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Reassuring the Reluctant Warriors: U.S. Civil-Military Relations and Multilateral Intervention

By Stefano Recchia

Reviewed by Marybeth P. Ulrich, Professor of Government, Department of National Security and Strategy, US Army War College

In *Reassuring the Reluctant Warriors*, Stefano Recchia, a lecturer in international relations at Cambridge University, investigates the role civil-military relations played in US efforts to gain the support of international organizations for the use of force. His central hypothesis is “when there is no clear threat to US national security and policymakers consequently disagree about the merits of intervention, a determined military leadership can veto the use of American force” (51). In short, Recchia argues senior military leaders at the apex of political-military decision-making can effectively veto policy when civilian policymakers are divided and the national interest is less than vital. In such scenarios, the military may demand the government obtain the support of international organizations as a condition of the military’s backing of the intervention.

Recchia argues further the military’s demand for an international organization mandate is also linked to the military’s preference for such resolutions to state explicitly that US intervention forces will hand over control to multinational follow-on forces. The existence of such a provision in the planning phase of the operation will not only facilitate the planning process itself with the inclusion of the assumption of the presence of multinational stabilization forces, but will also fulfill the military’s post Weinberger-Powell Doctrine desire for a clear exit strategy before giving its assent to the use of force. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) would usually be the first choice to endorse the intervention given its unique status as the organization the Charter of the United Nations authorizes to approve the use of force, but the approval of other regional organizations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the Organization of American States (OAS) may also suffice.

Reassuring the Reluctant Warriors is remarkable on many levels. First, its four case studies: Haiti (1993–94), Bosnia (1992–95), Kosovo (1998–99), and Iraq (2002–03) are extraordinarily well researched. Recchia conducted over 100 interviews with primary participants in the cases to include US secretaries of state and defense, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, national security advisers, US ambassadors to the UN, NATO, and the European Union, and many more with individuals holding positions a tier or two below the principals. The breadth and depth of the interviews enabled Recchia to include many insights from these key participants’ in the deeply sourced text, some of which directly supported his hypothesis. The case studies alone, which include many of these comments, merit acquiring the book.

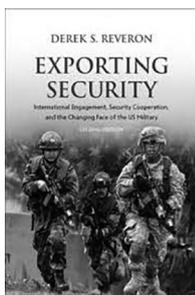
Second, Recchia illustrates (literally—with useful figures) the factors influencing the military’s viewpoint, their methods for exerting policy influence, and specific conditions that will make the military’s “insistence” to acquire international organization approval more or less likely. Third, through the development of his primary and

alternative hypotheses, he provides readers a rich review of the various factors, conditions, and theory that explains why international organization approval is or is not sought as well as methods employed to acquire approval.

If the book falls short in any area, it is in Recchia's neglect to consider whether the behaviors he documents on the part of senior military leaders fall outside the bounds of civil-military norms. First, there is the discussion of the military's "veto" power. While Recchia painstakingly completes the "process tracing" of the impact of the civilian and military actors in each case, he does not note the military is in what Eliot Cohen deemed an "unequal dialogue" with civilian policymakers, meaning a military veto is inconsistent with the principle of civilian control. Consequently, the table detailing "How the generals can influence military intervention decision-making" with its inclusion of "present some options as unfeasible," "selectively leak reservations to the press," and "hint at possible resignation," along with provide "professional expertise" and "alert civilian policymakers to risks and likely operational costs," are included side by side despite the issue the former suggestions include behaviors that effectively undermine civilian control.

The case development at times also includes the political opinions of the military along with the professional expertise civilians expect regarding the operational limits of various options under consideration. In the Haiti case, for example, Recchia wrote, "The top-level generals and admirals disputed that important US national interests were at stake in Haiti. They were skeptical about using force to restore democracy and protect human rights and worried about getting bogged down in an open-ended stabilization mission that the Congress might not support" (81). It is not the role of senior military leaders to determine national interest or to set policy. Manipulating the provision of professional expertise in order to get the institution's way on policy is a serious violation of professional norms related to civilian control. Some recognition of this issue in the text would have strengthened the presentation of the cases.

Overall, *Reassuring the Reluctant Warriors* is a welcome addition to civil-military relations literature in political science. Recchia wrote his purpose was to build theory in such a way that it acknowledges the direct and underappreciated role senior military leaders at the apex of political-military dialogue play in policy development. The text accomplishes this goal with its outstanding case studies. Future and present military leaders, however, should be careful to approach the book not so much as a "user's manual" for greater influence in the policy process, but as a well-written and well-researched vehicle to analyze the actions of former military leaders, who at times, may have exceeded their designated roles in the "unequal dialogue."



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Exporting Security: International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the US Military – Second Edition

By Derek S. Reveron

Reviewed by Benjamin Jensen, Associate Professor, Marine Corps University, Scholar-in-Residence, American University School of International Service, and author of *Forging the Sword: Doctrinal Change in the US Army* (Stanford University Press, 2016)

Exporting Security: International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the US Military – Second Edition provides an excellent overview of the concept of theater shaping: how military forces conduct cooperative engagements to advance the interests of the United States. These activities, traditionally associated with Phase 0, provide options for addressing what author Derek Reveron calls security deficits, areas of instability that create persistent challenges for US national security. The book provides the historical background and policy context including PPD-23 and the 2015 National Military Strategy behind the expanding definition of security to include practices traditionally associated with development and diplomacy. According to Reveron: “Presidents of all political persuasions continue to use the military as a preferred tool of national power in noncoercive ways” (48). From this perspective, the military is an engagement as much as it is a coercive instrument, and the United States is “more concerned that Pakistan will fail than it is that Russia will attack Western Europe” (4).

Because of the continued importance of theater shaping and Phase 0 activities, future researchers will need to enter the dialogue and ask important questions based on Reveron’s work. First, a persistent theme in the book is that the US military has undergone dramatic change over the last three decades. There is also an implicit assumption that “security cooperation programs have broadened the mission set for the military beyond major combat” (4). If so, this change should be apparent in major shifts in operational concepts and doctrine in each service and, to a lesser extent, due to political influences, path dependencies, force structure, and resource allocation. But, are they? Does the US military, as measured by the individual service doctrines and Program Objective Memorandum submissions, reflect a prioritization of military engagement?

Second, do Phase 0 activities actually reduce security deficits? Reveron contends that military engagement can “reduce other states’ security deficits created when subnational, transnational, or regional challenges overwhelm a partner’s national security institutions” (43). Yet, research by Dafna Rand and Stephen Tankel presented in *Security Cooperation & Assistance: Rethinking the Return on Investment* (August 2015) suggests the contrary. They found security cooperation and building partner capacity initiatives often fail due to a misalignment of ends, ways, and means as well as the underlying difficulty of measuring progress. For Rand and Tankel “the failure to adequately assess efficacy contributes to the potential overreliance on security assistance and cooperation as a tool of statecraft.” For scholars Gordon Adams