp. 415-417.
[599] Robert Tollast, "Maliki's Private Army," *The National Interest*, December 31, 2013.

leadership ignored them. When USSF expressed their concerns to Maliki and the new ISOF leadership about the deterioration in training standards and the turn to loyalty-based and ethnosectarian personnel practices, Maliki brushed them off. From 2008 onward, ISOF began to conduct operations targeting Maliki's political opponents. Iraqis increasingly saw the ISOF as Maliki's political tool, earning the nicknames "the dirty brigade," and "Fedayeen Maliki." USSF protestations against the transformation and misuse of the brigade they had built fell upon deaf ears.[600]

In keeping with the expectations of IST (and Talmadge's theory of political intervention and military effectiveness), ISOF's military effectiveness suffered as Maliki ignored U.S. advice and implemented problematic military organizational practices. The deterioration of ISOF military effectiveness after USSF lost control of the organization helps to illustrate the role of U.S. influence over partner military units compared to alternative explanations of security assistance outcomes, such as the amount or quality of assistance and equipment provided. From 2004 to 2008, ISOF's superior military effectiveness was overdetermined. USSF exercised every influence tool in the toolkit to shape ISOF military organizational practices, but it also spent more on each individual soldier and provided the highest-end equipment. ISOF's deterioration from 2008 despite the persistence of the investment helps to isolate U.S. influence strategies and recipient military organizational practices as the determinative variables. The rise and fall of the Iraqi ISOF during the U.S. advisory period thus lends further support to Influence Strategy Theory. Also in keeping with IST's expectations, though beyond the scope of this study, the

[600] Witty, "The Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service," pp. 18-19; Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2*, pp. 415-417.

ISOF demonstrated significant improvement between the fall of Mosul in June 2014, and the 2016-2017 battle to retake Mosul, after the USSF returned to direct control.[601]

***

To summarize, the results of the U.S. advisory effort in Iraq align with the expectations of Influence Strategy Theory. The U.S. military relied almost exclusively on teaching and persuasion to influence Iraqi political and military leaders to implement U.S. advice regarding the development of the Iraqi Army. As expected by IST, Iraqi leaders largely ignored them, continuing to implement loyalty-based personnel practices, permit and even encourage corruption, and disregard the chain of command. As expected by IST and Talmadge's theory of political intervention, the Iraqi Army never demonstrated significant improvement on the battlefield. The improvement and then deterioration of the ISOF with the USSF's transition from direct command to indirect, persuasion-based influence lends further support to IST and helps to weaken alternative explanations.

5.4 Testing The Cult of the Persuasive

Why did U.S. military personnel rely on teaching and persuasion in Iraq despite precedents in Korea and Vietnam that should have encouraged them to climb the full escalation ladder? Why did the U.S. military continue to eschew escalation to bargaining, despite the clear and consistent refusal of Iraqi leaders to follow U.S. advice and take steps necessary to put the Iraqi Army on a better track? Why, when several key MNF-I officers and USSF broke the

[601] Michael Knights and Alex Mello, "The Best Thing We Built in Iraq: Iraq's Counter-Terrorism Service and the Long War Against Militancy," *War on the Rocks*, July 19, 2017, https://warontherocks.com/2017/07/the-best-thing-america-built-in-iraq-iraqs-counter-terrorism-service-and-the-long-war-against-militancy/.

institutional norm and achieved better results through the full toolkit, did the larger institution still neglect to adjust its approach to the problem?

The prevailing explanation of U.S. influence failure and security assistance failure more broadly holds that interest divergence is often too high and U.S. bargaining power too low for U.S. advisors to effectively incentivize recipient leaders to follow U.S. direction. This approach conceptualizes security assistance as a Principal Agent (PA) problem between the U.S. principal and its recipient agent. It treats the U.S. principal as a rational unitary actor constrained by structural factors. In contrast, the Cult of the Persuasive highlights *a second PA problem*—between the U.S. civilian principal in Washington, and its military agent out in the field attempting to build the partner military. Washington's military agent is not, in actuality, diligently pursuing its principal's goal of building a better partner military. Rather, the U.S. military optimizes its approach to security assistance to its own institutional objectives: minimizing disruption from within, from the partner, and from its principal in Washington. Exclusive reliance on teaching and persuasion does not advance the goal of building a better partner military, but the approach serves the U.S. military's institutional interests quite well. In contrast, an influence escalation strategy leveraging every tool in the toolkit would more likely secure recipient compliance and improve the recipient military, but coercion risks disruption from within, from the partner, and from the principal.

This study theorized and then illustrated how the U.S. military's institutional interests led to the development of a doctrine and then an ideology of persuasion—the cult of the persuasive—in Vietnam. The cult of the persuasive ideology consists of two ordering beliefs: the normative belief that persuasion is the *appropriate* strategy of influence to use to shape the behavior of U.S. partners, and the efficacy belief that the U.S. lacks bargaining power to

effectively exercise leverage. Advisors were effectively indoctrinated and incentivized to conform to the prescribed approach. Decisions by occasional individual advisors to deviate from the doctrine and escalate to bargaining had little to do with national-level fluctuations in visibility or bargaining power, and much to do with individual-level variables such as personality, intelligence, and personal experience. The U.S. military did not adjust its approach to security assistance in response to the successful innovation by these individuals, because effectiveness was not, in fact, what the military was after.

This study expects the cult of the persuasive to persist through to Iraq. Scholars of military innovation generally begin from the premise that organizations, including (perhaps especially) military organizations, do not like change. Militaries institutionalize preferred ways of doing business through a variety of mechanisms such as written doctrine, training, and practice, and by promoting officers who conform and proceed to replicate the cycle in the next generation. The expectation is thus that the U.S. military should continue to default to its preferred approach to advising until a serious threat of intrusion and disruption forces the military to consider change. Civilian interest in the U.S. military between Vietnam and Iraq never focused on security assistance. Thus, the U.S. military never had any institutional incentive to think hard about its approach to the problem. Despite the complete rebuilding of the U.S. Army that took place after Vietnam and the absence of any significant, Army-led security assistance missions in the intervening thirty years, the doctrine of advising developed in Vietnam survived intact. In 2004, General Casey picked it up off the shelf and set out to build the Iraqi Army.[602]

[602] Author interview with General (Retired) George Casey, April 2020.

In this section, I test the relative explanatory power of the Cult of the Persuasive against the rational actor model. I apply the standardized question set outlined in Chapter 2 that I applied in the Korea chapter (3) and the Vietnam chapter (4) to the Iraqi case. I proceed systematically through each of the indicator questions in the table below. The questions generate conflicting sets of observable implications, permitting me to test the relative explanatory power of two competing explanations for U.S. influence strategy selection in Iraq.

Indicator Question	Rational Actor Model Expectation	Cult of the Persuasive Expectation
1. *Do the senior officers in Iraq optimize the advisory effort to goals set in Washington?*	Yes.	No.
2. *How do the commanding officers in Iraq instruct the advisors under their command?*	To do what is necessary to accomplish the mission.	To do what is necessary to generate an appearance of progress while maintaining comity with the counterpart.
3. *How do the advisors in Iraq evaluate the progress of the advisory mission?*	Rigorously, objectively.	In a manner designed to create an appearance of progress.
4. *Does MNF-I/MNSTC-I innovate in response to evidence of influence strategy (in)effectiveness?*	Yes.	No.
5. *How do the advisors explain their influence strategy selection?*	In strategic terms.	In normative and/or careerist terms.

The findings across each indicator question strengthen the Cult of the Persuasive and weaken the rational actor framework for U.S. strategy selection in security assistance.

1. The Military Optimized the Advisory Effort to Minimize Disruption

From the insurgency of Spring 2004 to the civil war that began in 2006 (the Casey period), Washington's primary objective in Iraq was to develop local security forces capable of

securing the country so that the United States could exit with a reasonable claim to success. As put by President George W. Bush, "Our strategy can be summed up in this way: As the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down." In defense of his administration's decision at the time not to send more troops, Bush noted "Sending more Americans would undermine our strategy of encouraging Iraqis to take the lead in this fight."[603] In Baghdad, MNF-I commander General George Casey repeatedly stated that developing competent Iraqi Security Forces was his priority in Iraq. With the 2007 surge, Washington redirected the U.S. military to focus primarily on the provision of population security, and secondarily on the development of the ISF. Washington's priority returned to the advisory effort from June 2008 through to the final withdrawal of December 2011. The shift was most clearly evident in the withdrawal of the Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) and their replacement with Advise and Assist Brigades (AABs).

The rational actor model would expect the U.S. military to align its efforts in Iraq with the direction of its principals. Apart from the surge period, the U.S. military should have focused the weight of its effort on improving the military effectiveness of the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police. The Cult of the Persuasive, however, expects the military's efforts in Iraq to be untethered from Washington's priorities. It expects the military to focus on the development of sustainable standard operating procedures (SOPs), stability with the partner, and happy talk for the principal, regardless of the degree to which the advising SOPs actually advance the mission set in Washington.

The findings align with the Cult of the Persuasive. The U.S. military in Iraq did not optimize its efforts to the development of stronger Iraqi Security Forces, despite plenty of rhetorical protestations to the contrary. Instead, the military optimized its efforts to the

[603] George W. Bush, Full Text of President George Bush's speech at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, as provided by the White House, *The Guardian*, 28 June 2005, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/jun/29/iraq.usa.

development of sustainable internal SOPs. The crux of the U.S. military's effort for the advisory program went to the bureaucratic hardware of finding the bodies for the job, giving them counter-IED training to reduce casualties (and, cynically, to reduce the attention from Washington that casualties bring), and cycling them in and out of theater.[604] The Army did nothing to change the professional incentive structures that lead competent officers to avoid the advisory mission, and underperformers to settle for it. Rather than incentivize the best and brightest to embark on the mission, the assignment was instead excluded from the Army's 2005 list of "key developmental or branch qualifying" jobs officers required for promotion."[605] Personnel selected for the role had no special background in advising, usually had no prior deployment experience, and were more often than not underperforming junior officers in units whose commanders were happy to be rid of them.[606] In reference to their motley nature, MiTT members took to calling themselves "Mutts."[607]

The short duration of MiTT tours is a telling indication of the military's deviation from commitment to the stated mission. MiTT tours clocked in at approximately 12 months—usually only nine in theater actually conducting advisory work. The theory of influence embraced by the U.S. military in Iraq hinged on personal diplomacy. Not only did the military disregard the suitability of the personnel selected for a personal diplomacy-based mission, but they also did not put them in theater long enough to build the relationships upon which their influence was believed to hinge. The design of the MiTTs was a logistical feat of sustainable bureaucratic hardware, but for a theory of influence predicated on personal diplomacy, the software effectively ensured mission failure. As put by the U.*S. History of the Army in Iraq*, "In many

[604] Author interview with Major General (Retired) Paul Eaton, telephone, August 2019.
[605] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1*, p. 470.
[606] Ibid.
[607] Ibid.

ways, the transition teams had been tasked to rebuild the very sinews of the Iraqi military… Yet it was on the shoulders of these transition teams, ad hoc organizations comprised of a mismatched group of personnel with only eight days of adviser-specific training, that the MNF-I campaign plan rested."[608]

The design of the embedded advisor teams does not suggest a military placing a high premium on accomplishing its mission of building a stronger Iraqi Army. In short, and in keeping with the expectations of the Cult of the Persuasive, the U.S. military focused in Iraq not on building a better Iraqi Army, but on sustaining the bureaucratic machinery of the advisory effort.

2. Instruction to the Advisors

The rational actor model expects MNF-I and MNSTC-I commanders to inform their advisors that their job in Iraq is to improve the military effectiveness of the Iraqi Army units they advised, to provide the advisors with direction intended to help them accomplish that objective, and to incentivize them to accomplish their mission by rewarding advisors whose units demonstrated real improvement. In contrast, the Cult of the Persuasive has no expectation that commanders direct and incentivize advisors to improve their partner units. Rather, it expects commanders to direct their advisors in a way intended to minimize the advisors' potential to inject uncertainty into the advisory effort. In their direction to the advisors, commanders should aim to minimize the risks advisors pose of generating internal disruptions, of sparking disruption from the partner, or of drawing attention from Washington. In pursuit of this risk minimization objective, commanders should instruct their advisors to establish and maintain rapport with their

[608] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1*, p. 475.

Iraqi counterparts. Evidence from Iraq strongly supports the expectations of the Cult of the Persuasive and contradicts the expectations of the rational actor model.

The commanders did not provide clear instruction regarding the goals for the advisory effort generally and the role of the advisors in particular. Most advisors simply had no idea what they were supposed to be doing with their Iraqi units. In the words of one former embedded advisor:

> At that point we still had not received anything from IAG or anybody that said, 'This is really what you're doing.' I think that was probably, for me, the biggest frustration. 'What did we do for a year? Did we really get to where we wanted to go because we didn't have that objective end state?' We had our own -- in absence of guidance we said, 'This is where we want them to go.' We didn't get it. Honestly, we didn't get it. At six months we moved and we went from 490 down to 125 and had all new people. There were only one or two officers who were there when we got there and still there at the end of our tour. That was frustrating. We passed on what we thought out actual mission would be; where they needed to go, where they were at, and all the training.[609]

The advisors were not, in short, instructed that their objective was to strengthen their partner unit.

In contrast, instruction to the advisors overwhelmingly promoted the ideology of persuasion, almost as an end in itself rather than a tool to accomplish influence. The military promoted the ideology through doctrine, training, and recommended readings. These mechanisms all stressed the importance of developing and maintaining relationships, trust, and rapport, influencing through positive example, and explaining the logic behind U.S. guidance. These sources also cautioned advisors against the use of conditionality.

---

[609] Interview, Jessica Trussoni, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Richard Sweet, 13 February 2009.

DOCTRINE

As previously noted in this study, U.S. security assistance doctrine—FM-3-07.1, FM 3120, FM 3-24, and FM 3-22—released before and during the U.S. advisory effort in Iraq all emphasized *persuasion*. Doctrine heavily emphasized the importance of building relationships, rapport, and trust through proximity (living, eating, training, and fighting with the partner), demonstrations of cultural understanding, and people skills. For instance, FM 3-07, released in 2003, emphasized the importance of "mutual understanding" and "cultural awareness,"[610] and cautioned that "ethnocentrism and cultural arrogance can damage relationships with other forces."[611] Similarly, FM 31.20-3 (also released in 2003), emphasizes subtle persuasive techniques, and then explicitly discourages advisors from using "bribery or coercion, since results achieved from these actions are only temporary."[612] The emphasis in the doctrine on bargaining as a method of influence that secures *temporary* compliance by overcoming interest divergence, is intended to contrast with the persuasion method of influence, intended to secure more durable compliance by reshaping partner preferences. The problem, however, is that persuasion—much too ambitious a project—secures no compliance, temporary or otherwise.

Updated field manuals released over the course of the advisory period in Iraq only increased the emphasis on persuasion. General Dempsey's forward to the updated Stability Operations field manual, FM 3-07.1, released in May 2009, emphasized the centrality of personal relationships in advisory missions.[613] FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency, the U.S. Army manual introduced in late 2006 before the U.S. surge in Iraq, similarly, emphasizes the importance of

---

[610] Department of the Army, *FM 3-07: Stability Operations and Support Operations* (Washington DC: US GPO, 2003), 3-1.
[611] Ibid, 1-69.
[612] Department of the Army, *FM 31-20-3: Foreign Internal Defense Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Special Forces* (Washington, DC: GPO 1994), I-3, cited in Biddle et. al, "Small Footprint, Small Payoff," 116.
[613] Department of the Army, *FM 3-07.1, Security Force Assistance* (Washington, DC: GPO 2009), 2-8.

building relationships and rapport, earning host-nation military leaders' respect through demonstrations of knowledge and professionalism, and the tactic of convincing local counterparts that the suggested approach to a particular military practice is the more effective approach. FM 3-24 encourages advisors to be "subtle" and "diplomatic when correcting host-nation forces," and advises against coercive tactics.[614]

Released in January 2013, the Army support to Security Cooperation FM 3-22 counsels personnel developing partner militaries to "accomplish their mission by building relationships and rapport with [local forces], motivating and influencing them to accomplish tasks," because it is through "their interpersonal skills" and "rapport" that they will positively affect the actions and decisions of their counterparts and work toward shared goals. In a subsection entitled "RAPPORT," it continues: "The measure of effective rapport is whether Soldiers can inspire foreign counterparts to take the desired action and guide them to succeed."[615] In service of rapport-building, FM 3-22 further instructs advisors to study human nature, to study the particularities of the host-nation culture, to "smile often," to "remember and use people's names, encourage others to talk about themselves, listen to others, discuss what the other person is interested in, and make the other person feel important." The manual cautions: "It is important to remember that genuine rapport is developed slowly, but it can be ruined in an instant."[616]

In keeping with the prediction of the cult of the persuasive, U.S. military doctrine acknowledges the importance of influence in SFA, consistently encourages persuasion, and discourages bargaining.

---

[614] Department of the Army, *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: US GPO, 2006), 6, 40.
[615] Department of the Army, *FM 3-22: Army Support to Security Cooperation* (Washington, DC: US GPO, 2013), 6-2.
[616] Ibid, 6-3.

It is safer to interpret the doctrine described above more as an encapsulation of the cult of the persuasive ideology by the more senior servicemembers tasked with developing the doctrine, than as a mechanism of ideology promotion in the Iraqi case. That is because former embedded advisors reported that they did not read doctrine to guide their efforts as advisors. As one former Military Transition Team chief noted, "I didn't look at doctrine for this job, I don't know anyone who did."[617] Indeed, none of the former embedded advisors interviewed for the Operational Leadership Experiences project, and none of the former embedded advisors interviewed by the author referenced doctrine as a guide for their deployment.

Embedded advisors were indoctrinated in the cult of the persuasive through other means. The principal mechanisms of ideology promotion for the U.S. personnel who served as embedded advisors in the Iraqi military were pre-deployment training and assigned reading materials. Additionally, General George Casey deliberately designed the structure of the embedded advisor teams to ensure their receptivity and adherence to the preferred ideology.

ADVISOR TRAINING

Embedded advisors were instructed in the cult of the persuasive in their pre-deployment training. Although training for the embedded advisors was initially brief and haphazard, it increased in duration and intensity over the course of the advisory period. Even the initial predeployment training curriculum, which consisted of little more than a few quick briefings by senior leaders and lessons by a mysterious "expert in Arab culture" brought to Iraq by CMATT commander Brigadier General James Schwitters referred to only as "Dr. Chin,"[618] contained a

---

[617] Author interview with a former embedded advisor, telephone, June 2019.
[618] The mysterious "Dr. Chin" was referenced as an expert in Arab culture (or the equivalent in different language) by six former embedded advisors interviewed for the Operational Leadership Experiences project: Majors Kelly, Curwen, Tennyson, Jones, Shipman, Doherty.

clear and consistent message regarding the persuasion approach to influence. As more rigorous training programs developed, all focused on inculcating in the advisors the importance of cultural sensitivity and relationship-building as the foundations for effective influence. Advisors were discouraged in their training from using carrots and sticks to shape Iraqi behavior.

The senior leaders responsible for the direction of the advisors directed them in the normative and causal superiority of persuasion. Brigadier General James Schwitters, the second commanding general of the Coalition SFA Training Team (CMATT), expressed a clear conviction that the most important element of the advisory effort would be to cultivate the persuasive skills of the advisors in order to influence Iraqi decision-makers. In an interview for the Operational Leadership Experiences project at the Combat Studies Institute, Schwitters explained that:

> the core aspect of what [the advisors] had to do was something we don't usually do as soldiers – that is, to develop human relationships with individuals and small groups…We needed people who were temperamentally and experientially trained to go in, put their arms around a bunch of folks and develop relationships from which they could then influence action and behavior and develop capabilities.[619]

Citing advisors' lack of preparedness for this relationship-centric role, Schwitters explained that he developed a makeshift pre-deployment curriculum for incoming advisors at the Taji base in Iraq led by Dr. Chin, who emphasized "Iraqi-specific cultural understanding"[620] as a prerequisite for the relationship-building that was believed to be prerequisite—and sufficient—for effective influence.

Major General Richard Sherlock, the deputy commander of the Coalition Military

---

[619] Interview, Steven Clay, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Brigadier General James Schwitters, 13 December 2006.
[620] Ibid.

Assistance Training Team under Schwitters and the man responsible for managing the process of "turning soldiers from the 98th reserve division into military advisors," stated that "in the Iraqi culture, everything is done on a personal relationship basis."[621] In an interview with the author, Sherlock recounted that he personally briefed every incoming advisor team, explaining to them that their mission was "not to coerce and force Iraqis" to make certain decisions, but rather to build the "foundations of trust" necessary to persuade Iraqi officers to follow U.S. guidance.[622]

Pre-deployment training for the advisors evolved relatively quickly from the makeshift briefings at Taji in 2004 to an iterative effort emphasizing the centrality of relationships to influencing Iraqi decision-making. In 2005, retired Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl, known for his counterinsurgency book *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife,*[225] was tasked with the development of a pre-deployment training for the advisor teams in the United States at Camp Atterbury in Indiana. In an interview with the author, Nagl explained that his training curriculum focused principally on the establishment of relationships with Iraqi counterparts as the key to effective advisory. The training even simulated dinner encounters with counterpart Iraqi commanders, complete with interpreters and Iraqi food, to troubleshoot the MiTT members' approach to building rapport.[623] Once they arrived in Iraq, advisors received further training at Camp Taji and at the Phoenix Academy, where they were taught that sensitivity to cultural differences and avoidance of cultural arrogance were keys to the relationships upon which their influence—and through their influence their effectiveness—would hinge.[624]

---

[621] Interview, Steven Clay, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Brigadier General Richard Sherlock, 16 November 2006.
[622] Author interview with Major General (Ret.) Richard Sherlock, Arlington, VA, August 2019. [225] John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
[623] Author interview with Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) John Nagl, telephone, August 2019.
[624] Author interview with Major General (Ret.) Richard Sherlock, Arlington, VA, August 2019; Author interview with Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) John Nagl, telephone, August 2019.

CG MNSTC-I 2008-2009 Lieutenant General Frank Helmick recounted setting up a weeklong training course for incoming advisor teams focused heavily on the importance of relationship-building and demonstration of what right looks like. When I asked him what he suggested to the advisors that they do if Iraqis continued to ignore their advice despite their best efforts to persuade them otherwise, he said “that didn’t come up.”[625] Helmick did not offer instruction to the advisors regarding what they should do if their Iraqi counterparts continue to ignore their advice. This omission contrasts sharply with the instruction to the KMAG advisors in Korea, who were told to escalate from persuasion to bargaining as needed to secure compliance.

As explained by Colonel Lawrence Kelly, who was responsible for the officer and noncommissioned officer education system for the advisory mission:

> everybody went through several iterations of cross-cultural communications. They got that in Indiana, in Kuwait when they came in, and there were times once they got up to Baghdad that we had a specialist, Dr. Chin, who sat down and talked to them about the importance of establishing relationships, how to go about that and how to be prepared for different types of customs and everything else…So our soldiers in these areas had all gone through this intense training as a way to ensure that their introductions went well, that they could be sincere, and that they could have a better understanding of where their counterparts were coming from.[626]

Unlike the doctrine (which no one seems to have read), the message promoted in the pre-deployment training curriculum—that relationship-building was the key to effective influence—was received loud and clear by the embedded advisors. An exchange between interviewer Operational Leadership Experiences (OLE) interviewer Jenna Fike (JF) and former embedded advisor (2007-2008) Major Matthew Cox (MC) illustrates the point:

---

[625] Author interview with Lieutenant General (Retired) Frank Helmick, May 2020.
[626] Interview, Steven Clay, with Colonel Lawrence J. Kelly, Operational Leadership Experiences, 15 December 2006.

> MC: We'd go over and do physical training (PT) with them, have breakfast with them, lunch, go back after dinner and play cards with them at night just trying to build that relationship and it was great. It was a little weird when you had guys running up to hold you by the hand to walk you into places and stuff; the personal space thing I'm sure you've heard before but it was great.
> JF: Had you been trained in the importance of establishing that personal relationship at Fort Riley?
> MC: They stressed it and it's extremely important. They keep bringing it up.[627]

Similarly, former embedded advisor (2010-2011) Major Dion Freemon recounted in his oral history for the Operational Leadership Experiences project: "Well from the train-up and in some of the training we got, especially the culture and language training was that we would go over and build relationships, rapport and really get an understanding of our counterparts from my area, Signal, of where they were and where they wanted to go and some of the issues and challenges that they were dealing with; to the best of our ability, to assist them in working with them and reaching their goals."[628]

ASSIGNED READING – SEVEN PILLARS OF WISDOM

In addition to doctrine and training, assigned reading proved a powerful mechanism of indoctrination for the embedded advisors. The assigned reading that most effectively communicated the ideology of persuasion to the advisors was T.E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.[629] Dozens of embedded advisors (and several general officers, including CG MNF-I George Casey[630] and CG CMATT James Schwitters[631]) emphasized that their role model for

[627] Interview, Jenna Fike, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Matthew Cox, 31 July 2012.
[628] Interview, Jenna Fike, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Dion Freeman, 18 October 2011.
[629] T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (Subscriber's edition, 1926). One former embedded advisor, Major Christopher Lawson, explained in his OLE interview that *Seven Pillars* had been assigned reading. See Interview, John McCool, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Christopher Lawson, 31 October 2006.
[630] Casey, *Strategic Reflections*, 51.
[631] Interview, Steven Clay, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Brigadier General James Schwitters, 13 December 2006.

influencing Iraqi thinking and behavior was T.E. Lawrence, otherwise known as Lawrence of Arabia. Former embedded advisor Major Ryan Ledlinsky, for instance, said that all embedded advisors should read "*Seven Pillars of Wisdom*; it's gospel. T.E. Lawrence was a smart dude."[632] Elements of Lawrence of Arabia's approach embraced by the embedded advisors included Lawrence's appreciation of Arab culture as the foundation for the establishment of relationships, trust, and influence. Advisors also emphasized Lawrence's discouragement of an incentives-based approach. For instance, one advisor explained that "We didn't want to be the cash cow for this brigade and we learned enough from T.E. Lawrence about not being that cash cow."[633]

In short, as predicted by the cult of the persuasive theory, the ideology of persuasion and discouragement of bargaining was effectively promoted through training and assigned readings. It was captured (though apparently less effectively transmitted) in doctrine. Advisors were not taught to experiment in order to determine which strategy of influence might work best—they were taught to rely on persuasion.

Evidence suggesting that embedded advisors were told that their job was to improve their partner units, and that they should draw on whatever levers of influence they could to incentivize their counterparts to follow their advice (as the KMAG advisors had been in Korea), would have strengthened the rational actor model and weakened the cult of the persuasive theory. No such evidence was uncovered in Iraq.

Instead, advisors were taught *not* to exercise carrots and sticks to incentivize Iraqi compliance. In keeping with the cult of the persuasive, the servicemembers responsible for influencing Iraqi military organizational practices were taught that their mission was to develop

[632] Interview, Jenna Fike, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Ryan Yedlinsky, 21 March 2011.
[633] Interview, Laurence Lessard, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Jon-Paul Maddaloni, 24 January 2008.

relationships with their Iraqi counterparts, and that these relationships would serve as their primary—indeed their only—tool of influence. In the event that persuasion failed to achieve the desired change in Iraqi behavior, they were not taught to adjust their influence strategy, they were taught to accept Iraqi sovereignty to make their own choices with respect to the development of their own military. Congruent with the expectations of the cult of the persuasive, the U.S. military indoctrinated the embedded advisors tasked with shaping the behavior of Iraqi decision-makers to default to persuasion and to eschew bargaining.

3. False Metrics

The rational actor model would expect the U.S. military to rigorously and objectively evaluate its approach to building the Iraqi Army. The Cult of the Persuasive, conversely, expects the military to develop metrics for evaluation that help it to present an appearance of progress to its civilian principal, regardless of the reality. The evidence strongly supports the cult of the persuasive. In Iraq, the U.S. military developed an evaluation system optimized to justify the continuation of existing SOPs and to present an appearance of progress to its civilian principal in Washington. The U.S. military masked its failure to convince Iraqi leaders to professionalize their military organizational practices by "putting lipstick on a pig."[634]

The primary system developed by the U.S. military to trace the progress of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) units was the Transition Readiness Assessments (TRAs). In spring 2005, at the direction of and in consultation with MNF-I headquarters (General Casey), MNSTC-I developed the TRA rubric for evaluating ISF units. TRAs were completed by the chiefs of the embedded

[634] This was the phrase used by a senior officer of MNSTC-I to describe his own approach to presenting the appearance of progress over the duration of the advisory period. Author interview with senior officer, who wished to remain nameless, Zoom, 2020.

advisor teams at the end of their deployments. TRAs consisted of 15 questions divided into six major groupings: personnel, command and control, training, sustainment/logistics, equipment, and leadership. The questions focused on quantitative input metrics. For example, MiTTs indicated whether Iraqi units had the equipment and personnel it was authorized. There was little room for assessment of the professionalism of Iraqi military organizational practices. There was no room to note, for instance, whether the Iraqi unit was proficient in *using* the equipment it had on hand, whether it sold the equipment on the black market, or shot at other units of the Iraqi Army. No question in the assessment permitted ratings on sectarianism, corruption, willingness to fight, or unit cohesion.

On each question, the advisor rated the Iraqi unit on a four-tiered color scale: green, amber, red, or black. Aggregating the 15 scores, the TRAs assigned Iraqi units an

> overall rating from 1 (fully capable of planning, executing, and sustaining independent counterinsurgency operations) to 4 (describing a unit that was still being formed and incapable of conducting counterinsurgency operations)…Coalition advisers could include a subjective narrative assessment to accompany the numeric TRA score, but this narrative did not contribute to the overall calculation of TRA ratings or override the TRA rating that produced through aggregation of the quantitative scores. [635]

The TRAs were widely recognized as bogus by all who wrote them and all who received them. At the mention of TRAs in interviews, interviewees would often interject before I could even finish the sentence to tell me that the TRAs were "trash,"[636] "total bogus,"[637] and "way worse than SIGACT data,"[638] As one former advisor explained:

> The measures of effects [effectiveness] were coming down from Coalition, from the force up in Baghdad, were things that were irrelevant...like. 'Is the Iraqi Security Forces fully manned?' I'm like, Yes, it's fully manned, it's fully manned with militiamen.' The historical record will be quite entertaining on this...because you're going to find a bunch

[635] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1*, p. 390.
[636] Author interview with Lieutenant General (Ret.) James Dubik, telephone, August 2019.
[637] Author interview with a former embedded advisor, telephone, 6 June 2019.
[638] Author interview with a former embedded advisor, telephone, 10 June 2019.

> of categories that are color-coded for good to go. Yet, the text boxes that go with them is going to say something horrific like, Iraqi Security Forces in MND-Southeast are completely dominated by Shi'a militias. They sponsor attacks on the local population and against the occupation. They are sponsored by Iran. We have no control over them. Assessment, green.' I was allowed to write what I wanted to in the box as long as the thing was green, because by their criteria it was green.[639]

Nevertheless, TRA ratings served as an important element in coalition decisions to off-ramp coalition brigades, close coalition bases, and transition responsibility for battlespace to Iraqi units. In General Casey's words, TRA's were important because they were used to "make judgments about when we might transition areas to the Iraqi Army and, ultimately, provinces back to the Iraqis."[640] Otherwise put, the TRAs helped the military to justify implementation of its SOPs and its plan for phased withdrawal, rather than to rigorously assess whether it was actually building a stronger military in Iraq.

In keeping with the expectation that the U.S. military in Iraq should seek to insulate itself from civilian intrusion, the Defense Department's reports to Congress on progress in Iraq were similarly deceptive. These reports, entitled "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," transferred the rosy scores emerging from the TRAs to present the appearance of progress to the U.S. Congress. The October 2005 9010 report, for instance, touts the progress of the Iraqi Army, citing the increase in the number of Iraqi units able (according to TRA scoring) to take the lead in combat operations against the insurgency, and to take responsibility for areas of operation (also according to TRA scoring), and the increased number of units and individuals trained and equipped. [641] Most of the units cited in this report as "able to take the lead" collapsed completely

---

[639] Interview, Lisa Beckenbaugh, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Stephen Campbell, 27 August 2013.
[640] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1*, 391.
[641] "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," Report to Congress, Washington, DC, Department of Defense, October 2005.

in the civil war that engulfed the nation just several months later.[642] As explained by an incensed Anthony Cordesman in a report for CSIS in August 2006:

> The first three reports to Congress on Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq failed to meet virtually every possible standard for credibility and integrity. They were a disgrace to the public service and to everyone who participated in drafting and approving them. Giving them a grade of "F-" was charitable…the ISF section makes all the usual claims about the readiness of the Iraqi Army, but provides no assessment of problems and risks. The major weaknesses and shortcomings in the Iraqi security forces, police forces, and paramilitary forces are totally ignored.[643]

The military's reports to Congress on the progress of the advisory effort did not reveal a military acting as a diligent agent of its principal, committed to the goal of building a stronger partner military and willing to modify its approach as needed. The reports to Congress instead reveal a military doing its best to insulate itself against civilian scrutiny and critique, in keeping with the expectations of the cult of the persuasive.

4. Failure to Adapt

The predictions of the cult of the persuasive and the rational actor model predict different responses to unambiguous information regarding the ineffectiveness of the persuasion approach. A rationally acting military aiming to accomplish its stated mission of building a better partner military suggests that clear and consistent information regarding the inefficacy of the persuasion approach, and the relative efficacy of deviations to coercion, should lead the military to innovate and return coercion to the toolkit. The cult of the persuasive, on the other hand, predicts no innovation in response to clear indications of persuasion's failure with respect to the development of the partner military, because the development of the partner military is not the

[642] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1,* 541-542.
[643] Anthony H. Cordesman, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq. The August 2006 Quarterly Report: Progress but Far from the Facts the Nation Needs and Deserves," Center for Strategic and International Studies, September 2006, 4-5.

U.S. military's primary objective—the military's primary objective is to keep its bureaucratic machinery running smoothly and to minimize external disruption. So long as persuasion continues to advance these bureaucratic objectives, the military has no incentive to and will not innovate.

Evidence from Iraq aligns with the expectations of the cult of the persuasive. In the effort to build the Iraqi Army, the information was plentiful and unambiguous. As discussed in the Influence Strategy Theory section of this chapter, U.S. servicemembers were exposed to repeated Iraqi defiance in the face of their persuasion efforts and observed compliance in the rare instances of bargaining. The United States military's reliance on teaching and persuasion failed to move Iraqi leaders to improve their military organizational practices, and the U.S. advisors, from bottom to top, knew it.

Moreover, the rare instances in which elements of the U.S. military combined persuasion with coercion were more successful, and could have led a rationally acting military to update its approach. General Odierno and General Austin could have observed Petraeus' and Dubik's effective manipulation of U.S. resources to secure compliance from Iraqi political leaders and employed the full toolkit themselves. The U.S. military understood that USSF direct control over the ISOF was a crucial reason for its relative success, and understood that the USSF's loss of direct control in 2008 precipitated ISOF's decline, and yet did not update its approach to the broader advisory effort. Rather, the U.S. military, despite these exceptions, and in keeping with the expectations of the cult of the persuasive, continued to rely exclusively on teaching and persuasion.

Also in keeping with the cult of the persuasive, civilian leadership in Iraq did not intervene to force a corrective with respect to the military's approach to the advisory effort.

Washington overwhelmed military opposition to push through the surge decision in late 2006,[644] and to push through the withdrawal decision in 2008. Although civilian leadership understood that the metrics produced by the U.S. military were untethered from the reality on the ground, as in Vietnam, the design and implementation of the advisory effort remained for the duration of the U.S. advisory effort the exclusive purview of the U.S. military.

5. Self-Reported Explanations of Strategy Selection

The rational actor model expects the advisors to explain their choice of influence strategies in strategic terms. They should describe choosing the strategies that "work," that are "necessary," that "get results." In contrast, the cult of the persuasive predicts that the U.S. general officers and embedded advisors responsible for security assistance in Iraq should discuss their own choices in language that conforms to the ideology they were taught. Language congruent with the cult of the persuasive could take several forms. It could evince a default preference for persuasion and a failure to even consider bargaining as an option. It could express the normative conviction that the U.S. *should* take a certain approach to influencing "sovereign" Iraqi "partners," and that exercising leverage over U.S. partners would be tantamount to disrespecting the partner's culture or infringing upon their sovereignty. Language could also reflect the advisors' tendency to resolve the cognitive dissonance of persisting with an ineffective strategy by shifting the goalposts. Although servicemembers may have reasons to misrepresent their strategy selection or may misunderstand their own choices, discourse analysis is an important and established method for recognizing ideological conformity.[645]

---

[644] Peter Feaver, "The Right to Be Right: Civil-Military Relations and the Surge Decision," *International Security* 35, 4 (Spring 2011), pp. 87-125.
[645] Teun A. Van Dijk, "Ideology and Discourse Analysis," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11, no 2 (June 2006), 115-140.

The language employed by the U.S. advisors to Iraqi political and military leaders, from coalition commanders down to battalion advisors, is consistent with the expectations of the cult of the persuasive.

Brigadier General James Schwitters, the commanding general of CMATT from June 2004 to June 2005 expressed his conviction that "The core aspect of what they had to do was…develop relationships from which they could influence action and behavior and develop capabilities."[646] In this quote, Schwitters explicitly describes the theory of victory for influence over Iraqi military organizational practices. U.S. servicemembers were to develop relationships with Iraqis, and through relationships influence the behaviors (military organizational practices) upon which battlefield effectiveness depends. Explaining that the role of the U.S. with respect to the development of the Iraqi military was to "advise and assist," Schwitters stated that "Our core mission was to teach, coach and mentor the individuals in leadership positions and try to help them mature their organizations."[647] The language Schwitters uses to describe his approach to influencing Iraqi decision-making does not suggest an officer carefully seeking to determine which tools of influence to use to most effectively shape Iraqi decision-making. He is expressing a static conclusion that persuasion is the preferred—or even the only—approach to influencing Iraqi behavior. Deputy commanding general Richard Sherlock likewise expressed a preference for persuasion without any discussion of an alternative, noting that in Iraq "everything is done on a personal relationship basis."[648]

[646] Interview, Steven Clay, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Brigadier General James Schwitters, 13 December 2006.
[647] Ibid.
[648] Interview, Steven Clay, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Brigadier General Richard Sherlock, 16 November 2006.

Commanding General MNSTC-I George Casey likewise explicitly explained his own preference for persuasion using language that directly contradicts the rational actor model and is congruent instead with the cult of the persuasive. In an interview with the author, Casey explained that "I was an advisor in a sovereign nation, my role was to advise my partner, and even when it was frustrating it was up to them to decide."[649] Casey explained in *Strategic Reflections* and in multiple interviews that though he often disagreed with Maliki's sectarian promotion patterns and disregard for the chain of command, he viewed Maliki as a partner, and one due his "respect and deference."[650]

When pressed by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to exert stronger pressure on Maliki, Casey refused, on the grounds that his role *ought* be to provide military advice and then permit Maliki to make his own decisions, rather than twist Maliki's arm to suit the U.S. interest. Casey repeatedly emphasized Iraqi sovereignty, and counseled the frustrated U.S. Secretary of Defense to "walk a mile in Maliki's shoes."[651] In explaining his approach to influencing Iraqi senior civilian leadership, Casey emphasized the importance of respecting Iraqi sovereignty, the need to avoid U.S. overreach, and the centrality of relationships and trust in influencing Iraqi behavior. The normative language emphasizing the appropriate approach to influencing a sovereign U.S. partner—rather than the most effective approach—is congruent with the expectations of the cult of the persuasive. MNF-I commander General Raymond Odierno used similar language to explain his reliance on persuasion to influence Maliki's personnel practices.

In contrast, General Petraeus' and General Dubik's explanations of their choices suggest that they had not imbibed the cult of the persuasive. In answer to the question "Why did you

[649] Author interview with General (Retired) George Casey, April 2020.
[650] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1*, p. 640.
[651] Ibid.

choose the strategies of influence you chose?", Petraeus responded: "Because it was clear that one would work better than the other. Tended to use a ladder of escalation: persuasion first, conditionality next (most often for personnel issues), threat to withdraw resources and support last…situations were different, to be sure, but those are the generalities."[652] General Dubik's language was similar. Dubik explained that "we tried one approach and if it didn't work and it was something important we tried another, escalating sometimes."[653] Petraeus' and Dubik's explanations of strategy selection are congruent with the rationalist expectation that the U.S. chose strategies of influence based on revealed information about the relative effectiveness of different approaches. When the gentler strategy of influence failed to accomplish the desired behavior change, Petraeus and Dubik turned to a more coercive approach to secure compliance.

Embedded advisors also used normative language in discussing their reliance on persuasion rather than bargaining to shape Iraqi military organizational practices. In keeping with their training, embedded advisors emphasized that the *appropriate* role of the advisor was to provide Iraqi military leaders with advice regarding professional personnel practices, rigorous training regimens, effective resource allocation, and effective command structures, and that it was up to the Iraqis to take or leave that advice. They expressed their conviction that personal relationships with Iraqi counterparts was a crucial determinant of whether Iraqi leaders would follow their guidance. They emphasized the importance of respecting Iraqi culture and Iraqi sovereignty, which they equated with the need to accept that Iraqis might not always—or indeed often—heed their advice. When discussing instances in which Iraqi leaders ignored their advice, advisers would often emphasize the importance of respecting Iraqi sovereignty. Their language did not suggest much attention to the option of using carrots and sticks to incentivize compliance.

[652] Email correspondence with the author, General David Petraeus, 19 February 2020.
[653] Author interview with Lieutenant General (Ret.) James Dubik, telephone, August 2019.

In fact, the few advisors who did acknowledge the bargaining option tended to refer to it pejoratively.

In the words of one former embedded advisor, “Iraq is a sovereign nation. We weren’t there to force them to do what we wanted, we’re not imperialists. They weren’t always going to do things our way and that’s okay. It’s up to them. We do our best to earn their trust so that when we explain why we’re saying what we’re saying they’ll listen, but it’s their decision.”[654] Another former embedded advisor recounted that “we were supposed to advise, coach, train, and assist” and to “implore them to do things we wanted them to do that they didn’t necessarily want to do,” and “we were supposed to respect the fact that they were a sovereign nation.”[655] Another advisor described his job as “We had to…determine where they wanted to be in the future and how we could help them get there.”[656] His language reveals his internalization of the ideology—he would not consider incentivizing his Iraqi counterparts to comply with U.S. preferences, he was there to help Iraqis to achieve *their* aims.

One former advisor, after equating his Iraqi battalion commander counterpart to a mob boss straight out of *The Godfather,* and recounting his efforts to build rapport and trust in order to try to persuade him to clean up his act, noted that “the person reading this may wonder why he was there, why did we allow him to be in charge? To be quite honest, we don’t have control over their army. Obviously the government of Iraq is sovereign and they control who’s in their army and who isn’t.”[657] Another embedded advisor explicitly acknowledged the option to use carrots to incentivize Iraqi compliance with U.S. guidance, explaining that the embedded advisor teams

[654] Author interview with a former embedded advisor, telephone, July 2019.
[655] Interview, John McCool, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Paul Esmahan, 2 November 2006.
[656] Interview, Laurence Lessard, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Jon-Paul Maddaloni, 24 January 2008.
[657] Interview, Major James R. Hill, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major David Voorhies, 26 November 2007.

had Transition Team Integration Funds (TTIF) that they could spend on their counterpart Iraqi brigade. He spoke pejoratively of the "cash cow" approach, however, noting that "we learned enough from T.E. Lawrence about not being that cash cow." He emphasized instead his efforts to build relationships with his Iraqi counterparts, and to convince them that the U.S. was there to help them help themselves.[658]

Many of the embedded advisors used language that reflected goal displacement. As one advisor explained, "For Iraqis, they were getting it. By a U.S. standard, I would say absolutely not. One of the things I had to learn, and it's kind of a – I'll quote T. Lawrence here, or paraphrase him at least, 'Something done by the Iraqis marginally is 100 times better than a U.S. soldier doing it perfectly.' You almost had to lower your standards and expectations so you didn't get frustrated."[659] Many of the embedded advisors expressed satisfaction in their deployment if they were able to establish positive relationships with their Iraqi counterparts. In so doing, they often conflated the *mechanism* through which they were instructed to influence Iraqis, with the *objective*. When relationships failed to accomplish the transformational change in their Iraqi counterparts that they hoped for, they still took satisfaction in—and counted as progress—the relationships themselves. For example, when asked "Overall, how do you feel your team did in theater," MiTT chief (2006 – 2007) Major Richard Sweet responded "I think we did very well…At the other end of it there was a lot of trust built."[660] The confusion as to

[658] Interview, Laurence Lessard, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Jon-Paul Maddaloni, 24 January 2008.
[659] Interview, Angie Slattery, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major John Atilano, 1 March 2012.
[660] Interview, Jessica Trussoni, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Richard Sweet, 13 February 2009.

whether relationships are the tool of influence or the goal itself is ubiquitous in U.S. security cooperation and security force assistance.[661]

In summary, from commanding generals down to the embedded advisors, the U.S. personnel tasked with building the Iraqi Army used language congruent with the cult of the persuasive, and incongruent with the expectations of the rational actor model.

***

This section tested the relative explanatory power of two competing logics of strategy selection—the rational actor model, and the Cult of the Persuasive—in the case of the U.S. effort to build the Iraqi Army (2003 – 2011). The evidence strengthens the Cult of the Persuasive and weakens the rational actor model. As expected by the Cult of the Persuasive, the U.S. military 1) pursued its bureaucratic interests above the goal set by its civilian principal, 2) instructed advisors to rely exclusively on persuasion no matter the results, 3) implemented an evaluation system optimized to presenting an appearance of progress, 4) did not innovate in response to clear information regarding the relative effectiveness of different influence strategies, and 5) used normative language and exhibited rationalization and goal displacement in explication of their approach.

---

[661] In my capacity as adjunct researcher for RAND Corporation, I participated in a study to evaluate the effectiveness of security cooperation in the Baltics in support of the mission to deter Russia. The Department of Defense did not ask RAND to evaluate Russian reactions to U.S. security cooperation efforts in the Baltics. Rather, one of the metrics the Department of Defense asked RAND to evaluate was the quality of U.S. relationships with Baltic leadership. The genesis of this dissertation, in fact, lies in the U.S. military's conflation of relationships the means with relationships the goal. On an MIT Security Studies Program visit to Pacific Command, I asked a Pacific Command representative how the Navy evaluated the effectiveness of its multi-national naval exercises. The representative responded that the measure of effectiveness is "whether we get invited back."

5.5 Alternative Explanations

This section examines several alternative explanations of U.S. influence strategy selection in Iraq. In particular, it focuses on the possibility that the U.S. military in Iraq 1) neglected to develop an optimal strategy for the advisory effort, but did so at the behest of a civilian executive focused on domestic politics; 2) lacked the visibility necessary to detect the ineffectiveness of persuasion and thus had no reason to change course; (3) had no choice but to rely on persuasion because interest divergence between the United States and Iraq was too high and U.S. bargaining power too limited for the U.S. military to incentivize compliance; and (4) implemented suboptimal influence strategies in advising in order to advance the United States' larger objectives in the broader Iraq War. Each of these four theories suggests, contrary to the Cult of the Persuasive, that the United States military was, in fact, operating as a faithful agent of its principal in Washington. Evidence from Iraq is incongruent with these alternative explanations.

Stakes of the Actual Progress in the Advisory Effort Compared to Domestic Politics

Perhaps the U.S. military persisted with a suboptimal approach to the advisory effort in *alignment* with the preferences of a civilian principal less focused on actually strengthening the Iraqi Army than on projecting an appearance of progress in Iraq to a domestic electorate. This theory contradicts the Cult of the Persuasive in the sense that it essentially erases the civil-military Principal Agent (PA) problem, suggesting that neither the agent *nor the principal* were particularly concerned about accomplishing the stated priority of building competent security forces in Iraq. On the other hand, the explanation does not contradict the Cult of the Persuasive's

central claims regarding the gap between the goal the military was nominally pursuing in Iraq, and the goals it actually pursued.

Of the alternative explanations for U.S. military strategy selection in Iraq, this argument is the strongest. Indeed, the Bush Administration's and then the Obama Administration's approach to the war in Iraq were heavily shaped by domestic political concerns.[662] Both administrations had strong political incentives to present an appearance of progress to the nation. The military may have fed Washington happy talk, but there was also a hunger for happy talk in Washington. Indeed, the primary (perhaps the only) goal of the Obama administration in Iraq was to leave. There was little interest within the administration in interrogating the viability of the Iraqi Security Forces, because the administration was committed to withdrawal regardless of what they found under the hood.

Before the surge, however, the Bush Administration considered the development of competent Iraqi Security Forces the central objective of the Iraq War, crucial both from a strategic perspective, and from a domestic political perspective. The Bush Administration wanted the advisory effort to succeed. Casey's persistent reliance on persuasion despite plenty of information that might have precipitated experimentation with bargaining, and MNF-I's overly optimistic assessments to the Bush White House even behind doors closed to the public, illustrates the gap between civilian principal and military agent during this period.

---

[662] See, for example, Andrew Payne, "Presidents, Politics, and Military Strategy: Electoral Constraints during the Iraq War," *International Security* 44, 3 (2020), pp. 163-203; Peter Feaver, "The Right to be Right: Civil-Military Relations and the Iraq Surge Decision," *International Security* 35, 4, pp. 87-125.

Monitoring Capacity

Monitoring capacity was simply not the limiting factor on U.S. influence in Iraq at any point in the advisory period. During General Casey's tenure in command of MNF-I, the embedded advisor teams and the senior coalition leadership including General Casey himself were acutely aware of highly problematic Iraqi military organizational practices. Sectarian personnel appointments, corruption, and command structure violations at the highest levels of Iraqi leadership were well known and oft-discussed by all of the commanding generals of MNF-I and MNSTC-I. Indeed, there was little effort at concealment. Maliki openly discussed his aversion to Sunni leadership in the officer corps with coalition commanders and the imperative that he directly command units of the ISF when it suited him—sectarianism and command structure violations were simply not secrets.[663]

At the tactical level, former embedded advisors, whether deployed in 2005, 2007, or 2010, spoke in gory detail of ghost soldiers, apathetic training regimens, and dysfunctional chains of command. In one particularly tragicomic example, former MiTT chief Major David Voorhies characterized his counterpart Iraqi battalion commander as follows:

> Colonel Sabah is a free spirit, I suppose. He's Shi'a and was in Saddam's army. He was known as more of an opportunist than anything else...You'd probably get a good idea of what it's like to work with him by watching The Sopranos or watching The Godfather trilogy. He tried to be his own entity, if you will; his own criminal organization. He's very persuasive and he leads through fear. He's very well tapped into the neighborhoods in which he operates. By that I mean we got reports of racketeering, reports of criminal activity, extortion, unsubstantiated cases where he may have had people who worked for him – officers and soldiers alike – killed because they disagreed with him. He was kind of an interesting cat to work with. The person reading this may wonder why he was there,

[663] Both General Casey and General Odierno discuss conversations with Maliki in which he openly explained his sectarian personnel decisions. See, for example, Interview, [Name Redacted], MNC-I historian, with Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno, U.S. Army Center of Military History, 6 June 2007, CENTCOM Iraq Documents.

> why did we allow him to be in charge? To be quite honest, we don't have control over their army. Obviously the government of Iraq is sovereign and they control who's in their army and who isn't.[664]

Another former MiTT chief discussed the corruption occurring right under the noses of the coalition:

> Corruption was a major problem in the new battalion. We had videotape of the battalion taking bulk food items meant for its soldiers and transporting them to Tuz for sale on the black market. I'm talking stuff like Pepsi, oranges, etc. The battalion's XO put the soldiers on an eating schedule, literally going to chow every other day at the cafeteria, so the battalion could pocket the savings. The battalion paid a contractor something like two dollars a day per soldier to feed the troops. When you work it all out, the battalion was pocketing close to $500 a day, which is not bad when the average family takes home a hundred a month. Also, the S1 had hundreds of ghost soldiers on the books. These were soldiers who went AWOL but were kept on the records, soldiers who were killed, and in a few instances the teenaged sons of some officers. One soldier had a brother who deserted to Syria but the battalion kept him on the rolls.[665]

Information from the field was not lost in the game of telephone up to higher headquarters. Senior MNF-I and MNSTC-I leadership were clued in on the problems at the division, brigade, and battalion levels. As summarized in a declassified "Intelligence Analysis Paper" dated December 2005 in which Commanding General MNF-I George Casey laments the deep penetration of the ISF by insurgents, Casey noted: "Our transition teams give us the best visibility into" the problems across the ISF.[666]

The U.S. increased its footprint in Iraq during the surge, which would logically have increased U.S. visibility into Iraqi military organizational practices even further than in the pre-surge and post-surge periods. However, U.S. monitoring capacity in Iraq was high from 2004 through 2010. And yet, incongruent with the expectations of the PA model, bargaining was the

[664] Interview, Major James R. Hill, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major David Voorhies, 26 November 2007.
[665] Interview, Laurence Lessard, with Major Mark Gilmore, Operational Leadership Experiences, 15 November 2007.
[666] Memorandum from George W. Casey, Jr. to Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Subject "Intelligence Analysis Paper (OSD 120505-09)," 12 December 2005, CENTCOM Iraq Documents.

exception rather than the rule over the duration of the advisory period. Petraeus and Dubik had plenty of visibility into Iraqi behavior during the surge, but so did Casey in 2005 and Austin in 2010. Embedded advisors were well aware of problematic military organizational practices over the duration of the advisor period. A lack of monitoring power cannot explain the U.S. reliance on persuasion in Iraq.

Bargaining Power

Perhaps the U.S. observed the ineffectiveness of persuasion, but continued to rely on persuasion because interest divergence between the United States and Iraqi leaders was too high, and U.S. bargaining power too low for the U.S. military to use carrots and sticks to incentivize Iraqi leaders to follow U.S. guidance.

For the bargaining power explanation to hold water, there should be congruence between increases in bargaining power and the exercise of bargaining, and reductions in bargaining power and the non-use of bargaining. However, embedded advisors maintained the persuasive approach over the entire duration of the advisory period, while deviations from the persuasive norm at the senior levels was attached to three individuals—Petraeus, Dubik, and Barbero—and not to any structural change in U.S. leverage over Iraq. In "Small Footprint Small Payoff," Biddle et. al argue that Petraeus was able to bargain effectively with Maliki because the increased U.S. footprint in Iraq during the surge gave the U.S. greater leverage over Maliki. However, while Petraeus was commanding MNSTC-I in 2004 before the surge, he bargained effectively with Interim Prime Minister Jaafari to incentivize him not to take control of the Iraqi Special Operations Forces. At that same time, Petraeus' then-boss, MNF-I commander Casey, eschewed bargaining and relied exclusively on persuasion. Petraeus' exercise of leverage had nothing to do

with national level fluctuations in U.S. bargaining power across different periods in the Iraq War. Petraeus' exercise of leverage had to do with Petraeus.

Moreover, it is difficult to argue that the United States—sitting astride Iraq an occupying power—lacked leverage over the nascent Iraqi civilian leadership in Iraq in 2004 and 2005. It is also difficult to argue that the U.S. lacked leverage over Maliki in the aftermath of the March 2010 election, which Maliki lost to the al-Iraqiya party.[667] Maliki certainly believed the coalition had leverage over him. Maliki was concerned that the U.S. might help Sunni elements to stage a coup against him.[668]

Advocates of the bargaining power approach argue that the U.S. often has a hard time making its threats credible. In the case of Iraq, the U.S. devoted considerable energy to assuring Maliki of the U.S. commitment. Otherwise put, the U.S. considered the threat of abandonment to be too credible, and devoted energy to undermining the credibility of that threat. Alternatively, the U.S. might have chosen to exploit Maliki's fear of abandonment to secure compliance. As summarized by Berman and Lake, "Replacement of the proxy was also possible. Due to the deep involvement of the United States in Iraqi politics, and its large role in handpicking al-Maliki as its proxy, Washington could in theory have replaced al-Maliki—if not at will, given its reliance on elections, then certainly with some relatively modest cost. This ability was affirmed in the 2010 election when the United States could have tipped the scales against al-Maliki and again when it helped push him out of office in 2014."[669] Whether the U.S. wanted to replace Maliki or

---

[667] Rayburn and Sobchak, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2,* p. 508*;* Author interview with Ben Connable, Arlington, VA, July 2019; Emma Sky, *The Unraveling*: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2015).
[668] Sky, *The Unraveling*, p. 237.
[669] Berman and Lake, *Proxy Wars,* p. 243.

not, the U.S. could have exploited Maliki's recognition of the U.S. ability to replace him at will to secure his cooperation in the professionalization of the military.

Moreover, the U.S. had plenty of carrots and sticks it could have wielded besides the extreme options of proxy replacement or complete abandonment. The alliance management literature often attributes a patron's failure to secure compliance from a client to the fact that nuclear options are difficult to make credible because the nuclear options would hurt the patron as well as the client.[670] Indeed, Casey expressed this concern himself in explaining his unwillingness to exercise leverage. But the United States did not need to rely on the nuclear option in Iraq (though in the Iraq case, as evidenced by Maliki's concern that the U.S. might stage a coup against him, even the nuclear option was credible), because the U.S. had a diverse array of carrots and sticks of varying kinds and scale that it could have used (and every once in a while did use) to secure Iraqi compliance.

The effectiveness of bargaining when the U.S. chose to bargain bolsters the argument that the United States did, in fact, have bargaining power. This becomes clear upon analysis of Petraeus', Dubik's, and Barbero's effective manipulation of smaller-scale sticks to secure improved military organizational practices. These generals effectively used the threat to sever funding or disband specific Iraqi units as a mechanism to secure compliance from their commanders. They also manipulated the ISF's complete dependence on the coalition for logistical support, maintenance support, water, food, and gasoline to secure compliance.[671] As Berman and Lake note, Petraeus' successful use of conditionality "suggests that a strategy of

---

[670] Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, pp. 165-200.
[671] Biddle et al., "Small Footprint Small Payoff," p. 41.

manipulating incentives might have worked in Iraq if it had been embraced earlier and much more extensively."[672]

Some argue that the U.S. lacked leverage over Iraqi leaders because of the fact that the United States might, at any moment, exit the country. This argument is backwards. The plausibility of U.S. departure, given the extent of Iraqi dependence, should have been a powerful asset at the bargaining table. Indeed, Petraeus, Dubik, and Barbero all effectively manipulated the political environment in Washington to their advantage, telling Iraqi leaders that the politicians in Washington were looking for any reason to stop funding Iraqi units or sever ties to Iraq altogether. Blatant sectarianism, they warned Iraqi leaders, would give the advocates of withdrawal the ammunition they needed to tip the U.S. to premature departure.[673] MNF-I commanders General Casey, General Odierno, and General Austin could have done likewise—they chose not to.

Although the embedded advisors had less leverage over their Iraqi counterparts than MNF-I and MNSTC-I commanders, they did have carrots and sticks they could have used to incentivize compliance. As previously mentioned, the advisors were given Transition Team Integration Funds that they could dole out or withhold at their discretion. They could also recommend incompetent, corrupt, or sectarian Iraqi leaders for removal up the coalition chain of command. They could help—or not help—Iraqi units to get around bureaucratic red tape slowing their receipt of equipment. The fact that most embedded advisors did not even consider exercising their leverage to shape Iraqi behavior suggests that it was not a lack of leverage, but thoroughly absorbed ideas about what their role *ought* to be, that shaped their approach. Indeed,

[672] Berman and Lake, *Proxy Wars*, p. 239.
[673] Author interview with Lieutenant General (Ret.) James Dubik, telephone, August 2019. Author interview with Lieutenant General (Ret.) Michael Barbero, Zoom, April 2020.

one of the embedded advisors who mentioned the Transition Team Integration Funds acknowledged his ability to condition carrots on compliance, but spoke pejoratively of the approach, and emphasized instead his efforts to build relationships with his Iraqi counterparts, and to convince them that the U.S. was there to help them help themselves.[674]

Moreover, the commanding generals could have developed an advisory structure in Iraq that empowered the advisors to use carrots and sticks to incentivize their counterparts to follow their advice, as the commanders in Korea did for the KMAG advisors. It is true that the embedded advisors could not easily navigate the American bureaucracy to incentivize compliance. This, however, was by MNF-I design. It could have been designed differently.

I do not argue that the United States could have gotten everything it wanted from Iraqi leaders had the U.S. generals and their advisors simply escalated to bargaining or direct command. I do argue, however, that they could have done significantly better. When it comes measuring both the cooperativeness of a client and the effectiveness of a military, degrees can matter quite a bit.

Persuasion Undermined the Advisory Mission but Served the Larger War Effort

Another possible explanation for the U.S. military's persistent reliance on persuasion in Iraq recognizes that persuasion undermined the advisory effort but suggests that persuasion was necessary for the larger war effort. The military was not ignoring goals set in Washington, it was prioritizing one goal above another. For this argument to hold up, two things must be true. First, Washington must have placed greater weight on alternative military objectives in Iraq than the

[674] Interview, Laurence Lessard, Operational Leadership Experiences, with Major Jon-Paul Maddaloni, 24 January 2008.

advisory effort. Second, reliance on persuasion must have credibly served the alternative objectives.

Neither is true in Iraq. Except for the 18-month surge period, Washington's highest priority in Iraq was the development of indigenous forces capable of providing security in Iraq (ironically, it was during the surge period when the advisory mission was decidedly second tier, that Petraeus and Dubik actually exercised U.S. leverage to secure compliance in the development of more effective security forces). Even if escalation to coercion might have undermined other elements of the war effort, the advisory effort should have come first, and strategic decision-making should have been optimized to advancing the effectiveness of the Iraqi military.

With respect to the second point, it is difficult to argue that reliance on persuasion was necessary in order to build the legitimacy of the Iraqi state, win the allegiance of the population, or suppress the insurgencies. General Casey's famous promoted "antibody" theory, which argued that the presence of American troops fueled the insurgency against the state. There is no reason that antibody theory should have led Casey to rely exclusively on teaching and persuasion and to eschew coercion, however. On the contrary, antibody theory demanded a light U.S. footprint, and an "Iraqi face" on the counterinsurgency. All the more reason to take the steps necessary to develop competent, professional Iraqi Security Forces. Moreover, the critical cause of antibodies was the highly visible U.S. troop presence, not the quiet exercise of leverage behind closed doors. It is unlikely that the Iraqi public would have had sufficient visibility into the inner workings of U.S. influence strategies to register a shift to an incentives-based approach.

5.5 Summary

This chapter sought to test the two theories presented in Chapter 2 in the case of the U.S. effort to build the Iraqi Army from 2003 to 2011. Chapter 2 presented Influence Strategy Theory, which linked the influence strategies employed by advisors in security force assistance to the effectiveness of the recipient militaries, and predicted that recipient leaders would largely ignore U.S. efforts to teach and persuade them to build better militaries, and would be more likely to comply with U.S. efforts when the United States escalates to bargaining or direct command. Chapter 2 also presented two competing models of influence strategy selection—the rational actor model, and the Cult of the Persuasive. Chapter 2 theorized that the cult of the persuasive took root in Vietnam, and, because institutionally advantageous ideologies are sticky, expects the influence strategy selection of the advisors in Iraq to align with the expectations of the Cult of the Persuasive.

This chapter proceeded in five main sections. The first section provided background information relevant to analysis of U.S. influence strategies in Iraq. The second section coded U.S. influence strategies in Iraq. The third section tested Influence Strategy Theory and the cult of the persuasive. The evidence of Iraqi political and military leaders' disregard for U.S. MNF-I and MNSTC-I advice delivered through persuasion, and the generally poor performance of the Iraqi Army for the duration of the advisory period is congruent with the central expectations of Influence Strategy Theory. The fourth section tested the relative explanatory power of the cult of the persuasive theory against the prevailing rational actor model. Testing the conflicting observable indications of five indicator questions, I found strong support for the Cult of the Persuasive. The fifth section explored alternative explanations.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The United States struggles to build stronger militaries in partner states. The central obstacle to effective security assistance is interest divergence between providers and recipients. Recipient leaders are often not deeply, exclusively, or in some cases even remotely interested in building militaries that can fight. Consequently, they may take U.S. assistance but ignore U.S. advice, implementing policies that keep their militaries weak. The success or failure of U.S. advisory efforts thus depends on whether the United States can influence recipient leaders to implement the policies necessary to build better militaries.

Existing scholarship recognizes the interest divergence challenge at the core of security assistance, and attributes the United States' inability to overcome it to prohibitively high interest divergence and insufficient bargaining power. This approach overlooks the agency of the United States to choose among more and less effective strategies of influence. It also overlooks the Principal-Agent problem between the U.S. civilian principal in Washington, and its military agent deployed to design and implement advisory projects.

This final chapter of the study proceeds in four parts. First, I summarize the central arguments and findings. Second, I explore the external validity of the arguments for cases not examined. Third, I address questions the study raises but leaves unanswered. Specifically, why did the Cult of the Persuasive take root precisely when and where it did—in Vietnam? Why not in Korea just a few years before? Why not after or somewhere else? I offer several hypotheses for testing in future research. Fourth and finally, I explore the central contributions of the project to academic scholarship and policy.

6.1 Summary of Arguments and Findings

This study did three things. First, it offered a novel conceptualization of U.S. influence strategies in security assistance. In its efforts to build better militaries since WWII, the U.S. military has historically employed an influence strategy "ladder" comprised of four rungs of escalating coerciveness: teaching, persuasion, bargaining, and direct command.

It also proposed and tested two theories. The first theory—Influence Strategy Theory—examined the *consequences* of U.S. security assistance influence strategies for the military effectiveness outcome. Influence Strategy Theory argued that teaching and persuasion on their own will not suffice—the United States is more likely to influence partners to build better militaries when it supplements teaching and persuasion with bargaining and/or direct command.

I found strong support for Influence Strategy Theory in three most-different cases of U.S. security assistance during war: the U.S. effort to build the Republic of Korea Army (1948 – 1953), the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (1954 – 1973), and the Iraqi Army (2003 – 2011). These cases crossed different generations, regions, and forms of conflict. Nevertheless, IST's central expectations are borne out in each case. In Korea, the U.S. military used every tool in the influence toolkit, escalating as necessary from teaching and persuasion to bargaining and direct command. In keeping with IST, Republic of Korea political and military leaders largely complied with U.S. guidance, and implemented military organizational practices that significantly improved the performance by the Republic of Korea Army in the fighting against the People's Volunteer Army in the latter half of 1952 through to the July 1953 Armistice.

In Vietnam and Iraq, in contrast, the U.S. military relied almost exclusively on teaching and persuasion, consistently eschewing the bargaining and direct command. In keeping with IST, Government of Vietnam and Iraqi political and military leaders generally ignored U.S. military

guidance with respect to the development of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam and the Iraqi Army, and implemented military organizational practices that kept their armies weak. Most units of the ARVN and the Iraqi Army failed to demonstrate unit cohesion or basic tactical proficiency, much less the ability to coordinate complex operations. In both cases, within-case exceptions to the rule—CORDS' exercise of leverage in Vietnam and U.S. Special Forces' use of every available tool to shape the Iraqi Special Operations Forces—lend further support to IST.

The study then moved back a link back in the causal chain to examine the *causes* of United States strategy selection. I presented two competing models of strategy selection—a rational actor model, and the Cult of the Persuasive. The rational actor model expects the U.S. military to, in short, actually try to build a stronger partner military. The U.S. military should diligently pursue the objectives set by its principal in Washington with respect to the development of the partner, instruct and incentivize the advisors to accomplish the goal of improving their counterpart units, rigorously evaluate and honestly report on the progress (or lack thereof) of the advisory effort, innovate in response to information suggesting suboptimal strategy, and explain strategy selection in strategic terms. Chapter 3 demonstrated that U.S. strategy selection in Korea aligned closely with the expectations of the rational actor model. This study argued that the rational actor model cannot, however, explain the United States' persistent reliance on persuasion in and ever since Vietnam.

The study argued that a cult of the persuasive took root in Vietnam and has guided U.S. strategy selection in security assistance ever since. Chapter 4 illustrated how the U.S. Army in Vietnam pursued its parochial interests, optimizing its approach to the advisory effort to its *institutional* goals of keeping the bureaucratic machinery of security assistance running smoothly and minimizing disruption from its local partner and civilian principal. It illustrated that teaching

and persuasion served the Army's institutional interests in Vietnam, while coercion threatened them. Inside Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), through a process of "ideational Darwinism," ideas that threatened the U.S. Army's institutional objectives—e.g. coercion of the partner—were stamped out, while ideas that advanced its institutional interests won the debate and became doctrine. MACV incentivized and indoctrinated its advisors in the normative and causal superiority of persuasion over coercion, adapting Cold War legitimation strategies to the advisory context. Instead of rigorously evaluating and honestly reporting the progress (or lack thereof) of the ARVN, MACV instead generated and presented metrics designed to create an appearance of progress, and glossed over evidence that the advisory effort was failing. A succession of GVN leaders ignored MACV advice, implementing policies that ensured the ARVN would remain weak. Rather than experiment with escalation to bargaining or direct command, MACV doubled down on persuasion. By the 1970s, the preference for persuasion had hardened into gospel. Ideology. Cult. A *cult of the persuasive* took had taken hold of the United States Army.

The cult of the persuasive persists today. Chapter 5 tests the relative explanatory power of the rational actor model against the Cult of the Persuasive in the contemporary case of U.S. security assistance to Iraq (2003 – 2011). Drawing on over 150 original interviews conducted over the course of fieldwork in Iraq, Jordan, and the United States, review of thousands of recently declassified archival documents, and review of hundreds of oral histories from former embedded advisors, I found strong support for the persistence of the Cult of the Persuasive in the U.S. advisory effort in Iraq. U.S. military advisors deployed for advisory missions remained committed to persuasion despite clear and repeated partner defiance not only because conformity serves their professional interests, but because they genuinely subscribe to the ideology so

thoroughly absorbed and propounded by their organization. In contemporary security assistance, the United States does not eschew bargaining because interest divergence is too high and bargaining power too low, the U.S. *military* eschews bargaining because it continues to embrace an institutionally advantageous ideology that prescribes persuasion and proscribes coercion.

6.2 External Validity

This study examined in depth three cases of U.S. efforts to build stronger militaries in partner states. I selected these cases in an effort to bolster claims of both internal and external validity. With respect to internal validity, examination of within-case variation permitted me to test the expectations and mechanisms of both theories while holding theater-specific variables constant. With respect to external validity, I chose three most-different cases—with reference to temporal variation, regional variation, and the nature of the threats the U.S. military built them to combat—to strengthen claims to external validity.

I expect Influence Strategy Theory to apply across all cases of security assistance in which 1) a strong patron helps a dependent client build a military to combat a pressing threat, and 2) there is significant interest divergence between the patron and the client with respect to the development of the military. The first condition is necessary for establishing the patron's bargaining power over the client. The patron has to have leverage in order to use it. I argue that this condition is met in almost every case of U.S. security assistance, and, beyond the United States, in every case of security assistance by a powerful state to a far weaker, more dependent state. The second condition excludes rare cases of near-perfect interest alignment. In such cases, teaching should suffice to move the recipient to take the steps necessary to improve its military.

If anything, Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq are biased in favor of structural arguments and against Influence Strategy Theory. The power differential between the United States and each of these three client states was so large, and client survival so wholly contingent on United States cooperation, that there would seem little room for U.S. strategies of influence to factor into client decision-making. Logically, in cases in which structural factors are less overriding (i.e. power differentials between provider and recipient are smaller and clients less dependent), influence strategies should matter *more.*

Turning now to the causes of strategy selection. I expect the rational actor model to sufficiently explain U.S. strategy selection in most cases of security assistance preceding Vietnam. I expect the Cult of the Persuasive to shape U.S. security assistance in most cases since Vietnam. In keeping with organizational theory, the Cult of the Persuasive expects the ideology of persuasion to stick within the U.S. military so long as persuasion continues to serve the U.S. military's interests. As long as Washington continues to provide the resources and permit the U.S. military to conduct security assistance without disruption or interference, its institutional interests will be met, and the cult of the persuasive should persist.

In security assistance, the stakes of failure are never high enough to precipitate civilian intrusion. Security assistance never comes close to threatening the survival of the United States. The United States' preponderance of power, favorable neighborhood and geography, and nuclear arsenal combine to produce a surplus of security that makes security assistance failure an inefficiency the United States can afford to absorb. Moreover, the progress of the U.S. military in its efforts to build partner militaries tends to rank lower in Washington's eyes than the military's suppression of insurgent violence in the same theater, or preparation to deny a Russian invasion of the Baltics. The highest stakes, most obviously catastrophic cases of security assistance

failure—the ARVN and the Iraqi Army—caused Washington some frustration but led only to the feeblest attempts at civilian intervention. When four American soldiers were killed in Niger in October 2017, alerting Congress to the ubiquity of U.S. security assistance projects around the world, Congress enacted legislation requiring the Department of Defense to develop a standardized, objective evaluation of DoD security cooperation projects around the world. The DoD slow-rolled the evaluation, used its own metrics of success to evaluate itself, and never actually presented the findings to Congress. Meanwhile, Congress lost interest. Security assistance is never the civil-military relations hill Washington wants to die on.

The persistence and prevalence of the Cult of the Persuasive is visible everywhere. The cult of the persuasive is evident in each new issue of security assistance doctrine, it shows in every advisor social media account featuring soccer games with partners, in every headline applauding military-military relationships, and in the design and curriculum of the new dedicated Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs). The Military Advisor Training Academy (MATA) curriculum provides advisors a recommend reading list with selections including Stuart Diamond's *Getting More: How to Be a More Persuasive Person in Work and Life*, Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, and T.E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.[675] The cult of the persuasive is everywhere you look.

I thus expect the Cult of the Persuasive to help explain the U.S. approach to all security cooperation and security assistance efforts, large and small, high-profile or low-profile, conventional or unconventional, all around the world. The Cult of the Persuasive is no longer the

---

[675] Military Advisor Training Academy, Combat Advisor Training Course Recommended Reading List, https://www.benning.army.mil/armor/316thcav/MATA/Content/pdf/CATC%20Recommended%20Reading%20List.pdf.

exclusive philosophy of the Army. It also permeates the Navy and the Air Force. I thus expect all services engaged in security assistance or security cooperation to subscribe to the ideology.

The main limitation to the external validity of the cult of the persuasive is the role of U.S. civilians. As long as the military is running the project unmolested by civilians, the cult of the persuasive should dictate the advisory project. I would not, however, expect the cult of the persuasive to apply in cases of security assistance directed or rigorously overseen by civilians. If the National Security Council plays a significant role in a particular security assistance project, for example, I expect a rational actor model to perform better than the cult of the persuasive. Although I anticipate there are few cases of security assistance in which civilians play the decisive role, future research is needed both to establish the scope of civilian-led security assistance, and to explore the dynamics that shape strategy selection in such cases.

For more than a decade, the U.S. military has also promoted its approach to advising among its security cooperation partners. In cooperating with the U.K., Germany, and Australia to provide security assistance to local forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States has endeavored to get all of the allies "on the same sheet of music." U.S. allies, seemingly in an effort to please the United States at low cost, have readily embraced the persuasion approach in their own advisory efforts. I thus expect the cult of the persuasive to go a long way to explaining not only how the United States approaches security assistance, but how the United States' security cooperation partners approach security assistance as well. I have no expectation that the cult of the persuasive will explain how U.S. competitors, such as Russia and China, conduct security assistance, however.

6.3 Remaining Questions and Future Research

This study raises an important question that it does not answer. Why did the cult of the persuasive take root in Vietnam? Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 tested the relative explanatory power of the rational actor model against the Cult of the Persuasive in Korea and Vietnam. In Korea, the military behaved as a loyal agent of the state, doing its best to build a better Republic of Korea Army (ROKA). In Vietnam, just a few years later, the U.S. military untethered from the state, pursued its parochial interests, and subscribed to an ideology of persuasion that militated against escalation to bargaining or direct command despite clear and consistent GVN defiance.

Below, I offer several hypotheses to explain why the cult of the persuasive took root when and where it did. These hypotheses pass a simple hoop test: the central variable in each hypothesis changed values within the relevant time period (over the course of the 1950s and 1960s) or across the two theaters. They are also logically plausible. Future research is needed, however, to move from correlation and logical plausibility to claims of causality.

The U.S. Army Comes Under Institutional Threat

Between Korea and Vietnam, the U.S. Army came under acute institutional threat. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's "New Look" (formalized in National Security Council document 162/2 in October 1953) envisioned a reduced role for the Army in U.S. national security strategy in the atomic age. In an era of nuclear weapons, land power was no longer seen as the be-all end-all of war. Accordingly, Eisenhower invested in the Air Force, but reduced the Army's size and budget.[676] On Capitol Hill, the Army's leadership was under attack by Senator

[676] Andrew Bacevich, *The Pentomic Era: The US Army Between Korea and Vietnam* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1986), pp. 15-16.

Joseph McCarthy.[677] The prestige of the Army had also fallen in American popular culture. Depictions of the Army, such as comic strip Beetle Bailey and the television show Sergeant Bilko, portrayed Army soldiers and officers as bumbling, lazy, self-interested, and irrelevant. As put by General William DePuy, the embattled post-Korea Army "was feeling sorry for itself."[678] General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, expressing the acute ennui of the 1950s Army, lamented in 1955 that "today it seems to me that the very survival of the Army…is at stake."[679]

The historian Andrew Bacevich describes a series of steps the U.S. Army of the 1950s took to try to restore its lead role in U.S. military strategy, increase its share of the defense budget, and boost its prestige in the eyes of the nation. In 1953 and 1954, the Army fought Eisenhower tooth and nail over nuclear strategy and the Army's role in national security strategy. The Army argued that Eisenhower's reliance on massive retaliation was immoral, as its logic relied on willingness to destroy cities and kill millions of civilians, and unwise, as the Soviet Union would soon develop a nuclear arsenal strong enough to cancel the American one, making nuclear weapons moot.[680] When the Army failed to move Eisenhower on the matter, it proceeded to slow-roll implementation of the New Look, and to publicly discredit the administration's policies.[681] Beginning in the mid-1950s, the Army changed tack, accepting that nuclear weapons would play a large role in U.S. military strategy, and advocating that the Army should plan to employ tactical nuclear weapons on future battlefields.[682]

---

[677] Thomas Ricks, *The Generals: American Military Command from World War II to Today* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), p. 206.
[678] Ibid.
[679] Bacevich, *The Pentomic Era*, p. 21.
[680] Ibid., p. 32.
[681] Ibid, pp. 39-42.
[682] Ibid., 54-56.

The Army also set out to rebrand itself in the eyes of the American people. It launched a public relations campaign intended to highlight the importance of the Army for national security and its role defending the United States from aggression and promoting American values overseas. "It is not enough to do a good job," Army Secretary Wilbur M. Brucker told students at the Command and General Staff College in 1956. "The American people must know their Army is doing it. The time has come when no Army officer can sit in the bleachers and act as a mere spectator. Public relations is not a job of the few but of the many."[683] Illustrative of the 1950s rebrand, soldiers shed their olive drab uniforms and donned the smart new "Army Green."[684] In 1955 the Army released a feature-length documentary entitled "This is Your Army" for showing in theaters across the country. The documentary portrayed the Army as progressive, technologically advanced organization with a vital worldwide mission.[685]

Bacevich and the journalist Tom Ricks (author of *The Generals*) have argued that the U.S. Army, in pursuit of its institutional goals of projecting an external appearance of importance and professionalism, transformed over the course of the 1950s into a "management organization." Under the direction of Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson, the former CEO of General Motors Corporation, the U.S. Army embraced the management practices of corporate America, institutionalizing standard operating procedures (SOPs) to govern every aspect of personnel behavior, and optimizing SOPs and personnel policies to the goal of minimizing institutional risk. The Army began to promote "organization men" who demonstrated skill managing the bureaucracy and making the Army look good. According to Ricks, the Army of the 1950s began to elevate officers who "were acting less like stewards of their profession,

[683] Ibid, p. 22, quoting Wilbur M. Brucker, "A Vital Element of Our National Strength," *Military Review* 36 (July 1956), p. 5.
[684] Ibid, pp. 22-24.
[685] Ibid, p. 24.

answerable to the public, and more like keepers of a closed guild, answerable mainly to each other. Becoming a general was now akin to winning a tenured professorship, liable to be removed not for professional failure but only for embarrassing one's institution with moral lapses."[686] As put by Army officer-turned military historian Henry Gole, "There was a lot of show…white rocks, short hair, shiny boots, the appearance of efficiency, over-centralization, fear of risk."[687] As Ricks put it, "From the outside, the Army looked terrific, in part because so much effort had been put into looking good."[688] The problem, however, was that the Army was no longer interested in or optimized to pursuing goals set in Washington. It was designed instead to *appear* professional to the untrained eye.

This is certainly a simplification of what occurred within the 1950s U.S. Army. There were plenty of good officers left in the Army, many of whom went on to help rebuild the U.S. Army after Vietnam. Still, the Bacevich-Ricks story likely does capture significant shifts in the relationship between Washington and the Army, the Army's institutional interests, and the Army's methods of advancing those interests. The story also aligns precisely with the timing of the shift in Army behavior between Korea and Vietnam. The U.S. Army that set out to build the Army of the Republic of Vietnam was intensely wary of its civilian principal, concerned with its public image, and optimized to the effective management of bureaucracy rather than the advancement of objectives set in Washington. Acute institutional threat from 1950s Washington, and the U.S. Army's response to that threat, thus presents a compelling hypothesis for testing in future research.

[686] Ricks, *The Generals*, p. 214.
[687] Ibid., p. 213.
[688] Ibid., p. 212.

The Scale and Duration of the Advisory Effort in Vietnam

A second possible explanation for the precise timing and location of the shift lies in the scale and duration of the U.S. advisory effort in Vietnam. The U.S. effort to build the ARVN grew far larger and lasted far longer than any previous advisory effort. The KMAG, the largest U.S. security assistance mission until Vietnam, peaked at 2,800 advisors, and the majority of the effort occurred in three quick years between the invasion of June 1950 and the Korean Armistice agreement of July 1953. In contrast, the number of advisors deployed to build the ARVN stayed above 3,000 for the entire 1960s and reached a peak of 14,332 advisors in 1970.

Scale matters because the larger the bureaucracy, the more bureaucratically the bureaucracy behaves. Large bureaucracies have larger, more complex tasks to accomplish, and must consequently devote more energy to the achievement of those tasks. The MAAG chiefs and the COMUSMACVs of Vietnam had to perform the Herculean tasks of managing the rotation, equipping, and supplying of tens of thousands of advisors (while also running the ground war), and the Army of the 1950s prepared and incentivized them to focus on keeping those trains running on time. The more people comprise the bureaucracy, the more sources of risk the bureaucracy must manage, the harder a bureaucracy must work to institutionalize SOPs designed to control individual behavior and minimize risk. Westmoreland took pains to oversee and direct the behavior of the far-flung tactical advisors to minimize the risk that these advisors would cause embarrassment to the organization. Duration matters because the process of ideational Darwinism described in Chapter 2, from the debate of ideas to the institutionalization of the preferred approach, takes time. The advisory effort in Vietnam lasted long enough for the Army to debate, reject, and ultimately place the coercion of partners in security assistance outside the realm of acceptable debate.

The Crystallization of U.S. Containment Legitimation Strategy

The crystallization and crescendo of U.S. legitimation strategies over the 1950s and 1960s for Cold War competition with Soviet Union broadly and intervention in Vietnam specifically may also have contributed significantly to the emergence of the cult of the persuasive in Vietnam.

From before the founding through to the present day, the United States has defined itself in the world as the anti-imperial power. Rather than coerce other states to bend to its will as the colonial powers of Europe had done, the United States would shine like a beacon, inspiring others to follow its example. When the United States did intervene abroad, it would do so to help free peoples defend their freedom.[689] In the context of security assistance, beliefs that U.S. advisors should inspire their local counterparts to follow their military advice rather than force them to comply, faith that the example set by American advisors would indeed inspire emulation, and conviction that advisors were deployed to help partners defend themselves against oppression, fall squarely within this American ideological tradition.

As the United States began to expand its reach across the Pacific and the Atlantic, American leaders seeking to legitimate an increasingly expeditionary American foreign policy began to place greater rhetorical weight on America's moral obligation to protect and extend

---

[689] An immense literature details and debates the evolution of American foreign policy ideology and rhetoric. Work that informed this analysis includes (but is not limited to): Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1988); Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1993), Stanford Nuclear Age Series; Robert Zoellick, *America in the World: A History of U.S. Diplomacy and Foreign Policy* (New York: Twelve, 2020), Chapters 9-12; John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding After Major Wars* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), Chapter 6; Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987); Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2007); Stephen Wertheim, *Tomorrow, the World: The Birth of U.S. Global Supremacy* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2020); Stacie Goddard and Ronald Krebs, "Rhetoric, Legitimation, and Grand Strategy," *Security Studies* 24, no. 1, (March 11, 2015): 5-36.

freedom abroad. To galvanize a hesitant American public into supporting U.S. assistance to the Allies in World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaimed that the United States "must be the great arsenal of democracy" and intervene to protect "all people who live in freedom."[690] As the United States began to compete with the Soviet Union to control the post-1945 world order, the Truman administration realized that a war weary American public would need some convincing to support United States interventions in service of far-away governments in Greece and Turkey. On March 12, 1947, Truman made the case for the Marshall Plan, telling Congress

> I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures…The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms. If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world—and we shall surely endanger the welfare of our own nation.[691]

With the birth of Containment, U.S. leaders set out to convince Americans that "its oldest and dearest tradition, Liberty, was under siege at home and abroad,"[692] and that it was the United States' moral duty to set sail in defense of freedom.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the wave of decolonization and the escalation of Cold War ideological competition with the Soviet Union led U.S. leaders to energetically promote a legitimation strategy for Containment generally, and Vietnam specifically. Decolonization put the United States in a bind. On the one hand, centuries of U.S. ideology pushed it to align itself with liberation movements around the world. On the other hand, U.S. security interests led it to oppose the replacement of colonial powers with communist regimes tied to the Soviet Union. Capitalizing on this tension in U.S. foreign policy, Nikita Khrushchev announced in January

---

[690] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "December 29, 1940: Fireside Chat 16: On the 'Arsenal of Democracy,'" December 29, 1940, *University of Virginia Miller Center, Presidential Speeches*, available https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-29-1940-fireside-chat-16-arsenal-democracy.

[691] Harry Truman, "President Harry S. Truman's Address Before a Joint Session of Congress, March 12, 1947," *Yale Law School, The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, available https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/trudoc.asp.

[692] McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State*, p. 167.

1961 the Soviet Union's support for wars of national liberation against imperial oppression.[693] U.S. leaders experimented with rhetoric to legitimate American intervention on behalf of governments seeking to put down communist nationalist movements. To square the circle, U.S. leaders settled on a legitimation strategy that emphasized the United States as the anti-imperial empire, champion of free peoples (defined as non-communist) and defenders of democracy against Soviet tyranny.

In his first inaugural in January 1961, President John F. Kennedy Jr. "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty."[694] Kennedy defined America as the defender of free people against tyranny, emphasizing its moral obligation to help free people defend their freedom. As early as June 1956, then-Senator Kennedy asserted (in a short speech that used the word "free" or "freedom" 19 times) that "the independence of a Free Vietnam is crucial to the free world."[695] In February 1962, speaking to the Vietnamese people on the occasion of their New Year (but with the American audience in mind), President Kennedy emphasized the sacrifices the Vietnamese had made for the sake of freedom, and "assure[d] them] of our continued assistance in the

[693] For President Kennedy's reactions to the speech, see, for example, "95. Paper Prepared in the Department of State, Talking Points Reviewing Conversations Between President Kennedy and Chairman Khruschev (June 3-4, 1961), Washington, June 12, 1961, available https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v05/d95.

[694] John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address of John F. Kennedy," January 20, 1961, *Yale Law School, The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, available https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/kennedy.asp.

[695] John F. Kennedy, "Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy at the Conference on Vietnam Luncheon in the Hotel Willard, Washington DC, June 1, 1956," *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*, available https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/vietnam-conference-washington-dc-19560601.

development of [their] capabilities to maintain [their] freedom and defeat those who wish to destroy that freedom."[696]

President Lyndon B. Johnson sang the same song, justifying the escalation of American commitment in Vietnam on the grounds that "we must fight if we are to live in a world where every country can shape its own destiny."[697] Speaking in September 1967, Johnson reiterated that "Communist expansionism is…ruthlessly attempting to bend free people to its will," that the freedom of the region was at stake, and that "Our objective is the independence of South Viet-Nam, and its freedom from attack. We want nothing for ourselves – only that the people of South Viet-Nam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way."[698] In short, American Containment ideology legitimated American intervention in Vietnam on the grounds that Americans were there to help the free people of Vietnamese defend their freedom.

Popular culture added additional ingredients to the ideological cocktail of American containment. In 1958, Eugene Burdick and William Lederer published a political novel entitled *The Ugly American*. The novel catalogued the failures of the U.S. diplomatic corps in Southeast Asia. It depicted Americans in the imaginary country of Sarkhan as pretentious, arrogant, inept, "loud and ostentatious," clueless with respect to local language, culture, needs, and history, disrespectful of local people, and wholly incompetent in the art of diplomacy. The Soviet Union, as portrayed by the authors, was comparatively artful. The heroes of the story are Colonel Edwin Hillendale and Homer Atkins, Americans who break the mold by immersing themselves in local

---

[696] John F. Kennedy, "New Year's Greetings to the People of Vietnam, 1 February 1962," *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*, available https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKWHA/1962/JFKWHA-068-007/JFKWHA-068-007.
[697] Lyndon B. Johnson, "April 7, 1965: Address at Johns Hopkins University," *University of Virginia Miller Center, Presidential Speeches*, available https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/april-7-1965-address-johns-hopkins-university.
[698] Lyndon B. Johnson, "September 29, 1967: Speech on Vietnam," *University of Virginia Miller Center, Presidential Speeches*, available https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/september-29-1967-speech-vietnam.

culture and forging relationships of mutual respect with local figures. The authors based the Hillandale character on none other than Edward Lansdale.[699] The novel caused a sensation in Washington. Then-senator John F. Kennedy was so taken with the book that he took out a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* to promote it and sent a copy to each of his colleagues in the senate. President Kennedy would later credit the book with shaping his vision for the Peace Corps.[700] *The Ugly American* injected a new dimension into the ideology legitimating American intervention—Americans had a moral obligation to help free peoples help themselves, and they would do so by developing close interpersonal ties based on mutual respect and cultural sensitivity.

It was within this ideological framework—one that crystallized in the years between Korea and the escalation of the advisory effort in Vietnam—that the generals of Vietnam set out to build the ARVN. General William Westmoreland frequently employed the rhetoric of U.S. containment legitimation strategies to defend his reliance on persuasion and unwillingness to escalate to bargaining or direct command despite GVN intransigence. Whether Westmoreland genuinely believed the ideology he propounded or not (and there is no real reason to think that he did not), the ideology was highly compatible with a doctrine of advising that advanced the institutional interests of the Army.

In combination, the three hypotheses discussed above offer a potential explanation for the emergence of the cult of the persuasive in Vietnam. They remain, however, mere hypotheses,

---

[699] Eugene Burdick and William J. Lederer, *The Ugly American* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1958).
[700] Michael Meyer, "Still 'Ugly' After All These Years," *The New York Times*, July 10, 2009, available https://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/books/review/Meyer-t.html.

highlighted here for their temporal correlation with the shift between Korea and Vietnam and for their logical plausibility. Future research could strengthen or weaken these hypotheses or surface new ones.

6.4 Contributions

This study makes a number of theoretical and empirical contributions to the security assistance, military innovation, civil-military relations, and alliance management literatures. Building on the work of security assistance scholars who emphasize conditionality as a prerequisite for effective security assistance, the study harnesses organizational theory to explain why the United States so rarely uses its considerable leverage to enforce compliance. The study weakens a prominent military innovation theory that failure causes innovation, by illustrating that U.S. military advisors continue to rely on rapport-based persuasion, even when their counterparts clearly and consistently ignore their advice. The study supports the civilian intervention school of military innovation, by illustrating how the Army's insulation from civilian direction or oversight in security assistance minimizes its incentives to innovate.

The study also frames U.S. security assistance strategy as a civil-military relations problem on the supply side. Washington delegates the task of training and advising partner militaries to the U.S. Army, while the Army considers partner intransigence a diplomatic problem best addressed by Washington. Responsibility for building a stronger partner military thus falls between stools. General officers tasked with influencing local heads of state conceptualize their mandate as providing best military advice, rather than as seeing to it that their advice is followed. Finally, at its core, this is a study of the exercise of influence in international relations. The work pushes against the tendency in the alliance management literature to explain

away the defiance of client states by redefining bargaining power so broadly that the concept loses meaning, obscuring the central puzzle: the perplexing reticence of the patron to bargain.

The study also offers concrete policy prescriptions for a Department of Defense intent on promoting security assistance and security cooperation as tools to manage local threats and distribute the burden of great power competition. It suggests that the current tendency within the Department of Defense to maintain commitments to partner militaries on the grounds that they will otherwise collapse will serve only to perpetuate ineffective assistance ad infinitum. The findings also suggest that the Department of Defense's conviction that security assistance will improve if only the military manages to incentivize high caliber officers to serve as advisors is misguided. As long as those high caliber advisors are instructed and incentivized to rely exclusively on rapport-based persuasion, they will continue to find their local counterparts unreceptive to their advice and unwilling to take the costly steps—to improve personnel policies, root out corruption, or abide by the chain of command—necessary to build a better military.

The findings suggest that returning incentives and direct command to the security assistance toolkit would not be unproductive (as indicated in current doctrine), but productive. Finally, the study suggests that the U.S. Army will be unlikely to implement conditionality of its own volition, and that innovation up the escalation ladder will require a push from Washington. Otherwise put, this study prescribes political-military integration. In Title 10 security assistance missions, civilian leaders in Washington should not defer to the officer in the field and should instead take responsibility for ensuring that recipient leaders eager to take U.S. military assistance also implement U.S. military advice. For its part, Congress should reassert its oversight authority, refuse to accept the military's output metrics (e.g. equipment disbursed, hours trained) as evidence of progress, and should instead evaluate security assistance missions

according to the military effectiveness of the recipient as demonstrated in live operations. Alternatively, Washington could consider ending missions to build militaries in states whose leaders pursue competing goals, and to conserve its strength for other missions instead.

Bibliography

Books, Journal Articles, Media

Acheson, Dean. *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department.* New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987.

Allison, Graham, and Philip Zelikow. *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis.* 2nd edition. New York: Longman, 1999.

Amble, John. "Modern War Podcast: Security Force Assistance in an Era of Great-Power Competition." *Modern War Institute at West Point* (July 8, 2020), https://mwi.usma.edu/mwi-podcast-security-force-assistance-era-great-power-competition/.

Arreguin-Toft, Ivan. *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict.* Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Avant, Deborah Denise. *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons from Peripheral Wars.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

Bacevich, Andrew. *The Pentomic Era: The US Army Between Korea and Vietnam.* Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1986.

Ball, Tim "Replaced? Security Force Assistance Brigades vs. Special Forces." *War on the Rocks*, February 23, 2017. https://warontherocks.com/2017/02/replaced-security-force-assistance-brigades-vs-special-forces/.

Barnett, Michael, and Raymond Duvall, "Power in International Politics." *International Organization* 59, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 39-75. www.jstor.org/stable/3877878.

Battaglia, Philip, and Curtis Taylor. "Security Force Assistance Operations: Defining the Advise and Assist Brigade," *United States Army*, July 22, 2010. https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA536573.pdf.

Bauer, Shane. "Iraq's New Death Squad: America has built an elite and lethal counterterrorism force. But who's calling the shots?" *The Nation*, June 3, 2009. http://www.thenation.com/article/iraqs-new-death-squad.

Berman, Eli, and David Lake. *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Violence through Local Agents*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019.

Bernard, Chester I. *The Functions of the Executive*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968.

Biddle, Stephen. *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle*. New Jersey:

Princeton University Press, 2006.

Biddle, Stephen, Julia MacDonald, and Ryan Baker. "Small Footprint, Small Payoff: The Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41, nos. 1-2 (2018): 89-142. http://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2017.1307745.

Biddle, Stephen. "Building Security Forces & Stabilizing Nations: The Problem of Agency." *Daedalus* 146, no. 4 (2017): 126-138. http://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2017.1307745.

Biddle, Stephen, Jeffrey A. Friedman, and Jacob N. Shapiro. "Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007?" *International Security* 37, no. 1 (Summer 2012): 7-40. https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00087.

Blainey, Geoffrey. *The Causes of War.* 3rd edition. New York: Free Press, 1988.

Blair, Clay. *The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953.* New York: Times Books, 1987.

Boot, Max. "The Truth about Iraq's Casualty Count." *Wall Street Journal*, May 3, 2008. https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB120977505566564207.

Borgwardt, Elizabeth. *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights.* Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2007.

Brooks, Risa, and Elizabeth Stanley. *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007.

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

Brucker, Wilbur M. "A Vital Element of Our National Strength." *Military Review* 36 (July 1956).

Burdick, Eugene, and William J. Lederer. *The Ugly American.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1958.

Bush, George W. Full Text of President George Bush's speech at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, as provided by the White House, *The Guardian*, 28 June 2005, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/jun/29/iraq.usa.

Bush, George W. "President's Address to the Nation," Office of the Press Secretary, January 10, 2007, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html.

Bush, George W. "Transcript from Bush Speech on American Strategy in Iraq." *The New York*

Times, May 24, 2004. https://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/24/politics/transcript-from-bush-speechon-american-strategy-in-iraq.html.

Buttinger, Joseph. *Vietnam: A Political History*. Boston: International Thomson Publishing, 1968.

Casey Jr., George W. *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom* July 2004 – February 2007. Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2012.

Castillo, Jasen J. *Endurance and War: The National Sources of Military Cohesion.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014.

Chayes, Sarah. *Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2015.

Chung, Donald, K. *The Three Day Promise: A Korean Soldier's Memoir*. Tallahassee: Father and Son Publishing, 1989.

Clarke, Jeffrey D. *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, 1965-1973. Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1988.

Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. Edited by Michael Eliot Howard and Peter Paret. First paperback printing. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Clemens, Peter Ethan. *The Intelligent Man on the Spot, Captain James H. Hausman in South Korea, 1946-1948.* Masters Thesis, Kansas State University, 1988.

Cochrane, Marisa. "The Battle for Basra: March 2003 – May 31, 2008." *Institute for the Study of War*. https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep19538.

Collins, Jr., James Lawton. *The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 1950-1972*. Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1975.

Cordesman, Anthony H. "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq. The August 2006 Quarterly Report: Progress but Far from the Facts the Nation Needs and Deserves." *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, September 5, 2006. https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/060905_iraq_quarterly.pdf.

Cote, Owen. *The Politics of Innovative Military Doctrine: The U.S. Navy and Fleet Ballistic Missiles*. Doctoral Thesis. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996.

Dalton, Melissa. "Reforming Security Cooperation." *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, July, 2016. https://www.csis.org/analysis/reforming-security-cooperation.

Dalton, Melissa, Hijab Shah, Shannon Green, and Rebecca Hughes, "Oversight and

Accountability in U.S. Security Sector Assistance: Seeking Return on Investment." Center for Strategic & International Studies, February 2018. https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180207_Dalton_OversightAccountability_Web.pdf.

David, Steven R. "Explaining Third World Alignment." *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (January 1991): 233-256, https://doi.org/10.2307/2010472.

Deady, Timothy. "MiTT Advisor: A Year with the Best Division in the Iraqi Army." *Military Review*, November - December 2009. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/militaryreview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20091231_art008.pdf.

Doubler, Michael. *Closing with the Enemy: How GIs Fought the War in Europe, 1944-1945*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1944.

Enthoven, Alain C. and K. Wayne Smith. *How Much Is Enough? Shaping the Defense Program, 1961-1969.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1971.

Feaver, Peter D. *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005.

Feaver, Peter. "The Right to be Right: Civil-Military Relations and the Iraq Surge Decision." *International Security* 35, no. 4 (Spring 2011): 87-125. https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00033.

Finnemore, Martha, and Kathryn Sikkink. "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change." *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (Autumn, 1998): 887-917. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2601361.

George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennet. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Belfer Center Studies in International Security. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2005.

Gibby, Bryan. *Fighting in a Korean War: The American Advisory Mission from 1946-53.* Doctoral Thesis. Ohio State University, 2004.

Goddard, Stacie, and Ronald Krebs. "Rhetoric, Legitimation, and Grand Strategy." *Security Studies* 24, no. 1 (March 2015): 5-36, https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2014.1001198.

Goodman, Allan E. *An Institutional Profile of the South Vietnamese Officer Corps*. Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, 1970. https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/514242.pdf

Gouldner, Alvin. "The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement." *American Sociological Review* 25, no. 2 (April 1960): 161-178, https://doi.org/10.2307/2092623.

Gramer, Robbie, and Michael Hirsh. “It’s Not Personal. It’s Just Diplomacy.” *Foreign Policy*, March 15, 2009. https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/its-not-personal-its-just-diplomacy.

Greenhill, Kelly M. and Peter Krause. *Coercion: The Power to Hurt in International Politics.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Griggs, Lee. “Saigon: Memories of a Fallen City.” *Time,* May 12, 1975. http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,917415-2,00.html.

Habermas, Jurgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1985.

Habermas, Jurgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason.* Boston: Beacon, 1985.

Hausrath, Alfred H. *The KMAG Advisor: Role and Problems of the Military Advisor in Developing an Indigenous Army for Combat Operations in Korea*. Operations Research Office. Maryland: Johns Hopkins University, February 1957. https://nautilus.org/foia-document/the-kmag-advisor-role-and-problems-of-the-military-advisor-in-developing-indigenous-army-for-combat-operations-in-korea/.

Heginbotham, Eric. “The British and American Armies in World War II: Explaining Variations in Organizational Learning Patterns." Defense and Arms Control Studies Program Working Paper. Cambridge, MA: MIT Center for International Studies, 1996.

Hickey, Gerald Cannon. *The American Military Advisor and His Foreign Counterpart: The Case of Vietnam.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1965. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_memoranda/RM4482.html.

Hinh, Nguyen Duy, and Tran Dinh Tho. *The South Vietnamese Society*, Indochina Monograph. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980.

Hoopes, Townsend. *The Limits of Intervention: How Vietnam Policy was Made—and Reversed—During the Johnson Administration.* New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc, 1987.

Hosmer, Stephen, Konrad Kellen, and Brian Jenkins *The Fall of South Vietnam: Statements by Vietnamese Military and Civilian Leaders*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1978. https://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R2208.html. Also available in print form.

Huntington, Samuel. *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil- Military Relations.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957.

Ikenberry, John. *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding After Major*

Wars. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000.

"Iraq Commander Nomination Hearing," *C-Span*, January 23, 2007, https://www.c-span.org/video/?196316-1/iraq-commander-nomination-hearing.

Jackson, Colin, "Defeat in Victory: Organizational Learning Dysfunction in Counterinsurgency." Doctoral Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2008.

Janowitz, Morris, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait.* New York: Free Press, 1960.

Jenkins, Brian M. *A People's Army for South Vietnam: A Vietnamese Solution*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1971.

Johnson, David E., M. Wade Markel, and Brian Shannon. *The 2008 Battle of Sadr City: Reimagining Urban Combat*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2013. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR160.html.

Johnson, Lyndon B. "April 7, 1965: Address at Johns Hopkins University." *University of Virginia Miller Center, Presidential Speeches*. https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/april-7-1965-address-johns-hopkins-university.

Johnson, Lyndon B. "September 29, 1967: Speech on Vietnam." *University of Virginia Miller Center, Presidential Speeches*. https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/september-29-1967-speech-vietnam.

Kagan, Kimberly. *The Surge: A Military History.* New York: Encounter Books, 2009.

Karlin, Mara. *Building Militaries in Fragile States: Challenges for the United States.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018.

Kennedy, John F. "Inaugural Address of John F. Kennedy." January 20, 1961. *Yale Law School, The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/kennedy.asp.

Kennedy, John F. "Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy at the Conference on Vietnam Luncheon in the Hotel Willard, Washington DC, June 1, 1956." *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*, https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/vietnam-conference-washington-dc-19560601.

Kennedy, John F. "New Year's Greetings to the People of Vietnam, 1 February 1962." *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*, https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKWHA/1962/JFKWHA-068-007/JFKWHA-068-007.

Keohane, Robert. "Reciprocity in International Relations." *International Organization* 40, no. 1 (Winter 1986): 1-27. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2706740.

Kier, Elizabeth. *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Kier, Elizabeth. “Culture and Military Doctrine: France between the Wars.” *International Security* 19, no. 4 (Spring, 1995): 65-93. https://doi.org/10.2307/2539120.

Kim, Chum-kon. *The Korean War: 1950-1953*. Seoul: Kwangmyong Publishing Company, 1980.

Kimmons, Sean. “SFABs look to grow force, expand missions around the world.” *Army News Service*, May 7, 2020. https://www.army.mil/article/235370/sfabs_look_to_grow_force_expand_missions_around_the_world.

Knights, Michael and Alex Mello. “The Best Thing We Built in Iraq: Iraq’s Counter-Terrorism Service and the Long War Against Militancy.” *War on the Rocks*, July 19, 2017. https://warontherocks.com/2017/07/the-best-thing-america-built-in-iraq-iraqs-counter-terrorism-service-and-the-long-war-against-militancy/.

Knights, Michael. “The Long Haul: Rebooting U.S. Security Cooperation in Iraq.” *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, (2015). https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/long-haul-rebooting-us-security-cooperation-iraq.

Komer, Robert. *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on U.S.-GVN Performance in Vietnam*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1972. https://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R967.html.

Korea Institute of Military History. *The Korean War, Volume 1*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

Korea Institute of Military History. *The Korean War*, Volume 3. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001.

Kubat, Muhammed Cihad. *Ambassador at War: John J. Muccio and the Korean War (1948 – 1952)*. Master’s Thesis, Ihsan Dogramaci Bilkent University, 2019.

Long, Austin. *First War Syndrome: Military Culture, Professionalization, and Counterinsurgency*. Doctoral Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2010.

Ladwig III, Walter C. “Influencing Clients in Counterinsurgency: U.S. Involvement in El Salvador’s Civil War, 1979-92.” *International Security* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 99-146. https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00251.

Ladwig III, Walter C. *The Forgotten Front: Patron-Client Relationships in Counterinsurgency.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Leffler, Melvyn. *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War.* Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1993.

Levy, Jack S "Domestic Politics and War." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 653-673. https://doi.org/10.2307/204819.

Lewy, Guenther. *America in Vietnam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Long, Austin. First War Syndrome: Military Culture, Professionalization, and Counterinsurgency Doctrine. Doctoral Thesis. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2010.

Long, Austin. "The Anbar Awakening." *Survival* 50, no. 2 (April/May 2008): 67–94. https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330802034283.

MacArthur, Douglas. *Reminiscences*. New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1964.

March, James, and Herbert Simon. *Organizations.* New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958.

McCain, John, and Joe Lieberman. "The Surge Worked." *Wall Street Journal*, January 10, 2008. https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB119992665423979631.

McDougall, Walter A. *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776.* Boston: Mariner Books, 1988.

McLauchlin, Theodore, Lee J.M. Seymour, and Simon Pierre Boulange-Martel. "Tracking the Rise of US Foreign Military Training: A New Dataset." Unpublished working paper.

McLeary, Paul. "Army's SFAB Trainers Go Head to Head with Chinese in Asia, Africa." *Breaking Defense*, October 13, 2020. https://breakingdefense.com/2020/10/armys-sfab-trainers-go-head-to-head-with-chinese-in-asia-africa/.

Melendez, Sierra A. "1st Security Force Assistance Brigade holds activation ceremony." *Army News Service*, February 9, 2018. https://www.army.mil/article/200403/1st_security_force_assistance_brigade_holds_activation_ceremony.

Millett, Allan Reed, and Williamson Murray. *Military Effectiveness: Volume 1 The First World War.* New South Wales, Australia: Unwin Hyman, 1989.

Millett, Allan Reed, and Williamson Murray. *Military Effectiveness: Volume 2 The Interwar Period.* New South Wales, Australia: Unwin Hyman, 1989.

Millett, Allan Reed, and Williamson Murray. *Military Effectiveness: Volume 3 The Second World War.* 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Millett, Allan R., *The War for Korea, 1950-1951.* Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010.

Millett, Allan R. “Captain James H. Hausman and the Formation of the Korean Army, 1945-50.” *Armed Forces and Society* 23, no. 4 (Summer 1997). https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X9702300401.

Murray, Williamson. *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Meyer, Michael. “Still ‘Ugly’ After All These Years.” *The New York Times*, July 10, 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/books/review/Meyer-t.html.

Myers, Kenneth W. *KMAG’s Wartime Experiences*. Camp Zama, Japan: Office of the Military History Officer, 1958.

Na, Johngnam. *Making Cold War Soldiers: The Americanization of the South Korean Army, 1945-1955.* Doctoral Thesis. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006.

Na, Jongnam, “The Transformation of the Republic of Korea Army: Wartime expansion and doctrine changes, 1951-1953,” in *In From the Cold*, edited by John Blaxland, Michael Kelly, and Liam Brewin Higgins, 97-116. Canberra, Australia National University Press, 2020.

Nagl, John A., and Peter J. Schoomaker. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam.* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005.

Nye, Joseph, *The Future of Power.* New York: Public Affairs, 2011.

Oye, Kenneth. “Explaining Cooperation under Anarchy.” *World Politics* 38, no. 1 (October 1985): 1-24.

Partlow, Joshua. “Maliki’s Office is Seen Behind Purge in Forces.” *The Washington Post*, April 30, 2007. https://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2007/04/29/AR2007042901728.html?referrer=email.

Payne, Andrew. “Presidents, Politics, and Military Strategy: Electoral Constraints during the Iraq War,” *International Security* 44, 3 (2020): 163-203. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00371.

Pollack, Kenneth. *Armies of Sand: The Past, Present, and Future of Arab Military Effectiveness.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Posen, Barry R. “Foreword: Military Doctrine and the Management of Uncertainty.” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39, no. 2 (2016): 159-173. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2015.1115042.

Posen, Barry R. *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars.* Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.

Ramsey, Robert D. *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*. Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006. https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.179.2459&rep=rep1&type=pdf.

Rayburn, Joel D., and Colonel Frank K. Sobchak. *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003 – 2006*. Carlisle: United States Army War College Press, 2020.

Rayburn, Joel D., and Frank K Sobchak, with Jeanne F. Godfroy, Matthew D. Morton, James S. Powell, Matthew M. Zais. *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 2: Surge and Withdrawal, 2007 – 2011*. Carlisle: United States Army War College Press, 2020.

Reiter, Dan, and Allan C. Stam. *Democracies at War.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Reynolds, Celia L., and Wilfred T. Wan. "Empirical Trends in Sanctions and Positive Inducements in Nonproliferation," in *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation*, edited by Etel Solingen, 56-122. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Ricks, Thomas. *The Generals: American Military Command from World War II to Today.* London: Penguin Books, 2013.

Ridgway, Matthew B., *The Korean War*. Boston: De Capo Press, 1986.

Ripley, Tim. *Operation Telic: The British Campaign in Iraq 2003-2009*. Lancaster, UK: Telic-Herrick Publications, 2014.

Risse, Thomas, "'Let's Argue!': Communicative Action in World Politics." *International Organization* 54, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 1- 39. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2601316.

Romanus, Charles F., and Riley Sunderland. *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater—Stilwell's Mission to China*. Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1987.

Roosevelt, Franklin D. "December 29, 1940: Fireside Chat 16: On the 'Arsenal of Democracy,'" December 29, 1940, *University of Virginia Miller Center, Presidential Speeches*. https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-29-1940-fireside-chat-16-arsenal-democracy.

Rosen, Stephen Peter. *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military.* Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Sapolsky, Harvey. *The Polaris System Development Bureaucratic and Programmatic Success in Government.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972.

Sawyer, Robert K. *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War*. Washington DC: US Army Center for Military History, 1962.

Schnabel, James. *United States Army in the Korean War: Policy and Direction – The First Year*. Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 1992.

Schneider, Frederick W. *Advising the ARVN: Lieutenant General Samuel T. Williams in Vietnam, 1955 – 1960*. Master's Thesis, University of North Texas, 1990.

Shah, Hijab, and Melissa Dalton, "The Evolution of Tunisia's Military and the Role of Foreign Security Sector Assistance." *Carnegie Middle East Center*, April 29, 2020. https://carnegie-mec.org/2020/04/29/evolution-of-tunisia-s-military-and-role-of-foreign-security-sector-assistance-pub-81602.

Shah, Hijab, Melissa Dalton, and Erol Yayboke. "Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation in Action for Security Sector Assistance." *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, June 27, 2019. https://www.csis.org/analysis/assessment-monitoring-and- evaluation-action-security-sector-assistance.

Shaplen, Robert. *The Lost Revolution: The U.S. in Vietnam, 1946 – 1966*. New York: Harper and Row, 1965.

Sheehan, Neil. *A Bright and Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*. New York: Random House, 1988.

Simon, Herbert. "Rationality and Administrative Decision-Making." *Models of Man, Social and Rational.* New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1957.

Skaggs, David Curtis. "The KATUSA Experiment: The Integration of Korean Nationals Into the U.S. Army." *Military Affairs*, 38, 2 (1974). https://www.jstor.org/stable/i308034.

Snyder, Jack. *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Snyder, Glenn. *Alliance Politics.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Sopko, John F. "Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan." *Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction*, September 2017. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/sigar-17-62-ll.pdf.

Spector, Ronald H. *After Tet: The Bloodiest Year in Vietnam*. New York: Vintage, 1994.

Spector, Ronald H. *Advice and Support: The Early Years, 1941-1960*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1983.

Sullivan, Mariska. "Maliki's Authoritarian Regime," *Middle East Security Report No. 10*, Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, April 2013.

Sun-yup, Paik. *From Pusan to Panmunjon: Wartime Memories of the Republic of Korea's First Four Star General*. Lincoln: Potomac Books, 2007.

Talmadge, Caitlin. *Explaining Military Effectiveness: Intervention and Battlefield Performance*. Doctoral Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2011.

Talmadge, Caitlin. *The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015.

Thompson, James D. *Organizations in Action.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967.

Thompson, Robert. *No Exit from Vietnam*. New York: David McKay Company, Inc, 1970.

Thorpe, Rebecca U. *The American Warfare State: The Domestic Politics of Military Spending* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.

Tollast, Robert. "Maliki's Private Army," *The National Interest*, December 31, 2013. http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/malikis-private-army-7915.

Truman, Harry. "President Harry S. Truman's Address Before a Joint Session of Congress, March 12, 1947," *Yale Law School, The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/trudoc.asp.

Tuchman, Barbara. *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-1945*. Reprint edition. (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2017).

Tucker, Spencer C. ed., *Encyclopedia of the Korean War: A Political, Social, and Military History, Volume 3.* Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2000.

U.S. Department of the Army, *FM 3-07.1: Security Force Assistance* (Washington, DC: US GPO, 2009).

U.S. Department of the Army, *FM 3-22: Army Support to Security Cooperation* (Washington, DC: US GPO, 2013).

U.S. Department of the Army, *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: US GPO, 2006).

U.S. Department of the Army, *FM 31-20-3: Foreign Internal Defense Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Special Forces* (Washington, DC: GPO 1994).

Van Dijk, Teun A. “Ideology and Discourse Analysis.” *Journal of Political Ideologies,* 11, no. 2 (June 2006): 115-140. http://doi.org/10.1080/13569310600687908.

Van Evera, Stephen. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Van Evera, Stephen. “The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War.” *International Security* 9, no. 1 (Summer 1984): 58-107. https://doi.org/10.2307/2538636.

Vien, Cao Van, Ngo Quang Truong, Dong Van Khuyen, Nguyen Duy Hinh, Tran Dinh Tho, Hoang Ngoc Lung, and Chu Xuan Vien. *Indochina Monographs: The US Adviser.* Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980.

Waltz, Stephen. *Theory of International Politics*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1979.

Weidmann, Nils B., and Idean Salehyan. *International Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (March 2003): 52-64. https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12059.

Wertheim, Stephen. *Tomorrow, the World: The Birth of U.S. Global Supremacy.* Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2020.

Witty, David. “The Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service,” *Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings*, 2016. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/david-witty-paper_final_web.pdf.

Wright, Donald, and Timothy Reese. *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign: The United States Army in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, May 2003-January 2005*. Fort Leavenworth, Combat Studies Institute Press, US Army Combined Arms Center, 2008.

Zoellick, Robert. *America in the World: A History of U.S. Diplomacy and Foreign Policy.* New York: Twelve, 2020.

Zucchino, David. “Kabul’s Sudden Fall to Taliban Ends U.S. Era in Afghanistan,” *The New York Times,* August 15, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/15/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-kabul-surrender.html.

Archival Sources

National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland

Record Group 334: Records of Interservice Agencies, Records of Military Assistance Advisory Groups

Record Group 500: Records of the Eighth United States Army

Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force ("Pentagon Papers")

United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

Headquarters, Eighth United Stated Army Korea, Historical Section, Special Problems in the Korean Conflict and Their Solutions, 1952.

U.S. Army Service in Korea Veteran's Questionnaires

George C. Marshall Library and Archives, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Virginia

James A. Van Fleet Papers

Center of Military History (CMH) Vietnam War Records Collection

Southeast Asia Branch (SEAB)

Washington National Records Center (WNRC), National Archives and Records Administration

Historical Records Branch (HRB)
- Westmoreland Papers
- Abrams Papers

CENTCOM Iraq Papers

1007 documents at the U.S. Army Heritage & Education Center available for download: https://ahec.armywarcollege.edu/CENTCOM-IRAQ-papers/index.cfm.

National Archives of the United Kingdom

The Iraq Inquiry ("Chilcot Report") Documents, available for download: https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171123122801/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/the-evidence/.

Interviews

I conducted over 150 interviews with subjects including commanding generals of coalition forces in Iraq, retired Iraqi general officers, and former U.S. advisors to Iraqi Army units. Interviews were conducted in person in Iraq, Jordan, and the United States, over the telephone, and over Zoom. Several conversations occurred over email exchanges. Identification is provided only for those subjects who provided explicit permission. I list below the interviews directly cited in this study.

Identified Subjects Cited

Barbero, Michael, General (ret.). Zoom interview, April 2020.

Casey, George, General (ret.). Zoom interview, April 2020.

Connable, Ben. In person, Arlington, VA, July 2019

Dubik, James, Lieutenant General (ret.). Telephone interview, August 2019.

Eaton, Paul, Major General (ret.). Telephone interview, August 2019.

Helmick, Frank, Lieutenant General (ret.). Telephone interview, May 2020.

Nagl, John, Colonel (ret.). Telephone, August 2019.

Petraeus, David, General (ret.). Email correspondence, February 2020.

Pollack, Kenneth. Telephone interview, October 2019.

Sherlock, Richard, Major General (ret.). In person, Arlington, VA, August 2019.

Anonymous Subjects Cited

Iraqi Army officer (ret.), and scholar of the Iraqi Army. In person interview, Washington, DC, July 2019.

Iraqi General (ret.) who served with General George Casey. In person interview with interpreter, Erbil, Iraq, February 2020.

Iraqi General (ret.) who served under Maliki. In person interview with interpreter, Erbil, Iraq, February 2020.

Iraqi General (ret). who retired prior to the U.S. invasion but remains in close contact with many of the Iraqi general officers who served under Maliki. In person interview with interpreter. Erbil, Iraq, February 2020.

Iraqi General (ret). who served under Maliki. In person interview with interpreter, Erbil, Iraq, February 2020.

Former U.S. advisor to the Iraqi Army. Telephone interview, July 2019.

Former U.S. advisor to the Iraqi Minister of Defense, 2008-2009. Telephone, April 2020.

Former U.S. advisor to the Iraqi Army. Telephone interview, June 2019.

Former U.S. advisor to the Iraqi Army. Telephone interview, June 2019.

Former U.S. advisor to the Iraqi Army. Telephone interview, June 2019.

Oral Histories

Operational Leadership Experiences Project, available online at the Combat Studies Institute Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library. https://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4013coll13. Using a variety of search terms, I identified and reviewed 317 oral histories with American personnel involved in the advisory effort in Iraq, most of them embedded advisors with the advisory teams (Military Transition Teams). I list below the oral histories directly cited in this study.

Atilano, John, Major. Interviewed by Angie Slattery on 1 March 2012.

Campbell, Stephen, Major. Interviewed by Lisa Beckenbaugh on 27 August 2013.

Cox, Matthew, Major. Interviewed by Jenna Fike on 31 July 2012.

Curwen, John C., Lieutenant Colonel. Interviewed by Steven Clay on 8 February 2007.

Doherty, Michael, Major. Interviewed by Laurence Lessard on 25 January 2007.

Esmahan, Paul, Major. Interviewed by John McCool on 2 November 2006.

Gilmore, Mark, Major. Interviewed by Laurence Lessard on 15 November 2007.

Hale, Toby, Colonel. Interviewed by Dennis Dan Wey on 24 January 2006.

Heffington, Robert, Major. Interviewed by Jenna Fike on 9 May 2011.

Jones, Matthew, Major. Interviewed by Steven Clay on 4 November 2006.

Kelly, Lawrence J., Colonel. Interviewed by Steven Clay on 15 December 2006.

Maddaloni, Jon-Paul, Major. Interviewed by Laurence Lessard on 24 January 2008.

Schwitters, James, Brigadier General. Interviewed by Steven Clay on 13 December 2006.

Sherlock, Richard, Brigadier General. Interviewed by Steven Clay on 16 November 2006.

Shipman, Doug, Colonel. Interviewed by Steven Clay on 3 November 2006.

Stewart, Don, Major. Interviewed by Jessica Trussoni, on 9 October 2008.

Sweet, Richard, Major. Interviewed by Jessica Trussoni on 13 February 2009.

Tennyson, Jeff, Major. Interviewed by Steven Clay on 3 November 2006.

Voorhies, David, Major. Interviewed by James R. Hill on 26 November 2007.