

# **Is the Prerogatives Approach Obsolete? A Reconsideration of Civil-Military Relations Theories**

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The approach in civil-military relations' theory known as the separation or prerogatives approach, and its resulting objective of complete civilian governmental control, has frequently proven difficult to adapt to the modernizing and democratizing world. Recent alternative explanations based on cultural arguments have been made in order to reveal the viability of the separation approach in fitting with reality. These are also problematic because their main explanatory variable of political culture is subject to change and cannot, therefore, be effectively operationalized.

This research agrees with the criticism that the theoretical postulations of the separation approach do not match the requirements of the real world, however, it offers a more practical argument to account for this gap and for the separation approach's shortcomings. This research argues that a special state structure will emerge to address the dilemma that stems from the simultaneous needs presented by political globalization/liberalization pressures on the one hand, and the containment of external and internal security (anarchy) on the other. This unique state structure brings about a special nature of civil-military relations that do not necessarily fit with the separation/prerogatives approach.

## **The Separation/Prerogatives Approach**

The bulk of civil-military relations' theory was built up by Huntington, Janowitz, and Finer. While Huntington emphasized professionalism as the base for non-intervention in the political sphere,<sup>1</sup> Janowitz proposed that the adjustments in the organizational framework of the armed forces would serve the same purpose.<sup>2</sup> Finer stressed the civilian side of the relationship and suggested that an efficient and influential political sphere could manage the civil-military relationship in such a way that military intervention would be less likely.<sup>3</sup>

A major underlying assumption of the literature has been the separation of the military and political realms. A clear separation of the armed forces and the civilian political apparatus is further supported by the suggestion that there should be a total subordination of the military to the political authority. Huntington's objective of civilian control could be said to now represent the mainstream dominant postulation and prescription within the civil-military relations paradigm.

Huntington outlined four requirements of the objective of civilian control as follows: 1) a high level of military professionalism and recognition by military officers of the limits of their professional competence; 2) the effective subordination of the military to the civilian political leaders who make the basic decisions on foreign and military policy; 3) the recognition and acceptance by that leadership of an area of professional competence and autonomy for the military; and 4) a resulting impact which is the minimization of military intervention in politics and of political intervention in the military.<sup>4</sup>

### **Concordance Theory**

The objective civilian control model and its concepts of separation and total subordination have not gone without challenge, in particular at the empirical level. One alternative proposed to the strong position of the separation approach is Rebecca Schiff's "Theory of Concordance,"<sup>5</sup> which appears to be predominantly a political culture argument. Concordance Theory<sup>6</sup> postulates that one form that civil-military relationships can take is that of a high level of integration between the military and other parts of society. Three "partners"—the military, the political elite, and the citizenry—should "aim for a cooperative relationship that may or may not involve separation but does not require it". Concordance Theory does not exclude the separation and control of the military by civilians, but proposes that under "certain cultural conditions," civilian institutions or the idea of civilian control may be "inappropriate". Concordance Theory claims that it can explain the institutional and cultural conditions that shape the relationship, and predict that if the three partners compromise on the "four indicators," i.e. the social composition of the officer corps, the political decision-making process, the recruitment method, and military style, domestic intervention is less likely to occur.<sup>7</sup>

Concordance Theory attempts to question the current theory of separation (objective civilian control)<sup>8</sup> on two interconnected issues, first, that the current theory is mostly the output of American (USA) experience which has its own historical and cultural characteristics, and second that Separation Theory, while focusing on institutional analysis, fails to take into account the cultural and historical conditions that may encourage or discourage institutional (civil-military) separation. This is why the core of Concordance Theory lies in the institutional and cultural four indicators. Obviously, this requires looking at empirical data.

At first glance, when looking at the given examples ("anomalies of the Separation Theory") of India and Israel, there seem to be strong explanatory points within Concordance Theory. Although both cases failed to meet the strict standards of a complete separation between civil and military institutions and were therefore prime candidates for domestic military intervention, neither has seen military involvement.

This situation does appear to pose a serious challenge to the traditional theory of separation, yet there are several problems with Concordance Theory as well. First, as a political culture argument, it becomes more difficult to conduct further theory construction since cultural variation will be valid at every level. Culture, by definition, may not be comparable. Second, Schiff seems to have normative concerns which might mislead the theory's explanatory elements. For example, the theory clearly postulates that the three partners *should* aim for a cooperative relationship<sup>9</sup>. Such a wishful standing may not fit with the objectivity demanded for

theory construction. The third problem is relevant to the examples and consists of two elements. First, the two examples may not be a sufficient number to propose an anomaly for an established theory. Second, and more significantly, the differences between Israel (in which there are very high external threat conditions) and India (in which, although the civil institutions have been in decline for some time, we can not automatically say that the army has filled the vacuum and that separation has ceased to exist) can mean that these countries experienced some type of separation rather than concordance.

Concordance Theory has also been criticized first for not accurately defining the old theory, and secondly for the consequent failure of the characterization of the new form which is seen as based on the 'mistaken' analyses of the old theory.<sup>10</sup> It is claimed that separation is not always the case in the old theory and furthermore, that Concordance may be virtually the same as "fusion" as presented by Huntington in The Soldier and the State, when he points out that "every decision on national policy contained both military and non-military elements which could not be segregated."<sup>11</sup>

Concordance Theory is also criticized on the operational levels where it is seen as possibly serving as a surrogate for intervention. The probability is mentioned that if the military is an equal partner with political power, then intervention is inexplicable. It is also said that the line between the absence of intervention and the presence of agreement is blurred in Concordance Theory.<sup>12</sup> The same criticism does admit, however, the need for a reconsideration of civil-military relations' theory, and concordance as a concept is viewed as a good point of departure for theoretical inquiry.<sup>13</sup>

Concordance Theory responds to these criticisms, emphasizing that it considers the great importance of context in studying the military and society, therefore introducing a cultural explanation as being crucial in the study of civil-military relations. Concordance also rejects that it is similar to the concept of "fusion" within the traditional Separation Theory since it has proposed that the "agreement" might result in variations including separation. Most importantly, in defense of the claim that concordance can mean intervention, Concordance Theory responds that it does not presume that militaries are 'innately' hostile and coercive institutions. It points out that the field of civil-military relations was largely developed as a result of many military interventions including those in areas such as the Middle East, South Asia, and Latin America. When these interventionist tendencies were recorded, the theory proposes that the possibility of positive military contribution was extinguished. As a result, the traditional western theoretical model of institutional separation, was "superimposed" upon these regions as a way to deal with militaries.<sup>14</sup>

### **A Security-Based Account**

While Concordance Theory disagrees with the concept of an automatic translation of prerogatives into intervention as based on cultural arguments, this research takes a different approach, arguing not directly against the theoretical postulations of the prerogatives approach, but rather against the applicability of a developmental model of civil-military relations for the democratizing world as based on the prerogatives approach.

As the predominant theoretical perspective, the prerogatives/separation approach appears to constitute the most accepted suitable pattern of civil-military relations for a "proper" transition to democracy. This research argues, however, that in certain regions of the democratizing world, separation of the civilian and military spheres and reduction of the military prerogatives leading to the military's subordination, is not viable. It therefore follows that the separation approach needs to be reformed in order to take into account the realities of these regions. This research offers, therefore, an alternative explanation based on the degree of vulnerability that states face. While there are economic and social factors which have been noted in the literature, emphasis is given here to the conflictive nature of the interstate relations and the nexus of the threat-based evaluations of internal and external security, namely, an insecurity dilemma.

Many developing countries have weak institutional and administrative capabilities. They are marked by communal (ethnic, religious, racial, linguistic, etc.) cleavages, and many have a variety of nations living within the same state. The National Security Doctrine, defined as the security of a whole socio-political entity,<sup>15</sup> becomes problematic when applied to weak states because, in those cases, threats emerge from within, due to the lack of socio-political cohesiveness. Regime security requires "order" and gives an extra mission to the armed forces.

On top of this internal security need, the traditional security dilemma is still alive in many areas of the developing world, due to the existence of unconsolidated borders. This means that many developing countries still live in environments where prospects for conflict are much greater than those faced by developed countries.

The combination of internal and external insecurity leads to a threat-based National Security Doctrine that emphasizes the need for strong military prerogatives. This is where the separation and subordination approach becomes problematic. First, because of the weak state, these countries do not have the necessary strong political institutions and leaders to which the armed forces will willingly subordinate. Second, defining and then managing the threat becomes more of a military than a political issue. Third, as ruling is considered to mean managing the threats, then ruling will require a military role. These conditions are contradictory with what the separation/prerogatives approach tells us.

### **The State Structure and Military Prerogatives**

It is expected that the state structure in the developing world will be forced to reform in order to find a balance between responding to the impacts of further liberalization and meeting the constant needs of external and internal security challenges. This possible reformation will inevitably introduce a new pattern of civil-military relations that will still include a high degree of military prerogatives. The following sections describe how such a new formulation may be theoretically operationalized.

Three major assumptions are necessary to construct the relevant hypothesis. First, most of the states which aspire to be democratized and developed like the members of the core sphere, can be categorized based on their state-society relationship as strong states and weaker, fragmented societies, and may be considered to form an independent sphere in the current world political system. Second, most states in this sphere are still unitary, power-maximizing, and security-

concerned actors. The regions in which these states are located are still not experiencing the same levels of the phenomena which moderates anarchy in the core, such as interdependence, cooperation, and transnational links. Therefore, a high degree of vulnerability and anarchy continues to exist and realist rules are still highly valid. Third, due to their high desire to be modernized and democratized, these states are the most open entities to the international liberalization pressure of political globalization.

The major hypothesis drawn from these assumptions has three levels. First, the power-holding dominant security circles of these states rationally believe that democratization/liberalization, since it frequently corresponds to long, traumatic, and unstable restructuring processes, will pose a serious threat to the effectiveness which stems from a unitary power source and implementation process.

Second, it is very unlikely that states can openly reject responding to political globalization despite its weakening effect on their power status, because of the inevitable need for increasing international and national legitimacy. Third, because of the previous two points, the state elites/power-holding circles are forced to reorganize the state and government. Since they already represent the powerful security-oriented circles of the state and society, they will design this reorganization in a manner in which they will be able to preserve their prerogatives within the justification of the national security rubric, and this will lead to an imperfect accountability of the state to society, or the emergence of a Deep State. In order to satisfy the demand for further legitimacy, this design will also include the formal, democratic-in-appearance, weak government institutions, or a Surface State.

The Surface State's high level of accountability to society is viewed by the Deep State as a potentially dangerous source of destabilization. A consequence of this is the distinction generated between the agenda of the Deep State—the high politics of security matters and the containment of domestic and external threats—and that of the Surface State—the low politics of conducting daily economic and social policies, and providing a suitable front to meet national and international legitimacy needs. This type of reorganization will lead to an imperfect democracy. This situation makes democratic consolidation extremely difficult, and is not conducive for the ideal pattern of civil-military relations that the separation/prerogatives approach presents as a model.

## **World Spheres**

In order to locate the type of states and areas in the developing world where such a development has been occurring and is most likely to occur, this research refers to a categorization of the world political system into three types of states: premodern, modern, and postmodern<sup>16</sup>. The postmodern state, or first sphere, corresponds roughly to what most would consider the "first" or "developed" world. The premodern state is at the opposite end of the spectrum. With its extremely weak state and fragmented society, the premodern state is prevented from achieving its aspirations of becoming a modern state. Some examples of such states are Afghanistan, Tadjikistan, Somalia, Nigeria, Sudan, and Zaire. The third categorization, the modern state, is primarily characterized by strong governmental control over society. This second sphere of world states typically aspire not only to become postmodern states but also, and more

importantly, to become great powers, or at least regional hegemons. Some examples of modern states could be considered as Iran, Iraq, China, India, Turkey, and the two Koreas.

Power politics remain the name of the game in this sphere. States expect and prepare for the possibility of serious tension with others, and therefore relative gains matter. One reason for this is the fact that the interdependence level between these states is low, as are transnational links. Even if some interdependence exists and produces some cooperation—generally an economic one—these economic cooperations are usually engineered and conducted by geoeconomical forces such as business and trade circles, and remain both fragile and open to suggestions of possible intervention by geopolitical forces, namely, security bureaucracies of the participating states. Two examples to consider are the APEC and BSEC regional economic organizations. In the case of BSEC, the tension between private business and the state security circles has been documented.<sup>17</sup>

Secondly, insecurity concerns such as separatist movements and anti-regime activities elevate the degree of the state's vulnerability and emphasize further relative gains since whoever is stronger can manipulate the internal problems of the rival state. Ayooob argues that in many conflicts originating as interstate conflicts, the relationship between internal and external factors is "symbiotic in character" in the sense that one set of factors thrives in the presence of the other<sup>18</sup>. He maintains that the internal vulnerabilities of Third World States allow neighbors and global powers to interfere in the affairs of that country. In general, this position promotes a desire to maximize and store power at virtually any cost, leading to army and military buildup. This in turn means maintaining or even increasing military prerogatives.

### **Democratization as a Weakening Process**

This section considers why some dynamics of the democratization phase in this sphere can contradict with the requirements of the separation approach. The inevitable combination of external and internal security dilemmas constitutes a special type of anarchical pressure for modern states in this sphere. Basically, the combination of external and internal threats to security leads to a high perception of vulnerability which is supported by a high level of destabilization fear within both the society and the state circles. This phenomenon also becomes acute at the systemic level when actors believe that their internal security problems can be manipulated by rival actors to maximize their rivals' relative gains. Such atmospheres constitute regional anarchies and varying degrees of vulnerability across the subsystems.

Since anarchy exists as a degree of vulnerability and also as the absence of governance in the traditional sense, states/actors must respond properly to it to survive (see Waltz on anarchy<sup>19</sup>). This means that the "effectiveness" (power) mission of the state takes on a significant emphasis, and national security doctrines and prerogatives gain importance, as do power-holders in both the physical prerogative and political senses. However, the dilemma emerges when the states in this sphere come under the impact of political globalization in the form of further democratization and liberalization pressure. The push for further legitimacy (consent) requires a reduction in the unaccountable power concentrations, and contradicts with the perceived requirements which anarchy places on the state. Political globalization meets with anarchy and the emphases of these two forces on, respectively, unaccountable power concentration and management and diffused

and highly accountable power holding and management, clash, since further accountability of the power-holding forces is considered to lead to power losses vis-à-vis internal and ultimately external threats.

What then are the dynamics of the understanding that responding to political globalization, meaning political liberalization and democratization, can weaken the power status of a state vis-à-vis internal and external threats? First, established security circles and power-holding mechanisms believe that the new and inexperienced political figures that come to power through democratization will lack the expertise on defense issues and will underestimate threat perceptions.

Second, the power-holding circles believe that the competitive character of liberal democracy among political parties will weaken the effective decision-making process as regards security issues since it will involve never-ending bargaining and consultations. Therefore, management of power, which in power struggles is considered as important as power itself, will be inefficient. Evidence of this concern can be found in the words of a Turkish Army General who, during the latest Turkish-Greek conflict, pointed out that since the Greek army was so very dependent on civilian decisions, they were unable to make effective decisions. Not being in a similar position was seen as strengthening the Turkish performance in combat.<sup>20</sup>

Third, the power-holding circles believe that seeking legitimate consent will place more emphasis on populist tendencies and therefore potential insecurity issues may be exacerbated and manipulated by the new political entities such as a liberal elite and political parties. This phenomenon also generates anti-war and security waves (human rights concerns, etc.) which also weaken the combatting, and therefore, power status of the state.

Under these circumstances, what we can expect to see is an attempt to fit a response to political globalization, i.e. more opening on the political sphere and legitimacy, into the dominant power politics at both the domestic and international level. It is not premature then to predict a likely reorganization of the state and of state-society relations. The question of who will supervise this reorganization is also not difficult to predict since this group of states exists in a sphere characterized by a strong state and fragmented society. Logically, the state (power-holding) mechanisms, with their obvious favoring of power issues as justified by the regional/national anarchy, will most likely shape the reorganization process. This will be done presumably at the expense of the legitimacy (consent) portion of the relationship. However, in order to meet both national and international legitimacy needs, it will be done in a manner which will meet at least the formal requirements of the response to political globalization. The formal/substantive distinctions will be important because, consistent with its nature, security circles and the state will apply frequently to the vaguely defined national security doctrine and its secretive nature.

This will automatically bring its own structure for civil-military relations. For the above reasons, this structure will obviously be very different from what the prerogatives approach suggests, because the static state and societal factors will be convinced that the prerogatives must be maintained, if not even increased, in order to contain the high level of external and internal vulnerability.

## Concluding Analysis

There are shortcomings of the traditional separation approach, perhaps the most significant of which for this research is the gap that exists between the theoretical postulations and resulting policy proposals of the separation/prerogatives approach, and what we see in reality. Military institutions have at times gained significant amounts of prerogatives and maintained considerable autonomy, even in some democracies that have long had civilian control. In particular in many developing world countries, civilian governments have often failed to develop the means, methods, or strength to build a supremacy over the armed forces. The most important and valid justification for this situation that allows armies to maintain their autonomy has been the accepted need to professionalize the management of threats, whether at the domestic, international, or, in the case often of the democratizing world, at both levels.

In areas where the level of threat is sufficiently high, the scope and contents of the national security concepts have been designed to be conducive for the maintenance and increase of military prerogatives. Politicians and even entire nations are placed in situations where they are forced to choose between security and civilian control. This becomes especially salient since the goal of civilian control is to subordinate security to the broader policies of the nation rather than the other way around. Therefore, a dilemma of civilian control vs. military efficiency—requiring increased military autonomy—presents a challenge for civil-military relations, both practically and theoretically.

In the practical sense, countries involved in such situations must juggle delicate balances in order to coordinate and maintain stable/democratic and efficient civil-military relations. These *de facto* formulations create pictures which vary from those postulated by the objective civilian control or separation approach, since many armed forces have been able to maintain degrees of autonomy and levels of prerogatives that are too high for an ideal civilian supremacy.

When the civil-military relations' literature considers the dilemma of military efficiency and professionalism vs. civilian control, greater attention has been given to the first half of the equation since, as something that can weaken the powers of civilian control, it is considered to warrant close monitoring.<sup>21</sup> The impacts on the military of ideal objective control and efforts to establish it, have been largely ignored. This neglect becomes particularly salient in cases where the need for efficiency and professionalism is seen by the powerful elites as vital for the country's overall security needs. It may even be seen as vital by large segments of the society, depending on how deeply embedded the national security concept and perception is.

The separation approach's goal of objective civilian control may create permissive conditions in some countries for a generation of forces aiming to decrease military efficiency and power. This may in turn lead the military and civilian elites to take action to first reverse these processes—mainly democratizing ones—and second, to create a type of tutelary pattern in which a façade of democratic processes can take place.

This outcome is most likely to occur in the large segments of the democratizing developing world where the forces of political liberalization coexist with the need to contain domestic and

regional threats, therefore requiring a response which can balance the competing and contradicting arguments in the concept of objective civilian control.

This research has provided a tentative model of how an imperfect restructuring of the state may occur and lead to patterns of civil-military relations that present anomalies when applying the separation approach as a "necessary" model for the democratizing world. Further research must be made at the empirical level on individual countries such as India, Pakistan, and Turkey, to view how the process might be working. By doing this we will not only reconfirm the serious gaps in the prerogatives' approach but may also create a more sound and attainable balance to suit the still anarchic but slowly liberalizing regions of the world.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> S. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1957.

<sup>2</sup> M. Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, New York: Free Press, 1960. See also "Military Elites and the Study of War", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 1, 1957, p. 10-11.

<sup>3</sup> S. Finer, *The Man on Horseback*, London: Pall Mall, 1962.

<sup>4</sup> Huntington, p. 83-85.

<sup>5</sup> R. Schiff, "Civil-Military Relations Reconsidered: A Theory of Concordance", *Armed Forces & Society*, vol.22, n.1, Fall 1995, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> Although I have taken the term "Concordance Theory" from the literature, I am not convinced that it meets the criteria to be classified as a new theory. For the purposes of this research however, I refer to "Concordance Theory" as the alternative theory which it claims to be.

<sup>7</sup> Schiff, p.8.

<sup>8</sup> Huntington, pp.189-192.

<sup>9</sup> Schiff, p.7.

<sup>10</sup> R.S. Wells, "The Theory of Concordance in Civil/Military Relations: A Commentary", *Armed Forces & Society*, vol.23, n.2, Winter 1996, p.271.

<sup>11</sup> Huntington, p.351.

<sup>12</sup> Wells, p.272.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p.273.

<sup>14</sup> R. Schiff, "Concordance Theory: A Response to Recent Criticism", *Armed Forces & Society*, vol.23, n.2, Winter 1996, pp.277-283.

<sup>15</sup> B. Buzan, *People, States, and Fear*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.

<sup>16</sup> B. Buzan & G. Segal, *Anticipating the Future*, London: Simon & Schuster, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> E. Aydinli, "Constructing and Managing Economic Interdependence in a Hostile Region: Black Sea Economic Cooperation", paper presented at the ISA North East Annual Meeting, Boston, MA, November 12-13, 1998.

<sup>18</sup> M. Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflicts, and the International System*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995.

<sup>19</sup> K. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979.

<sup>20</sup> Reported in the Turkish daily newspaper *Hurriyet*, June 27, 1997.

<sup>21</sup> R. H. Kahn. "How Democracies Control the Military". *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 8, no. 4, October 1997, 140-153.

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