Civil-Military Relations in the Arab-Israeli War Initiation: Can the Research Findings about American Cases be Generalized?

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I. Introduction

This paper focuses on civil-military relations and the use of force in the initiation of war. Its main purpose is to ascertain whether the research findings of Richard Betts in his analysis of U.S. military intervention cases during 1945-75\footnote{Richard K. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen and Cold War Crises, Harvard University Press, 1977.} are applicable to similar cases of war intervention by countries other than the United States. More specifically, this study examines two basic areas of inquiry in two case studies of non-American intervention (Israel’s Six-Day War of 1967 and Egypt’s Ramadan War of 1973): (1) the extent to which the civilian and military leadership differ in the degree of aggressiveness each brings to advocating the initiation of war; and (2) the extent to which a military recommendation against war is most likely to be accepted by the top decision-makers than one for war initiation.

To this end, this paper focuses on the attitudes of civilians and military leaders toward war initiation for the purpose of examining its global applicability. This paper is concerned only with war initiation, not with war escalation. The American cases used for comparative purposes have been thoroughly examined in the work of Richard Betts.\footnote{By adding new case studies (1976-1991) to his previous research (1945-1975) on U.S. foreign policy. Betts argued that "...data from recently declassified sources do not substantially alter my interpretations of earlier cases.... New case studies from the intervening years in turn, have struck me as remarkably consistent with the main thesis of the first edition—that military leaders are generally more cautious about the use of force than prevalent stereotypes suggest." See Richard K. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen and Cold War Crises, Morningside Edition with new preface and epilogue, Columbia University Press, 1991, Preface to the Morningside edition, p.x.} Betts analyzed the role by military advisers in the American foreign policy decision-making process in comparison to civilian advisors, but no one has extended his analysis to civil-military relations in other coun-

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tries. Therefore, it is the purpose of this paper to answer the question, "Are research findings about American cases valid in the analysis of cases of military interventions by other countries?" In order for research findings to be more generalized and policy-relevant, it is important to extend the analysis to other countries cases in order to determine similarities and differences and to analyze the reasons for such conditions.

1. Theoretical Arguments

There are two central views among U.S. scholars about the role of civilian and military strategists in the decision-making process regarding military intervention in other countries or waging a war.

The first concerns the relationship between war and politics. This view is related to the Clausewitzian dictum, "war is a continuation of policy by other means," and holds that the civilian strategists should always control the military in the process of war, because war is produced by politics. A war is just a means to achieve political objectives and should be rationally guided by political purposes. Hence, the argument is that civilians dealing with politics, not the military, should make war decisions. Among scholars who argue this viewpoint are Bernard Brodie, Robert Osgood, Henry Kissinger, and so on.

The second view focuses on the importance of the military in the initiation of war, a view often made light of by civilian strategists. The latter's position is that because of the nature of the Cold War and the implications of nuclear weapons, the boundaries between the military and politics have broken down. The sharp distinction between foreign and military policy has been blurred. Civilians perform tasks essentially "military" in nature and the roles of military strategists are indistinguishable from those of civilians. The military view is that it is dangerous to leave war preparation policy only to statesmen. This is contrary to the Clausewitzian dictum emphasizing the concept of traditional apolitical soldiers.

In other words, the military hold that they should take part in war initiation deci-


5) The role of the military is not the same as it used to be. There are inter-service conflicts within the military. See Gene M. Lyons, "The New Civil-Military Relations," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 55, March 1961, pp. 53-63.