Command or Control: Military Experience and the Secretary of Defense

by

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in the Department of
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2022

ABSTRACT

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Abstract

In the relationship between military leaders and their civilian masters, the secretary of defense (SecDef) plays a unique role. He or she represents both the military enterprise *and* the non-military policymakers that control it. As a result, in civil-military relations literature the SecDef role is inconsistently categorized as sometimes *military*, sometimes *civilian*. Although this is an understandable conflation, it warrants attention. By law, the SecDef is a civilian, but he or she is required to demonstrate expertise in military matters. In some ways, the position sits in both spheres. Yet, the SecDef plays a key role in *civilian control of the military*, and so it is important to both draw distinctions and understand overlap. This paper examines the nuances and functions of the SecDef role, and argues that secretaries must be successful in *both* the civilian and the military aspects of the job in order to provide effective civilian control of the military.

Intriguingly, a variety of leaders have filled the SecDef position—from decidedly civilian ones like Ash Carter, who started his career in theoretical physics, to martial legends like George Marshall. The range includes secretaries with combat experience, ones with long careers in the Reserves, and ones with prior appointments in the Department of Defense. Every secretary has brought a unique level of military knowledge, connection and cultural familiarity to the office. These varied personal experiences each affected civilian control of the military in their own right.

This paper provides a comprehensive new dataset covering the military experience of historical SecDefs, cross-tabbed with descriptive variables in order to better understand the background and expertise each secretary has brought to the position. Finally, the paper uses five mini case studies to analyze the effect of extensive military experience on civilian control of the military. It is the first empirical study designed to explore this effect. I find, first, that all secretaries struggle in the role in some capacity. Additionally, I find that, a SecDef's military experience is not a strong driver in determining whether a secretary will enhance or degrade civilian control of the military during his or her tenure.

Dedication

This is dedicated to Gene (my "secret weapon"), and to Opal, Ike and Louie, who challenge me to be a little silly every day.

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1. Introduction

In 2017 Congress confirmed General (Retired) Jim Mattis —-then just four years out of uniform —-as secretary of defense. It had been almost 67 years since the last time a retired general was given the job. Yet, four years later, Congress confirmed another military man—General (Retired) Lloyd Austin. These two successive appointments seem to speak to the viability of recently-retired senior military officers as Pentagon leaders. However, neither Mattis nor Austin were shoe-ins. In fact, both nominations generated heated debate in Congress for the very fact that they had military backgrounds. Congress even had to pass legislation in order to suspend the statutory bar against having a recently retired officer serve in the job (10 U.S. Code § 113, CRS Report Jan 6 2021). Representative Jared Golden, a former Marine, voted against legislation suspending the statutes—publicly dubbed a "waiver"—for General (Retired) Austin. Speaking about his decision, he made the following seemingly ambivalent statement:

> My decision is in no way a reflection of any lack of… confidence in [General Lloyd Austin's] ability to lead our military… I hope my colleagues in the Senate will move quickly to confirm General Austin as the new secretary of defense, as I believe he is qualified… [but] the principle of civilian control of the military is far too important for our democracy to justify supporting this waiver.

How could Secretary Austin be both a qualified candidate *and* a threat to democracy? Congress established statutory conditions for SecDef nominees in the 1947 National Security Act in order to limit the president's ability to appoint retired generals and protect civilian control of the military—a fundamental tenet of healthy civil-military relations. Yet, the rule has been waived for 3 out of the 28 secretaries in history. Moreover, it addresses only those candidates who have recently retired from commissioned, active service in the Regular forces. There have been many secretaries aside from those three who have come with military service experience but not required a waiver. This raises two questions: what kind of military experience is normal for secretaries of defense, and can a SecDef have too much military experience to the point where it degrades civilian control of the military? Put another way, how does a SecDef's "militariness," by which I mean the extent that the individual has prior military experience, affect his or her performance in the job?

This paper introduces a new comprehensive dataset of the secretaries of defense, which includes data on the varied types and extents of military service within the historical population of secretaries. It also attempts to evaluate whether a SecDef's military experience affects civilian control of the military—the first empirical analysis of its kind.

As the case studies in this paper demonstrate, the role of secretary of defense is complex and the job requirements are nuanced based on the varying needs and

experience of the commander-in-chief. Not all "significantly military" SecDefs are alike, nor are all "purely civilian" secretaries alike. I find that, on a whole, every secretary struggles with certain aspects of the job. However, I do *not* find sufficient evidence to support my hypothesis that a SecDef's military experience affects his or her ability to maintain civilian control. This non-finding is, however, significant, since there has been recent legislative discussion over whether retired flag officers—generals and admirals—should be further limited from serving in the position (Bender 2021).

In terms of order, I will first survey the civil-military literature relevant to this discussion and to the SecDef role in civil-military relations. I will then introduce my hypothesis for why a SecDef's military experience could degrade civilian control. Next, I will provide an overview of the universe of cases when it comes to SecDef "militariness," as well as descriptive statistics of those cases. Then, using five case studies I will explore the validity of my hypothesis. Finally, I will highlight the many questions that remain unanswered and provide recommendations for future research on the SecDef's role in civil-military relations.

2. Literature Review

Peter Feaver described the "civil-military problematique" (Feaver 1996). On the one hand, the American military must be strong and ready to respond to threats—both foreign and domestic. On the other hand, it must remain responsive and subservient to the American democracy, and not become a tool for despotism. The American people need the military to protect them, but they also must have protection from the military. This predicament is resolved through an important tenet of American civil-military relations: civilian control of the military. At the same time, the resolution is simpler in words than it is in practice. After all, what is civilian control? How do we achieve it?

At the heart of this discussion is Samuel Huntington's concept of objective civilian control, which he introduced in his seminal work, *Soldier and the State.* According to Huntington, a healthy civil-military relationship is one where civilian policymakers determine political objectives, but leave the actual warfighting to military leaders. The health of this relationship, though, is contingent upon the officer corps maintaining a *professional military ethic*—in other words, it must stay isolated from politics, subordinate to civilian leaders, and competent in warfighting (11-18). However, most civil-military authors since Huntington agree that his concept of objective civilian control is not an accurate reflection of reality.

First, an apolitical, subordinate military is nearly impossible to achieve. Military leaders are inclined to influence civilian policy decisions, even when it is inappropriate

for them to do so. They exert influence by publicly voicing their opinions, leaking information, slow-rolling or manipulating bureaucratic processes, or by participating in politics after retiring (Feaver 2003, Desch 1999, Robinson 2018, Recchia 2015). In *Armed Servants*, Dr. Peter Feaver describes this not-so-perfect version of reality with a principal-agent model. The military (the agent) is directed by civilian leaders (the principal) to execute certain policies. The military either complies fully, or it does not, but civilian leaders maintain the "right to be wrong" when it comes to policy, because they are accountable to the electorate (Feaver 2003, 298). Various authors have presented theories on when and why the military acts insubordinately (Avant 1994, Desch 1999, Feaver 2003), but they all generally agree that the objective control model is unrealistic.

Additionally, civil-military scholars today argue that extensive isolation between the civil and military spheres is problematic. Elliot Cohen (2003) describes healthy civil-military relations as an "unequal dialogue" (*not* monologue) between civilian leaders and military subordinates (263). Statesmen, through active participation in military affairs, push their generals to be successful (Cohen 2003). Peter Feaver, elaborating on his "right to be wrong" claim in *Armed Servants*, echoed some of these sentiments in his 2011 paper, "The Right to be Right" (2011), in which he argued that the best policy is developed through iterative collaboration between civilian and military spheres. Janine Davidson (2013) and Risa Brooks (2021) agree, arguing that civilians are most in control when they have a firm understanding of military affairs and can get hands-on with

military policy. They argue that it is not just involved statesmen that are responsible for this dynamic, but politically intelligent (though not partisan) military leaders as well.

The secretary of defense is an important part of this relationship and several scholars have explored that role. Huntington argues that the secretary of defense balances the civil-military relationship—finds synergy between the military and fiscal-administrative viewpoints and representing the department to external entities (1957, 428). However, true to his "isolated spheres" paradigm, Huntington suggests that the SecDef should *not* himself administrate or advise on military courses of action. Feaver, on the other hand, argues that the SecDef is key to keeping the ulterior motives of the military in line. In Feaver's view, the SecDef plays an important role in oversight and punishment, and leads a civilian secretariat that permeates the upper echelons of the defense enterprise and enforces military compliance with directives (2003, 82-85). Others take a similar view as Feaver, but emphasize the importance of a capable and cohesive civilian staff in the Officer of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) (Karlin 2021 61-63, Friend 2020). "Oversight requires an organization, not an individual" (Karlin 2021, 63).

In terms of the nuts and bolts of the position, Charles Stevenson provides a list of SecDef functions—the most comprehensive outline of the job until this paper. He describes the SecDef roles as advisor, diplomat, manager, and war planner—and attributes overall success to the SecDef's ability to maintain key relationships (2006, 215). He also organized historical secretaries according to how well they performed the

functions and built relationships, grouping them together in terms of "Operating Styles" as "the Revolutionaries," "the Firefighters," and "the Team Players" (Stevenson 2006, 216). This comparative historical analysis builds on similar reviews by others (Borklund 1966, Kinnard 1980), but provides a clearer picture of what might make a secretary successful.

However, despite the seemingly bright line between *overseer* and *overseen*, there is a tendency for civil-military scholars to ambiguously group the SecDef sometimes with the civilian principals and sometimes with the military agents. Occasionally, scholars have done this even within the same text (i.e. Desch's coding, 1999; Moten's depiction of Rumsfeld, 2005; Feaver's coding, 2003). This warrants attention—not necessarily to criticize these authors for sloppy coding, but to explore *real* ambiguities that led them in that direction. Certainly, scholars have recognized in recent years that there is a great deal of overlap between political civilian roles and military warfighting roles (Brooks 2021, Golby and Karlin 2020). However, aside from Stevenson's description of the SecDef as a "war planner" there has been little effort to parse out how the secretary himself might sit in both camps and complicate the principal-agent division.

Adding complexity to the idea of civilian/military overlap, is the fact that the two most recent presidential administrations have appointed retired generals as secretaries of defense, despite the fact that presidents in the 66 years prior appointed only SecDefs with no or minimal active-duty service. To be sure, presidents select cabinet members

from a range of backgrounds for a variety of reasons. In choosing a SecDef, presidents might want to find someone with the acumen and clout to tighten the budget, reign in outspoken military leaders, build consensus with Congress or within the NSC, or shift the focus on threat priorities. Each of these mandates requires different leader with different strengths. As one historian put it, the secretaries have been, variously, "leaders and followers, arbiters, prophets, scapegoats, circumstantially successful, haunted by tragedy, amenable, disputatious, unimpressive, dynamic, and dull" (Borklund 1966, 6).

Politics and team dynamics also plays a role in cabinet selections. Presidents tend to benefit from appointing co-partisan and/or like-minded advisors but must account for dominant ideologies in Congress in order to ensure their selections will be confirmed (Bonica, Chen & Johnson 2015). Some presidents have also sought to bring divergent opinions to their cabinets (i.e. President Lincoln's "team of rivals," Goodwin 2006) in order to capitalize on a "polythink" (vs. a groupthink) dynamic (Mintz & Wayne 2016). Others seek cross-party candidates for the sake of generating bipartisan support for their administration's objectives—i.e. President Clinton selecting Cohen for SecDef (Stevenson 2006, 106).

However, the blurry line that the SecDef walks between the civilian and military spheres and the fundamental importance of civilian control in our democracy makes a SecDef's military experience particularly interesting. During the nomination and confirmation processes for Secretaries Mattis and Austin, scholars, journalists, and

policymakers all offered opinions on the dangers of appointing a recently retired military officer to the position (Golby 2020, Schake 2018, Ricks 2016, Golden 2020). There is theoretical basis for their concern.

Huntington, for instance, argues that your perspective is a product of your experience:

> People who act the same way over a long period of time tend to develop distinctive and persistent habits of thought. Their unique relation to the world gives them a unique perspective on the world and leads them to rationalize their behavior and role (Huntington 1957, 59).

This matches Huntington's "isolated sphere" model, but he is not alone in believing that military institutionalization deeply affects one's perspective. Feaver's principal-agent model describes a military that is driven by its own interests, as well as the wishes of its civilian supervisors. A component of this dynamic is that the military and civilians have *divergent* preferences. They both want security for the state, but they don't necessarily agree on how to achieve it. While there is sometimes greater agreement and sometimes greater disagreement, in the end there is an "irreducible difference between military and civilian," which is cultivated by a combination of military customs, training, experience, etc. (Feaver 2003, 59). Feaver and Gelpi explore this divergence in greater detail in *Choosing Your Battles*. Through survey data they

demonstrate that veterans and non-veterans tend to have fundamentally different philosophies on foreign policy. This difference is most evident between military elites and civilian elites (Feaver and Gelpi 2004).

Moreover, as much as it might be convenient for civilian and military perspectives to *converge* in the secretary of defense—for instance, by appointing a civilian person who has a military mind—elevating a "military mind" to the civilian realm contradicts the very nature of the principal-agent model. Civilians and the military play inherently different roles in the civil-military relationship (Feaver 2003, 60). Civilians determine ends; the military recommends and executes means. The "military mind" is burdened by the logistics of execution and entrenched in realpolitik security concerns; civilians are able to apply non-military perspectives to generate fresh solutions (Kaplan 2020). Putting someone with a military outlook in charge of the civilian secretariat, therefore, could be potentially damaging to civilian control.

Feaver-esque concerns about "militariness" are what inspired the statutory "cool off" period for recently retired officers. While both initial versions of the National Security Act of 1947 required that the secretary be appointed "from civilian life," the version introduced in the House was even more limiting. It excluded any "person who has held a commission in a Regular component of the armed services" from the job (H.R. 4214, Sec 102(a)). However, because the Senate version of the bill contained no requirement, the two houses found a compromise in conference and settled on a version

which required appointees to be retired from active service for more than ten years (NSA 1947 Conf. Report, 19).

Other scholars have challenged this "military mind" argument, suggesting that astute men and women can make the transition from military to civilian successfully. "Military minds" are not set in stone, but flexible to broadening experience; professional military officers are capable of being both attentive to military requirements and attentive to democratic values (Travis 2016, Burk 2002). Policymakers, too, have challenged the argument, particularly those who advocated to overturn legislative restrictions and confirm Mattis and Austin. It is person dependent, policymakers suggested in the confirmation hearings; not *all* people could make the jump effectively from military to civilian life, but these men could because they had personally witnessed the innerworkings of the Pentagon and had demonstrated an understanding of civilian roles while serving in uniform. Meanwhile, the generals' military expertise made them, not just admissible, but *appropriate* candidates for the job (Nomination Hearings for Mattis and Austin, esp. introductory comments).

It's along this line of thinking that Presidents and legislators have advocated for the role to be open to all qualified candidates, regardless of whether they'd recently served in uniform. Out of the fourteen Presidents in office since 1947, three have requested that Congress reconsider the restrictions. Additionally, in 2007 Representative Walter Jones moved to eliminate the ten-year active service 'cool off'

period completely in order to expand the “pool of qualified candidates” for the position (Jones press release, May 2007). His proposal made it into the House version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) bill, but was met with compromise in conference with the Senate. In the final version of NDAA 2008 the ‘cool off’ requirement was officially reduced from ten years to seven years (NDAA 2008, Sec. 903(a)).

Despite all of these opinions and concerns, there has been no empirical analysis done on whether a SecDef’s military experience affects civilian control of the military. This is a gap, as it is clearly an important and relevant discussion. On a day-to-day basis the balancing act of civilian supremacy vs. professional expertise is exercised in the E-ring of the Pentagon, where civilian secretaries, senior military leaders, and a conglomeration of uniformed and non-uniformed staff members work together in a sometimes tumultuous, sometimes harmonious, sometimes productive, sometimes ineffective effort. The secretary of defense is at the center of this dynamic.

3. The Role of the Secretary of Defense in Civil-Military Relations

If the secretary of defense sits at the juncture of the civilian and military spheres—a juncture which might look a bit like a Venn diagram—then it is important to understand the functions he or she fills. As mentioned previously, Charles Stevenson (2006) lists these functions as manager of the Pentagon, diplomat, NSC advisor, and war planner. This is helpful, but does not clearly describe the civil-military overlap in the role. I refine and redefine Stevenson's list in order to provide clarity to the SecDef's position in the civil-military dynamic. The SecDef is a *politician*, an *enforcer,* and a *diplomat*, and is required to demonstrate expertise in military *strategy*, as well as *institutional embeddedness* ("institutional embeddedness" term was developed in conversation with Dr. Friend).

3.1 A Civilian Secretary

To the Framers, secretary positions at the top of the military organizations were important, not just to reign in wayward generals but wayward presidents. They interrupted the link between the president and his generals—a link that could be exploited by a tyrannical executive. (Kohn 1991, 90). Thus, when Congress set out to consolidate the military establishment in 1947, the requirement for civilian leaders was a given. The debate, instead, was over how to ensure that civilian voices prevailed over military ones in national security decision-making (SASC Hearings for National Security

Act of 1947). Congress was eager to prevent a "garrison state" in post-war America, where military influences unduly prevailed and the public was enslaved to a military-industrial complex (Laswell 1941, 155-160).

In this debate, President Truman argued that a single civilian secretary, overseeing the entire military enterprise, would provide the *strongest means* for civilian control of the military. He could rise above service-centric agendas and effectively don the civilian point of view (Trask and Goldberg 1997,6). The 1947 Act and its Amendments followed Truman's intent (if not his exact design). It created a civilian secretary of defense who was directly in charge of the three departmental secretaries.

However, as the first SecDef, James Forrestal, soon discovered, while the secretary could *don* a civilian point-of-view, he or she did not have the power to combat service-centric agendas. In fact, Forrestal once said that "the peacetime mission of the Armed Services is to destroy the Secretary of defense" (West, Jr. 1981, 91). Though he once advocated that the SecDef's job be centered on "coordination," versus control, by the end of his tenure Forrestal was pushing for greater authority and manning in OSD (Trask and Goldberg 1997, 8). Though it took another decade and many rounds of negotiations with members of Congress, the Defense Reorganization Act of 1958 and subsequent directives provided both authority and clarity to the SecDef's role: "the chain of command was to run from the President to the secretary of defense and through the Joint Chiefs to the unified commanders" (Trask and Goldberg 1997, 28). Now the

SecDef could more directly *control* the services in order to meet policy objectives in theater. Post-1947 Amendments to the National Security Act also allotted the secretary an integrated civilian and military staff in order to effectively exercise his or her authority, and specified that the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff are advisors, not commanders. The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 further clarified the Chairman's advisory duties (10 U.S. Code § 151); it also specified the chain of command as flowing from president to SecDef to combatant commands, excluding the JCS (10 U.S.C § 162). Over the course of these debates, some Congressmembers remained wary of creating a "super secretary" and voiced concerns about the rise of a "Prussian-style general staff," with the SecDef leading the nation as a despotic "man-on-horseback." However, the White House and the DoD were adamant that the SecDef required greater authority; through excessive lobbying, the SecDef's powers were more fully established (Trask and Goldberg 1997, 9, 26).

Functionally, the SecDef does several things. First, he or she is a *politician.* He or she is expected to negotiate and communicate within the government and within the party in order to advance the department's and the administration's agendas. Stevenson (2006) does not include this as a *function* of the secretary, but analyzes political relations in his assessment of historical secretaries. I argue that being a politician is a SecDef *function*. It is not just that a SecDef's success is built on his or her ability to foster good relationships (Stevenson's view); the SecDef is *required* to navigate the network of

authority and status in Washington in order to promote DoD interests. For instance, he or she must nominate and advocate for top political appointments within the Pentagon, all of whom must be reviewed and confirmed by the Senate. The SecDef must also negotiate budget requirements with the president and Congress. Finally, he or she must keep Congress and the electorate appraised of DoD strategy and policy, answer for the DoD's decisions and mistakes, and garner support for military needs and activities. Recognizing these tasks as SecDef functions, rather than products of his or her charisma, trustworthiness, etc. is important for comparing the effectiveness of secretaries with backgrounds in (or outside of) Washington.

Additionally, the SecDef is an *enforcer* of civilian policy intent—in everything from military operations to the expansive DoD budget. He or she is responsible for ensuring that the military meets the president's and Congress' objectives, and that the military is maintaining its appropriate role within the inter-agency effort. This encompasses two of Stevenson's functions—manager and war planner—but more fully incorporates the "control" element of the SecDef's mandate (10 U.S. Code § 202(b)). While Stevenson describes the manager role as purely administrative—i.e. maintaining effective business processes (2006, 182-188), I argue that the SecDef's responsibility is weightier. He or she does not just oversee processes in order to maintain bureaucratic harmony and secure resources, but imposes civilian budgetary objectives on the services via the civilian service secretaries and an empowered OSD staff.

Stevenson's description of "war planner" more closely fits my *enforcer* function, but it excludes the administrative/budgetary aspects and slightly mischaracterizes "control." In Stevenson's depiction, SecDef "control" over war planning constitutes his or her "unapologetic civilian assertiveness" over plans (as opposed to heeding military advice, Stevenson 2006 193)— i.e. civilian over professional supremacy (as characterized by Feaver 2011, 90). However, this misrepresents control as only flourishing under particularly inflexible managers (for instance, Rumsfeld, Stevenson 2006 193). I argue that *enforcing* civilian objectives does not preclude a SecDef from taking professional recommendations. The functional requirement for the SecDef is that he or she helps determine well-informed policy objectives, communicates those objectives to military leaders, and ensures that the military complies. He or she does this by actively reviewing plans, designing the strategy, engaging in the budget process, signing off on troop deployments (as required by 10 U.S. Code § 113), approving executive orders for contingency operations (JP 5-0, Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations), etc.

Finally, the SecDef is a *diplomat.* He or she represents one part of a whole-of-government foreign policy—a policy for which the State Department generally has (or should have) the lead. Therefore, the SecDef should coordinate and nest with State Department objectives, and perform diplomat functions by bringing tangibles to diplomatic discussions—port operations, basing plans, and multilateral training opportunities. On this function I align most with Stevenson, but I argue that the

responsibility has greater significance for civil-military relations than he lets on. Stevenson overviews the SecDef's diplomatic tasks—for instance, taking trips and overseeing cooperative activities with foreign militaries—but describes the SecDef's involvement in diplomacy as "division of labor" and a necessity based on the fact that the DoD has significant international presence and clout. I argue that this function should include the SecDef's responsibility to intentionally nest military means within a broader, whole-of-government policy.

3.2. Military Expertise

Despite the fact that the SecDef is a codified civilian and executes many civilian duties, he or she is also head of the national military establishment. As the saying goes, where you stand is where you sit… and the SecDef stands in the Pentagon. He or she represents and advocates for the DoD on a regular basis. Therefore, the SecDef must share in the Pentagon's military expertise (idea generated with the assistance of Dr. Friend). This takes two forms.

First, the secretary must have expertise in military *strategy.* He must possess and demonstrate a thorough understanding of national security threats and military capabilities. Not only does he need this in order to represent the department on the NSC and to other externalities, but it is required for him to perform Title 10 tasks, like signing off on troop deployments and approving contingency operations. This expertise is similar to what Stevenson (2006) describes as the SecDef's NSC advisor function. I

argue, that this is not a SecDef function, per se; his or her mandate is to assist the president in DoD matters by actively *directing* and *controlling* the Department (10 U.S. Code § 113(b)). At the same time, as principal assistant to the president and head of the DoD, the SecDef will advise the president in the course of his or her duties, and must demonstrate that he/she has expertise in military strategy.

The SecDef is also required to demonstrate *institutional embeddedness*. This includes what Dale Herspring calls "concurring with military service culture"—setting high standards for personal conduct and demonstrating respect for military values and sacrifices (2005, 14). It also means the secretary must understand and work with the nuances of military culture (i.e. military promotion system, military norms and mores). Finally, it means the SecDef must understand and appreciate the professional military ethic and seek to protect it from partisan politics. While *institutional embeddedness* can be learned or adopted by anyone, it is important for healthy civil-military relations (Herspring 2005, 14). Moreover, despite the fact that it is learnable, some historical SecDefs have managed (elected) to embed more fully than others.

3.3 Organizational Leader

Finally, the SecDef is an organizational leader, a function that is neither exclusively military nor exclusive civilian in nature. There is nothing particularly unique about leading the Department of Defense, though it is an exceptionally large and dispersed organization. The tenets of good executive leadership in the Pentagon are the

same as those in the State Department or in corporations and there are myriad opinions on best executive leadership practices.

Dale Herspring summarizes some "military" expectations of leaders: that they deliver clear orders, understand roles and lanes, to respect the diversity of expertise in the organization, and to demonstrate respect for organizational values and traditions (2005, 17). Arguably these do not describe effective military leadership, but effective organizational leadership of any kind.

An effective organizational leader also assesses and accepts risk, and risk is a large part of military operations. As Feaver puts it "the military quantifies risk, the civilian judges it" (Feaver 1996, 154). To put this in terms of organizational leadership roles in general, an effective leader both works through risk *and* accepts the consequences.

It is unlikely that a SecDef could feasibly bring all of the relevant expertise to the office or perform all of the functions perfectly. As a result, SecDefs have generally been judged to be unsuccessful by one measure or another (Stevenson 2005, 215; West, Jr. 1981, 91). It is for this reason that Charles Stevenson calls the job "nearly impossible" (Stevenson 2006, 3).

4. Hypothesis for SecDef Military Experience

As described, the SecDef's job has *civilian functions,* but also requires some level of *military expertise*. By parsing these out and exploring each in detail I've already provided greater clarity to the literature on how and where the SecDef's job contains civil/military overlap. This clarification is important, because I argue that failure in *either* sphere—either in performance of civilian functions or in ability to provide military expertise—can lead to degraded civil-military relations. If the secretary fails in his civilian functions, then he may lose the *trust* of the president, Congress or the public, and will over-empower the military voice due to lack of oversight, lack of legitimacy, or intentional deference. On the other hand, if he fails to demonstrate the necessary military expertise, he may lose the *confidence* of the military and civilian leaders, and over-empower military voices as a result of either incompetency or resentment or both.

As was discussed in Section 2, other authors (Huntingon 1957, Feaver 2003, Feaver and Gelpi 2004) have argued that military experience shapes a person's worldview. However, many authors simplify military experience when conducting empirical analysis—coding it as a binary variable (service/no service), and sometimes adding in another binary variable (combat/no combat) (i.e. Feaver and Gelpi 2004, Stevenson 2006). This doesn't paint the whole picture. As Feaver (2003) and Huntington (1957) insinuate with their descriptions of a "military mind," acculturation

is a process—the more time someone spends in the military, the more military will be their worldview.

I argue that we should view a SecDef's "militariness" with greater context than is given by a binary variable. An extensively military SecDef brings a different background and worldview to the job than does an extensively civilian SecDef, but also a different background and worldview from a SecDef with just some experience. In Section 6 I illuminate the range of historical SecDef "militariness."

I also argue that a SecDef's "militariness" effects whether he or she will be likely to succeed in either the civilian or military aspects of the job and, therefore, whether he or she will be able to maintain effective civilian control. In particular, I assert that a secretary who has significant military experience has, therefore, been extensively shaped by a Huntingtonian ethic will be more likely to struggle in the SecDef job's *political* function. I argue also that he or she is also less likely to excel as a *diplomat* after spending significant time viewing national security problems from a tactical/operational military lens. Finally, I argue that a SecDef extensively shaped by military experience will be a less effective *enforcer* of civilian policy, both because he or she is not accustomed to thinking in terms of ends (vs means) and because he or she might be sympathetic to military pushback.

On the other hand, an exclusively civilian background will more likely leave a SecDef unprepared to demonstrate the military expertise and institutional

embeddedness required for the job. In either case, secretaries with either extensively military backgrounds *or* "purely civilian" backgrounds are more likely to struggle in the job and degrade civilian control as a result.

5. Research Design

In the history of the office, there have only been 28 secretaries of defense, a very small N for quantitative research. With such a small N it is difficult to control for the many other variables that might affect civilian control of the military during a particular SecDef's tenure. Therefore, in order to test the effect of SecDef "militariness" on civilian control, I will use case studies. This way I can account for the many complexities of the SecDef role, while diving into the ways in which the SecDefs' military experience has impacted the civil-military relationship. I will first provide an overview of the universe of cases and summary statistics of the cases. Then I will provide a close examination of the three most military SecDefs and two non-military SecDefs in a most similar case analysis (Seawright and Gerring 2008).

5.1. Case Study Selection

For the case studies, I will examine most similar cases (Seawright and Gerring 2008) using 5 secretaries—three extensively military ones and two purely civilian ones. Because there have only been 28 SecDefs in history, it is impossible to control for potential confounding variables, which include the president, the chairman of the joint chiefs, the external and internal threat environments, etc. To compensate for this control problem, I include variation in the party of the appointing president, so that I can group and compare SecDefs with varied military experience by presidential party. I prioritize variation in presidential party because there is extensive civil-military literature describing the military's conservative bent. (Huntington 1957, Dempsey 2011, Kohn

1994, Urben 2010). This bent might affect civilian control of the military in Democrat vs. Republican administrations.

From Democratic administrations I selected two extensively military SecDefs—George Marshall and Lloyd Austin—and one "purely civilian" SecDef—William Cohen. Although George Marshall served more than four decades before the next secretary on my list, I include his case because the list of former-four-star secretaries is so small that it seemed valuable to be comprehensive. Moreover, the other retired general appointed by a Democrat—Lloyd Austin—is still in office. Since his time is not yet concluded, it is difficult to fully assess Austin's effect on civilian control of the military. In essence, Austin's a "light" case. From Republican Administrations I selected one extensively military SecDef—Jim Mattis—and one "purely civilian" SecDef—Robert Gates.

If my hypothesis is correct, then the former general cases should be more likely to struggle with the civilian functions of the SecDef job. They will likely be disappointing politicians or diplomats, ineffective (or unwilling) enforcers, or a combination thereof. On the other hand, the "purely civilians" should struggle to demonstrate expertise and institutional embeddedness. In all cases, civilian control of the military should suffer.

These represent hard cases because, except in Mattis' case, each of these SecDefs came into office during a period of degraded civil-military relations with a mandate to reassert civilian authority, influence or reputation vis a vis the military. Effective civilian control, then, was part of each man's priorities. Marshall was onboarded, in part, to deal with a renegade MacArthur; Cohen was expected to revitalize the administration's poor reputation with the right and the military on defense matters; Gates was asked to forcibly

shift the military's focus to counter-terror; and Austin was asked to reestablish a healthy balance of influence in his nomination hearings. Meanwhile, while Mattis did not come to office with a mandate of control, he served a president that was assertive, decisive and critical of ongoing military operations.

Table 1. Case Study Selections

	Republican President	Democrat President
Career Military	Mattis	Austin, Marshall
Career Civilian	Gates	Cohen

5.2. Dependent and Independent Variables

The dependent variable for these cases is civilian control, measured in terms of relative influence in the DoD between the civilian secretariat and the military. While this involves some subjective coding, I consider effective/healthy civilian control of the military to consist of an empowered, ends-driven secretariat that is cognizant of, but untethered by, military preferences, reluctance or beliefs about limitations. Effective civilian control is manifested in an active civilian staff that can act as the extra "arms and legs, eyes and ears, and authoritative voices for the secretary" (Marlin 2021, 62). Conversely, ineffective civilian control looks like an unsynchronized, uninformed, and unempowered civilian staff and an unduly empowered JCS or military OSD staff (like the Secretary's Initiative Group under Mattis, interview with Dr. Friend), which steps up to execute oversight or other civilian functions or which executes military functions without appropriate oversight.

For the sake of comparison, I also incorporate Stevenson's (2006) dependent variable, which I call *mission success*. Stevenson evaluates each SecDef on whether he accomplishes what he (not necessarily the president) set out to accomplish. In some cases, SecDef goals are bold, in other cases they are not.

The independent variable for this study is military experience. As I've already insinuated, there exists a range of SecDef "militariness" (Reserve experience, DoD civilian experience, combat experience, etc.), but the five case studies selected are more black-and-white. In these cases, military experience is dichotomous: either it is extensive, or it is absent.

6. Variations in Military Experience

While there is a significant spread in experience—from no service to over 4 decades of service—every SecDef falls within six categories of experience. In the next to sections I will provide an overview of the historical cases as well as some descriptive statistics, which challenge common assumptions.

6.1. Overview of the Universe of Cases

The "Purely Civilian SecDefs." These secretaries served neither in the military, nor in the DoD prior to being appointed SecDef. Presumably, they came into the office most unfamiliar with military culture and strategy. The "Purely Civilian SecDefs" are as follows: Charles Wilson, Neil McElroy, James Schlesinger, Richard Cheney, William Cohen and Robert Gates. Two of these, Neil McElroy and Charles Wilson, were successful businessmen. Richard Cheney and William Cohen both came from serving in Congress. Robert Gates was career CIA and James Schlesinger held a variety of political appointments in government outside of the Department of Defense. Two of these—Charles Wilson and Neil McElroy—served under President Eisenhower, who was himself a retired general. It is important to note that Secretary Gates is a bit of an anomaly. He *technically* served two years in uniform through the rank of First Lieutenant. However, he did so under the sponsorship of the Central Intelligence Agency. As a result, his professional loyalty, even while serving, was to the Agency.

”SecDefs with DoD Civilian Experience.” The second group of secretaries includes those who did not serve in the military, but did serve as civilians in the DoD prior to their appointment as SecDef. Presumably, they are familiar with Pentagon policymaking culture, even if they haven’t been personally immersed in military life. There are only two in this group: Harold Brown and Ash Carter, both of whom began their careers as physicists. Brown served as Director of Defense Research and Engineering and then the Secretary of the Air Force prior to his appointment as SecDef. Carter served in several DoD political appointments, including Deputy Secretary of defense, prior to his appointment.

The “Minimal Service/No Combat SecDefs.” This group includes those with minimal (under five years) of service, and no combat experience: James Forrestal, Robert McNamara Clark Clifford, Frank Carlucci, Casper Weinberger, Les Aspin, William Perry, and Leon Panetta. Most of these served on senior-level staffs during their military service, or were handpicked as executive aides. Within this group there are two sub-groups—those that served other DoD appointments prior to the SecDef job and those that did not. James Forrestal, Frank Carlucci and William Perry all fall into the first group. The others came were appointed out of the business world, Congress, or other positions within the executive branch.

“Minimal Service/Combat Experience SecDefs.” The fourth group includes those with minimal (under five years) of service, and combat experience in World War I,

World War II or Vietnam: Louis Johnson, Robert Lovett, Thomas Gates, Melvin Laird, Elliot Richardson, and Chuck Hagel. Of these, three received purple hearts and two received awards recognizing their valor in action. Hagel was the only secretary who served as an enlisted man. Again, this group contains those with prior civilian DoD experience and those without. Louis Johnson, Robert Lovett and Thomas Gates all served political appointments in the DoD prior to being appointed SecDef. Melvin Laird and Chuck Hagel served in Congress prior to their appointments, and Elliot Richardson served appointments in other agencies.

The "Mixed Careerists." The fifth group includes those secretaries who served full careers in a combination of regular forces and the Reserves: Donald Rumsfeld and Mark Esper. The former served 3 years on active duty and 18 years in the Naval Reserves; the latter served 10 years on active duty and 11 in the Army National Guard and Reserves. Both held numerous command positions in the course of their careers, and retired with just over 20 years of service as senior field grade officers. While both men spent a majority of their service as "citizen-soldiers," they were habituated to the military culture.

The final group includes retired four and five-star generals—"The General SecDefs": George Marshall, James Mattis and Lloyd Austin. Each of these men served for over 40 years and obtained the pinnacle rank of their day. Each, also, gained a reputation by serving in high-profile billets. Of the 247 years of combined military

service of all 28 secretaries of defense from history, the service of these three men accounts for well over half.

If we consider these experience levels cross-tabbed with Stevenson's "Operating Style" categories—Firefighters, Revolutionaries, and Team Players—we see that each of his categories contains SecDefs with military and non-military experience. I extended his coding to the seven most recent SecDefs (Appendix A), and those additions are incorporated in the parenthetical counts in Table 1 below. Although the coding here is clearly subjective, I categorized Bob Gates as a Revolutionary; Chuck Hagel, Mark Esper and Jim Mattis as Firefighters; and Leon Panetta, Ash Carter and Lloyd Austin as Team Players based on Stevenson's depictions.

Table 2. Operating Styles vs. Militariness

Experience Category	Firefighters	Revolutionaries	Team Players	*Total*
Purely Civilian	1	1 (2)	3	*5*
DoD Civilian Experience	0	0	1 (2)	*1*
Minimal/Non-Combat	2	3	2 (3)	*7*
Minimal/Combat	2 (3)	0	3	*5*
Mixed Careerists	0 (1)	1	0	*1*
The Generals	0 (1)	0	1 (2)	*1*
Totals	*5 (8)*	*5 (6)*	*10 (13)*	*20 (27)*

6.2. Cross-Tabulations of Cases

With such a small N, it is difficult to establish any sort of statistically-powerful correlation between "miltiariness" categories and other variables—including Stevenson's Operating Styles. However, it is useful to explore the relationships between

"militariness" and other variables, even without heuristic tools, in order to reflect on the assumptions and predictions we maintain about what military experience means and why presidents might desire it in a SecDef. The following sections explore this by cross-tabbing different variables with SecDef military experience.

6.1.1. Appointing President's Party

First, one might assume there to be correlation between the secretary's military experience and the party of the appointing president. For instance, since Republicans tend to be more hawkish and Democrats more dovish, perhaps Republican presidents will be more likely to nominate extensively military SecDefs. On the other hand, perhaps Democrat president choose very military SecDefs in order to gain support from hawks (Krepps, et. al 2018), or in order to gain credibility in Defense issues, which are typically "Republican owned" (Fagan 2021).

A visual look at the cross-tabbed data suggests that none of these assumptions is reliable. Of the 28 SecDef appointments, 14 were made by Republican presidents and 14 were made by Democrat presidents. Both Republican and Democrat presidents have appointed secretaries from almost every category of military experience. Of the 20 secretarial appointments where the secretary had military experience, 9 were made by Republicans and 11 were made by Democrats.

Table 3. Presidential Party vs. SecDef Militariness

Experience Category	Republican	Democrat	*Total*
Purely Civilian	5	1	*6*
DoD Civilian Experience	0	2	*2*
Minimal/Non-Combat	2	6	*8*
Minimal/Combat	3	3	*6*
Mixed Careerists	3	0	*3*
The Generals	1	2	*3*
Totals	*14*	*14*	*28*

6.1.3. Bi-partisan/Co-partisan Appointments

There is incentive for presidents to appoint co-partisans to their cabinet, but there is also incentive to find members who can generate bi-partisan support (Bonica, Chen and Johnson 2015). For instance, if we again consider issue ownership, it is possible that Democrat presidents are more likely to choose Republican cabinet members on issues that Republicans "own" (i.e. defense) and vice versa, in order to gain support and credibility from across the aisle (Fagan 2021). It would follow that Democrat presidents should be more likely to pick Republican SecDefs.

Upon visual inspection this assumption might be true, though with such a small N it is fruitless to heuristically test. When it comes to secretaries of defense, 21 out of 28 of the appointments were co-partisan, 3 were bi-partisan, and 4 were neither (based on declared party affiliation). All 3 of the bi-partisan appointments were made by Democrat presidents: Cohen (non-military) was a Republican Senator appointed to SecDef by President Clinton, McNamara (minimal/non-combat) was a Republican

businessman appointed by President Kennedy, and Hagel (minimal/combat) was a former Republican senator appointed by President Obama.

Table 4. Secretary's Military Experience and Partisan Nature of Appointment (Republican and Democrat Presidents)

Experience Category	Cross/ Repub.	Co-Part/ Repub.	Neutral/ Repub.	Cross/ Dem.	Co-Part/ Dem.	Neutral/ Dem.	*Totals*
Purely Civilian	0	5	0	1	0	0	*6*
DoD Civilian	0	0	0	0	2	0	*2*
Min/Non-Comb	0	2	0	1	5	0	*8*
Minimal/Combat	0	3	0	1	1	1	*6*
Mixed Careerists	0	3	0	0	0	0	*3*
The Generals	0	0	1	0	0	2	*3*
Totals	*0*	*13*	*1*	*3*	*8*	*3*	*28*

6.1.4. Presidential Military Experience

A final relationship to consider is that between the secretary's military experience and the president's military experience. Presumably, a President who himself has significant military experience might feel comfortable with military capabilities, strategy and professional culture and may not rely as heavily on that expertise from him SecDef. Interestingly, this doesn't necessarily seem to be the case.

In the 75 years since the role was established, there have been 28 secretaries (counting Secretary Rumsfeld twice), who served 14 presidents. Of those presidents, one was a retired general (President Eisenhower); 3 did full military careers in a combination of active and reserve service (Presidents Truman, Johnson and Nixon); 3 served in short duration but experienced combat (Presidents Kennedy, Ford and Bush,

Sr.); 3 served between 6-10 years of active, reserve or national guard duty in non-combat capacities (Presidents Carter, Reagan and Bush, Jr.); and 4 did not serve in the military at all (Presidents Clinton, Obama, Trump and Biden).

If we look just at the extremes, 2 retired generals were appointed as secretaries by non-military presidents (Presidents Trump and Biden), but 1 was appointed by a president with over 20 years of active and reserve service (President Truman). On the other hand, non-military secretaries were appointed by presidents with every variation of military experience.

Table 5. Secretary's Military Experience and President's Military Experience

Experience Category	Non-mil	6-10 yr svc/ Non-Comb	<6 yrs svc/ Combat	Mixed Careerists	The General	*Totals*
Non-Mil SecDef	1	1	1	1	2	*6*
DoD Civilian	1	1	0	0	0	*2*
Min/Non-Combat	3	2	1	2	0	*8*
Minimal/Combat	1	0	0	4	1	*6*
Mixed Careerists	1	1	1	0	0	*3*
The Generals	2	0	0	1	0	*3*
Totals	*9*	*5*	*3*	*8*	*3*	*28*

7. Case Studies

For each of the five case studies I will first analyze the military exposure and experience of the SecDef and describe his mandate (what the president wanted him to achieve) and other reasons for his selection. I will then provide an overview of the various civil-military issues during his tenure, and analyze both his performance of the civilian functions and his ability to demonstrate military expertise. Finally, I will assess whether his performance improved or degraded civilian control of the military and whether he achieved what he hoped to achieve.

7.1 Democrat Administrations

7.1.1 George Marshall

Secretary George Marshall was one of "The General SecDefs." He served 43 years in the military—9 of those as a flag officer—and achieved the elusive rank of five-star General of the Army. Moreover, he was a general in reputation, beloved by the public for organizing victory in World War II. However, he was also familiar with Washington. For most of the war, in fact, he was in DC. First, he was assisting Roosevelt with his buildup strategy as Chief of Staff of the Army, then he was advising and accompanying Roosevelt in every key Allied Power Conference as U.S. leader of the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff (Borklund 1966, 92). Upon retirement Marshall served as President Truman's Presidential ambassador to China and then his secretary of state before retiring, briefly, again. When Marshall was sworn in as secretary of defense in

September,1950 he had served 46 years in government, 43 of those as a soldier and 3 of them as a civilian political appointee (George Marshall's OSD Historian bio).

Mandate. In President Truman's own words, he hired Marshall because he needed "a man of great national prestige to head the Department of Defense" (Pogue 1987, 422). Marshall's predecessor, Louis Johnson, had been a disappointing secretary. Arrogant and personally ambitious, Johnson had soured relations with Congress, and senior members of the military, and had lost the confidence of Truman and the public (Condit 1988, 33). Most significantly, Secretary Johnson had ruined relations with Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, even going so far as to severely limit communication between the two departments (Condit 1988, 371-373). President Truman wanted a man who could turn the Department around and restore good relations within his National Security Council (Borklund 1966, 88).

Second, Truman needed help with the war effort in Korea, which was in jeopardy. Truman wanted Marshall to help him build the force to meet needs on the ground, as well as help manage the expanding international coalition (Stoler 2021, 169). To top it all off, Truman was managing a tremendous personality in General MacArthur—the five-star Far East Commander who was tremendously popular with many members of Congress and who had a propensity for speaking outside of his purview on matters of national security policy (Truman 1956, 354). Secretary Johnson was reticent to reign him in (Acheson 1969, 423-425), but George Marshall had clout, and

a history of being blunt with MacArthur (Acheson 1969, 424). In Marshall, Truman believed he had a special ally who could help him establish some control over MacArthur's actions.

Key Events of Marshall's Tenure. Marshalls' tenure was brief—just one year, and it was dominated by the Korean War.

Just days prior to Marshall's confirmation as the new SecDef, General MacArthur, the Far East Commander, began a daring amphibious assault on Incheon in order to interrupt enemy supply lines from the rear. North Korean forces were taken completely by surprise, turning the tides of what had become a rather desperate situation (Truman 1956, 337-339). Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Bradly, called the envelopment maneuver "the luckiest military operation in history" (Bradley 1983, 556). By September 29th—just 8 days after Marshall was confirmed—MacArthur had retaken all of South Korea and restored the government in Seoul (MacArthur 355). When he requested permission to move U.N. forces across the 38th parallel in pursuit of the enemy, he was granted permission but advised of the parameters: do not start a war with China (MacArthur 1964, 358). Marshall sent a private note on September 30th for MacArthur to proceed "unhampered (Pogue 1987, 457)."

In the months that followed, however, MacArthur brushed off intelligence reports that China intended to (or had already) join the war. He continued to push non-

Korean troops closer and closer to the Chinese border, something the JCS had specifically directed him not to do (Pogue 1987, 458).

On November 7, when MacArthur ordered the bridges of the Yalu River bombed and subsequently confirmed that there were Chinese pouring over the border into Korea, Marshall and the JCS were dumbfounded (Pogue 1987, 459). What were U.S. troops doing so far north? Coalition Forces were soon overwhelmed and began retreating down the Peninsula. MacArthur meanwhile, was all over the map in the press. He publicly pinned the retreat on Washington's unwillingness to support him, announced that troops would be "home by Christmas," and insinuated that China could expect retribution (Condit 1988, 102). Marshall and the JCS were starting to think MacArthur had "lost control of the battlefield and possibly his nerve (Bradley 1983, 604)" and were increasingly frustrated by his rhetoric. They sent in General Ridgeway and additional troops in order to regain the Allied position at the 38th parallel (Bradley 1983, 607-608).

The final straw, however, came in March when the House Minority Leader, Joseph Martin, requested that MacArthur weigh in on the situation in Korea. To Truman's shock, MacArthur's letter, which Martin read aloud in the House, advocated for the use of troops from Formosa (Taiwan) and called into question Truman's global plan for containment (Letter from MacArthur to Martin, March 20, 1951). Despite MacArthur's wild popularity in Congress, Truman fired him. The resulting political

backlash sparked a Congressional investigation into the dismissal. Marshall's testimony in support of Truman helped assuage Congressional concerns, but ultimately failed to restore Truman's reputation (Borklund 1966, 110).

Despite these strategic losses in Korea and the highly-public civil-military conflict during his tenure, George Marshall's tenure must be viewed in context. If we do so, then it is evident that he actually performed quite well.

Civilian Functions. In almost all of the civilian functions, Marshall was successful, despite his extensive military experience.

As Truman had hoped, Marshall was a great team player and his impact on the executive branch was felt immediately. In part, this was because he understood his role as a *diplomat* (after all, he had already served as Secretary of State). Despite his personal experience with military means, Marshall understood that the DoD had to be nested within a broader national security agenda and that the State Department had the lead. He immediately lifted the moratorium on Defense-State collaboration (Borklund 1966, 102). Moreover, he demonstrated personal deference to Secretary Acheson by exercising traditional military protocols—always walking left and slightly behind Acheson, entering automobiles second and sitting on the left, refraining from speaking in meetings until Acheson had done first (Acheson1969, 441). The result, according to Acheson, was monumental. For the first time in three years the secretaries of state and defense collaborated on foreign policy problems as teammates. (Acheson 1969, 441)."

Acheson later reflected on misgivings by members of Congress that Marshall would bring a "military mind" to the civilian post of SecDef. "Nothing could be more mistaken... in the sense that [his mind] was dominated by military considerations… relating to the use of force" (Acheson 1960, 163). According to Acheson Marshall was exceptionally concerned with the dominance of non-military solutions and this enabled a rebalancing of ends and means within the Defense Department (Acheson 1969, 735).

Although he received his fair share of vitriol from members on the extreme right (Condit 1988, 109), Marshall was also an adept *politician* and well-connected within Washington, particularly within Congress and its key committees (Pogue 1987, 440). This is most evidenced by his wins getting staff appointments through Congress, especially getting Ann Rosenberg confirmed as assistant secretary of defense for manpower. Marshall knew when he selected Ann that it would be an uphill battle with Republicans; she was "a New Dealer, a Jew, an Easterner, and a woman." She was a bold selection, but Marshall felt that manpower was a top priority and was adamant for ensuring the right person was in the job. Despite vicious attacks from the right, Marshall worked through his personal network in order to get Rosenberg in place (Pogue 1987, 430)

Marshall was also known for his mastery at communicating to Congress in testimony—at highlighting main points and persuasively drawing on experience (Marshall 1991, 355; Perry 2017, 229). This was especially helpful for the Administration

in February of 1951 when Truman came under attack by Republicans in the Senate over his stationing American troops in Europe under NATO (Condit 1988, 97). According to Bradley, Truman relied heavily on Marshall as his "tower of strength" when dealing with Congress (Bradley 1987, 497).

Interestingly, while his performance in hearings was primarily a personal talent, his political clout was bolstered by his military reputation. Congressmembers almost always referred to him as "General," not as "Secretary" (Senate Hearings on Korea, 1951; Borklund 1966, 110-111). Ultimately, however, it was his integrity and candor that won Congressmembers over. Said Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn, "Marshall… would tell the truth even if it hurt his cause. Congress always respected him. They would give him things they would give to no one else" (Pogue 1987, 517).

Where Marshall suffered most was in his role as *enforcer*. With his notice on September 30th 1950 to "proceed unhampered," he failed to clearly communicate to MacArthur the Allied policy objectives in North Korea and his limitations. In the winter, he stood by for too long as MacArthur's forces retreated south, rather than swiftly finding a replacement who could turn the tide (Bradley 1987, 604).

Bradley suggests that Marshall's latency in removing MacArthur for competency reasons was due, in part, to his sensitivity about the "civilianness" of his role. He wanted to ensure that he was not unduly drowning out the opinions of his military advisors—the Joint Chiefs—who were hesitant about removing MacArthur for

operational failures (Bradley 587). It could be argued, therefore, that his Huntingtonian view of civilian and military roles (likely cultivated by his professional military education) hampered him in his SecDef responsibilities.

At the same time, it is important to remember the context of the time. MacArthur had demonstrated incredible acumen at Incheon, despite being doubted by the JCS. Moreover, the President (and Marshall) were beholden to the policy objectives of the entire U.N. Coalition, and it was a challenge for Truman to gain clear consensus with his fellow leaders (Truman 1957, 406-413). Finally, Truman *and* Marshall had received contrite apologies from MacArthur for his press statements (Truman 1957, 365), and both men were cognizant of the political backlash that would stem from MacArthur's dismissal (Truman 1957, 447). Therefore, Marshall's shortcomings as an enforcer of policy were significantly complicated by the pace of events, the earlier success of MacArthur and MacArthur's political popularity. There is no evidence which suggests that someone with less military experience would have acted any more decisively. Moreover, when Truman *did* fire MacArthur, Marshall provided "crucial support" to the president during the subsequent Congressional investigation and assertively reestablished civilian supremacy (Stevenson 2006, 13).

Military Expertise. It is undeniable that Marshall brough military expertise to the office, though as a *strategist* in the SecDef job Marshall had mixed success. His surprise that Marshall's forces had were at the Yalu suggest that he was not duly informed on

MacArthur's activities—even those that had serious strategic consequences. This was a failing of MacArthur's, but also Marshall's. Then in January Marshall hesitated to replace MacArthur, even when it became clear that he might lose the Peninsula. However, this assessment must also be viewed with the context of Incheon in mind. MacArthur had just recently proved that he had an accurate operational picture and could effectively assess risk. There was no real reason to believe that another commander could succeed where the brilliant MacArthur was failing.

Of course, Marshall was very successful in terms of *institutional embeddedness*. He was admired by the Force and demonstrated respect for its service (Borklund 1966, 90). Moreover, he was highly sensitive to maintaining the military's professional military ethic and avoiding politicization of the military (Stoler 2021, 169). He did not vote, even after his tenure as secretary, and was dedicated to keeping the DoD out of politics (Uldrich 2005). When he finally understood in March that MacArthur's previous contrition over press statements were disingenuous, he recognized that Truman needed a subordinate and representative commander and supported MacArthur's dismissal (Condit 1988,104). Finally, he maintained awareness of own reputation as a leader and made a conscientious effort to support the President and his public mandate. This was demonstrated by his deferent attitude towards the President and the Secretary of State, and his successful efforts to support the president's decision regarding MacArthur.

Civilian Control. Without a doubt, civilian control improved under Marshall in terms of the balance of civilian and military influence in the Pentagon. Marshall performed all of the civilian functions of the SecDef job well, despite his extensively military background. He was an effective politician, diplomat and (in the end) enforcer of policy. As a result, he was able to maintain the trust of the president, Congress and the public (aside from a few outspoken, right-wing Congressmembers), as well as the confidence of military and civilian leaders in the Pentagon.

His success was reflected in his competent, informed and empowered civilian secretariat. By way of his reputation and personal connections, Marshall was able to staff key political appointments with mission-driven, team-focused personnel. Most significantly, Marshall maintained an outstanding relationship with Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Lovett, who was described as Marshall's "alter-ego" (Condit 1988, 36) and who was groomed for succession following Marshall's retirement.

Finally, Marshall's reputation with Congress and willingness to enforce Truman's will on MacArthur set an important precedent for generations of military officers. As Marshall attested, the president deserves subordinate commanders; by defending Truman's decision before Congress Marshall reinstated civilian supremacy.

Mission Success. Although Stevenson does not use Marshall as one of his case studies, he insinuates in his introductory chapters that Marshall achieved mission success in his mandate (Stevenson 2006, 13) through a "Team Player" operating style. I agree. Although Marshall was at first slow to respond to MacArthur's failings, he and General Bradley ultimately provided direction to the commanders in Korea in order to save the war effort from total disaster. Moreover, he established a cooperative working relationship with the State Department, and provided Truman with vital support when he had to defend his dismissal of MacArthur to Congress.

7.1.2. William Cohen

Before he took the job of SecDef, William Cohen had never worked in the Pentagon nor served in the military. That's not to say he didn't have experience with military matters. During his service in Congress, Cohen had assisted with drafting several key pieces of military legislation, including the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Montgomery G.I. Bill Act (William S. Cohen, OSD Historian bio).

However, this type of national security experience was very different than what was required in the Pentagon. Cohen had no experience running a large organization, and no experience on the execution end of policy. As his long-term Chief of Staff, Bob Tyrer, pointed out, it was a big change to go from problem-finder and to problem-solver; Going into the job Secretary Cohen and Tyrer, had two major concerns: 1. They wanted to make sure the secretary could overcome his lack of military experience, and 2. They

wanted to make a smooth transition to the executive branch (author interview with Tyrer).

Mandate. Clinton had been satisfied with Secretary Perry's performance as SecDef and hoped that Cohen could continue the good effort in terms of Pentagon leadership (Clinton 2004, 737). He was impressed with Cohen's work on key pieces of defense legislation, most particularly his involvement in Goldwater-Nichols, which demonstrated that understood what was required for reform and management of the Pentagon (Clinton 2004, 737). Undoubtedly, Clinton was familiar with Cohen's reputation for being a defense budget critic in the early 80s; after a story got out about the Navy spending $600 for a P-3 lavatory cover Cohen famously quipped that it gave "new meaning to the word 'throne' (Cohen as reported by Hiatt 1985)."

However, what Clinton really saw in Cohen was the potential for a bipartisan bridge—a respected, rational figure who was willing to occasionally stray from his party line, but who could diffuse some of the partisan tension that had plagued Clinton's first term (Stevenson 2006, 106; Clinton 2004, 737; author interview with Tyrer). Clinton promised Cohen that he would never ask Cohen to sit in a political decision; Cohen promised that he would be a loyal team member. The offer was made and Cohen accepted (author interview with Cohen).

Cohen's Tenure. Cohen served in the Pentagon from 1997-2001, a period that was characterized by a rising global terrorist threat and regional humanitarian crises. During the course of his service there were two very public civil-military events.

Khobar Towers. In 1996 terrorists bombed military living quarters in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing 19 Air Force personnel (Clinton 2004, 717). In the resulting investigation, the base commander, Brigadier General Terry Schwalier was acquitted of responsibility. However, Secretary Cohen, with the consent of the president, withdrew Schwalier's promotion order. In Cohen's view, Schwalier was aware of the possible car bomb threat, but failed to ensure that alert and evacuation systems were sufficient. He believed that Schwalier had to be held accountable (author interview with Cohen). The Chairman, General Shalikshavili, agreed, but the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Rob Fogleman did not. In an unprecedented move, Fogleman retired early from his position, relaying in his farewell message that he "did not want the Air Force to suffer" as a result of his speaking out (Fogleman letter,1997). However, in later interviews with Dr. Richard Kohn he explained that he had been considering early retirement for a while, citing discontent with Cohen's unimaginary budget reform and general unwillingness to listen to his advice (Kohn 2001, 21).

Although it was portrayed by the press as a "resignation," (Ricks 1997) Fogleman expressed that it was not. He "felt out of step" and had attempted to resign quietly. For that matter Secretary Cohen believed that intention as well and personally respected his

decision (author interviews with Cohen, Tyrer). Fogleman was inspired by H.R. McMaster's book *Dereliction of Duty*, which advocated for senior military leaders to speak up when civilian leaders are failing (Kohn 2001, 9) and self-selected as a potential obstacle to civilian control.

Kosovo and Clark. When Cohen received the list of names for Supreme Allied Command Europe (SACEUR), General Wesley Clark's name was not on it. This seemed odd to Cohen—from his perspective (coming from the world of politics) Clark was an obvious great choice. He was top of the class at West Point, a Rhodes scholar, and he looked the part of a leader (author interview with Cohen). However, when Chairman Shalikshavili eventually asked Army Chief of Staff Dennis Reimer to sign off on Clark's selection, Reimer refused. Reimer acquiesced that Clark was an intelligent and hardworking officer, but was concerned that he was "focused too much upward and not down on the soldiers (Benac 2003). Indeed, Wes Clark was widely disliked by his peers, despite his connections in Washington (Perry 2017, 91). However, these complaints were not relayed to Cohen. Not long later, the reason for Reimer's resistance became evident (author interview with Tyrer).

Even before operations began in Kosovo, tensions between Clark and Cohen were high. Clark, along with Secretary of State Albright, supported a ground invasion, while Cohen and the new Chairman Hugh Shelton did not. Cohen suspected that Clark was meeting directly with Secretary Albright, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and NSC

Advisor Sandy Berger on strategy matters that weren't in line with his or the Chairman's plans (Herspring 2005, 361; Rodman 2009, 224). Moreover, Clark repeatedly expressed to the press that escalation might be imminent without gaining concurrence on that opinion from the Pentagon (Perry 2017, 101). Finally, Cohen asked Shelton to relay a verbatim message to Clark: "get your f**ing face off the TV. No more briefings, period. That's it. (Shelton 2010, 383)." Cohen also started monitoring Clark's interactions in Washington to ensure that he was not going over his head to undermine his intent (Herspring 2005, 363.)

When the air war in Kosovo concluded successfully, Cohen decided to make his move. Despite operational successes, Clark was proving himself a liability in dealing with the Russians in the war's aftermath, and a generally unmanageable subordinate (Perry 2017, 106). However, Cohen recognized that Clark had close friends in Washington. He called Clinton with a seemingly benign request: the term for Vice Chairman Ralston was coming to an end and he needed another assignment if he was going to be kept on active duty. What did the president think of making him the next SACEUR? Clinton thought that made sense. However, apparently unbeknownst to the president, Ralston's move to Europe would force Clark into early retirement. Clinton was furious when he realized he'd been played, but didn't intervene in the dismissal (Perry 2017, 106).

Civilian functions. In terms of filling his civilian roles, Cohen excelled at many of them. In particular, he was an excellent *politician*, as Clinton had hoped he would be. He maintained cooperative relations with Congress partly due to the fact that, as his deputy John Hamre put it, he was "in the brotherhood" (OSD oral history interview with Hamre, 5). In Clinton's most dire days—those leading up to his grand jury testimony—Cohen used his intimate knowledge of Congressional politics to placate Congress about the timing of Operation Desert Fox. The operation had been perceived by some Republicans to be a distraction from the impeachment, but Cohen's response to Congressional badgering successfully deflected the negative attention (author interview with Cohen; Clinton 2004, 804; Shelton 2010, 367).

As a *diplomat* Cohen was somewhat successful—he did recognize the role of the secretary of defense in representing U.S. whole-of-government goals abroad (author interviews with Cohen, Tyrer). However, Cohen's personal relationship with Albright was tense and he rarely concurred with her hawkish approach to foreign policy (Rodman 2009, 223-224). As a result, General Clark was caught in the middle of a foreign policy strategy that lacked cohesion between the diplomatic and military arms.

Finally, Cohen was moderately successful as an *enforcer*, and failed, in particular, to enforce civilian intent on the DoD budget. Though his budget did not garner significant debate because the defense budget ceiling was written into law in 1997, he did not implement the major cuts that the White House and Congress wanted (Isenberg

1997). In the GAO report to Congress, analysts recommended significant savings in weapons procurement (GAO report 1997, 2), which was in line with the budget reduction process started by Secretary William Perry (Kohn 2001, 12). However, the actual DoD budget proposal rejected almost all of those cuts (Stevenson 2006, 111). Cohen's Quadrennial Defense Report called for continued technology advancement, citing the danger of major regional powers "over the horizon" of 2010 (1997 QDR, iv). In some ways, this was consistent with the personal priorities Cohen outlined in his confirmation hearing, including "security relations in the Asia-Pacific" (Confirmation Hearing transcript, 12), but Cohen admits that he was not intimately involved with QDR development (author interview with Cohen). The final QDR recommended finding savings in business practices and, especially, base closures, which were later mostly killed in Congress (1997 QDR 111; Stevenson 2006, 111-112).

Aside from budget issues, Cohen's challenge with *enforcing* policy was due, in part, to Clinton's weak foreign policy vision, which often shifted according to the pressures of public opinion. While *Cohen* forcefully kept Clark's interventionist tendencies in check, there was significant confusion on the NSC regarding the desired end state and the limitations on use of force, and this left Clark playing monkey in the middle (Blumenthal 2003, 639-640). Ultimately, however, Cohen saw Clark's subversion of the chain-of-command and rhetoric with the press as undermining civilian control, and "bamboozled" the President in order to secure Clark's dismissal (Perry 2017, 108).

Military expertise. Though he was a "purely civilian" SecDef, Cohen did bring with him almost 2 decades of experience conducting military oversight in the legislature, and this helped him succeed in demonstrating the necessary military expertise. He was very involved in war planning—he reviewed the "off-the-shelf" contingency plans for China, Iran, Iraq and North Korea, and even directed a total re-write of the North Korea plan (Stevenson 2006, 113). Moreover, though Clark disagrees with the clarity of Cohen's intent (Clark 2001, 98-99) Cohen generally stayed engaged and informed on operations in Kosovo in order to keep Clark in line with intent (Stevenson 2006, 113; Perry 2017, 98; Shelton 2010, 370-371).

In terms of *institutional embeddedness*, Cohen was willing to learn, but was not completely in tune with the subtleties of military culture. Though his relationship with Clark was strained, Cohen developed an "almost ideal" relationship with the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Stevenson 2006, 108). This was an accomplishment for a politician, as Shelton was a man known for his lack of polish and who, in his memoir, adopted the epithet that Washington was full of snakes and he was the snake eater (Shelton 2010, 307). Cohen was viewed by his senior leaders as a man "with complete integrity" which Shelton said was "every bit as important" as his knowledge on military issues (2010, 367, 313). He respected the expertise of the two Chairmen who served him—Shalikshavili and Shelton—and valued their buy-in (author interview with Tyrer). What's more, he thought it was important to demonstrate a united front outside of the DoD and carefully

coordinated responses within the Pentagon before presenting them forward (Stevenson 2006, 108). "He didn't want to get out in front of [his Generals]" an NSC staffer reported (as reported by Stevenson 2006, 108). Ultimately, this team building approach brough him respect and rapport.

At the same time, he may have missed some of the subtleties of military culture and the civil-military dynamic. For instance, he didn't recognize Fogleman's resignation as a potentially grave civil-military precedent (author interviews with Tyrer and Cohen). He also didn't understand the cultural intricacies of military officer assignment selections; if he had and had accepted them as valid, he might have saved himself some headaches in managing Clark.

Civilian Control. As would be expected of a "purely civilian" secretary, Cohen performed well in most of the civilian functions. In particular, his background in Congress enabled him to be an effective *politician* as SecDef, and his extensive experience with Congressional oversight empowered him to play *enforcer.* Moreover, despite being a DoD "maverick," Cohen's experience on the Senate Armed Services Committee gave him competence and confidence to get involved and advise on military strategy. As a result of these successes, Cohen was able to maintain the trust of Congress and the President, and the confidence of the military and support civilian supremacy in the Pentagon.

In fact, although there were two well-publicized civil-military disputes within his tenure as secretary, the balance of civil-military influence improved slightly with Cohen. Despite Clinton's weakness in foreign policy and the dissension within the NSC, Cohen's efforts with Clark ensured that he stayed in his box—a not insignificant feat, considering the sway Clark had in the White House. When Cohen ultimately relieved Clark, he sent a clear message to the military about who was in charge and the political risks he was willing (and able) to take to exercise authority. Moreover, the influence that Cohen had in Congress legitimized his authority over the DoD and made him an indispensable teammate in the White House. Finally, while Cohen's relationship with the JCS was extremely close he did not just line up "behind his generals" (Stevenson 2006, 108). On significant matters—i.e. the ground war in Kosovo—he followed the vision that he brought to the office.

It is possible, however, that the military had an outsized influence on the QDR and defense budget at the start of Cohen's tenure. The final versions of these were focused on future (beyond 2010) major regional conflicts, consistent with the military's realpolitik bent. By Cohen's own account, he was not excessively involved in QDR development (interview with Cohen). At the same time, the final products were consistent with Cohen's personal views and stated priorities (Cohen confirmation hearing 1997).

Mission Success Charles Stevenson describes Cohen as leaving the Pentagon "in the wake of praise and satisfaction" (2006, 117). Although he was a "Firefighter" SecDef (focused on solving ad hoc problems), this was really in line with his mandate. President Clinton wanted Cohen to diffuse tension and build bridges; he did just that, most notably in the days surrounding Clinton's impeachment trial.

7.1.3. Lloyd Austin

The newest of the "general secretaries," Austin came to the DoD with 41 years of military service, also culminating in command at U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). His service in the Pentagon included a tour as Director of the Joint Staff, and Vice Chief of Staff of the Army (Lloyd Austin OSD Historian biography, CENTCOM bio). Following retirement from active-duty, Austin went to work for the defense contracting giant, Raytheon.

Mandate. Biden nominated Austin for several reasons. First, he had worked with Austin previously on withdrawal operations in Iraq. Ending the War in Afghanistan was a campaign promise of President Biden's. Austin had demonstrated to Biden that he was willing and able to downsize the U.S. footprint abroad (Biden 2021).

Additionally, Austin fit an image that the president wanted to cultivate in his cabinet; he had been the first African-American to command a theater of war, and would be the first African-American to hold the office of secretary of defense (Biden 2021). In selecting Austin, Biden was fulfilling a commitment to his constituents to

break down traditional barriers and introduce greater diversity into the country's leader ranks.

Finally, Austin was someone who was willing to conform and comply with Biden's policy objectives. Biden had butted heads with senior military leaders in the past—especially General Stanley McChrystal when he was ISAF Commander in Afghanistan. Biden had also watched the rise of "the generals" in the Trump Administration. Austin likely represented a military ally—a strong figure and warfighter that wasn't likely to start waves (author interview with senior Pentagon staffer; author interview with Mattis).

Austin's Tenure. There is, obviously, much left to be written about Austin's time in the job. His first year, however, was dominated by three major things: domestic extremism, COVID-19, and the withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan.

Extremism. The January 6th riots—which were organized and broadcasted by ultra-right fringe groups—drew significant national attention to the growing problem of domestic extremism. Additionally, because several of the rioters had military associations, the public (and the new Administration) demanded to understand and fix the problem of extremism within the Force. For the first several months in the job, Secretary Austin's goal was to answer these demands and restore public trust in the DoD. His actions included a service-wide standdown, force-wide training and

reexamination of screening criteria and servicemember transition plans (DoD memorandum on mandatory extremism training).

While the military, so far, has complied with the new training requirements, Congressmembers have used the training to grandstand about race studies (Kheel 2021). In fact, while testifying in Congress, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Mark Milley came to Secretary Austin's aid to answer a question about critical race hypothesis in the military: "what is wrong with… having some situational understanding about the country for which we are here to defend? (NDAA Hearings 2021)." His comments enraged some conservative members and caused conservative news to dub Milley the "woke general" (i.e. Slisco, 2021).

Afghanistan. In the last year of his presidency, Trump signed a peace deal with Taliban leaders in Doha (Lee and Tucker, 2021), which planned for a conditions and time-based withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan—some 3,000 troops still operating throughout the country (Afghanistan Withdrawal Hearings 2021, 7). Even though the conditions were mostly not met, upon taking office, Biden decided to conform to the agreement and pushed for withdrawal by a September 1st, 2021 deadline (Garrison 2021). Though the U.S. military met the timeline, Allied Afghan forces were unable or unwilling to hold against Taliban forces, and the withdrawal was widely seen as a strategic debacle. The Afghan military was overrun and the government toppled. What's more, in the final days of the evacuation a car bomb exploded outside the airport

in Kabul—the only remaining exit point—killing 13 U.S. servicemembers and wounding 18 (Myers, Shane, Atman 2021). The operation drew backlash against the administration, including from retired military leaders, and prompted a Congressional investigation. A key goal of the investigation was to determine whether blame should be placed on the President for failing to listen to military advice, or on the military for overlooking or misreading intelligence about the strength of the Afghan government (Hearing on Afghanistan Withdrawal 2021).

COVID-19. Finally, during Secretary Austin's first year, he dealt extensively with DoD policy on COVID-19, particularly vaccine mandates for the Force. On October 4th, 2021 Secretary Austin signed a directive that mandated all DoD servicemembers and employees to receive the COVID-19 vaccine (DoD news release, OCT 2021). The mandate generated significant backlash from the ranks; after the deadline passed nearly 20,000 servicemembers remained unvaccinated. At the beginning of 2022 all of the services began discharging "vaccine holdouts" (Hassan 2022).

Civilian Functions. In terms of his civilian roles, Secretary Austin has demonstrated strength in some. As *enforcer,* in particular, Austin has done well. During his tenure so far, he has ensured DoD follow-through on many of Biden's objectives: extremism retraining, withdrawal from Afghanistan, COVID-19 compliance, transgender ban reversal, etc. Each of these issues had the potential to generate backlash within the military, but each was effectively implemented.

Austin has not demonstrated that he is an adept *politician,* or that he is terribly confident in his interactions with Congress. In testimony, Milley has even interjected to support Austin on *policy* questions in order to save him from Congress' vitriol. For instance, he offered his input on critical race hypothesis questions—questions which should have been taken exclusively by Austin—in order to spare him from attack (NDAA Hearings 2021).

At the same time, Secretary Austin has been more successful than Secretary Mattis at filling key political appointments within the Department of Defense, which is hopefully due to agreement between the White House and Austin on best picks. However, across the breadth of positions, the Biden Administration is having only marginally better success than the Trump Administration (Biden appointment tracker), and there are still some important positions open in the DoD. For instance, the deputy undersecretary of defense for acquisitions and sustainment—a position that Mattis pushed for and was able to fill within his first 6 months (author interview with Mattis), still remains unfilled a year into Austin's tenure.

Military Functions. By Biden's own account, Austin was selected for his abilities as a *strategist*. However, he came under significant fire for the chaotic withdrawal in Afghanistan. According to Congressional testimony, Generals McKenzie and Milley both recommended to Austin and Biden that a small U.S. force remain in the country. However, Austin defended the evacuation to Congress and said that the Taliban

overthrow took him “by surprise” (Afghanistan Hearings 2021). Considering Austin’s decades of experience in CENTCOM and the allegedly realistic intelligence estimates regarding the speed of Afghanistan’s collapse (Meek 2021), his “surprise” is difficult to understand. More understandable is what Austin implied to the press when he said that “the president made his decision.” This suggests that his duty to comply with the president’s directive overrode his personal strategy preferences, which raises important questions about his personal status and authority as a policy decisionmaker (Cherner and Lantry 2021).

In personal conversation with me, senior staff members in OSD have voiced their appreciation for the level of experience that Austin brings to the office. Austin deals every day with issues that are highly technical. Austin brings a level of experience and baseline knowledge to issues pertaining to cyber, space, and Great Power Competition. “He is the right person for the times,” said one staff member. This sentiment was reflected in multiple Congressional statements of support for Austin (Nomination Hearing, Jan 2021).

Naturally, Secretary Austin is *institutionally embedded*. Though he may not have quite the same status as Marshall or Mattis, he generates respect in the Force. Additionally, he has demonstrated significant sensitivity to the role of the professional military ethic in the civil-military relationship, and went to great lengths in his confirmation hearing to communicate that he understands and supports civilian control

of the military. In particular, he pledged to restore a balance of influence between OSD staff and the JCS (Nomination Hearings 2021)

Civilian Control. True to my hypothesis, Austin seems to be wanting as a *politician*, though he has demonstrated strength as an *enforcer.* He has struggled to maintain the trust of Congress and the public, but has proven himself to be a team player in terms of accomplishing the administration's objectives.

In terms of civil-military relations, it seems like Secretary Austin is turning the tides on the influence balance between OSD and the JCS. In fact, it seems to have been a priority of his from the beginning. By filling key appointments with competent people and carefully setting boundaries in the building, Austin enforced subordination within the DoD. This is helped by the positive relationship that Austin seems to have with President Biden.

Despite these positive trends, it is impossible to assess Austin's overall impact on civilian control while he is still in the position. Myriad events shape civil-military relations. Some of these, like the unexpected violation of norms, or the setting of new precedents, can happen very quickly.

7.2. Republican Administrations

7.2.1. Robert Gates

As mentioned previously, Bob Gates actually *did* hold military rank—in 1967 he attended Air Force Officer Training School, but he did so under the sponsorship of the

CIA. This makes Gates a "purely civilian" SecDef, but a very different civilian from William Cohen. By the time Gates took the SecDef job, he had served 29 years in the executive branch doing national security. He had served in the Agency—an organization that also embraces a code of ethics that includes dedication to country, selfless service and non-partisanship. Moreover, as Director of Central Intelligence, Gates interacted with the DoD, as he was responsible for coordinating intelligence across the Intelligence Community (IC), including intelligence produced by DoD. However, he was not a product of the DoD.

Mandate. Bush hired Gates for the purpose of change. Secretary Rumsfeld had soured relations with the military by repeatedly failing to listen to requests for more troops and better equipment, and by being a difficult and disrespectful leader in general (Herspring 2008, 177; Feaver 2011, 98). He had also soured relations with the Department of State, believing that operations in Iraq were "purely military" and that Rice's support for counterinsurgency was forcing the military out of its combat lane and into a state-building lane (Herspring 2008, 180). By the time he resigned in 2008 he was under broad attack in the public sphere for his failings in Iraq. Bush recognized that there was no option but to enforce change (Herspring 2008, 189).

In his interview with Gates, Bush articulated to Gates the "importance of success in Iraq" (Gates 2014, 6). He was interested in Gates' involvement on the Iraq Study

Group and was hopeful that Gates would be able to turn the tides in an increasingly complex and unpopular conflict (Bush 2010, 93-94).

Gates' Tenure. Secretary Gates served two Presidents: Bush and Obama. However, in this comparative study I am focused on his time serving a Republican Administration. During Gates' tenure under Bush, Iraq was the dominant issue and was the impetus for Gates' main priorities: wounded warriors, Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected Vehicles (MRAPs) and Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) platforms (Gates 2014, 119, 216, 135). Iraq also became the center of the main civil-military disputes of Gates' time.

Right off the bat, Gates recognized that there was a lack of motivation within the senior ranks of the Pentagon over the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Gates 2014, 39). Many of them were frustrated with the high and climbing operational tempo, and believed that the wars were a distraction from "future fights" (Karlin 2021, 106). This included the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Mullen, who hoped out loud that there would be "no more adventures" after Iraq and Afghanistan (Perry 2017, 230). As a result, Gates was met with resistance, at first, on acquisitions programs he saw as essential to the contemporary fight— Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicles (MRAPs) and Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) technology. In order to force change on the "business as usual" mindset within the leadership, Gates fired

senior leaders for incompetence (Shachtman), and directed that in-theater requests went straight to him (Gates 2014, 135).

Meanwhile, President Bush was increasingly concerned about Iran's involvement in Iraq, and believed that intelligence reports on Iran's nuclear program were underestimating reality (Perry 2017, 232). This frustrated the CENTCOM Commander, Admiral William "Fox" Fallon, as well as Secretary Gates. They believed that the administration should take every caution to avoid conflict with Iran (author interview with Gates). While, as a commander, Fallon was operating within the administration's intent, he made frequent comments to the press about avoiding conflict with Iran. These comments insinuated that conflict with Iran was possible, and forced Gates to repeatedly reassure the public that the administration was not headed towards another war. The President was concerned about Fallon's loyalty; Gates was annoyed, but not concerned, potentially because he shared some of Fallon's sentiment (Gates 2014, 187-188).

In March, Fallon alerted Gates that *Esquire* was going to publish a piece on him—a piece that published in April under the title "The Man Between War and Peace." It painted Fallon as the only person barring President Bush from starting a war with Iran (Barnett 2008). Gates characterization was that the article "caused heartburn," but defended to President Bush that he did not have a "MacArthur problem" and was not challenging the commander-in-chief. At the same time, Gates could see that Bush had

lost trust in Fallon. Bush denied this, but Gates saw that the damage was done. "I would say he lost mine," he told Bush. Several days later, likely with a nudge from Admiral Mullen, Admiral Fallon asked that he be allowed to step down (Gates 2014, 188).

Civilian Functions. Across the board, Gates was successful in his civilian SecDef functions. In terms of being a *politician*, he self-describes his relationship with Congress as "superb," because he would readily admit to inadequacies (author interview with Gates). At the same time, his personal perspective of a majority of Congress was that they were "uncivil, incompetent in fulfilling basic constitutional responsibilities (such as timely appropriations), micromanagerial, parochial, hypocritical, egotistical, thin-skinned, often putting self (and reelection) before country (Gates 581)." Moreover, he was met with some challenges at the start of the Obama Administration in getting key appointments through (Weiner, Reuters 2009).

Whatever weakness he did show in politics, he made up for in spades as *enforcer*. Gates had a mandate for change and he lived up to it when it came to Iraq, in particular by supporting the surge and generating momentum for critical resourcing (Perry 2017, 224). He gained a reputation early on for firing senior officers and staff that were incompetent or out-of-step (Shactman 2010), and pushed remaining leaders to refocus doctrine and resources from the specter of future conflicts to the contemporary Global War on Terror (Karlin 2021, 137). Although Gates initially dragged his heels with Fallon

and Mullen, he ultimately pressed for the resignation of the first and enforced compliance with the other.

As *diplomat* too, Gates was competent. Unlike his predecessor he had an outstanding relationship with Secretary Rice and valued her leadership in the NSC (Gates 2014, 99-100). Moreover, he had publicly expressed his concern over funding and using the DoD for State Department functions (Gates 2014, 2007) and expressed concern to the president about relying on military tools against Iran and Libya (author interview with Gates).

Military Expertise. In terms of military expertise, Gates crossed the civilian boundary successfully, though his penchant for change might have impeded his ability to think long term. He did take his role as a *strategist* seriously. Gates aimed to understand military operations in detail, particularly resourcing needs at the lower levels. In Gates' view, if a secretary doesn't have "microknowledge" then he is a "kept" man—beholden to the military services, the Pentagon bureaucracy and the civilian staff (Gates 2014, 578). He was "renowned for his obsession with conducting regular reviews of war plans (Karlin 2021, 83)," and his active involvement helped make the surge a recognized success.

However, Gates was so interested in driving change (rooting out "Next-War-Itis," Carafano 2009) that he was overly dismissive of characteristic military concerns about realpolitik future threats. As civil-military Charles Dunlap pointed out, he had a

"penchant for indulging near-term wants (and perceived needs) at the expense of long-term strategic interests… the kind of thinking that got Wall Street into trouble" (Dunlap 2010). Indeed, looking back on the Global War on Terror, the American response seems disproportionate to the actual terrorist threat (Brooks 2016, 276). This illustrates the overlap and tensions points within the SecDef role. On the one hand, Gates dutifully enforced a mindset changed within the DoD; on the other hand, he may have failed in his duty to provide expertise on long-term military policy.

Additionally, Gates demonstrated *institutional embeddedness*, particularly through demonstrating respect for servicemembers from senior leaders down to the troops. When he was appointed, there was a general sense of relief within the Department. (Perry 2017, 210), and his demonstrations of empathy eventually earned him the nickname: "soldier's secretary" (i.e. CBS story 2011). He also understood the importance of developing cultural literacy, in particular the military cues—or "tells"—that signified dissension (Karlin 2021, 77). These served him well in identifying where he did not have (and still needed) buy-in.

Civilian Control. Gates performed his civilian functions well, and was particularly effective as an *enforcer.* Though he may have been short-sighted when it came to military strategy, he maintained the confidence of the military (perhaps because the Iraq surge proved initially successful) and was able to improve civilian control.

Mara Karlin, in fact, suggests that relations between the joint staff and the civilian secretariat of OSD were at a "zenith" during Gates' tenure, due to Gates' knowledge of national security affairs, the autonomy he was granted to run the department, and his active involvement in maintaining balanced relations. There was deliberate collaboration between civilians and military staff members in the Pentagon; the JCS and undersecretary for policy even signed a memorandum of understanding to facilitate collaboration. The most obvious evidence of civilian control, however, was that the focus of the Pentagon shifted during Gates' tenure, from "future wars" to the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Karlin 2021, 64-65).

Mission Success. If we view Gates' from Stevenson's lens, he was a "Revolutionary" who achieved success when it came to fundamentally redirecting the military's focus and doctrine. Though he did not achieve victory in Iraq, he oversaw operational success there during the surge. Moreover, he willfully and consistently pushed for greater focus on counter-insurgency, and greater resourcing for the Global War on Terror. By the time he left office in 2011, the DoD was fully committed and engaged in "now war" efforts.

7.2.2. Jim Mattis

Jim Mattis served 42 years in the Marine Corps, culminating as commander of United States Central Command, in which he oversaw operations in the Middle East/South Asia region, including Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. Though decidedly one

of the “General Secretaries,” Mattis held military assignments within the OSD secretariat, including serving as senior military assistant to the deputy secretary of defense and executive secretary to William Cohen (James Mattis, OSD Historian bio).

Mandate. In his first interaction with Mattis, Trump presented three topics: NATO, intelligence collection and torture. On every issue, Mattis disagreed with the President-elect. Mattis left the interview convinced (and content) that he was headed back to retirement on the West Coast (author interview with Mattis). However, several days later he got another call; he was Trump’s nominee. Moreover, Trump announced to the press that, after consultation with Mattis, he’d changed his view on torture (Paletta and Timiraos, 2016). What Mattis understood from the experience was that Trump was comfortable with dissent and trusted Mattis’ independent opinion (author interview with Mattis). He would have some autonomy in running the Department and he was comfortable accepting the job. Later, it turned out that Trump would not be so hands-off.

Trump’s real reason for picking Mattis was that Mattis was a retired general. He was apparently Trump’s third choice, but it was no coincidence that all three men offered the job—Stanley McChrystal, Jack Keane and Jim Mattis—were retired generals. Presumably, the president saw Mattis’ extensive foreign policy experience as an important complement to his *lack* of experience (author interviews with McMaster and Mattis). In his long discussions on nomination choices with General (Retired) Jack

Keane, Trump was particularly concerned about instability in the Middle East, the War in Afghanistan, and competition with China (Bergen 2019, 54-55). Keane recommended Mattis, and Trump was impressed by Mattis' military career, calling him the "the real deal" (Neidig 2016). He wanted Mattis to "make the American military stronger"—second to none (author interview with Mattis).

Trump's intentions for Mattis were likely also political. Trump's election and the subsequent alarm over Russian meddling polarized the nation. Moreover, Trump had alienated a lot of the traditional conservative base during his presidential campaign, even inciting a Never Trump movement within the Republican party. He likely thought that generals—who are perceived to be largely apolitical figures—could cool the partisanship and reassure those who were concerned about his unconventional background (Diamond 2017).

Mattis' Tenure. One of the first events that caused alarm among civil-military scholars (Schake 2018, Golby & Karlin 2020) wasn't, in substance, even a military matter. On January 27th, immediately following Mattis' swearing in ceremony at the Pentagon, President Trump signed an executive order in the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes, banning citizens from a specified list of countries from entering the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly was on a flight during the signing and saw the event on television (Bergen 2019, 95). The president' choice of backdrop signaled military concurrence; it was possible that Trump knew that just six months before, Mattis had criticized the ban.

Secretary Mattis did not say anything, deciding that it was best to stay out of this political issue (Snodgrass 2019, 37).

After this initial incident, the major fault lines in civil-military relations during Mattis' tenure (or, potentially just civil-civil relations) were those involving Allies—in the Middle East, Europe and the Indo-Pacific. What was a cordial disagreement between Trump and Mattis in the SecDef's interview became a constant point of contention. In fact, Mattis had spent so much time consoling allies and partner in his first year that he was dubbed the "secretary of reassurance," and neglected other key political relationships in Washington—particularly with Congress (author interview with Mattis.) Disagreement and a general lack of trust ultimately came between president and SecDef. And in December 2018, Mattis resigned as a result (author interview with Mattis; Snodgrass 2019, 78; Mattis resignation letter, 2018).

Civilian Functions. Mattis struggled at many of the civilian functions of SecDef, with a few exceptions. For one, he was not an adept *politician*, although the unique conditions of the Administration were arguably difficult for even the savviest Washington insider. Trump was under attack from, not just Democrats, but a large population of Republicans as well. As a result, Mattis was challenged to get his picks—which included Republicans *and* Democrats—past either the White House or Congress. Mattis' choices for critical positions, like Michèle Flournoy for deputy secretary (a Democrat) and Mary Beth Long for undersecretary for policy (a NeverTrumper), either

turned him down, or were vetoed by the White House and replaced with Trump team picks (Szoldra 2017). To some extent, it seemed like Mattis didn't get the bottom line: Trump had won the election, and so Mattis wasn't allowed to pick Democrats to fill the Pentagon. At the same time, by selecting candidates autonomously he was not operating "out of the ordinary" (author interview with Gates).

Part and parcel to this was the fact that there was an intense effort within Congress to ensure Trump's failure. Democrats in Congress were slow-rolling the nominees that were coming through. Despite Mattis' close personal relationships with both Representative Pelosi and Senator Schumer, he simply could not generate the bipartisan support to fill jobs (author interview with Mattis). While it's possible that greater political acumen might have allowed Mattis to build bridges within the White House, it is also important to put his struggle in the context of an extremely contentious transition. Unfortunately, however, his inability to fill roles with his picks generated distrust within the E-ring with deleterious results.

Aside from political appointment efforts, Mattis had generally good relations with Congress which, in his view, might have had something to do with his reputation. "I didn't have to chew on a cigar and spit curse words to be recognized as tough" (author interview with Mattis). His status with Congress was likely also helped by press characterizations that the was one of the "adults in the room" with Trump (i.e. O'Hanlon 2018). Whatever the reason for his reputation, Mattis did his due diligence

with Congress with resounding success. Case in point, in the midst of such a contentious administration he ended up with 87% of Congress voting for record-breaking budgets (author interview with Mattis).

One significant critique of Mattis, however, his reticence to talk to the public (noted in Austin confirmation hearing), a key political function of the position. This was intentional, on Mattis' part, because he found the press to be adversarial. "If I said a half dozen and the president said six, the press would report that we disagreed" (author interview with Mattis). He determined that it was rarely in his or the country's best interest for him to go on TV and defend the president's tweets—a testament to the unsynchronized relationship between him and the White House. At the same time, representing the DoD to the public was a critical political duty, and his failure to embrace that role likely impacted public perceptions of the Department.

As a *diplomat*, on the other hand, Mattis was exceptional. He believed in the State Department's primacy in foreign relations and in a whole-of-government approach to policy. He maintained a close relationship with Secretary Tillerson and Director of the National Economic Council Gary Cohn. Tillerson and Mattis were like-minded about the importance of Allies and both men put these relationships at the top of their priorities. Interestingly this State-Defense partnership did not reflect the President's foreign policy interests (Snodgrass 2019, 80). I recommend further exploration of this in Section 9.

Mattis' performance as *enforcer* was poor. President Trump was known for Tweeting policy before vetting it with his staff, and on several occasions Mattis bore the brunt of this (i.e. transgender ban, Bowden 2017). Understandably, Mattis dealt with these, not by running out to implement change, but by confronting the president directly and, occasionally, changing the president's mind post hoc (author interview with Mattis). Mattis' real failures as an enforcer were instead organizational. Most significantly, he surrounded himself by like-minded military officers—mostly friends—which earned the name PENTACOM (Pentagon Command) across the staff (Snodgrass 2019, 50). Not only did this create an echo chamber of military mindedness within OSD, but it generated an "us vs. them" mentality in the Pentagon that favored his military-staffed office (Karlin 2021, 68). Likely, this exacerbated (and was exacerbated by) a lack of trust between Mattis and the White House staff.

Moreover, Mattis did not follow normative processes for passing military expertise and advice to the commander-in-chief. In fact, he preferred to control information going to and from the president and the Pentagon, even between the chairman and the president (author interview with McMaster). Dunford in particular had less access to Trump than was typical (author interview with McMaster), and was even initially written out of list of required attendees for NSC principal's meetings (National Security Presidential Memorandum 2).

While it's possible that this difference in perspective could be attributed to Mattis' "military mind," this is not likely because no clear delineation existed between the minds of "the generals" and the civilians on the NSC as a whole. Secretary Tillerson, for instance, held a similar view as Mattis on foreign policy issues; in the end, both secretaries effectively blocked the President's access to their organizations (author interview with McMaster).

Military Expertise. As a *strategist*, Mattis was, unsurprisingly, good. Though Karlin criticizes him for not getting his staff involved in reviewing war plans (Karlin 2021, 69), Mattis was intimately involved in the writing of the National Defense Strategy (author interview with Mattis), and spent a significant amount of time cultivating the relationships required to achieve strategic success in the Middle East Europe and Indo-Pacific. He did not generally micromanage operations, but actively worked to set conditions for theater and combatant commanders (author interview with Mattis).

Additionally, Mattis was clearly *institutionally embedded* and maintained significant clout within the Force. Additionally, he was sensitive to preserving the professional military ethic, in an administration where the president was inclined to degrade it. This was an important quality in Mattis and has been praised by many civil-military scholars (Feaver 2018, Schake 2018). Mattis also identifies this as an important quality he brought to the office: "when the big civil-military issue comes down the street to you there won't be a big 76-piece band coming with it telling you here comes the big

one. It's going to be "walk with me across Lafayette square." You want people who know this stuff well enough and who've learned from experience so they can handle it. (author interview with Mattis)." Mattis' astuteness (as well as that of the other "generals" on his staff) was invaluable in ensuring the President's inclinations to politicize the military were kept in check as much as possible (interview with McMaster, Trump; Feaver 2018, Schake 2018).

Civilian Control. As hypothesized, Mattis with some of the civilian SecDef functions—most especially, he was not an adept *politician* in an administration that required a lot of political finesse. He also failed, likely to due to issues of mistrust, to fully empower his civilian staff, and instead surrounded himself with like-minded military advisors. At the same time, his performance must be viewed in context, and the Trump presidency was tumultuous.

In the bipartisan National Defense Strategy report, submitted to Congress in 2018, the authors asserted that the civilian influence in policy decision-making is trending downwards (McInnis 2021). This criticism has been echoed by Mara Karlin and others (Karlin 2021, 66-67; Golby 2020; Schake 2018). This may have been due to the dearth of civilians in the Pentagon during the first year of Mattis' tenure, or to the general lack of trust between him and President Trump. At the same time, military influence was *not* necessarily getting all the way up to the president (except through retired officers). The chairman, for instance, had much less direct influence over

presidential policy than some of his predecessors. Nevertheless, the overall assessment is that civilian control diminished under Mattis.

Of all the SecDefs analyzed, Mattis had the most contentious relationship with his boss and the case illuminates some interesting directions for future study. While this paper focuses on civilian control of the military at the civilian/military juncture of, the Constitutional Framers also intended for civilian control to include checks on the president. Mattis frequently acted as an interrupter of the link between the president and the military, and I recommend in Section 9 that this SecDef role be explored more thoroughly in future research. In any case, Mattis must be judged based on the difficulty of his assignment—serving in a very contentious administration. While civilian control diminished under his leadership, largely due to fractures in trust, he also did quite a bit to provide consistency and gravitas in an otherwise chaotic administration.

Mission Success. If viewed under Stevenson's framework, Mattis was successful in some areas and unsuccessful in others. He *did* publish the first National Defense Strategy in 8 years, which drove a major shift within the DoD towards Great Power Competition and away from terrorism (NDS 2018, 1). This he achieved even in the midst of a contentious administration. However, his tireless efforts to put out fires—often over Tweets—took away from his ability to manage key relationships and ultimately resulted in his resigning in frustration.

8. Summary and Analysis

Across the five cases, four were able to maintain a healthy balance of civilian and military influence within the upper echelons of the Pentagon—Marshall, Cohen, Gates and (so far) Austin. Under Mattis, on the other hand, influence over decision-making shifted towards the military staff. As predicted, performance in key civilian and military functions was important to maintaining this balance. However, there is not clear evidence from these cases that military experience is a significant driver of performance. The secretaries with extensive military experience were able to perform many of the civilian functions effectively; conversely, the secretaries with *no* military experience were able to perform many off the military functions effectively. By itself, military experience does not covary in intuitive ways with whether a secretary will be able to effectively maintain civilian control or not.

In terms of civilian vs. military functions, there are trends and similarities between the cases that are worth noting. For one, it is clearly important to civilian control that SecDefs are able to fill and confirm competent civilians within their staffs. Marshall and Cohen were successful *politicians* and able to effectively get nominees confirmed—even tough nominees like Marshall's Ann Rosenberg.

Reputation in Congress is also important, but it is not as important for civilian control as it is for DoD function and autonomy. For instance, Mattis' reputation in Congress helped him get record-breaking budgets passed, even during a contentious

administration. Cohen's laudable performance before Joint Session took the heat off of the DoD for the regrettable timing of Operation Desert Fox. The only exception here is Marshall, whose reputation with Congress had direct impact on the health of civil-military relations. His testimony on the Hill during the investigation on MacArthur's dismissal helped close the issue and set the record straight on the importance of civilian control.

In terms of being *diplomats*, Marshall and Mattis were most effective. Each of these men recognized the importance of maintaining a whole-of-government approach to foreign policy, exercised their positions to maintain positive international relationships, and allowed their counterparts at State to take the lead. This is particularly interesting in the case of Mattis; he served a president who did not highly value allies or allied organizations, and who did not have a great relationship with his first secretary of state. It is possible, based on this trend, that extensively military SecDefs tend to excel at this function, recognizing that military means are just one part of an orchestra of government efforts.

The least effective diplomat was William Cohen. Though he personally understood the importance of synchronization within the cabinet, he had a testy relationship with Secretary of State Albright and disagreed with her, fundamentally, on use of force parameters. As a result, General Clark received mixed signals from these

two players and the president was too detached from the National Security Council process to effectively settle disputes.

All of the cases selected were successful, to some extent, as *enforcers*, though the most successful of the five was Bob Gates. He was decisive and confident when relieving military and civilian staff, and led the Pentagon to change its focus through force of will and presence. Austin, too, has demonstrated that he is willing to implement potentially unpopular policy in the DoD. Marshall, on the other hand, was reticent to keep MacArthur within policy guidelines and his reticence enabled MacArthur to repeatedly undermine Truman's objectives.

In terms of military experience, the most important for civilian control is institutional embeddedness. All five cases selected demonstrated some level of success in this regard. However, Cohen's lack of military experience proved an obstacle to understanding the details of military culture. For instance, he did not pick up on the military queues about General Clark's fitness for the SACEUR position, and he did not recognize the importance of Fogleman's resignation after Khobar Towers. While neither event led to civil-military catastrophe, either event could have set unfavorable norms or generated resentment.

In all four modern cases there was interest within the senior military ranks to focus on realpolitik foreign policy. Cohen did not fight this perspective, but accepted and advocated for a defense budget that prioritized "future conflict" weapons, despite

guidance from Congress and the White House. Gates, on the other hand, forced the military to abandon its realpolitik focus in favor of the conflict at hand. It was Mattis' defense strategy that shifted the DoD focus *back* to realpolitik efforts. Mattis' version of the strategy declared, unequivocally, that "inter-state competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern (Summary of the National Defense Strategy, 1)." Secretary Austin's priorities have been a continuation of that. It is difficult to say whether this change is a result of 'military minds' at the Pentagon, or simply an accurate reflection of the changing threat global climate.

Finally, it is clear from these cases that the President's relationships with both the secretary and with the military play a critical role in civil-military relations. Gates was an assertive enforcer of change, but so was Bush. In fact, Bush was the first to demonstrate resolve to change by firing Rumsfeld. Cohen's relationship with Clark was complicated by the President's weak relationship with the military. At the same time, it is likely that Cohen's success in maintaining civilian control was helped by Clinton's improved reputation with the military after four years in office. Finally, Mattis' struggle to empower his staff, appropriate his time and communicate with the public were largely a result of his boss' unpredictable behavior.

9. Area for Future Research

As is clear in these cases, the role of the SecDef is highly nuanced. However, there is a commonality in this study that warrants additional research. All three of the secretaries who were influential in improving the civil-military balance—Marshall, Cohen and Gates—were appointed in the administration's second term (technically, Marshall served in Truman's first term but it was the president's fifth year in office). Mattis and Austin, on the other hand, served/are serving as first term appointees. While it appears that Austin is improving the civil-military balance, his service is ongoing and the jury is still out.

One of the challenges of first-term appointments is filling key positions within the Pentagon leadership. SecDefs in these cases are pressed to get nominees confirmed, often in extremely contentious political environments. In Mattis' case this was made extra difficult by the infighting within the Republican party prior to Trump's election. Arguably, in Mattis' case, when appointments weren't filled, military staffers stepped up (author interview with McMaster). This is a natural consequence of having much to do and too few people to execute.

Additionally, according to an online appointment tracker run by Partnership for Public Service, progress in filling appointments has been slow, not just in the Trump Administration, but the Biden Administration as well. At one year in, Trump and Biden were able to fill 238 and 269 positions respectively (across the entire government). Bush

and Obama, on the other hand, were able to confirm 403 and 383 positions, respectively, within their first year. This latency in filling political positions is likely to affect civilian control of the military. Without a civilian staff, the SecDef is likely to struggle with his *enforcer* tasks; additionally, he or she may delegate greater powers to the military to fulfill military-esque functions. Finally, the SecDef may expend political capital on appointments that could/should be used elsewhere.

Also, while this paper has focused on civilian vs. military influence, it is worth exploring further the role of the secretary as "interrupter" between the president and the military. For the Constitutional Framers, this was a key function of the position. Mattis' tenure might have been characterized by undue military influence, but he arguably did *best* among the five cases at protecting the military from potentially subjective civilian control. This warrants additional attention.

One thing this paper does *not* examine in detail is threat environment. Although I discuss the influence of threat environment in my research design, there are no comparison civilian cases from the current Post-GWOT/Great Power Competition era. This is potentially related to demand signal. In other words, it is possible that retired generals are desired (by the president *and* even Congress) during certain threat conditions.

Finally, I began this paper by posing normative questions about whether policymakers should confirm extensively military SecDefs or reject them. This paper

begins to answer those questions, but cannot answer them completely. While I demonstrate that SecDef's "militariness" is not a significant driver of civilian control, it is worth asking whether civilian control is the only concern when it comes to appointing significantly military SecDefs. For instance, it is possible that repeatedly appointing retired generals as SecDef contributes to a public perception that military officers more qualified than civilians for key cabinet positions. This could be normatively bad for reasons other than civilian control. Then complexity of the normative questions posed is worth exploring in future research.

10. Conclusion

The secretary of defense—is he a member or representative of the military enterprise? In fact, he is both. The SecDef role includes a variety of functions. Some of them are decidedly civilian—administrator, diplomat, policy enforcer and politician. However, the SecDef is also responsible for understanding the military culture and ethic and developing military strategy. Failure in any of these functions can degrade civilian control of the military, by over-elevating military influence beyond that of the civilian staff. The SecDef sits at the very juncture of the civil-military relationship and is critical to striking the right balance of influence. However, this paper finds that that a SecDef's military experience is not a significant driver in whether he will successfully find this balance. Every SecDef has successes and failures, but "extensively military" SecDefs are still able to excel at civilian functions and establish control; conversely, "purely civilian" SecDefs can learn the military parts of the job and keep the relationship healthy.

Appendix A

Table A. 1. Secretaries of Defense

Secretary	Sworn in	Time in Office	Appt. President	Pres. Party	Pres. Mil Cat	SecDef Mil Cat	Operating Style (Stevenson)
James Forrestal	*9/17/1947*	*1yr, 6mo*	*Truman*	*Dem*	*Mixed Careerist*	*Min serv/Non-cmbt*	*Revolutionary*
Louis Johnson	*4/28/1949*	*1yr, 6mo*	*Truman*	*Dem*	*Mixed Careerist*	*Min serv/Cmbt*	*Firefighter*
George Marshall	*9/21/1950*	*1yr*	*Truman*	*Dem*	*Mixed Careerist*	*General*	*Team Player*
Robert Lovett	*9/17/1951*	*1yr, 4mo*	*Truman*	*Dem*	*Mixed Careerist*	*Min serv/Cmbt*	*Team Player*
Charles Wilson	*1/28/1953*	*4yrs, 8mo*	*Eisenhower*	*Rep*	*General*	*Pure Civilian*	*Team Player*
Neil McElroy	*10/9/1957*	*2yrs, 2mo*	*Eisenhower*	*Rep*	*General*	*Pure Civilian*	*Team Player*
Thomas Gates, Jr.	*12/2/1959*	*1yr, 1mo*	*Eisenhower*	*Rep*	*General*	*Min serv/Cmbt*	*Team Player*
Robert McNamara	*1/21/1961*	*7yrs, 1mo*	*Kennedy*	*Dem*	*Min serv/Cmbt*	*Min serv/Non-cmbt*	*Revolutionary*
Clark Clifford	*3/1/1968*	*11mo*	*Johnson*	*Dem*	*Mixed Careerist*	*Min serv/Non-cmbt*	*Firefighter*
Melvin Laird	*1/22/1969*	*4yrs*	*Nixon*	*Rep*	*Mixed Careerist*	*Min serv/Cmbt*	*Firefighter*
Eliot Richardson	*1/30/1973*	*4mo*	*Nixon*	*Rep*	*Mixed Careerist*	*Min serv/Cmbt*	*Team Player*
James Schlesinger	*7/2/1973*	*2yrs, 5mo*	*Nixon*	*Rep*	*Mixed Careerist*	*Pure Civilian*	*Revolutionary*
Donald Rumsfeld	*11/20/1975*	*2yrs, 2mo*	*Ford*	*Rep*	*Min serv/Cmbt*	*Mixed Careerist*	*Firefighter*
Harold Brown	*1/20/1977*	*4yrs*	*Carter*	*Dem*	*Min serv/Non-cmbt*	*DoD Civ*	*Team Player*
Casper Weinberger	*1/21/1981*	*6yrs, 10mo*	*Reagan*	*Rep*	*Min serv/Non-cmbt*	*Min serv/Non-cmbt*	*Revolutionary*
Frank Carlucci	*11/23/1987*	*1yr, 2mo*	*Reagan*	*Rep*	*Min serv/Non-cmbt*	*Min serv/Non-cmbt*	*Team Player*
Richard Cheney	*5/21/1989*	*3yrs, 10mo*	*Bush (G.H.W.)*	*Rep*	*Min serv/Cmbt*	*Pure Civilian*	*Team Player*
Les Aspin	*1/20/1993*	*1yr*	*Clinton*	*Dem*	*Pure civ*	*Min serv/Non-cmbt*	*Firefighter*
William Perry	*2/3/1994*	*3yrs*	*Clinton*	*Dem*	*Pure civ*	*Min serv/Non-cmbt*	*Team Player*
William Cohen	*1/24/1997*	*4yrs*	*Clinton*	*Dem*	*Pure civ*	*Pure Civilian*	*Firefighter*
Donald Rumsfeld	*1/20/2001*	*5yrs, 11mo*	*Bush (G.W.)*	*Rep*	*Min serv/Non-cmbt*	*Mixed Careerist*	*Revolutionary*

Robert Gates	*12/18/2006*	*4yrs, 6mo*	*Bush (G.W.)*	*Rep*	*Min serv/Non-cmbt*	*Pure Civilian*	*Revolutionary***
Leon Panetta	*7/1/2011*	*1yr, 8mo*	*Obama*	*Dem*	*Pure civ*	*Min serv/Non-cmbt*	*Team Player***
Chuck Hagel	*2/27/2013*	*2yrs*	*Obama*	*Dem*	*Pure civ*	*Min serv/Cmbt*	*Firefighter***
Ash Carter	*2/17/2015*	*1yr, 11mo*	*Obama*	*Dem*	*Pure civ*	*DoD Civ*	*Team Player***
James Mattis	*1/20/2017*	*1yr, 11mo*	*Trump*	*Rep*	*Pure civ*	*General*	*Firefighter***
Mark Esper	*7/23/2019*	*1yr, 4mo*	*Trump*	*Rep*	*Pure civ*	*Mixed Careerist*	*Firefighter***
Lloyd Austin	*1/22/2021*	---	*Biden*	*Dem*	*Pure civ*	*General*	*Team Player***

**My assessments using Stevenson's coding methodology

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