

Stefano Recchia, *Reassuring the Reluctant Warriors* – U.S. Civil Military Relations and Multilateral Intervention

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It is far too often the case that International Relations monographs that offer novel and provocative theoretical arguments are lacking in empirical support for their claims. Exceptions to the rule are usually historical works, where a record of published or archival documents awaits the scholar willing to dedicate the time to exploring it. Contemporary International Relations, by leaving less of an available documentary record, often leaves the writer short of evidence and the reader desirous of more detail.

Stefano Recchia's *Reassuring the Reluctant Warriors* provides a provocative theoretical argument and rich empirical detail to evaluate it on an issue of great contemporary relevance: why the United States has pursued a multilateral route to military intervention in the post-Cold War era. The roughly one hundred interviews Recchia conducted provide the heart of the book's empirical contribution. These interviews alone would be worth the price of the book and they make its rendering of the decision-making process superior to similar works.

Recchia begins the book by noting that it is somewhat counterintuitive that the US would pursue a multilateral route to intervention given that the US is capable of intervening alone and that multilateralism is costly in terms of time and side payments, and pursuing it often undercuts the effectiveness of statecraft. He defines multilateralism qualitatively as attaining United Nations Security Council (UNSC) or regional security organisations' (e.g., NATO) authorisation for intervention.

The book argues that the US pursues International Organisation (IO) approval for interventions as a means to increase the likelihood that other countries will share the economic and military burdens of war and – crucially – post-war peace operations. Domestic and bureaucratic politics are central, however, to how and why administrations choose multilateralism.

Because interventions are wars of choice, hawks and doves often face off over whether to intervene. The top American officers – especially the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) – can play a critical role in the debate. The Generals and Admirals are reluctant to embrace intervention as they are concerned about the costs of intervention to the US military and fear that American troops will ultimately be stuck in a quagmire. They also worry that the US Congress will not support intervention if it goes awry or lasts too long. As such, they favour IO

authorisation because it increases the likelihood of burden-sharing and, in so doing, makes long term Congressional support more likely as well. Hawkish policymakers pursue IO approval to get the military to support (or at least not oppose) intervention.

Recchia's argument about the US military is rooted in the bureaucratic politics literature as it argues that American Generals and Admirals' policy preferences are driven by what they believe is in the best interests of the bureaucracies they head.

Recchia also outlines two alternative arguments that are prominent in the literature. Some scholars argue that states have internalised an international norm that states should gain IO authorisation prior to intervention. Other scholars argue that authorisation from IOs can put rising competitors of the US at ease and thus help Washington avoid 'soft' balancing (i.e., coordinated political opposition).

Recchia uses qualitative structured, focused comparison and process tracing methods to assess his novel analytical framework. He rightly focuses on cases of military intervention where attaining IO authorisation was difficult – Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and the 2003 Iraq War.

The book's first case is the 1994 US decision to send twenty-thousand troops to restore order and reinstate Jean-Bertrand Aristide as president of Haiti. Recchia draws on declassified documents to show that getting IO approval was costly: the Clinton administration offered foreign assistance in the attempt to get OAS approval and the haggling over UNSC and OAS resolutions seem to have led the Haitian government to perceive a lack of resolve.

National Security Adviser (NSA) Anthony Lake led those advocating military intervention in Haiti but the Clinton administration was divided in that Secretary of State Christopher was initially quite sceptical of intervention and the civilian Pentagon leadership were firmly opposed. JCS Chair Colin Powell led the early military opposition to intervention based on concerns that the US military would be stuck policing Haiti indefinitely. In gaining UNSC resolution 940, Clinton officials assuaged the military's concerns. The resolution authorised the US intervention and committed to establishing a subsequent peace mission. As JCS Vice Chair Admiral Owens told Recchia (p. 84) "[w]e felt strongly that without that kind of commitment from the United Nations, one could not envision an American occupying force going in."

Recchia's second case is the Clinton administration's decision to intervene in the Bosnian conflict. While the most hard line intervention advocates, such as the US Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright, advocated unilateral air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs in 1993, others in the Clinton administration such as Secretaries of Defense Aspin and Perry and Secretary of State Christopher urged President Clinton to seek approval from the UNSC and NATO. The book demonstrates again that multilateralism was suboptimal in that the conflict raged on while negotiations took place and getting NATO authorisation of the air campaign led to divisions within the Atlantic alliance.

Leading Generals and Admirals were concerned that air strikes alone could not achieve US objectives and that by initiating an unsuccessful air war, the US would become embroiled in a costly ground campaign. The military pushed the Clinton administration to run the air campaign (Operation Deliberate Force) through NATO as a means to ensure that NATO allies would play a significant role in the post-war peace operations, which they did. The US contributed only thirty percent of the NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) for Bosnia.

The Clinton administration chose to run the 1999 Kosovo air campaign through NATO's integrated command. The US did so even though this slowed the process considerably, made it unwieldy, and encouraged Serb leader Slobodon Milosevic to question NATO's resolve. Albright, who had become Secretary of State, again advocated for unilateral intervention, whereas NSA Berger served as the voice of caution.

The military, represented most forcefully by Secretary of Defense Cohen, were sceptical that air strikes could achieve US objectives and concerned with being bogged down in peace operations in Kosovo. The book demonstrates that Albright's State Department came to realise that the only way to get the Pentagon on board with the air war was to run it through NATO, thus ensuring that allies would be obligated to own the post-war phase. As Undersecretary Talbott said (p. 172) the goal was to attain "as much participation in the war as possible from allies and ad hoc partners *in order to* ensure their participation in the reconstruction." Ultimately, the US was committed to provide roughly fifteen percent of the KFOR stabilisation force.

Recchia's final case is the 2003 Iraq War. He notes that those most in favour of war, like Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, were also least likely to favour attempting to attain IO authorisation because they felt threats to the US had to be addressed quickly and decisively. Senior US officers were sceptical that Iraq was a threat to the US and were concerned about the challenges of the war and, especially, post-war stability operations. The book shows that Secretary of State Powell, who was also sceptical of the case for war and concerned about the post-war period, encouraged President Bush to pursue what became UNSC resolution 1441. UNSCR 1441 did not authorise the US war, however, and the Bush administration was unwilling to pay the costs necessary to attain a follow-on authorisation resolution (pp. 221–24).

The Iraq case differed from the other cases in that the most important generals – JCS chair Myers, vice chair Pace, and CENTCOM commander Franks – did not communicate their concerns and preferences for IO approval to President Bush or the NSC. To explain the Generals' silence Recchia cites Rumsfeld's "authoritarian management style" (p. 209) and argues that in the wake of the 9/11 attacks the military was unwilling to question anything the administration framed as part of its global war on terror.

Throughout the cases Recchia provides evidence that the US government almost never sought IO approval because of concerns about the potential negative reactions of other states. He also shows that in almost every case the policymakers most in favour of intervention (Tony Lake in Haiti, Madeleine Albright in Kosovo) were also the least likely to want to pursue IO authorisation.

Reassuring The Reluctant Warriors is a welcome addition to the literature. It is clear, well written and it presents the evidence in a way that makes it easy for the reader to evaluate the author's framework relative to the alternatives. The book is also theoretically provocative. It reintroduces bureaucratic politics into the scholarly discussion of decisions on the use of force and does so in a way that is thorough and logical. Recchia makes the case that top Generals and Admirals are particularly prone to bureaucratic politics because they spend their professional careers in the organisations they represent. Recchia's argument is also compelling because it runs counter to the view that multilateralism leads to inefficiencies that a mission-

focused war fighter would do best to avoid.¹ Recchia demonstrates that the military's top Generals and Admirals realise that the benefits of partners outweigh the costs entailed in working with them.

As mentioned at the outset, one of the book's strongest aspects is its empirical foundation. Scholars often promise they will trace the decision-making process linking cause and effect but Recchia delivers. Recchia does an excellent job of weaving together the hundred interviews he conducted with a rich array of additional sources. He worked with the Clinton Presidential Library to attain the declassification of a number of documents, which he draws on to great effect. He also has thoroughly mined the secondary source literature, memoirs, and news accounts of the cases to provide detail and insight that he adds to the interviews and documentary record.

While the book has these important strengths, it also suffers from some flaws. First, the book's analytical framework does not explain the 2003 Iraq War case and the reader finishes the chapter with more questions than answers. Recchia provides evidence to support the claim that Rumsfeld's management style was a significant factor in the Iraq case. Unfortunately, this argument or caveat to the analytical framework appears nowhere in the book prior to the case, though he does address it in the conclusion (p. 229). Moreover, Recchia presents Rumsfeld's style along with the post 9/11 environment as dual causes without a sense of which is more important. The threat environment argument at least resonates with his earlier caveat (p. 61) that "after a direct attack on the American homeland" intervention may occur without military caution. The book should have presented both caveats in the theoretical discussion and then evaluated their relative importance in the case.

Furthermore, the reader is left wondering about Recchia's stipulation earlier in the book (e.g., p. 51) that a lack of consensus within an administration is a critical prerequisite for the military to adopt the critical role of veto player. Recchia shows that the administration was divided, at least initially, with Colin Powell expressing scepticism about war. We know that Powell kept his scepticism private and eventually came publicly to support the war. It would have been useful for Recchia to consider a counterfactual wherein Powell had been vocal in his scepticism about the post-war phase. In that context, might one or more of the Generals have broken the silence and expressed their concerns to the President? Exploring such a counterfactual through interviews might have shed light on the relative importance of the factors driving the case.

How significant is the Iraq example for the book? In the book's conclusion Recchia makes the case that (p. 230) instances of military deference like Iraq "are relatively rare and likely to be short-lived." Recchia is certainly not the first scholar to argue that the Iraq War is a special and aberrant case.² It is problematic from a bureaucratic politics perspective, however, that top Generals did not intervene to maximise burden-sharing on what ended up being by far the most costly post-war stabilisation operations in the post-Cold War era.

Second, I would have liked to see Recchia more directly confront a recent work with a very similar research question. Sarah Kreps's *Coalitions of Convenience* seeks to explain US decisions to pursue multilateralism (through IO approval or coalitions)

1 John E. Peters et al., *European Contributions to Operation Allied Force* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001).

2 See, for example, Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, 'Don't Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment,' *International Security* 37, No. 3 (Winter 2012/13), 31.

or unilateralism in the post-Cold War era.³ Kreps argues that the US has been likely to pursue multilateralism when it has the time to do so (i.e., it does not face urgent threats) and perceives that there will be a need for operational support in the war or post-war phase. Recchia cites Kreps's book but does not confront it as directly as he might have.

Recchia's book is more empirically rich than Kreps' work. He also provides a much more thoroughly thought out and supported explanation of why and how the US decides to pursue multilateralism when it does. Kreps' book, however, offers a plausible and elegant explanation of varying outcomes. *Coalitions of Convenience* provides a theory that explains why the US sometimes chooses multilateralism and other times chooses unilateralism. *Reassuring the Reluctant Warriors* makes the case that multilateralism is the norm and focuses its theoretical and empirical firepower on explaining that outcome. One final note: Recchia's empirical detail on the 2003 Iraq War casts doubt on Kreps' analysis of that case in that Rumsfeld's management style is nowhere in her argument or analysis. As such, neither work can fully explain that case given what we know. This is yet another reason why a more direct confrontation between the two books would have been fruitful.

In conclusion, Stefano Recchia has written a book that all those interested in military interventions should read. The monograph's flaws leave the reader with questions but there are worse things to be left with. The theoretical argument is provocative and the level of research is staggering. Recchia's research has set a standard that it will be hard for future works to match.

3 Sarah E. Kreps, *Coalitions of Convenience: United States Military Interventions After the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).