

Jiří Paták

2006

*The Role of the Military in the United States Foreign Policy Process*

Assessment:

Jiří Paták has chosen the role of the United States military in United States foreign policy as the topic of his M.A. dissertation. As the supervisor of this work, I would like to commend Jiří for his hard work and overall independence. In addition to his studies, Jiří has been active in the Prague Security Studies Institute and has thus had the opportunity to consult with experts in the field of American national security. Unlike many students I have taught over the years, Jiří knows how to meet deadlines and keep appointments. Jiří's decision to write in English is also admirable as English is not his mother tongue. The dissertation contains an Introduction, four main chapters, and a Conclusion.

In the Introduction, Jiří says that the military's role in United States foreign policy needs to be examined based upon the following criteria: input, decision-making, and execution. He has chosen the example of United States foreign policy towards Iran as a case study. The bibliographical essay indicates that Jiří has consulted numerous sources in the United States.

Chapter 1 deals with the foreign policy input of the United States military. The central role of threat perception in the making of foreign policy is analyzed as are geopolitical considerations and past experience. In addition, the military's share of the overall federal budget and its consequences are likewise discussed. Jiří rightly points out that over 2 million people are on the military payroll, which means that any changes in the military budget are bound to have important domestic consequences. The gathering and analysis of intelligence information require tireless work on the part of military professionals who present their findings to the government, thus influencing the nature of foreign policy.

Chapter 2 examines the role of the United States military in the foreign policy decision-making process. Jiří correctly refers to three basic elements of the foreign policy decision-making process, namely prioritizing, planning, and resource allocation. Whereas prioritizing is generally the province of civilian policymakers, the military can play a significant role in planning and resource allocation. Jiří devotes two sections of this chapter to actors in the foreign policy decision-making process and the role of the military during different historical periods respectively. Particularly interesting is the contrast between the *purist* and *fusionist* approaches. *Purists* perceive the role of the armed forces as executing policies formulated by civilians, whereas *fusionists* see an overlap between military, political, and economic policy that justifies a military role in the decision-making process. Indeed, there has been a gradual shift in favor of *fusionism* and Jiří analyzes the positive and negative arguments presented by scholars in the ongoing debate. The remaining sections of Chapter 2 discuss a) the opposing conceptions of total versus limited war; b) “planning, programming, and budgeting”; c) unofficial military influence “beyond the process.”

Chapter 3 is entitled “Interpretation and Foreign Policy Execution.” Generally speaking, the chapter is fine, but I must point to a slight mistake on page 61. The term “executioners” is used inappropriately here. An “executioner” is one who physically implements death sentences. I believe the Czech term is “kat.” A better term in this context might be “executives.”

Chapter 4 represents a case study of the military’s role in United States policy towards Iran. It is refreshing to see a case study in a dissertation of this sort because the reader can get so bogged down in theoretical matters that he or she loses touch with reality. This chapter provides an historical overview as well as offering insights and possible scenarios that could face American policymakers at some stage.

The Conclusion represents a recapitulation of points made earlier concerning the intertwining of civilian and military matters. Jiří's reference to Alexis de Tocqueville is most appropriate. I believe that Jiří has presented his case well.

At long last, the time has come for me to offer a general assessment. Insofar as the content of this dissertation is concerned, I believe that Jiří has done an outstanding job. Some of the grammatical and typographical errors are regrettable, but should not detract from the overall quality of this work. In fact, I believe that, if properly edited and revised, Jiří Paták's dissertation could serve as the basis for an expanded doctoral project. An **excellent mark** is in order.

PhDr. Francis D. Kaska, Ph.D.