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Civil–Military Relations: Control and Effectiveness Across Regimes

Thomas C Bruneau and Aurel Croissant (eds) | Reviewed by Michael Evans

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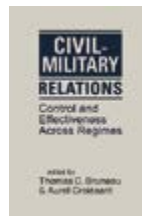
– should read *History's Fools*, if only to sharpen their own arguments. I've benefited over the years from reading Jones's work, even if my blood pressure hasn't; better that than the pious, politically correct, bland uniformity that passes for much supposedly 'critical' scholarship these days. There are worse things than being challenged, surprised and even outraged by authors with whom one may not instinctively agree.

Civil–Military Relations: Control and Effectiveness Across Regimes

Thomas C Bruneau and Aurel Croissant (eds)

Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder CO, 2019

Reviewed by Michael Evans



The field of civil–military relations is an important part of interdisciplinary strategic studies. Yet it is one in which most research is narrowly conceived and often concerned with relations between political systems on one hand and the armed forces on the other. There is far less research conducted on military interaction with civil bureaucracies in producing strategy or with the outcomes of military effectiveness.

During the Cold War era, much of the civil–military relations literature from Samuel Huntington through Morris Janowitz to Amos Perlmutter was concerned with what American scholar, Peter Feaver defined in the mid-1990s as the 'civil–military

problematique' – that is how to reconcile protection *by* the military with protection *from* the military. In the twenty-first century, such a focus is far too conceptually restrictive. This is especially true of established liberal democracies with militaries that are fully reconciled to civil control. In liberal democracies, the military is itself a state bureaucracy and while it may be neutral in terms of the dynamics of party politics, it is never apolitical in outlook. Military establishments have their own institutional interests and goals to pursue, which range from budgets to equipment acquisition and the making of strategy. As a result, the pattern of civil–military relations existing in any modern state produces a defence output, namely the efficacy of national defence strategies, operational capabilities and military organisational systems at any given time. It is this broader subject of effectiveness that is the concern of the essays compiled in *Civil–Military Relations: Control and Effectiveness Across Regimes*, edited by Thomas C Bruneau and Ariel Croissant. Both scholars are leading experts in civil–military relations and their edited book explores the importance of effectiveness in defence and military outputs.

The editors mount a powerful case that 'the civilian control and military effectiveness nexus' is understudied in civil–military relations and requires ongoing research effort by scholars. The book defines effectiveness as the capability of the military to

achieve politically desired outcomes across a spectrum of activities ranging from conventional warfighting, counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, and internal security through to peace operations and the provision of humanitarian and disaster relief. These roles are, in turn, measured by three main indicators of military effectiveness. The first indicator is the presence of defence planning processes (white papers and national security strategies). The second indicator is the existence of proper organisational structures (departments of defence, joint military staffs and interagency national security coordination). The third indicator is the systematic allocation of sufficient resources to ensure that the military is equipped for the missions it may have to undertake. The editors recognise that military effectiveness as a process links itself to a distribution of political power. This distribution ranges from the polar opposites of civilian control existing in liberal Western democracies through one party control such as that in China to outright military dictatorship of the kind found in today's Egypt.

With the above analytical framework in place, the international contributors to the volume develop a comparative analytical approach to the control and effectiveness relationship. Essays range from examining control and effectiveness in consolidated democracies such as the United States, Japan and Germany, through such

emerging democracies as Chile, Indonesia and Tunisia to the authoritarian political regimes of Russia, Turkey, Egypt and China. While in all cases, the relationship between state, society and armed forces is of fundamental importance, the differences identified in regime type determine a variety in civil–military patterns of control and effectiveness.

Thomas-Durell Young's chapter on the United States presents a case study of control and effectiveness in an advanced democracy. However, Young identifies a striking contradiction in that while the US Congress advocates military unity and jointness, its political practices and lobbying procedures all but ensure that the Department of Defense remains in 'a state of bureaucratic disaggregation.' This situation serves to hamper the operational effectiveness of America's armed forces.

In his chapter on Japan, Chiyuli Aoi, notes that, until the 1990s, the country possessed a system of 'bureaucratically-managed civil–military relations' in which career civil servants managed both the national security agenda and the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF). This situation is a direct outcome of Japan's post-1945 pacifist constitution whereby for half a century, the *bunkan tosei* system of bureaucratic civilian control by the Defense Agency's Internal Bureau Operations and Planning Division dominated the

military at the expense of the influence of Japanese politicians. In the twenty-first century, with the rise of China and a deteriorating international security environment, Tokyo shifted towards much stronger political control of the Japanese defence system. The Japanese government dissolved the Internal Bureau's Operations and Planning Division, strengthened the Joint Staff and created a National Security Council. Nonetheless, Japan's transition of protection *from* the military to protection *by* the military remains a work-in-progress given the residual strength of Japan's culture of anti-militarism. While the Japanese SDF is well trained and equipped, its transition towards the status of a 'normal' military power is uneven with Japanese forces untested in their military effectiveness beyond peace support operations.

In Germany, similar concerns about military effectiveness are apparent with the Bundeswehr existing as the unwanted stepchild of German democratic politics. In his essay, Sven Bernhard Greis suggests that Germany is the classic 'civil–military problematique' that asks 'how to reconcile a military strong enough to do anything the civilians ask them to do with a military subordinate enough to do only what civilians authorise them to do.' In the post–Cold War era, German strategic culture has embodied the idea of *Zivilmacht* (civilian power) with the Bundeswehr systematically downsized and underfunded

by German politicians into a state of organisational dysfunction. German military undertakings occur at the request of allies rather than following any coherent national strategy. At the same time, the Bundeswehr's self-concept of *Innere Führung* (citizen soldier) contributes to an image of the German armed forces as a 'gigantic and self-referential bureaucracy' run by careerists rather than an effective military force controlled by dedicated military professionals. From this perspective, President Donald Trump's belief that Germany does not pull its financial and military weight in NATO appears to have considerable justification.

Ofer Fridman's chapter on Russia presents an analysis of the Russian military as the historic defenders of the motherland. Despite a long history of autocracy and authoritarianism, Russia has never suffered direct military rule but the military has always been a political actor in the shadows. After suffering deep neglect under Boris Yeltsin, the Russian armed forces have been rehabilitated, reformed and revitalised by President Vladimir Putin. Russian military actions in Georgia, Ukraine, Crimea and Syria demonstrate a level of effectiveness that testifies to the success of Putin's defence reforms.

Further chapters on Indonesia, Turkey and Egypt serve to illustrate how regime type creates a pattern for the unfolding of civil-military relations.

Both Indonesia and Turkey have long traditions of military involvement in politics but in both countries, military effectiveness is only apparent in internal security and counterinsurgency operations. Since the 1990s, the Indonesian military, while still a political actor, has accepted the primacy of democratic institutions. In contrast, Turkey has slipped into neo-Ottomanism under the executive presidency of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan with its military involved in operations in northern Syria, with uncertain outcomes. Robert Springbord's chapter on Egypt presents a case study of where direct military rule has led to a poor capacity by the Egyptian armed forces to undertake conventional military operations. As Springbord observes Egypt's modern military history 'demonstrates that running a country and being an effective military are incompatible roles.'

You Ji's chapter on China emphasises how the creation of a highly effective military has been a key driver of China's transformation since 1978. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) represent a symbiotic relationship of shared strategic interests that dates back to the anti-Japanese war of the 1930s. This civil-military symbiosis is described as a 'historically-embedded and special lip-and-tongue integration of the party and the armed forces.' In Xi Jinping's China, the goal is the realisation of a 'superpower military' by 2050. There is dialectic

between control and effectiveness at work in China because as the country has become an economic powerhouse so too has the PLA benefited from a largesse promoting military modernisation and professionalism. As You puts it, 'the nexus of military effectiveness and war preparation is organic for the PLA's modernization.'

The PLA has gone from a strategic posture of 'defensive defense' to one of 'defensive offense' while moving from a focus on continental military concerns towards a much greater concentration on maritime warfare and anti-access operational strategies. You believes that the evolution of the CCP-PLA relationship will be decisive in China's ambition of achieving global superpower status. Currently, there is a control-effectiveness nexus based on CCP rule and continuing PLA professionalism in a coalition of interests. However, You sounds a note of caution. He warns that since the PLA serves both the party and the nation, any divergence between party and populace automatically threatens the dialectic between political control and military effectiveness. At some point in the future, the PLA might face the choice between being the political instrument of an unpopular party or the professional servant of a population demanding political change.

In their conclusion, Bruneau and Croissant highlight the myth that it is only in democracies with civilian control that military effectiveness flourishes. The illiberal regimes of

Russia and China demonstrate that authoritarian civilian control can produce effective military establishments. In a clear reference to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the editors go on to note that 'despite a defense budget that is more than twice as large as the combined budgets of Russia and China, the US armed forces have not been particularly effective in many of the conflicts in which they have been involved for some years.' Similarly, the armed forces of both Germany and Japan possess untried militaries due to legacies of pacifism, bureaucratic control and political indifference. The overall conclusion of the book is that while 'civilian control may be a necessary condition for military effectiveness, democratic civilian control is not.'

The material gathered in this volume is a useful reminder of the paucity of research conducted into Australian civil-military relations since the 1980s. This is a perplexing situation in that knowledge of the theory of civil-military relations define both the character and culture of modern defence organisations and the direction of policy and strategy. As Eliot Cohen puts it, 'a theory of civil-military relations contains within it a theory of strategy.' Such an approach to defence organisation is not evident in twenty-first century Australia. Accordingly, both the ADF and Canberra's policymakers would benefit from a renewed focus on civil-military relations, beginning with reading this book.