

DON'T BLAME THE GENERALS: A POLICY-FOCUSED  
THEORY OF EROSION OF CIVILIAN CONTROL

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## Abstract:

Civilian control of the military is a fundamental characteristic of the government that affects its capacity, stability, and legitimacy. Abundant literature on civil-military relations offers insights into factors that motivate or restrain the military in challenging civilian control. These factors include preference divergence, military professionalism, the lack of the right and capacity of the military to govern; and institutional oversight of the military. However, little research has been devoted to understanding how a particular government's policies might affect the above factors and weaken civilian control. As a result, governments are ill-equipped to evaluate whether or not their actions will have a destructive effect on civilian control of the military. This research fills this gap by offering a policy-focused theory explaining under what conditions government policies about an intrastate use of force lead to erosion of civilian control. To capture the variation of civilian control beyond coups and in forms relevant to democracies, this study advances a comprehensive analytical framework that includes erosion by insubordination, competition, and deference. Relying on process tracing and cross-case comparisons, this dissertation tests the policy-focused theory in four cases: Ukraine at the beginning of the Russian-backed war in Donbas, Russia during the First Chechen War, Israel in the First Intifada, and the United Kingdom in Northern Ireland. The evidence for this study comes from extensive fieldwork, interviews with military and political elites, and the analysis of archival sources in four languages. The findings reveal that if a government's policies about an intrastate use of force challenge the boundaries of the military profession or increase the political risks for elected officials it creates a conducive environment for the military's involvement in politics. This study highlights the unintended consequences of the governmental policies about the use of force for civilian control of the military. From the policy perspective, these insights would allow governments to develop effective approaches to tackling security threats with taking into account the potential risks for civilian control of the military.

*To the people of Ukraine fighting for their land, freedom, and democracy.*

*Life will prevail over death, and light — over darkness.*

*Життя переможе смерть, а світ — темряву.*

# Table of Contents

Introduction	x
Chapter 1: Theory and Definitions	1
1. Relevance	1
2. Key definitions	2
3. Literature Review	4
4. The comprehensive analytical framework of erosion of civilian control	11
5. Policy-focused Theory of Erosion of Civilian Control	16

## Chapter 2: Methodology

Introduction	21
1. Research Strategy	25
2. Within-Case Process Tracing	26
3. Cross-case comparison	39
4. Data Collection and Sources	44

## Chapter 3: Russia in the First Chechen War (1994-1996): Fighting for Order and Losing Control

Introduction	47
1. Pre-conflict Civil-Military Relations in Russia	48
2. Erosion of Civilian Control by Insubordination	52
3. Erosion of Civilian Control by Competition	57
4. Erosion of Civilian Control by Deference	74
5. Conclusion	84

## Chapter 4: Ukraine's war in Donbas (2014-2019): When the War Makes the Military

Introduction	87
1. Pre-conflict Civil-Military Relations in Ukraine	90

2. Erosion of Civilian Control by Insubordination	97
3. Erosion of Civilian Control by Competition	104
4. Erosion of Civilian Control by the Volunteer Battalions	108
5. Erosion of Civilian Control by Deference	128
6. Conclusion	130

### **Chapter 5: Israel in the First Intifada and the Oslo Process (1987-1999): The Limits of Civil-Military Partnership**

Introduction	134
1. Pre-conflict Civil-Military Relations in Israel	136
2. Erosion of Civilian Control by Insubordination	154
3. Erosion of Civilian Control by Competition	164
4. Erosion of Civilian Control by Deference	175
5. Conclusion	184

### **Chapter 6: British Military in Northern Ireland (1968-1972): Deference by Default**

Introduction	189
1. Pre-conflict Civil-Military Relations in the United Kingdom	191
2. Erosion of Civilian Control by Insubordination and Competition	194
3. Erosion of Civilian Control by Deference	201
4. Conclusion	218

### **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

Bibliography	232
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## List of Tables

Table 1.1 Operationalization of civilian control	12
Table 1.2 Types of erosion and observable indicators	14
Table 2.1 Causal process and observable implications for H1: Defending the Profession	28
Table 2.2 Causal processes and observable implications for H2	30
Table 2.3. Alternative explanations for the erosion of civilian control and contradicting evidence	36
Table 2.4. Case selection	44
Table 3.1 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for insubordination	56
Table 3.2 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for competition	73
Table 3.3 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for deference	84
Table 3.4 Russia: Summary table	86
Table 4.1 Comparative table: military profession, government's policies, and erosion by insubordination	101
Table 4.2 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for insubordination	103
Table 4.3 The balance of trust in societal institutions (KIIS)	107
Table 4.4 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for insubordination by the battalions	122
Table 4.5 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for competition by the battalions	128
Table 4.6 Ukraine: Summary table	133
Table 5.1 IDF's military profession and the challenges of the First Intifada	154
Table 5.2 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for insubordination	164
Table 5.3 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for competition	174

Table 5.4 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for deference	184
Table 5.5 Israel: Summary table	187
Table 6.1 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for deference	218
Table 6.2 UK: Summary table	219
Table 7.1 Summary table for all four cases	228

## **List of Figures**

Figure 4.1. Relations between government's policies and different forms of erosion of civilian control by the AFU and volunteer battalions	109
Figure 5.1 Israeli Ministers of Defense 1948-2020	146
Figure 5.2 Annual losses of the IDF 1987-1995	163
Figure 5.3 Military expenditure in Israel in 1992 in comparison to previous years (Sources: SIPRI, the World Bank)	172

## List of Abbreviations

AFU	Armed Forces of Ukraine
ATO	Anti-Terrorist Operation
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
DPA	The Movement in Support of the Army (Rus.: Dvizhenie v Podderzhku Armii)
DUK	Ukrainian Volunteer Corps (The military wing of the Pravyi Sektor organization) (Ukr.: Dobrovolchii Ukrainskii Korpus)
FSB	Federal Security Service (Rus.: Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti)
GlavPUR	The Chief Political Directorate (Rus.: Glavnoe Politicheskoye Upravlenie)
GOC	General Officer Commanding
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IRA	Irish Republican Army
MMP	Members of the Military Profession
MoD	Ministry of Defense
MoIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MVD	Ministry of the Interior (Rus.: Ministerstvo Vnutrennih Del)
NSC	National Security Council
OMON	Police Special Forces Unit (Rus.: Otryad Militsii Osobogo Naznacheniya)
PIRA	Provisionary IRA
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PM	Parliament Member
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SBU	Security Service of Ukraine (Ukr.: Sluzhba Besopasnosti Ukrainy)



SC	Security Council
SSNI	Secretary of the State for Northern Ireland
UDA	Ukrainian Volunteer Army (former DUK)
VV	Internal Troops (Rus.: Vnutrenniye Voiska)

## INTRODUCTION

Civilian control of the military is a fundamental characteristic of the government that affects its capacity, stability, and legitimacy. Abundant literature on civil-military relations offers insights into factors that motivate or restrain the *military* in challenging civilian control. These factors include preference divergence, military professionalism, the lack of the right and capacity of the military to govern; and institutional oversight of the military.<sup>1</sup> However, little research has been devoted to understanding how a particular government's policies might affect the above factors and weaken civilian control. As a result, governments are ill-equipped to evaluate whether or not their actions will have a destructive effect on civilian control of the military. My research fills this gap by offering a policy-focused theory explaining *under what conditions do governments' policies lead to erosion of civilian control of the military?*

To answer this question, I employ several theoretical, conceptual, and methodological innovations. First, I propose a theory of erosion of civilian control that illuminates how particular policies can shift the civil-military power balance. Second, to observe a broad range of these effects, I develop a comprehensive analytical framework that includes erosion by insubordination, erosion by political competition against the government, and erosion by civilian deference to

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy J. Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1979); Risa A. Brooks, *Shaping Strategy: The Civil-Military Politics of Strategic Assessment* (Princeton University Press, 2008); Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2005); Zoltan Barany, *The Soldier and the Changing State* (Princeton University Press, 2012); Samuel E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction, 2002); Harold A. Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control of the Military in Venezuela: A Comparative Perspective* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2011); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 2002); Juan J. Linz, *Crisis, Breakdown & Reequilibration: The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Lindsay P. Cohn, "It Wasn't in My Contract: Security Privatization and Civilian Control," *Armed Forces & Society* 37, no. 3 (2011): 381–98.

the military.<sup>2</sup> Finally, I test the explanatory power of the new theory in the context of intrastate conflict, which will yield useful insights for theory and policy.

I argue that governments' decisions will erode civilian control under two conditions: First—if the government's policy about the use of force stretches the boundaries of the military profession by using the armed forces beyond their area of responsibility, expertise, or undermining their corporate spirit. The pushback from the military can include a failure or refusal to take orders, leaking sensitive information to the media to pressure the government, or even the military's involvement in the electoral competition. Second, civilian control will weaken if the government perceives the conflict as a political burden and uses the military to shield itself from the popular dissatisfaction over conflict-related policies. This condition would increase the military's involvement in politics and civilian government's dependence on the armed forces and lead to erosion of civilian control through civilian deference to the military.<sup>3</sup> I test this argument by looking at the cases when democratic and democratizing governments deploy military force in the intrastate conflict.

To test the predictions of the policy-focused theory of erosion, I study four cases of democratic or democratizing states using their militaries in separatist conflicts: Russia during the First Chechen War, the United Kingdom and in Northern Ireland, Israel in the First Intifada, and Ukraine at the beginning of the Russian-backed war in Donbas. Intrastate separatist conflicts create a conducive environment for the occurrence of the two conditions specified by the policy-focused theory. The deployment of the armed forces to tackle intrastate threats often implies the use of the military beyond their area of expertise and responsibility. Moreover, intrastate use of force creates a politically risky environment for the government creating favorable conditions for civilian

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<sup>2</sup> Polina Beliakova, "Erosion of Civilian Control in Democracies: A Comprehensive Framework for Comparative Analysis," *Comparative Political Studies* 54, no. 8 (2021): 1393–1423.

<sup>3</sup> Polina Beliakova, "Erosion by Deference: Civilian Control and the Military in Policymaking (Summer 2021)," *Texas National Security Review*, 2021.

deference to the military in policymaking. Thus, separatist conflicts offer a rich research context for observing how the government's policies aimed at tackling the intrastate threat may result in weakening civilian control of the military.

Methodologically, the variation between the chosen cases allows me to compare how the proposed theory applies to states with stronger or weaker institutions (e.g., Russia in the 1990s vs. Israel) and stronger or weaker threats to the military profession posed by the government's policies (e.g., Ukraine in April-August 2014 vs. the United Kingdom). Analyzing each case, I use process tracing, starting from the pre-conflict period, to set the baseline. The project relies on extensive archival research, fieldwork, expert interviews, analysis of government documents, and secondary sources. My command of all four relevant languages—Russian, English, Ukrainian, and Hebrew—allows me to evaluate the original government documents, local media reports, and other data sources firsthand.

This research will improve our understanding of how governments' decisions about the use of force can weaken civilian control of the military. In addition, this study will illuminate the understudied phenomenon of civilian deference to the military and its implications for civil-military relations. The empirical findings of this research will highlight the unintended consequences of the intrastate use of the armed forces, thus contributing to the literature on insurgencies and civil wars. From the policy perspective, these insights will allow developing well-informed strategies of conflict management, resolution, and post-conflict state-building with taking into account the power balance between civilian and military actors in conflict-affected societies. The policy-focused theory of erosion can also be applied to develop and test hypotheses about weakening civilian control in contexts other than intrastate wars and by armed actors other than the military.

# **CHAPTER 1:**

## **THEORY AND DEFINITIONS**

### **1. Relevance**

Civil-military relations are at the center of the power dynamics in domestic and international politics. On domestic level, harmonious civil-military relations are a requirement for legitimate and effective governance. Specifically, the government's ability to control the military at home assures that both the government and armed forces serve the interests of the citizens and the state. On international level, civil-military relations affect the state's ability initiate the use of force, effectively apply it, and cease hostilities in alignment with the national interests. Pathologies of civil-military relations, thus, can negatively affect domestic politics and international relations, lead to abuse of power, threaten regime stability, undermine national, regional, and international security.

One of the most deleterious pathologies of civil-military is the erosion of civilian control of the military — the main focus of this research. Existing studies focus on how the military erodes civilian control, leaving the potential distractive effect of the civilian side of the relationship beyond the scope of the analysis. Moreover, the predominant majority of empirical studies focus on coups, falling short of discussing more subtle forms of erosion of civilian control of the military.

This study fills both gaps by offering a new policy-focused theory of civil-military relations exploring how the governmental policies affect civilian control of the military. In addition, it advances a new comprehensive framework that helps capture erosion of civilian control beyond coups.

By highlighting the understudied role of civilians in erosion of civilian control of the military this new theory contributes to the scholarly understanding of how governmental policies affect civil-military relations. Focusing on the forms of erosion other than coups makes this research extremely relevant for democratic regimes which are empirically proved not to be coup-prone but experience the decline of democratic institutions and processes through more gradual processes of backsliding.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter begins with the definitions of key terms. It then pays separate attention to defining civilian control, placing it into a causal perspective, and operationalizing the erosion of civilian control through a new comprehensive framework.

## 2. Key definitions

**Civil-military relations.** The term civil-military relations pertains to the wide range of interactions between the military, the government, and the society. The primary focus of this research is the relations between the government and the military. These include the interactions between the government and the armed forces in the policy formulation and implementation processes. The relations between the government and the military can be harmonious or contentious, characterized by intense interaction or extensive autonomy. For instance, the government can develop policies with or without consulting with the military, have military's compliance or opposition, let the military manage violence with limited civilian supervision or with extensive oversight of the operations. In this research, the relationships between the society and the military are considered as a secondary aspect of civil-military relations, affecting the government-military relations.

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<sup>4</sup> Nancy Bermeo, "On Democratic Backsliding," *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 1 (2016): 5–19; Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (Broadway Books, 2018).

***Government.*** For the sake of this research the ‘government’ is limited to civilian legislative and executive actors and bodies that immediately involved in policymaking at a national level as part of their job obligations. Immediate involvement presumes an ability to define policy objectives and the ways and means of their achievement. These include the executive branch — the president, the cabinet of ministers, separate ministries (e.g., the Ministry of Defense), national security councils and their analogues. On the side of the legislature the governmental actors may include the parliament, parliamentary fractions, members of the parliament, and parliamentary committees capable of affecting policymaking. Members of the elites (e.g., the oligarchs), party members who are not parliament members, and bodies of the local government are excluded from this definition.

***The Military.*** This study uses ‘the military’ to refer to the members of the military profession or groups of the members and not the institution as a whole. Therefore, when discussing the military not obeying the orders, participating in policymaking, or competing with civilian authorities, it refers to the behavior of the representatives of the military profession, socialized within the military institution, and appearing as members of such (e.g., wearing the uniform, using the military ranks as an honorific, etc.). The definition includes the officer corps, the conscripts, military reservists called on active duty, and recently retired officers who continue to use their affiliation with the military institutions in public domain. For instance, a recently retired general appointed a minister of defense would be considered a member of the military profession. A long retired officer who managed to build a separate civilian career for which they are publicly known would not be considered as a member of the military profession if they do not appear in uniform and not introduce themselves using military ranks.

The chapter about Ukrainian war in Donbas also considers the role of pro-government, which belonged to the military only formally but were not

effectively integrated in the chain of command. Yet, because they performed the functions of the military, wore military uniforms, used military ranks, and were legalized as part of the military institution, this research considers them as actors in Ukrainian civil-military relations.

***Civilian control of the military.*** This term refers to the ability of the civilian sectors of the society to regulate the behavior of the armed forces. Civilian control of the military includes governmental control of the military and societal control (e.g., by civil society organizations). This research focuses on the former leaving the latter out of the scope. For the sake of this study, civilian control pertains to the ability of the government to dominate in the relationships with its armed forces pertaining to policy formulation and implementation. The following sections provide a more detailed perspective on civilian control and offer the operationalization of its erosion.

### 3. Literature Review

#### ***Understanding civilian control***

The issue of civilian control is of critical importance for regime's survival because of what Feaver calls the civil-military problematique: "The civil-military problematique is a simple paradox: because we fear others we create an institution of violence to protect us, but then we fear the very institution we created for protection."<sup>5</sup> Thus, civilian control does require not only the military's compliance with the orders of civilians but also the officers' abstention from domestic political contestation.

The existing scholarship does not rely on one agreed-upon definition of civilian control of the military as well as a uniform way to operationalize and measure it. In broad terms, *civilian control* pertains to the relative power of

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<sup>5</sup> Peter D. Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control," *Armed Forces & Society* 23, no. 2 (1996): 149–78, 150.



civilian and military groups in society.<sup>6</sup> Some scholars understand civilian control as societal oversight of the military, while others conceptualize it as political (institutional) control of the armed forces.<sup>7</sup> In democracies, these two dimensions overlap since citizens delegate authority to elected officials to exercise control of the armed forces.<sup>8</sup> The understanding of civilian control as a set of relationships between the civilian government and its military in exercising power in politics produces a variation that cannot be reduced to a binary measurement (e.g., coup / no coup).<sup>9</sup>

For Huntington, civilian control “exists when there is proper subordination of an autonomous profession to the ends of policy.”<sup>10</sup> His notion of objective civilian control rests on the professionalization of the armed forces, which will lead to the emergence of an autonomous military profession with strict boundaries that the military themselves would be unwilling to cross. The civilian dominance in the political sphere is achieved by minimizing the political power of the military. This arrangement requires the separation of spheres of responsibility—civilians develop policy and decide when to use the military as a tool, the armed forces perform a professional task of managing the violence on civilian demand.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the emergence of the military profession does not mean that once achieved, the productive balance between the civilian government and the military will persist. The goal of the present research is to empirically test what

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<sup>6</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 80.

<sup>7</sup> Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*, Free Press trade paperback edition (New York: Free Press, 2017); Feaver, *Armed Servants*; Brooks, *Shaping Strategy*.

<sup>8</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Claude Emerson Welch, *Civilian Control of the Military: Theory and Cases from Developing Countries* (SUNY Press, 1976); Richard H. Kohn, “The Erosion of Civilian Control of the Military in the United States Today, Naval War C,” *Rev., Summer*, 2002, 22–37; Aurel Croissant et al., “Beyond the Fallacy of Coup-Is: Conceptualizing Civilian Control of the Military in Emerging Democracies,” *Democratization* 17, no. 5 (2010): 950–75.

<sup>10</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 72.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

happens when governmental policies threaten the military's professionalism and how it affects civilian control.

Huntington's theory attracted criticism from various sides. Janowitz sees the solution to the civilian control problem in increased civilian oversight of the military.<sup>12</sup> For Janowitz, however, civilian control is not institutional but societal, and therefore the key to it is not the separation of the spheres of influence but military integration with civilian values.<sup>13</sup> In the case of Israel I consider in this study, the military is strongly integrated with the values of the broader society, and yet, erosion by insubordination, competition, and deference occurs. Accounting for policy-related factors sheds light on why it happens. Cohen challenges the prescription of objective control on the grounds of autonomy. However, in contrast to Janowitzian idea of politicizing the military, Cohen demonstrates through historical case studies that the subordination of the use of force to policy objectives requires a constant interference of the state leadership in the conduct of warfare.<sup>14</sup>

In line with understanding civilian control as a spectrum or balance, Feaver claims that in strong democracies where coup remains a theoretical possibility that rarely materializes, scholars should focus on understanding the patterns of civilian control rather than its absence or presence.<sup>15</sup> He develops an agency theory that explains civilian control as a principal-agent problem producing various outcomes depending on the costs of civilian oversight and the costs of military shirking.<sup>16</sup>

Overall, scholars have framed civilian control of the military as a dynamic system of relations in which civilians and the military engage in power balancing.

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<sup>12</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 420.

<sup>14</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen and Leadership in Wartime* (Simon and Schuster, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique," 167.

<sup>16</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*.

Below I review the existing research on the factors that can affect civil-military power balance in society.

### ***Factors that affect civilian control***

Scholars of civil-military relations argue that *threat environment* affects the level of military involvement in politics. For instance, Lasswell posits that intense international threats that might affect the entire population are likely to increase the role of the military in politics up to the emergence of a garrison state.<sup>17</sup> Huntington agrees by stating that under subjective civilian control, when professional boundaries do not restrain the military from political involvement, “intensified security threats result in increased military imperatives against which it becomes more difficult to assert civilian power.”<sup>18</sup> Going further, Desch suggests that different combinations of internal and external threats define the mission of the military and shape civil-military relations.<sup>19</sup> However, in contrast to Lasswell, he argues that external threats offer the most favorable conditions for harmonious civil-military relations as they allow for close to the full autonomy of the armed forces. Professional autonomy, in turn, results in the separation of the spheres of civilian and military responsibility resembling Huntingtonian objective control.<sup>20</sup> Contrarily, fighting internal wars or performing intrastate non-military missions would lead to pathologies in civil-military relations due to the weakness of the government and politicization of the military by the key political players.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Harold D. Lasswell, “The Garrison State,” *American Journal of Sociology* 46, no. 4 (1941): 455–68; Harold Lasswell, “The Garrison State Hypothesis Today,” in *Essays on the Garrison State* (Routledge, 1997).

<sup>18</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier*, 84.

<sup>19</sup> Michael C. Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment*, paperback ed (Baltimore London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> Michael Desch, “Threat Environments and Military Missions,” *Civil-Military Relations and Democracy*, 1996, 12–29.

<sup>21</sup> Desch, “Threat Environments and Military Missions”; Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military*.

*Preference divergence* between the military and civilian authorities is another factor that can motivate the military to interfere in politics.<sup>22</sup> When civilians and the military have different preferences, it creates the incentives for the military to shirk or to interfere in political matters to manipulate the political decisions in their favor.<sup>23</sup> Among the preferences of the military that can be threatened by the government are budgetary concerns, organizational autonomy, maintenance of cohesion, and the survival of the military institution.<sup>24</sup> While substantive literature treats the government's ability to prevail over the military in cases of preference divergence as an indicator of civilian control of the military, this measurement is at best incomplete. In fact, a convergence of civilian and military preferences can be a source of erosion of civilian control as well when the government voluntarily delegates power to the military, thus decreasing civilian influence in politics. I discuss this in detail, developing the concept of civilian deference to the military in policymaking.<sup>25</sup>

The factors that restrain the armed forces from taking over the government include *professionalism* based on three pillars—expertise, responsibility, and corporateness.<sup>26</sup> For the military, the expertise is to manage violence (usually in international conflict), the responsibility is to defend the state and its society, and the corporateness defines the sense of belonging to the profession.<sup>27</sup> Keeping these three components intact should cultivate the sense of unique military profession and engender self-restraint that would prevent the military's involvement in politics. Similar to this logic, Finer states that the lack of technical

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<sup>22</sup> Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority*; Feaver, *Armed Servants*; Brooks, *Shaping Strategy*.

<sup>23</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*.

<sup>24</sup> Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military*.

<sup>25</sup> Beliakova, "Erosion by Deference."

<sup>26</sup> Amos Perlmutter, "The Praetorian State and the Praetorian Army: Toward a Taxonomy of Civil-Military Relations in Developing Politics," *Comparative Politics* 1, no. 3 (1969): 382–404; Huntington, *The Soldier*.

<sup>27</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier*.

capacity and skill to govern complex political systems will prevent the military from taking over the government. The more complex the society and the more specialized the economy, the less military skills and capabilities apply to governing the state.<sup>28</sup> However, Huntington's measurement of professionalism is analytically problematic because of the inherent recursion: a professional military is one that does not interfere in politics; when the military interferes in politics, it is not professional. Colton challenges this argument claiming that professionalism can motivate the military's interference in politics to prevail in the range of institutional issues.<sup>29</sup>

The second restraining factor for the military's interference in politics is *the legitimacy* of the government. For instance, Finer discusses how the lack of the legal right to govern and the lack of moral grounds to justify the armed forces' intervention in politics keeps the military in barracks. According to Finer, the military cannot govern by force alone; they have to prove that they have a right to rule. In a similar vein, it is not enough to simply claim a right to govern. The military has to justify the disruption of the existing political order, which is extremely problematic to do in modern societies.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Linz argues that the citizens' shared belief in the legitimacy of the government precludes the military from turning their arms against the civilian authorities.<sup>31</sup> Of course, different regimes have various power legitimizing mechanisms. For instance, in monarchies, legitimacy rests on heredity, while in democracies, the source of legitimacy is public participation in politics through elections.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, challenging the legitimacy of the government in monarchies would require contesting the birthright of the monarch, while in a democracy, it would mean the

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<sup>28</sup> Finer, *The Man on Horseback*.

<sup>29</sup> Colton, *The Commissars*, 276.

<sup>30</sup> Finer, *The Man on Horseback*.

<sup>31</sup> Linz, *Crisis, Breakdown & Reequilibration*, 17.

<sup>32</sup> David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (Macmillan International Higher Education, 2013).

withdrawal of public support.<sup>33</sup> This is an important distinction because the events that would relax the restraining effect of legitimacy on the military intervention in politics would also vary across regimes.

Finally, *strong civilian institutions* capable of formulating viable security policies, providing oversight of the military, and punishing non-compliance constitute another factor restraining the military involvement in politics.<sup>34</sup> The functioning of institutional restraining mechanisms relies on civilian expertise in security matters, effective monitoring mechanisms, and the rule of law. In democracies, regardless of how strong the military is, the preferences of elected civilian authorities must prevail since only their power is legitimate.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, civilian expertise in security matters is of crucial importance. In the words of Peter Feaver: “Regardless of how superior the military view of a situation may be, the civilian view trumps it. Civilians should get what they ask for, even if it is not what they really want. In other words, civilians have a right to be wrong.”<sup>36</sup>

To conclude, existing scholarship on civilian control allows to identify the factors that might motivate the military to get involved in politics, as well as those that constrain the armed forces in doing so. This knowledge serves as a departure point for developing a theory that would allow predicting which government’s policies will trigger the process of erosion of civilian control and under what conditions it is more likely to happen. To develop such a theory, it is first necessary to conceptualize the erosion of civilian control.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Perlmutter, “The Praetorian State and the Praetorian Army”; Feaver, “The Civil-Military Problematique”; Cohn, “It Wasn’t in My Contract”; Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control of the Military in Venezuela*.

<sup>35</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 5-6.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 6.

## **4. The comprehensive analytical framework of erosion of civilian control**

The primary dependent variable of my interest is civilian control of the military that can vary in response to the government's policies. For the sake of this research, I adopt a broad definition of civilian control as a power balance between civilian political authorities and the military in which civilians dominate. This definition allows conceptualizing the erosion of civilian control in terms of a dynamic power balance. Here power is taken in Dahlian terms: "*A* has power over *B* to the extent that [*A*] can get *B* to do something that *B* would not otherwise do."<sup>37</sup> In the case of civil-military relations *A* and *B* stand for civilian authorities and the military interchangeably, meaning that not only that the government can command the military but also that the military can influence the behavior of the government.

Building upon the available research, I operationalize civilian control as having three key attributes of civilian dominance in politics.<sup>38</sup> First, the military is subordinate to the government. The observable indicators of subordination are the military's compliance with the government's orders, their timely and accurate implementation, and timely and accurate reporting to the government on major security-related events.

Second attribute of civilian control is that the military does not compete with the government for political power. The observable indicators of this attribute are that the members of the military profession do not participate in elections, do not try to influence politics by engaging with the public opinion, do not blackmail or coerce the government, and do not participate in or plot a military takeover. In other words, the officers accept that political power resides

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<sup>37</sup> Robert A. Dahl, "The Concept of Power," *Behavioral Science* 2, no. 3 (1957): 201–15.

<sup>38</sup> See Welch, *Civilian Control of the Military*; Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*; Feaver, *Armed Servants*; Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique"; Desch, "Threat Environments and Military Missions"; Cohen, *Supreme Command*; Barany, "The Soldier and the Changing State."

in the hands of civilian officials and do not try to challenge the existing civil-military power balance in policymaking. Third attribute of civilian control requires that civilian authorities dominate the policy process. In operational terms it means that elected or appointed civilians dominate the key security policy making bodies (e.g., the Security Council), civilian expertise informs security policy formulation, and the final decision-making power belongs to civilian officials. I summarize this operationalization of civilian control in Table 1.1, outlining the key attributes and observable indicators of this phenomenon.

**Table 1.1 Operationalization of civilian control**

Attributes	Indicators (Operationalization)	Authors
<i>Subordination of the military to civilian authorities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliance with the orders issued by the civilian authority.</li> <li>• Timely and accurate implementation of orders.</li> <li>• The military reports to civilian authorities on major security-related events.</li> </ul>	Huntington 1957; Pion-Berlin 1992; Desch 1999; Feaver 2003.
<i>The military does not compete with the government for political power</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the military do not run for offices.</li> <li>• They do not try to influence politics through blackmailing or challenging the government and affecting public opinion (media appearances, public addresses, etc.).</li> <li>• They do not plot, try to perform, or assist a coup.</li> </ul>	Huntington 1957; Kohn 2002; Feaver 2003; Brooks 2008; Croissant et al. 2010; Barany 2012.
<i>Civilian authorities dominate the policy process.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civilian appointees dominate key security policymaking bodies.</li> <li>• Civilian expertise on security issues is taken into account in policy formulation.</li> <li>• The final decision-making power belongs to civilian authorities.</li> </ul>	Perlmutter 1969, Feaver 1996/2003; Cottey et al. 2002; Trinkunas 2005; Cohn 2011; Cohen 2012.



Understanding civilian control in terms of power balance is useful for developing a comprehensive framework for the analysis of the *erosion* of civilian control applicable across regimes (See Table 1.2). It allows to differentiate the processes through which the fluctuation in civilian control can happen, thus capturing both quantitative (more-less erosion) and qualitative variation in the outcome (what kind of erosion). Specifically, the process of *erosion* can take place along three primary attributes of civilian control identified in Table 1.1. First, when the military refuses to abide by the orders, it denies the government's exercise of power, leading to erosion by *insubordination*. In this case, the power of the military does not expand, but civilian influence decreases. Instances of erosion by insubordination include shirking, foot-dragging, refusal to take or give orders, failure to report, defections and mutinies.

Second, when the military attempts to contests the civilian's political power erosion by *competition* occurs. Empirical indicators of such behavior include the members of the military profession participating in elections, endorsing the candidates, publicly challenging the government's authority, leaking sensitive information to the press, plotting or attempting a coup. For example, General Stanley McChrystal's critical remarks on the White House's conduct of war in Afghanistan that were published in the infamous feature article by *The Rolling Stone* would constitute erosion by competition.<sup>39</sup> Another instance would be the leaking to the *Washington Post* McChrystal's strategic assessment, requesting more troops in Afghanistan.<sup>40</sup> In both cases, the military would try to challenge the government's policy by engaging with the public opinion via media.

Third, when civilians delegate part of their policymaking powers to the military, they voluntarily diminish civilian input in the policy process leading to

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<sup>39</sup> Michael Hastings, "The Runaway General: The Profile That Brought Down McChrystal," *Rolling Stone* (blog), June 22, 2010, <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/the-run-away-general-the-profile-that-brought-down-mcchrystal-192609/>.

<sup>40</sup> Matthew C Brand, "General McChrystal's Strategic Assessment," Air Force Institute Research Papers, July 2011, [https://media.defense.gov/2017/Jun/19/2001765050/-1/-1/0/AP\\_BRAND\\_MCCHRYSTALS\\_ASSESSMENT.PDF](https://media.defense.gov/2017/Jun/19/2001765050/-1/-1/0/AP_BRAND_MCCHRYSTALS_ASSESSMENT.PDF).

erosion by *deference*. The indicators of erosion by deference are the increase of the number and influence of the members of the military profession in policymaking bodies, the predominance of the military expertise in policymaking, and granting decision-making powers on policy issues to the military. One of the recent examples of erosion by deference is President Donald Trump delegating the decision to define the number of troops in Afghanistan to the Pentagon headed by Gen. (Ret.) James Mattis and heavily populated by military experts.

**Table 1.2 Types of erosion and observable indicators**

Attribute	Power dynamics	Indicators
<i>Insubordination</i>	Denial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shirking;</li> <li>• Foot-dragging;</li> <li>• Refusal to take orders;</li> <li>• Systematic failure to report.</li> <li>• Defections/mutinies</li> </ul>
<i>Military competition against civilians</i>	Contestation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the military profession (MMP) affect policy via media: press statements, leaks;</li> <li>• MMP run for public offices or support political parties;</li> <li>• MMP plot, attempt, perform a coup.</li> </ul>
<i>Civilian deference to the military in policy-making</i>	Delegation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civilians delegate policymaking tasks to the MMP;</li> <li>• Military experts dominate policy formulation;</li> <li>• MMP has decision-making power over policy issues.</li> </ul>

Analyzing civilian control along these three dimensions, we can observe the extent of civilian power over the military—increase/decrease in comparison to a chosen baseline—as well as the qualitative attributes of its change – insubordination, competition, and deference. This analytical framework constitutes an advance in scope and granularity over major existing typologies that address the issue of civilian control and military involvement in politics.

For instance, Colton describes the military participation in politics along two dimensions — scope (from internal military to societal issues) and means involved (from official prerogatives to the use of force). Colton also discusses the ways through which the military gets involved in politics (including upon the invitation by the government) as well the motivators for intervention in politics (similar to what I call competition).<sup>41</sup> However, his typology does not include the political consequences of the military denying the exercise of power to civilians — insubordination.

Croissant et al. assess civilian control by focusing on five decision-making areas — elite recruitment, public policy, internal security, external defense, and military organization.<sup>42</sup> In further discussion, they outline what the particular indicators of existing civilian control relevant for each sphere are. However, in real life, these decision-making areas are not independent of each other, and treating them as analytically distinct might obscure important interconnections between them. The comprehensive framework cuts across the five decision-making areas and allows for systematic analysis and comparison between them. In addition, it is better suited for capturing the nature and scope of *change* in civilian control rather than its absence or presence. Therefore, the comprehensive framework provides a more systematic and dynamic perspective on civil-military power balancing.

Cohn suggests four indicators of civilian control focusing on policy formulation: whether civilian or military policy preferences prevail; whether or not civilian policymakers set the policy agenda; whether civilian leaders consulted a range of advisors, and whether military advisors presented alternative courses of action.<sup>43</sup> In contrast, the comprehensive framework captures the manifestations of

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<sup>41</sup> Colton, *The Commissars*.

<sup>42</sup> Aurel Croissant et al., “Beyond the Fallacy of Coup-Is: Conceptualizing Civilian Control of the Military in Emerging Democracies,” *Democratization* 17, no. 5 (2010): 950–75.

<sup>43</sup> Cohn, “It wasn’t in my Contract,” 387.

weakening civilian control in both policy formulation and implementation stages. In addition, it goes beyond the traditional preference divergence paradigm and allows to identify the instances of erosion of civilian control in which the preferences of civilian officials and the military might converge, and nevertheless, civilian control decreased (erosion by deference).

To conclude, the new framework provides a comprehensive multidimensional outlook on civil-military power dynamics and is applicable across policy areas and regime types. For this research, I employ it to capture the process of erosion through which the change in civilian control happens in response to the government's policies. Now having a definition of civilian control, the analytical framework that helps to capture its erosion, and keeping in mind the factors that affect civilian control, we can assemble the new policy-focused theory of erosion.

## **5. Policy-focused Theory of Erosion of Civilian Control**

How can the government's policies engage with the factors that affect civilian control — preference divergence, professionalism, legitimacy, and institutions? The first intuitive response is that the military will challenge civilian control when a government's policy generates diverging preferences between the military and civilians. Nevertheless, a preference divergence approach does not provide a precise answer as to divergence of what particular preferences would cause a disagreement strong enough to trigger the process of erosion. Moreover, preference divergence can explain insubordination and competition, but civilian deference to the military in policymaking can as well be characterized by the convergence of preferences and yet lead to the decrease of the relative power of civilian government in society.

Scholars of military professionalism provide a solution to the first problem, arguing that the military is more likely to intervene in politics when its institutional preferences are threatened by the government.<sup>44</sup> I advance this line of research by empirically testing how civilian interference with the three pillars of the military profession — responsibility, expertise, corporateness — affects civilian control.

First, the military *responsibility* as one of the pillars of the profession provides the sense of the mission and motivation to the military.<sup>45</sup> Simply speaking, it answers the question *what is the purpose of the military?* This responsibility usually includes protecting the state and society and can be exercised on the battlefield as well as through providing expert military advice to the government.<sup>46</sup> If the government's policy challenges the responsibility of the military, the armed forces will use their political power to defend the core of the profession. The military contestation of civilian power — erosion by competition — can take the form of the military leaking sensitive information to the press, making media statements, lobbying, supporting political opposition, running for offices, and even planning or attempting a coup. Preference divergence over the responsibility of the armed forces may also be accompanied by acts of insubordination.

The second pillar of the military profession is expertise. It answers the question *of what is the unique military skill?* Broadly speaking, military expertise is managing violence.<sup>47</sup> Of course, which types of violence and in which context —depends on the military professional culture and history. Nevertheless, if, in a given case, the officers perceive the tasks assigned to the military as not their job,

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<sup>44</sup> Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority*; Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military*.

<sup>45</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier*.

<sup>46</sup> William E. Rapp, "Civil-Military Relations: The Role of Military Leaders in Strategy Making," *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 45, no. 3 (2015): 4.

<sup>47</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier*.

they will resist these orders denying the civilian the exercise of power over the military. This denial results in erosion of civilian control through insubordination and can manifest in foot-dragging, refusing to take orders, failing to report, defections, and resignations. It would be true, especially if there are other agencies and services whose expertise involves the tasks assigned to the military (e.g., internal security services, border patrol, police, or civilian agencies). Of course, over time, the new functions can be internalized in the profession.

The third foundation of the military profession is the sense of corporateness which provides an answer to a question *who is a member of the military profession (and who is not)?* First, the armed forces derive their corporateness from having a unique license to use military force in the interests of the state and society. Second, the exclusive nature of the profession stems from the high requirements for entering the organization and being promoted within its hierarchy. An essential part of preserving corporateness is upholding the standards of the profession and preventing the “unsuitable” individuals from entering it. The government’s interference with military corporateness can also launch two forms of erosion—insubordination and competition. If the threat to corporateness entails a long-term fundamental transformation in the profession (e.g., the rules of conscription or promotion), the military will engage in political competition with the civilian authorities to change the policy. If the effect on the corporateness is temporary (e.g., simultaneous deployment of the military and internal security services under a shared command), it will result in insubordination—foot-dragging, failure to report, refusal to take orders, etc.

Based on the above discussion, the first hypothesis is:

*H1: Erosion of civilian control by insubordination and competition occurs when the government’s policies threaten the military’s responsibility, expertise, or corporateness.*

To solve the deference conundrum, it is useful to turn to the discussion of legitimacy, especially in democracies. The legitimacy of democratic and democratizing governments is conditional on popular trust in the government, its institutions, and policies. Civilian deference to the military is a voluntary delegation of power by the government to the military. When would civilian authorities' own policies lead to this delegation? I argue that this happens when civilian government considers security policymaking as a potential political burden (e.g., the policy lacks popular support or may involve unexpected undesirable outcomes). To minimize political losses, elected politicians can exploit the military's authority to increase the public trust in their policies thus activating the causal mechanism of *boosting the approval*. Alternatively, the government can try to shield itself from the negative political consequences of risky policies driven by the mechanism of *avoiding responsibility*. Delegating policymaking prerogatives to the military would limit civilian input in policymaking and provide the military with the legal authority and moral ground for interfering in politics, thus leading to erosion of civilian control through civilian deference to the military. Examples of erosion by deference include allowing the military to spearhead the negotiation with the adversary or appointing the members of the military profession in key policymaking positions. It yields a hypothesis about how the government's policies can produce erosion by deference:

*H2: Erosion by deference occurs when the government sees the conflict as a political burden and uses the military to mitigate the political costs of unpopular policies.*

Thus, answering the central question of this study, I argue that government's policies cause the erosion of civilian control under two conditions: First—if the government stretches the boundaries of the military profession by using the armed forces beyond their area of responsibility, expertise or undermining their

corporate spirit. Violating the boundaries of the military profession creates preference divergences between the armed forces and the government about whether and how the military should be used. It triggers the causal mechanism of *defending the profession* – the military mobilizes its political power in order to preserve the previously accepted boundaries of the military craft. The pushback from the military can include a failure or refusal to take orders, leaking sensitive information to the media to pressure the government, or even the military’s involvement in the electoral competition. However, the military is not the only actor who can erode civilian control. According to the policy-focused theory, elected politicians driven by the desire to *avoid responsibility* or *boost approval* for their policies can delegate policymaking prerogatives to the military and weaken civilian control through deference.

I test the above hypotheses and the plausibility of the associated causal mechanisms using process tracing and cross-case analysis. Since process tracing requires identifying alternative explanations to the phenomenon of interest, in the methodology section, I review rival hypotheses that could explain different forms of erosion.



## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

To test the analytical utility of the policy-focused theory in a particular political context, I use it to explain how the government's policies affect civilian control during the intrastate conflict. Intrastate conflicts create a conducive environment for the occurrence of the two conditions specified by the policy-focused theory. The deployment of the armed forces to tackle domestic political threats often implies the use of the military beyond the limits of the profession. Moreover, the use of force at home can constitute a political burden for the government who failed to address the crisis with other non-kinetic instruments, thus creating favorable conditions for civilian deference to the military in policymaking.

Specifically, intrastate conflict introduces several peculiarities that might be challenging for the military's profession. To begin, the professional military emerged as a tool of *international* politics capable of prevailing over the adversary armies on the battlefield and allowing their governments to impose a political solution on the defeated side.<sup>48</sup> However, the reasons that drive internal conflicts are usually deeply rooted in *domestic* politics, and solutions cannot be reached by the use of force alone.<sup>49</sup> Unlike interstate wars, insurgencies and civil wars challenge the legitimacy and authority of the state government and require

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<sup>48</sup> Michael Howard and Peter Paret, *Carl von Clausewitz on War* (Princeton University Press, 1984).

<sup>49</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006).

simultaneous political and military efforts to resolve the conflict.<sup>50</sup> In many cases, the use of the military within the state borders will go against the military's professional responsibility.

Second, instead of well-equipped uniformed enemy combatants, intrastate wars involve politically motivated non-state actors. These actors come from the state's population, depend on popular support, and fight among the people.<sup>51</sup> To compensate for the inherent military inferiority, politically motivated non-state actors rely on asymmetric warfare using guerrilla tactics, terrorist attacks, ambushes, hostage-taking, human shields, use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and other forms of violence not typical for interstate wars. Thus, using the armed forces against these actors can stretch the expertise of the military.

Third, unlike in international wars, in intrastate conflicts, the military will likely not be the only governmental actor responsible for managing violence. The necessity to coordinate with security services, internal troops, police, and other law enforcement agencies distinguishes the use of military force in internal conflict from its more traditional interstate application. Being not the only actor with the right to use force can undermine the sense of military corporateness.

Fourth, intrastate conflict challenges the government's authority and legitimacy and can create incentives for the elected civilians to delegate risky policy moves to the military. Through these two mechanisms, intrastate conflict creates a conducive environment for erosion by deference.

For the sake of this research, I focus on the government's policies directed at using the military for tackling the conflicts within the state's own borders. For comparability, the cases selected for this study are separatist conflicts, formally

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<sup>50</sup> K. J. Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 51 (Cambridge ; New York, N.Y., USA: Cambridge University Press, 1996); David J. Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency," in *Strategic Studies* (Routledge, 2008), 336–51; David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>51</sup> Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd ed., rev (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2005); Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, 1st Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 2008); Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*; Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*.

matching the definition of insurgency as a struggle between a non-ruling group and a government in which the former relies on a combination of political and military means to challenge government's power and legitimacy, while striving to obtain or maintain control over a particular area.<sup>52</sup> Using this definition allows analyzing strategically comparable but tactically diverse conflicts. From the strategic point of view, insurgencies share similar objectives — establishing/maintaining control over a given territory. Tactically, these conflicts can involve a variety of challenges, including terrorist campaigns, guerrilla attacks, conventional warfare, international actors, and even great powers.<sup>53</sup> Focusing on insurgencies rather than civil wars allows capturing the initial phase of the conflict before it crosses the threshold of casualties necessary to be counted as a civil war.<sup>54</sup>

I also limit my case selection to democratic and democratizing states for several reasons. First, multiple studies found that internal wars produce a conducive environment for coups.<sup>55</sup> However, democracies proved to be more coup-proof.<sup>56</sup> In addition, recent research shows that under conditions in intrastate

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<sup>52</sup> Daniel Byman, “Understanding Proto-Insurgencies,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 31, no. 2 (2008): 165–200; O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*; Kilcullen, “Countering Global Insurgency.”

<sup>53</sup> Assaf Moghadam, Ronit Berger, and Polina Beliakova, “Say Terrorist, Think Insurgent: Labeling and Analyzing Contemporary Terrorist Actors,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8, no. 5 (2014): 2–17.

<sup>54</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>55</sup> Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Resource Rents, Governance, and Conflict,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 4 (2005): 625–33; Milan W. Svolik, “Contracting on Violence: The Moral Hazard in Authoritarian Repression and Military Intervention in Politics,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 57, no. 5 (2013): 765–94; Curtis Bell and Jun Koga Sudduth, “The Causes and Outcomes of Coup during Civil War,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61, no. 7 (2017): 1432–55; Varun Piplani and Caitlin Talmadge, “When War Helps Civil–Military Relations: Prolonged Interstate Conflict and the Reduced Risk of Coups,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60, no. 8 (2016): 1368–94.

<sup>56</sup> Staffan I. Lindberg and John F. Clark, “Does Democratization Reduce the Risk of Military Interventions in Politics in Africa?,” *Democratisation* 15, no. 1 (2008): 86–105; Ulrich Pilster and Tobias Böhmelt, “Do Democracies Engage Less in Coup-Proofing? On the Relationship between Regime Type and Civil–Military Relations,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 8, no. 4 (2012): 355–71; Jonathan Powell, “Determinants of the Attempting and Outcome of Coups d’état,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 6 (2012): 1017–40; Nancy Bermeo, “On Democratic Backsliding,” *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 1 (2016): 5–19.

conflict, civilian control in democracies erodes in ways other than coups.<sup>57</sup> This condition will allow observing more implications of the policy-focused theory since the outcomes will not be limited to only one form of erosion by competition — a coup.

Second, the requirements for civilian control in democracies are more demanding than in autocratic regimes. In addition to preventing coups and assuring subordination, democratic civilian control requires civilian dominance in policymaking, relying on civilian expertise in national security and foreign policy.<sup>58</sup> While civilian dominance in policymaking is optional for autocracies, in democracies, it is a requirement. In particular, this condition allows us to observe erosion by deference.

Finally, existing research shows that unconsolidated democracies are particularly prone to intrastate violence.<sup>59</sup> Combining data from UCDP-PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset with Polity IV yields 54 governments with polity scores over five (strong democracies) and 52 with scores between one and five (regimes with prevailing democratic features) that fought intrastate conflicts in the period from 1946 to 2017.<sup>60</sup> Despite the widespread intrastate conflicts in regimes with predominantly democratic characteristics, empirical findings of how this type of

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<sup>57</sup> Beliakova, “Erosion of Civilian Control in Democracies.”

<sup>58</sup> Andrew Cottey, Timothy Edmunds, and Anthony Forster, “The Second Generation Problematic: Rethinking Democracy and Civil-Military Relations,” *Armed Forces & Society* 29, no. 1 (2002): 31–56; Feaver, “The Civil-Military Problematique”; Cohn, “It Wasn’t in My Contract”; Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control of the Military in Venezuela*.

<sup>59</sup> Jack A. Goldstone et al., “A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability,” *American Journal of Political Science* 54, no. 1 (2010): 190–208; Lars-Erik Cederman, Simon Hug, and Lutz F. Krebs, “Democratization and Civil War: Empirical Evidence,” *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 4 (2010): 377–94; Håvard Hegre, “Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816–1992,” *American Political Science Review* 95, no. 1 (2001): 33–48.

<sup>60</sup> For comparison, the numbers for predominantly authoritarian regimes are 62 (Polity from 0 to -5), 74 (Polity from -6 to -10), and 45 transitioning regimes that experienced intrastate conflicts in the same period.

threat affects civilian control of the military — a fundamental requirement for democratic governance — are inconclusive.<sup>61</sup>

## 1. Research Strategy

To test the hypotheses of the policy-focused theory and examine the sensitivity of my findings to different antecedent conditions, I rely on a combination of within-case process tracing and cross-case comparisons. First, applying within-case process tracing allows to systematically examine the evidence and explicate the causal processes behind each hypothesis.<sup>62</sup> Analyzing each case, I begin with the pre-conflict period (at least five years) to set a baseline level of civilian control using the comprehensive framework of erosion. I then evaluate the shifts in civil-military power balance relative to this baseline.

The within-case analysis allows keeping constant some alternative explanations for the erosion of civilian control, such as the history of military involvement in politics, the strength of institutions, and government's legitimacy.<sup>63</sup> I use process-tracing tests to eliminate the remaining alternative explanations. Next, comparing *between* the cases is useful for evaluating the effect of the alternative explanations for the erosion of civilian control previously held constant on the within-case stage of analysis but varying across cases. Comparing the findings between the cases that vary in the history of the military involvement in politics, the strength of civilian institutions, the level of democracy, and the level of threat to the military profession posed by the government's policies provide additional tests to the main hypotheses. Below I

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<sup>61</sup> Bell and Sudduth, "The Causes and Outcomes of Coup during Civil War"; Piplani and Talmadge, "When War Helps Civil–Military Relations."

<sup>62</sup> David Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44, no. 4 (2011): 823–30; Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, eds., *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, Strategies for Social Inquiry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139858472>.

<sup>63</sup> Lindberg and Clark, "Does Democratization Reduce the Risk of Military Interventions in Politics in Africa?"; Belkin and Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk."

first outline how I test the hypotheses with process tracing, then specify the cross-case comparison procedures and conclude with justifying my case selection.

## 2. Within-Case Process Tracing

Process tracing is a systematic analysis of diagnostic evidence on processes within a case aimed at testing the hypotheses about causal mechanisms that might be producing the outcome of interest.<sup>64</sup> The choice of this methodology implies several assumptions about the nature of causal relations of interest. First, causality is understood in terms of a generative process through which the cause produces the effect.<sup>65</sup> Simply speaking, to claim that X causes Y, it is not enough to show a correlation between certain values of these variables. Instead, one has to be explicit about the causal process through which X leads to Y and collect data to test the observable implications of this process.<sup>66</sup> It is important to keep in mind that while mechanisms are by nature unobservable theoretical constructs, the causal processes that they set in motion produce observable indicators.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, examining the data, one has to be looking not for the mechanisms as such but for evidence that they operate.

Second, the equifinality assumption requires taking into account alternative causal processes that could plausibly produce the same outcome.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, accounting for a wide variety of rival explanations to the outcome of interest becomes crucial. Acknowledging that alternative explanations and hypotheses of the policy-focused theory are not necessarily mutually exclusive but often

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<sup>64</sup> Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing”; Bennett and Checkel, *Process Tracing*.

<sup>65</sup> John H. Goldthorpe, “Causation, Statistics, and Sociology,” *European Sociological Review* 17, no. 1 (2001): 1–20.

<sup>66</sup> Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing”; Bennett and Checkel, *Process Tracing*.

<sup>67</sup> Bennett and Checkel, *Process Tracing*.

<sup>68</sup> Sherry Zaks, “Relationships among Rivals (RAR): A Framework for Analyzing Contending Hypotheses in Process Tracing,” *Political Analysis* 25, no. 3 (2017): 344–62; Bennett and Checkel, *Process Tracing*.

coincident, I use additional tests to separate their effects. Furthermore, the interactions between the hypothesized causes and contextual factors can affect the outcomes that similar processes produce in different cases (e.g., changing the magnitude of the outcome or even not producing it at all).<sup>69</sup> Examining these interactions expands our understanding of how the hypothesized mechanisms operate under different conditions.

Therefore, applying process tracing for empirical analysis requires the following three methodological steps: First, translating the hypotheses in terms of mechanisms, causal processes they produce, and observable indicators of these processes. Second, acknowledging the potential for equifinality, it is necessary to identify major alternative explanations for the erosion of civilian control and their relations to the main hypotheses. I also specify the evidence necessary to rule out these alternative explanations. Finally, to see how the variation in policy-related factors (threat to the profession and conflict-related policies being a burden for the government) affect erosion of civilian control, I rely on cross-case comparisons.

### ***Hypotheses, mechanisms, processes, and indicators***

The hypotheses of the present research specify three mechanisms through which government policies lead to the decrease of civilian control. The mechanism of *defending the profession* operates when the military resorts to insubordination and competition to block or subvert the governmental policies detrimental to the military's profession. The mechanisms of *boosting the approval* and *avoiding the responsibility* produce erosion by civilian deference to the military when the government perceives the conflict as a burden and delegates policymaking prerogatives to the members of the military profession. The next step is to identify the observable indicators of each causal process — what one would see if the process is at work. For the mechanism of *defending the*

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<sup>69</sup> Peter A. Hall, "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Politics". In Mahoney, J. and Rueschemeyer, D.(Eds) *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

*profession* producing erosion by competition or insubordination (Hypothesis 1), at least three necessary observable indicators have to be jointly supported by evidence:

1. The military did recognize the policy as being threatening to the profession (i.e., undermining responsibility, expertise, or corporateness)
2. The military was dissatisfied specifically with the detrimental effect of the policy on the military profession.
3. It is this dissatisfaction with the particular effect that was a key motive of political competition or insubordination.

Table 2.1 summarizes how a hypothesis translates into a causal process and the expected observable indicators of the causal mechanism that will be tested against the evidence.

**Table 2.1 Causal process and observable implications for H1: Defending the Profession**

H1: Erosion of civilian control by insubordination and competition occurs when the government's policies threaten military responsibility, expertise, or corporateness.						
<b>Causal Process: Defending the Profession</b>						
Gov's policy undermines the military profession	→	The military recognizes the threat and wants to defend the profession	→	The military exercises its political power or denies civilian power to reverse the damaging policy	→	Erosion by competition and insubordination
<b>Observable indicators</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The government's policy requires the military to perform tasks not aligning with the military's responsibility, expertise, or corporateness.</li><li>• The military is dissatisfied with the policy.</li><li>• The military engages in political competition: elections, lobbying, media statements in order to undermine the government's policy.</li><li>• The military uses insubordination: foot-dragging, resignations, failure to give/take orders, desertions to halt the government's policy.</li></ul>						



The hypothesis about erosion by deference (Hypotheses 2) suggests two causal mechanisms — *boosting approval* and *avoiding responsibility*. In the first instance, civilian officials invite the military into the policymaking process to increase popular support for the government or its particular policies. In the second, the government does not want to bear the costs of unpopular policies and decides to delegate the responsibility to the military. Both mechanisms produce erosion by deference but through different causal processes. Table 2.2 presents the mechanisms and lists the observable indicators that have to be tested against the evidence to show that the theorized mechanisms of erosion by deference work as predicted.

**Table 2.2 Causal processes and observable implications for H2**

H2: Erosion by deference occurs when the government sees the conflict as a political burden and uses the military to mitigate the political costs of unpopular policies.		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Causal Processes:</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 25%;"> <p>The gov. recognizes the conflict as a political burden</p> <p>→</p> </div> <div style="width: 50%; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>A: Boosting Approval</b></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>The gov. has strong policy preferences about managing the conflict</p> <p>→</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>The gov. involves the military in policymaking to increase the popular approval for the policy</p> <p>→</p> </div> </div> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>B: Avoiding Responsibility</b></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>The gov. has a strong preference for distancing itself from the conflict</p> <p>→</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>The gov. withdraws from policymaking, leaving the military officers as the public face of a given policy</p> <p>→</p> </div> </div> </div> <div style="width: 25%;"> <p>Civilian input in policymaking decreases</p> </div> </div>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Observable indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The government's policies about the use of force have low popular support and/or face strong political opposition</li> </ul>		
<p><b>A: Boosting Approval</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The gov. has strong preferences about pursuing its conflict policies</li> <li>• The military enjoys high popular support and trust of the society</li> <li>• The gov. underscores the military's participation in policymaking</li> <li>• The <i>joint</i> participation of civilians and the military in policymaking is visible (e.g., publicly advertised in press statements, photo-ops, etc.)</li> </ul>		
<p><b>B: Avoiding Responsibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The gov. conflict-related policies are inconsistent with previous statements/promises.</li> <li>• The gov. delegates the responsibility for the unpopular political tasks to the military</li> <li>• The gov. visibly withdraws/distances itself from policymaking</li> <li>• The gov. publicly blames the military for policy failures</li> <li>• The military's participation in policymaking is advertised, the civilian role is minimized</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The members of the military profession dominate policymaking in at least one of the following stages of policy development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifying policy objectives</li> <li>- Estimating risks and opportunities</li> <li>- Deciding on ways and means to achieve the objectives</li> <li>- Evaluating policy effectiveness.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

Analyzing the data, I identify the observable indicators associated with each causal process. Finding supportive evidence for any causal process would allow concluding with a high level of confidence that the hypothesized mechanism indeed was at work in a given case. However, it would not be sufficient to claim that it was this mechanism that produced the outcome because of the assumption of equifinality. To increase our certainty about the hypothesized cause of erosion, it is important to identify its relationships with the rival hypotheses and rule them out if possible.

### ***Equifinality and alternative explanations***

To deal with the equifinality problem, each piece of evidence has to be tested against alternative explanations. Ruling out alternative causes would allow increasing the level of confidence in the hypotheses of this research. I turn to the existing literature on civil-military relations and identify plausible explanations for different forms of erosion — competition, insubordination, and deference.

***Erosion by Competition.*** Abundant literature on military coups advances several factors that lead to this most extreme and best-studied form of competition. Belkin and Schofer identify three structural factors that increase the risk of a coup — *weak civil society* (also Perlmutter 1969), *low regime legitimacy* (also Feaver 1996, Lindberg and Clark 2008), and the past history of coups (also Powell 2012).<sup>70</sup> However, the past history of coups is not a causal factor as such but rather an indicator that in a given state, military intervention in politics is not taboo. Other explanations for the military exercise of their political power against the government include *economic underperformance of the government* (including the decreasing welfare of military elites), the increasing *uncertainty*

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<sup>70</sup> Belkin and Schofer, “Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk”; Perlmutter, “The Praetorian State and the Praetorian Army”; Feaver, “The Civil-Military Problematique”; Lindberg and Clark, “Does Democratization Reduce the Risk of Military Interventions in Politics in Africa?”; Powell, “Determinants of the Attempting and Outcome of Coups d’état.”

*about the future of the regime* and the position of the military institution in it; a strategic interaction in which the military demands political power in exchange to suppressing the regime's opponents — *contracting on violence*.<sup>71</sup> An additional logical explanation for the military's political competition against the government is the political *ambitions of individual officers* driven by the pursuit of power, glory, and/or wealth.

***Erosion by insubordination.*** Among the dominant explanations for insubordination in the existing literature are *weak civilian oversight* and the military's *fear for their lives*.<sup>72</sup> In the first case, since the likelihood of punishment is low, the military would be more likely to avoid doing their jobs and following the government's order. In the second case, the military might engage in insubordination to save the lives of the members of the military profession.

***Erosion by deference.*** Civilian deference to the military is the least studied facet of the comprehensive framework of civilian control. One plausible alternative explanation beyond those included in the policy-focused explanations of this research — *boosting approval* and *avoiding responsibility* — is *cajoling the military*.<sup>73</sup> According to the causal logic of *cajoling the military* mechanism, is that the government understands that the military has the motivation and capability to intervene in politics. To mitigate the tensions, the government delegates key policymaking tasks to the members of the military profession and prevents the intervention.

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<sup>71</sup> Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing"; Powell, "Determinants of the Attempting and Outcome of Coups d'état"; Bell and Sudduth, "The Causes and Outcomes of Coup during Civil War"; Daron Acemoglu, Davide Ticchi, and Andrea Vindigni, "A Theory of Military Dictatorships," *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics* 2, no. 1 (2010): 1–42; Svobik, "Contracting on Violence."

<sup>72</sup> Weak oversight: Martin Gassebner, Jerg Gutmann, and Stefan Voigt, "When to Expect a Coup d'état? An Extreme Bounds Analysis of Coup Determinants," *Public Choice* 169, no. 3 (2016): 293–313; Feaver, *Armed Servants*; Fear for one's life: Holger Albrecht and Kevin Koehler, "Going on the Run: What Drives Military Desertion in Civil War?," *Security Studies* 27, no. 2 (2018): 179–203.

<sup>73</sup> Beliakova, "Erosion by Deference."

Another potential alternative explanation available in the literature on civil-military relations suggests that elected politicians delegate policymaking prerogatives to the military when civilians *lack the necessary expertise* in defense matters.<sup>74</sup> This explanation, though plausible in some cases (e.g., Israel), falls short of illuminating the deep-rooted motives and conditions that prevented the development of civilian defense expertise in cases where this explanation applies.

Process tracing methodology offers useful tests that allow evaluating the research hypotheses against alternative explanations. Below, I discuss these tests and specify the types of evidence that would allow me to discriminate between the hypotheses of policy-focused theory and the alternatives.

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<sup>74</sup> David Pion-Berlin, “Delegation or Dereliction? When Governments Assign Too Many Defense Posts to Military Officials,” *Democracy and Security* 16, no. 1 (2020): 81–96.

### ***Tests and evidence***

Process tracing literature offers four logical tests to which the evidence subjects the hypotheses of interest.<sup>75</sup> These tests vary in the probative value of evidence identified across two dimensions: whether the evidence uniquely points at one hypothesis of interest (dimension 1); will the evidence certainly materialize if the hypothesis is true uniquely predicts this evidence (dimension 2).<sup>76</sup>

The evidence with the highest probative value is both unique and certain and subjects the hypothesis to a so-called *doubly-decisive test*. In other words, if this hypothesis is true, this evidence must certainly be present, and if it is present, only this hypothesis must be uniquely true. The next type of test is a *smoking-gun test*: if present, the evidence uniquely points at one of the hypotheses as being true. However, the absence of this type of evidence does not constitute the evidence of the absence of the causal process of our interest. The third type of test — a *hoop-test*— is, in contrast, certain but not unique.<sup>77</sup> It specifies the evidence that must be present if the hypothesis is true, but this evidence does not uniquely point at one hypothesis. Simply speaking, surviving this test does not prove the hypothesis is true but failing proves that it is false. Smoking gun and hoop tests are the most versatile process tracing tools since it is relatively easy to identify the evidence that would subject the hypotheses to these tests.<sup>78</sup> The final test is *straw-in-the-wind*. Being neither unique nor certain, it, however, can testify in favor of one

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<sup>75</sup> James Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in the Social Sciences,” *Sociological Methods & Research* 41, no. 4 (2012): 570–97; Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Bennett and Checkel, *Process Tracing*; Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing.”

<sup>76</sup> Bennett and Checkel, *Process Tracing*; Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*.

<sup>77</sup> Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*.

<sup>78</sup> Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in the Social Sciences.”

hypothesis over another if enough independent pieces of evidence point in the same direction.<sup>79</sup>

These tests can also be understood in terms of the necessity/sufficiency of the evidence for a hypothesis to be true. For instance, a hoop test specifies necessary but not sufficient conditions, while a smoking gun is sufficient but not necessary.<sup>80</sup> Since the observable implications from tables 2.1 and 2.2 are necessary but not sufficient components of the causal chain, the evidence of their absence/presence subjects the respective hypotheses to a series of hoop tests. Moreover, these observable indicators are jointly sufficient to produce the outcome. Therefore passing all necessary hoop tests can increase our confidence in the hypothesis close to a smoking gun test.

Nevertheless, the chance remains that the outcome was predetermined by alternative causal processes that would have produced it regardless of the policy-focused explanation. Acknowledging that the effect can be jointly produced by the hypotheses of the policy-focused theory and alternative factors (e.g., a threat to the profession AND weak institutions), the evidence in favor of the policy-focused explanation does not automatically weaken the rival hypotheses.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, I use additional hoop-tests to eliminate alternative explanations and increase the level of confidence in the policy-focused hypotheses of this research. I develop a specific list of these tests in Table 2.3.

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<sup>79</sup> Bennett and Checkel, *Process Tracing*.

<sup>80</sup> Mahoney, "The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in the Social Sciences."

<sup>81</sup> Zaks, "Relationships among Rivals (RAR)."

**Table 2.3. Alternative explanations for the erosion of civilian control and contradicting evidence**

Competition		
<i>Alternative explanation</i>	<i>Causal logic</i>	<i>The evidence pointing that the alternative failed a hoop test</i>
Weak civil society/ Low social cohesion	Weak institutions and low social cohesion can motivate the military to take over and introduce order to save the country (Perlmutter 1969). Weak or absent civil society organizations cannot resist the military (Belkin and Schofer 2003)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The military does not try to take over the government fully but rather competes for particular power positions.</li> <li>2. The government's institutions are strong and effective, yet competition occurs.</li> </ol>
Low regime legitimacy	<p>A) The military exploits the lack of societal consensus about the government's right to make rules (Belkin and Schofer 2003). The elites may use this situation to advocate their positions using the military (Stepan 1971).</p> <p>B) The military sees itself as a defender of public interest and the government as undermining these preferences. The military sees itself as a defender of collective preferences (Feaver 1996)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The regime has public support and the support of elites, but competition still occurs.</li> <li>2. Both the government and the military do not have high support from the elites and citizens, but competition occurs.</li> <li>1. The regime has public support and the support of elites, but competition still occurs.</li> <li>2. The motivations of the military intervention in politics do not include "saving the people/state" but are limited to military prerogatives.</li> </ol>
Previous military intervention in politics	<i>*It is not a generative cause but an indicator that military involvement in politics is not taboo in a given state. It is controlled for in-case selection for cross-case analysis.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No previous interference in politics by the military has been observed in the past</li> </ol>
Economic underperformance	Poor economic performance undermines the welfare of the military, motivating them to interfere in politics (Bell and Sudduth 2015). In addition, the stagnating economy increases the public willingness to accept the government formed as a result of a coup (Luttwack 1969).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The state economy is not in stagnation</li> <li>2. The military's welfare did not change</li> <li>3. The military does not enjoy public support more than the government</li> </ol>
Uncertainty about the future of the regime and the military	A) After democratization, the government wants to cut military prerogatives. The military intervenes in politics to defend its well-being (Acemoglu et al. 2010)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No significant changes in the military prerogatives/benefits have been introduced lately</li> <li>2. The military did not try to defend its prerogatives before the government issued a problematic policy.</li> </ol>



	B) In a political crisis or an intrastate conflict, the likelihood of the potential opponent's or rebel's victory is extremely high. The military takes over to prevent this victory and potential revenge from the other side.	1. The rebels/opposition does not have a high chance to overthrow the government.
Contracting on violence	The regime utilizes the military to suppress the domestic opposition. In exchange, the military demands a say in politics. When the government fails to negotiate concessions, the military intervenes in politics (Svolik 2012).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Previous instances of the military defending the government from high threats from the opposition in which the military did not demand involvement in politics.</li> <li>2. The military is not interested in perpetuating the suppression of the opposition.</li> </ol>
Individual ambitions	Individual officers have the ambition to gain political power. They exploit the current political situation to Maksymize their chances to get political positions/appointments.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The officers are willing to sacrifice their power for the sake of achievement of alternative political goals (peace, victory, etc.)</li> <li>2. The competition is strictly limited to securing military prerogatives.</li> </ol>

#### **Insubordination**

<i>Alternative explanation</i>	<i>Causal logic</i>	<i>The evidence pointing that the alternative failed a hoop test</i>
Weak oversight	When preferences of civilians and the military diverge, the military will shirk if the likelihood of being detected and punished is low (Feaver 2003)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Officers undertake open acts of insubordination: formally refusing to take orders, resigning, etc.</li> <li>2. The oversight is extensive, and the government punishes insubordination on a regular basis, yet insubordination occurs.</li> </ol>
Fear for one's life	Participation in combat threatens the lives of soldiers. They defect/desert to save their lives.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Defection/desertion happens in the higher echelons not involved in direct combat.</li> </ol>

#### **Deference**

<i>Alternative explanation</i>	<i>Causal logic</i>	<i>The evidence pointing that the alternative failed a hoop test</i>
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Cajoling the military	The civilian government expects the military to intervene in politics and delegates policy decision-making to the military preventively.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is no plausible reason to suspect an intervention (e.g., the military has no political ambition)</li> <li>2. The positions given to the military are not influential enough to placate their ambitions</li> <li>3. The government does not take a collaborative stance towards the military trying to cajole them</li> </ol>
Lack of civilian expertise	The government delegates policy-making prerogatives to the military because it does not have civilian expertise in defense matters	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The government does have civilian expertise in defense matters</li> <li>2. The government involves the military in policymaking on a declarative level without relying on the military's defense expertise.</li> </ol>

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It is important to notice that some of the alternative explanations are macro-level contextual factors, the variation in which is better observed between rather than within cases — the strength of civil society, legitimacy of the government, past history of military involvement in politics. They could also be easily ruled out by case selection. However, these alternative explanations, while not producing the outcome on their own, can interact with causal variables of the policy-focused theory, enable or halt the operation of the mechanisms, and alter the outcomes of the causal processes.<sup>82</sup> For example, erosion by competition could take the shape of a coup attempt in a state with weak regime legitimacy, while in a state with a legitimate regime, the competition might take more subtle forms of media leaks or lobbying.

Consequently, there are three important implications of taking into account the interaction between contextual factors and causal variables. First, finding the same evidence in different cases will have different probative value for testing the hypotheses of this research. Specifically, finding that the mechanism of *defending*

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<sup>82</sup> Hall, “Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Politics.”

*the profession* (H1) produces erosion by competition in a context where most of the alternative explanations are historically absent will increase our confidence in H1 to a greater extent than a similar finding in a case where this outcome could have been predetermined by alternative causes. In other words, in the first case, H1 is competing with fewer alternative explanations and therefore has a higher prior probability of being a likely explanation for the weakening of civilian control.

Second, to increase the level of confidence in the evidence from a case where multiple alternative explanations cannot be eliminated by case selection, it is important to perform the hoop-tests outlined in Table 2.3. Finally, while the findings made in a more “sterile” context would have a higher weight in supporting the hypotheses of this research, they would shed no light on the interaction between the contextual factors and policy-focused variables. Therefore, to account for these interactions and subject my hypotheses to additional tests under different background conditions, I rely on cross-case comparisons.

### **3. Cross-case comparison**

#### ***The logic of case selection***

I select cases based on the variation in the causal variables of policy-focused theory (policy factors) — a threat to the military profession and conflict as a policy burden to the government. I also take into account the variation in contextual factors that can affect the outcome and provide alternative explanations for erosion of civilian control — weak civil society, low social cohesion, low regime legitimacy, economic underperformance of the regime. Studying cases with different combinations of these causal variables would allow us to observe the interactions between the policy factors and background conditions as well as between different forms of erosion of civilian control. Of course, the case where

both policy factors are salient and contextual factors that can contribute to the erosion of civilian control are prominent would be the most difficult for attributing the effects to the policy factors, but most rich for observing the interactions between the government's policies and the contextual variables. In such a case, more process tracing tests have to be performed to investigate the role of the contextual factors in producing the outcome.

### ***Case Selection***

Based on my preliminary research, I select four cases to test my theory: Russia during the First Chechen War (1994-1996), the initial phase of the U.K. conflict in Northern Ireland (1968 - 1972), Israel in the First Intifada and its immediate aftermath (1987-1996), and Ukraine in the initial stages Russian-backed conflict in Donbas (2014 - 2018).

#### **1. Russia — a rich case.**

Russia in the First Chechen War constitutes a rich case in which policy factors and alternative explanations for erosion are present. The First Chechen War was beyond the Russian military's profession. This war also constituted a policy burden for the regime that had low public support.<sup>83</sup> With regard to contextual factors, the state was transitioning to democracy, having a diverse but incoherent civil society with a multitude of parties and organizations not tested by time. The economic performance of the government was low and deteriorating. Moreover, Russia has witnessed the previous involvement of the military in politics in the coup attempt of 1991 (as part of the USSR) and in 1993 during the constitutional crisis. This intersection of the policy factors and contextual conditions makes Russia a rich case for testing the policy-focused theory. On the one hand, it is an easy case for observing the instances of erosion as the

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<sup>83</sup> Dale Roy Herspring, *The Kremlin & the High Command: Presidential Impact on the Russian Military from Gorbachev to Putin* (University Press of Kansas, 2006); Olga Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994-2000: Lessons from Urban Combat* (Rand Corporation, 2001); Brian D. Taylor, *State Building in Putin's Russia: Policing and Coercion after Communism* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

interaction of policy and contextual factors are likely to amplify them. On the other hand, it is the most difficult case that requires performing multiple process-tracing tests to tease out the mechanisms and eliminate alternative explanations.

## **2. Ukraine — within-case variation in the level of threat to the profession.**

The case of Ukraine's war in Donbas provides a unique research environment in which the level of threat to the military profession caused by the government's policies changed over time. In the first months of the war (April-August 2014), the government in Kyiv considered the conflict as a separatist insurgency led by local rebels with support from Russia. However, after August 2014, Russia's direct involvement became undeniable to the government and Ukrainian Armed Forces. This changed the threat perception from intrastate separatist conflict (beyond military profession) to external aggression (within the military's profession). Existing research shows that external threats consolidate civil-military relations.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, we should expect the change in threat perception to result in the military having limited or no preference divergence over responsibility since their mission is still defending the state from external aggression.

At the same time, some of the alternative explanations for the military's involvement in politics remained constant in Ukraine despite the change in threat perception after August 2014. Ukraine remained a democratizing state, with weak institutions, active but volatile civil society, deteriorating economy, and increasing popularity of the military. Thus, this case would allow us to observe whether alternative explanations would be sufficient to produce erosion by competition and insubordination in the absence of the policy factors in Ukraine after August 2014.

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<sup>84</sup> Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military*; Piplani and Talmadge, "When War Helps Civil-Military Relations."

Moreover, the conflict in Ukraine allows us to test whether the policy-focused theory can explain the erosion of civilian control by organizations other than the military. At the beginning of the war, Kyiv legitimized the use of the volunteer battalions. These paramilitary formations effectively participated in combat in the initial phases of the war but at the same time posed significant challenges to Kyiv's monopoly over the use of force.

In addition, Ukraine historically had limited civilian expertise in defense policymaking which provides a strong alternative explanation for deference. At the same time, the conflict in Donbas did not constitute a political burden to the government and actually allowed civilian politicians in Kyiv to increase their political capital. This absence of policy-focused causes and the presence of alternative explanations for erosion by deference creates a conducive environment for testing the second hypothesis of this research.

### **3. Israel in the First Intifada — peculiar civil-military relations but strong democratic institutions**

Israeli case allows to test the policy-focused theory under conditions when the military is historically actively involved in policymaking. In the Israeli case this civil-military cooperation usually allowed to resolve tensions at the stage of security policy formulation, which was almost exclusively informed by military expertise. Under such conditions, it is difficult to imagine that civilian policies would be the source of erosion of civilian control. However, in the case of the First Palestinian Intifada the government's policies did stretch the military's profession. Despite the fact that the Israeli Defense Forces historically performed missions against non-state actors, the governmental policies of the First Intifada required them to engage in riot control and use brutal force against unarmed civilians.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the use of force in the occupied territories against the civilian population did not match the criteria of a war of no choice imposed upon Israel from the outside — the preferred justification for the use of force by the

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<sup>85</sup> Zeev Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land* (University of Michigan Press, 2009).

IDF. Both these conditions went against the IDF's understanding of the military profession — expertise and mission. At the same time, alternative explanations for competition and insubordination are weak in this case since Israel is a functional democracy with high regime legitimacy, a healthy economy, a developed civil society, and no history of coups.

In terms of deference, the First Intifada constituted a political burden for the government undergoing a political crisis in the late 80s early 90s. This condition is favorable for erosion by deference. However, the alternatives are also strong in the Israeli case where the military historically enjoys a substantial presence in the policymaking process and civilian expertise in defense matters is severely underdeveloped. Therefore, studying the case of Israel would allow answering two important questions about the implications of the policy-focused theory. First, would policy-related causes be sufficient to produce erosion by competition and insubordination in a case where the alternative explanations are absent? Second, how the policy-focused explanation for deference interacts with the alternative explanations under conditions of functional democracy? Since the cases of Russia and Ukraine are instances of weak democratizing states, examining Israel provides a unique perspective on the erosion of civilian control in democracies.

#### **4. The United Kingdom — a sterile case.**

In the case of the United Kingdom in the early stages of the Troubles (1968-1972), the government's policies did not go against the military's profession. The British military sharpened its professional skill of counterinsurgency in multiple previous colonial campaigns from earlier engagements in Northern Ireland to Aden, Palestine, and Cyprus. Alternative explanations for insubordination and competition such as weak institutions, economic underperformance, and volatile civil society are also absent in this case.

At the same time, the conflict in Northern Ireland constituted a liability for London, and Westminster tried to distance itself from the policymaking, which creates conducive conditions for erosion by deference. Since alternative

explanations for civilian deference to the military are absent in this case, it allows us to test whether the policy-focused explanations — the desire of the government to *avoid the responsibility* or *boost the policy approval* — would be sufficient to weaken civilian control of the military in one of the oldest and most developed democracies in the world.

Table 2.4 below summarizes the selection of cases:

**Table 2.4. Case selection**

		<b>Policies as a threat to the mil. profession</b>	
		<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Policy burden for the gov.</b>	<b>Y</b>	RUSSIA (1, 2) ISRAEL (2)	THE UK 1968-1972
	<b>N</b>	UKRAINE APR-AUG 2014 (1, 2)	UKRAINE POST-AUG 2014 (1, 2)

*Strong alternative explanations for H1(1) and H2 (2)*

## 4. Data Collection and Sources

To collect data for this research, I rely on extensive fieldwork, expert interviews, archival work, governmental documents, memoirs, military statutes and regulations, professional military publications, doctrinal documents, media reports, and results of public opinion polls. Acknowledging that the standards of civilian control are context-dependent, I commit to using as many original and locally produced sources as possible, including scholarly writing on the subject. I use my proficiency in Russian, Ukrainian, Hebrew, and English to examine original pieces of evidence and interview local experts.

Recognizing that political context affects the types of evidence available at the moment, I rely on different sources in different cases. For instance, in Russia,



the military archives pertaining to the First Chechen War are still closed. However, I found some governmental and parliamentary documents reflecting the decision-making of the policymakers available at the State Archives of the Russian Federation (Moscow) and the Yeltsin Center (Yekaterinburg). In Ukraine, the conflict is still ongoing, which allowed me to interview policymakers, parliament members, veterans, volunteer battalion commanders, journalists, and civil society activists who are immediately involved in the unfolding events. Cases of Israel and the United Kingdom required an extra effort to mitigate the hindsight bias since the reflections on the First Intifada are deeply affected by the experiences of the Second, and the Troubles started more than half a century before I undertook my research effort. Therefore, I devoted special attention to finding professional military publications, reports, surveys, scholarship, and media coverage contemporary to the events under examination.

To test the first hypothesis about competition and insubordination, I relied on the memoirs and interviews of the members of the key security policymaking institutions and of the high military command to identify whether the military considered the government's policies as being threatening to the profession. Professional military publications (e.g., "Krasnaya Zvezda" in Russia and "Maarachot" in Israel) provided useful information on what the military considered as part of its responsibility, expertise, and corporateness before and at the time of the conflict. In case if the candidates from the military ran for the public offices, I reviewed their electoral campaign materials to assess whether they used their military background for political gains, whether they promised to limit or halt the use of the armed forces within the state, and in general, whether their campaigns involved undermining the credibility of the government by referring to the lack of military support. I also used existing historical studies, media reports, and expert interviews.

For the second hypothesis about deference, I compared the degree of involvement of the members of the military profession in policymaking before

and after conflict using governmental and doctrinal documents as well as professional military publications. In addition, to evaluate the quality of this involvement, I used historical research, the government's orders on security policy issues, the protocols of the meetings of security policy institutions (if available), as well as interviews and memoirs.

Finally, to assure analytical transparency, consistency, and clarity, I rely on the software for qualitative and mixed-methods analysis—NVivo. The NVivo software package provides tools for a consistent coding of qualitative data (archival documents, memories, other textual sources, graphic images, videos, etc.) according to clear coding rules.

## **CHAPTER 3:** **RUSSIA IN THE FIRST CHECHEN WAR (1994-1996):** **FIGHTING FOR ORDER AND LOSING CONTROL**

### **Introduction**

Russia in the First Chechen War (1994 - 1996) constitutes a rich case for testing the hypotheses of the policy-focused theory of erosion of civilian control. President Boris Yeltsin's policies about the use of the military for intrastate conflict violated the boundaries of the military profession of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in several ways. First, these policies required the military to act beyond its responsibility and expertise while coordinating with other security services. Second, they denied the military the resources necessary for developing the skill of managing violence under new conditions and doomed the armed forces to experience failure, frustration, and criticism. Moreover, Russia's government did not enjoy much public support for the use of force in Chechnya and the conflict constituted a political burden for the Kremlin. Taken together, these conditions are favorable for all three forms of erosion of civilian control — insubordination, competition, and deference.

However, the presence of multiple alternative causal factors poses a challenge of proving that the background conditions did not overdetermine erosion. In the early 1990s, Russia had weak institutions, stagnating economy, and —after the constitutional crisis of 1993— a questionable regime legitimacy. Most importantly, if some of these alternative explanations have not produced the erosion on their own, they could interact with and amplify the effects of the mechanisms of policy-focused theory — *defending the profession, boosting popular approval, and avoiding the responsibility*.

Therefore, studying the case of Russia's First Chechen War would not allow us to separate the effects of governmental policies and contextual factors. Instead, it would allow us to observe their interaction and demonstrate that the contextual factors alone did not constitute the sufficient condition for the occurrence of the most striking instances of erosion. The way I conceptualize erosion of civilian control in this research requires setting a baseline relative to which civilian power over the military diminishes. Thus, I begin by discussing the state of civilian control in Russia before the beginning of the First Chechen War.

## **1. Pre-conflict Civil-Military Relations in Russia**

As well as the state they were designed to serve, the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation were born in a turmoil following the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Officially created in May 1992 with the order of Yeltsin (Presidential Order N 466, May 7th, 1992), the Russian military was a direct continuation of its Soviet predecessor in terms of the personnel, equipment, institutions, branches, and professional culture.<sup>86</sup> One significant difference was the disappearance of the party oversight that served as an integral institutional component of the Soviet Army.

With the democratization of political institutions and processes in the 1990s, pro-democratic forces made attempts to establish democratic civilian control over military shared between executive and legislative branches. In 1991 Yeltsin's order banned the activity of political parties in the armed forces. In fall 1992, the Law about Defense explicitly outlined the division of responsibilities in civilian oversight between the legislature, the president, and the government. For instance, according to this law, the legislature was responsible for defining the military

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<sup>86</sup> Mark Kramer, "The Armies of the Post-Soviet States," *Current History* 91, no. 567 (1992): 327; Brian D. Taylor, *Politics and The Russian Army: Civil-Military Relations, 1689-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511615719>.

policy and doctrine, approving the military budget, making decisions about the use of force and military mobilization, approving the presidential appointments to the positions of the Minister of Defense, Chief of the General Staff and their deputies. The responsibilities of the military were narrowly defined as repelling the aggression, defeating the aggressor, and fulfilling the missions according to the international obligations of the Russian Federation. A separate paragraph prohibited the use of the armed forces beyond this mission.

However, after the constitutional crisis of 1993, the president prevailed over the legislature and the parliament lost most of its prerogatives leaving close to full authority and control over the military to the president. In December 1993, Yeltsin issued a separate order canceling the prohibition to use the armed forces beyond their narrowly defined mission. According to the new Constitution of 1993, the State Duma had a limited impact on the matters of defense and security. Its Defense Committee became a visible player in Russia's civil-military relations only after 1995 elections when General Lev Rokhlin went in politics and chaired the committee. However, under his leadership, the committee rather performed the parliamentary oversight of the executive rather than civilian control of the military. I discuss this example below in detail as an instance of erosion by political competition by the military against the civilian government.

Despite the heated struggle between the executive and legislative branches, non-intervention in political matters remained a firm principle of the Russian military's professional culture in the early 1990s.<sup>87</sup> The recent history of a failed coup of August 1991 resulted in the reluctance of the armed forces to get involved in politics. First, the military had learned the lesson – they should stay out of politics to not become a tool of the competing political actors.<sup>88</sup> Second, the subsequent purges in the Ministry of Defense of the USSR and the General Staff

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<sup>87</sup> Viktor Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*, (Moscow: Kolleksiia "Sovershenno Sekretno." 1998); Taylor, *Politics and The Russian Army: Civil-Military Relations*, 1689-2000.

<sup>88</sup> Taylor, *Politics and The Russian Army: Civil-Military Relations*, 1689-2000.

removed those officers who doubted the wisdom of political neutrality.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, those who replaced them were hardly apolitical. The new appointments were offered to the officers who demonstrated or at least declared their loyalty to the new authorities due to genuine democratic preferences or because they managed to catch the wind of changes.<sup>90</sup> Either way, the events of August 1991 constitute an organizational trauma echoed in the reluctance of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation to get involved in domestic politics. However, in two years they would become an arbiter in political competition between the president and the parliament.

Ironically, the most outspoken proponent of the depoliticization and departyzation of the military was then Minister of Defense General Grachev. His assertion that the military should be out of politics was widely supported by the servicemen and manifested in the military's reluctance to get involved in managing the constitutional crisis of 1993 when both the president and the parliament tried to drag the military to their side.<sup>91</sup> Even though the crisis ended up with the use of military force on the side of the president, the armed forces continued to adhere to the culture of non-interference in politics and did not use this opportunity to increase their influence on the substantive matters of domestic politics.<sup>92</sup>

The appointment of General Pavel Grachev to the high position in the Ministry of Defense in 1992 prevented the Russian Federation from achieving a crucial step in the democratization of civil-military relations — having a civilian-led Ministry of Defense. Russian experts in civil-military relations underscore that the western practice of having a civilian as the head of the Ministry of Defense was not easily transferable to the Russian realities. Due to the strong influence of

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<sup>89</sup> Herspring, *Russian Civil-Military Relations*.

<sup>90</sup> Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*.

<sup>91</sup> Taylor, *Politics and The Russian Army: Civil-Military Relations, 1689-2000*; Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*.

<sup>92</sup> Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*.

the General Staff and its Chief in Russia's Defense Ministry, appointing a civilian minister without reforming the institution itself would have diminished and not increased the civilian control of the military.<sup>93</sup> Grachev justified his appointment, saying: "The military will not accept a civilian."<sup>94</sup> Matching the western standards of civilian control required not only having a civilian as a minister but reforming the ministry and the armed forces. Yeltsin's government was unwilling or unable to initiate such a reform. It took Russia fifteen more years to appoint the first Minister of Defense without a previous career in the military or other security services.

As Yeltsin consolidated control over military matters in his hands, the role of the Security Council (SC) became even more prominent. The Council served as a key policymaking forum informing the presidential decisions about national security and defense and included civilian and military heads of the relevant ministries. By law, the president is the head of the SC, and he appoints the Secretary of the SC who sets the agenda of the Council's meetings, coordinates the inter-ministry cooperation, oversees the implementation of policies, and reports directly to the president. In the period from 1992 to 1996, only civilians occupied this position.<sup>95</sup>

In sum, by the beginning of the First Chechen War, Russia already had a uniformed Minister of Defense who nevertheless promoted the idea of having an apolitical military; a mixed SC led by civilians; a disabled parliament, and the military that despite multiple opportunities to become a separate political actor upheld the professional standard of non-involvement in politics. Overall, civilian

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<sup>93</sup> Aleksandr Golts, *Voennaia reforma i rocciiiskii militarizm [Military reform and militarism in Russia]* (Uppsala Universitet, 2017).

<sup>94</sup> Aleksandr Belkin, "Civilian Control: Russian Myths and Reality," in *Civilian Control of the Armed Forces: Internatioanal Experience and Russian Specifics*, ed. Vladimir Smirnov, Hermann Hagen, and Alexandr Savinkin (Moscow: Russkiy Put, 1999).

<sup>95</sup> In 1993, Yeltsin tried to appoint Marshal of the Aviation Yevgeny Shaposhnikov as a Secretary of the SC, but the legislature (then still functional) did not approve this candidate.

control of the military took a form of presidential control and strongly depended on the military's self-restraint.

## **2. Erosion of Civilian Control by Insubordination**

Insubordination is the first form of erosion of civilian control that can occur when the armed forces' resist governmental policies undermining the military profession. Insubordination occurs when the military recognizes that the government's policy stretches the boundaries of the profession and denies the civilians exercise of power by shirking, failing to report, resigning, defecting, or foot-dragging.

In the case of Russia's first war in Chechnya, the military did not see it as a security necessity requiring the use of military force but rather as a risky political maneuver.<sup>96</sup> Numerous surveys demonstrate the unwillingness of the military officers to follow the orders that involve the intrastate use of the military for missions lying beyond their professional expertise. For instance, the survey conducted before the First Chechen War by Friedrich-Ebert Foundation (1994) made evident that officers oppose the use of the Armed Forces for fighting separatist movements, construction works, or gathering the harvest.<sup>97</sup> Another survey performed at the later stages of the operation in summer 1995 showed that the officers still reject the internal use of the military as a part of its mission. When explicitly asked about following the orders to put down a separatist rebellion 24 percent of respondents stated that they probably would not follow the orders, while 15 percent said that they definitely would not follow the orders. In total, it yields 39 percent of officers being unwilling to fulfill the tasks related to suppressing the separatist movements.<sup>98</sup> Unsurprisingly, multiple acts of

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<sup>96</sup> Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*; Anatolii Kulikov, *Tiazhelyie Zviesdy [Heavy Stars]* (Moscow: Voina i Mir Books, 2002).

<sup>97</sup> Taylor, *Politics and The Russian Army: Civil-Military Relations, 1689-2000*.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 312.



insubordination occurred. In the course of the First Chechen War, 540 members of the military, including generals, officers, and non-commissioned officers resigned in order not to take part in it.<sup>99</sup> Those who did not quit expressed their opposition by refusing to take orders or simply not following them.

For instance, on December 13, 1994, General Ivan Babichev led his troops to Grozny when they met the resistance of the local civilians protesting the war in Chechnya.<sup>100</sup> Being unsure how to treat the civilian opposition, Babichev contacted the Command of the Joint Grouping of Forces in Mozdok, North Ossetia. They ordered the general to proceed anyway.<sup>101</sup> He refused to advance, which significantly delayed the movement of troops to Chechnya.<sup>102</sup> Babichev explained his unwillingness lead the troops to Chechnya when faced with the civilian opposition by stating that the military cannot implement an order to run over people. He explicitly invoked the military rule (Rus: *ustav*), forbidding the implementation of illegal orders. Thus, Babichev did not only recognize the moral hazard of implementing Yeltsin's policy but its direct contradiction to the norms of the military professional conduct.

Later that week, the commander of the Joint Grouping of Forces in Chechnya General-Colonel Aleksandr Mitukhin refused to issue the directives to the troops in Chechnya and under the pretense of sickness flew back to Moscow.<sup>103</sup> Many suspected that Mitukhin's sickness was simply an act of shirking to avoid the responsibility for the operation.<sup>104</sup> Later General-Colonel Mitukhin explained his refusal to command the operation saying that the military

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<sup>99</sup> Olikier, *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994-2000*.

<sup>100</sup> Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*; Herspring, *Russian Civil-Military Relations*.

<sup>101</sup> Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*.

<sup>102</sup> Herspring, *The Kremlin & the High Command*.

<sup>103</sup> Valentin Runov and Anatoliy Kulikov, *All Russia's Wars in the Caucasus* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2013); Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*.

<sup>104</sup> Runov and Kulikov, *All Russia's Wars in the Caucasus*; Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*.

lacked the expertise to implement it properly and was afraid that politicians would blame the failure on him.<sup>105</sup> This points to the fact that he recognized that Yeltsin's policy goes beyond the military's professional expertise and engaged in insubordination by refusing to issue orders to the troops and potentially shirking. These dynamics are consistent with the policy-focused explanation for erosion of civilian control.

After Mitukhin's departure, Minister of Defense Grachev decided to appoint the new Commander of the Joint Grouping of Forces in Chechnya. He turned to the Deputy Commander of the Ground Forces General Eduard Vorobiev to fill this position.<sup>106</sup> On December 18th, when Russian troops were already on their way to Grozny, Vorobiev refused to take command and resigned shortly afterward.<sup>107</sup> General Vorobiev refused to take the command because the troops were not ready to perform the expected tasks.<sup>108</sup> According to Grachev, he threatened Vorobiev with 15 years in prison and even the death penalty for refusing to implement the order of the Minister of Defense.<sup>109</sup> Vorobiev preferred to take the risk, sacrificed his high position in the military, and resigned in order not to implement the policy that went beyond the military's expertise.

In sum, the military shirked, refused to give and implement orders, and even resigned because they recognized that the government's decision to use the military in Chechnya does not match the military's expertise. Thus, the above evidence demonstrates that the components of the causal process suggested by the policy-focused theory of erosion were present: the government's policy stretched

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<sup>105</sup> Runov and Kulikov, *All Russia's Wars in the Caucasus*; Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*.

<sup>106</sup> Golts, *Voennaia reforma i rocciiiskii militarizm* [*Military reform and militarism in Russia*]; Herspring, *Russian Civil-Military Relations*;

<sup>107</sup> Herspring, *The Kremlin & the High Command*.

<sup>108</sup> Viktor Khlystun, "Pavel Grachev: I Was Appointed Responsible for the War [In Russian]," *Trud Newspaper*, 2001, [http://www.trud.ru/article/15-03-2001/21092\\_pavel\\_grachev\\_menja\\_naznachili\\_otvetstvennym\\_za\\_vo.html](http://www.trud.ru/article/15-03-2001/21092_pavel_grachev_menja_naznachili_otvetstvennym_za_vo.html); Aleksandr Golts, *Voennaia reforma i rocciiiskii militarizm* [*Military reform and militarism in Russia*].

<sup>109</sup> Khlystun, "Pavel Grachev: I Was Appointed Responsible for the War [In Russian]."

the military's expertise, the armed forces recognized this fact, and the officers refused to follow the orders of civilian government because of this. These findings point to the plausibility of the policy-focused explanation of the erosion by insubordination. Further analysis of alternative explanations is necessary to strengthen our confidence in this scenario.

### ***Alternative Explanations***

***Weak civilian oversight.*** One of the common explanations for military insubordination is weak civilian oversight.<sup>110</sup> The causal logic is the following: when the preferences of civilians and the military diverge, the military will shirk if the likelihood of being detected and punished is low.<sup>111</sup> Because Russian generals performed open, public, and easily observable acts of insubordination (e.g., refusing to move the troops or resigning), this explanation does not meet a necessary condition of the low likelihood of being detected and punished. Therefore, weak civilian oversight hypothesis does not explain the abovementioned instances of insubordination.

***Fear for one's life.*** According to this explanation, when the participation in combat threatens the lives of the military, they disobey the orders to save their lives.<sup>112</sup> The way in which Babichev handled the situation with civilians blocking the way of his troops does not conform to this explanation. He approached the crowd of civilians directly, standing less than an arm's length from the protesters.<sup>113</sup> This behavior is inconsistent with him being afraid to be shot, stabbed, or kidnapped.

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<sup>110</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*; Gassebner, Gutmann, and Voigt, "When to Expect a Coup d'état?"

<sup>111</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*.

<sup>112</sup> Albrecht and Koehler, "Going on the Run."

<sup>113</sup> The video footage of this event is available here: *RUSSIA: CHECHNYA: TROOPS MAN ARMED CORDON AROUND GROZNY* (Associated Press Archive, 2015), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mxy8\\_TaTZU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mxy8_TaTZU).

Mitukhin and Vorobiev refused to perform the staff tasks and not the combat ones. They were supposed to command the operation from the staff headquarters in Mozdok, North Ossetia — more than 100 kilometers from Grozny, Chechnya. Thus, the fear for one's life fails to provide a plausible explanation to erosion by insubordination in the First Chechen War. No doubt, some number of desertions and defections in Chechnya happened due to the soldiers' fear for their survival. However, explaining the insubordination of the higher commanding officers, the policy-focused theory provides a more plausible explanation. Overall, as shown in Table 3.1, the abovementioned instances of insubordination can be better explained by the destructive potential of the government's policies about the use of force in Chechnya (*defending the profession*) than the alternative explanations. These findings allow us to conclude that the policy-focused theory provides a plausible and most probable explanation for insubordination. It means that with high certainty stretching of the military expertise motivated the military to disobey the orders, shirk, and resign.

**Table 3.1 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for insubordination**

<b>Cases of Insubordination (N=3)</b>				<b>Observations explained</b>
<b><i>Causal Mechanisms</i></b>	Babichev refuses to lead the troops	Mitiukhin resigns	Vorobiev refuses to command the operation	
<i>Defending the profession</i>	V	V	V	3/3
<i>Weak oversight</i>	X	X	X	0/3
<i>Fear for one's life</i>	X	X	X	0/3

**V = supported by evidence; X = not supported by evidence; ~ = partially supported**

### 3. Erosion of Civilian Control by Competition

Erosion by competition is the exercise of the political power by the military to challenge, contest, or pressure the civilian government. The period of the First Chechen War and its immediate aftermath witnessed numerous instances of the members of the military profession going in politics and using their political power against the government. In this section, I will consider the three most salient of them. The first is the rise of the Lebed as a political competitor to Yeltsin. The second concerns the Minister of Defense Grachev giving up his mantra about the military staying out of politics and encouraging the participation of active-duty officers in parliamentary elections of 1995. The third is a short but tremulous political career of General Rokhlin in which he mobilized the opposition to Yeltsin in the armed forces and allegedly plotted a coup.

The policy-focused theory predicts that the government's policies posing a threat to the military will launch a mechanism of *defending the profession* and produce erosion by competition. The below evidence suggests that the military recognized the use of the military force in the first Chechen war as going beyond the military profession. They engaged in the acts of competition against the government to halt, reverse, and subvert the detrimental government's policy vis-a-vis the use of force in Chechnya. This finding is consistent with the policy-focused theory. However, the case of Russian in the early 1990s presents multiple alternative explanations for the military's interference in politics — weak institutions, volatile civil society, questionable regime legitimacy, poor economy, the uncertain future of the military, history of previous coup attempts, and individual political ambitions of particular generals. The evidence allows to rule out these explanations as being sufficient for erosion by competition and thus increases our confidence in the policy-focused explanation.

### ***General Lebed: A Candidate in the Uniform***

General Alexandr Lebed clearly recognized that the intrastate use of force was beyond the military's responsibility and thus detrimental to the military profession. He consistently opposed the use of the Armed Forces for political missions within the state. During the coup attempt of 1991, Lebed serving in the Airborne Troops protected Yeltsin and his followers from the coup plotters that included Lebed's superior — the Minister of Defense General Dmitry Yazov. When explaining his actions, Lebed said:

*"They tried to push me, a Russian general, to shoot my own people in the capital of my own state. No such force exists that would compel me to do this. I'm not a policeman. My job is to deal with external enemies. Build up a national guard or whatever you want to deal with domestic problems, but leave the armed forces out of it!"*<sup>114</sup>

Later, in 1993, Yeltsin himself brought tanks to the streets of Moscow to pressure the parliament. Lebed criticized the president for using the military in domestic politics and allowing the tank commanders to make political decisions.<sup>115</sup> These examples show that Lebed was consistent in his opposition to the intrastate use of the military regardless of who orders it — Gorbachev in 1989, Yazov in 1991, or Yeltsin in 1993 and 1994. He also clearly recognized it as being beyond the military's professional responsibility and expertise.

Lebed saw the war in Chechnya as even more threatening to the military profession than the crises of 1991 and 1993 because the long-term engagement in an intra-state conflict postponed the much-needed reform of the armed forces.<sup>116</sup> In the absence of the reform, the troops could not get proper training, equipment, and sustenance. Recognizing the mismatch between the current military expertise

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<sup>114</sup> John Kohan and Yuri Zarakhovich, "Awaiting His Nation's Call," *Time Magazine*, 1995, p. 26.

<sup>115</sup> Kohan and Zarakhovich, "Awaiting His Nation's Call"; Steven E. Miller and Dmitri Trenin, eds., *The Russian Military: Power and Policy* (MIT Press, 2004).

<sup>116</sup> Pavel Felgengauer, "The Army: THE WAR IN CHECHNYA AND ARMY REFORM ARE INCOMPATIBLE" (*Segodnya*, 1996); Miller and Trenin, *The Russian Military: Power and Policy*.

and the requirements of the intra-state campaign, Lebed publicly challenged Yeltsin in the press saying that the president should resign over Chechnya and that “Only a criminal government could send hundreds of its citizens to certain death”.<sup>117</sup>

After the discharge from the military, Lebed ran in the State Duma elections (1995). Getting the military out of Chechnya and implementing the reform remained on the top of his agenda. As a parliament member from the Congress of the Russian Communities party, Lebed initiated a movement called “Dignity and the Motherland” to advocate for the interests of the Russian Army being “intentionally destroyed” by the current government’s policies.<sup>118</sup> This behavior is consistent with erosion by competition.

In 1996 Lebed challenged Yeltsin in the presidential elections of 1996. When Lebed’s presidential campaign delivered him almost 15% support of the Russian voters, he negotiated with Yeltsin to receive the position of the Secretary of the SC. According to the initial pre-election agreement between Yeltsin and Lebed, the general was supposed to become the Minister of Defense.<sup>119</sup> However, after the first tour, the price of Lebed’s endorsement went up, and he renegotiated the terms to become the Secretary of SC.<sup>120</sup> This made Lebed the first member of the military profession to hold this post officially and further contributed to the erosion of civilian control. Although this position gave Lebed close to full power over Chechnya, the responsibilities of the Secretary of the SC did not include coordinating the reform of the Armed Forces. Thus Lebed sacrificed the long-term goal over the immediate priority of getting the military out of Chechnya.

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<sup>117</sup> Andrei Smirnov, “GENERAL ATTACKS THE SUPREME COMMANDER IN CHIEF” (Kommersant-Daily, 1995), 3.

<sup>118</sup> Ilya Bulavinov, “Lebed Strives to Unite the Offended Military” (Kommersant, 1995).

<sup>119</sup> Timothy J. Colton, *Yeltsin : A Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

As a Secretary of the SC, Lebed spearheaded the Khasaviurt negotiation process to end the war in Chechnya.<sup>121</sup> In one of the interviews following his visit to Chechnya, Lebed mentioned that the soldiers had been used as cannon fodder and have to be brought back home immediately.<sup>122</sup> Justifying his insistence on the end of the military campaign Lebed stated: “The troops will leave Chechnya because constitutional order cannot be restored by airstrikes and artillery shelling.”<sup>123</sup> This again points to the fact that he recognized the mismatch between the military’s job and the conflict in Chechnya. While Lebed succeeded in reversing the Yeltsin’s policy of using the military in Chechnya, this move costed him a high seat. Yeltsin fired Lebed soon after the signing of the Khasaviurt accords.<sup>124</sup>

The above examples show that Lebed decided to use his political capital to reverse the policy that was detrimental to the military profession. While the further analysis will address the alternative explanations, the above discussion shows the mechanism of *defending the profession* provides a plausible explanation for this instance of erosion of civilian control by competition.

### ***General Grachev: Deployment in the Parliament***

As a minister of defense, Grachev never publicly challenged the president or civilian government. Grachev’s professional mantra as the defense minister was that “the military should stay out of politics”.<sup>125</sup> Driven by this principle, Grachev insisted that the members of the military profession should not be running in the Duma elections of 1993.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, after the beginning of the First Chechen

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<sup>121</sup> Runov and Kulikov, *All Russia’s Wars in the Caucasus*.

<sup>122</sup> Maria Eismont, “GEN. LEBED IS APPALLED BY THE CONDITION OF THE FEDERAL GROUP” (Segodnya, 1996).

<sup>123</sup> Maria Eismont, “GEN. LEBED CANCELS THE ASSAULT ON GROZNY” (Segodnya, 1996).

<sup>124</sup> Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*; Maria Eismont, “GEN. LEBED CANCELS THE ASSAULT ON GROZNY.”

<sup>125</sup> Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*.

<sup>126</sup> Ilya Bulavinov, “Party Life in Russia” (Kommersant, 1995).



War, Grachev actively worked to increase the military presence in the State Duma. Grachev encouraged the military to send its representatives to compete in the 1995 Duma elections. As a result of his efforts, more than 100 military officers ran for the seats in the parliament.<sup>127</sup> Despite most of the “Grachev’s 100” failed in this electoral race, these events offer an example of erosion of civilian control by competition. Why did Grachev betray his motto about the military outside of politics? The policy-focused theory suggests that *defending the military* from the threatening government’s policies is the key.

As a professional military officer, Grachev recognized that intrastate missions go beyond the military’s profession. For instance, when Yeltsin ordered to use the troops against the parliament during the constitutional crisis of 1993, Grachev at first deployed his signature tactics of insubordination — acted as he did not fully understand the order and required multiple clarifications from the president.<sup>128</sup> Grachev insisted that the armed forces should not perform the tasks that lie beyond its expertise saying that it is the job of the Ministry of the Interior (MVD) to use the police special forces (OMON) or the internal troops (VV) to solve the crisis.<sup>129</sup>

Despite the fact that the war in Chechnya also fell within the responsibility of the MVD and its Internal Troops, the MVD insisted that the Ministry of Defense has to take command of the operation.<sup>130</sup> This time, Grachev openly resisted the idea to use the military for internal missions.<sup>131</sup> He warned the SC members, including Yeltsin, that the military is not fit for the task – understaffed,

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<sup>127</sup> Miller and Trenin, eds., *The Russian Military: Power and Policy*.

<sup>128</sup> Golts, *Voennaia reforma i rocciiiskii militarizm [Military reform and militarism in Russia]*

<sup>129</sup> Cited from Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*, 172.

<sup>130</sup> Bettina Renz, “Russia’s ‘Force Structures’ and the Study of Civil-Military Relations,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 18, no. 4 (2005): 559–85; Timothy L. Thomas, “The Russian Armed Forces Confront Chechnya: I. Military-political Aspects 11–31 December 1994,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 8, no. 2 (1995): 233–56; Taylor, *State Building in Putin’s Russia*.

<sup>131</sup> Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*; Yuriy Baturin, Alexandr Ilyin, and Vladimir Kadatskiy, *Epokha Yeltsina : Ocherki Politicheskoi Istorii [Yeltsin’s Era: Essays of Political History]* (Moscow: Vagrius, 2001).

underfunded, and have not been adequately trained to perform the internal missions, especially in coordination with other security services.<sup>132</sup> Grachev did not prevail and almost got himself fired for the untimely and inappropriate pessimism.<sup>133</sup> He later tried to prevent the use of the military in Chechnya by personally negotiating with Dzhokhar Dudayev, the leader of the Chechen separatists, in attempts to reach a peaceful solution of the crisis.<sup>134</sup> Overall, Grachev recognized that the use of the armed forces in Chechnya goes beyond the expertise of the Russian military, but the attempts to prevent it were fruitless and almost cost the general his career.

Understanding that the military is doomed to fight in Chechnya, Grachev tried to advance the reform to match the expertise with the current security demands of managing intrastate violence. When he asked Yeltsin to increase spending in support of the reform, the president refused to allocate the funds.<sup>135</sup> Thus, to advocate for the increase of funding from within the system, Grachev incentivized a group of more than 100 active duty and retired military officers to run for Duma elections in 1995.<sup>136</sup> The Minister of Defense also encouraged the armed forces to vote for the party “Our Home — Russia” and not to support the candidates whose votes did not conform to the interests of the military.<sup>137</sup> In sum, what sparked the military’s competition for political power in the Duma elections of 1995 was the discordance between Yeltsin’s policies about the use of force in Chechnya and the military’s expertise. The policy of using the military in Chechnya stretched the expertise of the armed forces requiring them to manage

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<sup>132</sup> Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*; Baturin et al., *Epokha Yeltsina*.

<sup>133</sup> Khlystun, “Pavel Grachev: I Was Appointed Responsible for the War [In Russian]”; Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*; Baturin et al., *Epokha Yeltsina*.

<sup>134</sup> Runov and Kulikov, *All Russia’s Wars in the Caucasus*; Baturin et al., *Epokha Yeltsina*.

<sup>135</sup> Herspring, *The Kremlin & the High Command*.

<sup>136</sup> Jacob Kipp and Timothy L. Thomas, *The Russian Military and the 1995 Parliamentary Elections: A Primer* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Foreign Military Studies Office, 1995); Herspring, *The Kremlin & the High Command*.

<sup>137</sup> Evgeniy Yuriev, “Plenary Meeting of the State Duma” (Kommersant, 1995).

the type of violence for which they were not prepared. In this situation, general Grachev's decision to "deploy" the uniformed candidates to the parliament to raise funds for the reform constitutes an attempt to protect the military from Yeltsin's policies.

### ***General Rokhlin: a Parliament Member who Plotted a Coup***

General-Lieutenant Lev Rokhlin challenged Yeltsin's use of force in Chechnya first while running in the 1995 Duma elections, then by using his seat as the Chair of the Duma Committee on Defense to launch an investigation against Yeltsin and Grachev, and then by mobilizing fellow members of the military profession to force Yeltsin to resign over Chechnya. The last episode was the closest Russia was to a coup since August 1991 until today. Evidence suggests that, as well as Lebed and Grachev, Rokhlin's competition against Yeltsin was also driven by the desire to defend the military profession threatened by the deployment in Chechnya.

Rokhlin was one of the four commanders who led the Russian troops on their way to Grozny in December 1994.<sup>138</sup> Despite taking the command, the general remained a sound opponent of the use of the military within the state.<sup>139</sup> He even refused to accept the award for taking Grozny, saying: "In civil wars, commanders cannot gain glory. The war in Chechnya – is not Russia's glory but its tragedy."<sup>140</sup> Rokhlin opposed the use of the military in Chechnya because the armed forces lacked adequate training and could not perform professional combat tasks, especially in coordination with other security services.<sup>141</sup> Moreover, he said that the government used the military not to defend Russia from a real security

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<sup>138</sup> Kulikov, *Tiazhelye Zviesdy [Heavy Stars]*.

<sup>139</sup> Herspring, *The Kremlin & the High Command*.

<sup>140</sup> Alexandr Volkov, *Lev Rokhlin. Istoriya Odnogo Ubiystva [Lev Rokhlin. The Story of One Murder]* (Moscow: Algoritm, 2012), 57.

<sup>141</sup> Volkov, *Lev Rokhlin. Istoriya Odnogo Ubiystva*

threat but to protect the business interests of the oligarchs involved in oil trade.<sup>142</sup> Thus, Rokhlin saw the use of the military in Chechnya as going beyond its expertise, corporateness, and responsibility.

Less than a year after leading the troops to Grozny, he joined the electoral race for the seat in the State Duma of the Russian Federation. In his pre-election interview to the *Kommersant* newspaper, Rokhlin admitted that the only reason he decided to join Victor Chernomyrdin's party "Our Home — Russia" was his experience of commanding the troops in Chechnya.<sup>143</sup> At first, Rokhlin did not want to go to politics at all. The general changed his mind when he realized that the Duma seat would allow him to mitigate the damage that the war in Chechnya had on his soldiers.<sup>144</sup> As a Chair of the Duma Committee on Defense, Rokhlin used his political power to openly accuse Yeltsin and Grachev of destroying the military. He launched an investigation to establish who was responsible for the "mass death of the military personnel" in the First Chechen War.<sup>145</sup> Rokhlin also used the Duma tribune to publicly call Yeltsin to resign over the situation in Chechnya.<sup>146</sup> These examples show that the general engaged in competition because he recognized the war in Chechnya as harmful to the military.

In 1997 Rokhlin mobilized the opposition to the government in the armed forces and founded the Movement In Support of the Army, Defense Industry, and

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<sup>142</sup> Alexei Borzenko, "The Confession of the General," in *Video Interview in Russian*. TVC, 1998, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkpaFs-ERU8>.

<sup>143</sup> Konstantin Krasnopol'skiy, "General Rokhlin: I Don't Need a Seat in the Duma," *Kommersant* (Moscow, 1995).

<sup>144</sup> Volkov, *Lev Rokhlin. Istoriya Odnoy Ubiystva*; Konstantin Krasnopol'skiy, "General Rokhlin: I Don't Need a Seat in the Duma,"

<sup>145</sup> Lev Rokhlin, "Report About Illegal Military Actions in the Territory of the Chechen Republic in October-November 1994 and the Modern Crisis of the Government" (Moscow: State Archive of the Russian Federation, 1997), fund 10100, inventory 13, case 1852, 23-26.

<sup>146</sup> Lev Rokhlin, "Transcript of the Press-Conference, 13 October, 1997, 14:00," vol. fund 10100, inventory 14, case 5818 (Moscow: State Archive of the Russian Federation, 1997), 50.

Military Science (DPA).<sup>147</sup> Through this movement, Rokhlin voiced two urgent concerns of the armed forces — the humiliation over the defeat in Chechnya and budgetary needs of the impoverished military.<sup>148</sup> In his press statements, Rokhlin underscored that while there are still legitimate ways to force Yeltsin to quit, the DPA is ready to use the military and law enforcement to guarantee the peaceful change of the regime.<sup>149</sup> Rokhlin also clarified that DPA did not intend to perform a coup.<sup>150</sup> Instead, they insisted on impeaching Yeltsin and electing another president through a legitimate democratic process, what the literature on democratic backsliding calls a promissory coup.<sup>151</sup> The movement became very popular among the military because it demanded to keep the government accountable for the damage that the First Chechen War had done to the military.<sup>152</sup>

In sum, in all three major instances of erosion of civilian control by competition during the First Chechen War, the military recognized that the intrastate use of the armed forces goes beyond the military profession and engaged in political competition to defend the profession. While Lebed tried to

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<sup>147</sup> Vitaliy Shlykov, “Politicization of the Army and Problems of Civilian Control,” in *Civilian Control of the Armed Forces: International Experience and Russian Specifics [In Russian]*, ed. Hermann Hagena, Vladimir Smirnov, and Alexandr Savinkin (Moscow: Russkiy Put, 1999), 126–45; Herspring, *The Kremlin & the High Command*; Kulikov, *Tiazhelyie Zvezdy*.

<sup>148</sup> Shlykov, “Politicization of the Army and Problems of Civilian Control.”

<sup>149</sup> Lev Rokhlin, “Transcript of the Press-Conference of the Chair of the Movement in Support of the Military L. Rokhlin, 20 November, 1997, 12:00” (Moscow: State Archive of the Russian Federation, 1997), 68–69, 68.

<sup>150</sup> Lev Rokhlin, “Transcript of the Press-Conference of the Member of State Duma, Rokhlin L., 23 October, 1997, 11:00,” (Moscow: State Archive of the Russian Federation, 1997), 60. According to the memoirs of his aide Alexander Volkov, Rokhlin planned a mass protest in Moscow on June 20th, 1998, and actively networked within the military to convince them to step in if the police or internal troops will try to suppress the demonstration (See Volkov, *Lev Rokhlin. Istoriya Odnogo Ubiystva*). According to Rokhlin’s former deputy Batalov, what was really supposed to happen is a military coup (Veselov 2011). Rokhlin’s daughter supported this version in her interview to *Radio Svoboda* in 2016. Former Minister of the Interior (1995-1998) Anatoliy Kulikov in his memoirs mentions that in 1998 Rokhlin consulted with him on whether the MVD internal troops (VV) would resist the advancement of the military in Moscow (See Kulikov, *Tiazhelyie Zvezdy [Heavy Stars]*). This plan had never materialized as Rokhlin was mysteriously killed on July 3, 1998, at his summer house.

<sup>151</sup> Bermeo, “On Democratic Backsliding.”

<sup>152</sup> Shlykov, “Politicization of the Army and Problems of Civilian Control.”

halt the implementation of the policies damaging to the military, and General Grachev used his political power to mitigate their effects, General Rokhlin demanded accountability, revenge, and compensation. The above discussion shows that all three generals engaged in competition with the government to challenge the policy detrimental to the military profession. This finding suggests that the policy-focused explanation for erosion by competition is *plausible*. To evaluate its *probability*, it is necessary to consider numerous alternative explanations for erosion by competition.

### ***Alternative explanations for erosion by competition***

Existing research suggests that the military interferes in politics when institutions and civil society are weak<sup>153</sup>; regime legitimacy is questionable<sup>154</sup>; economic performance is poor<sup>155</sup>; and when the future of the military is uncertain.<sup>156</sup> Additionally, the history of previous coup attempts increases the likelihood of subsequent takeovers.<sup>157</sup> Finally, individual political ambitions of particular power-seeking members of the military profession can potentially explain the military competition against the government.

***Weak institutions and civil society.*** The institutions in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union were weak and the civil society volatile. Even president Yeltsin admitted it in his address to the Federal Assembly.<sup>158</sup> However, weak institutions alone cannot explain the abovementioned instances of erosion

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<sup>153</sup> Belkin and Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk"; Perlmutter, "The Praetorian State and the Praetorian Army."

<sup>154</sup> Alfred C. Stepan, *Military in Politics : Changing Patterns in Brazil*. Princeton Legacy Library (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); Lindberg and Clark, "Does Democratization Reduce the Risk of Military Interventions in Politics in Africa?"

<sup>155</sup> Luttwak, *Coup D'etat : A Practical Handbook*.

<sup>156</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson, "Persistence of Power, Elites, and Institutions"; Bell and Sudduth, "The Causes and Outcomes of Coup during Civil War."

<sup>157</sup> Belkin and Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk."

<sup>158</sup> Boris Yeltsin, The Address to the Federal Assembly." [In Russian] (Moscow: Kremlin, 1995).

by competition. First, according to this explanation, the military would try to take over the state to introduce order in the country. No such attempt took place after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Even an alleged coup plot of General Rokhlin was not aimed at replacing the institutions (e.i., the presidency), but the particular head of the state — president Yeltsin.

Moreover, the key motivation for his political mobilization was the damage that First Chechen War done to the military. Grachev tried to alter the composition of the institution — the legislature — through the legitimate means of parliamentary elections. Lebed also did not try to take over the state but sought particular power positions within the existing institutional structures.

Overall, the situation in Russia does not conform to the scenario described by Perlmutter, and Belkin and Schofer in which the military takes over the control of the state to introduce the order and weak civil society cannot resist. However, weak institutions could be a contextual factor enabling the instances of erosion. For example, Grachev's involvement in the State Duma election in 1995 violated the law that forbids campaigning in the military units. No institutional power was present to coerce him to play by the rules of the game. Similarly, Rokhlin's DPA was possible because no institutional constraints effectively limited the military's participation in politics and political engagement of the armed forces.

***Low regime legitimacy.*** According to the *low legitimacy* explanation, the military takes over the state exploiting the lack of societal consensus about the government's right to make rules;<sup>159</sup> the elites use this situation to advocate their positions using the military.<sup>160</sup> Yeltsin's regime legitimacy indeed suffered losses after the constitutional crisis of 1993 and the use of force in Chechnya.<sup>161</sup> Nevertheless, Yeltsin managed to galvanize sufficient public and elite support to get re-elected for the second term. Furthermore, Lebed, instead of challenging the

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<sup>159</sup> Belkin and Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk."

<sup>160</sup> Stepan, *Military in Politics*.

<sup>161</sup> Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*.

government's legitimacy, cut a deal with Yeltsin and endorsed him in the runoff. Thus, low regime legitimacy, while being present, did not launch the causal process that would lead to erosion by competition as expected.

Moreover, during the constitutional crisis of 1993, when Yeltsin was the most dependent on the military and his legitimacy was severely jeopardized, the military has not used this opportunity to expand its influence in politics.<sup>162</sup> However, it was precisely the low public support for the president, particularly due to the war in Chechnya, that encouraged Yeltsin to negotiate with Lebed.<sup>163</sup> Therefore, while low regime legitimacy did not lead to erosion by competition on its own, it enabled the military involvement in politics.

The second causal process through which low legitimacy of the government leads to the military interference in politics involves the military seeing itself as a defender of public interest and the government as undermining these preferences.<sup>164</sup> Some Rokhlin's statements conform to this explanation. For instance, during his press conference on November 20, 1997, demanding the impeachment, Rokhlin said: "We will make every effort so that the army protects the indignant people [from the government]. [...] Our position is based on the belief that the will of the people is sacred."<sup>165</sup> Nevertheless, his early political claims were limited to the well-being of the military. In 1995 Rokhlin even admitted that he joined the political campaign for the State Duma elections so that his appeals for saving the military from the devastating consequences of the government's policies will reach the broader audience.<sup>166</sup> Moreover, Rokhlin

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<sup>162</sup> Taylor, *Politics and The Russian Army: Civil-Military Relations, 1689-2000*; Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*.

<sup>163</sup> "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation: Telephone Conversation With Russian Yeltsin on June 18, 1996" (The White House, 1996).

<sup>164</sup> Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique Huntingdon, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control."

<sup>165</sup> Rokhlin, "Transcript of the Press-Conference of the Chair of the Movement in Support of the Military L. Rokhlin, 20 November, 1997, 12:00," 69.

<sup>166</sup> Krasnopolskiy, "General Rokhlin: I Don't Need a Seat in the Duma."



claimed that if he wins the Duma seat, he will not take it.<sup>167</sup> This evidence shows that low regime legitimacy served as an amplifier for erosion by competition in Rokhlin's case: the competition started from the narrow issue of the government's policies damaging the military and resulted in the broad claims of the authorities' illegitimacy, calls for impeachment, and probably plotting a coup.

Finally, both low legitimacy hypotheses fail to explain the case of General Grachev encouraging the military to participate in the Duma elections of 1995. If anything, this example shows that Grachev believed in legitimate ways of influencing the policy through elections and lobbying.

**Poor economic performance.** Existing research argues that poor economic performance undermines the welfare of the military, motivating it to interfere in politics.<sup>168</sup> In addition, the stagnating economy increases the public willingness to accept the government formed in result of a coup.<sup>169</sup> The collapse of the Soviet Union and the withdrawal of troops from Europe indeed undermined the welfare of the military. The officers lacked housing, equipment, and clear prospects for the future.<sup>170</sup> While in the case of Russia in the 1990s, it is difficult to completely refute the economic explanation some existing evidence casts doubt on it.

Specifically, the economic situation in the armed forces was catastrophic from the very beginning of the 1990s, but it took almost five years for the military to use its political power to challenge the government through competition. The military stayed out of politics when the government cut military spending, failed to provide the officers returning from Europe with housing, and delayed pensions.<sup>171</sup> Despite most of these events happening before the constitutional crisis, the military abstained from the participating in the State Duma elections in

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Bell and Sudduth, "The Causes and Outcomes of Coup during Civil War."

<sup>169</sup> Luttwak, *Coup D'etat : A Practical Handbook*.

<sup>170</sup> Herspring, *Russian Civil-Military Relations*; Taylor, *Politics and The Russian Army: Civil-Military Relations, 1689-2000*.

<sup>171</sup> Herspring, *The Kremlin & the High Command*; Taylor, *Politics and The Russian Army*.

1993 let alone performing a coup. Of course, poor economic conditions provided strong attack points for the political platforms of Lebed and Rokhlin and motivated Grachev to fight for the budget in the Duma. However, the evidence casts doubt on the assumption that the poor economic conditions taken separately from the government's policies about the use of force produced erosion by competition. Further case studies of states with strong economies — the United Kingdom and Israel — will allow better separate the policy factors from economic ones.

***The uncertain future of the military.*** The uncertainty about the future of the military institution can lead to erosion by competition through two causal processes. First, after democratization, the government wants to cut the military's prerogatives. The armed forces intervene in politics to prevent it.<sup>172</sup> In the case of Russia and the USSR, the Soviet military did not enjoy broad political prerogatives and was firmly under the party control of the Chief Political Directorate (GlavPUR).<sup>173</sup> Therefore, the democratization of Russia did not limit military influence in politics. One might even argue that it opened the avenues for the military's participation in political life when GlavPUR disappeared, and politics became competitive. In sum, this explanation does not pass a plausibility test.

***History of previous coups.*** Abundant research shows that previous coups are a reliable predictor of future takeovers.<sup>174</sup> However, in the case of Russia, scholars agree that the coup attempt of 1991 constitutes an organizational trauma that contributed to the military's reluctance to get involved in politics.<sup>175</sup> One of the main fears of historically apolitical Soviet and then Russian armed forces was

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<sup>172</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson, "Persistence of Power, Elites, and Institutions."

<sup>173</sup> Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*; Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority*.

<sup>174</sup> Belkin and Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk."

<sup>175</sup> Taylor, *Politics and The Russian Army: Civil-Military Relations, 1689-2000*.

to be used as a scapegoat in political intrigues.<sup>176</sup> This fear explains the initial refusal of the armed forces to take sides in the 1993 constitutional crisis as well as the opposition of the General Staff to using the military in Chechnya. The fact that both cases ended up with the use of force paradoxically testifies in favor of civilian control since it was civilians' preferences that prevailed.

***Individual ambitions.*** The final alternative explanation for erosion by competition is individual officers' ambition to gain political power. In this scenario, power-seeking members of the military profession exploit the current political situation to Maksymize their chances to get political positions/appointments. Hence, engaging in a competition to halt Yeltsin's policy towards Chechnya would have been just a political maneuver aimed at gaining more power.

At first glance, this explanation seems to fit Lebed's case: He became a political figure while still in the military, attacked Yeltsin over Chechnya while his military career had nothing to do with the North Caucasus, and many observers underscored his unique charisma, assertiveness, and zeal when it came to making political statements. The strongest piece of evidence against this explanation is that the other two generals involved in erosion by competition — Grachev and Rokhlin — had little to no political ambitions at the beginning.

In 1992, Yeltsin appointed General Pavel Grachev as the first Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation based on the personal trust they established in the turmoil of 1991.<sup>177</sup> Grachev initially refused to take the position of the Minister of Defense because he wanted to stay out of politics.<sup>178</sup> Yeltsin trusted Grachev specifically for being obedient and devoid of any political skill or

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<sup>176</sup> Golts, *Voennaia reforma i rocciiiskii militarizm [Military reform and militarism in Russia]*

<sup>177</sup> Alexandr Korzhakov, *Boris Yeltsin: From Dawn to Dusk* (Moscow: Interbook, 1997); Colton, *Yeltsin : A Life*; Golts, *Voennaia reforma i rocciiiskii militarizm [Military reform and militarism in Russia]*.

<sup>178</sup> Korzhakov, *Boris Yeltsin: From Dawn to Dusk*; Boris Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*, 1st ed. (New York: PublicAffairs, 2000).

ambition.<sup>179</sup> Thus, Grachev's decision to politicize the armed forces before the Duma elections of 1995 was a risky and unnecessary step if he wanted to remain in power.

Rokhlin also initially lacked political aspirations, so power-seeking nature cannot explain his entry into politics. Of course, particular leadership characteristics could serve as an amplifier of Rokhlin's subsequent political steps, but they still fail to explain what had driven the general in the first place. Thus, while individual traits of a particular general's personality can explain the launch of Lebed's political career, they fall short of explaining the instances of erosion by competition initiated by Grachev and Rokhlin.

In sum, the alternative explanations are not sufficient to explain erosion by competition in Russia during the First Chechen War. As indicated in Table 3.2, out of eight explanations, only *defending the profession* proved to be a plausible explanation for erosion by competition in all three observations. Individual ambitions explain only the political activism of General Lebed, while other not policy-related mechanisms are not sufficient for fully explaining any instances of competition.

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<sup>179</sup> Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*.

**Table 3.2 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for competition**

<i>Causal Mechanisms</i>	Cases of Competition (N=3)			<b>Observations explained</b>
	Lebed goes in politics	Grachev forms the party lists	Rokhlin challenges Yeltsin	
<i>Defending the profession</i>	V	V	V	3/3
<i>Weak institutions</i>	X	X	X	0/3
<i>Low gov's legitimacy</i>	X	X	~	0/3
<i>Poor econ. performance</i>	X	~	~	0/3
<i>Uncertainty about the regime</i>	X	X	X	0/3
<i>History of coups</i>	X	X	X	0/3
<i>Contracting on violence</i>	X	~	X	0/3
<i>Individual ambitions</i>	V	X	X	1/3

**V = supported by evidence; X = not supported by evidence; ~ = partially supported**

These findings allow to conclude with high probability that government's policies threatening the military profession triggered erosion by competition and motivated Lebed to run for high political seats, General Grachev to encourage the military presence in the State Duma, and General Rokhlin, moving from the reluctant participation in the political race to allegedly plotting a coup.

## 4. Erosion of Civilian Control by Deference

The case of the First Chechen War offers several examples of civilian deference to the military in policymaking. On several occasions discussed below, Yeltsin delegated policymaking prerogatives vis-a-vis the use of force in Chechnya to the members of the military profession. The policy-focused theory predicts that erosion by deference occurs when the government recognizes the conflict as a political burden. This recognition can trigger one of the two mechanisms of deference. The first one is called *avoiding the responsibility*. When this mechanism is at work, the government assigns policy tasks to the military and withdraws from policymaking to limit its responsibility for risky or unpopular decisions. The second one is *boosting the approval*. In this case, the government invites the military in policymaking positions to exploit its credibility in order to increase the popular support for otherwise unpopular policy. As the result of any of the two mechanisms operating, the military dominates at least one of the critical policymaking stages: setting the objectives, estimating risks and opportunities, deciding on the means and ways of policy implementation, evaluating policy effectiveness.

To test whether government's policy considerations indeed drive erosion by deference, the below discussion also considers alternative explanations for deference. The first one — *cajoling the military* — assumes that the government is trying to resist the military's political pressure. Delegating policy prerogatives to the officers is supposed to appease the military. In this case, the government would portray the relations as cooperative to prevent the citizens from noticing the executive's dependence on the armed forces. Second explanation for deference — *lacking the expertise* — suggests that the government simply lacks civilian expertise in security policy matters and delegates policymaking tasks to the military "borrowing" their expertise.

### ***Chechnya as a Political Burden for Moscow***

Dealing with political instability in Chechnya was a challenge that the Kremlin tried to avoid for a long time. Even before the First Chechen War, when in 1991 Dzhokhar Dudayev made the first attempt to gain independence from Russia, Yeltsin passed the responsibility for dealing with this issue to the Ministry of Defense.<sup>180</sup> Neither the president nor the government was happy with the results of these talks as they delivered no political solution to the problem. Nevertheless, four years later, the situation repeated and Yeltsin appointed his minister of defense Grachev responsible for negotiating with Dudayev.

The burden that the war in Chechnya posed for the government increased as the the president's rate of approval was tied to the situation in Chechnya.<sup>181</sup> The public opinion polls from April 1996 support this statement: 33.2% of the respondents claimed that events in Chechnya constitute the most important issue in Russian politics, and 51.4 % said that it is one of the most important issues.<sup>182</sup> Thus, more than 80% of the electorate was concerned with the Chechen crisis right before the presidential elections scheduled for the summer of 1996. Yeltsin recognized that Chechnya could become a graveyard of his political career.<sup>183</sup> In a conversation with the American president Bill Clinton, Yeltsin admitted that cannot win the election without addressing the issue of Chechnya.<sup>184</sup> Nevertheless, after getting reelected on July 3, 1996, Yeltsin delegated the responsibility for ending the war in Chechnya to a retired general.

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<sup>180</sup> Khlystun, "Pavel Grachev: I Was Appointed Responsible for the War [In Russian]."

<sup>181</sup> Kulikov, *Tiazhelyie Zviesdy* [Heavy Stars]

<sup>182</sup> "Public Opinion About Chechnya and its 'Heroes'" (Fond Obshestvennoye Mneniye, 1996).

<sup>183</sup> Baturin et al., *Epokha Yeltsina*.

<sup>184</sup> "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation: President's Discussion with Yeltsin on Reform, Chechnya, START II and NATO on January 26" (The White House, 1996).

### ***Avoiding the Responsibility as a Driver of Deference***

The most likely observable indicators of this are low political support for the government or its particular policies. To avoid the potential political risks, the government delegates the responsibility for the risky policies to the members of the military profession. Additional prove of abdication of responsibility mechanism producing the erosion by deference might be civilians publicly underscoring the responsibility of the military for the given policies.

In 1994 Yeltsin consistently rejected the policy options that involved him personally making political steps to resolve the Chechen crisis (e.g., negotiating with the Chechens or seeking the support of the leaders of other North Caucasus republics).<sup>185</sup> He also avoided the direct involvement in the most politically risky episodes of the First Chechen War. For instance, in June 1995, Chechen militants took hostage about 1400 people in Budyonnovsk, Stavropol Krai, demanding the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Chechnya.<sup>186</sup> Despite the ongoing crisis, Yeltsin flew to Canada for a G7 meeting leaving the head of the government Chernomyrdin to negotiate with the Chechens without clear guidance.<sup>187</sup> The president later blamed the mismanagement of the crisis on Chernomyrdin and fired the minister of the interior and the head of the Federal Security Service (FSB).

### ***Instances of erosion by deference***

Before analyzing the instances of erosion by deference in Russia in the 1990s, it is important to set the baseline of what does and what does not constitute erosion of civilian control by Russian standards. Specifically, having a military

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<sup>185</sup> Baturin et al., *Epokha Yeltsina*.

<sup>186</sup> Elena Pokalova, *Chechnya's Terrorist Network: The Evolution of Terrorism in Russia's North Caucasus* (ABC-CLIO, 2015).

<sup>187</sup> Baturin et al., *Epokha Yeltsina*.



Minister of Defense was a long-time Soviet and later Russian tradition.<sup>188</sup> Therefore, despite an evident contradiction to the western standards of civil-military relations, the appointment of General Pavel Grachev as a Minister of Defense in 1992 does not constitute erosion by deference by itself. However, the way Yeltsin distributed the challenging policymaking tasks during the First Chechen War, increased the influence of the generals in policy in comparison to previous periods and did constitute erosion by deference.

### ***1994: Grachev Drives the Policy on Chechnya***

On November 29, 1994, despite the military's opposition to the use of force in Chechnya, Yeltsin appointed Minister of Defense Grachev responsible for the coordination of federal executive authorities in solving the Chechen crisis.<sup>189</sup> After that SC meeting, the uniformed services dominated policy formulation and implementation with regards to Chechnya for almost two months.<sup>190</sup> Formally, the civilian Minister for the Ethnic Affairs Yegorov became the envoy of the president in Chechnya.<sup>191</sup> Nevertheless, Yegorov himself delegated responsibility to the uniformed ministers allowing Grachev to keep him out of the loop on many issues.<sup>192</sup>

In this period, Yeltsin refused to talk with the leader of the Chechen separatists and authorized the military to negotiate with Dudayev. It was Grachev's final attempt to prevent the full-scale war and release the soldiers taken

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<sup>188</sup> Belkin, "Civilian Control: Russian Myths and Reality"; Golts, *Voennaia reforma i rocciiiskii militarizm* [*Military reform and militarism in Russia*], 24.

<sup>189</sup> Runov and Kulikov, *All Russia's Wars in the Caucasus*; Herspring, *The Kremlin & the High Command*; Thomas, "The Russian Armed Forces Confront Chechnya: I. Military-political Aspects 11–31 December 1994."

<sup>190</sup> Baturin et al., *Epokha Yeltsina*.

<sup>191</sup> Boris Yeltsin, "Order of the President of the Russian Federation N2136." [In Russian]" (Kremlin, 1994).

<sup>192</sup> Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*, 232; Thomas, "The Russian Armed Forces Confront Chechnya: I. Military-political Aspects 11–31 December 1994."

hostage after the failed November raid.<sup>193</sup> The captives returned home, but military negotiators were unable to reach a political agreement with the Chechens. After the beginning of the hostilities three Russia's top security officials — Grachev (Ministry of Defense), Sergei Stepashin (Federal Counterintelligence/Federal Security Service), and Viktor Yerin (Ministry of the Interior) — frequently flew between Mozdok and Moscow to participate in SC meetings and immediately implement the policy of their making on the ground. This instance of deference dramatically decreased civilian input in security policymaking and weakened civilian control.

Trying to avoid responsibility for the failure to solve the Chechen crisis in a fast and assertive manner, Yeltsin publicly blamed the military as early as February 1995.<sup>194</sup> Moreover, in his memoirs, Yeltsin claims that it was Grachev who enthusiastically persuaded him to use the military in Chechnya.<sup>195</sup> This description does not match multiple accounts of what happened in the SC meeting of November 29, 1994, in which Grachev almost was fired for not being enthusiastic enough about the use of force in Chechnya.<sup>196</sup> This behavior is consistent with avoiding responsibility explanation for deference. In addition, this evidence also casts doubt on *boosting the approval* explanation, which involves civilians and the military appearing as working on the policy together.

### ***1996: Lebed Ends the First Chechen War***

The second significant instance of civilian deference to the military in policymaking happened after Yeltsin's reelection on July 3, 1996. Then, the president withdrew from the policy process on Chechnya and allowed the Secretary of SC General (Ret.) Lebed to craft the ceasefire negotiations with the

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<sup>193</sup> Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*; Runov and Kulikov, *All Russia's Wars in the Caucasus*.

<sup>194</sup> Yeltsin, "The Address to the Federal Assembly." [In Russian].

<sup>195</sup> Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*.

<sup>196</sup> Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*; Baturin et al., *Epokha Yeltsina*.

Chechens to his liking. Yeltsin appointed Lebed his envoy in the republic, giving the retired general close to full freedom of action.<sup>197</sup> After appointing Lebed responsible for defining the ceasefire policy in summer 1996, Yeltsin had not attended any of the SC meetings.<sup>198</sup> This led to the close to full delegation of policymaking with regard to Chechnya to the member of the military profession. Yeltsin's deteriorating health at the time could explain this disengagement from policymaking.<sup>199</sup> However, it does not explain why Yeltsin gave so much power over Chechnya to Lebed and not Chernomyrdin whom president trusted enough to temporarily grant him the powers of commander-in-chief before the surgery the Yeltsin underwent later that year.<sup>200</sup> This evidence goes in line with *avoiding the responsibility over boosting the approval*.

Yeltsin's further behavior also goes in line with *avoiding the responsibility*. Yeltsin openly criticized Lebed's efforts to end the Chechen war while the negotiations were still ongoing.<sup>201</sup> This evidence is also inconsistent with using the military for boosting the popular approval for policy. When Lebed returned from Chechnya after signing the Khasaviurt agreement with the Chechens, Yeltsin refused to meet with him and left on vacation.<sup>202</sup> It seems puzzling since Yeltsin appointed Lebed his envoy in Chechnya with the most extensive powers possible, including the right to fire deputy ministers if they do not cooperate.<sup>203</sup> These two facts — Yeltsin giving Lebed close to full power over Chechnya and him criticizing Lebed's efforts in the press — conform to the causal process through

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<sup>197</sup> Boris Yeltsin, "Order of the President of the Russian Federation N1151." [In Russian]" (Kremlin, 1996).

<sup>198</sup> Baturin et al., *Epokha Yeltsina*.

<sup>199</sup> Colton, *Yeltsin : A Life*.

<sup>200</sup> Colton, *Yeltsin : A Life*.

<sup>201</sup> Natalia Konstantinova, "The Bloodshed in Chechnya Has Come to a Halt," *Nezavisimaa Gazeta*, 1996.

<sup>202</sup> Runov and Kulikov, *All Russia's Wars in the Caucasus*.

<sup>203</sup> Yeltsin, "Order of the President of the Russian Federation N1151."

which *avoiding the responsibility* mechanism drives erosion of civilian control by deference.

Overall, the above discussion demonstrates that all components of avoiding the responsibility causal process were present to explain erosion by deference in the First Chechen War. Conflict threatened the political career of the chief executive, and the leadership recognized the potential costs associated with it. Civilians avoided the involvement in risky policymaking efforts and granted extensive responsibility for policy formulation and implementation to the members of the military profession. Furthermore, civilian leadership publicly blamed the military not only for the failures but even for political moves that have not yet materialized. To increase the confidence in the policy-focused explanation of erosion by deference, it is necessary to address an alternative explanation not involving policy considerations.

### ***Alternative Explanations***

***Cajoling the Military.*** Since deference is the least studied component of erosion of civilian control, the existing literature does not offer many alternative explanations for this phenomenon. However, one possible cause of deference that does not relate to the policymaking process is *cajoling the military*.

The logic of the *cajoling the military* explanation is the following: The government understands that the military has the motivation and capability to intervene in politics. To prevent an intervention and mitigate the tensions, the government delegates key policymaking tasks to the members of the military profession. If this explanation is correct, several implications must be empirically observable. First, the positions given to the military have to grant them considerable responsibility and power over policy issues to decrease the motivation for pressuring the government. Second, the government would have to

take a cooperative stance towards the military in politics not to provoke the expected intervention.

The existing evidence does not fully conform to these expectations. To begin, when putting Grachev in charge over solving the Chechen problem, Yeltsin was well aware that his minister of defense did not want to get involved in the Chechen war in the first place.<sup>204</sup> Therefore, giving Grachev a considerable responsibility and power over planning the operation in Chechnya did not constitute a conciliatory move in which the government gives the military what they want. However, in the case of Lebed as a Secretary of the SC, Yeltsin clearly recognized the dependence of his political future on the support from the retired general.<sup>205</sup> He gave Lebed the power and responsibility to fulfill the retired general's political ambitions. Thus, the first empirical implication — give the military what they want — has a mixed record against the evidence: It does not conform to the case of Grachev and seems to the case of Lebed.

In the face of the above findings, the second observable implication of *cajoling the military* explanation becomes crucial. In both major instances of deference, Yeltsin subjected his generals to harsh criticism. He publicly blamed the failure of the initial phase of the First Chechen War on the military and criticized Lebed's achievements in the negotiation process right while the talks took place. Yeltsin also actively undermined Lebed's Khasaviurt initiative, refused to talk to him after the signing of the accords, and fired the retired general shortly afterward. Hence, — *cajoling the military* — explanation does not meet the necessary condition of the government treating the military in politics in a cooperative way in order to reduce pressure and avoid the military's intervention in politics. These findings allow to eliminate the first alternative explanation for erosion by deference and increase the probability that *avoiding the responsibility*

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<sup>204</sup> Baranets, *Lost Army: Notes of the General Staff Colonel*; Baturin et al., *Epokha Yeltsina*.

<sup>205</sup> "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation: Telephone Conversation With Russian Yeltsin on June 18, 1996."

for troubling policies is indeed the mechanism that produced the weakening of civilian control.

***The Lack of Expertise.*** Another potential explanation for erosion of civilian control by deference is the lack of relevant civilian expertise: the government decides to rely on the military in policymaking because it does not have adequate sources of civilian expertise on the subject matter. However, this explanation does not meet the necessary condition — the lack of civilian expertise on the issues of ethnic conflict. Yeltsin had civilian advisers who offered him solutions to the Chechen problem involving political and military means. Nevertheless, the president voluntarily limited their input in policymaking.

For instance, when in late November of 1994 a covert Russian raid in Chechnya failed to curb the separatist forces of Dudayev, Yeltsin's Chief of Administration Sergei Filatov (an academic) proposed to proclaim the state of emergency in Chechnya.<sup>206</sup> Yeltsin refused to sign the order prepared by Filatov and suspended him from further policymaking on the Chechen issue.<sup>207</sup> The president's unwillingness to proclaim the state of emergency also supports *avoiding the responsibility* explanation for deference: Signing the order would make Yeltsin responsible for the use of force in Chechnya. Instead, the president preferred to use vague language ordering the government to "use all means at state's disposal to provide security, legality, rights and freedoms, defense of the social order, preventing crime, and disarming all illegal formations" in Chechnya.<sup>208</sup> The order does not involve any language suggesting that president Yeltsin ordered to use military force in Chechnya.

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<sup>206</sup> Baturin et al., *Epokha Yeltsina*.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid, 598.

<sup>208</sup> Boris Yeltsin, Order of the President of the Russian Federation N2166: On Measures to Suppress the Activities of Illegal Armed Groups in the Chechen Republic and in the Zone of the Ossetian-Ingush Conflict." [In Russian] (Moscow: Kremlin, 1994).

A similar situation occurred when another civilian policymaker, Yeltsin's Assistant on National Security, Yuri Baturin (a political scientist, lawyer), advised the president to negotiate with the heads of the Muslim republics and convince them not to support the Chechens in a case of war. Baturin also suggested that Yeltsin has to request international support from Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Georgia to prevent the conflict spill-over. After listening to this report, Yeltsin dismissed Baturin from the upcoming SC meetings and had not met with him in person for more than a month.<sup>209</sup> Following Baturin's advice would have exposed Yeltsin's political weaknesses on national and international levels. Instead, the president put the military in charge of solving the Chechen problem and eliminated civilian policymakers who did not support this course of action. Thus, Yeltsin did have civilian experts to advise him on Chechnya, but decided to delegate the responsibility to the military instead.

Yeltsin also alienated most of the civilian experts specializing in ethnic conflict and domestic politics who insisted on comprehensive political solutions for Chechnya. Before the escalation in November 1994, the president instituted a special advisory body — the Expert-Analytical Council — to consult him in particular on ethnic conflicts in the Russian Federation.<sup>210</sup> In my interview with one of the members of the Council, the former Yeltsin's adviser underscored that the president highly valued the input of civilian experts on Chechnya and therefore the decision to launch a military operation on December 10, 1994 came to them as a devastating surprise. In December 1994, the members of the Expert-Analytical Council voiced their concern about the over-reliance of the president on the military while leaving the political side unaddressed.<sup>211</sup> The above evidence allows excluding the option that the president delegated the

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<sup>209</sup> Baturin et al., *Epokha Yeltsina*, 599, 609.

<sup>210</sup> Boris Yeltsin, “‘Decree of the President of the Russian Federation N438’ [In Russian],” (Moscow: Kremlin, 1994).

<sup>211</sup> Baturin et al., *Epokha Yeltsina*.

responsibility to the military due to the lack of civilian expertise and increase our confidence in the policy-focused explanation of *avoiding responsibility*.

Overall, the alternative explanations for deference do not align with the evidence, suggesting that one of the policy-focused mechanisms — *avoiding responsibility* — was the most likely cause of Yeltsin’s deference to the military. Table 3.3 summarizes the performance of different explanations for deference, showing that another policy-focused explanation — *boosting approval* — as well as not policy-related alternatives did not explain erosion by deference during Russia’s first war in Chechnya.

**Table 3.3 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for deference**

<i>Causal Mechanisms</i>	Cases of Deference (N=2)		<b>Observations explained</b>
	Grachev drives policy on Chechnya	Lebed ends the First Chechen war	
<i>Avoiding responsibility</i>	V	V	2/2
<i>Boosting approval</i>	X	X	0/2
<i>Cajoling the military</i>	X	X	0/2
<i>Lacking the expertise</i>	X	X	0/2

V = supported by evidence; X = not supported by evidence; ~ = partially supported

## 5. Conclusion

To conclude, the evidence found in the case of Russia’s First Chechen War (1994-1996) and its immediate aftermath (1997-1999) suggests that when government’s policies threaten the military profession (responsibility, expertise,



corporateness), it results in erosion of civilian control by competition and insubordination. In explaining civilian deference to the military, the evidence showed that *avoiding the responsibility* by the government could plausibly explain the government's over-reliance on the members of the military profession in policymaking. Eliminating the alternative explanations for the three forms of erosion testify in favor of not only their plausibility but also increase the probability that the policy-related mechanisms of erosion led to the weakening of civilian control of the military (See table 3.4 for summary).

Several contextual conditions had likely enabled (but not independently caused) erosion by competition. In particular, weak institutions likely made the military's involvement in politics possible. Economic underperformance likely contributed to the popular and military's support for the generals who challenged the government. Finally, questionable government's legitimacy may have provided additional opportunities for the military's interference in politics. Examining next cases in which these factors are less salient or absent would allow separating the effects of the policy-relevant factors from these contextual conditions. Meanwhile, the study of Russia in the First Chechen War provided insights about the interaction of the background factors with government's policies related to the use of force.

**Table 3.4 Russia: Summary table**

<b>Form of erosion</b>	<b>Causal Mechanisms</b>	<b>Observations explained</b>
<b>Erosion by insubordination (N=3)</b>	<i>Defending the profession</i>	<b>3/3</b>
	<i>Weak oversight</i>	0/3
	<i>Fear for one's life</i>	0/3
<b>Erosion by competition (N=3)</b>	<i>Defending the profession</i>	<b>3/3</b>
	<i>Weak institutions</i>	0/3
	<i>Low gov's legitimacy</i>	0/3
	<i>Poor econ. performance</i>	0/3
	<i>Uncertainty about the regime</i>	0/3
	<i>History of coups</i>	0/3
	<i>Contracting on violence</i>	0/3
	<i>Individual ambitions</i>	1/3
<b>Erosion by deference (N = 2)</b>	<i>Avoiding responsibility</i>	<b>2/2</b>
	<i>Boosting approval</i>	<b>0/2</b>
	<i>Cajoling the military</i>	0/2
	<i>Lacking the expertise</i>	0/2

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **UKRAINE’S WAR IN DONBAS (2014-2019):**

### **WHEN THE WAR MAKES THE MILITARY**

#### **Introduction**

The case of Ukraine’s war against the Russian-backed separatists in Donbas (2014-present) provides a unique opportunity to test the predictions of the policy-focused theory not observable in the case of Russia’s first war in Chechnya.

First, similarly to the case of Russia, the government of Ukraine initially perceived the threat as a separatist rebellion. Thus, the government’s policy about the use of the military in Eastern Ukraine required the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) to act outside the limits of the military profession, which in Ukraine before 2014 was restricted to countering external aggressions. However, the subsequent appearance of the regular Russian troops and heavy artillery in Donbas in August 2014, changed the conflict's nature to one resembling a conventional war. The change in threat perception from sub-conventional to conventional helped close the gap between the government’s policy and the military profession. This unique intra-case variation in threat perception allows us to observe how the urge to *defend the profession* — one of the core causal mechanisms leading to erosion by insubordination and competition — can be activated and deactivated depending on whether governmental policies challenge or match the military’s profession. The findings discussed below show that the Ukrainian Armed Forces engaged in insubordination only at the beginning of the conflict when the government policies went against their profession. Therefore the case of Ukraine and the use of force in Donbas shows that the change in the military’s perception of the threat as being within or outside of their professional boundaries indeed affects the patterns of erosion of civilian control, as predicted by the policy-focused theory.

Second, unlike the First Chechen war for the Kremlin, the conflict in Donbas was not a political burden to the government in Kyiv. Quite the opposite, both presidents — Poroshenko and Zelensky — gained political points by portraying themselves as being on top of managing the conflict. Therefore, they had no incentives to distance themselves from policymaking, delegate it to the military, and weaken civilian control through deference, in contrast to Yeltsin at the beginning and the end of the First Chechen war in Russia.

Third, the case of Ukraine in the Donbas war allows to test how policy-focused theory of erosion applies to actors other than the military. The Ukrainian Armed Forces' initial insubordination to the government left Kyiv no choice but to legalize the use of force by the volunteer battalions. This policy weakened the government's control over the use of force in Ukraine. Indeed, most of the instances of erosion of civilian control by insubordination and competition involved the battalion fighters. As below analysis shows, the policy-focused theory is instrumental in explaining insubordination and competition by the volunteer battalions. In particular, the evidence indicates that the mechanism of *defending the profession* could operate similarly for professional militaries and paramilitary organizations. I devote several sections to understanding how the battalions defined their responsibility, expertise, and corporateness — the key pillars of profession — and how this definition affected erosion of civilian control by the volunteer fighters.

Finally, the case of Ukraine shows that government's policies can not only undermine democratic civilian control but also consolidate it even in a weak conflict-affected democracy. The evidence suggests that Kyiv's decision to use the military in Eastern Ukraine created favorable conditions for the erosion of democratic civilian control. The subsequent policy of relying on the volunteer battalions further diluted civilian control over the use of force. Nevertheless, Kyiv's commitment to democratic norms and the extensive support from the United States and the European Union helped Ukrainian policymakers partially

reverse the damaging effect of their initial decisions, professionalize the military, integrate most of the battalion fighters into governmental forces and reinstate control over the volunteers.

This chapter relies on numerous interviews with Ukrainian experts, policymakers, parliament members, veterans, volunteers, and journalists, the careful examination of secondary sources and government documents. Specifically, during my fieldwork in Kyiv in winter 2019-2020, I interviewed former National Security Advisor to President Volodymyr Zelensky, the Advisor to the Chief of the General Staff, current parliament members, veterans of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, and commanders of the volunteer battalions. These data allowed me to test the hypotheses of the policy-focused theory against the alternatives and conclude that understanding the boundaries of the military profession is key for the government for formulating policies about the use of force and maintaining civilian control.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, to establish the analytical baseline, I describe the pre-conflict civil-military relations in Ukraine and the AFU's understanding of the military profession from 1991 to 2014. Then I present the analysis of erosion by insubordination by the AFU. Section three discusses why the Ukrainian military did not engage in erosion of civilian control by competition. Section four applies the policy-focused theory to the the volunteer battalions and the acts insubordination and competition they initiated, leading to further erosion of civilian control. Finally, section five explains why the war in Donbas did not result in erosion of civilian control by government's deference to the military. I conclude by discussing the implications of my findings for theory and policy.

# 1. Pre-conflict Civil-Military Relations in Ukraine

As Ukraine gained its independence from the USSR in 1991, creating Ukrainian Armed Forces became a priority for the government in Kyiv. Despite the widespread calls and sporadic efforts to de-Sovietize the Ukrainian military,<sup>212</sup> Soviet heritage, persisted in the AFU.<sup>213</sup> The Soviet legacies and failed attempts to reform the military according to the needs of independent Ukraine determined the nature of civil-military relations and the understanding of military professionalism before the beginning of the war in 2014.

## *Civil-military Relations and Civilian Control Before 2014*

Like its Soviet predecessor, the AFU remained apolitical subscribing to the Clausewitzian notion that armed forces were merely a tool of policy and not its masters.<sup>214</sup> The two main weaknesses of Ukrainian civil-military relations, however, also have their roots in the Soviet past.

First, independent Ukraine kept appointing members of the military profession as ministers of defense. Doing so, distanced Ukrainian civil-military relations from the standards of western democracies, in particular OSCE and NATO countries. Second, the relations between the General Staff of the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defense (MoD) inherited the Soviet tradition of competition and distrust. The main area of contention was the influence over military and strategic policymaking.<sup>215</sup> The General Staff dominated policy

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<sup>212</sup> Taras Kuzio, "Civil-Military Relations in Ukraine, 1989-1991," *Armed Forces & Society* 22, no. 1 (October 1995): 25–48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X9502200102>.

<sup>213</sup> Leonid I. Polyakov, "Defense Institution Building in Ukraine," *Connections* 7, no. 2 (2008): 15–20, 15.

<sup>214</sup> James Sherr, "Civil-Democratic Control of Ukraine's Armed Forces: To What End? By What Means?," *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 17, no. 1 (2001): 65–77, 67.

<sup>215</sup> Natalie Mychajlyszyn, "Civil-Military Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine: Implications for Domestic and Regional Stability," *Armed Forces & Society* 28, no. 3 (2002): 455–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X0202800306>.

formulation leaving the administrative issues to the MoD.<sup>216</sup> Unsurprisingly, the uniformed personnel of the General Staff drafted most of the foundational military policies, including the laws “*On the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine*,” “*On Defense of Ukraine*,” and “*On the Armed Forces of Ukraine*.”<sup>217</sup>

The dominance of the General Staff over the MoD in policymaking was not a sign of the military’s prevalence over civilians because the military had also dominated the MoD with only a limited number of civilian employees in low-level positions.<sup>218</sup> Due to the lack of relevant civilian expertise, the military also had the upper hand in the military-industrial complex.<sup>219</sup> One of the leading Ukrainian experts described this situation as “civilian control by military means.”<sup>220</sup> The civil-military balance in the MoD began to shift in civilians’ favor only after Ukraine started to consider NATO accession in 2003.<sup>221</sup>

Nevertheless, Ukraine’s democratic aspirations helped create the legal and doctrinal bases for introducing civilian control of the armed forces, at least on paper. In 1997 the Ukrainian Parliament—Verkhovna Rada—developed and approved the *Concept of National Security of Ukraine* that emphasized the necessity of establishing democratic civilian control over the armed forces.<sup>222</sup> In 2003, Verkhovna Rada passed the *Law of Ukraine “On Democratic Civilian*

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Polyakov, “Defense Institution Building in Ukraine,” 16

<sup>218</sup> Mychajlyszyn, “Civil-Military Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine”; Leonid Polyakov, “An Analytical Overview of Democratic Oversight and Governance of the Defence and Security Sector in Ukraine” (Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2005).

<sup>219</sup> Stacy B. Closson, “Civil-Military Relations in a Sovereign Ukraine: Contributing or Detracting from the Security of a New Nation?,” in *Ukrainian Foreign and Security Policy: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Jennifer DP Moroney, Taras Kuzio, and Mikhail A. Molchanov (Praeger, 2002), 113–28, 118.

<sup>220</sup> Anatoliy S. Grytsenko, *Civil-Military Relations in Ukraine: System Emerging from Chaos* (Groningen: Centre for European Security Studies, 1997), 76., cited from Polyakov, “Defense Institution Building in Ukraine,” 15.

<sup>221</sup> Polyakov, “Defense Institution Building in Ukraine,” 16

<sup>222</sup> Polyakov, “An Analytical Overview of Democratic Oversight and Governance of the Defence and Security Sector in Ukraine,” 55

*Control of State Military Organization and Law Enforcement Bodies,*” extending the scope of control over security services. Despite this visible progress in developing the legal framework for democratic civil-military relations, experts point to the narrow understanding of civilian control in Ukraine limited to oversight and not matching the broader western interpretation as the combination of oversight, direction, management, administration, and supervision.<sup>223</sup>

Thus, pre-2014 legislative efforts constitute only partial success in democratizing Ukrainian civil-military relations. By the beginning of the war in Donbas in 2014, the Parliament’s capacity to exercise effective oversight of the armed forces remained limited. At the same time, the President of Ukraine and Presidential Administration had close to full power over the military.<sup>224</sup> In addition, almost since the inception, the Ukrainian military was in a constant state of reforms leaving both civilian authorities and the military in flux about the future of the AFU.

Overall, considering the three dimensions of erosion of civilian control, the military’s competition in politics was low, civilian deference to the military in policymaking was baked into the system, and no major acts of insubordination had occurred.

### ***The State of the AFU and the Military Profession Before 2014***

The attempts to reform the AFU in accordance to the post-Cold war geopolitical reality left an imprint on pre-2014 civilian control and military professionalism in Ukraine.

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<sup>223</sup> James Sherr, “Ukraine: Reform in the Context of Flawed Democracy and Geopolitical Anxiety,” *European Security* 14, no. 1 (2005): 157–73, 160

<sup>224</sup> Closson, “Civil-Military Relations in a Sovereign Ukraine,” 118; Polyakov, “An Analytical Overview of Democratic Oversight and Governance of the Defence and Security Sector in Ukraine,” 3; Rosaria Puglisi, “Institutional Failure and Civic Activism: The Potential for Democratic Control in Post-Maidan Ukraine,” in *Reforming Civil-Military Relations in New Democracies*, ed. Aurel Croissant and David Kuehn, 2017, 45; Author’s interview with the former commander of the Air Assault Forces of Ukraine, now parliament member, Lieutenant General Mykhaylo Zabrodskyi, Kyiv, December 2019.



First, inconsistent reforms prevented the military's professionalization. In the early 1990s, Ukraine neither needed nor could sustain the second largest military in Europe it inherited from the USSR, numbering 750,000 troops in 1992.<sup>225</sup> Therefore, the main direction of the reforms was to reduce the number of troops and cut military spending. However, due to the lack of funds, the ineffectiveness of institutions, the absence of immediate threats, and no clear strategic vision, the reforms were incremental and had an overall destructive effect on the AFU.<sup>226</sup> While the government managed to cut the number of troops and reduce spending, the AFU had never reformed into a modern military force.<sup>227</sup> Therefore, at the time of the annexation of Crimea in March 2014, the Ukrainian military was ill-equipped, understaffed, undertrained, and unmotivated with only about 2000 deployable troops.<sup>228</sup>

Moreover, the military's professional mission remained vague especially when it came to defending Ukraine from the Russian aggression. The *Concept of Defense and Development of the Ukrainian Armed Forces* adopted in October 1991, proclaimed the neutral and non-aligned status of Ukraine.<sup>229</sup> This development required restructuring the AFU by simultaneously reducing its size

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<sup>225</sup> Kuzio, "Civil-Military Relations in Ukraine, 1989-1991," 25; Julie Anderson and Joseph L. Albini, "Ukraine's SBU and the New Oligarchy," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 12, no. 3 (September 1999): 282-324, 288-289; Taras Kuzio, "The Non-military Security Forces of Ukraine," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 13, no. 4 (2000): 29-56, 30; Yevhen Akmaldinov, "Development of Civil-Military Relations in Independent Ukraine" (NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL MONTEREY CA DEPT OF NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS, 2003), 8-9; Puglisi, "Institutional Failure and Civic Activism: The Potential for Democratic Control in Post-Maidan Ukraine," 48.

<sup>226</sup> Closson, "Civil-Military Relations in a Sovereign Ukraine," 114, 121; Tetyana Malyarenko and David J. Galbreath, "Paramilitary Motivation in Ukraine: Beyond Integration and Abolition," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 16, no. 1 (2016): 113-38, 119; Deborah Sanders, "'The War We Want; The War That We Get': Ukraine's Military Reform and the Conflict in the East," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 30, no. 1 (2017): 30-49.

<sup>227</sup> Sanders, "'The War We Want; The War That We Get.'"; Author's interview with Gen. M. Zabrotskyi.

<sup>228</sup> Kateryna Zarembo, "Substituting for the State: The Role of Volunteers in Defense Reform in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine," *Kyiv-Mohyla Law and Politics Journal* 0, no. 3 (December 2017): 47-70, 47.

<sup>229</sup> Colby Howard and Ruslan Pukhov, *Brothers Armed: Military Aspects of the Crisis in Ukraine*, Second edition. (Minneapolis: East View Press, 2015), 25.

and preparing the troops to repel aggression from every direction, including Russia.<sup>230</sup> However, the second component of these efforts had never materialized. In early 2014 the Ukrainian military remained stationed according to the Cold War deployment plans in the western part of the country, leaving its eastern regions open to the Russian invasion.<sup>231</sup>

In terms of expertise, the Soviet perception of the military as a tool for a great interstate war persisted in the AFU despite of the geopolitical changes.<sup>232</sup> The understanding of AFU's mission as external and the estimation of the likelihood of foreign aggression as very low led to the overall deterioration of military expertise in managing violence.<sup>233</sup> In particular, by 2012, the number of combat training programs in AFU dropped dramatically. The nature of contingencies the AFU were preparing for, fell within a range of peacekeeping,<sup>234</sup> support to NATO/US troops in international missions<sup>235</sup> and improbable scenarios like stability operations in Moldova.<sup>236</sup> Interestingly, participation in stability operations and support missions could have prepared the AFU to manage the violence in asymmetric intrastate missions. However, it was not the case.<sup>237</sup> Only a limited number of personnel participated in either type of operations or theoretical contingency planning. Most of the AFU staff performed bureaucratic functions.

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<sup>230</sup> Mychajlyszyn, "Civil-Military Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine," 467

<sup>231</sup> Howard and Pukhov, *Brothers Armed*, 63; Ilmari Kähkö, "A Nation-in-the-Making, in Arms: Control of Force, Strategy and the Ukrainian Volunteer Battalions," *Defence Studies* 18, no. 2 (April 2018): 147–66, 152.

<sup>232</sup> Sherr, "Civil-Democratic Control of Ukraine's Armed Forces," 69.

<sup>233</sup> Malyarenko and Galbreath, "Paramilitary Motivation in Ukraine: Beyond Integration and Abolition," 119.

<sup>234</sup> Puglisi, "Institutional Failure and Civic Activism: The Potential for Democratic Control in Post-Maidan Ukraine," 48.

<sup>235</sup> Sherr, "Civil-Democratic Control of Ukraine's Armed Forces," 75; Oleksandr Gaivoronskyi et al., trans., *2013 White Book* (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2014), 5.

<sup>236</sup> Author's interview with General Mykhaylo Zabrodskyi.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

In spring 2014, the AFU resembled an extensive bureaucracy more than a capable military. One of the experts even suggested that the core of the AFU's expertise was managing not violence but paperwork, which earned the Ukrainian military a pejorative nickname—the UPA—Ukrainian Paper Army.<sup>238</sup> Ukraine's pre-war military spending illustrates this point: from 2010 to 2013, the annual expenditure for training and development had never reached a 20% mark leaving more than 80% of funds spent on maintaining the ineffective armed forces.<sup>239</sup> Most strikingly, in 2013, 1.52 billion dollars were spent on salaries and social benefits for the personnel, while only 0.1 and 0.22 billion dollars were allocated on training, and supply and modernization, respectively.<sup>240</sup>

Unsurprisingly, at the beginning of the war in Donbas, the mission and expertise of the AFU did not include either defending Ukraine from the east or tackling internal threats in coordination with internal security services. Managing internal threats has never been a part of the Ukrainian military's profession. It traditionally belonged to the turf on the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA) and the Security Service of Ukraine (Ukr.: SBU). The latter agencies received more attention and funding from the government than the MoD and AFU.<sup>241</sup> The MoIA had at its disposal about 30,000 internal troops (disbanded in March 2014 and transformed into the National Guard) and 4000 of the riot police ("Berkut").<sup>242</sup> Being in constant competition for scarce resources, the Ukrainian military and

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<sup>238</sup> Author's interview with AFU veteran and former reform activist Maksym Kolesnikov, Kyiv, December 2019; "Zbroini Syly Ukrainy: Sproba Vidpovisty Na Bagato 'Chomu?' [Armed Forces of Ukraine: An Attempt to Answer to Many 'Why's?']," *Tyzhden.UA*, accessed July 20, 2022, <https://tyzhden.ua/Society/112060>.

<sup>239</sup> *White Book 2013*, 6.

<sup>240</sup> Malyarenko and Galbreath, "Paramilitary Motivation in Ukraine: Beyond Integration and Abolition," 119.

<sup>241</sup> Rosaria Puglisi, "General Zhukov and the Cyborgs: A Clash of Civilisation within the Ukrainian Armed Forces," *Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) Working Papers* 15, no. 17 (May 2015), 2, 6.

<sup>242</sup> Malyarenko and Galbreath, "Paramilitary Motivation in Ukraine: Beyond Integration and Abolition," 119.

other security services did not undergo training that included their cooperation and coordination for jointly defending Ukraine.

In sum, the AFU were professional in a very superficial sense of staying out of politics. On a deeper substantive level, the military's mission and expertise were defined by the outdated Soviet legacies, incomplete reforms, and the prevalence of bureaucracy over war fighting. Thus, while the AFU did not pose any threat to the government in Kyiv, its professional definition also did not include defending the state from separatist challengers in Donbas in a joint operation with other security services. No surprise, that the AFU responded to the initial government's decision to deploy the military in Donbas with multiple acts of insubordination.

## 2. Erosion of Civilian Control by Insubordination

### *The AFU Denies the Government's Exercise of Power*

The policy-focused theory of erosion of civilian explains the military's insubordination through the causal mechanism of *defending the profession*. The logic of this mechanism implies that the armed forces recognize the government's policy about the use of force as contradicting the military's mission, expertise, or corporateness. The military then denies the government an opportunity to exercise its power over the armed forces by performing the acts of insubordination—shirking, foot-dragging, and refusal to take or implement orders—to preserve the status quo and maintain the professional boundaries. The evidence from the case of Ukraine's war in Donbas shows that the reasons for the AFU's insubordination in the early stages of the conflict are consistent with the mechanism of *defending the profession*. The military did see the conflict in Donbas as being beyond their professional responsibility and expertise. To defend the professional boundaries, it denied the government an opportunity to exercise its power over the armed forces. Shirking, foot-dragging, desertion, and failure to perform the assigned tasks characterize the behavior of the AFU in the spring and summer of 2014.

At the beginning of the war in Donbas in the spring of 2014, the government saw the conflict as intra-state separatist violence by non-state actors with some support of Russian citizens and paramilitaries. The name of the security operation launched by the interim government in Kyiv—the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO)—and the reluctance to introduce martial law in the problematic territories contributed to the military's understanding of this conflict as being out of their turf. In the words of the former advisor to the minister of the interior, Anton Gerashenko, commenting on the early stage of the war: "There [in the military] was constant sabotage. The commanders were saying: there is no

state of martial law, therefore by the law the military has no right to do anything.”<sup>243</sup>

Moreover, in the first announcement of the Anti-Terrorist Operation, President ad-Interim Turchynov underscored that “separatism and the use of weapons against *your own* [...] state is a serious *crime*”<sup>244</sup> (emphases added). Dealing with crimes committed by domestic actors is the job of the MoIA and the SBU and not the AFU. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that at the beginning of the conflict, the Ukrainian government was having trouble mobilizing the military. President Poroshenko later admitted that nearly 30 percent of the AFU conscripts abandoned their positions at the beginning of the war. He explained such massive desertion with the lack of training and equipment to perform the expected tasks.<sup>245</sup> This explanation points at the gap between the government’s policy about the use of force and the military’s expertise.

At the initial phase of the conflict, the military engaged in insubordination by refusing to perform the tasks that were beyond their expertise and responsibility — fighting in urban environment and dealing with the opposition of local civilians. For instance, on April 17, 2014, In Kramatorsk, Donetsk oblast, the 25th Airborne Brigade of the AFU surrendered under the pressure of local civilians and unidentified armed individuals. Consequently, the separatists took over six out of 21 units of military equipment and moved them to Sloviansk, Donetsk oblast.<sup>246</sup> The soldiers explained their refusal to resist by stating that no one trained them to deal with the populations or to fight within the cities.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Interview with Advisor of the Minister of the Interior Anton Gherashenko in Kateryna Hladka, Dmytro Hromakov, and Veronika Myronova, *Dobrobaty [In Ukrainian]* (Folio, 2017), 146.

<sup>244</sup> Turchynov Announced Anti-Terrorist Measures Against Separatists with Weapons (Fakty ICTV, April 7, 2014), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=myjnfelp\\_V0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=myjnfelp_V0).

<sup>245</sup> “Poroshenko presented the disturbing statistics of desertion from the Ukrainian Army in the first wave of mobilization,” *TSN*, March 21, 2015, <https://tsn.ua/politika/poroshenko-nazvav-strashnu-statistiku-dezertiriv-ukrayinskoyi-armiyi-pid-chas-pershoyi-hvili-mobilizaciyi-416813.html>.

<sup>246</sup> Hladka et al., *Dobrobaty*, 250.

<sup>247</sup> Hladka et al., *Dobrobaty*.

Similarly, In Amvrosiivka, Donetsk oblast, when the militants blocked the way of the AFU troops and prevented the border closure, the military refused to use force against non-uniformed opponents and failed to secure the Ukrainian border from Russian incursions.<sup>248</sup> During the battles for Sloviansk, Donetsk oblast, in April 2014, several generals also refused to command troops stating that the military will not fight against the people.<sup>249</sup> These examples show that the government's decision to use the military in ATO stretched the limits of the military's responsibility and expertise and, therefore, led to erosion of civilian control by insubordination.

The preference for staying within the limits of the military profession also explains why the AFU provided weapons to the volunteer battalions despite the direct order from Kyiv not to do so.<sup>250</sup> As the AFU proved to be slow-moving and reluctant to use force, the government legalized the use of volunteer militias. These volunteer formations involved highly motivated fighters, but often lacked appropriate military equipment. At the same time, the regular AFU lacked motivated fighters but had the necessary munition. Defying the direct government's order, the military secretly armed the battalions by reporting the equipment as being lost in combat.<sup>251</sup> Providing the weapons to the battalions spared the AFU the necessity to perform the tasks lying beyond their responsibility and expertise. Specifically, because pre-2014, the external aggression was considered unlikely and internal threats were the responsibility of the MoIA and SBU, most AFU personnel never expected to fight a war in the

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<sup>248</sup> Interview with AFU General Ruslan Khomchak in Hladka et al., *Dobrobaty*, 182-183.

<sup>249</sup> Interview with the National Guard commander Yuriy Allero in Hladka et al., *Dobrobaty*, 291.

<sup>250</sup> Rosaria Puglisi, "Heroes Or Villains?: Volunteer Battalions in Post-Maidan Ukraine," *Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) Working Papers* 15, no. 08 (March 2015): 2–20, 16.

<sup>251</sup> Author's interview with Maksym Kolesnikov; Author's interview with the anonymous former instructor of the battalions, Kyiv, December 2019.

Ukrainian territory.<sup>252</sup> Since, fighting against militias in Donbas did not match the military's expectations about the job they applied for, the AFU used insubordination to avoid these unusual tasks.<sup>253</sup>

Looking at the boundaries of the military profession also helps understand the acts of desertion by the AFU in the later stages of the conflict. By the summer of 2014, the AFU managed to replace the old officers and soldiers with new conscripts trained to repel separatist aggression in urban environment. Paradoxically, this professional adaptation led to at least two acts of desertion. In July 2014, the 51-st Guards Mechanized Brigade crossed the Russian border and surrendered to the enemy. Later, in August 2014, about 1200 AFU troops allegedly abandoned the positions during Ilovaisk encirclement.<sup>254</sup> In both instances, the troops that were newly trained to counter separatist militias were faced by Russia's conventional troops.<sup>255</sup> Their training and equipment were not sufficient to repel a surprise attack of the Russian Federation's regular troops and heavy artillery.<sup>256</sup> Faced with the task that went beyond their newly acquired expertise — fighting separatist forces — the troops abandoned the positions.

The above examples show that in spring 2014, the military recognized the separatist conflict in Donbas as being beyond their profession. The generals and soldiers explicitly motivated their refusal to take and implement the orders by the contradiction between the assigned tasks and their responsibility and expertise.

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<sup>252</sup> Montana Hunter, "Crowdsourced War: The Political and Military Implications of Ukraine's Volunteer Battalions 2014-2015," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 18, no. 3 (2018), 98; Author's interview with General Mykhaylo Zabrotskyi; Author's interview with Maksym Kolesnikov.

<sup>253</sup> Hladka et al., *Dobrobaty*, 3-4, 48.

<sup>254</sup> "The Ministry of Defense Published a Report on the Chronology of the Formation of the Ilovaisk Encirclement [In Ukrainian]," *Hromadske Radio*, October 19, 2015, <https://hromadske.radio/news/2015/10/19/minoborony-opublikovalo-zvit-z-hronologiyeyu-utvorenniya-ilovayskogo-kotla>.

<sup>255</sup> "The Interim Report of the Temporary Investigative Group on the Tragic Events near Ilovaisk. Full Text [In Ukrainian]," *Ukrainska Pravda*, 20 2014, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2014/10/20/7041381/>.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.



However, when in summer 2014 the old soldiers and officers were replaced with new conscripts who joined the military to fight against the separatist forces, they were attacked by the Russian Federation's regular forces. This type of missions contradicted their expertise and led to further erosion of civilian control by insubordination (See Table 4.1 for comparison).

**Table 4.1 Comparative table: military profession, government's policies, and erosion by insubordination**

Period	AFU's understanding of the profession	Government's policy	Type of insubordination
<b>March-May 2014</b>	<u>Responsibility</u> : repelling external aggression <u>Expertise</u> : managing the bureaucracy <u>Corporateness</u> : competition with other security services	Using the AFU to suppress separatist violence together with other security forces.	Desertion, abandoning the positions, refusal to move troops, failure to implement orders, provision of weapons to the battalions
<b>June-August 2014</b>	<u>Responsibility</u> : defending the territorial integrity of Ukraine <u>Expertise</u> : responding to separatist violence <u>Corporateness</u> : coordination with other security services	Using the AFU to suppress separatist violence and repel Russian aggression	Abandoning the positions, provision of weapons to the battalions.

In sum, in the early phase of the conflict, government's policy about the use of force in eastern Ukraine went against both the responsibility and the expertise of the AFU. In contrast, in summer 2014 the central contradiction concerned the expertise in managing the type of violence that changed from irregular and sporadic separatist attacks to conventional warfare with the participation of the regular troops of the Russian Federation. Thus, the policy-focused theory provides a plausible explanation for the military's insubordination at the beginning of the war through the causal mechanism of *defending the profession*. To increase the confidence in this mechanism producing the outcome, it is necessary to consider alternative explanations to insubordination.

### *Alternative explanations for the AFU insubordination*

The first alternative explanation for insubordination available in the literature is the *weak oversight* of the armed forces. The underlying logic of this explanation is that when the preferences of civilians and the military diverge, the military will shirk if the likelihood of being detected and punished is low.<sup>257</sup>

The available evidence does not support this explanation. First, it is doubtful that the likelihood of being detected and punished was low. Specifically, the White Book of the Ministry of Defense reports that thousands of criminal proceedings were launched to punish different acts of insubordination. For example, in 2014, 2,287 soldiers were investigated for unauthorized abandonment of a military unit; 4,880 soldiers for desertion; and 1,323 soldiers for evasion of military service by self-mutilation or other means.<sup>258</sup> In addition, many of the acts of insubordination were public, showing that those who committed them did not intend to go undetected. In particular, the generals who refused to mobilize the troops at the beginning of the war made explicit statements about their intentions and motivations. Moreover, several units that failed to perform the orders were disbanded as early as April 17, 2014, proving that insubordination will not be left unpunished. Of course, the lack oversight might have enabled the AFU to provide weapons to the battalions against the government's policies. However, *weak oversight* does not explain other instances of erosion by insubordination during the war in Donbas.

The second alternative explanation for insubordination is the *fear for one's life*. When participation in combat threatens soldiers' lives, they choose to desert or defect to survive. From the first sight, this explanation looks plausible for desertions that happened in the battle of Ilovaisk. However, this explanation does not apply to the earlier instances of insubordination when the soldiers moving in

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<sup>257</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*.

<sup>258</sup> 2014 *White Book* (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2015).

armored vehicles refused to face the opposition of local civilians in Sloviansk, Kramatorsk, and Amvrosiivka. Also, it does not explain the refusal of the generals to move the troops in conflict since no risk of life for the staff generals was involved. Hence, alternative explanations look plausible only in some instances of erosion by insubordination. At the same time, the policy-focused explanation based on the mechanism of *defending the profession* demonstrates better explanatory power (See Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for insubordination**

<i><b>Causal Mechanisms</b></i>	<b>Cases of Insubordination by the AFU (N=4)</b>				<b>Observations explained</b>
	Failure to implement orders	Desertion	Provision of weapons to the battalions	Abandoning the positions in Illovaisk	
<i>Defending the profession</i>	V	V	V	V	4/4
<i>Weak oversight</i>	X	X	V	X	1/4
<i>Fear for one's life</i>	X	V	X	V	2/4

**V = supported by evidence; X = not supported by evidence; ~ = partially supported**

### 3. Erosion of Civilian Control by Competition

#### *Why did the AFU not Compete for Power?*

Interestingly, the evidence does not provide any salient instances of the military competing with the government for political influence since the beginning of the war in Donbas. Even the participation of Lieutenant General Mykhaylo Zabrotskyi in the parliamentary elections in 2019 does not qualify as competition since he had not used this political position to challenge the government's policies. Moreover, President Poroshenko's consistent attempts to use the image of the military in his presidential campaign in 2019 also did not result in the emergence of any uniformed challengers to the Ukrainian government.<sup>259</sup>

The policy-focused explanation for the absence of political competition by the AFU is that when the government's policies about the use of force undermined the military profession, the armed forces were too weak to challenge the authorities, and erosion of civilian control was limited to insubordination. By the time when the AFU started rising from the ruins, at the end of summer 2014, the tasks and missions it was supposed to perform did not contradict the military's responsibility anymore.<sup>260</sup> Most importantly, the appearance of the Russian ground and airborne troops equipped with tanks and heavy artillery in the territory of Ukraine in August 2014 resonated with the classic military mission of defending the state and its society from external aggression. What was lacking is the expertise.

The improvement of professional training for the military after the battle of Ilovaisk (end of August 2014) helped redefine the expertise of the AFU to match

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<sup>259</sup> Serhiy Surepin, "Army! Language! Faith! Poroshenko Named the Formula of the Modern Ukrainian Identity [In Ukrainian], *Zaborona*, September 20, 2018, <https://zaborona.com/armiia-mova-vira-poroshenko-nazvav-formulu-suchasnoi-ukrainskoi-identychnosti/>.

<sup>260</sup> Author's interview General Mykhaylo Zabrotskyi.

the new threat environment. The 2015 defense budget was twice higher than the previous year.<sup>261</sup> The funds spent for new equipment and armaments quadrupled in comparison to 2014.<sup>262</sup> The new civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) units within the AFU underwent special training to respond effectively to the needs of the local population in the conflict-affected zone and adjust the military operations accordingly.<sup>263</sup> In addition, the Airborne troops were reformed into the separate branch — Air Assault Forces—which allowed them to better perform the necessary tasks in the ATO zone. In January 2016, the Special Operation Forces of the AFU were founded with a set of professional missions tailored to the requirements of the war in Donbas.<sup>264</sup> Overall, after August 2014, the training, rotation, and recovery of troops improved dramatically, allowing the AFU to prepare better and perform the missions.<sup>265</sup> The change of the nature of the war from unconventional asymmetric conflict to a conventional positional war further contributed to the harmonization of tasks performed by the military officers with their profession.

Finally, the gradual replacement of volunteers and conscripts with the contract soldiers helped the AFU to move towards a professional military. For example, according to then-Minister of Defense Stepan Poltorak, in 2016, the AFU signed contracts with 42,000 soldiers. For comparison, in 2015, this number was about 16,000.<sup>266</sup> This finding provides useful insights into how professionalization can turn an insubordinate military into an obedient instrument of policy. For instance, in the fall of 2019, despite the heated political tensions over the withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from Zolote, Donetsk oblast, the AFU

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<sup>261</sup> 2014 *White Book*.

<sup>262</sup> Sanders, “‘The War We Want; The War That We Get,’” 47.

<sup>263</sup> Author’s interview with Military Attache at Embassy of Ukraine in Washington DC, Col. Andriy Ordynovych, October 2019.

<sup>264</sup> “Special Operation Forces of Ukraine. Mission.,” n.d., <http://sof.mil.gov.ua>.

<sup>265</sup> Author’s interview with Col. Andriy Ordynovych

<sup>266</sup> Hladka et al., *Dobrobaty*, 550.

remained subordinate to the government's orders. The experts I interviewed in Kyiv in December 2019, explain the AFU's subordination pointing that by the fall of 2019 most of the politically motivated volunteers and conscripts of the first waves of mobilization were replaced by the contract soldiers for whom military service is a job and not a vocation or a matter of spirit.<sup>267</sup> New contract soldiers receive decent salaries and undergo appropriate training and rotation.<sup>268</sup> This finding shows the importance of professionalization for civilian control of the military.

Of course, one may argue that the AFU and its senior officers have never acquired sufficient capabilities (e.g., popular support, media attention, material resources) to challenge the government, and professional considerations have little to do with the absence of erosion by competition. The evidence suggests otherwise. The military enjoyed high public trust in comparison to the pre-war levels of confidence in the armed forces and other government institutions.<sup>269</sup> In December 2018, the military was one of the most trusted institutions in Ukraine (See Table 4.3 for details).<sup>270</sup> The military also enjoyed higher popular trust than the president, the parliament, the government, and the press. Such a critical gap between the levels of public confidence in civilian authorities and the military, paired with increasing military capabilities, could create a conducive environment for erosion by competition. Nevertheless, no noticeable instances of the military's contestation of the government's authority occurred.

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<sup>267</sup> Author's interview with former Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine Oleksandr Danyliuk, Kyiv, December 2019; Author's interview with Maxym Kolesnikov.

<sup>268</sup> Author's Col. Andriy Ordynovych.

<sup>269</sup> "Ukrainians' trust in social institutions" [In Ukrainian] (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, April 18, 2012), <https://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=81>.

<sup>270</sup> Data sources: "Trust in social institutions. December 2018" [In Ukrainian] (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, January 29, 2019), <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=817&page=1>; Liana Novikova, "Trust in Social Institutions and Groups" (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, January 15, 2016), <https://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=579&page=1>; "Ukrainians' trust in social institutions" [In Ukrainian] (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, April 18, 2012), <https://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=81>.

**Table 4.3 The balance of trust in societal institutions (KIIS)**

	February 2012	December 2015	December 2018
<b>Church</b>	<b>44.7</b>	<b>40.4</b>	<b>28.0</b>
<b>AFU</b>	<b>-2.4</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>24.0</b>
<b>Ukrainian press</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>-6.6</b>	<b>-11.0</b>
<b>Security Service of Ukraine</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>-33.4</b>	<b>-26.0</b>
<b>President of Ukraine</b>	<b>-44.0</b>	<b>-48.1</b>	<b>-54.0</b>
<b>Government of Ukraine</b>	<b>-52.7</b>	<b>-66.3</b>	<b>-63.0</b>
<b>Parliament of Ukraine</b>	<b>-61.4</b>	<b>-72.4</b>	<b>-72.0</b>

From a theoretical perspective, this finding shows that factors providing the opportunity for the military's involvement in politics are not sufficient for the occurrence of erosion by competition. Therefore, the evidence casts doubt on several common explanations for the competition that were present in the case of Ukraine. In particular, unstable institutions, questionable regime legitimacy directly challenged by the Donbas rebels, poor economic performance of the government, political instability, high popular confidence in the military, and intrastate conflict were all present in the Ukraine case but did not result in erosion of civilian control by competition.

## **4. Erosion of Civilian Control by the Volunteer Battalions**

The story of Kyiv's policies about the use of force in Donbas and the resulting erosion of civilian control would not be complete without addressing the role of the volunteer battalions.

Since the government could not effectively control the AFU at the beginning of the conflict, it legitimized the use of force by inherently unprofessional actors—the volunteer battalions.<sup>271</sup> The presidential decree of March 2014 legalized the volunteer formations as Territorial Defense Battalions under the MoD and Special Police Battalions under the MoIA.<sup>272</sup>

It took Ukraine about three months to replace the AFU soldiers and officers who never expected to fight, with new conscripts, who knew what they signed up for.<sup>273</sup> Meanwhile, the volunteer battalions held the front, becoming the saviors of the nation but also a threat to democratic governance contributing to the erosion of civilian control.<sup>274</sup> Analyzing the acts of insubordination and competition committed by the volunteer battalions is relevant to understanding the effect of a government's policies on civilian control. In particular, the government's decision to use the battalions became a necessity due to the military's inability and unwillingness to mobilize enough troops to perform unconventional missions at the beginning of the war. Thus, the military's insubordination opened avenues to other instances of erosion. This condition provides a valuable perspective on the

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<sup>271</sup> Tor Bukkvoll, "Fighting on Behalf of the State—the Issue of pro-Government Militia Autonomy in the Donbas War," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 35, no. 4 (2019): 293–307; Hunter, "Crowdsourced War," 98, 100.

<sup>272</sup> Hunter, "Crowdsourced War," 90.

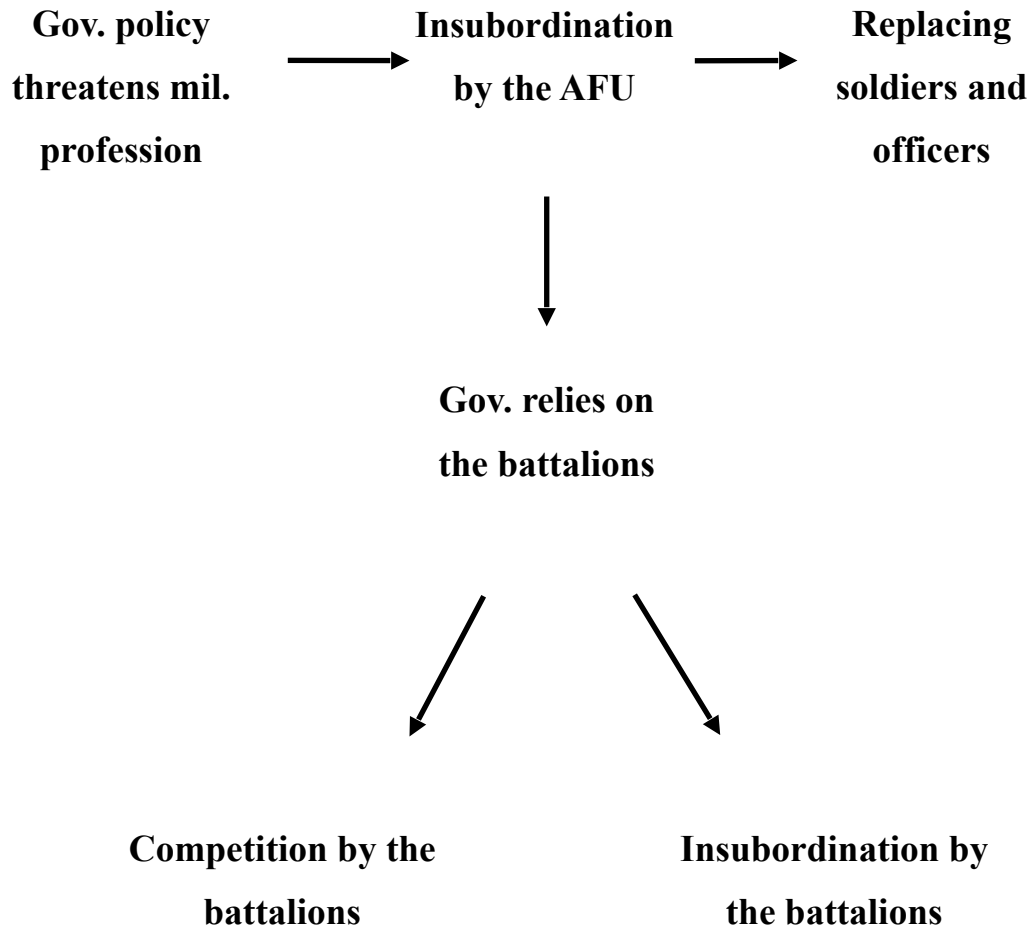
<sup>273</sup> Hunter, "Crowdsourced War," 98; Author's interview with Maksym Kolesnikov.

<sup>274</sup> Andreas Umland, "Irregular Militias and Radical Nationalism in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine: The Prehistory and Emergence of the 'Azov' Battalion in 2014," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 31, no. 1 (2019): 105–31, 106.



interaction between different sources of the weakening of civilian control (See Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1. Relations between government's policies and different forms of erosion of civilian control by the AFU and volunteer battalions**



### *Understanding the battalions*

Formally subordinated to the AFU and the MoD, territorial defense battalions were staffed and funded by regional organizations and volunteers. These new units were a heterogeneous mix of mobilized conscripts, Maidan activists, and military veterans. The sources of funding also varied. For instance, in Ivano-Frankivsk oblast, the “Prykarpattya” battalion received funds from the local administration. In contrast, the “Aidar” battalion, nominally related to the Luhansk oblast, received significant financial support from Ukrainian oligarch and the governor of Dnipropetrovsk, Ihor Kolomoysky.<sup>275</sup> Unlike many other territorial defense battalions of the AFU, “Aidar” was staffed not with the conscripts drafted through the military commissariats but with Maidan self-defense activists personally selected by the battalion commander.

When in April 2014, it became clear that AFU and existing internal security services will not be able to tackle violence in Eastern Ukraine, the MoIA initiated the creation of additional volunteer battalions subordinate to the regional police chiefs. The government could provide the battalions with the legitimacy to use force. However, they had to be self-reliant in almost everything else. In different regions of Ukraine, local activists, veterans, and reservists had to form units, find the training bases and equipment relying on local sources and connections.<sup>276</sup> The volunteer fighters had about 30 days of training before beginning to perform combat operations.<sup>277</sup> Some volunteer battalions first formed the units, trained, gained combat experience, and only later formally joined the official government

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<sup>275</sup> Dmitriy Sinyak, “Fighters of the Invisible Front. How Many Pocket Armies Are There in Ukraine? [In Russian],” *Focus*, April 21, 2015, <https://focus.ua/politics/327967>.

<sup>276</sup> Interview with Viktor Chavlan in Hladka et al., *Dobrobaty*, 85.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid*, 88.

forces (e.g., the “Azov” battalion).<sup>278</sup> In some instances, not Ukrainian officers but Israeli and Georgian instructors trained the new defenders of Ukraine.<sup>279</sup>

Sluggishness of the AFU contributed to more people joining the volunteer formations. After the reinstatement of conscription in May 2014, the military’s bureaucratic machine was not ready for mass mobilization and had to turn away many conscripts that stood in lines to the military’s drafting points (military commissariats).<sup>280</sup> This inability to deal with the influx of conscripts in the spring of 2014, brought more people to the volunteer battalions with bottom-up recruitment. The first waves of compulsory mobilization allowed to form 29 (according to other sources 32)<sup>281</sup> battalions of territorial defense under the AFU command in 2014.<sup>282</sup>

Unlike the apolitical Ukrainian military, the significant number volunteers were politically and ideologically driven. Several battalions had close ties with political organizations existing before Euromaidan. For instance, Andriy Biletskyi, the commander of the “Azov” battalion and later a parliament member, was the leader of the nationalist organizations “Social-National Assembly” and “Ukrainian Patriot.” A significant part of “Azov” fighters also belonged to the Ukrainian nationalist organizations before the Euromaidan crisis.<sup>283</sup> The entire

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<sup>278</sup> Interview with Mykola Balan in Hladka et al., *Dobrobaty*, 97; Umland, “Irregular Militias and Radical Nationalism,” 121.

<sup>279</sup> Interview with former “Dnipro-1” battalion commander and a parliament member Yuriy Bereza in Hladka et al., *Dobrobaty*, 106.

<sup>280</sup> Author’s interview with the commander of the paramedical volunteer battalion “Hospitaliery” PM Yana Zinkevych, December 2019; Author’s interview with Maksym Kolesnikov; Interview with MoD Stepan Poltorak in Hladka et al., *Dobrobaty*, 532.

<sup>281</sup> Rosaria Puglisi, “A People’s Army: Civil Society as a Security Actor in Post-Maidan Ukraine,” *Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) Working Papers*, 2015, 11.

<sup>282</sup> White Book of the MoD 2014, 20. Only ten territorial defense battalions were truly volunteer-based with a bottom-up recruitment procedure (See Puglisi, “A People’s Army,” 11). The remaining units were staffed through the regular draft and did not match the label of a volunteer battalion precisely. In contrast, the reserve battalions of the National Guard and police special forces battalions of the MoIA were comprised of politically motivated volunteer fighters with various professional and political backgrounds.

<sup>283</sup> Umland, “Irregular Militias and Radical Nationalism.”

“Sich” battalion comprised of the members of the political organization and a political party All-Ukrainian Union “Svoboda.”<sup>284</sup> “Pravyi Sektor” — one of the most capable volunteer movements — initially was a coalition of right-wing nationalist organizations, some of which were active in Ukraine since the early years of independence.<sup>285</sup> Other battalions were more culturally and politically diverse.<sup>286</sup>

While most of the volunteer units were affiliated with the National Guard, the AFU, or the police, there are some important exceptions. For example, “Pravyi Sektor” as a political organization, initiated the creation of the Ukrainian Volunteer Corps (Ukr.: DUK), which included multiple battalions formally not subordinate to the Ukrainian government. “Pravyi Sektor” mobilized its fighters to deploy in Eastern Ukraine ten days before Turchynov announced the beginning of the Anti-Terrorist Operation.<sup>287</sup> It became possible due to operational autonomy and high combat readiness “Pravyi Sektor” demonstrated since the beginning of the Euromaidan crisis.<sup>288</sup>

At the beginning of the ATO, the combat readiness of most volunteer fighters was very low and comparable to the average preparedness of the AFU.<sup>289</sup> What was different is the level of motivation: while the AFU were demotivated, the volunteers were eager to fight, which helped them acquire combat skills in a

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<sup>284</sup> Interview with Viktor Chavlan in Hladka et al., *Dobrobaty*, 92.

<sup>285</sup> Mustafa Nayyem, “Behind the Scenes of Pravy Sektor [In Ukrainian],” *Ukrainska Pravda*, April 1, 2014, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2014/04/1/7020952/>.

<sup>286</sup> Puglisi, “Heroes Or Villains?” 6.

<sup>287</sup> Author’s interview with PM Yana Zinkevych.

<sup>288</sup> After the split of “Pravyi Sektor” in December 2015, most DUK battalions were reformed into the “Ukrainian Volunteer Army” units that continue to operate in the ATO zone independently (and after spring 2018 illegally) but in coordination with the AFU and the operational staff. See “The ATO Forces Captured Eight DPR Terrorists and Annihilated Three More,” *NV.ua*, June 27, 2016, <https://nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/events/sili-ato-zahopili-v-polon-visim-teroristiv-dnr-i-shche-troh-znishchili-158487.html>; Yuri Butusov, “The big war and the ‘seventh wave,’” *Zerkalo Nedeli*, October 8, 2016, <https://zn.ua/internal/bolshaya-voyna-i-sedmaya-volna-strategicheskaya-obstanovka-na-fronte-ato-osenyu-2016-goda-.html>.

<sup>289</sup> Author’s interview with anonymous former instructor.

short time. However, some of the fighters were not sure for how long they would be willing to commit to operating in the ATO zone. As a result, many volunteers refused to join the battalions formally to avoid the desertion charges later on.<sup>290</sup> This condition complicates the attempts to take account of all battalion members killed, taken hostage, and missing.<sup>291</sup> In addition, foreign nationals from Georgia, Israel, Poland, Sweden, Belarus, and even Russia joined the battalions de facto but could not do so legally.<sup>292</sup>

Driven by personal and political preferences of their members, commanders, and sponsors, virtually independent from the state, often lacking trust in government institutions, the battalions could hardly be expected to become the obedient tool of Kyiv's policy in Donbas.<sup>293</sup> Of course, the above factors apply to different battalions to a various degree. The formations that ended up being the most challenging for Kyiv's civilian control were the most militarily capable, financially independent, and politically motivated (e.g., DUK "Pravyi Sektor," "Azov," "Donbas," "Dnipro-1").<sup>294</sup> The units that lacked all or some of these features signed contracts and blended in the armed forces or were disbanded (e.g., "Shakhtarsk," "Tornado"). However, even the volunteer battalions that were formally associated with the government forces lacked professional military education and did not share the norms of non-involvement in politics. The former deputy commander of the National Guard Mykola Balan explained the issues with the discipline and subordination in the battalions by pointing out that most of the volunteers are civilians that have never read or, as a matter of fact, held in their

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<sup>290</sup> Maksym Muzyka, *Savur Mohyla. Military Diaries* [In Ukrainian] (Kyiv: Folio, 2015).

<sup>291</sup> Hladka et al., *Dobrobaty*, 493-496.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid, 499.

<sup>293</sup> Puglisi, "Heroes Or Villains?" 6; Aliyev 2016, 508.

<sup>294</sup> Chris Dunnett, "Ukraine's 'Battalions' Army, Explained.," *Hromadske International*, September 17, 2014, <https://medium.com/@Hromadske/ukraines-shadow-army-b04d7a683493#a5-dro017t>.

hands, the military statute.<sup>295</sup> Overall, to understand the erosion of civilian control by the volunteer battalions, it is important to acknowledge several peculiarities of their understanding of responsibility, expertise, and corporateness.

First, narrowly defined, the battalions' *responsibility* included defending Ukraine from internal separatists and external paramilitaries supporting them. However, coming from different political backgrounds, battalion members had various conceptions about the limits of their responsibility. For instance, Yuriy Bereza, former commander of "Dnipro-1," stated that his battalion is an ideology and that after the war, it will turn to a spiritual center for the patriotic upbringing of Ukrainian youth.<sup>296</sup> The commander of "Donbas" Semen Semenchenko went farther, stating that: "If volunteers can manage to equip the army better than the army bosses, it means volunteers can run the country."<sup>297</sup> The leader of "Pravyi Sektor" Dmytro Yarosh claimed that it is his duty to protect Ukraine not only from external but also from internal occupation by the oligarchs and corrupt politicians.<sup>298</sup> Predictably, those who saw the mission of the battalions as broadly defined, including defending the state from corrupt and incompetent elites, ended up being the main challengers of civilian control of the use of force.

In terms of the *expertise*, the most capable battalions quickly learned how to fight the non-uniformed enemy that other state forces were not ready to face.<sup>299</sup> The necessary skills involved rapid mobilization, swift maneuvering, proficient

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<sup>295</sup> Interview with Mykola Balan, deputy commander of the National Guard, in Hladka et al., *Dobrobaty*, 98.

<sup>296</sup> Interview with former "Dnipro-1" battalion commander and parliament member Yuriy Bereza in Hladka et al., *Dobrobaty*, 483

<sup>297</sup> "Abandoned Donbas Battalion Fights On," *Kyiv Post*, August 24, 2014, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/war-against-ukraine/abandoned-donbas-battalion-fights-on-361886.html?cn-reloaded=1>.

<sup>298</sup> Serhiy Ivanov, "Dmytro Yarosh: 'The Embodied Regime of the Internal Occupation Is the Financial-Industrial Oligarchic Groups That Tear Ukraine Apart' [In Ukrainian]," *Censor.Net*, July 10, 2015, [https://censor.net/ru/resonance/355095/dmitro\\_yarosh\\_uosoblennyam\\_rejimu\\_vnutrsh-no\\_okupats\\_ukrani\\_fnansovopromislov\\_olgarhchn\\_grupi\\_yak\\_rozdirayut](https://censor.net/ru/resonance/355095/dmitro_yarosh_uosoblennyam_rejimu_vnutrsh-no_okupats_ukrani_fnansovopromislov_olgarhchn_grupi_yak_rozdirayut).

<sup>299</sup> Interview with Minister of Defense Arsen Avakov in Hladka et al., *Dobrobaty*, 252.

use of light arms, ability to operate without sophisticated equipment, and take the initiative on the ground in the absence of hierarchical command.<sup>300</sup>

The sense of *corporateness* of the battalions was informed by the lack of trust to the political and military elites which resulted to the sense of entitlement to operational autonomy.<sup>301</sup> The fact that Kyiv decided to rely on volunteer fighters because of the failure to effectively mobilize the government forces, resulted in the distrust of the battalions to the military and government elites. For instance, after the battle of Ilovaisk, the commander of “Dnipro-1” battalion, Yuriy Bereza, blamed the government for deliberately failing to rescue the volunteers to destroy the battalions.<sup>302</sup> Thus, the volunteers' corporate spirit was based on the assumption that unlike the corrupt and incompetent military and government officials, they are the true defenders of the nation. In words of the commander of “Donbas” Semen Semenchenko: “We became the military because the state could not defend the civilians—and we took this responsibility.”<sup>303</sup> In addition, the values of being free-spirited, highly motivated, and taking the initiative came in contradiction with the expectation from the military to be an obedient tool of statecraft.<sup>304</sup> For example, former commander of “Azov” Andriy Biletskyi explicitly stated that being a volunteer fighter is rather a matter of spirit, not a profession.<sup>305</sup> In his words, the AFU, “need serfs, slaves that could be ordered around and given any absolutely insane orders.”<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Puglisi, “Heroes Or Villains?” 10.

<sup>301</sup> Bukkvoll, “Fighting on Behalf of the State.”

<sup>302</sup> Puglisi, “General Zhukov and the Cyborgs,” 9.

<sup>303</sup> Anastasyia Ringis, “New Faces: Why Do Battalion Commanders Go into the Big Politics,” *Ukrainska Pravda*, October 24, 2014, <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2014/10/24/182635/>.

<sup>304</sup> Kähkö, “A Nation-in-the-Making, in Arms,” 158; Author's interview with PM Yana Zinkevych.

<sup>305</sup> Interview with former “Azov” battalion commander and parliament member Andriy Biletskyi in Hladka et al., *Dobrobaty*, 104.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid*, 518.

The broad conception of the mission extending to domestic politics, the preference for using and not managing violence, distrust to the elites, and the prioritization of autonomy and initiative over subordination and obedience are important features that distinguish the volunteer battalions from professional armed forces. Acknowledging these professional peculiarities allows us to apply the causal logic of the policy-focused theory to explain insubordination and competition by the battalions.

### ***Insubordination by the battalions***

In line with the policy-focused theory, when the Kyiv's police went against the volunteer battalions' understanding of their mission, expertise, and corporateness it led to erosion of civilian control by insubordination and competition.

For instance, the most powerful, motivated, and best-equipped volunteer formations—"Donbas," DUK "Pravyi Sektor," "Aidar," "Azov," "Dnipro-1"—remained subordinate to the government only when they agreed with the objectives of the operations.<sup>307</sup> When the government tried to put the battalions under the AFU's command in joint operations with regular troops, it went against the corporate spirit of the volunteer battalions. This condition contributed to the tragedy of Ilovaisk in August 2014, that involved multiple instances of insubordination and desertion among the volunteers. Specifically, the Ukraine's military prosecutor argued that the volunteer battalions were "uncontrollable." They engaged in combat before the AFU, even though their role was to enter the city after the military would capture it.<sup>308</sup> When Russian regular troops opened fire, AFU's territorial defense battalion "Prykarpattia" left the positions and

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<sup>307</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, "Strong Militias, Weak States and Armed Violence: Towards a Theory of 'State-Parallel' Paramilitaries," *Security Dialogue* 47, no. 6 (2016): 498–516, 509; Malyarenko and Galbreath, "Paramilitary Motivation in Ukraine: Beyond Integration and Abolition," 121.

<sup>308</sup> "Which Units Left Ilovaisk without a Fight," *Ukr.Media*, October 10, 2015, <https://ukr.media/ukrain/244972/>.



moved towards Ivano-Frankivsk (more than 1000 km from the ATO zone).<sup>309</sup> This step left the Ukrainian border open to the advancement of the Russian troops that later encircled the Ukrainian forces in Illovaisk.<sup>310</sup>

The later battle of Debaltseve in February 2015, also involved instances of desertion by the AFU territorial battalions. The MoD reported that at the time of withdrawal from the encirclement, separate units “Kyivska Rus” and “Kryvbas” left their positions two days earlier than planned.<sup>311</sup> Fighting in a massive coordinated conventional battle was against the battalions’ expertise in swift independent maneuvers using light weapons. In addition, operating under the AFU’s command undermined the sense of corporateness resting on operational autonomy and distrust to the military elites. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the battalions decided to behave independently which the AFU command recognized as an act of insubordination.

By the fall of 2014, the Ukrainian government had already recognized the risks of leaving the battalions unchecked.<sup>312</sup> In November 2014, Minister of Defense Poltorak announced the government’s policy of integrating the volunteers into the state defense and security institutions. Alternatively, the battalion fighters could disarm and demobilize or face charges. The government’s policy for compulsory integration of the volunteer fighters into the government forces was in direct contradiction to the battalions expertise and corporateness. Specifically, it undermined the battalions’ preference for the use (and not management) of force, maintaining autonomy, as well as independence from political and military elites. In the words of one of the DUK fighters:

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<sup>309</sup> “The Reason for the Ilovaisk Tragedy Was the ‘Prykarpattya’ Battalion - Chief Procucer of Ukraine,” *LB.Ua*, October 7, 2014, [https://lb.ua/society/2014/10/07/281840\\_pervoprichinoy\\_-tragedii\\_pod.html](https://lb.ua/society/2014/10/07/281840_pervoprichinoy_-tragedii_pod.html).

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> “The Analysis of Combat Actions in Eastern Ukraine in the Winter Campaign 2014-2015” (General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, December 23, 2015), <https://www.ukrmilitary.com/2015/12/analiz-war-in-winter-2014-2015.html>.

<sup>312</sup> Puglisi, “Heroes Or Villains?” 4.

*“We want to fight and eliminate the enemy daily. We see the enemy—we kill them. It’s a simple formula. And the military says: don’t shoot, observe, [respect the] Minsk [Protocol], grain ceasefire, spring truce, easter truce, truce, truce, truce. I have half the phone book [contacts] already dead. Whom should I reach a truce with? The military does not give me an answer.”*<sup>313</sup>

The above quote demonstrates a strong preference for using violence and not selectively deploying it in accordance with higher political goals (e.g., moving forward with the Minsk agreements). It also shows the preference for autonomy over obedience.

In response to the new policy of integration, the most politically active and militarily capable resisted the government’s attempts to establish civilian control over the volunteer formations. For example, in April 2015 the AFU and the National Guard had to besiege the training base of the “Pravyi Sektor” because its military wing DUK refused to integrate into the AFU.<sup>314</sup> The leader of “Pravyi Sektor,” also a parliament member and a former presidential candidate, Dmytro Yarosh, negotiated directly with the Chief of the General Staff Gen. Viktor Muzhenko on the special conditions under which the multiple battalions of DUK “Pravyi Sektor” would agree to join the AFU.<sup>315</sup> This effort was unsuccessful, and DUK “Pravyi Sektor” battalions remained independent but continued to work in cooperation with the ATO Staff.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Kostyantyn Reutskyi and Anastasyia Stanko, “‘Getting Dissolved in the Steps of Donbas:’ Will the Volunteers Leave the Frontline,” [In Ukrainian] *Hromadske*, October 19, 2018, <https://hromadske.ua/posts/rozchinyayemos-u-stepah-donbasu-chi-pidut-dobrovolci-z-peredovoyi>.

<sup>314</sup> “Pravy Sektor Informed That Their Base Is Beseiged by the Armed Forces of Ukraine [In Ukrainian],” *Ukrainska Pravda*, May 28, 2015, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2015/04/28/7066230/>.

<sup>315</sup> “The Presidential Apparatus Claimed That the Question of Integrating the ‘Pravy Sektor’ in the AFU Is Already Solved [In Ukrainian],” *Unian*, April 29, 2015, <https://www.unian.ua/politics/1073049-v-ap-zayavili-scho-pitannya-vhodjennya-pravogo-sektora-do-skladu-zsu-vje-virishene.html>.

<sup>316</sup> Author’s interview with ‘Pravy Sektor’s’ Ukrainian Volunteer Corps fighter, Kyiv, December 2019.

In this way, several of the most capable volunteer formations denied the government's superiority and did not come under civilian control. In 2018, the fighters of the DUK "Pravyi Sektor" that refused to join the AFU continued to perform combat and intelligence tasks in Donbas in loose coordination with the AFU.<sup>317</sup> Explaining their reluctance to sign the contracts, the volunteers said that sitting on the block-post checking cars is not what they would be willing to do.<sup>318</sup> This again points to the battalions' preference to act according to their expertise of using violence and not managing it (i.e., deploying, withdrawing, preventing or repelling the attacks based on the political objectives of the operation). Overall, the battalions' sense of expertise and corporateness explains the government's inability to integrate some volunteers in the government structures and subject them to civilian control.

Even the battalions formally affiliated with the government security services also often remained insubordinate and denied Kyiv's control when the government's policy contradicted the battalions' profession. For instance, in April 2015, Ukrainian authorities decided to demilitarize the village of Shyrokyne, Donetsk Oblast, according to the Minsk Protocol.<sup>319</sup> The ATO Staff supported this decision.<sup>320</sup> However, the "Azov" battalion, that took a significant part in capturing this position in February 2015, refused to comply with the policy and the forces stayed in Shyrokyne.<sup>321</sup> While formally Azov is a part of the National Guard, in fact, the battalion (now a regiment) often acts on its discretion and has independent recruitment infrastructure, training facilities, press office, and even

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<sup>317</sup> Ihor Burdygha, "An Invisible Legion: Ukrainian Volunteers That Resist the Legalization [In Ukrainian]," *DW*, October 30, 2018, <https://p.dw.com/p/37Jvn>.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> "The Ukrainian Side Offered to Demilitarize Shyrokyne [In Ukrainian]," *Tyzhden*, May 15, 2015, <https://tyzhden.ua/News/134246>.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> "'Azov' Refused to Leave Shyrokyne [In Ukrainian]," *Dzerkalo Tyzhnya*, May 17, 2015, [https://dt.ua/UKRAINE/ukrayina-zgodna-na-demilitarizaciyu-shirokino-shtab-ato-170174\\_.html](https://dt.ua/UKRAINE/ukrayina-zgodna-na-demilitarizaciyu-shirokino-shtab-ato-170174_.html).

its own sergeants' school.<sup>322</sup> "Azov's" refusal to withdraw from Shyrokin in accordance to the Minsk agreements is consistent with the professional preference of the volunteers for the use of force to fight the separatists rather than withdrawing to uphold a political deal with the opponent. It also shows the distrust to political elites and policy decisions they make when it comes to the use of force in Donbas.

In sum, even though the volunteer battalions were non-professional forces, they developed a sense of responsibility, expertise, and corporateness. These three pillars of professional self-perception defined the battalion's reaction to the government's policies. Specifically, the above examples show that volunteer formations engaged in the acts of insubordination to resist the government's policies undermining their professional preferences, as the policy-focused theory predicts. To increase our confidence in this explanation, it is necessary to consider the alternatives.

#### ***Alternative explanations for insubordination by the battalions***

Alternative explanations for insubordination—*weak oversight* and *fear for one's life*—do not help understand the behavior of the battalions in a systematic way. To begin, the battalions did not try to conceal the aforementioned acts of insubordination as the *weak oversight* explanation would predict. In contrast, the commander of the "Prykarpattia" battalion of the AFU submitted a written refusal to keep his troops in the ATO zone before the unit abandoned its positions in the battle of Ilovaishk.<sup>323</sup> Similarly, the refusal of Dmytro Yarosh to integrate DUK "Pravyi Sektor" in the AFU was a public affair, as well as "Azov" refusal to withdraw from Shyrokin. In addition, the volunteer battalions involved in

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<sup>322</sup> Pavlo Sheremet, "Regiment 'Azov'. Between the Old and New Army," *Ukrainska Pravda*, May 16, 2015, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2015/04/16/7064867/>; "Regiment Azov. About.," n.d., <https://azov.org.ua/pro-nas/>.

<sup>323</sup> "The Interim Report of the Temporary Investigative Group on the Tragic Events near Ilovaishk. Full Text [In Ukrainian]."

insubordination, human rights abuses, criminal behavior, and insubordination—e.g., “Tornado,” “Shakhtarsk,” “Prykarpattia”—were prosecuted and disbanded with some of the members facing criminal charges.<sup>324</sup> Thus, the logical assumptions of the *weak oversight* explanation do not hold: insubordination acts were not related to the low likelihood of being caught.

Available evidence also is not consistent with *fear for one's life* explanation. While it could potentially shed light on abandoning the positions in Ilovaisk and Debaltseve, it still provides limited insights into the reluctance of the battalions to integrate into the AFU or the refusal to withdraw from positions. In fact, the motivations of DUK “Pravyi Sektor” for remaining independent contradict the logic of *fear for one's life* since the preference to use force on the battlefield puts the volunteer fighters in more danger than sitting on the block-post checking cars. The same logic applies to “Azov” in Shyrokyne: their refusal to withdraw from the held positions is more consistent with the professional preference to use force than the desire to prevent the loss of life.

Overall, the policy-focused theory provides a plausible explanation of how the government’s use of paramilitary forces beyond their profession leads to the erosion of civilian control by insubordination in all three instances of insubordination by the battalions (See Table 4.4). Also, the above examples show how insubordination by the military can create conducive conditions for the emergence of alternative actors that do not share the professional culture of serving the state and hence contribute to further erosion of civilian control.

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<sup>324</sup> Puglisi, “Heroes Or Villains?” 12.

**Table 4.4 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for insubordination by the battalions**

Cases of Insubordination by the Battalions (N=3)				
<i>Causal Mechanisms</i>	Abandoning the positions	Refusal to integrate	Refusal to withdraw	Observations explained
<i>Defending the "profession"</i>	V	V	V	3/3
<i>Weak oversight</i>	X	X	X	0/3
<i>Fear for One's Life</i>	V	X	X	1/3

V = supported by evidence; X = not supported by evidence; ~ = partially supported

### ***Competition by the Battalions***

Most instances of erosion by competition during the war in Donbas involved the volunteer battalions trying to change or challenge the government's policies. Stepping in to defend the state in the spring of 2014, the battalion commanders earned considerable political capital allowing them to become political players with a direct connection to armed militias. In addition, volunteer battalion members lacked professional military education and did not share the norm of non-involvement in politics.<sup>325</sup> Their rapid pursuit of political careers in the middle of the ongoing hostilities provides additional insights into the importance of military professionalism for civilian control.

The policy-focused theory explains erosion by competition through the mechanism of *defending the profession*. This mechanism helps understand the competition by the battalions if we take into account the peculiarities of the battalions' understanding of their responsibility discussed earlier. The broad conception of the responsibility as defending Ukraine from external and internal threats does not prevent the battalion fighters from participating in domestic politics. In contrast, since some battalion commanders belonged to political

<sup>325</sup> Some battalions were an outgrowth of political organizations that existed before Maidan.

organizations of pre-Maidan era, their participation in politics was not a violation of professional responsibility but rather its logical extension. For example, Semen Semenchenko (“Donbas”) claimed that after the separatists are defeated in Donbas, the next battlefield might be the government offices in Kyiv.<sup>326</sup> In this sense, any government’s move that did not align with the perceived correct course of action by the battalions could trigger the erosion by competition.

For instance, despite the ongoing war, the government in Kyiv maintained trade relationships with the conflict-affected territories. Opposed to this policy, in December 2016, the leaders of several battalions, including “Donbas” and “Aidar” announced the economic blockade of Donetsk and Luhansk “people’s republics” without any government sanction. The former “Aidar’s” chief of staff ordered the battalion fighters to install the checkpoints to prevent the import of metals, coal, timber, and other goods from the occupied territories.<sup>327</sup> The representatives of the “Donbas” battalion blocked the roads between the occupied and Ukraine-controlled territories.<sup>328</sup> The goal of this move was to pressure the government in Kyiv to limit trade with the occupied territories where pro-Russian forces took over Ukrainian industry. In March 2016, after failed attempts to restrain the volunteers, the Ukrainian government accepted the blockade as an official policy.<sup>329</sup> President Poroshenko admitted that the blockade was a forced political solution to stop the chaos caused by the volunteers.<sup>330</sup>

Most recently, the decision by President Zelensky to comply with the Minsk Protocol and begin the disengagement of troops in Zolote, Luhansk oblast,

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<sup>326</sup> “Abandoned Donbas Battalion Fights On.”

<sup>327</sup> <https://hromadske.ua/posts/eks-nachshtabu-batalionu-aidar-zaiavyv-pro-ekonomichnu-blokadu-lnr-ta-dnr>

<sup>328</sup> <https://korrespondent.net/ukraine/3792470-.nko-zaiavyl-o-novom-vytke-blokady-ldnr>

<sup>329</sup> “The Presidential Address at the Meeting of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine” [In Ukrainian], <https://web.archive.org/web/20180307214425/http://www.president.gov.ua/news/vistup-prezidenta-na-zasidanni-radi-nacionalnoyi-bezpeki-ta-40378>.

<sup>330</sup> Dmytro Replianchuk, “‘Samopomich’ Has to Take the Political Responsibility for the Donbas Blocade – President” [In Ukrainian], *Hromadske*, March 20, 2017, <https://hromadske.ua/posts/politychnu-vidpovidalnist-za-blokadu-donbasu-povynna-nesty-samopomich-prezydent>.

and Petrivske, Donetsk oblast, in the fall of 2019 ignited opposition among the ATO veterans.<sup>331</sup> About 100 of them arrived at the frontline in uniforms, carrying arms, and ready to step in when the AFU troops withdraw. The former commander of the “Azov” regiment politician Andriy Biletsky, also arrived in Zolote, claiming that if the president and the government fail to protect Ukraine as they did in 2014, the veterans who took arms in 2014 to defend their land will do it again in 2019.<sup>332</sup> This act of competition with the government’s policy resulted in a controversial visit of President Zelensky to Zolote, where he personally confronted the veterans demanding their disarmament.<sup>333</sup> In sum, the battalion fighters’, commanders’, and veterans’ broad conception of responsibility extending to political domestic matters motivated political competition with the government.

In addition, the government’s policies that threatened the battalions’ corporate spirit also resulted in erosion of civilian control by competition. In particular, after being elected to the parliament in 2014, many battalion commanders continued to perform their functions at the front being half-time legislators and half-time warriors.<sup>334</sup> As peoples’ deputies, the battalion commanders tried to lobby the legislation that would advance their political agendas.<sup>335</sup> As commanders, they used their authority to compete with the government’s policy on the ground. For example, in February 2015 two parliament members, Dmytro Yarosh (DUK “Pravyi Sektor”), Semen Semchenko (“Donbas”) and representatives of seventeen battalions initiated the

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<sup>331</sup> “Ukraine Conflict: Front-Line Troops Begin Pullout,” BBC News (BBC, October 29, 2019), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50221995>.

<sup>332</sup> “The Leader of the Natskorpus and the Veterans of the JFO Are Planning to Defend Zolote in Case of the Disengagement of Troops” [In Ukrainian],” October 6, 2019, <https://day.kyiv.ua/uk/news/061019-lider-nackorpusu-ta-veterany-oos-planuyut-zahyshchaty-zolote-u-razi-vidvedennya-viysk>.

<sup>333</sup> “Zelensky in Zolote Spoke to the Volunteers: ‘I’m Not Some Loser’” [In Ukrainian], *Ukrainska Pravda*, October 26, 2019, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2019/10/26/7230161/>.

<sup>334</sup> Author’s interview with PM Yana Zinkevych.

<sup>335</sup> Puglisi, “Heroes Or Villains?” 8.



creation of an alternative General Staff to coordinate the actions of the volunteers independently from the GS of the Armed Forces and the ATO Staff.<sup>336</sup> This initiative undermined the government's policy of integrating the volunteers in the structures of the MoD and MoIA and subordinating them to the ATO Staff. The preference for autonomy over obedience and the distrust to the military elites as two pillars of the battalions' corporate spirit explain the attempt of the most politically active battalion commanders to undermine governmental policies.

### *Alternative explanations for competition by the battalions*

Alternative explanations for erosion by competition offered in previous research include weak institutions, low social cohesion, low regime legitimacy, economic underperformance, uncertainty about the future of the regime (high risk of rebel takeover), contracting on violence, and individual political ambitions of particular battalion commanders. First, weak institutions can motivate the uniformed actors to step in and save the country by establishing a more stable regime.<sup>337</sup> While weak institutions clearly enabled the battalions' emergence and contestation of power, the battalions' behavior does not provide evidence that it was *the* motivating factor. Instead of taking over the government, the battalion commanders paved their way into politics by participating in the legitimate electoral processes. This explanation, however, fits the attempt to establish an alternative General Staff (a parallel institution) for coordination of the battalions. At the same time, it does not provide any insight into the other two instances of erosion by competition—participation in elections and the use of force to change policy.

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<sup>336</sup> Puglisi, "General Zhukov and the Cyborgs," 14. The initiative was unsuccessful as it met the resistance of other authoritative battalion commanders, including those already integrated into the AFU and the National Guard; See "Parallel Military Reality. Who and Why Is Creating an Alternative General Staff" [In Ukrainian], *Ukrainska Pravda*, February 19, 2015, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2015/02/19/7059155/>.

<sup>337</sup> Perlmutter, "The Praetorian State and the Praetorian Army."

Second, the battalions recognized the legitimacy of the government in Kyiv as well as acknowledged the common interest in defending Ukraine broadly speaking.<sup>338</sup> Indeed, in many instances, the battalion fighters pledged loyalty to the president and even waited for the government's approval before moving the troops.<sup>339</sup> What they did question is the regime's competence in defending the state and therefore interfered in politics. Thus, questionable regime legitimacy does not explain competition by the battalions.

Third, the government's economic underperformance might lead to erosion by competition by motivating the uniformed services to improve economic well-being by intervening in politics. Of course, it is plausible to assume that becoming parliament members might have increased the income of volunteer fighters. However, this explanation does not shed light on the participation of ATO veterans in the anti-withdrawal campaign in Zolote and the attempts to create a parallel General Staff as these actions do not offer any economic benefits.

The uncertainty about the regime's survival due to the high likelihood of rebel victory does not apply to the conflict in Ukraine since the government in Kyiv has never faced a real threat of being defeated and replaced by the separatists. Next, the explanation of competition through contracting on violence presumes that the regime utilizes the armed forces to suppress the domestic opposition. In exchange, the armed forces demand a say in politics. When the government fails to negotiate the concessions, the armed forces intervenes in politics.<sup>340</sup> This logic also does not apply since the battalion commanders used the electoral mechanisms and not negotiations with the government to gain power.

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<sup>338</sup> Bukkvoll, "Fighting on Behalf of the State."

<sup>339</sup> Semen Semenchenko, "Facebook Status Update," May 19, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/dostali.hvatit/posts/904625212905587?pnref=story>; "'People Want Disengagement' the Video of the President's Conversation with the Volunteers Was Published in the Network" [In Ukrainian], *Radio Svoboda*, October 26, 2019, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-rozmova-zelenskoho-z-veteranamy/30237804.html>.

<sup>340</sup> Svolik, "Contracting on Violence."

Finally, the political ambitions of particular commanders could plausibly explain their participation in elections as well as launching the blockade, the anti-withdrawal campaign, and even creating the parallel General Staff by Yarosh and Semenchenko. However, it does not explain the participation of less visible battalion fighters and veterans in these political missions. The ATO veterans opposing the withdrawal in Zolote even covered their faces to prevent recognition. Therefore, individual political ambitions is the most powerful and still only partial alternative explanation for erosion by competition.

In sum, the above analysis shows that the government's decision to use the battalions created armed political actors whose definition of responsibility, expertise, and corporateness had a built-in trigger for political competition and the weakening of civilian control over the use of force. Alternative mechanisms provide only a partial explanation for this phenomenon (See Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for competition by the battalions**

Cases of Competition by the Battalions (N=4)					
<i>Causal Mechanisms</i>	Participation in elections	Parallel GS	Donbas blockade	Zolote standoff	<b>Observations explained</b>
<i>Defending the profession</i>	V	V	V	V	4/4
<i>Weak institutions</i>	X	V	X	X	1/4
<i>Low gov's legitimacy</i>	X	X	X	X	0/4
<i>Poor econ. performance</i>	~	X	X	X	0/4
<i>Uncertainty about the regime</i>	X	X	X	X	0/4
<i>Contracting on violence</i>	X	X	X	X	0/4
<i>Individual ambitions</i>	V	V	~	~	2/4

V = supported by evidence; X = not supported by evidence; ~ = partially supported

## 5. Erosion of Civilian Control by Deference

### *Why did no power delegation occur?*

Another form of erosion of civilian control that did not occur in the case of Ukraine is erosion by deference. According to the policy-focused theory, the government delegates policymaking responsibility to the military to shield itself from the politically risky decisions when it sees a conflict as a political burden. Therefore, it should not be surprising that no erosion by deference occurred in the case of Ukraine's war in Donbas. In the early years of the conflict,

the government did not see the war in Donbas as a political burden and therefore had no incentive to defer to the armed forces. President Poroshenko used the conflict in Donbas to his political benefit rather than tried to distance himself from the war to avoid paying the costs. Poroshenko often posed in the military uniform, frequently visited the troops, made references to the armed forces in his electoral campaign under the slogan “Army! Language! Faith!” and overall positioned himself as a wartime president. President Zelensky also took opportunities to show how he supports the military, visited the frontline, and used the conflict to boost his political image domestically and internationally. Thus, since the conflict did not constitute a political liability to Kyiv, delegation of policymaking prerogatives to the military did not occur.

Of course, the baseline of inherent deference in Ukrainian case was already high. In the pre-war years, the delegation of the responsibility for security policymaking to the military was already remarkably high. The General Staff of the AFU formulated most of the foundational defense and security policy documents of independent Ukraine. Also, 14 out of 19 ministers of defense (including the interim) came from the uniformed services. Therefore, even at the beginning of the war in Donbas, the military already had established positions in policymaking.

Nevertheless, since the beginning of the war in Donbas, the military did not exercise any role or influence in policy matters and especially in the Minsk process. While there are reports that President Poroshenko did consult with the Chief of the General Staff Gen. Viktor Muzhenko during the second Minsk talks, the substance of their conversation concerned the current situation on the battlefield in Debaltseve.<sup>341</sup> Of course, the fact that President Poroshenko consulted directly with the Chief of Staff and not the minister of defense or national security advisor before making a policy decision in Minsk might be

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<sup>341</sup> Author’s interview with the former advisor to the Chief of the General Staff of the AFU Lubov Tsybulska, Kyiv, December 2019.

considered as an attempt to delegate the responsibility to the AFU. However, Poroshenko (and later Zelensky) did not try to attribute any responsibility for the Minsk process to the military, which would be consistent with the logic of erosion by deference. Furthermore, it took the government almost four years to give the military a formal responsibility for the operation in Donbas by finalizing the Anti-Terrorist Operation and launching the Joint Forces Operation under the official AFU command. In sum, Kyiv was slow to expand the military's responsibilities even within the area of the AFU's professional prerogatives, not to say in politics.

Finally, having a uniformed minister of defense under the Poroshenko administration was not a departure from pre-war norms. Therefore, it did not constitute a decrease in civilian control associated with the government's policies over the use of force. Furthermore, over the years of conflict, Ukraine started to adopt the NATO standards of democratic civil-military relations. It first led to the retirement of then Minister of Defense from his military service and then to the appointment of a civilian minister Andriy Zahorodniuk to this position. Thus, while pre-conflict dominance of the General Staff over the MoD remains a persistent problem in civil-military relations, the pro-western orientation of Ukraine after the beginning of war led to a temporary increase of civilian input in security policymaking.

## **6. Conclusion**

The case of Ukraine shows how the variation in political context changes the effect that the government's policies about the use of force have on civilian control. The initial government's policy to launch the Anti-Terrorist Operation in Donbas led to erosion of civilian control by the military's insubordination. The refusal of the AFU to implement orders being beyond their understanding of the military profession at the time is consistent with the predictions of policy-focused theory and exemplify the causal mechanism of *defending the profession*.

Moreover, the military's initial insubordination created the necessity for the government's legitimization of the use of force by politically motivated volunteer battalions that further contributed to erosion by insubordination and competition. Thus, the case of Ukraine during the war in Donbas demonstrates the complex interactions between different forms of erosion of civilian control (e.g., insubordination and competition in response to the government's policies). In addition, the phenomenon of volunteer battalions brings to our attention the importance of professionalization of the uniformed services for effective civilian control over the use of force broadly speaking.

At the same time, the absence of political competition by the AFU shows that to challenge the government's authority, the military has to enjoy political power, which the AFU lacked at the beginning of the conflict. Interestingly, when the AFU improved its capabilities and public image by the end of the summer of 2014, it had no motivation to challenge the government since the conflict began to match the military's job description—protecting the state from external aggression. Several subsequent government policies — integrating the battalions into the government's security organizations, increasing spending on training and equipment, and moving towards a professional contract-based military — contributed to the normalization of civil-military relations and helped Kyiv re-establish civilian control over the use of force.

Finally, the fact that the use of force in Donbas did not constitute a political burden for the government prevented erosion by deference. However, it is important to keep in mind that the usual prevalence of the General Staff over the Ministry of Defense in policymaking and proximity to the president remains one of the main flaws of Ukrainian civil-military relations. Also, while politicians did not delegate policymaking prerogatives to the military, President Petro Poroshenko heavily exploited the image of the military in his political campaign for presidential reelection. Nevertheless, these efforts did not expand the military's

relative power compared to civilian authorities and, therefore, did not constitute an erosion of civilian control.

Summary table (Table 4.6) provides an overview of the explanatory power of different causal mechanisms tested in this chapter. The mechanism of *defending the profession* suggested by the policy-focused theory demonstrates the highest explanatory power in the instances of erosion by insubordination and competition. It provides plausible explanation to all seven cases of insubordination while *fear for one's life* could reliably explain only three. Considering erosion by competition, *defending the profession* plausibly explains four out of four cases. The runner up — *individual political ambitions of the military* — covers only two out of four instances of erosion by competition. The case of Ukraine does not include any instances of deference suggesting that the history of the military's dominance in security policymaking is not a sufficient factor for erosion by deference, thus weakening this alternative explanation.

To conclude, the case of the war in Ukraine shows how the change in the threat perception can close the gap between the military profession and the government's policies. This finding provides additional support to the explanation of erosion by competition and insubordination through the mechanism of *defending the profession*. In addition, the above analysis showed that the policy-focused theory can provide valuable insights about the government's policies about the use of force for actors other than the military. Finally, the evidence suggests, that even under conditions favorable for the military's involvement in politics (e.g., weak institutions, economic instability, intrastate conflict), erosion of civilian control originates in government's policies about the use of force and not the political ambitions of the military.



**Table 4.6 Ukraine: Summary table**

Form of erosion	Causal Mechanisms	Explanatory power
<b>Erosion by insubordination (both the AFU and battalions) (N = 7)</b>	<i>Defending the profession</i>	7/7
	<i>Weak oversight</i>	1/7
	<i>Fear for one's life</i>	3/7
<b>Erosion by competition by the battalions (N = 4)</b>	<i>Defending the profession</i>	4/4
	<i>Weak institutions</i>	1/4
	<i>Low gov's legitimacy</i>	0/4
	<i>Poor econ. performance</i>	0/4
	<i>Uncertainty about the regime</i>	0/4
	<i>Contracting on violence</i>	0/4
	<i>Individual ambitions</i>	2/4
<b>Erosion by deference (N = 0)</b>	N/A	N/A

**CHAPTER 5:**  
**ISRAEL IN THE FIRST INTIFADA**  
**AND THE OSLO PROCESS (1987-1999):**  
**THE LIMITS OF CIVIL-MILITARY PARTNERSHIP**

**Introduction**

The case of the Israeli government's use of force in the First Intifada (1987-1993) and the early years of the Oslo Process (1993-1996) shows that the policies of civilian government regarding the use of force can lead to the erosion of civilian control even when the military takes an extensive part in policymaking. Unlike in other developed democracies, in Israel, civil-military relations are not based on the separation between political and military spheres. In contrast, tight interconnectedness between civilians and the military assures the military's subordination and civilian primacy in political matters. Yet, even under these unusual conditions, the policy-focused theory of erosion of civilian control demonstrates substantial explanatory power. Specifically, the below findings show that even in Israel, where the military historically enjoyed a strong influence in politics, it is the civilian government's policies that lead to the erosion of civilian control. In other words, even when the military is politically powerful, the civilian side still bears the responsibility for weakening civilian control.

The initial analytical expectation from this case study was to find limited evidence of the government policies' erosive effect on civilian control for the following reasons. First, the IDF historically took an active part in the policymaking process. This condition makes it unlikely that the government would adopt a policy threatening the military profession and causing erosion of civilian control, as predicted by the policy-focused theory. Second, throughout its history, the IDF performed a wide range of missions, from building agricultural

settlements to performing sub-conventional raids against non-state actors, to facilitating the military occupation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, to fighting conventional wars against powerful state adversaries. This observation allowed us to assume that the IDF has broad professional boundaries and can accommodate a wide variation in missions. Such a wide range of missions could decrease the chances that the government's use of the IDF in the First Intifada would pose a threat to the military's profession. Finally, the Israeli tradition of civil-military partnership already relies on an embedded norm of considerable civilian deference to the military in policymaking. Therefore, it was difficult to imagine what kind of the government's delegation of responsibility to the IDF would constitute a deviation from this norm and engender erosion of civilian control by deference.

Nevertheless, the below analysis shows that despite the above conditions, the government's use of the IDF in the First Intifada and during the Oslo Peace Process, in fact, challenged the boundaries of the military profession and created the conditions for civilian deference.<sup>342</sup> Specifically, the findings indicate that the government's policies about the use of force in the First Intifada threatened the military's responsibility, expertise, and corporateness. In line with the predictions of the policy-focused theory, this threat triggered the mechanism of *defending the profession* and led to erosion by insubordination and competition against the government.

Moreover, in the course of the First Intifada and the Oslo Process, the government delegated the military the political responsibilities that went beyond existing norms of civil-military partnership. This condition resulted in the erosion of civilian control by deference. The evidence indicates that the government first used the IDF to avoid the responsibility for political risks associated with the

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<sup>342</sup> To collect data for the below analysis, I prioritized the sources contemporary to the described events written in English and Hebrew. This decision allowed me to partially avoid the hindsight bias and the projection of the subsequent failure of the Peace Process and the eruption of the Second Intifada on the analysis of the events happening in 1987-1996.

Intifada and then took advantage of the military's credibility to promote territorial concessions during the Peace Process. Both findings are consistent with the explanations for erosion by deference specified by the policy-focused theory — avoiding responsibility and boosting approval. Therefore, against the initial expectations, the case of Israel in the First Intifada and the Oslo Process supports the predictions of the policy-focused theory of erosion.

The chapter begins by discussing pre-Intifada civil-military relations. It outlines the historical roots of the peculiar civil-military relations, the paradoxes of Israeli civilian control of the military, and the three pillars of the IDF's military profession — responsibility, expertise, and corporateness. The following sections discuss the instances of erosion by insubordination, competition, and deference and test the plausibility of policy-focused explanations. To increase the level of confidence in the policy-focused hypotheses, each section also analyzes the plausibility of alternative explanations. The fifth section discusses the implications of the main findings of this chapter for theory and policy.

## **1. Pre-conflict Civil-Military Relations in Israel**

### ***Historical roots of Israeli peculiar civil-military relations before 1987***

Civil-military relations in Israel do not match the pattern common for democratic states in which the military does not participate in domestic politics and decision-making. Historically, experts described Israeli civil-military relations as being harmonious,<sup>343</sup> symbiotic,<sup>344</sup> and characterized them as a political-

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<sup>343</sup> Rebecca L. Schiff, "Civil-Military Relations Reconsidered: Israel as an 'Uncivil' State," *Security Studies* 1, no. 4 (June 1992): 636–58, 637; Eva Etzioni-Halevy, "Civil-Military Relations and Democracy: The Case of the Military-Political Elites' Connection in Israel," *Armed Forces & Society* 22, no. 3 (1996): 401–17, 401.

<sup>344</sup> Stuart A. Cohen, "Changing Civil-Military Relations in Israel: Towards an Over-Subordinate IDF?," *Israel Affairs* 12, no. 4 (October 2006): 769–88, 773.

military partnership in which the military is an equal partner.<sup>345</sup> Several historical conditions contributed to this high degree of interconnectedness between the Israeli government and the IDF.

To begin, in the first 45 years of its existence, Israel experienced six wars. Therefore, in the formative period of the state and civil-military relations in Israel, there was barely any distinction between wartime and peacetime.<sup>346</sup> Repeated hostilities brought security issues to the forefront of the political agenda, positioned the military at the center of policymaking activities, and blurred the boundaries between civilian and military spheres of influence.<sup>347</sup> Moreover, since the state's inception, the Israeli leadership has considered every national problem as a security issue.<sup>348</sup> This condition justified the extensive military involvement in civilian and political life. However, despite wide prerogatives, the military did not try to take over the government. Instead, the IDF became one of the pillars of the Israeli society, the melting pot for new immigrants, and the most reliable tool of Israeli statecraft.<sup>349</sup> The extensive involvement of the military in politics and an

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<sup>345</sup> Yoram Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy* (United States Institute of Peace Washington, D. C, 2002), 11; Stuart A. Cohen, *Israel and Its Army: From Cohesion to Confusion* (Routledge, 2008), 1.

<sup>346</sup> Yehuda Ben-Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 28.

<sup>347</sup> Stuart A. Cohen, "The Israel Defense Forces (IDF): From a 'People's Army' to a 'Professional Military'-Causes and Implications," *Armed Forces & Society* 21, no. 2 (January 1995): 237–54, 248; Charles D. Freilich, "National Security Decision-Making in Israel: Processes, Pathologies, and Strengths," *The Middle East Journal* 60, no. 4 (October 1, 2006): 635–63, 635; Yagil Levy, "A Revised Model of Civilian Control of the Military: The Interaction between the Republican Exchange and the Control Exchange," *Armed Forces & Society* 38, no. 4 (October 2012): 529–56, 532.

<sup>348</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, "Patterns of Militarism in Israel," *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 34, no. 2 (1993): 196–223, 207; Uri Bar-Joseph, "Towards a Paradigm Shift in Israel's National Security Conception," *Israel Affairs* 6, no. 3–4 (March 2000): 99–114, 105; Sergio Catignani, "Political–Military Relations," in *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas* (Routledge, 2008), 36–37.

<sup>349</sup> Uri Ben-Eliezer, "Rethinking the Civil-Military Relations Paradigm: The Inverse Relation between Militarism and Praetorianism through the Example of Israel," *Comparative Political Studies* 30, no. 3 (1997): 356–74.

outsized influence on policymaking became a norm in Israeli civil-military relations.<sup>350</sup>

Second, at the time of the IDF's creation in 1948, the original ordinance did not include any mention of civil-military relations.<sup>351</sup> Civilian supremacy over the armed forces rested on David Ben-Gurion's personal authority and charisma.<sup>352</sup> Thus, Israeli civil-military relations resembled Huntington's subjective civilian control.<sup>353</sup> The issue of power balance between the military and the government did not find reflection in the formal or legal documents until 1976. Moreover, in the first decade of its existence, the IDF was not exclusively the military but also a nation-building force. It participated in numerous civilian enterprises, including the construction of agricultural settlements, providing instruction to school children from underprivileged communities, and building housing for the new immigrants.<sup>354</sup> While the IDF's participation in these low-skilled projects vanished with time, its expansion in the civilian and political sphere persisted. Overall, the lack of clear thinking on the limits of the IDF's prerogatives prevented the separation of the army from politics.

Third, the IDF historically enjoyed high prestige and public appeal, which allowed military elites to convert their battlefield achievements into political careers. For instance, after the miraculous victory in the Six-Day War (1967), an especially high number of high-ranking officers entered the Israeli parliament (the Knesset), launching the era of the generals in Israeli politics.<sup>355</sup> In addition, after 1967, the IDF became responsible for providing civil administration in the

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<sup>350</sup> Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy*.

<sup>351</sup> Ben-Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 33.

<sup>352</sup> Metin Heper and Joshua R. Itzkowitz-Shiffrin, "Civil-Military Relations in Israel and Turkey," *Journal of Political & Military Sociology*, 2005, 231–48, 232.

<sup>353</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*.

<sup>354</sup> Cohen, "The Israel Defense Forces (IDF)," 246; Bar-Joseph, "Towards a Paradigm Shift in Israel's National Security Conception," 105; Sergio Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas: Dilemmas of a Conventional Army* (Routledge, 2008), 30.

<sup>355</sup> Schiff, "Civil-Military Relations Reconsidered," 644.

occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.<sup>356</sup> The establishment of the military government and then military-led Civil Administration in the occupied territories expanded the IDF's professional prerogatives and increased the government's dependence on the military in day-to-day politics.

The subsequent events brought some, even though insufficient, clarity to Israeli civil-military relations. After the strategic blunder of the Yom Kippur war (1973), the conclusions of the Agranat committee investigating the reasons for the tragedy launched the process of much-needed reforms of civilian control of the military. The committee found that "there [was] no clear definition of distribution of authorities, obligations, and responsibilities in matters of defense... and of the relationship between the political leadership and the high command of the IDF."<sup>357</sup> As a result, for the first time in Israel's history, the *Basic Law: the Army* (1976) obliged the military to look to civilian leaders for decisions on military policy, specified that the IDF is subject to the authority of the government and that the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) is subordinate to the Minister of Defense.<sup>358</sup> The new law, however, remained silent on the relationships between the Minister of Defense and the Prime Minister on security-related issues. Moreover, despite the reforms, the decreased trust in the government motivated the IDF elites to have more and not less influence in politics to prevent the politicians from using the military as a scapegoat in the future.

More friction occurred in Israeli civil-military relations when in 1978, the left-wing party Mapai, which was in power since Israel's independence and enjoyed close and productive relations with the IDF, lost the election. The right-wing Likud took the leading role in the coalition government for the first time. This political change loosened the tight connections between the high military

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<sup>356</sup> Heper and Itzkowitz-Shiffrinson, "Civil-Military Relations in Israel and Turkey," 234.

<sup>357</sup> Cited from Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 41.

<sup>358</sup> Ben-Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, 31-32; Heper and Itzkowitz-Shiffrinson, "Civil-Military Relations in Israel and Turkey," 236; Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 41.

officers and the government since the Likud could not cultivate loyal military leadership while in opposition before 1978.<sup>359</sup> When the Likud-led government started the first Lebanon war (1982) against the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), it was the first massive use of the IDF that did not qualify as “the war of no choice.” The Israeli public questioned this war’s necessity for the security of the state and its citizens, and so did some of the IDF officers.<sup>360</sup> The First Lebanon war (1982-1985) gave rise to a new phenomenon in Israeli civil-military relations—conscientious objection — the refusal to serve in the IDF for moral reasons.<sup>361</sup>

In 1984 Gen. (Res.) Yitzhak Rabin became the MoD in the National Unity government of Labor and Likud parties (1984-1988). Rabin’s military background and extensive political experience helped harmonize civil-military relations. Nevertheless, the security challenges falling outside of the military’s preferred professional turf challenged this harmony. In 1985, the IDF proved to be ineffective in countering the insurgency in Southern Lebanon, and Rabin ordered the withdrawal of troops from their positions to create a security zone.<sup>362</sup> This failure, however, did not prevent Rabin from deploying the IDF in the occupied territories two years later to “strike the [Intifada] out of the agenda.”<sup>363</sup> The effects of this decision on Israeli civil-military relations constitute the main focus of the chapter and are discussed below in detail.

To conclude, historical conditions such as ambitious state-building, hostile regional environment, immature political system, and new security challenges—

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<sup>359</sup> Heper and Itzkowitz-Shiffrinson, “Civil-Military Relations in Israel and Turkey,” 235.

<sup>360</sup> Efraim Inbar, “The ‘No Choice War’ Debate in Israel,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 12, no. 1 (March 1989): 22–37, 29.

<sup>361</sup> Ruth Linn, “When the Individual Soldier Says ‘No’ to War: A Look at Selective Refusal during the Intifada,” *Journal of Peace Research* 33, no. 4 (1996): 421–31.

<sup>362</sup> Efraim Inbar, “Yitzhak Rabin and Israel’s National Security,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 20, no. 2 (June 1997): 25–40.

<sup>363</sup> Efraim Inbar, “Israel’s Small War: The Military Response to the Intifada,” *Armed Forces & Society* 18, no. 1 (1991): 29–50, 33



left their imprint on civil-military relations producing the key weaknesses of civilian control discussed below.

### ***Civilian control and civil-military partnership***

As mentioned above, civil-military relations in Israel are non-typical for democratic states and involve extensive involvement of the military in politics.<sup>364</sup> Interestingly, the explanation for this phenomenon is not a power-hungry military but rather an underdeveloped civilian component of civil-military relations.<sup>365</sup> Below, I describe the main weaknesses of Israeli civil-military relations and their implications for civilian control. Then, taking into account the peculiar nature of civilian control in Israel, I contextualize the three forms of its erosion that constitute the focus of this research — erosion by competition, insubordination, and civilian deference to the military — to match the Israeli realities.

**Baked-in deference.** First, high levels of civilian deference to the military is an innate characteristic of Israeli civil-military relations. Civilian officials partner with the IDF elites in both policy formulation and implementation. The latter plays the role going far beyond giving the “best military advice” and enjoying high levels of political influence.<sup>366</sup> Traditionally, Israeli leadership had a tendency to consider all wars as being imposed upon the state by its enemies.<sup>367</sup> Relying on this image of “wars of no choice” allowed different Israeli governments to approach the use of force without a long-term political vision.

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<sup>364</sup> Schiff, “Civil-Military Relations Reconsidered,” 647; Etzioni-Halevy, “Civil-Military Relations and Democracy,” 401; Cohen, “Changing Civil–Military Relations in Israel,” 769.

<sup>365</sup> Schiff, “Civil-Military Relations Reconsidered.”

<sup>366</sup> Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel’s Palestinian Policy*, 5.

<sup>367</sup> Even though in the wars of 1956, 1967, and 1982 Israel took the initiative. See Inbar, “The ‘No Choice War’ Debate in Israel.”

The governments let the military “do its thing” and later put the responsibility for failures and miscalculations on the IDF.<sup>368</sup>

One of the reasons for this inherent deference is that the Israeli multi-party political system, based on a coalition government, disincentivizes the politicians from openly making bold decisions, especially in defense and security.<sup>369</sup> The ministers are trying to navigate the minefield of ideological compromise between the coalition’s parties without blowing up the government agreement or damaging their chances for reelection.<sup>370</sup> To preserve the coalition, civilian officials often procrastinate until the development of the events produces the situation of “no choice” requiring improvisation, including by military means.<sup>371</sup> In addition, civilian politicians have a tendency to keep their directives to the IDF vague and inarticulate, making it the military’s responsibility to interpret and execute the missions.<sup>372</sup> This peculiarity of the Israeli political system creates favorable conditions for civilian deference to the military to avoid responsibility, especially in security policymaking.

In particular, the Israeli government historically did not have a civilian security policymaking body and relied on the IDF’s Strategic Planning Division for identifying the national interests, as well as military, political, and economic

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<sup>368</sup> Inbar, “The ‘No Choice War’ Debate in Israel,” 23. For instance, the Agranat Committee that investigated the reasons for Israel’s failure to foresee the 1973 Yom Kippur war blamed the blunder on the IDF and did not investigate the role of the political leadership. Only the public uproar that followed the controversy forced Prime Minister Golda Meir to take responsibility and resign in 1974 (See Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel’s Palestinian Policy*, 21).

<sup>369</sup> Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel’s Palestinian Policy*, 5; Freilich, “National Security Decision-Making in Israel.”

<sup>370</sup> Freilich, “National Security Decision-Making in Israel,” 639, 645.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 646.

<sup>372</sup> Kobi Michael, “The Dilemma behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil—Military Relations: The ‘Discourse Space’ Model and the Israeli Case during the Oslo Process,” *Armed Forces & Society* 33, no. 4 (July 2007): 518–46, 531.

aspects of national security.<sup>373</sup> Attempts to establish a civilian National Security Council (NSC) faced the opposition of existing stakeholders. Many of them were socialized in the defense establishment and resisted the creation of the source of security policy expertise alternative to the IDF.<sup>374</sup> Even when the NSC formally took shape in 1999, it had little influence on policy formulation.<sup>375</sup>

In addition to already extensive civilian deference to the military in policymaking, the continuous occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip since 1967 expanded the IDF's domestic political prerogatives since it became the military's job to provide civil governance to Palestinians.<sup>376</sup> In this way, the Israeli government delegated the responsibility for governing the occupied civilian populations to the IDF and distanced itself from most of the policymaking on the occupation. As I show below, this tendency for the government's withdrawal from policymaking with regard to the occupied territories will be even more striking at the beginning of the First Intifada.

**The culture that favors insubordination and competition.** In the absence of effective means of civilian oversight, the government's supremacy over the IDF largely depends on the internalization of the norm of civilian dominance by the military echelon.<sup>377</sup> This reliance on a Huntingtonian idea of the military's professional self-restraint in the absence of a clear separation of civilian and military spheres is counterproductive as it contradicts the formative aspects of Israeli military culture.

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<sup>373</sup> Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy*, 23; Heper and Itzkowitz-Shiffrinson, "Civil-Military Relations in Israel and Turkey," 234; Freilich, "National Security Decision-Making in Israel," 657. For example, the Planning Division was the Menachem Begin's principal staff arm in the preparations for the peace talks with Egypt in 1977 (See Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy*, 23).

<sup>374</sup> Efraim Inbar, "Israeli National Security, 1973-96," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 555, no. 1 (1998): 62–81, 64.

<sup>375</sup> Freilich, "National Security Decision-Making in Israel," 641.

<sup>376</sup> Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy*, 20.

<sup>377</sup> Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy*, 6.

In particular, Israeli military culture considers operational initiative and improvisation (Heb.: *iltur*) on the lowest level of command as a virtue and not a vice. This condition blurs the definition of insubordination. For instance, on one notable occasion in the mid-1950s, CGS Moshe Dayan learned that the IDF was involved in a series of unauthorized clashes across the border with Jordan. While being surprised by this information, he, nevertheless, noted: "I prefer initiative and excessive action, even if they're accompanied by the occasional mistake, over passivity [ . . . ] and covering oneself with seven approvals of the operation before action."<sup>378</sup> This approach reflects the IDF's long tradition of "self-authorization" for the missions by using the MoD for a post factum rubber-stamp approval.<sup>379</sup>

This preference for the initiative also creates favorable conditions for erosion by competition when the military thinks that the government prevents it from fulfilling its professional duties. For example, it was the group of high-ranking IDF officers that pressured Prime Minister Levy Eshkol to start the Six-Day war in 1967. Moreover, the occupation of Jerusalem in the course of that war was not a predetermined government policy achieved by military means. Quite the opposite, despite the order not to attack the Old City of Jerusalem, the head of the Central Command, General Uzi Narkiss, created the conditions on the ground to take over the forbidden target, including the Wailing Wall.<sup>380</sup> Thus, the military's operational initiative imposed a new political reality upon the state, and Israel struggles with its consequences until today. Overall, the professional culture of the IDF does not prevent it from insubordination or competition and, in some instances, even encourages such behavior.

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<sup>378</sup> Cited from Gil-li Vardi, "'Pounding Their Feet': Israeli Military Culture as Reflected in Early IDF Combat History," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 31, no. 2 (April 2008): 295–324, 302.

<sup>379</sup> Vardi, "'Pounding Their Feet.'"

<sup>380</sup> Ibid, 319-320.

**Generals in Politics.** Israel has no legal mechanisms that would prevent what Israelis call “parachuting”— a swift transition from the top of the military ranks to the high political offices.<sup>381</sup> This condition leads to a heavy presence of the members of the military profession in politics and fosters the politicization of the high military officers. Indeed, some distinguished officers model their professional behavior and choices based on the close perspectives of a post-military political career.<sup>382</sup> Since the inception of the state, promotions in military ranks depended on the party loyalty of the officers.<sup>383</sup> No surprise that until the 1980s, all chiefs of staff but one were aligned with the party in power at the time of their appointment.<sup>384</sup> Political parties cultivated relationships with prominent officers to later include them on the voting lists and increase public confidence in the party.<sup>385</sup> It is also important to note that most military officers ran with the parties from the incumbent coalition, thus increasing their chances to win and have a seat in the next government.<sup>386</sup>

While Israeli law prohibits the active-duty military from occupying political positions, the officers can go into politics 100 days after retiring and joining the reserves.<sup>387</sup> Such a short break between occupying the military and political positions allows officers-turned-politicians to maintain active networks in the military while enjoying the power and legitimacy of the government office. Interestingly, out of 12 people who served Israeli PMs, only three—Yitzhak Rabin, Ehud Barak, and Ariel Sharon—were career military. However, the situation is strikingly different when we consider the ministers of defense: out of

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<sup>381</sup> Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy*, 6.

<sup>382</sup> Cohen, “The Israel Defense Forces (IDF),” 249.

<sup>383</sup> Heper and Itzkowitz-Shiffrinson, “Civil-Military Relations in Israel and Turkey,” 233.

<sup>384</sup> Etzioni-Halevy, “Civil-Military Relations and Democracy,” 408.

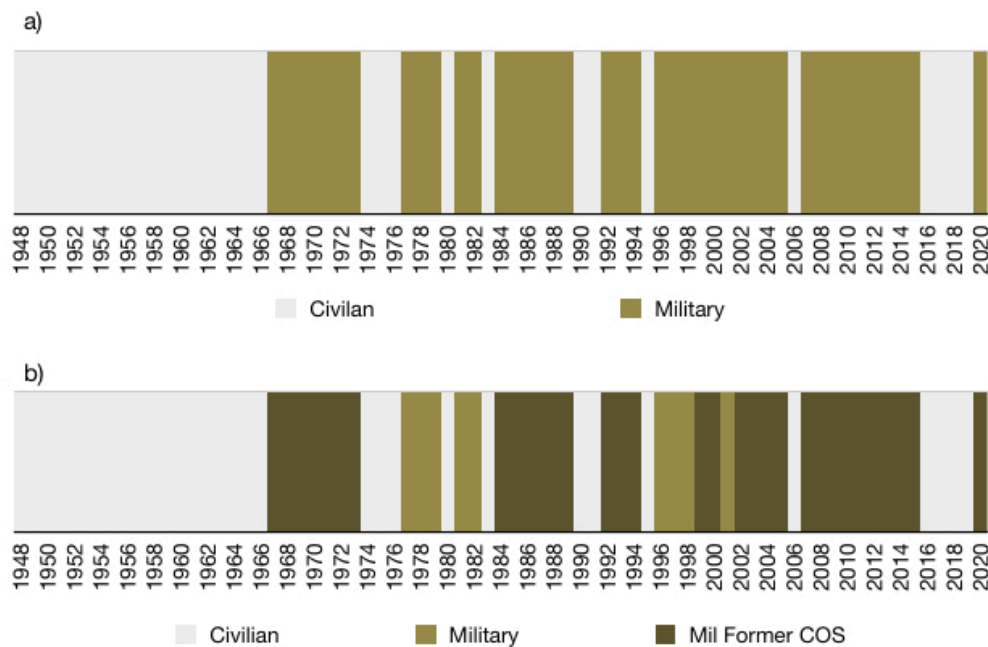
<sup>385</sup> Heper and Itzkowitz-Shiffrinson, “Civil-Military Relations in Israel and Turkey,” 233.

<sup>386</sup> Etzioni-Halevy, “Civil-Military Relations and Democracy,” 410.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 409.

21 people who occupied this position, ten (almost half) were career military. Members of the military profession were in charge of the ministry of defense for 42 out of 73 years of Israel's history since 1948 (Figure 5.1a). Thirty-two (32) out of 42 years of military dominance in the MoD, the former Chiefs of the General Staff occupied the position of the minister, exemplifying the career continuity between the military and political elites (Figure 5.1b). While this linkage between the military and political careers definitely leads to the dominance of the members of the military profession in the Ministry of Defense, it also helps hold the CGS subordinate to the MoD since insubordination or competition can hinder the political future of the high military officers.<sup>388</sup>

**Figure 5.1 Israeli Ministers of Defense 1948-2020**



In the case of Israel, analyzing the erosion of civilian control during the First Intifada would require taking into account the above peculiarities—inherent deference, preference for initiative and self-authorization, and military-political career nexus. On a general level, given the cooperative nature of civil-military

<sup>388</sup> Cohen, “Changing Civil–Military Relations in Israel,” 781.

relationships, the erosion of civilian control would manifest itself in the disruption of political-military partnership and the military's withdrawal from these cooperative relationships.

More specifically, erosion by deference would have to go beyond the routine involvement of the military in policymaking (which is a norm) and include the expansion of the military's responsibility beyond what the IDF considers acceptable in civil-military partnership. Erosion by competition would have to include not simply the military running in elections with the incumbent parties (which is also a norm in Israel) but criticizing and undermining the current government's policy. Analyzing erosion by insubordination would require keeping in mind that IDF's organizational culture prioritizes high levels of delegation of authority to battlefield commanders and praises operational improvisation and ingenuity. In addition to battlefield instances of insubordination, the Israeli case would also include the military's withdrawal of cooperation with the government.

The new policy-focused theory of erosion of civilian control helps investigate how government policies contribute to the diminishing of civilian power over the armed forces. One of the central arguments of this theory is that when the government's policies stretch the boundaries of the military profession, the military engages in insubordination or political contestation. To understand how the government's policies about the use of force in the occupied territories affected the IDF's profession, it is important to review how the Israeli military sees the three pillars of military professionalism — responsibility, expertise, and corporateness. Below I outline the IDF's understanding of its profession before 1987 and comment on how the government's policies regarding the use of force in the First Intifada challenged this understanding.

### ***The state of the IDF and the military profession before 1987***

***Responsibility.*** The core responsibility of the Israeli military is carved in its official name — the Army of *Defense* for Israel (Heb: *Tsva ha-Hagana le-*

*Yisra'el*). Despite historically defending Israel from state and non-state actors,<sup>389</sup> the IDF resisted adopting sub-conventional missions as part of its core responsibility.<sup>390</sup> The military considered threats posed by the insurgent and guerrilla attacks as peripheral and inferior to conventional threats by state actors.<sup>391</sup> Instead, the IDF preferred to model itself as a professional armed force responsible for defending the state of Israel by conventional means.<sup>392</sup>

This imbalance of priorities prevented the IDF from preparing for the challenges of intra-border disturbances such as the First Intifada. For example, the analysis of publications in the IDF's professional journal *Maarachot* from 1948 to 2000 shows that only 3% of the publications dealt with sub-conventional threats (small wars, insurgencies, non-state actors), while 94% discussed conventional wars.<sup>393</sup> Examining the distribution over time makes it evident that Israel's engagement in small wars and counterinsurgencies did not stimulate any immediate intellectual effort.<sup>394</sup> For instance, right before the First Intifada, at the time when the IDF was involved in the conflict with PLO and Syrian-sponsored guerrillas in Lebanon (1982-1987), only 1% of the *Maarachot* publications dealt with sub-conventional challenges.

Strikingly, in the period of the First Intifada (1987-1994), this number did not change.<sup>395</sup> Only around 1996, during the stalemate in the Oslo Process, the

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<sup>389</sup> Inbar, "The 'No Choice War' Debate in Israel," 23.

<sup>390</sup> Stuart A. Cohen, "How Did the Intifada Affect the IDF?," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 14, no. 3 (1994), 7.

<sup>391</sup> Stuart A. Cohen and Efraim Inbar, "Varieties of Counter-insurgency Activities: Israel's Military Operations against the Palestinians, 1948-90," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 2, no. 1 (April 1991): 41-60, 42.

<sup>392</sup> Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 72; Vardi, "'Pounding Their Feet,'" 298.

<sup>393</sup> Avi Kober, "The Intellectual and Modern Focus in Israeli Military Thinking as Reflected in Ma'arachot Articles, 1948-2000," *Armed Forces & Society* 30, no. 1 (October 2003): 141-60, 154.

<sup>394</sup> Stuart A. Cohen and Efraim Inbar, "A Taxonomy of Israel's Use of Military Force," *Comparative Strategy* 10, no. 2 (April 1991): 121-38, 129.

<sup>395</sup> Kober, "The Intellectual and Modern Focus in Israeli Military Thinking," 155.



IDF Training and Doctrine Division (TOHAD) started to demonstrate an intellectual interest in low-intensity conflict through a number of publications on the topic.<sup>396</sup> This shows that despite participating in intra-state engagements, the IDF resisted including sub-conventional challenges to its professional responsibility.

**Expertise.** Usually, the core of the military's expertise is to manage violence, predominantly in inter-state wars.<sup>397</sup> The IDF is not an exception. The responsibility to defend Israel from external threats affected how the IDF shaped its approach to managing violence. Due to the limited resources and high sensitivity to casualties, the IDF's leadership had historically preferred to employ the strategy of annihilation to the more time- and resource-consuming strategy of attrition.<sup>398</sup> The hostile geo-strategic environment in which the state of Israel and its military took shape resulted in a strong preference for offense and performance-oriented ethos (*bitsuism*). Therefore, swiftly defeating the enemy in its territory became the core of the IDF's expertise and the preferred response to attacks by state and non-state actors.<sup>399</sup>

In addition, effective deterrence is at the heart of IDF's strategic thinking. In terms of the military's expertise, it translates into the disproportionate use of military force to convince the opponent that it cannot prevail militarily. When applied to low-intensity conflict, achieving deterrence involved swift retaliation against terrorism and insurgent warfare.<sup>400</sup> The brief and rapid engagements during the retaliation raids mirrored the abovementioned preference of the IDF for

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<sup>396</sup> Niccolò Petrelli, "Deterring Insurgents: Culture, Adaptation and the Evolution of Israeli Counterinsurgency, 1987–2005," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 5 (October 1, 2013): 666–91, 670.

<sup>397</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*.

<sup>398</sup> With some exceptions, see Cohen and Inbar, "A Taxonomy of Israel's Use of Military Force," 124.

<sup>399</sup> Petrelli, "Deterring Insurgents," 676.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid*, 675.

the strategy of annihilation over attrition.<sup>401</sup> When it came to dealing with civilians, the IDF perceived cultural and religious differences between the Israeli and Palestinian populations as an impediment to the successful application of the “winning the hearts and minds” approach to counterinsurgency.<sup>402</sup> Therefore, the IDF’s expertise in low-intensity conflict was heavily skewed towards the use of overwhelming force to deter the insurgents rather than cutting off their popular support, as the classic counterinsurgency strategy suggests.

The fact that the IDF considered sub-conventional missions as marginal to its responsibility is reflected in the lack of adequate training and expertise to tackle these threats. Specifically, the IDF failed to integrate the lessons learned in the First Lebanon War against the PLO into a coherent operational framework of low-intensity conflict. This left the military unprepared for the First Intifada in 1987.<sup>403</sup> Furthermore, even in 1991, almost four years after the beginning of the first Intifada, the IDF Command and Staff College did not include the strategic and operational challenges of the Palestinian uprising in its curriculum for IDF officers.<sup>404</sup> On the lower level, the new draftees who were about to deploy in the occupied territories in the late 1980s and early 1990s underwent only several days of relevant tactical training with a limited intellectual component.<sup>405</sup>

The application of the existing principles — preference for offensive, deterrence by punishment, performance-oriented ethos, and improvisation — to civilian resistance resulted in the IDF’s reliance on punishments, curfews, arrests, and destruction of property.<sup>406</sup> Predictably, these approaches to managing violence proved to be counterproductive and backfired with the escalation of resistance and

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<sup>401</sup> Cohen, “Changing Emphases in Israel’s Military Commitments, 1981–1991,” 342.

<sup>402</sup> Petrelli, “Deterring Insurgents,” 680.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid, 668.

<sup>404</sup> Inbar, “Israel’s Small War,” 41; Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 92.

<sup>405</sup> Inbar, “Israel’s Small War,” 41.

<sup>406</sup> Petrelli, “Deterring Insurgents,” 682.

international criticism of the IDF. These difficulties with adaptation to the new type of threat showed that the challenge of the First Intifada lay beyond the IDF's professional expertise.

**Corporateness.** The sense of military corporateness is the third pillar of the military profession. The IDF has a three-tier structure, including a relatively small number of career officers, male and female conscripts, and predominantly male reservists.<sup>407</sup> Career officers undergo special courses through which they formally socialize in the military profession. In contrast, conscripts and reservists internalize the sense of who the IDF soldier is through performing their service tasks as well as from preexisting societal beliefs. A constant influx of new conscripts and regular return of the reservists to the service helps maintain close ties between the military and the society.<sup>408</sup> In the 1950s, Gen. Yigael Yadin described this intertwined relationship between citizenry and service, saying that the Israeli citizen “is a soldier on ten months’ leave.”<sup>409</sup> Therefore, the popular image of the IDF has a strong effect on the professional expectations of conscripts and reservists.

The historical legacies of the creation of the state of Israel and the IDF in the immediate aftermath of World War II and the Holocaust left their imprint on the ethical component of military corporateness. The “purity of arms” principle (Heb.: *tohar neshek*) became central to the IDF’s self-perception as a moral army that defends the Jewish state from much stronger adversaries in the wars of no choice.<sup>410</sup> This principle implies that the IDF has to abstain from using force against unarmed civilians, respect sacred buildings and places of worship, not

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<sup>407</sup> Cohen, “How Did the Intifada Affect the IDF?” 15; Stuart A. Cohen, “The Peace Process and Its Impact on the Development of a ‘Slimmer and Smarter’ Israel Defence Force,” *Israel Affairs* 1, no. 4 (June 1995): 1–21, 2.

<sup>408</sup> Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel’s Palestinian Policy*, 12.

<sup>409</sup> Ben-Eliezer, “Rethinking the Civil-Military Relations Paradigm,” 363.

<sup>410</sup> Ruth Linn, *Conscience at War: The Israeli Soldier as a Moral Critic*, SUNY Series in Israeli Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

participate in looting, and provide humane treatment to the prisoners of war.<sup>411</sup> The purity of arms also translates into the obligation of every IDF soldier to disobey an illegal order and, if necessary, to perform self-sacrifice to save the lives of innocent civilians.<sup>412</sup> The adherence to the purity of arms was essential to foster societal trust in the IDF and cultivate the willingness to serve in the new generations of Israeli soldiers.

Indeed, for a long time, the IDF's enjoyed the "aura of virtual sanctity"<sup>413</sup> — the perception of the military as moral, righteous, and capable saviors of the nation enjoying high status and prestige.<sup>414</sup> This condition resulted in the high respect from the general population, youths' eagerness to serve in the IDF,<sup>415</sup> and limited scrutiny and criticism in the Israeli media. Service in the IDF constituted the rite of passage for Israeli citizens privileging those who served and marginalizing those who did not.<sup>416</sup> The first cracks in this image appeared in the First Lebanon war (1982), which the Israeli public did not perceive as a war of no choice.<sup>417</sup> Then the First Intifada (1987) produced myriads of images and reports showing the helplessness and brutality of the IDF in dealing with the Palestinian

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<sup>411</sup> Reuven Gal, *A Portrait of the Israeli Soldier*, 52 (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1986), 239; Linn, *Conscience at War*, 142-148.

<sup>412</sup> Linn, *Conscience at War*, 143, 152; Linn, "When the Individual Soldier Says 'No' to War," 426.

<sup>413</sup> Cohen, "The Peace Process and Its Impact on the Development of a 'Slimmer and Smarter' Israel Defence Force," 9.

<sup>414</sup> Michael, "The Dilemma behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil—Military Relations," 523.

<sup>415</sup> Cohen, *Israel and Its Army*, 1; Amos Harel, "Israel's Evolving Military: The IDF Adapts to New Threats," *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 4 (2016): 43–50, 47.

<sup>416</sup> Schiff, "Civil-Military Relations Reconsidered," 646; Cohen, "The Peace Process and Its Impact on the Development of a 'Slimmer and Smarter' Israel Defence Force," 15.

<sup>417</sup> Ben-Eliezer, "Rethinking the Civil-Military Relations Paradigm," 363; Harel, "Israel's Evolving Military," 47.

uprising.<sup>418</sup> It undermined the popular image of the military as “almost totemistic objects of veneration and esteem.”<sup>419</sup>

Overall, the IDF sees its core responsibility as defending the state of Israel from existential threats by conventional means. This defensive mission translates in the expertise of swift offensive use of overwhelming force to deter future attacks.<sup>420</sup> The threefold structure of the IDF relying on the large numbers of conscripts and reservists makes the corporate spirit of the military strongly connected to the popular perception of the institution. The image of the righteous defenders of the nation under attack for a long time constituted the core of the IDF’s corporateness.

The First Palestinian Intifada challenged all three pillars of the IDF’s professional definition (See Table 5.1). First, the Palestinian riots did not pose an existential threat to the state of Israel. Second, the IDF’s expertise in managing violence by offensive measures consistent with the strategy of annihilation did not offer any practical solutions to the grass-root threat with horizontal organization posed by the First Intifada riots.<sup>421</sup> Instead, the Palestinian uprising compelled the Israeli leadership to adopt the strategy of attrition which required the investment of extensive resources and retraining of numerous personnel to deal with the threat that was far from existential.<sup>422</sup> Finally, the news coverage of the use of military force in the First Intifada cast a dark shadow on the image of the IDF as a virtuous institution defending Israel in wars of no choice. It questioned the principle of the purity of arms, which is central to the IDF’s positive societal and

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<sup>418</sup> Cohen, “The Peace Process and Its Impact on the Development of a ‘Slimmer and Smarter’ Israel Defence Force,” 9-10.

<sup>419</sup> Cohen, “The Israel Defense Forces (IDF),” 241.

<sup>420</sup> Petrelli, “Deterring Insurgents,” 675.

<sup>421</sup> Cohen, “How Did the Intifada Affect the IDF?” 11; Eitan Alimi, *Israeli Politics and the First Palestinian Intifada: Political Opportunities, Framing Processes and Contentious Politics* (Routledge, 2007), 66.

<sup>422</sup> Cohen and Inbar, “A Taxonomy of Israel’s Use of Military Force,” 129.

self-perception.<sup>423</sup> In the section below, I review the policies that the Israeli government employed in the First Intifada and then analyze their effect on the military profession and erosion of civilian control.

**Table 5.1 IDF's military profession and the challenges of the First Intifada**

Aspect of the Profession	IDF's understanding of the profession	Challenges of the First Intifada
<b>Responsibility</b>	Defending Israel from external existential threats.	Intra-border low-intensity decentralized civilian uprising.
<b>Expertise</b>	Offensive use of massive conventional force; Preference for annihilation over attrition.	Performance of policing duties; Limitations on the use of fire-power; Strategy of attrition.
<b>Corporateness</b>	Citizen soldier of a moral army upholding the purity of arms and defending Israel from a strong adversary in wars of no choice.	Using force against civilian population, including children; The policy of beatings; Enforcing the occupation against resisting civilians.

## 2. Erosion of Civilian Control by Insubordination

According to the policy-focused theory, the military engages in insubordination to defend the military profession from the harmful effects of governmental policies threatening the military's sense of responsibility, expertise, and corporateness. Erosion by insubordination manifests in the forms of foot-dragging, refusal to take or implement orders, desertions, resignations, or systematic failure to report to civilian authorities. In the case of Israel during the First Intifada, erosion by insubordination manifested in the refusal to serve in the occupied territories, avoiding the draft, foot-dragging, and resignations of mid-level and high officers. The evidence from the Israeli case suggests that the

<sup>423</sup> Tamar Liebes and Shoshana Blum-Kulka, "Managing a Moral Dilemma: Israeli Soldiers in the Intifada," *Armed Forces & Society* 21, no. 1 (1994): 45–68, 46; Ben-Eliezer, "Rethinking the Civil-Military Relations Paradigm," 369.

officers and soldiers recognized the use of force in the First Intifada as stretching the IDF's professional boundaries and, in response, engaged in acts of insubordination. Below, I discuss the evidence in detail. Then, to increase our confidence in the mechanism of defending the profession, I examine alternative explanations for insubordination advanced in existing research.

### ***Insubordination among the reservists and conscripts***

The Israeli government's response to the riots of the First Intifada resulted in an unprecedented number of conscripts and reservists refusing to serve or avoiding the draft.<sup>424</sup> MoD Rabin wanted to avoid casualties among Palestinian protesters that would lead to more funeral demonstrations and create an unfavorable image of Israel internationally.<sup>425</sup> He was impressed with how the Border Police managed to deal with the riots using sticks. Thus, the IDF got equipped with batons to disperse the demonstrations by damaging the protesters just enough so they would abstain from further riots. This approach received the label of the "policy of beatings" or "broken bones policy."<sup>426</sup> It was complemented with mass arrests, detaining more than 2,500 Palestinians between January and March 1988.<sup>427</sup> Despite Rabin's expectations, wounded protesters appearing in the media created an even worse image of Israel and the IDF than the previous reports on the number of killed people.<sup>428</sup> International and domestic media, human rights groups, and political parties issued notes of criticism of the Israeli policy in the occupied territories.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 97.

<sup>425</sup> Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 1999), 589.

<sup>426</sup> Cohen, "How Did the Intifada Affect the IDF?" 9.

<sup>427</sup> Inbar, "Israel's Small War," 34.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>429</sup> Don Peretz, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising*, 1st ed. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1990), 46.

Using severe beatings against civilian protesters undermined the corporate spirit and morale of the troops resulting in erosion by insubordination.<sup>430</sup> The phenomenon of selective refusal to serve in the occupied territories for ethical reasons — *conscientious objection* — became particularly salient. The official number of full conscientious objectors during the First Intifada was almost twice higher than during the First Lebanon War and reached 300 people.<sup>431</sup> However, since obtaining the official status of a conscientious objector required a long bureaucratic process, only a small portion of refusers claimed it.<sup>432</sup> Others refused to serve or avoided the draft by making alternative arrangements (e.g., with the commanders). The issue was especially acute among the reservists.<sup>433</sup> For instance, during the first years of the Intifada, 2,500 reserve soldiers signed the *Declaration of Refusal* issued by the Yesh Gvul movement, stating:

*“We, soldiers in the IDF, declare that we will no longer accept the burden of responsibility and complicity in this moral and political deterioration. We refuse to participate in suppressing the uprising and rebellion in the Occupied Territories.”*<sup>434</sup>

The IDF sentenced about 180 of the signatories to jail terms. This number is by no means representative since military authorities preferred to release the refusers or reassign them to less morally challenging duties over sending them to jail.<sup>435</sup>

Explaining their insubordination, many refusers cite the considerations central to the IDF’s corporateness—the morality of the use of force and purity of

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<sup>430</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 590.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid.

<sup>432</sup> Peretz, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising*, 132.

<sup>433</sup> Cohen, “The Peace Process and Its Impact on the Development of a ‘Slimmer and Smarter’ Israel Defence Force,” 10.

<sup>434</sup> Yesh Gvul official website, <http://www.yesh-gvul.org.il/english>

<sup>435</sup> Cohen, “The Peace Process and Its Impact on the Development of a ‘Slimmer and Smarter’ Israel Defence Force,” 10-11; Linn, “When the Individual Soldier Says ‘No’ to War,” 422; Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 94.



arms. In particular, the top Israeli scholar of conscientious objection, Ruth Linn, concludes that during the First Intifada, a typical refuser was an experienced soldier, distressed by the requirement to deal with the civilian population, the necessity to obey illegal or immoral orders, and by the lack of pride in being the soldier of an occupying force.<sup>436</sup> Since, according to then MoD Rabin, 60% of stone-throwers were children, fighting them did not match the principles of purity of arms and the image of the IDF as a moral army.<sup>437</sup> Indeed, in a matter of weeks since the beginning of the Intifada, the asymmetry of force between the technologically advanced IDF and the Palestinians using stones and firebombs nullified the image of the Israeli military as a righteous force, defending the nation in wars of no choice against much greater Arab aggression.<sup>438</sup> As one of the soldiers put it in the interview, “there is no purity in the club and no morality in tear gas,”<sup>439</sup> pointing again at the deterioration of corporate principles of the IDF. In sum, the early government’s policies with regard to the first Intifada undermined the moral basis of the IDF’s corporateness, and thus, many reservists and conscripts met them with refusal to serve.

Beyond the policy of broken bones, other tasks assigned to the IDF by the government also did not match the military's expertise — solving the nation’s problems on the battlefield by conventional means.<sup>440</sup> First, the Intifada quickly proved to be an issue that the IDF could not solve on the battlefield, rendering the military’s expertise irrelevant.<sup>441</sup> Second, it required the IDF to perform police duties and respond in low-intensity violence while under the strict limitations on

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<sup>436</sup> Linn, “When the Individual Soldier Says ‘No’ to War,” 430.

<sup>437</sup> Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 85.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid, 81-82.

<sup>439</sup> Cited from Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 90.

<sup>440</sup> Cohen, “How Did the Intifada Affect the IDF?” 11.

<sup>441</sup> Patrick Tyler, *Fortress Israel: The inside Story of the Military Elite Who Run the Country and Why They Can’t Make Peace*, 1st ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 330.

the use of firepower.<sup>442</sup> Third, the IDF's operational concept that emphasized the offensive maneuver of ground forces proved to be inadequate in dealing with a popular uprising.<sup>443</sup> These conditions firmly placed the Intifada beyond the IDF's profession.

No surprise that the reservists socialized in the pre-Intifada IDF proved to be the most problematic component of the military.<sup>444</sup> For instance, in a separate notable case in the spring of 1988, when the government still hoped that the policy of beatings would end the conflict, a Lebanon war refusenik Adam Keller drafted as a reservist to serve in the First Intifada, defaced 117 IDF tanks and trucks with a writing "soldiers of the IDF refuse to be the occupiers and oppressors."<sup>445</sup> This statement contrasts the notions of being an IDF soldier with participation in the occupation and oppression, showing that the government policies undermined the IDF's corporateness, as well as the expertise. Keller's act limited the government's ability to use the defaced vehicles, thus conforming to the power denial dynamics of insubordination.

On less salient instances, the reservists refused to learn new police skills and perform missions that did not match the image of war ingrained in their previous professional socialization. For example, one reserve soldier justified his refusal by stating, "When the Intifada started, I knew I would refuse ... this is not a war — this is an oppression."<sup>446</sup> This explanation presumes that he would be willing to fight a war, but the Intifada clearly fell beyond the IDF's war-fighting profession. Avoiding the draft became very common among the reservists, especially after

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<sup>442</sup> Inbar, "Israel's Small War," 35; Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 90.

<sup>443</sup> Petrelli, "Deterring Insurgents," 680.

<sup>444</sup> Cohen, "How Did the Intifada Affect the IDF?" 14.

<sup>445</sup> "Adam Keller - 3 months in prison for painting political slogans on a military base [In Hebrew]," *Maariv*, May 12, 1988, The National Library of Israel, <https://www.nli.org.il/he/news-papers/mar/1988/05/12/01/article/65/?e=-----he-20--1--img-txIN%7ctxTI-----1>; Robert Hirschfield, "The Troubled Conscience of an Israeli Soldier," *America (New York, N.Y. : 1909)* 192, no. 7 (2005): 11–13, 12.

<sup>446</sup> Linn, "When the Individual Soldier Says 'No' to War," Book, 156.

Rabin declared PLO as partners in the negotiations: in 1992-1995, the number of reserve duty dodgers increased by 54%.<sup>447</sup> The expectation that the conflict will be over soon further decreased the incentives to participate in professionally questionable use of force.

In addition to the reservists, the number of the new conscripts willing to serve in the combat units decreased in the early 1990s since this service had nothing to do with learning the military skill (expertise) to protect the state of Israel from external existential threats (responsibility).<sup>448</sup> For instance, Linn mentions that 63% of the refusers named their unwillingness to be part of the occupying force as the reason for insubordination.<sup>449</sup>

### ***Insubordination among the officers***

On the higher level, the government's policy of beatings also eroded the sense of profession for the officers commanding the troops and serving in professional positions. For them, insubordination meant ending a promising military career. At the same time, compliance undermined the moral basis of corporateness and went beyond the IDF's professional expertise, which did not include systematic beatings of civilians. In fact, after serving in the Intifada, many conscript officers who could have extended their contracts to pursue military careers quit the IDF.<sup>450</sup>

For example, in January 1988, the commander of the Nablus region, Col. Yehuda Meir, ordered the beating of 12 Palestinian rioters from the nearby Beita village.<sup>451</sup> When the company commander, Ben Moshe, pointed out that beating non-resisting detainees is immoral, Meir reminded him that the order was in

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<sup>447</sup> Inbar, "Israeli National Security, 1973-96," 79.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

<sup>449</sup> Linn, "When the Individual Soldier Says 'No' to War," 427.

<sup>450</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 601.

<sup>451</sup> Linn, *Conscience at War*, 63.

compliance with the government's policy of broken bones active at the time.<sup>452</sup> Ben Moshe refused to follow the order. Despite the fact that he originally planned to become an officer and pursue a career in the IDF, after this situation, Ben Moshe decided to leave the military.<sup>453</sup> He motivated his insubordination by claiming that beating unarmed rioters "was not within the IDF moral norms and not the way the IDF resolves problems."<sup>454</sup> This explanation again points to the moral component central to the IDF's corporateness and the contradiction with the IDF's expertise in managing violence ("not the way the IDF resolves problems").

On two separate occasions, high-level career officers resigned or threatened resignation in response to the government's policies. For instance, when Rabin introduced the policy of beatings, the Chief Education Officer of the IDF, Brigadier-General Nehemya Dagan, instituted a special education program to instruct the IDF soldiers on the matters of humane treatment of protesters and on the detrimental effects of excessive use of force.<sup>455</sup> When this effort bore no fruit, and brutal beatings continued, Dagan resigned because IDF's actions in the territories contradicted his beliefs.<sup>456</sup> In addition, because of the beatings policy, the IDF legal advisor in the West Bank, Col. David Yahav, requested permission to resign. He claimed that he could not perform his professional duties as IDF legal advisor because, due to the policy of broken bones, "the law was being trampled upon, there is no longer rule of law in Judea and Samaria."<sup>457</sup> While Dagan's justification for resignation points out that the government's policy undermined the moral grounds of corporateness, Yahav's statement indicates that

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<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

<sup>453</sup> Linn, *Conscience at War*, 64.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>455</sup> Peretz, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising*, 49.

<sup>456</sup> Linn, "When the Individual Soldier Says 'No' to War"; Linn, *Conscience at War*, 147.

<sup>457</sup> Cited from Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 590. Yahav's superior, the IDF's judge advocate general, Brig. Amnon Straschnov clashed with the MOD Rabin to reverse the policy, which allowed Yahav to remain in his position.

the government's approach prevented the IDF legal officer in the West Bank from exercising his professional responsibility and expertise. Both findings are consistent with the logic of *defending the professional* mechanism.

In sum, the government's policies regarding the use of force in the Intifada undermined the corporateness, responsibility, and expertise of the IDFs conscripts, reservists, and officers and thus constituted a threat to the military profession. The IDF officers and soldiers who refused to serve or perform particular tasks recognized it and motivated their refusal to serve with considerations central to the IDF's corporateness (morality, purity of arms) and the mismatch between what the IDF should do and the missions the government asks it to perform (responsibility and expertise). To increase our confidence in this explanation, it is necessary to examine the alternatives.

### ***Alternative Explanations***

Existing research focuses on the two main explanations for military insubordination: weak oversight and the fear for one's life.

***Weak civilian oversight.*** In the case of weak oversight, the military estimates the likelihood of being caught and punished for insubordination as low and therefore engages in shirking, foot-dragging, failing to report the incidents, or refusing to take orders. This explanation answers the question what enables the military's insubordination? Nevertheless, unlike *defending the profession* explanation, it does not shed light on the motivation of the military's disobedience. Moreover, many of the abovementioned instances of insubordination were public or declarative acts (e.g., 2,500 signatures under the Declaration of Refusal, resignations, and threats to resign by high officers) and therefore went against the expectation of not being caught and punished, inherent for weak oversight explanation. In addition, the recent experiences of the First Lebanon war conscientious objectors clearly showed that refusers could pay a

high personal, professional, and societal cost for their actions.<sup>458</sup> Even in cases when refusing soldiers managed to make arrangements with their commanders and avoid the punishment, *weak oversight* only provides insight into the enabling conditions and not the driving force behind their decision. Thus, *defending the profession* mechanism offers a stronger explanation for insubordination than ineffective oversight.

***Fear for one's life.*** The second explanation for refusal—*fear for one's life*—seems plausible in the Israeli case. Indeed, service in the occupied territories required close contact with the adversary. In addition, the refusing soldiers might have omitted this explanation in the surveys and testimonies since it appears to be less noble than moral considerations. However, the fact that, in most cases, the refusal to serve during the First Intifada was restricted only to the occupied territories challenges this explanation.<sup>459</sup> For example, serving on the Lebanon border would require dealing with growing aggression from Hizballah that, unlike Palestinian protesters using stones, knives, and firebombs, relied on Katyusha rocket launchers.<sup>460</sup> The numbers show that in the first years of the Intifada and the Oslo Process (1987-1995), the IDF lost 67 soldiers and other security forces in the occupied territories.<sup>461</sup> Comparing these numbers with the total number of Israeli forces lost in these years reported by the Israeli Ministry of Justice shows that in the period from 1987 to 1995, service in the occupied territories accounted for no more than 7.8% of the IDF's annual losses (See Figure 5.2).

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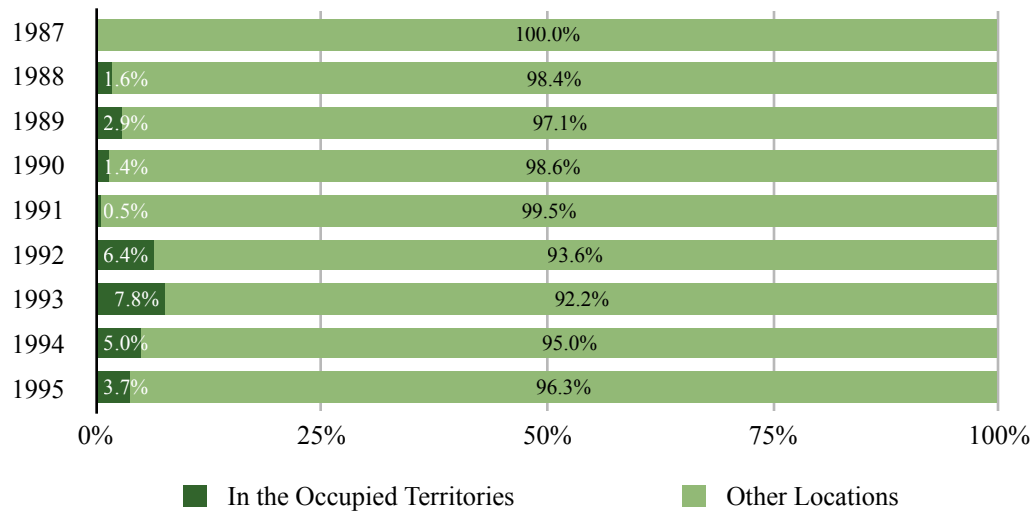
<sup>458</sup> Linn, "When the Individual Soldier Says 'No' to War," 429.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid, 422.

<sup>460</sup> "Laws of War Violations and the Use of Weapons on the Israel-Lebanon Border" (Human Rights Watch, 1996), <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/Israel.htm>.

<sup>461</sup> "Fatalities in the First Intifada," B'Tselem, accessed July 22, 2022, [https://www.btselem.org/statistics/first\\_intifada\\_tables](https://www.btselem.org/statistics/first_intifada_tables).

**Figure 5.2 Annual losses of the IDF 1987-1995**



This finding means that service in the occupied territories posed no more threat of the loss of life than service in other locations. Therefore, explaining erosion by insubordination with *fear for one's life* is not plausible in the Israeli case.

To conclude, the most likely alternative explanations described in previous scholarship — weak oversight and fear for one's life — do not provide sufficient insight into the causes of insubordination in the IDF during the First Intifada (See Table 5.2). Ruling out the competing hypotheses allows us to conclude with a higher level of confidence that, indeed, it was the mechanism of *defending the profession* that drove the military's disobedience in response to the government's policy threatening the IDF's corporateness, expertise, and responsibility.

**Table 5.2 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for insubordination**

Cases of Insubordination (N=6)						
<i>Causal Mechanisms</i>	Conscripts avoiding service	Reservists refusing to serve	Keller defacing the tanks	Officers leaving the military	Dagan's resignation	Yahav's resignation
<i>Defending the profession</i>	V	V	V	V	V	V
<i>Weak oversight</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Fear for one's life</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X

V = supported by evidence; X = not supported by evidence; ~ = partially supported

### 3. Erosion of Civilian Control by Competition

Erosion of civilian control by competition occurs when the members of the military profession mobilize their political power to subvert the government's policy and compel the government to adopt the course of action preferable to the armed forces. In practical terms, erosion by competition involves the members of the military profession participating in elections and political campaigns, and making statements to the press that challenge the government's policy. According to the central argument of this research, erosion by competition also originates in the mechanism of *defending the profession*. However, unlike insubordination, the competition involves the mobilization of the military's political influence to actively challenge or reverse the detrimental policy.



The evidence I examine below indicates that in the Israeli case, the military's competition against the government is consistent with the mechanism of defending the profession. Indeed, the members of the military profession who engaged in competition recognized the government's policies about the use of the military in the First Intifada as challenging the IDF's professional boundaries. They then challenged the government through advocacy, press statements, and other political activities aimed at reversing and replacing these policies. As in the case of insubordination, to increase our confidence in this explanation, I also test the alternative hypotheses about the sources of competition.

In Israel, the participation of military officers in politics had always been a widespread phenomenon, which intensified after the beginning of the occupation in 1967. The norm was that the IDF elites join the incumbent parties and ruling coalition rather than the opposition. This tradition of horizontal transition from the top of the military echelon to the top of the political hierarchy became the backbone of political-military partnership. The government's policies about the use of force in the First Intifada disrupted this collaboration forcing the military to compete against the government and its policies about the use of force.<sup>462</sup>

The initial Unity Government's (1984-1988) policies regarding the use of force in the First Intifada centered on the military as the key actor responsible for managing the conflict. At the same time, the role of civilian government in reaching the political solution to the problem remained nebulous at least until the late summer of 1988, when Rabin underscored the importance of negotiations with Palestinians in his electoral campaign. Since Rabin and his Labor party did not prevail in the 1988 elections, the new compromise-based National Unity Government (1988-1990) and later the Likud-led government (1990-1992) failed to offer a unified, coherent, and viable path to the negotiations.

Meanwhile, the IDF officers quickly recognized that policing tasks that the IDF had to perform in the occupied territories did not match the military's

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<sup>462</sup> Cohen, "How Did the Intifada Affect the IDF?" 18.

professional responsibility.<sup>463</sup> and were detrimental to its training and morale.<sup>464</sup> According to the analysis published in the IDF's professional outlet *Maarachot*, the massive deployment of troops in the first Intifada prevented the professional development of the units and officers that were assigned to perform constabulary tasks in the territories.<sup>465</sup> It also became clear that the IDF cannot successfully rotate counterinsurgency duties among conscripts and reservists trained to perform conventional tasks.<sup>466</sup> In response to these threats, the military profession, the officers, and soldiers started to use their politics to challenge the government's approach to tackle the Intifada. For example, many reservists and conscripts broke their stories to the press, communicating to domestic and international audiences the problematic aspects of the use of the military in the occupied territories.<sup>467</sup> Other members of the military profession started to participate in pro-peace advocacy, demanding negotiations with the PLO.

For instance, in 1988, the former chief of military intelligence, Gen. (Ret.) Aharon Yariv founded the *Council for Peace and Security* that promoted territorial concessions in exchange for security. The Council became very influential when 36 reserve and retired major-generals, 84 retired brigadiers, and more than 100 retired colonels of the IDF joined the organization. These retired and reserve IDF officers used their credibility as members of the military profession to claim that enforcing the occupation threatens Israeli security as it erodes the IDF's strength.<sup>468</sup> Specifically, they claimed that it is not the IDF's responsibility to offer long-term solutions to political problems — the argument

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<sup>463</sup> Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 90.

<sup>464</sup> Peretz, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising*, 45; Tyler, *Fortress Israel*, 330.

<sup>465</sup> Shaul Rubin, "Security in the Territories [In Hebrew]," *Maarachot*, December 1993, 49.

<sup>466</sup> Cohen, "The Israel Defense Forces (IDF)," 243.

<sup>467</sup> Peretz, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising*, 46; Cohen, "How Did the Intifada Affect the IDF?" 16.

<sup>468</sup> Peretz, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising*, 139.

that clearly points out that the government is using the IDF beyond its responsibility and expertise of the military.

The use of the IDF to suppress the First Intifada also resulted in the IDF deviating from the long-held tradition of supporting the incumbent government. Instead, the military engaged in political competition and sided with the opposition that promised to end the conflict that was stretching the boundaries of the IDF's profession. When the Israeli society divided into the Labor-led "peace camp" supporting the negotiations with the PLO and the Likud-led "nationalist camp" insisting on the military solution to the Intifada, the military elites started to recognize that the massive and prolonged use of the IDF for constabulary duties against civilian population damaged the operational effectiveness, deterrence posture, and prestige of serving the Israeli armed forces.<sup>469</sup> Even the MoD Rabin himself admitted that "riot control and chasing children who throw stones is not the most effective way of training a combat soldier."<sup>470</sup> Therefore, when almost a year after the beginning of the Intifada, the left-wing Labor embarked on the peace process, and the majority of the IDF elites sided with their policies.<sup>471</sup> Thus, the IDF joined the Labor side of the Unity Government (1988-1990) in its competition against the Likud. The military elites kept supporting the Labor when from 1990 to 1992, it withdrew from the coalition and came into opposition to the Likud-led government.

Specifically, the Likud-affiliated Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir (1986 - 88 and 1990 -1992) was the proponent of the military solution to the Intifada and a supporter of the settlement expansion in the occupied territories.<sup>472</sup> No surprise that he refused to recognize the PLO as a potential negotiation partner and

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<sup>469</sup> Stuart A. Cohen, "Changing Emphases in Israel's Military Commitments, 1981-1991: Causes and Consequences," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 15, no. 3 (September 1992): 330-50, 337-338; Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 73.

<sup>470</sup> Cited from Peretz, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising*, 131.

<sup>471</sup> Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy*, 5.

<sup>472</sup> Peretz, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising*, 27.

rejected any ideas of territorial concessions to the Palestinians. Challenging Shamir's policy, the IDF Intelligence Division Chief Amnon Lipkin-Shahak in March 1989 issued the assessment claiming that the Intifada could be ended only if the government agreed to negotiate with the PLO.<sup>473</sup> Lipkin-Shahak's assessment leaked to the press irritated the authorities to the degree that he was accused of interfering in politics. Some even called for his dismissal.<sup>474</sup> Later, when the Likud-led government kept insisting that the IDF should crush the Intifada, the CGS Dan Shomron publicly stated that this policy was not viable because its implementation would be against the norms that the Israeli society and the Western democratic states subscribe to.<sup>475</sup> Thus, the IDF leadership unequivocally and publicly claimed that solving the conflict with Palestinians was beyond the military's expertise and corporateness, which challenged the government's policy and supported the peace-seeking opposition.

Beyond the considerations of expertise and corporateness, the government's policy of solving the Intifada militarily contradicted the vision of the core IDF's responsibility. At the beginning of 1991, the rise of Iraq, Iran, and Libya as potential adversaries adjusted the IDF's strategic thinking and required the return to its core mission—defending the state from external aggression.<sup>476</sup> Reflecting this approach, in 1991, the General Staff drafted a multi-year plan (Heb.: *Mirkam*) which underscored the importance of reshaping the IDF into a smaller and smarter force, investing in training and equipment of high-tech branches, and improving technical and operational proficiency.<sup>477</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> Peretz, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising*, 80.

<sup>474</sup> Yoram Peri, "The Political–Military Complex: The IDF's Influence Over Policy Towards the Palestinians Since 1987," *Israel Affairs* 11, no. 2 (April 2005): 324–44, 326.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid.

<sup>476</sup> Cohen, "The Peace Process and Its Impact on the Development of a 'Slimmer and Smarter' Israel Defence Force," 11; Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy*, 15–16.

<sup>477</sup> Cohen, "How Did the Intifada Affect the IDF?" 13.

Meanwhile, the necessity to fight in the Intifada — a low-intensity war of attrition — fell beyond IDF's professional preferences and demoralized the troops.<sup>478</sup> In the words of the editor of the IDF professional magazine *Ma'arachot*: "the Intifada is a slap in the face for the IDF... The result is a little of this and a little of that — the worst of possible compromises."<sup>479</sup> In addition, it soon became obvious that the financial costs of the Intifada were undercutting the procurement and training.<sup>480</sup> Therefore, to invest the military's energy and resources in force development matching the new threat environment and the core IDF's mission, the military had to spare itself the responsibility of enforcing the occupation.<sup>481</sup> Thus, the desire to preserve and adequately develop the military's profession explains the IDF's competition against the government and its support for the peace process and the opposition.

When Rabin became the Prime Minister in 1992, the partnership between the military and the government again became the norm of Israeli civil-military relations. With the exception of the military's dissatisfaction with being excluded from the secret talks that preceded the signing of the Oslo I accords, the IDF was a reliable partner, designer, and even a promoter of the government's peace efforts.<sup>482</sup>

The erosion by competition occurred again when a year after Rabin's assassination in 1995, Benjamin Netanyahu (Likud) won the election and became the Israeli prime minister for the first time. He put on hold Rabin's peace-oriented policies that promised to alleviate the IDF's burden of enforcing the occupation. The military immediately engaged in competition, causing the unprecedented split between the IDF's high echelon and the government. In particular, Netanyahu's

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<sup>478</sup> Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 91.

<sup>479</sup> Cited from Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 91.

<sup>480</sup> Peretz, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising*, 130; Inbar, "Israel's Small War," 45; Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 92.

<sup>481</sup> Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy*, 15.

<sup>482</sup> Peri, "The Political–Military Complex," 329.

minister of defense, Gen. (Ret.) Yitzhak Mordechai resigned in disagreement with the reversal of the peace process. Mordechai later formed a political party with Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak (CGS 1995-1998), who also became an inveterate critic of the government's approach to the Palestinian issue. The public exchange of accusations between civilian and military elites became the new norm throughout Netanyahu's first term as a prime minister.<sup>483</sup>

The erosion of civilian control by competition reached its peak when an unprecedented number of members of the military profession joined the electoral race in 1999. More than 100 reserve officers participated in the election, including a recently retired Chief of the General Staff, Lt. Gen. (Res.) Ehud Barak became the next prime minister.<sup>484</sup> In fact, the government's use of the military for the missions the IDF could not perform due to professional limitations distorted Israeli civil-military relations to the degree that even ten years later, the venerated IDF general and experienced politician Ariel Sharon could not fully repair them during the Second Intifada (2001-2005).<sup>485</sup>

### *Alternative Explanations*

Existing research suggests that the military interferes in politics when institutions and civil society are weak;<sup>486</sup> regime legitimacy is questionable;<sup>487</sup> The economic performance of the government is poor and threatens the

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<sup>483</sup> Ibid, 332.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid.

<sup>485</sup> Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy*, 5-6.

<sup>486</sup> Belkin and Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk"; Perlmutter, "The Praetorian State and the Praetorian Army."

<sup>487</sup> Lindberg and Clark, "Does Democratization Reduce the Risk of Military Interventions in Politics in Africa?"; Stepan, *Military in Politics : Changing Patterns in Brazil*. Princeton Legacy Library.

military;<sup>488</sup> the future of the military is uncertain;<sup>489</sup> and the government uses the military to suppress political opposition.<sup>490</sup> Additionally, the history of previous coup attempts<sup>491</sup> increases the likelihood of subsequent takeovers. Finally, the individual political ambitions of particular power-seeking members of the military profession can potentially explain the military competition against the government.

Some of these explanations do not meet the necessary conditions in the case of Israel and have to be ruled out immediately. For instance, weak institutions, underdeveloped civil society, and questionable regime legitimacy had not been a concern in Israel during the First Intifada and thus did not shed light on the roots of erosion by competition. Similarly, Israel did not have a history of previous coups, and the government did not use the military to suppress political opposition, so these explanations are also not relevant for understanding the military's competition against the government's policies in the case of Israel. Finally, the explanation for competition by the uncertain future of the military implies that the adversary (e.g., the rebels or political opposition) might prevail and dismantle the armed forces. To prevent retaliation, the military takes over the government to devote all of the nation's resources to attain victory.<sup>492</sup> In the Israeli case, the IDF's adversary had no chance of becoming the government, so this explanation also offers limited insight into the sources of the competition.

***Economic hardships***, however, were part of the military's experience in the First Intifada. As mentioned above, waging a protracted, low-intensity conflict

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<sup>488</sup> Luttwak, *Coup D'etat : A Practical Handbook*.

<sup>489</sup> Acemoglu, Ticchi, and Vindigni, "A Theory of Military Dictatorships"; Bell and Sudduth, "The Causes and Outcomes of Coup during Civil War."

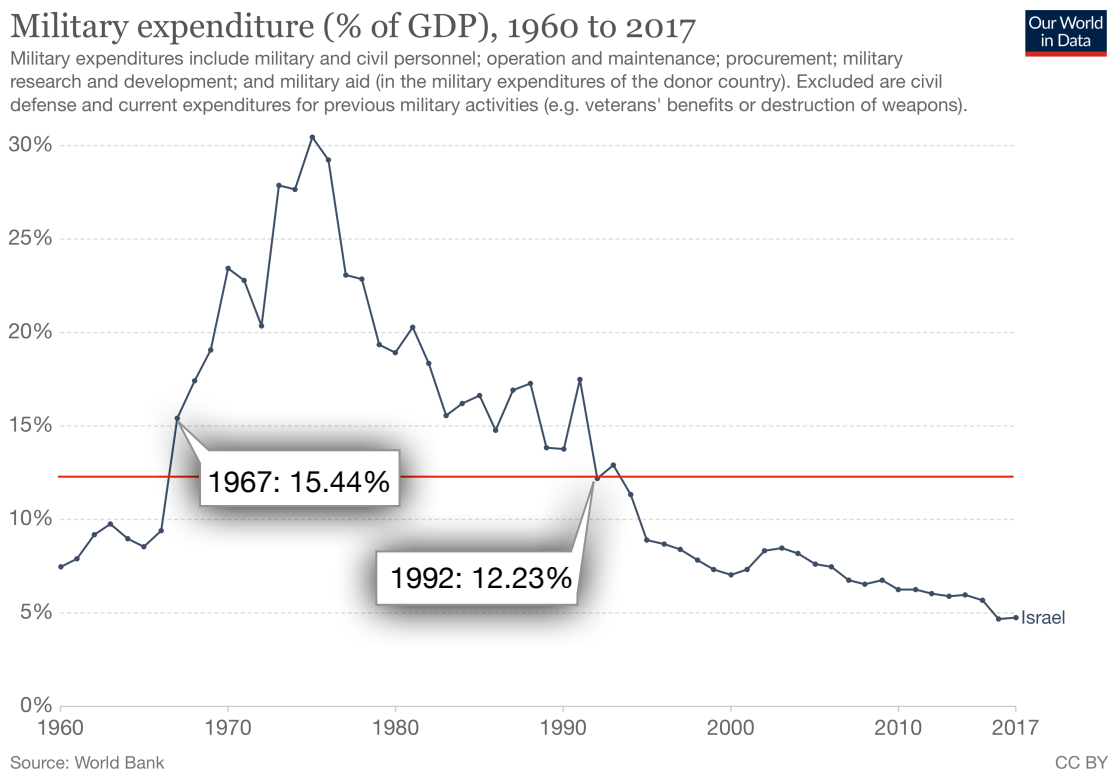
<sup>490</sup> Svolik, "Contracting on Violence."

<sup>491</sup> Belkin and Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk."

<sup>492</sup> Acemoglu, Ticchi, and Vindigni, "A Theory of Military Dictatorships"; Bell and Sudduth, "The Causes and Outcomes of Coup during Civil War."

required a considerable number of troops in the occupied territories and inflicted financial difficulties upon the IDF. It could have motivated the military's competition against the government's policies. However, the fact that the IDF supported the Peace Process even after Rabin significantly decreased military spending in 1992 contradicts the logic of this explanation. Indeed, after becoming a prime minister, Rabin cut defense spending to a degree unseen since 1967 (Figure 5.3).<sup>493</sup> Therefore, the economic considerations alone cannot explain the military's competition against the government's policies with regard to the Intifada. Moreover, CGS Shomron publicly challenged the policy of the right-wing government that could have resulted in the increase in military spending. This piece of evidence is also inconsistent with economic considerations.

**Figure 5.3 Military expenditure in Israel in 1992 in comparison to previous years (Sources: SIPRI, the World Bank)**



<sup>493</sup> Max Roser et al., "Military Spending," *Our World in Data*, August 3, 2013, <https://ourworldindata.org/military-spending>.



In addition, the *political ambitions of particular generals* could explain the military's competition against the government. We know from the previous sections that top military officers often pursue political careers. However, historical evidence also suggests that in Israeli political culture the CGS's *cooperation* with the MoD and the PM paves the career path of the military elites in politics. In addition, in 1988, when the IDF elites started to challenge the National Unity Government's policies with regard to the use of force in the Intifada, popular support was on the side of the forceful solution to the problem.

In particular, in August 1988, the polls indicated that 66% of the respondents believed in the army's ability to bring order to the occupied territories, and 68% reported a decrease in their belief in the likelihood of the peace process with Arabs. Even the supporters of the left-leaning parties admitted the decrease in the likelihood of achieving peace (58%).<sup>494</sup> Given these numbers, it becomes clear why Rabin and Labor running on the peace agenda, failed to prevail in the November 1988 elections. Most importantly, this evidence shows that the military's competition against the government's policies went against the popular sentiment. Thus, by participating in pro-peace advocacy and undermining the government's policies, the members of the military profession rather risked their military and political careers than the other way around. The case of Yitzhak Mordechai challenging PM Netanyahu might be an exception since, in 1996, a significant portion of the Israeli society did have a pro-peace sentiment.

In sum, the above evidence allows us to eliminate the two most plausible explanations for erosion by competition — *economic conditions* in the military and *political ambitions* of particular members of the military profession. This finding increases our confidence that the mechanism of *defending the profession*

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<sup>494</sup> Peretz, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising*, 136.

is not only a plausible explanation for erosion by competition but is also the most likely one. Table 5.3 summarizes the performance of different mechanisms in explaining erosion by competition in this case.

**Table 5.3 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for competition**

<i>Causal Mechanisms</i>	Cases of Competition (N=5)					<b>Observations explained</b>
	Council for Peace and Security	IDF's support for opposition	Leaking intel. assessment	CGS Shomron challenge s gov.'s policy	Mordechai challenges Netanyahu	
<i>Defending the profession</i>	V	V	V	V	V	5/5
<i>Weak institutions</i>	X	X	X	X	X	0/5
<i>Low gov's legitimacy</i>	X	X	X	X	X	0/5
<i>Poor econ. performance</i>	X	X	X	X	X	0/5
<i>Uncertainty about the regime</i>	X	X	X	X	X	0/5
<i>History of coups</i>	X	X	X	X	X	0/5
<i>Contracting on violence</i>	X	X	X	X	X	0/5
<i>Individual ambitions</i>	X	X	X	X	V	1/5

**V = supported by evidence; X = not supported by evidence; ~ = partially supported**

## 4. Erosion of Civilian Control by Deference

The policy-focused theory I develop in this research investigates the sources of a novel type of erosion of civilian control— erosion by the government’s deference to the military. In this case, the weakening of civilian control happens when the conflict constitutes a political burden to the government and civilian politicians voluntarily minimize their input in policy by delegating the responsibility to the members of the military profession. Erosion by deference can take the forms of the government’s withdrawal from policymaking, appointing the members of the military profession to the key policymaking positions, or allowing the military’s expertise to dominate in policy formulation and implementation. The policy-focused explanations for civilian deference originate in the complex relationship between society, the military, and the government. First, erosion by deference may occur when the government tries to exploit the political capital of the military to increase the popular approval of the government’s policies. I call this mechanism using the military as *an approval booster*. Second, the government might withdraw from the policy process if it wants the military to take responsibility for politically risky or costly moves—the mechanism of *avoiding the responsibility*. Looking at the Israeli case, it is important to keep in mind that not any instance of deference would constitute a departure from the norm and constitute an erosion of civilian control. Indeed, a certain degree of deference of the Israeli government to the IDF serves as a basis for political-military partnership. Throughout Israel’s history, the high military echelons’ active participation in political decision-making helped the military to assure that its operations match the political purposes identified jointly with civilian officials.<sup>495</sup> Therefore, erosion of civilian control by deference in Israel would

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<sup>495</sup> Cohen, “How Did the Intifada Affect the IDF?” 18

require the disruption of the partnership in a way that burdens the military with more power than it would be willing to carry. The below evidence is consistent with the *approval boosting* and *avoiding the responsibility* explanations for erosion by deference. To increase our confidence in these explanations, I also evaluate the plausibility of competing hypotheses.

One of the peculiarities of Israeli civil-military relations is that the appointment of a member of the military profession in the position of the MoD is a norm. In addition, until 1991, the MoD had primacy over the prime minister in relation to all security issues. Therefore, the fact that Yitzhak Rabin was the MoD during the First Intifada does not constitute an erosion of civilian control by Israeli standards. Nevertheless, Rabin's and Shamir's lack of political initiative at the beginning of the conflict did increase the political responsibility of the military to the degree that the IDF was not ready to handle. Later, when Rabin became the prime minister, his military background, disrespect for the political establishment, and a strong preference for relying on the military personnel for consultations significantly decreased civilian input in policymaking to a degree problematic even by Israeli standards.<sup>496</sup> In particular, the way he used the IDF in the negotiation with the PLO elevated the role of the military in politics and marginalized civilian voices in the Oslo Process and therefore presents an example of the erosion of civilian control by the government's deference to the military. Below, I consider these instances in detail.

### ***Erosion by Deference Under the Unity and Likud Governments (1987-1992)***

The First Intifada disrupted the civil-military partnership when in the early stages of the conflict, the civilian government could not offer useful political guidance, leaving the military the sole actor responsible for solving the conflict.<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>496</sup> Michael, "The Dilemma behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil—Military Relations," 536.

<sup>497</sup> Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 91.

This arrangement shielded the government from political responsibility for the conflict and made the IDF the sole target of harsh criticism both from the right and left-wing sides of the political spectrum and the media.<sup>498</sup> In response, CGS Shomron, on multiple occasions, called for a political solution to the problem, pointing to the limited civilian input in tackling the Intifada.<sup>499</sup> While Rabin admitted early on that the Intifada could not be solved militarily, he could not advance his peace proposal to the National Unity government. Prime Minister Shamir listened to Rabin on tactical security matters but blocked his peace proposals and initiatives.

The most plausible reason for the irresolute government's behavior at the beginning of the Intifada is *avoiding responsibility*. To begin, the First Intifada was not simply a burden for the Israeli government at the time but a threat to a coalition's survival. In the late 1980s Israeli political system was in a constant political crisis since none of the major political parties could offer a viable solution to the nation's problems, including the occupation and Israeli-Palestinian relations.<sup>500</sup> As a result, in the general election of 1984, neither left-wing nor right-wing parties received enough votes to form a coalition. Thus, the two main political opponents — the Likud and Labor— had to form a National Unity government which was in power in 1987 when the Intifada started. These parties had very different views on the nature of the threat. While the right-wing nationalist Likud insisted that the Intifada was a terrorist campaign that had to be suppressed by the overwhelming use of military force, the left-wing Labor sided

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<sup>498</sup> Cohen, "Changing Emphases in Israel's Military Commitments, 1981–1991," 338; Cohen, "The Peace Process and Its Impact on the Development of a 'Slimmer and Smarter' Israel Defence Force," 9; Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 589; Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 88.

<sup>499</sup> Cohen, "How Did the Intifada Affect the IDF?" 18; Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 85.

<sup>500</sup> Peretz, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising*, 40; Peri, "The Political–Military Complex," 329.

with the military's description of the conflict as a popular uprising with sporadic acts of terrorism.<sup>501</sup>

Pursuing a political solution under these conditions would have inevitably led to the collapse of the coalition and the government. In fact, the Likud's reluctance to pursue negotiations with Palestinians resulted in the Labor's withdrawal from the coalition in 1990 and the collapse of the second National Unity government (1988-1990). Until then, it was more beneficial for civilian officials to remain irresolute, making the military the dominant actor responsible for the Intifada and the main target of political criticism.<sup>502</sup> On multiple occasions, the politicians blamed the IDF for either being too harsh or too restrained with regard to the Intifada, leaving the responsibility of the government beyond the scope of the discussion. For instance, one of the Likud's Knesset members accused the IDF CGS Shomron of a lack of resolve, saying, "you hide behind the politicians' skirts claiming that IDF policy was in their hands."<sup>503</sup>

These examples are consistent with *avoiding the responsibility* mechanism of erosion by deference outlined by the policy-focused theory. Indeed, not willing to take responsibility for the risky and unpopular political steps and the potential collapse of the government, both the Likud and the Labor delegated the responsibility to the IDF, using the military as a scapegoat.

### ***Erosion by Deference Under the Labor Government (1992-1995):***

#### ***Wrapping Peace in Generals' Uniforms***

Surprisingly, when Rabin became the prime minister in 1992, he completely excluded the military from the secret negotiations with the PLO preceding the

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<sup>501</sup> Peretz, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising*, 129-130.

<sup>502</sup> Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 88.

<sup>503</sup> Cited from Peretz, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising*, 129.

Oslo I Accords of 1993.<sup>504</sup> However, after signing the Oslo I Accord, Rabin gave the Planning Division of the IDF close to full responsibility for deciding on territorial concessions with limited guidance from the government. Specifically, the government delegated the responsibility for negotiating the withdrawal from Jericho and Gaza to the military, including the Deputy CGS Maj. Gen. Lipkin-Shahak and the head of the Planning Division, Gen. Uzi Dayan.<sup>505</sup> Lipkin-Shahak headed the negotiation team<sup>506</sup> and the IDF's Planning Division became the leading agency for crafting the policies on territorial concessions, border security, water-sharing arrangements, and economic adjustments. At this time, the IDF's Planning Division — a military entity — coordinated the work of civil servants in the Ministry of Defense and other ministries.<sup>507</sup> In 2003, in a personal interview with Kobi Michael—one of Israel's top scholars of civil-military relations—Gen. Matan Vilnai admitted that “*There is no political level. The army decides the conception.[...] Believe me, the army decides everything.*”<sup>508</sup> This arrangement tremendously increased the military's influence on the Peace Process.

While the military took responsibility for policy formulation and implementation during the Oslo Process, the political echelon did not take much initiative to shape policy.<sup>509</sup> Indeed, all policy papers and recommendations Rabin received from the Planning Division were first pre-approved by the Chief of the General Staff. Nevertheless, Rabin undoubtedly maintained a visible formal

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<sup>504</sup> Cohen, “How Did the Intifada Affect the IDF?” 18; Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy*, 26.

<sup>505</sup> Etzioni-Halevy, “Civil-Military Relations and Democracy,” 407-408; Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy*, 26.

<sup>506</sup> Peri, “The Political–Military Complex,” 332.

<sup>507</sup> Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy*, 23; Michael, “The Dilemma behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil–Military Relations,” 533.

<sup>508</sup> Cited from Michael, “The Dilemma behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil–Military Relations,” 534.

<sup>509</sup> Michael, “The Dilemma behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil–Military Relations,” 534.

control over the final political decisions.<sup>510</sup> The fact that Rabin delegated extensive policymaking responsibility to the military but publicly demonstrated his leading role in the process is inconsistent with *avoiding the responsibility* explanation for erosion by deference. Avoiding the responsibility would require a noticeable withdrawal of the executive from the process so they can later put the blame on the military.

A more plausible explanation for deference, in this case, is using the military as an *approval booster*. Despite the media criticism of the IDF for its handling of the First Intifada, the military remained the top-most authority on national security issues in Israel. Since the Oslo Accords touched upon sensitive security topics, having the military on board was essential to gain popular support for the policy and strengthen the Labor's political position vis-a-vis the Likud-led opposition. In favor of the *approval booster* explanation also testifies the fact that in addition to policy formulation, the government also used the military as the promoters of the peace process. Specifically, Gen. Uzi Dayan and Maj. Gen. Matan Vilnai publicly praised the policy of withdrawing from Gaza and Jericho.<sup>511</sup> The fact that they made these statements in multiple pre-arranged media interviews and organized public fora suggests that these opportunities were deliberately designed to elevate the popular support for the Peace Process.<sup>512</sup>

On the government level, Rabin and later Shimon Peres, who became an interim prime minister after Rabin's assassination in 1995, tended to bring a group of senior military officers to the Cabinet meetings on a constant basis. Since these officers supported the same political views as Rabin and Peres, some observers

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<sup>510</sup> Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy*, 27; Arie M. Kacowicz, "Rashomon in Jerusalem: Mapping the Israeli Negotiators' Positions on the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process, 1993-2001," *International Studies Perspectives* 6, no. 2 (May 2005): 252-73, 259; Michael, "The Dilemma behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil-Military Relations," 534.

<sup>511</sup> Etzioni-Halevy, "Civil-Military Relations and Democracy," 407.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, 412.



called it “wrapping peace in generals’ uniforms.”<sup>513</sup> Thus, the military’s support for Rabin’s policy became an important component of the coalition’s struggle against the opposition. This finding is also consistent with *the approval booster* explanation for Rabin’s deference to the military during the Oslo process.

To conclude, the evidence from the Israeli case is consistent with the policy-focused explanations for erosion of civilian control by deference—*avoiding the responsibility* and *boosting popular approval*. Below I consider alternative explanations for deference beyond those stemming from the policy-focused theory.

### ***Alternative Explanations***

The concept of erosion of civilian control by the government’s deference to the military is novel and refers to a previously untheorized phenomenon. Therefore, existing research offers limited insight into alternative explanations for deference. Below, I address alternative causes of civilian deference to the IDF which look plausible in the case of Israel — *cajoling the military*, *the lack of the relevant civilian expertise*, and *Rabin’s personal preference for working with the military*.

***Cajoling the military.*** The alternative explanation for deference—*cajoling the military* to decrease civil-military tensions— finds little support in the evidence since, in all cases, the military got more responsibility than it was comfortable carrying. Under the Unity and Likud governments (1987-1992) as well as under the Labor government (1992-1996), the military elites voiced their frustration with the lack of input from the civilian side. Thus, the government’s delegation of policy responsibilities to the military during the First Intifada created a fertile ground for new civil-military tensions rather than cajoled the military.

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<sup>513</sup> Cited from Michael, “The Dilemma behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil—Military Relations,” 538.

***The lack of civilian expertise.*** It is true that the Israeli government failed to create policymaking bodies that could provide insights into security matters independent from the IDF.<sup>514</sup> While the lack of adequate civilian expertise in managing the Intifada created a fertile ground and a plausible excuse for the government's delegation of responsibilities to the IDF, it does not fully explain the abovementioned instances of deference. First, the evidence indicates that it was not the absence of the expertise but the lack of agreement in the National Unity government (1988-1990) that prevented the politicians from pursuing a viable non-military solution to the Intifada.<sup>515</sup> The fact that both Rabin and Shamir managed to come up with their own peace proposals but could not agree on a unified vision suggests that diminishing civilian input in solving the Intifada was an outcome of a political stalemate rather than the lack of relevant knowledge.

Second, Rabin engaged in secret negotiations with the PLO that led to signing the Declaration of Principles (Oslo I Accords) without ever consulting with the military. This fact suggests that what was lacking for a successful launch of the negotiation process before 1992 was not civilian expertise in security matters but the consolidated power behind the peace camp. It is true that the absence of a civilian security policymaking body does explain why Rabin used the IDF's Planning Division as the main source of expertise for the implementation of practical steps in the peace process. However, it does not explain the use of the military to promote Rabin's policy.

***Personal preferences of the PM.*** Of course, another plausible explanation for deference is Rabin's own military background and peculiar personal style of using the officers as if they were his staff of advisors.<sup>516</sup> However, several pieces of evidence cast doubt on this explanation. First, it was then-MoD Rabin who

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<sup>514</sup> Freilich, "National Security Decision-Making in Israel"; Michael, "The Dilemma behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil—Military Relations," 531.

<sup>515</sup> Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, 88.

<sup>516</sup> Michael, "The Dilemma behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil—Military Relations," 536.

started to insist on non-military solutions to the Intifada as early as November 1988. Therefore, his personal style could not account for the limited government input in managing the Intifada from 1989 to 1992. Second, from 1990 to 1992, Rabin even was not the MoD, and yet the government's deference to the military for solving the Intifada persisted. In fact, it was PM Yitzhak Shamir and his MoD Moshe Arens (not a member of the military profession) who insisted on the military solution to Intifada. It is true that Rabin's personal proclivity to rely on the IDF and not civilian politicians could explain why the military was driving the policy formulation on the Oslo I Accords. However, the fact that the distribution of responsibilities persisted even after Rabin's assassination makes this explanation insufficient.<sup>517</sup>

Table 5.4 summarizes different explanations for deference examined against the evidence from Israel. Overall, the two explanations for deference advanced by the policy-focused theory — *avoiding responsibility* and using the military as an *approval booster*—provide the most plausible explanations for the instances of civilian withdrawal from policymaking during the First Intifada and the Oslo Process. Alternative hypotheses — cajoling the military the lack of the relevant expertise and Rabin's personal style — find only partial support in the evidence.

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<sup>517</sup> Peri, "The Political–Military Complex," 332.

**Table 5.4 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for deference**

<i>Causal Mechanisms</i>	Cases of Deference (N=3)			<b>Observations explained</b>
	No policy guidance for the IDF	IDF Planning division drives negotiations	Wrapping peace in generals' uniforms	
<i>Avoiding responsibility</i>	V	X	X	1/3
<i>Boosting approval</i>	X	V	V	2/3
<i>Cajoling the military</i>	X	X	X	0/3
<i>Laking the expertise</i>	X	V	X	1/3
<i>Rabin's military background</i>	X	~	~	0/3

V = supported by evidence; X = not supported by evidence; ~ = partially supported

## 5. Conclusion

The evidence from the Israeli case suggests that even when the military enjoys extensive political influence and historically performs a wide range of missions, the government's policies about the use of force still can result in erosion of civilian control. Specifically, the findings indicate that despite the fact that the IDF enforced the occupation since 1967, the government's policies regarding the use of force in the First Intifada stretched the military's preferred professional definition and thus resulted in erosion of civilian control by insubordination and competition. In particular, the IDF considered defending Israel from external aggression through massive use of conventional force at the core of its responsibility and expertise. Moreover, the Israeli military placed the

morality of the use of force and the principle of the “purity of arms” as being foundational for the corporate spirit of the IDF. In contrast, the government’s policies of using the IDF for an intra-border low-intensity war of attrition against civilians armed with stones and firebombs undermined all three pillars of the military profession — responsibility, expertise, and corporateness. In line with the policy-focused theory, recognizing this detrimental effect, the members of the military profession engaged in acts of insubordination, including the refusal to serve in the occupied territories among the conscripts and reservists and resignations among high-ranking officers. The evidence indicates that alternative explanations for insubordination suggested by existing scholarly literature — *weak oversight* and *fear for one’s life* — have lower explanatory power in comparison to the mechanism of *defending the profession* that I advance in this research.

Similarly, the threat to the military profession posed by the Israeli government’s policies in the First Intifada led to the erosion of civilian control by the military’s competition against the government. Many retired members of the military profession engaged in political advocacy and campaigning. High-ranking active-duty IDF officers leaked sensitive assessments to the press and openly criticized the government’s policy of reliance on the military to solve the conflict. The findings indicate that the common driving force behind the military’s competition against the government was again *defending the profession*. The military’s advocacy for withdrawing from the occupied territories and pursuing peace with Palestinians even at the cost of territorial concessions was motivated by the desire to stop and reverse the policies detrimental to the IDF’s profession. Alternative explanations such as *poor economic conditions* in the military and *individual ambitions* of particular generals do not find strong support in the evidence, thus increasing our confidence in the policy-focused explanation through *defending the profession*.

Finally, different Israeli governments also delegated the responsibility for crucial policy tasks to the military, leading to an erosion by civilian deference to the military. At first, the National Unity government politicians withdrew from the policy process, leaving the IDF with limited guidance but full responsibility for ending the Intifada. Later, when Yitzhak Rabin became the PM, he delegated to the IDF the unprecedented responsibilities for formulating and implementing policies with regard to the Oslo Peace Process. The findings show that the most likely driver for such behavior was *avoiding the responsibility* in the first instance and using the military as *an approval booster* in the second, which is consistent with the policy-focused theory. Competing explanations for deference — the *lack of civilian expertise* and Rabin's *personal preference* for relying on the military — did not sustain the test against the evidence. Table 5.5 summarizes the above findings.

**Table 5.5 Israel: Summary table**

Form of erosion	Causal Mechanisms	Observations explained
<b>Erosion by insubordination (N=6)</b>	<i>Defending the profession</i>	<b>6/6</b>
	<i>Weak oversight</i>	0/6
	<i>Fear for one's life</i>	0/6
<b>Erosion by competition (N=5)</b>	<i>Defending the profession</i>	<b>5/5</b>
	<i>Weak institutions</i>	0/5
	<i>Low gov's legitimacy</i>	0/5
	<i>Poor econ. performance</i>	0/5
	<i>Uncertainty about the regime</i>	0/5
	<i>History of coups</i>	0/5
	<i>Contracting on violence</i>	0/5
	<i>Individual ambitions</i>	1/5
<b>Erosion by deference (N = 3)</b>	<i>Avoiding responsibility</i>	<b>1/3</b>
	<i>Boosting approval</i>	<b>2/3</b>
	<i>Cajoling the military</i>	0/3
	<i>Lacking the expertise</i>	1/3
	<i>Rabin's military background*</i>	0/3
*Unique for this case		

Overall, the findings of this chapter are consistent with the policy-focused theory of erosion of civilian control I develop in this study. Specifically, the case of Israel demonstrates that when the government's policies stretch the military

profession or use the military as a shield from political criticism, civilian power over the military, as well as civilian input in politics, diminishes. In sum, even in the case where the military has high political capital, it is the civilian side of the civil-military relations that bears the responsibility for the erosion of civilian control.



## **CHAPTER 6: BRITISH MILITARY IN NORTHERN IRELAND (1968-1972): DEFERENCE BY DEFAULT**

### **Introduction**

The case of the United Kingdom during the early stages of the Troubles (1968-1972) is the fourth and concluding test of the policy-focused theory. This new theory predicts that governments' policies about the use of force will lead to erosion of civilian control under two conditions. First, civilian control will weaken if the policies stretch the limits of the military profession by assigning the armed forces to perform tasks beyond their responsibility, expertise or undermining corporateness. Second, civilian control will deteriorate if the government perceives the conflict as a political burden and is willing to delegate policymaking prerogatives to the members of the military profession. The conflict in Northern Ireland offers two crucial tests to the theory.

First, exploring the cases of Russia's First Chechen War and Ukraine's conflict in Donbas showed that when governments use their armed forces in ways that undermine the military profession, it triggers the mechanism of *defending the profession* that leads to the military denying the government's exercise of power (erosion by insubordination) or publicly challenging the government's policy (erosion by competition). However, one might argue that it is not the government's policies about the use of force but rather the rudimentary and fragile democratic institutions in these post-Soviet states that are responsible for the weakening of civilian power over the military. Examining Israel's use of force during the First Intifada helped address this line of criticism, since in the late 1980s, Israel was an established and functional democracy, and yet erosion of civilian control in forms of insubordination and competition occurred. Nevertheless, we still do not know what happens if the government's decision to

use the military in intrastate conflict does *not* contradict the military profession. The case of the United Kingdom allows us to answer this very question since the conflict in Northern Ireland aligned with the British military profession shaped by multiple colonial counterinsurgency campaigns and previous deployments to the province.

Second, the case of the United Kingdom allows us to get more insight into the erosion of civilian control by a government's deference to the military. The findings from the previous three cases show that when the conflict constitutes a political burden and threatens the executive's electability, the civilian politicians tend to delegate policymaking responsibilities to the members of the military profession, causing erosion of civilian control by deference.<sup>518</sup> However, in two cases where the executives deferred to the military — Russia and Israel — the armed forces were also involved in fierce competition against the government — criticized the government in the media, ran for political positions, mobilized civil society against the government's policies. Might it be that delegating policymaking tasks to the generals was an attempt to appease the military and mitigate competition?

The case of the United Kingdom helps answer this question. Since the use of the British army was not in violation of the military's profession, no erosion by competition occurred. At the same time, at the beginning of the conflict, the Troubles presented a liability for Her Majesty's Government, thus, fostering erosion by deference. The case of the United Kingdom allows us to observe erosion of civilian control by deference in the absence of the military's competition against the government and separate the two phenomena.

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<sup>518</sup> Specifically, Russia's president Boris Yeltsin's decision to use the military in Chechnya backfired on his popular approval. To distance himself from this politically costly issue, Yeltsin delegated extensive decision-making powers to the generals. In Israel, the degree of government's deference to the military also depended on the phase of the electoral cycle. In Ukraine, the war in Donbas was not a political liability for President Petro Poroshenko, and no erosion by deference occurred.

## **1. Pre-conflict Civil-Military Relations in the United Kingdom**

Formally, British civil-military relations in the second half of the 20th century conformed to the norms of civilian control. The Ministry of Defense (MoD) was headed by a civilian Secretary of State for Defense, who was the only representative responsible for the defense matters in the Cabinet.<sup>519</sup> Normally, the Cabinet would communicate the policy directions to the Secretary of State for Defense, who would then pass these preferences to the Ministry of Defense and the military chain of command, including the Chief of the Defense Staff, the Army Chief of the General Staff, and the General Officer Commanding (GOC) in a particular area. Within the MoD the policy the cabinet-formulated policy would be translated into plans, operations, and orders.

In practice, at the time when the conflict in Northern Ireland began, the military was well-positioned to influence policy. In the late 1960s, despite the formal dominance of civilians over the military in policymaking, the Chiefs of Staff Committee, including the Chief of the Defense Staff and the heads of the three services (Army, Navy, and the Air Force) exercised significant power over policy decision-making within the ministry.<sup>520</sup> Policymaking did not resemble a top-down process discussed above but involved a deliberative endeavor in which career civil servants and senior military officers could impose constraints on

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<sup>519</sup> David A. Charters, *Whose Mission, Whose Orders?: British Civil-Military Command and Control in Northern Ireland, 1968-1974* (McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2017), 30.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-33.

governmental decisions.<sup>521</sup> This substantial involvement of the military in policymaking was, however, carefully regulated by the institutional arrangements within the ministry of defense. Moreover, while the Chiefs of Staff Committee could influence policy formulation within the ministry, they had no impact on the political objectives set by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet.

In fact, the British army was apolitical only in a very narrow sense, implying that it did not engage in coups. The norm of non-involvement in politics under this narrow definition did not prevent interventions in politics by means of influence or blackmail, consistent with the erosion of civilian control by competition.<sup>522</sup> Similar to Israel, military service opened avenues for political careers for the officers after retirement. For instance, in the 1945 U.K. elections, many candidates with military backgrounds appeared in public wearing their battledresses. In 1951, the British Parliament included 48 officers retired at the rank of major or cornel. In 1962, the military representation in the House of Commons was about 100 times greater than the share of the officers in the general population. These warriors-turned-politicians used their military credibility to lobby the ministers if necessary.<sup>523</sup> Overall, British civil-military relations created a fertile ground for erosion by competition.

Another source of competition was the role of the Crown in civil-military relations. Despite the fact that dual control of the military by the Crown and the ministers responsible to the Parliament was abandoned in the mid-19th century, the sense of the special connection between the soldiers and the Crown persisted throughout the 20th century.<sup>524</sup> On several occasions, high military officers used their connections to the monarch to undermine the government's policies and increase the pressure on elected politicians. During both world wars of the 20th

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<sup>521</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>522</sup> Hew Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 9.

<sup>523</sup> Strachan, *The Politics*, 34.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid, 45-73.

century, chiefs of the imperial general staff used the Crown as a counterweight to the government.<sup>525</sup>

Civilian control by the Parliament could not effectively limit the military's influence in politics. In the late 1960s and early 70s, parliamentary oversight of the military was weak, and the role of the Parliament in civil-military relations was rather symbolic. While the Parliament could ask questions and had to approve the defense budget, it had limited power over the decisions of the Cabinet. When the Troubles began, the legislature did not have a committee overseeing defense and military policy or operations. It also did not have a committee on Northern Ireland affairs.<sup>526</sup> This left the Parliament without the necessary knowledge and institutional instruments to effectively oversee the use of force in Northern Ireland. Moreover, the culture of excessive secrecy pervading Her Majesty Government made parliamentary control of the defense and military matters close to impossible.<sup>527</sup>

Overall, British civil-military relations before the outbreak of the Troubles were conducive for the occurrence of erosion of civilian control by competition through electoral channels and with the involvement of the Crown. The institutional oversight was not sufficient to prevent the military's involvement in politics. In light of these findings, the absence of insubordination or competition during the Troubles becomes puzzling and warrants an explanation that goes beyond the long-standing democratic tradition in the United Kingdom.

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<sup>525</sup> Ibid, 70-71.

<sup>526</sup> Charters, *Whose Mission*, 36.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid, 38.

## **2. Erosion of Civilian Control by Insubordination and Competition**

### ***Why did Insubordination and Competition not occur?***

Unlike in previously discussed cases of Russia's military operation in Chechnya, Ukraine's war in Donbas, and the Israeli campaign in the First Palestinian Intifada, the Troubles do not offer any notable instances of erosion of civilian control by competition and insubordination. The British military did not try to alter the government's policy by refusing to implement orders, threatening the government with resignations of high-ranking officers, participating in elections, or leaking sensitive information to the press. The policy-focused theory I advance in this research predicts that insubordination and competition occur when the governmental policies about the use of force stretch the boundaries of the military profession. Assigning the military to the missions beyond their responsibility and expertise triggers the causal mechanism of *defending the profession*, which leads to the military trying to halt or reverse the harmful governmental policies through the acts of insubordination (e.g., refusal to take orders) or competition (e.g., publicly challenging a government's policy). Despite the fact that the Troubles required tactical adaptation from the British Army, the conflict matched the broader sense of the mission, expertise and did not threaten the corporateness of the military. Thus, the conflict in Northern Ireland did not involve conditions conducive to the erosion of civilian control by insubordination.

The below section discusses in detail the sense of the military profession in the United Kingdom in the late 1960s and how the conflict in Northern Ireland fits this image. It also addresses potential alternative explanations for the non-occurrence of insubordination and competition — apolitical military, strong democratic institutions, and the absence of disagreement between the military and the government about the policy matters. The evidence allows us to rule out these explanations and increase our confidence in the policy-focused theory.

## The Troubles and the British Military Profession

Preventing the rebellious territories from breaking off of British rule became part of the military's mission and expertise in the second half of the 20th century. Colonial counterinsurgency campaigns, including in Borneo, Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus, Palestine, and Aden, defined the British military experience in the period immediately preceding its involvement in Northern Ireland.<sup>528</sup> This professional development is reflected in Sir Robert Thompson's *Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam*, Julian Paget's (1967) *Counterinsurgency Campaigning*, and Brigadier Frank Kitson's (1971) *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Peacekeeping and Law Enforcement*.

While the existence of a coherent and distinctive British tradition of counterinsurgency is debated,<sup>529</sup> it is clear that acting in aid of civil power, collecting intelligence from civilian populations, and coordinating efforts with local governors and police was already part of the British military's professional practice at the time when the Troubles began in 1968.<sup>530</sup> British military doctrine of that time matched the *Manual of Military Law* in specifying that the army could be used to suppress riots and insurrections not only in colonies but also in the United Kingdom.<sup>531</sup> Thus, unlike in other cases we considered in this study, using the British army in civil disturbances did not violate the military profession.

This finding is also confirmed by the British military's expertise, including riot control, using C.S. gas, and selective rifle fire against the leaders of the

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<sup>528</sup> Charters, *Whose Mission*, 4; Edward Burke, *An Army of Tribes: British Army Cohesion, Deviancy and Murder in Northern Ireland* (Liverpool University Press, 2018), 33.

<sup>529</sup> David Martin Jones and Michael LR Smith, "Myth and the Small War Tradition: Reassessing the Discourse of British Counter-Insurgency," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24, no. 3 (2013): 436–64.; Frank Ledwidge, *Losing Small Wars: British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan*, *Losing Small Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

<sup>530</sup> Desmond. Hamill, *Pig in the Middle : The Army in Northern Ireland, 1969-1984*, (London: Methuen, 1985).

<sup>531</sup> Stephen Deakin, "Security Policy and the Use of the Military Military Aid to the Civil Power, Northern Ireland 1969," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 4, no. 2 (1993): 211–27, 213; Burke, 67.

mob.<sup>532</sup> However, the British doctrine on the use of the military in aid of civil power underscored that operations in the U.K. must adhere to British civil law.<sup>533</sup> Hence, some colonial practices such as forced resettlement were deemed unacceptable for the operations within the U.K. borders.<sup>534</sup> Nevertheless, the use of brute force, covert operations, and coercive interrogation of the local populations became part of the British Army's counterinsurgency expertise brought to Northern Ireland.<sup>535</sup> Thus, despite the fact that the conflict in Northern Ireland required an operational adaptation, it did not redefine the British military's professional responsibility or expertise.

The conflict in Northern Ireland also did not undermine and likely even strengthened the military's corporateness. The period between 1945 and 1968 signified the decline of the British empire, the loss of the overseas territories, and, with them, the career opportunities for the British military. The outbreak of violence in Northern Ireland gave the military an immediate task and a new sense of purpose in the changing world.<sup>536</sup> Moreover, some high-ranking British officers even saw Northern Ireland in the context of a new Cold War theater, simplistically associating the socialist sympathies of the Official IRA with the advance of international communism.<sup>537</sup> Therefore, the Troubles provided an opportunity to perpetuate the use of the existing military's expertise and resonated with the Cold War mission.

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<sup>532</sup> Deakin, "Security," 213.

<sup>533</sup> Burke, *An Army of Tribes*, 67

<sup>534</sup> Ibid, 38.

<sup>535</sup> Jones and Smith, "Myth and the Small War Tradition," 439; Karl Hack, "Everyone Lived in Fear: Malaya and the British Way of Counter-Insurgency," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 23, no. 4–5 (2012): 671–99; Huw Bennett, "Minimum Force in British Counterinsurgency," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 21, no. 3 (2010): 459–75; David French, "Nasty Not Nice: British Counter-Insurgency Doctrine and Practice, 1945–1967," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 23, no. 4–5 (2012): 744–61.

<sup>536</sup> Strachan, *The Politics*, 192; Burke, *An Army of Tribes*, 34.

<sup>537</sup> Burke, *An Army of Tribes*.



Moreover, unlike the Israeli military discussed in the previous chapter, British officers' corporate spirit did not significantly depend on the societal perception of the institution. Quite the opposite, the British military was historically stationed overseas, isolated from the general population both physically and in terms of its values and norms.<sup>538</sup> Thus, the sense of corporateness was reproduced through the internal institutional cohesion and not strong connection to British society.<sup>539</sup> British rank-and-file soldiers were socialized in the military profession through developing a tribal loyalty to their regiment. The flags and symbols of the regiment were viewed as sacred, and breaking the ties with the group was considered painful, dangerous, and bordered the loss of a self.<sup>540</sup> These conditions made the British military's sense of corporateness strongly entrenched in the internal institutional norms. Therefore, the military was less sensitive to the popular disapproval of the use of force in Northern Ireland, eliminating one of the mechanisms of erosion of civilian control by insubordination and competition that we observed in the case of Israel.

Thus, the conflict in Northern Ireland did not undermine the military's sense of professionalism. Therefore, a finding that and no significant instances of insubordination and competition occurred is consistent with the predictions of the policy-focused theory.

### *Alternative Explanations*

Of course, there might be alternative explanations to the non-occurrence of erosion by insubordination and competition. The first one is that the United Kingdom is a strong democracy with robust institutions that prevent the military's

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<sup>538</sup> Ibid, 34; Hew Strachan, "The civil-military 'gap' in Britain." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 26, no. 2 (2003): 43-63, 44.

<sup>539</sup> Strachan, "The civil-military," 47.

<sup>540</sup> Burke, *An Army of Tribes*, 40-41, 45.

involvement in politics and apolitical military. The events of not so remote past suggest the opposite.

***Strong democracy and institutions.*** The evidence suggests that democratic institutions and processes historically could not prevent the military's involvement in politics. While not attempting a coup since the 17th century, the military resorted to erosion of civilian control by competition and insubordination in the 20th century before the Troubles. On multiple occasions, the army tried to shape policymaking through lobbying, media statements or threatening civilian leaders with resignation and non-cooperation.<sup>541</sup> The most prominent example is the Curragh incident of 1914, in which Her Majesty's Government ordered the British Army to use force against Ulster unionists — fellow Protestant Brits — if they resisted the accession of the province under the Irish Home Rule. In response, Brigadier-General Hubert Gough and the officers of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade threatened resignation (erosion by insubordination) in order to prevent the use of the military against Ulster unionists.<sup>542</sup> The military officers also skillfully used the press to shape public opinion in support of their cause, which is consistent with erosion by competition.<sup>543</sup> The incident ended with the resignation of the government.

Interestingly, the drivers for the officers' dissent have roots in the military profession on several levels. First, the core of the military's responsibility at the time was defending the empire. The expertise was to suppress the dissent of colonial subjects. The government's policy of granting the Home Rule to Dublin went against the integrity of the empire – the military's professional mission.<sup>544</sup> The order to suppress Ulster unionists loyal to Great Britain was in striking

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<sup>541</sup> Charters, *Whose Mission*, 30.

<sup>542</sup> Ian Beckett, "A Note on Government Intelligence and Surveillance during the Curragh Incident, March 1914," *Intelligence and National Security* 1, no. 3 (1986): 435-40.

<sup>543</sup> Mark L. Connelly, "The Army, the Press and the 'Curragh Incident', March 1914," *Historical Research* 84, no. 225 (2011): 535–57.

<sup>544</sup> Strachan, *The Politics*, 111, 116-117.

contrast to both the mission and the expertise of the military. Second, the government at the time tried to implement reforms that would effectively end military conscription. One of the most influential opponents of the reform, Field Marshal Frederick Sleigh Roberts, believed that ending military conscription would be against the nature of the British military, undermining its corporate spirit. He used his military credibility and political power to support the rebellious officers in Curragh and pressured the pro-reform Secretary of State for War, Sir John French, to resign.<sup>545</sup> The Curragh incident demonstrates that democracy does not provide a sufficient explanation for the non-occurrence of erosion. It also shows that the roots of the event can be traced to the mechanism of *defending the profession*.

On a more general level, developed political institutions in the United Kingdom historically did not prevent the military's involvement in politics. In fact, many of the political elites in the United Kingdom were members of the military profession. For example, historically prominent generals were awarded peerages and sat in the upper house of the Parliament — the House of Lords. In the lower house, the House of Commons, military service ranked as the second-largest occupational group until the 1960s — right before the outbreak of the Troubles.<sup>546</sup> In sum, the members of the military profession had an opportunity to challenge the government's policies vis-a-vis the use of force in Northern Ireland. Ironically, the democratic institutions provided them with this opportunity rather than denied it.

***Civil-military agreement on the policy content.*** Another potential explanation for the absence of insubordination and competition during the Troubles is that the military simply agreed with governmental policies about the use of force in Northern Ireland and therefore had no motivation to challenge them. Available evidence does not go in line with this explanation either. Quite

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<sup>545</sup> Ibid 114-115.

<sup>546</sup> Strachan, "The civil-military," 46.

the opposite, the military often disagreed with the government's decisions but carried out the orders anyway. To name a few examples, in 1971, GOC in Northern Ireland Tuzo and CGS Michael Carver opposed the policy of internment without trial.<sup>547</sup> In 1972, the high-ranking officers took an issue with the Secretary of the State for Northern Ireland (SSNI) Whitelaw's policy of keeping a low profile against the escalating IRA violence.<sup>548</sup> In 1974, GOC in Northern Ireland King demanded a more decisive counterterrorism response from the government.<sup>549</sup> In all these cases, the decisions were made not in the military's favor, but no insubordination or competition occurred.

One important distinction between the above civil-military tensions and the policy-focused mechanisms of erosion is that the officers disagreed with the government's policies because they saw governmental decisions as being unnecessary, counterproductive, and potentially dangerous but *not* falling beyond the military's profession.<sup>550</sup> In other words, the disagreement was on a substantive, not professional, basis. This evidence allows us to rule out an alternative explanation for the non-occurrence of competition and insubordination due to the alignment of civil-military preferences. Overall, the findings on the absence of insubordination and competition are consistent with the policy-focused theory: the conflict did not threaten the military's profession, and thus it did not trigger the mechanism of *defending the profession* through insubordination and competition.

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<sup>547</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 57; Michael Cunningham, *British Government Policy in Northern Ireland, 1969-2000* (Manchester University Press, 2001), 57; Rod Thornton, "Getting It Wrong: The Crucial Mistakes Made in the Early Stages of the British Army's Deployment to Northern Ireland (August 1969 to March 1972)," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 1 (2007): 73–107, 92; Charters, *Whose Mission*, 89, 101.

<sup>548</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 107.

<sup>549</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 167; Aaron Edwards, "Misapplying Lessons Learned? Analysing the Utility of British Counterinsurgency Strategy in Northern Ireland, 1971–76," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 21, no. 2 (2010): 303–30, 311.

<sup>550</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 60, 107; Cunningham, *British Government*, 57; Edwards, "Misapplying Lessons Learned," 311; Charters, *Whose Mission*, 89, 101.

### 3. Erosion of Civilian Control by Deference

The policy-focused theory predicts that erosion of civilian control occurs when the government perceives the conflict as a political burden. Then it delegates the policymaking prerogatives to the military-driven by one of the two motivations. First, the government can defer to the military to *avoid the responsibility* for risky policies. Second, the government can share the policymaking tasks with the military if it wants to *boost the popular approval* for the unpopular policies pertaining to the use of force. As the below evidence shows, London recognized the conflict in Northern Ireland as a political burden and tried to contain its effects on British politics. Moreover, it tried to limit its responsibility for managing the violence in the province by deferring to the military and the local government in Stormont. The fact that Stormont had no authority over the British military in Northern Ireland, and London avoided formulating coherent policies vis-a-vis the use of force in the province led to the decreased civilian input in policymaking, increased military influence in managing the conflict and thus resulted in erosion of civilian control by deference.

#### ***Conflict as a Political Burden for London***

London recognized the conflict in Northern Ireland as a political liability, which created a conducive environment for erosion by deference. Unlike previous counterinsurgency campaigns, it involved increased political stakes for Her Majesty's Government. In contrast to the events in remote colonies, the Troubles took place within the boundaries of the United Kingdom and involved British citizens electing the very government that sent the armed forces to repress the protests in the province.<sup>551</sup> In addition, the British military in Northern Ireland

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<sup>551</sup> Strachan, *The Politics*, 182.

was operating under the close attention of the media, who photographed, televised, and reported the events to the whole country and globally.<sup>552</sup> These conditions produced new legal and public-relations burdens for the government resulting in two contradictory tendencies. First, geographical proximity, shared institutions, and extensive media coverage increased the public expectations from Westminster to effectively deal with the Troubles. At the same time, these very conditions required to protect the British citizens from the effects of the conflict by containing it in the “problematic” province and keeping Northern Ireland at arm's length.<sup>553</sup>

As a result, London decided to distance itself from the problematic province. This civilian withdrawal from policymaking on the matters of the use of force distinguished the Troubles from colonial counterinsurgency campaigns.<sup>554</sup> Before the Troubles, these campaigns had a strong emphasis on a coordinated politico-military strategy under strict civilian control.<sup>555</sup> The use of military force was subordinated to a broader political strategy and fully subordinate to civilian policy.<sup>556</sup> In addition, in previous counterinsurgency campaigns, the government's political commitment to retaining the territory and the will to invest the necessary resources were central to the effective use of the military to reach strategic aims.<sup>557</sup> The government's commitment defined whether the military had the time to learn and adapt and whether the harsh coercive techniques were tolerated.<sup>558</sup> In contrast, in Northern Ireland, the lack of a clear policy and political will of British

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<sup>552</sup> Charters, *Whose Mission*, 5; Strachan, *The Politics*, 184.

<sup>553</sup> Peter Neumann, *Britain's Long War : British Strategy in the Northern Ireland Conflict, 1969-98*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). 22.

<sup>554</sup> Jones and Smith, “Myth and the Small War Tradition,” 451.

<sup>555</sup> Edwards, “Misapplying lessons learned,” 304; Strachan, *The Politics*, 164, 169, 174.

<sup>556</sup> Caroline Kennedy-Pipe and Colin McInnes, “The British Army in Northern Ireland 1969–1972: From Policing to Counter-Terror,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 20, no. 2 (1997): 1–24, 3–4.

<sup>557</sup> Burke, *An Army of Tribes*, 38; Strachan, *The Politics*, 182.

<sup>558</sup> Jones and Smith, “Myth and the Small War Tradition,” 451.

politicians made the military “the dominant force in the government and administration of Northern Ireland” for at least the first five years of the Troubles.<sup>559</sup>

Thus, London’s recognition of the conflict as a political burden led to a reluctance to produce clear policy about the use of force in Northern Ireland. It created a conducive environment for erosion by deference driven by the desire to *avoid responsibility*.

### ***Avoiding Responsibility as a Driver of Deference***

When *avoiding the responsibility* drives a government’s deference to the military in policymaking, the government demonstrates a visible withdrawal from policymaking, leaving the military in charge.<sup>560</sup> Westminster’s behavior during the early years of the Troubles is consistent with this expectation.

London’s preference for political non-involvement in Northern Irish affairs has deep historical roots that precede the Troubles.<sup>561</sup> When the “Irish problem” was solved in the 1920s by the partition of Ireland, Westminster was glad to escape from the political difficulties associated with Northern Ireland. Unlike in Wales and Scotland, where London strongly opposed any initiative of having a separate regional government, in Northern Ireland, it fully supported the idea of local government.<sup>562</sup> Such an arrangement allowed London to delegate the responsibility for the internal politics in the province, including law and order, to

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<sup>559</sup> Strachan, *The Politics*, 182.

<sup>560</sup> Polina Beliakova, “Erosion by Deference: Civilian Control and the Military in Policymaking,” *Texas National Security Review*, 2021.

<sup>561</sup> Neumann, *Britain’s Long War*, 21, 44.

<sup>562</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 10; Neumann, *Britain’s Long War*, 24.

the Northern Irish government based in Stormont.<sup>563</sup> As a result, Westminster had no Northern Ireland policy before the escalation of violence in the late 1960s.<sup>564</sup>

The Troubles took London's tendency to distance itself from any responsibility for the troublesome province to a new level, which now involved erosion of civilian control over the British military.<sup>565</sup> In the late 1960s, Stormont's control over the security situation in Northern Ireland weakened, and petrol bombs, arsons, and barricades became part of the daily life in the province.<sup>566</sup> The local militarized police force, Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), almost exclusively Protestant, was unable to deal with the growing political challenge as it lacked the trust of the Catholic population and was reluctant to suppress Protestant violence.<sup>567</sup> London wanted to stay out of the conflict so much that when Stormont's PM O'Neill started talking about requesting the military in aid of civil power in April 1969, Wilson's government considered a complete withdrawal of British troops from the province to prevent their involvement in Northern Irish politics.<sup>568</sup> Only reaching the conclusion that the withdrawal will, in fact, entail more responsibility for London than the alternatives, Wilson ruled out this option.<sup>569</sup>

Another observable implication of *avoiding the responsibility* mechanism driving erosion by deference is that the government's decisions would be inconsistent with previous policies or promises. To reconcile this discrepancy, civilian politicians would let the military take the lead, thus shielding the

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<sup>563</sup> Deakin, "Security Policy," 214.

<sup>564</sup> Charters, *Whose Mission*, 11.

<sup>565</sup> Kennedy-Pipe and McInnes, "The British Army," 6.

<sup>566</sup> Deakin, "Security Policy," 213.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid, 214; Kennedy-Pipe and McInnes, "The British Army," 7.

<sup>568</sup> Cunningham, *British Government*.

<sup>569</sup> Neumann, *Britain's Long War*, 43-44.



government from the responsibility for politically inconsistent decisions.<sup>570</sup> Indeed, sending the British military under Westminster's command to coerce the population in Northern Ireland was against London's usual neutral stance towards the problematic province.<sup>571</sup> Therefore London approved the deployment of the military in a conflict zone without a clear vision of the political objectives. This arrangement put the armed forces in a peculiar situation when they had to figure things out on their own. Meanwhile, Westminster presented itself as an outsider to Northern Irish politics, assuming a position of an "honest broker" that tries to bring peace and reason to the problematic province.<sup>572</sup> London's preferences become clear in the words of Wilson's Home Secretary James Callaghan: 'I said I wanted to be a catalyst [for peace, friendship, and equality] ... At the back of my mind, of course, I still did not want Britain to get more embroiled in Northern Ireland than we had to.'<sup>573</sup> In this way, to avoid the responsibility for Northern Irish issues, Westminster extended its deference to the military, weakening civilian control over the armed forces.<sup>574</sup>

Because London saw the conflict as a liability and preferred to avoid the responsibility for managing violence in Northern Ireland, the early years of the Troubles (1969-1972) offer vivid examples of erosion by deference. The below discussion introduces three major episodes in which the government's deference to the military in Northern Ireland led to erosion of civilian control. The persistent theme in these episodes is that while trying to avoid the responsibility for the Troubles, London abstained from issuing clear guidance to the British Army. In the absence of the government's policy on Northern Ireland, the British Army de

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<sup>570</sup> Beliakova, "Erosion by Deference."

<sup>571</sup> Neumann, *Britain's Long War*, 29.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>573</sup> Cited from Neumann, *Britain's Long War*, 59.

<sup>574</sup> Neumann, *Britain's Long War*, 29.

facto shaped political reality on the ground.<sup>575</sup> However, by 1972 the British public opinion started to lean heavily towards supporting the withdrawal of the troops from Northern Ireland.<sup>576</sup> Coinciding with the collapse of the Northern Irish government, this led to the imposition of direct rule from London, which gradually ended the Westminster *avoiding the responsibility* and deferring to the military in solving the conflict.

### ***1969: Deployment Without Guidance***

On August 15, 1969, Prime Minister Harold Wilson acceded to Stormont's request to deploy British troops on the streets of Belfast and Londonderry to assist in tackling the sectarian riots. However, unlike in colonial counterinsurgency campaigns, the government's commitment to managing the conflict was shaky.<sup>577</sup> From the beginning, British political elites adopted a bipartisan approach to the conflict in order to maintain the distance between the Troubles and British politics.<sup>578</sup> Therefore the government was reluctant to provide explicit guidelines or formulate clear goals for the army deployed in Northern Ireland in aid of civil power.<sup>579</sup> This distancing from the policymaking is consistent with *avoiding the responsibility* explanation for civilian deference to the military.

The Westminster formally retained control over the British troops in Northern Ireland.<sup>580</sup> making the GOC in Northern Ireland Lt. Gen. Ian Freeland

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<sup>575</sup> Strachan, *The Politics*, 182.

<sup>576</sup> Hayes, Bernadette C, and Ian McAllister. "British and Irish Public Opinion towards the Northern Ireland Problem." *Irish Political Studies* 11, no. 1 (1996): 61–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07907189608406557>.

<sup>577</sup> Paul Dixon, "'Hearts and Minds'? British Counter-Insurgency Strategy in Northern Ireland," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 3 (2009): 445–74, 449.

<sup>578</sup> Ibid, 449-50.

<sup>579</sup> Deakin, "Security Policy," 212; Kennedy-Pipe and McInnes, "The British Army," 5; Bart Schurman, "Defeated by Popular Demand: Public Support and Counterterrorism in Three Western Democracies, 1963–1998," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36, no. 2 (2013): 152–75, 156.

<sup>580</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 7.

accountable to the U.K. Ministry of Defense and not Stormont.<sup>581</sup> On the one hand, London wanted to avoid the impression that the Army support was given directly to Stormont.<sup>582</sup> On the other hand, Her Majesty's Government still wanted to avoid meddling in Northern Irish politics. Therefore, as soon as the army was committed to the ACP, London started to work on getting it out and making Stormont responsible for maintaining law and order in the province.<sup>583</sup> This condition explains the Westminster failure to define the constitutional and legislative basis for the use of the British Army in Northern Ireland until 1972. The combination of a short-term commitment on the side of the British government and the questionable basis for the use of the military in Northern Ireland further contributed to the government's withdrawal from policymaking and the associated erosion of civilian control by deference.

In the absence of a clear policy coming from the Cabinet, the Ministry of Defense, the military chain of command, and troops on the ground became not only London's primary instrument for managing the conflict but also the key players in deciding on how to use military force.<sup>584</sup> As Desmond Hamill puts it in his seminal study of the British Army in the Troubles, at the beginning of the conflict, "the Army [...] had first been forced to define its role and then shape it."<sup>585</sup> This policy vacuum led to the British Army making decisions about when and where to deploy without proper civilian guidance. Unfamiliar with the terrain and the political climate in the province, military officers on several occasions moved troops based on the guidance of the local police commissioner.<sup>586</sup> These examples allow us to rule out the alternative explanation for erosion of civilian

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<sup>581</sup> Burke, *An Army of Tribes*, 70.

<sup>582</sup> Kennedy-Pipe and McInnes, "The British Army," 9; Thornton, "Getting It Wrong," 72.

<sup>583</sup> Neumann, *Britain's Long War*, 51.

<sup>584</sup> Charters, *Whose Mission*, 23, 28.

<sup>585</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 276.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

control in which the military would use its political power to pressure the government into deploying and using the troops according to the military's preference.

At first, it looked like the strategy of minimum involvement was working, and by October 1969, street violence started to calm down, and three out of the eight British Army units sent to Northern Ireland started to withdraw.<sup>587</sup> However, it was also in January 1970 when the Provisional IRA (PIRA, henceforth IRA) splintered from the Official IRA (OIRA) and emerged as a new security threat taking control over Catholic areas and inciting violence against British soldiers. The Westminster failed to recognize the scope of this development in a timely manner and did not offer a policy about the use of the military adequate to the new conditions.<sup>588</sup>

The new type of threat and limited input from London forced the military to come up with its own solution to the problem as the violence escalated in the spring of 1970 with the start of the marching season in Northern Ireland. The Protestant unionists marched through the Catholic neighborhoods causing violent riots. Having no direction from the Westminster, GOC Freeland announced that the military would change its policy of minimal use of force: now everyone throwing a petrol bomb was liable to be shot. IRA, in turn, promised to target the soldiers if Irish people were shot. The Unionist paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force promised to shoot a Catholic for every British soldier shot.<sup>589</sup> In this way, the government's withdrawal from policymaking with regard to the use of force de facto left the military in charge of shaping the policy on the ground. This resulted in the weakening of civilian control and contributed to the escalation of violence in the province.

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<sup>587</sup> Kennedy-Pipe and McInnes, "The British Army," 11; Neumann, *Britain's Long War*, 52.

<sup>588</sup> Neumann, *Britain's Long War*, 53.

<sup>589</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 31.

### ***1970: Letting the Officers Define Policy (The Falls Curfew)***

Withdrawal from policymaking on Northern Ireland was not a particular preference of Wilson's Labour government. When the Conservatives won British elections and formed the government in June 1970, new prime minister Edward Heath continued the attempts to avoid deep involvement in Northern Irish politics. His top priority was the U.K.'s entry into the European Economic Community and reviving the British economy.<sup>590</sup> In this situation, the Troubles seemed like a distraction at best and an obstacle at worse. Thus, the new Conservative government was even more willing to limit its responsibility for managing the problematic province than its Labor predecessors.<sup>591</sup> As GOC in Northern Ireland Ian Freeland admitted, he felt the lack of guidance from the government and repeatedly asked for the statement of aims and a policy for security forces, but received none.<sup>592</sup> Meanwhile, the emergence of the IRA as a clearly identifiable adversary allowed the military to rely on its colonial counterinsurgency toolkit in a situation of escalating violence and low governmental input.<sup>593</sup> This led to the major manifestation of erosion of civilian control over the British troops in Northern Ireland — the Falls curfew.

With the change of the security environment on the ground and the lack of adequate policy guidance from the British government, the military took the situation into its hands and adopted an enemy-centric approach to counterinsurgency.<sup>594</sup> In July 1970, the military received intelligence about stashes of weapons in the Catholic Lower Falls area of West Belfast. Without consulting with civilian authorities neither in London nor in Belfast, COG Freeland ordered to implement a 34-hour curfew. His justification was that

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<sup>590</sup> Charters, *Whose Mission*, 90.

<sup>591</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 35.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid, 22; Burke, *An Army of Tribes*, 74.

<sup>594</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 33.

obtaining permission for a curfew would take too long because there was no clear legal basis for imposing it.<sup>595</sup> The military's tactics involved the destruction of the Catholic's property and the objects of worship, abuse, and intimidation of the local population, which resulted in four deaths and over three hundred arrests.<sup>596</sup> While the military's brutality alienated the Catholic population in Northern Ireland and increased their support for the IRA, the media coverage elevated the problem to the national and then international levels.<sup>597</sup> The political damage of the unapproved military curfew was overwhelming. Thus, the government's deference to the military produced an undeniable manifestation of erosion of civilian control with the long-reaching strategic and political ramifications.

The Falls curfew incident finally made London recognize how little control it has over the military in Northern Ireland. In an attempt to reinstate some control over the troops, Westminster prohibited the army from initiating massive searches or other military operations in Catholic areas without previous reference to the Ministers in London.<sup>598</sup> However, this applied only to searches of more than 25 houses. Smaller search operations could be authorized by GOC without prior consultation with civilians. This limitation on massive searches was a fragmented solution that failed to address a multidimensional issue of ends, ways, and means of the use of force in Northern Ireland. Thus, while the British government tried to maintain control over the military on the operational level, it still abstained from generating a clear policy about the use of force in the province. This condition preserved the military's position as the most powerful actor shaping the political reality on the ground as the Troubles continued.

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<sup>595</sup> Ibid, 35; Campbell and Connolly, "A model for war against terror," 352.

<sup>596</sup> Burke, *An Army of Tribes*, 75; William Beattie Smith, *The British State and the Northern Ireland Crisis, 1969-73: From Violence to Power-Sharing* (US Institute of Peace Press, 2011), 151.

<sup>597</sup> Burke, *An Army of Tribes*.

<sup>598</sup> Charters, *Whose Mission*, 93.

### ***1971: Internment Without Trial and Interrogation Without Authorization***

In the early 1970s, the British military in Northern Ireland was stuck between serving two masters. One, in Stormont, eager to go hard on IRA but having no power over the army. Another, in Westminster, having full authority to command the troops but doing everything to spare itself of this responsibility. The point of mutual agreement between the two masters was that both wanted to keep Stormont in place.<sup>599</sup> The adoption of the policy of internment without trial in August 1971, lobbied by Stormont PM Faulkner, provided a suitable compromise. The higher goal of approving the policy of internment for Westminster was to keep Stormont in place and avoid the responsibility for governing Northern Ireland.<sup>600</sup> London approved of this policy to help PM Faulkner satisfy the demands of his constituencies and remain in power.<sup>601</sup> After approving the new policy, London completely withdrew from addressing the political side of the internment and saw it as a tactical solution left to the Stormont's and the military's discretion.<sup>602</sup>

The burden of implementation of the new controversial policy fell on the military. In practical terms, internment meant detaining suspects without trial, charge, or due prosecution for an indefinite amount of time. This practice was not new since the British military used it before both in Northern Ireland and colonial counterinsurgencies.<sup>603</sup> Despite the fact that the new GOC in Northern Ireland, Gen. Tuzo and the Chief of General Staff resisted the introduction of internment<sup>604</sup>, they played only a consultative role in the policymaking process, in

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<sup>599</sup> Neumann, *Britain's Long War*, 56.

<sup>600</sup> Charters, *Whose Mission*, 90.

<sup>601</sup> Neumann, *Britain's Long War*, 56.

<sup>602</sup> Cunningham, *British Government*, 57.

<sup>603</sup> Kennedy-Pipe and McInnes, "The British Army," 15; Charters, *Whose Mission*, 90.

<sup>604</sup> Cunningham, *British Government*, 58.

line with democratic civilian control.<sup>605</sup> When Stormont's PM Faulkner prevailed and Downing Street approved the internment, the military abided by the order.

The government's deference to the military in policy implementation led to further weakening of civilian control and a number of policy failures. With Stormont being responsible for law and order but having no power to give orders to the military, the army commanders in Northern Ireland had a large degree of operational autonomy and little civilian oversight.<sup>606</sup> In the absence of adequate policy guidance, the military was again left to its own devices and resorted to the colonial toolkit — harsh suspect interrogation techniques similar to those used in Cyprus and Aden.<sup>607</sup>

Both internment and interrogations proved to be major policy failures on domestic and international levels.<sup>608</sup> According to the British Army's official analysis of the military operations in Northern Ireland, "the reintroduction of internment and the use of deep interrogation techniques had a major impact on popular opinion across Ireland, in Europe and the U.S."<sup>609</sup> Harsh interrogation techniques caused domestic and international outrage and led to a major political disagreement between the government and opposition in London, unprecedented since the beginning of the Troubles.<sup>610</sup>

London's behavior in response to the popular outcry is consistent with erosion by deference driven by *avoiding the responsibility* mechanism. Conservative Home Secretary Maudling clearly stated that methods used by British Army in Northern Ireland are the responsibility of General Officer

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<sup>605</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 57.

<sup>606</sup> Cunningham, *British Government*, 64.

<sup>607</sup> Kennedy-Pipe and McInnes, "The British Army," 15; Edwards, "Misapplying the lessons learned," 308; Charters, *Whose Mission*, 89.

<sup>608</sup> Cunningham, *British Government*, 58.

<sup>609</sup> "Operation Banner: An Analysis of Military Operations in Northern Ireland" (United Kingdom: Ministry of Defense, 2006), <https://file.wikileaks.org/file/uk-operation-banner-2006.pdf>.

<sup>610</sup> Cunningham, *British Government*, 59-60.



Commanding, ultimately communicating that London did not exercise adequate supervision of security policy and had weak control over the armed forces deployed in Northern Ireland.<sup>611</sup> Blaming the military for policy failures is a typical feature of erosion by deference.<sup>612</sup> In this way, once again, Westminster's withdrawal from policymaking to avoid the responsibility for Northern Irish policy resulted in erosion of civilian control.

### ***1972: Direct Rule and the End of Deference***

London's decision-making with regard to the use of force in Northern Ireland was conditional on domestic and international support.<sup>613</sup> By 1972, The domestic and international costs of internment, interrogation, and brutal use of force on Bloody Sunday outweighed the benefits for London's limited involvement in Northern Ireland. The harsh criticism of the domestic deployment of troops and the subsequent limitations of civil rights in Northern Ireland increased the political costs of London's attempts to rely on the military in solving the conflict.<sup>614</sup> The necessity of Westminster's ministers to publicly defend the decisions over which they exercised limited control required the government to finally take full responsibility for the events in the province. Thus, on March 22, 1972, Westminster implemented a major policy shift and introduced a direct rule over Northern Ireland from London.<sup>615</sup>

The army welcomed the policy of direct rule wholeheartedly since they expected it to finally give them long-term strategic guidance.<sup>616</sup> GOC Gen. Tuzo hoped that it would streamline the communication of political guidance pertaining

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<sup>611</sup> Cunningham, *British Government*, 62; Neumann, *Britain's Long War*, 57.

<sup>612</sup> Beliakova, "Erosion by Deference."

<sup>613</sup> Neumann, *Britain's Long War*, 27-28.

<sup>614</sup> Ibid.

<sup>615</sup> Bennett, "Minimum Force," 511; Neumann, *Britain's Long War*, 69.

<sup>616</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 103.

to the use of force.<sup>617</sup> He insisted that he would have to receive political directives from the newly instituted Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The fact that the military demanded more robust civilian control points to civilian deference and not the military's political ambitions as a root cause of previous erosion of civilian control.

However, the expectations of Gen. Tuzo did not materialize as the new SSNI William Whitelaw, instead of providing strategic guidance to the army, told the military to keep a low profile until he understands the situation and comes up with a political solution to the problem.<sup>618</sup> Since Whitelaw was prioritizing de-escalation, the military was prohibited from entering the Catholic (IRA-controlled) no-go areas.<sup>619</sup> This approach was not viable since it tied the military's hands in tackling the intensifying violence from the IRA and the Unionist extremists.<sup>620</sup> The result of keeping a low profile was the increase of army casualties and a drain of resources.<sup>621</sup> Moreover, the imposition of the direct rule left the military responsible for all security operations, including those involving RUC, while giving them no clarity on the government's policy about the use of force.<sup>622</sup> So while London took more responsibility for the situation in Northern Ireland and pursued political paths of resolving the conflict (e.g., negotiating with the IRA), it was still trying to distance itself from the military policy.<sup>623</sup> This again left the British military alone in figuring out the situation on the ground with little guidance from civilian policymakers.

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<sup>617</sup> Charters, *Whose Mission*, 147.

<sup>618</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 105; Bennett, "Minimum Force," 514.

<sup>619</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 112; Bennett, "Minimum Force," 511.

<sup>620</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 106.

<sup>621</sup> Bennett, "Minimum Force", 514.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid.

<sup>623</sup> Ibid, 512.

The subsequent failure of the attempted negotiations between London and IRA leadership and further escalation of violence put an end to the “low profile” policy and forced the government to approve the use of force to reestablish control over the Catholic areas.<sup>624</sup> On Friday, 21 July 1972, IRA simultaneously detonated more than 20 bombs in the center of Belfast.<sup>625</sup> In response to this unprecedented act of indiscriminate violence, the British government approved the military operation to reestablish control over IRA-controlled Catholic no-go areas.<sup>626</sup> This operation received a codename Motorman and was the biggest since the Suez crisis of 1956.<sup>627</sup> PM Heath personally scrutinized the risks associated with the operation and approved the military action.<sup>628</sup>

With the imposition of direct rule, London gradually took responsibility for the political and military situation in Northern Ireland. First, the Conservative government under PM Heath invested significant effort to negotiate a power-sharing agreement between Catholics and Protestants in the province. The military felt that finally, the politicians are taking constructive steps toward conflict resolution, not leaving it to the army alone.<sup>629</sup> Then, Wilson’s Labour government with SSNI Merlyn Rees pressed for the creation of the Ulster Defense Regiment, expansion of the RUC, and later the policy of police primacy over the security situation in Northern Ireland.<sup>630</sup> By the mid-1970s, civilian politicians assumed

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<sup>624</sup> Ibid, 521-524.

<sup>625</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 111; Schuurman, “Defeated by Popular Demand,” 158.

<sup>626</sup> Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 112.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid, 115.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid, 130.

<sup>630</sup> Aaron Edwards, “‘A Whipping Boy If Ever There Was One’? The British Army and the Politics of Civil–Military Relations in Northern Ireland, 1969–79,” *Contemporary British History* 28, no. 2 (2014): 166–89, 175.

firm control over security policy.<sup>631</sup> This major change ended the period of the government's deference to the military and associated erosion of civilian control.

### *Alternative Explanations*

The alternative explanations for civilian deference to the military do not find support in the case of Northern Ireland and British use of force during the Troubles. The first possible explanation suggests that that civilians might simply *lack the expertise* in managing intrastate conflict and therefore defer to the military. The long history of civil-military coordination in British counterinsurgency campaigns casts doubt on this explanation. As many experts notice, it is exactly the lack of civilian policy input that distinguished the use of the military in Northern Ireland from other colonial counterinsurgency campaigns.<sup>632</sup> This observation means that civilian authorities had the experience of managing small low-intensity conflict they accumulated in the previous military campaigns but decided not to use it in Northern Ireland.

Another possible explanation for deference is engaging the military in policymaking to *boost the popular approval* for unpopular policies. This explanation requires that the government would have a strong preference for employing an unpopular or risky course of action and would use the military to increase the approval for its preferred policy. The absence of a comprehensive government's policy on using force in Northern Ireland casts doubt on *boosting the approval* explanation for deference. As shown by the above discussion, the main problem in the early years of the Troubles was precisely the absence of any actionable policy preference for how to use the military in Northern Ireland.<sup>633</sup>

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<sup>631</sup> Ibid, 178.

<sup>632</sup> Edwards, "Misapplying lessons learned," 304; Strachan, *The Politics*, 164, 169, 174.

<sup>633</sup> See Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 33; Kennedy-Pipe and McInnes, "The British Army," 15; Edwards, "Misapplying the lessons learned," 308; Charters, *Whose Mission*, 89.

Thus, *boosting the approval* does not provide a plausible explanation for civilian deference to the military during the Troubles.

The absence of government policy about the use of force also allows for ruling out the possibility that the military shaping the political reality on the ground is, in fact, a form of *erosion by competition* rather than deference. Competition would require the military to use its political power to undermine the government's policy about the use of force. In the case of the first years of the Troubles, the military was filling the policy vacuum rather than challenging the government's preferred course of action.

Finally, one might speculate that the British government was deferring to the army to avoid civil-military tensions over the use of force in Northern Ireland. This explanation, *cajoling the military*, is also not consistent with the available evidence. As discussed earlier in this chapter, civil-military tensions arose precisely due to the *absence* of government participation in policymaking. On several occasions, the military demanded that civilian politicians provide more robust guidance.<sup>634</sup> Thus, if the government wanted to cajole the military, it should have provided more input and not less, as we see in this case.

To conclude, the mechanism of *avoiding responsibility* suggested by the policy-focused theory explains four out of four instances of deference discussed in this chapter. Another policy-focused mechanism — boosting approval — did not find significant support in evidence as well as alternative explanations not related to policy considerations of the government. Table 6.1 summarizes these findings.

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<sup>634</sup> Charters, *Whose Mission*, 147; Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 26.

**Table 6.1 Comparing the policy-focused and alternative explanations for deference**

<i>Causal Mechanisms</i>	Cases of Deference (N=4)				<b>Obs. explained</b>
	No policy guiding the deployment in 1969	Officers drive policy (the Falls curfew)	Internment without trial	No policy guidance under direct rule (1972)	
<i>Avoiding responsibility</i>	V	V	V	V	4/4
<i>Boosting approval</i>	X	X	X	X	0/4
<i>Cajoling the military</i>	X	X	X	X	0/4
<i>Lacking the expertise</i>	X	X	X	X	0/4

V = supported by evidence; X = not supported by evidence; ~ = partially supported

## 4. Conclusion

The case of the United Kingdom using its military in Northern Ireland during the early stages of the Troubles shows that even a strong democracy is not immune from erosion of civilian control. First, the strong democratic institutions of the United Kingdom could not prevent the military's intervention in politics. Instead, it is the fact that the use of force in Northern Ireland matched the broader military's sense of professional responsibility, expertise and helped maintain the corporate spirit that explains the absence of the military's motivation to undermine the government's policies through insubordination or competition. These findings go in line with the predictions of the policy-focused theory and show that its predictions apply to established democracies as well as to democratizing states. While the erosion by insubordination and competition did

not occur, the government in London weakened civilian control by deferring to the military (See Table 6.2).

**Table 6.2 UK: Summary table**

Form of erosion	Causal Mechanisms	Observations explained
<b>Erosion by insubordination</b> (N=0)	<i>N/A</i>	N/A
<b>Erosion by competition</b> (N=0)	<i>N/A</i>	N/A
<b>Erosion by deference</b> (N = 4)	<i>Avoiding responsibility</i>	<b>4/4</b>
	<i>Boosting approval</i>	<b>0/4</b>
	<i>Cajoling the military</i>	0/4
	<i>Lacking the expertise</i>	0/4

The conflict constituted a burden for Westminster, and the government tried to *avoid the responsibility* for the use of force in Northern Ireland during the first four years of the Troubles. London left the military deployed in the province without concrete policy guidance, which required the officers to figure out the policies about the use of force on the ground. Left to its own devices, on many occasions, the military fell to colonial counterinsurgency defaults and used the techniques that increased the political pressure in the province. In this way, the government's deference weakened civilian control of the military.

The above analysis allows separating erosion of civilian control by competition from erosion by deference. In other cases (e.g., Russia, Israel), both forms of the weakening civilian control were present, which allowed speculating that maybe the government delegated policymaking prerogatives to the military (deference) in order to mitigate the military's competition against the governmental policies. However, in the case of the United Kingdom's use of force

in Northern Ireland, the government deferred to the military to avoid the responsibility for risky policies while no significant acts of competition occurred. As in previous cases, the government's deference to the military reduced civilian influence in policy formulation and implementation and, in this way, weakened civilian control.



## **CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION**

The use of military force remains one of the most potent and dangerous tools of statecraft. This condition puts civilian control of the military at the core of national, regional, and international security. Surprisingly, most existing studies discussing civilian control focus on how the military challenges the government, falling short of looking at the civilian side of the bargain. My dissertation fills this theoretical gap, focusing on how the government's security policies can weaken civilian control.

The new policy-focused theory I developed in this research argues that civilian policy leads to erosion of civilian control if it undermines the boundaries of the military profession. Striving to preserve the status quo, the military will challenge the government's authority to undermine the harmful policy. In addition, this new theory suggests that, due to policy considerations, civilian leaders may voluntarily delegate policymaking prerogatives to the military. This happens when the government perceives the conflict and the associated policymaking effort as a political burden. The delegation of policymaking tasks to the military increases the power of the military in politics and erodes civilian control.

Challenging the conventional wisdom, the findings of this research show that, indeed, the elected officials' policies contribute to the erosion of civilian control more than the military's political ambitions. Moreover, contrary to the common assumption, the military elites' political aspirations are not necessary to decrease civilian power over the armed forces. These findings are robust to the levels of democratization, economic performance, previous history of coups, and the level of civilian expertise in security policymaking. Thus, scholars and policymakers should not blame the generals for the erosion of civilian control but pay closer attention to the actions of civilian politicians instead.

To test the policy-focused theory, this dissertation considers a subset of cases where both the abovementioned conditions — a threat to the military profession and conflict as a policy burden — are likely to be met. Intrastate separatist conflicts often lie beyond the scope of the military profession and constitute a policymaking burden for the civilian government that failed to manage the intrastate challenge without the use of military force. Russia in the First Chechen war (1994-1996), Ukraine at the beginning of the conflict in Donbas (2014-2019), Israel during the First Palestinian Intifada and the Oslo Process (1987-1999), and the United Kingdom in the early stages of the Troubles (1968-1972) provided useful variation in the two conditions specified by the policy-focused theory. The data collection effort for this research involved extensive fieldwork, expert interviews, archival work, the analysis of governmental documents, memoirs, military statutes and regulations, professional military publications, doctrinal documents, media reports, and results of public opinion polls. Acknowledging that the standards of civilian control are often unique to a given research context, I relied on as many original and locally produced sources as possible, using my proficiency in Russian, Ukrainian, Hebrew, and English to examine the original pieces of evidence and interview local experts.

The first chapter of this study, *“Russia in the First Chechen War: Fighting for Order and Losing Control,”* showed how Boris Yeltsin’s security policy in the Caucasus affected Russia’s civil-military relations in the 1990s. The evidence indicated that the government’s decision to use the military in Chechnya motivated the officers to interfere in politics to defend the boundaries of the military profession. Examples included the military’s participation in elections, attempts to alter government policies through the media, and to galvanize civil society to pressure the elected officials. In addition, seeing Chechnya as a graveyard of his political career, Yeltsin was eager to delegate policymaking prerogatives to the military on the most sensitive issues — starting and ending the war. These decisions decreased civilian input in policy and further weakened

civilian control in Russia. The case of Russia is rich in alternative explanations. Shaky institutions, volatile civil society, uncertainty about the future of the military, poor economy, the history of previous coups, and weak civilian oversight could potentially explain many instances of erosion. However, as Table 7.1 indicates, they did not sustain the test with the evidence, while the policy-related causal mechanisms suggested by this research demonstrated superior explanatory power, explaining all three instances of insubordination, three cases of the military's competition against the government, and two out of two instances of civilian deference to the military.

The second chapter, *"Ukraine's war in Donbas: When the War Makes the Military,"* explored how governmental policies regarding the intrastate use of force not only undermined democratic civilian control but also helped consolidate it. The evidence suggested that Kyiv's decision to use the military in Eastern Ukraine created favorable conditions for eroding democratic civilian control. Multiple acts of insubordination showed that elected officials could not effectively exercise power over the Ukrainian military. The following policy of relying on volunteer battalions further diluted civilian control. Nevertheless, the government's ability to adjust its security policies to the changing threat environment helped Ukrainian policymakers partially reverse the damaging effect of their initial decisions by professionalizing the military and reinstating control over the volunteers. This case demonstrated aligning the government's policies with the military profession and the nature of the current threat can help halt the erosion of civilian control. Moreover, the case of Ukraine showed that non-policy-focused explanations for deference fail to lead to deterioration of civilian control in the absence of policy-related causes. Specifically, the conflict in Donbas did not constitute a political burden for the government. At the same time, Ukraine had limited civilian expertise in policymaking, which some argue creates favorable conditions for deference. Nevertheless, no deference occurred, which

pointed to the importance of the policy-focused explanation for this type of erosion.

Of course, one might argue that it is not the governmental policies about the intrastate use of force but the overall low level of democracy in post-Soviet states that correlated with weak institutions, underdeveloped civil society, and poor economic performance which explain the weakening of civilian control in Russia and Ukraine. To test this assumption, the third and fourth chapters compared the post-Soviet cases to democratic states involved in intrastate conflicts — Israel during the First Palestinian Intifada and the United Kingdom during the Troubles.

The chapter “*Israel in the First Intifada: The Limits of Civil-Military Partnership*” showed that the government’s decision to use the IDF against Palestinian protesters in 1987 motivated the military’s interference in politics and undermined the democratic policy processes. Although most explanations for erosion by competition listed in Table 7.1 were absent, governmental policies about the use of force in the First Intifada still led to the weakening of civilian control in Israel. In addition, the high prestige of the military in Israel allowed us to observe a policy-focused mechanism of erosion by deference — *boosting the approval*. On two occasions, the Israeli government used the IDF to increase the popular trust in the politically risky policy of peace negotiations with the Palestinians. Overall, this case showed that neither the democratic institutions nor the long-standing tradition of civil-military partnership in Israel helped prevent the deleterious effects of the governmental policies on civilian control of the military.

The chapter “*British Army in Northern Ireland: Deference by Default*” presented the story of the oldest democracy in the world not being immune to weakening civilian control by the elected officials’ policies. On the one hand, Her Majesty’s Government’s decision to deploy the British military in Northern Ireland did not violate the boundaries of the military profession since the army has participated in several similar campaigns since 1945. Therefore, in line

with the policy-focused theory, no erosion by competition or insubordination occurred. On the other hand, despite the availability of civilian expertise in security policymaking, officials in London were reluctant to formulate a consistent policy to guide the deployment of troops. The absence of civilian policy defining the deployment's strategic objectives produced the situation where the military de facto shaped the political reality on the ground. As a result, democratic civilian control over the use of force deteriorated because of the abdication of responsibility by elected politicians. These findings show that the strong institutions, developed civil society, a stable economy, or civilian expertise in policymaking are not sufficient to prevent the erosion of civilian control when the policy factors remain powerful, leading to erosion of civilian control by deference even in a strong and developed democracy.

In sum, the four aforementioned chapters tested the policy-related mechanisms of erosion — defending the profession, avoiding the responsibility, and boosting public approval — against alternative explanations offered by previous scholarship in explaining erosion by insubordination, competition, and deference. Table 7.1 summarizes the explanatory power of these mechanisms. Overall, defending the profession plausibly explained all sixteen instances of insubordination across the three cases. An alternative explanation for insubordination based on weak oversight and fear for one's life explained only one and three observations, respectively. This record suggests that defending the profession is not only plausible but is the most probable explanation for insubordination. The case of the United Kingdom in Northern Ireland did not have any instances of insubordination or competition since the governmental policies did not threaten the military profession. This finding is consistent with the predictions of the policy-focused theory.

When it comes to erosion by competition, the mechanism of defending the military profession from deleterious governmental policies was consistent with the evidence in all twelve observations. This research examined its plausibility

against seven competing explanations of the military's participation in politics found in the existing literature. Individual ambitions of the generals proved to be the most promising alternative to defending the profession but explained only four or one-third of all observations of erosion by competition. Since two-thirds of instances of competition did not involve power-hungry generals, we can conclude that the individual ambitions of the officers are not a necessary condition for erosion by competition. This finding suggests that scholars and policymakers should pay more attention to the civilian side of civil-military relations when explaining the weakening of civilian control.

This study advanced two policy-focused explanations for deference — *avoiding the responsibility* for risky policy and *boosting the approval* for unpopular policies by delegating the policymaking prerogatives to the military. As Table 7.1 indicates, this research considered nine instances of erosion by deference in three cases — Russia, Israel, and the United Kingdom. Avoiding responsibility proved plausible in seven out of nine observations while boosting approval only in two. This finding calls for additional theorizing of the conditions under which each mechanism is likely to be launched. Alternative explanations of deference not related to policy considerations — cajoling the military and lacking the expertise — explained none and one observation, respectively. As was predicted by the policy-focused theory, the case of the Ukrainian war in Donbas did not involve any civilian deference to the military since Kyiv did not see the conflict as a political burden. Overall, the causal mechanisms suggested by the policy-focused theory proved to provide more plausible and probable explanations for most instances of erosion of civilian control considered in this research.

The new policy-focused theory of erosion of civilian control contributes to the study of security policymaking, civil-military relations, conflict studies, and democratic governance. It highlights the often overlooked role of civilian officials in the weakening of civilian control. This contribution is especially valuable for

the literature on democratic backsliding, claiming that the decline of democracies happens through a gradual deterioration of democratic institutions and processes. Resonating with this line of scholarship, the policy-focused theory demonstrates how the decisions of civilian officials can gradually weaken one of the fundamental pillars of democratic governance — civilian control of the military. The second significant contribution of this study is the comprehensive framework for the erosion of civilian control, which allows capturing subtle forms of weakening civilian power over the military manifesting in forms other than coups — insubordination, competition, and deference. Analyzing civilian control beyond military takeovers is particularly relevant for democratic and democratizing states where coups are less common but for which civilian control is essential.

The third theoretical innovation of this dissertation is the development of the concept of erosion by deference and specifying the causal mechanisms that lead to its occurrence. While the civilian delegation of policymaking prerogatives to the military constitutes an alarmingly widespread phenomenon, previous research paid limited attention to its causes and outcomes. In this study, I conceptualized civilian deference to the military, demonstrated how it relates to the weakening of civilian control, and tested two policy-oriented mechanisms that lead to erosion by deference — boosting public approval and avoiding responsibility. All three theoretical contributions — the policy-focused theory, the comprehensive framework, and the concept of erosion by deference — open avenues for further research on civilian control in democracies and the role of elected officials in weakening it.

**Table 7.1 Summary table for all four cases**

Form of erosion	Causal Mechanisms	Observations explained					
		Russia	Ukraine	Israel	UK	Total (N)	Total (%)
<b>Erosion by insubordination (N=16)</b>	<b><i>Defending the profession</i></b>	<b>3/3</b>	<b>7/7</b>	<b>6/6</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>
	<i>Weak oversight</i>	0/3	1/7	0/6	N/A	1	6.25
	<i>Fear for one's life</i>	0/3	3/7	0/6	N/A	3	18.75
<b>Erosion by competition (N=12)</b>	<b><i>Defending the profession</i></b>	<b>3/3</b>	<b>4/4</b>	<b>5/5</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100.00</b>
	<i>Weak institutions</i>	0/3	1/4	0/5	N/A	1	8.33
	<i>Low gov's legitimacy</i>	0/3	0/4	0/5	N/A	0	0.00
	<i>Poor econ. performance</i>	0/3	0/4	0/5	N/A	0	0.00
	<i>Uncertainty about the regime</i>	0/3	0/4	0/5	N/A	0	0.00
	<i>History of coups</i>	0/3	0/4	0/5	N/A	0	0.00
	<i>Contracting on violence</i>	0/3	0/4	0/5	N/A	0	0.00
	<i>Individual ambitions</i>	1/3	2/4	1/5	N/A	4	33.33
<b>Erosion by deference (N = 9)</b>	<b><i>Avoiding responsibility</i></b>	<b>2/2</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>1/3</b>	<b>4/4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>77.78</b>
	<b><i>Boosting approval</i></b>	<b>0/2</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>2/3</b>	<b>0/4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>22.22</b>
	<i>Cajoling the military</i>	0/2	N/A	0/3	0/4	0	0.00
	<i>Lacking the expertise</i>	0/2	N/A	1/3	0/4	1	11.11

This dissertation offers several empirical contributions. First, it adds to the scholarship relying on explicit process tracing of causal mechanisms driven by the disciplined approach to examining evidence against multiple alternative



explanations. Second, it features an empirical test of the classical Huntingtonian argument stating that military professionalism plays a crucial part in preventing the military's involvement in politics. This study evaluates how the government's attempts to redefine the key pillars of the military profession affect the military's ability and willingness to intervene in politics. The findings align with Huntington's argument, showing empirically that tampering with the military's expertise, responsibility, and corporateness weakens civilian control. Third, this research presents new data crucial for understanding how the war in Ukraine affected civilian control of the military. Of all four cases I investigate in this dissertation, Ukraine is the most recent, the least studied, and, arguably, the most important from the policy perspective since the war is still ongoing at the moment of this writing. This new data helps shed light on how Ukrainian understanding of the Russian aggression changed over time and how it affected the Ukrainian Armed Forces, helping them develop from a corrupt and dysfunctional post-Soviet force to a people's army to a professional combat-ready military.

Turning the analytical focus from the power-thirsty generals and coups to the role of civilian officials and their policies bears multiple policy implications. To begin, the policy-focused theory provides a helpful tool for analyzing whether the course of action preferred by the government would backfire and weaken civilian control. Understanding that policy options that challenge the boundaries of the military profession are likely to increase the military's involvement in politics has to be factored into the evaluation of risks associated with the preferred policy. Second, the comprehensive framework of erosion of civilian control provides a sensitive tool for policymakers, international organizations, and NGOs to capture and analyze the state of civil-military relations in conflict-affected societies. This knowledge is crucial for evaluating the expected outcomes of military assistance, conflict management initiatives, peace negotiations, and humanitarian efforts.

Third, the new concept of erosion by deference highlights the risks associated with the delegation of the policymaking prerogatives to the members of the

military profession. As my research on erosion by deference shows, the weakening of civilian control is an unintended consequence and not the goal of this delegation. Recognizing the deleterious effect of the military's excessive involvement in policymaking for civilian control would help design the policy formulation process with appropriate civil-military balance. As the case of Ukraine showed, governmental policies can not only erode civilian control but also help consolidate it. The findings of this research underscore the importance of the accountability of the civilian side of civil-military relations for civilian control of the military, democratic governance, and effective use of force.

It is important to admit that this study and its findings have several limitations. One of them is that this dissertation tested the policy-focused theory only under the conditions of the intrastate war, except for Ukraine after August 2014. While logically, the predictions of the policy-focused theory apply to interstate wars as well, empirical testing of its prepositions under different conditions remains the task for future research. In addition, the policy-focused theory is more relevant to democracies than authoritarian states. One of the reasons is that autocracies are more coup-prone, rely on repression against their own militaries, and do not necessarily require civilian dominance in policymaking. Therefore, more subtle forms of erosion are less likely to materialize. For instance, when the price for insubordination is execution, the officers would be less likely to resign or refuse orders. In the absence of the free media or democratic elections, we would not observe the leaks of the sensitive information by the military to the press or the officers running in elections — two forms of competition. Civilian deference to the military in policymaking may not be as problematic in autocracies as in democracies where it is a crucial regime requirement. Thus, the contributions of this research would be most helpful in analyzing democratic and democratizing regimes.

The policy-focused theory, the comprehensive framework of erosion of civilian control, and the novel concept of erosion by deference open new avenues

for further research on civil-military relations. The policy-focused theory allows scholars to generate and test new hypotheses about the role of civilians in the erosion of civilian control and the importance of military professionalism in application to various conflict environments. In my future research, I plan to apply it to the cases of U.S. military interventions after the end of the Cold War and their impact on civil-military relations in the United States. A second promising research direction would be examining the effects of governmental policies on civilian control in the context of the full-scale interstate war. The comprehensive framework of erosion of civilian control could be instrumental in research contexts where the power of the military in politics is increasing by means other than coups. In particular, Latin American states that democratized after the military rule and now are experiencing democratic backsliding would be a fruitful area of application for the new framework. Future research on civil-military relations would also benefit from further developing the theoretical understanding of civilian deference to the military. As democratic institutions experience a decline in popular trust, and the militaries continue to enjoy high respect in many democratic societies, the issue of civilian delegation of policymaking prerogatives to the military is likely to exacerbate and attract more scholarly attention.

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