
The Intersection of War and Politics: The Iraq War Troop Surge and Bureaucratic Politics

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Armed Forces & Society

38(3) 413-437

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DOI: 10.1177/0095327X11415492

<http://afs.sagepub.com>



Abstract

This study examines the decision-making process of the George W. Bush administration which led to the decision in late 2006 to order the Iraq troop surge. The study analyzes whether the bureaucratic politics model of foreign policy decision making can accurately explain the events of the case. The study seeks to further test the explanatory power and descriptive accuracy of the bureaucratic politics model, while also attaining a more textured, academic understanding of the decision-making process leading to the Iraq troop surge. The decision to order the troop surge in Iraq is one of the more important decisions in post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy and continues to impact U.S. strategy in Iraq, Afghanistan, and overall military doctrine. Finally, the author endeavors to contribute to the further development and refinement of the bureaucratic politics model of foreign policy decision making.

Keywords

Iraq surge, Iraq war decision making, bureaucratic politics, foreign policy decision making

Introduction

American military strategy in Iraq in 2006 revolved around a central goal of developing reliable and effective Iraqi military and security forces, with American

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forces acting in a support role. President George W. Bush regularly employed “as the Iraqis stand up, we’ll stand down” as the catchphrase to summarize his administration’s Iraq strategy.¹ American troops rarely patrolled in Iraqi major cities during 2006, preferring largely to mount operations from large, fixed, forward bases. Iraqi units were expected to provide security and mount counterinsurgency operations in urban areas.

The Samarra Mosque bombing on February 22, 2006, ignited widespread sectarian civil war in Iraq resulting in thousands of civilian deaths. Two joint Iraqi–American military operations aimed at quelling the escalating sectarian violence and insurgency were spectacular failures that underscored the ineffectiveness of Iraqi security forces. The failure of these operations, code-named Together Forward I and II, set events in motion which would lead to a new U.S. strategy in Iraq. President Bush, acknowledging the need for a new strategy, ordered the National Security Council (NSC) to review Iraq policy in September 2006. Following weeks of internal administration reviews of Iraq strategy, President George W. Bush decided to deploy 20,000 additional U.S. troops to Iraq in December 2006. Bush’s January 10, 2007, speech addressed the theme of “a new way forward” in Iraq that incorporated a troop surge and counterinsurgency strategy.

This analysis examines the Bush administration’s decision to adopt the troop surge strategy in December 2006 through a measured analysis of primary and secondary sources related to the surge, as well as major works from the bureaucratic politics literature. The study employs the bureaucratic politics model to explain the actors’ policy preferences and the politics that influenced one of the most important decisions of the Iraq War. However, this analysis’ employment of the bureaucratic politics model should not be construed as a rejection of the possible applicability of other models of foreign policy decision making. Simply put, this study, like others that test the viability of the bureaucratic politics model to explain real-world cases, maintains that bureaucratic politics provides the most compelling, and perhaps the most accurate, explanation for the decision to implement the surge strategy in Iraq.

The study proceeds as follows. First, the study examines the theoretical propositions of the rational actor and bureaucratic politics models and discusses these models as contending explanations for foreign policy decision making. Second, the study establishes a question set which incorporates the propositions associated with the rational actor and bureaucratic politics models. Third, the study identifies the key actors in the case, their bureaucratic missions, and reviews these actors’ policy preferences. The study continues on to analyze and review the policy-making process leading to the decision to adopt a surge in Iraq, and then discusses the role of President Bush in the case. Finally, the study reviews the principal argument of the study that bureaucratic politics provides the most compelling theoretical explanation for the events of the Iraq surge decision-making process.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology of the Study

Various models of decision making exist within foreign policy analysis, with one of the seminal works on decision-making models found in Graham Allison's treatment of three models of decision making. Allison's models seek to illuminate the factors and processes that can shape government action. Allison's Model I, the rational actor model, is based upon traditional rational choice theory. The rational actor model presumes that the state is a unitary actor, policymakers share common goals and preferences, conduct cost-benefit analyses, evaluate alternative options, and ultimately select the optimal policy solution, when confronted with a foreign policy dilemma. Allison's Model III, known as the bureaucratic or governmental politics model, builds upon traditional rational choice models to incorporate additional key variables of decision making, including the role of individuals, bureaucratic positions, personalities, parochial priorities, and politics.

Allison established specific propositions for each model that are of direct consequence to this study's treatment of the Iraq surge decision-making process. These models provide propositions which serve as contending explanations for foreign policy decision making. The rational actor model includes four basic organizing concepts. These include the state behaving as a unitary actor, state action is in response to a national security problem, the sum of activity by relevant actors constitutes the solution, and that action is a rational choice.² Rational choice involves identification of national security goals and interests, identification of policy options, evaluation of costs and benefits associated with the policy options, and finally selection of a choice which best maximizes the utility of the state.³

The bureaucratic politics model, on the other hand, emphasizes the role of politics, bureaucratic role and position, and action-channels, among other factors, in the foreign policy decision-making process. Allison also establishes organizing concepts for the bureaucratic politics model. First a nonunitary state consists of players in positions, with parochial priorities, perceptions, and issues influencing policy preferences. Second, political power depends upon possession and effective employment of bargaining advantages and decisions may be made under pressure of deadlines and other nonobjective considerations. Third, government action is taken through action-channels, and government action is the product of individual decisions, mistakes, and politicking.⁴ Thus, the bureaucratic politics model serves as an important contending perspective of foreign policy decision making.

Allison's models can be employed to derive specific propositions for the Iraq surge decision-making process. The bureaucratic politics model dictates that the United States would not act as a unitary actor in the case. Specifically, the Bush administration would be divided over options, goals, interests, and policy preferences. Second, the policy preferences of actors involved in the decision-making process would be influenced by parochial concerns, including the perceived effects of a potential troop surge on actors' bureaucratic role, mission, and essence. Third, actors

involved in the surge decision-making process would employ bargaining advantages in an effort to secure the adoption of their policy preferences. Fourth, the Bush administration would act through action-channels, and finally, that the final decision was the product of politics and not an objective, unified cost–benefit analysis.

This study predicts that the bureaucratic politics model will provide a compelling explanation for the decision to adopt a troop surge strategy in Iraq. The establishment of a question set based on the theoretical propositions of the bureaucratic politics and rational actor models allows for the testing of this hypothesis. This question set is employed to connect the propositions of the models to the events of the case. Questions 1–4 are intended to test whether the administration acted according to the rational actor model, while questions 5–8 test the key propositions of the bureaucratic politics model against the events of the case.

1. Did the United States act as a unitary actor in the case?
2. Did the administration select the option which best maximized the utility of the state?
3. Did the Bush administration develop unanimity regarding the national security goals and interests of the United States in Iraq?
4. Did the administration identify the problem, possible options, and conduct cost–benefit analyses evaluating potential policy options?
5. Did bureaucratic mission/interests influence the policy preferences of actors in the case?
6. Did action-channels develop in the case? If present in the decision-making process, was government action initiated through these action-channels?
7. Did actors employ bargaining advantages in the decision-making process?
8. Did the decision-making process feature politics and political behavior?

This question set is intended to provide the analytical framework of the case study as it examines the events of the Iraq surge strategy review and decision-making process. The question set also is intended to establish a replicable framework with which to apply to future case studies in an effort to assess the explanatory power and descriptive accuracy of the bureaucratic politics model. Table 1 below summarizes the hypotheses of each model.

This study will now examine the bureaucratic roles of the institutions involved in the Iraq surge decision-making process and then review the policy preferences of the individual actors. Analysis of bureaucratic role and policy preferences will establish important background information that will facilitate the subsequent testing of the models.

The Bureaucratic Roles of the Institutions in the Case

The NSC's bureaucratic mission is the coordination of the interagency foreign policy-making process, provision of timely and accurate foreign policy and security

Table 1. Predictions for the Models

Model and core elements	Prediction in the case
Rational actor model	
State behavior as a unitary actor	Administration acted as a single actor
Option selection	Surge as an optimal choice
Unanimity among actors	Policymakers agree on the surge
Cost–benefit analyses	Objective cost–benefit analyses
Bureaucratic politics model	
Bureaucratic role influences policy preferences	Actors' preferences are influenced by role
Development of action-channels	Surge decision came through action-channels
Employment of bargaining advantages	Competition among actors in the process
Final decision product of politics	Politics and political behavior dominate the process

policy advice and briefings to the president. The NSC also may serve as John Burke termed, an “honest broker,” ensuring that the views of the foreign policy principals are fairly and accurately considered and conveyed to the president. Thus, the NSC will likely concern itself with management, advising, and coordination of policy. However, the national security advisor and individual NSC staffers may also advocate particular options if the president solicits their opinions.

The Department of Defense is tasked with the defense of the United States and its interests throughout the world. Management of the armed forces of the United States, therefore, is the basic mission of the Pentagon. Ensuring that the armed forces of the United States are capable of fulfilling the missions and objectives determined by the civilian leadership is another key bureaucratic role of Defense. In addition, the secretary of defense is also charged with developing long-term defense strategies and management of the often-volatile weapons-procurement process.

The United States armed forces' principal mission is the protection of the territory of United States and American national interests throughout the world. As the highest command echelon of the military, the Joint Chiefs of Staff maintains an inherent organizational interest in ensuring that the military is capable of defending American interests. This mission necessitates particular attention to force sustainability and synchronization of force capabilities with mission demands. Finally, field commanders serve as the “on-the-ground” agents to implement defense policy, and their organizational essence and mission rest with the achievement of assigned military objectives.

The State Department serves as the day-to-day manager and implementer of American foreign policy and diplomacy. State operates the vast global network of embassies and consulates in addition to managing foreign aid and civilian reconstruction efforts. State has also suffered from decades of neglect and waning power and influence in foreign policy-making as the NSC has largely supplanted its policy-

making role. A consistent champion of diplomacy and nation-building, State often maintains an institutional aversion to escalation of U.S. military deployments.

The Policy Preferences of the Actors in the Case

Surge Advocates

Retired Army General Jack Keane. General Keane was an important ad hoc participant in the strategy review, and his sustained support for the surge enhanced the viability of that strategy. Keane, a former Army vice Chief of Staff, had remained active in military affairs as a member of the Defense Policy Board and also served as an American Broadcasting Company (ABC) military analyst.⁵ Keane believed that security provision was fundamental to any lasting progress in Iraq, and that while American forces had so far failed to provide that security, that there were enough troops available to resolve the problem.⁶ Keane also grew increasingly dissatisfied with the strategy that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General George Casey, and General John Abizaid, commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) continued to maintain even as the security situation in Iraq deteriorated.

General Raymond Odierno. General Raymond Odierno, who had earlier served as the commander of the 4th Infantry Division in Iraq, returned to Iraq in December 2006 as the deputy commander to General Casey. Following a stint as assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Odierno began to question Casey's strategy. Odierno came to favor a counterinsurgency approach that focused on providing security for the Iraqi population through the infusion of additional American troops into the country. "Lieutenant General Ray Odierno, who replaced Lieutenant General Pete Chiarelli as the Corps commander on December 14, 2006, argued that a troop increase of five to ten brigades could transform the situations in Baghdad and Anbar, especially if the troops focused on securing the population."⁷ Odierno, responding to the erosion of Iraq's stability amidst rampant sectarian violence, determined that the Army strategy had failed to achieve American strategic objectives in Iraq.

General David Petraeus. General David Petraeus, who had previously commanded the 101st Air Assault Division in Iraq early in the war, shared Odierno's vision of transformation of American military strategy. Petraeus had served as commander of the Combined Arms Center (CAC) at Fort Leavenworth since September 2005, overseeing the development of the Army's official training doctrines.⁸ Reflecting the lessons learned during his previous command experience in Iraq, General Petraeus also undertook the significant project of rewriting the Army counterinsurgency manual. Petraeus came to believe that the American strategy in Iraq necessitated a reorientation toward counterinsurgency. "An expert in counterinsurgency, General Petraeus agrees with 'surge' advocates that securing the civilian population must come first in Iraq."⁹ Petraeus' new counterinsurgency manual stressed the

importance of securing the population as the necessary prerequisite to defeating insurgencies.¹⁰ The release of the new manual garnered significant publicity and positioned Petraeus for promotion and possible redeployment to Iraq. President Bush was quickly impressed with Petraeus. “I decided to keep a close eye on General Petraeus’ work—and on him.”¹¹ Rumsfeld began to strongly consider Petraeus to replace Casey, and Keane publicly advocated the appointment of General Petraeus as the new Iraq commander.

The National Security Council. The NSC strategy review was led by the NSC deputy for Iraq and Afghanistan, Meghan O’Sullivan.¹² O’Sullivan possessed long-held reservations about the Rumsfeld–Casey strategy and favored deploying additional U.S. troops to Iraq. O’Sullivan’s reservations emanated from her belief that the administration’s strategy of reduction of American troop strength was based on assumptions that were no longer valid.¹³ O’Sullivan’s deepening pessimism regarding the war contrasted with the official optimism proffered by the Bush administration. O’Sullivan believed that the sectarian violence in Iraq would destabilize the Middle East and that American forces could serve as a neutral force in Iraq.¹⁴ O’Sullivan closely worked with National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley to formulate alternative options for Iraq strategy.

Hadley, while seeking to remain a neutral actor, did favor a strategy review. Hadley issued an NSC memo on November 8, 2006, later leaked to the *New York Times*, expressing dissatisfaction with Iraq’s Government. Hadley’s memo also proposed deployments of additional U.S. forces to Iraq as a possible method of rectifying the deteriorating security environment in Iraq.¹⁵ Hadley echoed O’Sullivan’s view of a fundamental disconnect between the Casey–Rumsfeld troop drawdown strategy and the events on the ground in Iraq.¹⁶ Hadley believed that the president needed to hear alternative options to the Rumsfeld–Casey strategy, and would come to favor the surge during the course of the review.

Surge Opponents

The Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, particularly Army Chief of Staff General Peter Schoomaker, believed that the surge would “break” the Army. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) preferred to continue with the Rumsfeld–Casey strategy of training Iraqi security forces to combat the insurgency in order to allow for the drawdown of U.S. forces.¹⁷ At December 13, 2006, meeting between the president and the Joint Chiefs at the Pentagon, Schoomaker counseled the president that a surge of five brigades in effect meant fifteen brigades due to unit rotations, travel, and reserve status.¹⁸ “This could not be done, Schoomaker said, without either calling up the National Guard and Reserves or extending the 12-month tours in Iraq. The Army had hoped to go in the other direction and cut tours to nine months.”¹⁹ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace shared the unease of the JCS regarding the surge’s potential drain on overstrained Army and Marine assets.²⁰

The Joint of Chiefs of Staff believed that the surge threatened the ability of the U.S. military to counter future threats or potential crises in Iran and the Korean peninsula. "Several of the chiefs noted that the five brigades were effectively the strategic reserve of the U.S. military, the forces on hand in case of flare-ups elsewhere in the world. Surprise was a way of international life, the chiefs were saying."²¹ Furthermore, the Chiefs believed that the surge would not succeed in achieving America's political and military objectives in Iraq, and would actually be counterproductive. "The Pentagon has cautioned that a modest surge could lead to more attacks by al-Qaeda, provide more targets for Sunni insurgents and fuel the jihadist appeal for more foreign fighters to flock to Iraq to attack US troops, the officials said."²² Thus, the JCS believed that the surge would inhibit security transfer and potentially worsen the violence in Iraq.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld thought that the surge would prevent the extrication of American forces from Iraq by delaying the establishment of effective Iraqi security forces. Rumsfeld reflected on this point in his 2011 memoir. "I was concerned that U.S. and coalition forces might inadvertently discourage Iraqis from taking on increased responsibility for bringing order to their country."²³ Rumsfeld feared American overextension in Iraq, which would threaten the strategic interests of the United States. Rumsfeld's opposition to the Iraq surge also reflected his disdain for nation-building operations as he sought above all else to turnover security responsibilities to the Iraqis.

CENTCOM—Generals George Casey and John Abizaid. General John P. Abizaid, who served from 2003 to 2007 as the commander of CENTCOM, opposed the troop surge. The CENTCOM is the unified combatant command overseeing all U.S. military operations in the Middle East and Central Asia. General Abizaid oversaw a war plan that sought to transition security provision to Iraqi forces quickly in order to enable American withdrawal from Iraq.²⁴ Abizaid believed that American forces in Iraq inhibited political reconstruction in Iraq. Abizaid testified before a Senate panel in November 2006 that additional American troops would not solve the security problems in Iraq.²⁵ Abizaid also shared the concerns of the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding the strain that a surge would place on the Army, and that the surge would prevent CENTCOM from responding to potential threats from Iran or address the resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan.²⁶

General George Casey, commander of U.S. forces in Iraq from 2004 to 2007, echoed Abizaid's opposition to the surge. Casey argued that additional American forces would only delay the development of effective Iraqi security forces. Casey also believed that the longer the United States stayed in Iraq, the longer insurgents would attack his forces, and that this would exhaust the patience of the American people.²⁷ General Casey believed that any American troop surge would only make this transition process more difficult, and also, that any stability created by an infusion of American troops would only be temporary in nature.²⁸

The State Department. While not as important of a player when compared to the Pentagon, NSC, or Joint Chiefs, Rice and the State Department initially opposed the troop surge. State released a memo entitled “Advance America’s Interests, Preserve Iraqi Independence” that countered the NSC’s prosurge reports. The State Department’s report argued that the United States should limit its ambitions in Iraq to defending the country from Al Qaeda and Iran-backed terrorists, and importantly, did not call for a U.S. troop surge.²⁹ Rice urged the President to adopt a new strategy that focused on political reconciliation and containment of terrorism.

This study will now examine and analyze whether bureaucratic politics can explain the events of the Iraq surge decision-making process.

Did the United States Act as a Unitary Actor in the Case?

Surge advocates, led by the NSC within the administration and by junior-level commanders within the military, engaged in sharp bureaucratic conflict with surge opponents in the Defense and State Departments, the Joint Chiefs, and senior field and CENTCOM commanders. Indeed, the administration, military, foreign policy-making community, and Congress remained divided over the wisdom of the surge strategy long after the president’s decision. This aspect of the case presents particular challenges for the rational actor model.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to express serious reservations about the surge following the president’s January 2007 speech. “But the Joint Chiefs have not given up making the case that the potential dangers outweigh the benefits for several reasons, officials said.”³⁰ Abizaid’s successor as CENTCOM commander, Admiral William “Fox” Fallon openly disagreed with the surge strategy and mounted various efforts to delay or otherwise obfuscate the implementation of the surge in Iraq. “Fallon, who took command of CENTCOM in March, worried that Iraq was undermining the military’s ability to confront other threats, such as Iran. ‘When he took over, the reality hit him that he had to deal with Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa and a whole bunch of other stuff besides Iraq,’ said a top military officer.”³¹ Petraeus won the confidence of the president and politically outmaneuvered Fallon, who was then fired in 2008 as head of CENTCOM and replaced by Petraeus.

Finally, Congress was largely opposed to the surge strategy. The most vocal opposition to the surge came from Democrats, who were emboldened by their landslide 2006 election victory and sought to rein in the administration over Iraq. Less than one week after General Petraeus arrived in Iraq, the new Democratic majority in the House of Representatives had passed a nonbinding resolution that declared, “Congress disapproves of the decision of President George W. Bush announced on January 10, 2007, to deploy more than 20,000 additional U.S. combat troops to Iraq.”³² Senator Joe Biden (D-DE) proposed a resolution opposing the surge. “Biden said the surge was simply a means of postponing disaster so the next president would be ‘the guy landing helicopters inside the green zone taking people off the roof’—a reference to America’s panicky exit from Vietnam at the end of the

war.”³³ Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) toured the talk show circuit expressing his disapproval of the strategy and led congressional Democrats in summoning administration officials to explain and defend the surge in formal hearings. Prominent Republicans also criticized the surge, including Senators Chuck Hagel (R-NE) and Richard Lugar (R-IN), who lacked confidence in the administration’s overall vision and strategy for Iraq. Somewhat ironically, one of the leading congressional opponents of the surge was Senator Barack Obama (D-IL), who 2 years later as president would order a similar surge in Afghanistan.

In sum, at no point during the strategy review and surge decision-making process did the United States act as a unitary actor. The administration, military, and Congress were each deeply divided over which course of action to take in Iraq. The decision to surge in Iraq produced intense political criticism and would, as this study will review, result in the termination of the careers of several important policymakers.

Did the Administration Select the Option That Best Maximized the Utility of the State?

The troop surge option cannot be said to have been an “optimal” policy solution. The surge was instead an example of satisficing behavior in decision making. Each option under consideration carried significant risks of failure. The training/security handover strategy proffered by Rumsfeld, Casey, and Abizaid had essentially failed by the fall of 2006 and a modified version of the training/handover strategy promised little in the way of lasting improvements in security and stability in Iraq. The State Department’s strategy would leave the Iraqis embroiled in sectarian civil war, and the surge presented the politically unappealing requirement of deploying additional forces from an already-overstretched Army and Marine Corps to an increasingly unpopular war. The troop surge also could not guarantee that population security would translate into political progress in Iraq. Far from being optimal, the troop surge option presented a set of serious risks if implemented.

Did the Bush Administration Develop Unanimity Regarding the National Security Goals and Interests of the United States in Iraq?

In 2005, the administration released the NSC-authored “National Strategy for Victory in Iraq” that established three core sets of goals for the United States in Iraq. The short-term metric for victory in Iraq included the defeat of the insurgency and establishment of effective and stable political institutions.³⁴ Medium-term objectives included an Iraq capable of taking the lead in security provision and long-term objectives for victory in Iraq required the development of an Iraq that had effective, stable constitutional and democratic political institutions and could serve as a true strategic partner of the United States.³⁵ While the NSC-authored document

established a core set of national objectives and metrics to assist the administration and public in assessing the course of the war, the “National Strategy for Victory in Iraq” ultimately failed to produce consensus regarding how to achieve those goals.

The administration and military divided into two rival coalitions during the surge decision-making process. While the coalitions agreed on long-term U.S. objectives in Iraq, sharp disagreement persisted over how to achieve those objectives. Surge advocates believed that population security was necessary for lasting political development and stabilization in Iraq. Generals Keane, Petraeus, and Odierno in particular supported counterinsurgency strategy as the key to stabilizing Iraq. Population security and counterinsurgency then necessitated the deployment of additional U.S. troops. Surge opponents believed that the United States could only achieve stability in Iraq by deploying effective and self-reliant Iraqi security forces. Surge opponents maintained that continued Iraqi reliance upon U.S. forces would only inhibit the development of effective Iraqi security and political institutions. Bush described the views of the surge opponents as: “General Casey told me we could succeed by transferring responsibility to the Iraqis faster. We needed to ‘help them help themselves,’ Don Rumsfeld said. That was another way of saying we needed to take our hand off the bicycle seat.”³⁶ The administration and military all endeavored to produce a democratic, stable, U.S.-aligned Iraq, but could not agree on the strategy required to achieve that end goal. The fundamental disagreements within the administration and military thus contributed to bureaucratic politics coming to dominate the decision-making process.

Did the Administration Identify the Problem, Possible Options, and Conduct Cost–Benefit Analyses Evaluating Potential Policy Options?

The Bush administration initially downplayed and underestimated the effects of the Samarra Mosque bombing on sectarian violence in Iraq. President Bush addressed his initial reaction in his 2010 memoir. “In a speech on March 13, I said the Iraqis had ‘looked into the abyss and did not like what they saw.’ I was wrong. By early April, sectarian violence had exploded.”³⁷ The Department of Defense’s May 2006 Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq report also underestimated the outbreak of sectarian violence.³⁸ The failure of Operations Together Forward I and II in the summer of 2006 finally resulted in the president accepting that a change of strategy was necessary in Iraq. “General Casey had launched a second major operation to restore security in Baghdad, this time with more Iraqi forces to hold territory. Once again it failed. I decided that a change in strategy was needed.”³⁹ Bush belatedly asked Hadley and the NSC to begin a strategy review in September 2006. Bush then directed the NSC to oversee a full, formal interagency strategy review beginning in November 2006 that reviewed and debated the various options offered to revise Iraq strategy.

The strategy review quickly centered around three principal strategy options for Iraq. The first included an accelerated version of the Rumsfeld–Casey security transfer strategy, the second was State’s strategy for focusing on counterterrorism and letting the Iraqis settle the sectarian violence, and the third option, offered by the NSC and supported by Keane and later Petraeus and Odierno, was the troop surge.⁴⁰ The administration debated the merits of these possible options during the interagency review that proceeded throughout November and December 2006.

However, the administration did not perform objective, unified cost–benefit analyses as predicted by the rational actor model. Instead, the options considered were heavily influenced by bureaucratic politics, and actors had already determined their policy preferences before the strategy review unfolded. Furthermore, the administration outright rejected the option of U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. The administration’s refusal to consider a significant policy option placed severe constraints on the nature of the cost–benefit analyses in the case. In particular, as this study will review, the options considered in the decision-making process were themselves the direct products of bureaucratic politics.

Did Bureaucratic Mission/Interests Influence the Policy Preferences of Actors in the Case?

Surge Advocates

The NSC’s policy preferences in this case appear to support the bureaucratic politics model as the NSC is tasked with reviewing strategy, coordinating the interagency process, and advising the president on foreign policy. The NSC review and subsequent development of an internal consensus reflects the position and role of the NSC within the foreign policy-making bureaucracy. Hadley and the NSC deputies’ policy preferences were influenced by the central bureaucratic function of the NSC as a coordinator and reviewer of strategy. The NSC “surgios” believed that the president was not receiving an accurate appraisal of conditions on the ground in Iraq. They also strove to ensure that the president heard alternative options to the Rumsfeld–Casey strategy. “Finally, Hadley showed up. ‘You have got to give the president the option of a surge in forces,’ he told the group.”⁴¹ The NSC in the case straddled the difficult line between serving as an “honest broker” and acting as an advocate of a particular policy. The NSC did, however, ensure that the surge was always included in the menu of options that were considered during the strategy review. The NSC did not simply conduct cost–benefit analyses and support the surge due to individual staffers’ appraisals of the effectiveness of the strategy. Bureaucratic mission and essence were critical to promoting the willingness of the NSC to consider alternative strategies and policy options for Iraq.

Bureaucratic interests influenced General Odierno’s policy preferences as these preferences were intertwined with his position within the Army. Odierno, the deputy commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, measured the effectiveness of his superior’s

strategy and decided that the security transfer/drawdown strategy had failed. However, as deputy commander in Iraq, Odierno's career prospects were inextricably linked to the outcome of the campaign in Iraq. Odierno, therefore, was influenced by bureaucratic self-interest in his position as deputy Iraq commander. Field commanders are tasked with implementing strategy and achieving the military objectives as issued by the unified combatant commands and National Command Authority.

Petraeus did not possess a field command during the strategy review, and his tenure as commander of the CAC at Fort Leavenworth greatly influenced his subsequent support for a troop surge. Petraeus, considered one of the Army's more intellectually gifted officers, was free at CAC to think "outside the box" and question traditional military strategy and doctrine. The CAC influenced Petraeus' preferences by allowing him to carefully consider revisions to military doctrine and Iraq strategy. Petraeus' tenure as commander of CAC also influenced his desire to revise how the military conducted counterinsurgency operations, and Iraq provided the best opportunity for him to put the principles of his new doctrine into action.

Bush reflected on the importance of Petraeus' advocacy of the surge in his 2010 memoir. "The most persuasive advocate of the surge was General Petraeus. As the author of the Army's new counterinsurgency manual, he was the undisputed authority on the strategy he would lead."⁴² Already aware of the discussions (through back-channel contacts in the administration) regarding his potential replacement of Casey as Iraq commander, Petraeus also strove to ensure that the surge and counterinsurgency strategy would be implemented if he was named the new commander of U.S. forces in Iraq. "Having accepted the command in the last week in December, Petraeus put down two markers with Pace, asking that the primary mission be explicitly changed from training Iraqi forces to population security and that all five brigades, plus another division headquarters, be committed."⁴³ The surge would effectively serve as a referendum on Petraeus' counterinsurgency strategy and also offer the general with an opportunity to rescue the American effort in Iraq.

Jack Keane maintained a powerful institutional attachment to the Army. While no longer on active duty, as a former Army vice chief of staff, Keane sought to ensure the integrity and morale of the Army. Keane also believed that Rumsfeld abrogated his responsibilities as secretary of defense through failing to implement a comprehensive plan for victory in the Iraq War. Keane was motivated by a personal desire to save the Army from a Vietnam-style institutional trauma and to prevent the national humiliation and defeat of the United States in Iraq.

Surge Opponents

The Joint Chiefs, and the Army and Marine Corps in particular, opposed the surge largely out of bureaucratic self-interest. The military was overextended and additional manpower demands represented a threat to the capabilities of the armed forces. Admiral Mike Mullen discussed the pressure on the armed forces and the difficulties regarding retention of officers with General Keane, when explaining the

JCS' reasons for opposing the surge.⁴⁴ Here, the policy preferences of the Chiefs were markedly influenced out of concern for the ability of the military to fulfill its core mission of protection of American national interests.

The Joint Chiefs, particularly Admiral Mullen, also resented the growing influence of Keane, Odierno, and Petraeus within the Bush administration. Keane reportedly told Vice President Dick Cheney that the Joint Chiefs of Staff was more concerned with breaking the Army and Marine Corps than winning the war.⁴⁵ Keane's vehement lobbying for the surge and direct access to many senior administration officials appeared to be a challenge to the bureaucratic position and authority of the JCS. "Admiral Michael Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, went out of his way to prevent General Keane from visiting Iraq in order to limit his influence with the White House."⁴⁶

In addition to his desire to transfer security to Iraqi forces, Rumsfeld viewed an infusion of additional U.S. forces as a rebuke of his overall strategy of military transformation. Rumsfeld's vision of military transformation had envisioned quick wars involving minimal deployment of ground forces.⁴⁷ This vision of military transformation proposed to shift resources from the Army and Marine Corps to the Air Force and Navy, with requisite cuts in the size of the Army and Marines. The prolonged and bloody insurgency in Iraq presented a stunning refutation of this vision. "He alone among the administration's key figures had an overarching theory of American global military strategy. The problem was that it was based on quick, decisive applications of high-tech military power, and the Iraq insurgency did not fit within it."⁴⁸ Simply too few American troops were deployed in Iraq to adequately provide security and defeat the insurgency.

Abizaid's policy preference also reflects the influence of the organizational mission of CENTCOM. As the unified combatant command responsible for defending American interests in the Middle East and Central Asia, CENTCOM would be directly affected by the troop surge. Diversion of already overextended resources threatened to cripple CENTCOM's ability to respond to other threats within its region. The CENTCOM's resources were stretched to the breaking point by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, continued containment of a resurgent Iran, and the pursuit of Al Qaeda. The surge thus represented a threat to the viability of CENTCOM to fulfill its organizational mission.

General Casey's opposition to the surge further underscored the influence of bureaucratic self-interest and mission. As commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, Casey's principal bureaucratic mission was the achievement of U.S. military objectives. Like Abizaid and Rumsfeld, Casey subscribed to the notion that Iraqi political reconstruction depended upon the rapid development of effective Iraqi security forces. Increasing the U.S. troop commitment in Iraq would only delay that process and thus, in Casey's view, delay the achievement of U.S. long-term goals. As Iraq commander, Casey possessed a vested interest in the success of the security transfer strategy. The adoption of a troop surge and counterinsurgency strategy threatened to reverse the Rumsfeld–Abizaid–Casey strategy and label Casey as a failed commander. The

failures of Operations Together Forward I and II had already reduced the administration's confidence in Casey. In addition, Casey also understood that the adoption of a new strategy would likely mark the end of his tenure as Iraq commander.⁴⁹

Finally, as secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice endeavored to regain some measure of power and influence in Iraq policy for the State Department. Rice had chafed at the domineering manner in which Rumsfeld managed the Pentagon and sought to dominate Iraq policy. Deployment of thousands of additional troops to Iraq threatened to further marginalize the influence and role of State in Iraq policy and undermine State's favored political reconciliation strategy. A troop surge would potentially damage the already-precarious bureaucratic position of State in Iraq and likely enhance the influence of the Pentagon in Iraq reconstruction policy.

The influence of bureaucratic interests on actors' policy preferences in the case is a strong example of the overall impact of bureaucratic politics. The policy preferences of both surge advocates and opponents were influenced by bureaucratic role and interests. Surge opponents clearly argued that the surge would run counter to their bureaucratic roles and interests, while surge advocates came to favor a surge partly through the influence of their position in the government and military.

Did Action-Channels Develop in the Case? If Present in the Decision-Making Process, Was Government Action Initiated through These Action-Channels?

This study has determined that two major action-channels were present in the case. First, a formal action-channel existed in the form of the NSC interagency review process. Second, a highly influential informal action-channel developed between Generals Keane, Odierno and Petraeus, the NSC, and President Bush that side-stepped formal, regularized chains of command and essentially performed an end-around key actors such as the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CENTCOM commanders, and the secretary of the defense, and associated civilian leadership at the Pentagon. These action-channels provide additional evidence for the influence of bureaucratic politics.

The president called a meeting of his top civilian and military advisers to discuss Iraq strategy at Camp David in June 2006. This important meeting initiated the NSC as an action-channel in the decision-making process. "According to officials involved in the discussions, it was not until June 2006, at a retreat called by Bush at Camp David, that the president began seriously to reassess his strategy for Iraq."⁵⁰ The June 2006 Camp David retreat also found Rumsfeld, Casey, and Abizaid continuing to advocate the security transfer strategy. Rumsfeld and Casey also argued for accelerated security handover at this meeting.⁵¹ Casey, Abizaid, and Rumsfeld all reasserted their preference for rapid security handover and commensurate draw-down of U.S. forces in Iraq. "Abizaid said he was concerned that a large U.S. occupation force would inhibit Iraq's efforts to govern itself. Casey agreed that reducing

the American presence was key.”⁵² The June 2006 meeting resolved nothing and found advisers lobbying for the president to continue with the status quo despite the erosion in security in Iraq, and furthermore, no one could explain why continuing with the same strategy would produce different results.⁵³ Furthermore, the June 2006 Camp David meeting also featured a panel of outside policy experts, including Keane, brief the president on possible new strategy options for Iraq. Keane forcefully advocated for a troop surge at this briefing session.⁵⁴

On November 10, 2006, President Bush ordered the NSC to conduct a formal administration-wide review of Iraq war strategy. O’Sullivan and Hadley then developed various proposals for a new strategy. These options included American withdrawal, large-scale infusion of American combat troops, and a hybrid approach that called for a short-term surge of U.S. forces into Iraq. J. D. Crouch, O’Sullivan, and Brett McGurk held daily meetings from November 2006 until the end of December, with these meetings solidifying their support for the surge.⁵⁵ These meetings continued and reflect the critical importance of the formal NSC interagency review as an essential action-channel.

President Bush confirmed the role of these November–December 2006 NSC meetings. “Over weeks of intense discussion in November and December, most of the national security team came to support the surge. Dick Cheney, Bob Gates, Josh Bolten, and Steve Hadley and his NSC warriors were behind the new approach. Condi would be, too, so long as the plan didn’t send more troops under the same old strategy.”⁵⁶ The rival coalitions continued to debate their preferred policy options and lobby the president to adopt or reject the troop surge throughout the November and December 2006 strategy review meetings.

The NSC meetings on December 8–9th, 2006, revealed that the president supported some form of troop surge. “The idea was to make protection of the Iraqi population an important goal and reduce violence before resuming efforts to transfer responsibilities to the Iraqis. Invoking a sports metaphor, he described the surge as a ‘slow-motion’ lateral to Iraqi control.”⁵⁷ However, the form, size, and duration of the surge remained undecided. This question sparked intense disagreement within the administration and, most importantly, within the military. Odierno, Keane, and Petraeus continued to advocate the infusion of the full five proposed combat brigades, while Casey and the Joint Chiefs wanted to send two brigades at the absolute maximum.

On December 11th, 2006, Hadley invited five outside experts, including retired General Keane, to the White House to brief the president on their views on the military strategy in Iraq.⁵⁸ Keane again advocated the surge and counterinsurgency strategy and continued to engage surge advocates within the administration. Keane also conveyed Odierno’s preferences for a surge to the president at the December 11 meeting.⁵⁹ Then, on December 13th, Bush and Cheney met with the JCS at the Pentagon to discuss the composition of the surge and possible effects on the readiness or combat effectiveness of the already-overstretched Army and Marine Corps. The December 13 meeting also found the Joint Chiefs expressing their opposition to the

surge, including Army Chief of Staff Schoomaker who explicitly informed the president that the surge would likely “break” the Army. The JCS essentially stated that they opposed the surge largely due to bureaucratic concerns over the effects of the surge on the military’s ability to fulfill its mission of protecting U.S. national security interests. Finally, the JCS insisted at the December 13 meeting that the president accept three key policy recommendations in order to secure their tacit support for the surge. These policy recommendations will be addressed in detail later in this study. Bush’s meeting with the JCS further reiterates the importance of action-channels in the Iraq surge decision-making process.

Meetings continued at the NSC and Pentagon, with the ultimate decision to deploy five additional combat brigades arrived at a December 28 NSC meeting at the president’s ranch in Crawford, Texas.⁶⁰ General Casey and the Joint Chiefs, following the December 13 Pentagon meeting, proposed a “mini-surge” of only two additional brigades. “The final question to resolve was the size of the surge. Some in the military proposed that we commit two additional brigades initially—a mini-surge of about ten thousand troops—with the possibility of sending up to three more brigades later. Pete Pace reported that General Petraeus and General Ray Odierno, the number-two commander in Iraq, wanted all five brigades committed up front.”⁶¹ Surge advocates immediately dismissed the idea of a two brigade, “mini-surge.” “One surge proponent countered that this ‘Casey-Pace plan’ was a ‘minimized face-saving token increase that wasn’t going to have the capacity to do anything.”⁶²

The December 28 NSC meeting was perhaps the most consequential strategy review session of the entire surge decision-making process. President Bush decided to adopt the full five-brigade surge, to replace his Iraq and CENTCOM commanders, name a new ambassador to Iraq, and endorse the vision of population security and counterinsurgency as the hallmarks of the new administration strategy at this meeting. Keane also intervened at the December 28 NSC meeting and contacted John Hannah, an aide to Vice President Cheney, informing Hannah that he felt that JCS Chairman Pace should be pressed on the suitability of the JCS’ and Casey’s proposed limited, two-brigade troop surge option.⁶³ Finally, Petraeus expressed his views through his contacts at the NSC at the Crawford meeting and demanded that, if he were to be named the new Iraq commander, he would receive the full five-brigade surge. “General Petraeus’s views were also influential. He was being considered to replace General Casey and wanted as many forces as he could get to pursue a strategy that, like General Odierno’s, would give priority to protecting Iraqi civilians and move American forces out of large bases.”⁶⁴

The Crawford NSC meeting also confirms the role of bureaucratic politics in the surge decision-making process. Actors again expressed policy preferences influenced by bureaucratic interests and political action dominated the process as actors engaged in political maneuvering. Political action included efforts by actors to amend the proposed strategy, support their favored options, and ensure that the surge included five full brigades and Petraeus as the new Iraq commander.

A second, informal action-channel was developed by surge advocates in the case. Keane, Odierno, and Petraeus developed and exploited informal advisory networks and personal relationship within the administration and military. This informal action-channel greatly enhanced the triumvirate's bargaining advantages and influence in the decision-making process. Keane, Odierno, and Petraeus were all ad hoc actors in the decision-making process and effectively subverted the traditional chain of command. Keane assumed an unusual amount of influence for a retired general as he consciously cultivated access within the Bush administration. Keane gave multiple briefings to the NSC and the president that forcefully and consistently argued for a troop surge in Iraq. Keane, quite importantly, also transmitted Odierno's policy preferences to the administration and served as a staunch advocate of Petraeus' command abilities and strategic competency.

Odierno and Petraeus also engaged like-minded officials in the administration in their pursuit of the adoption of the surge. "Communicating almost daily by phone with retired Gen. Jack Keane, an influential former Army vice chief of staff and his most important ally in Washington, Odierno launched a guerrilla campaign for a change in direction in Iraq, conducting his own strategic review and bypassing his superiors to talk through Keane to White House staff members and key figures in the military."⁶⁵ Odierno was also willing to jump the chain of command in pursuit of his policy preferences. This politicking was unusual for a junior field commander and also potentially threatened Odierno's career. Petraeus developed a close relationship with surge advocates at the NSC who consulted with him about the potential surge strategy. Petraeus also employed his contacts within the administration to secure the Iraq command and ensure the deployment of the full five-brigade surge.

Action-channels thus played a highly salient role in the surge decision-making process. Official government decisions were made through the formal action-channel of the NSC strategy review. The generals' back channel also was critical to the decision-making process as it allowed for ad hoc actors to emerge in the case and directly lobby administration officials. Finally, these two action-channels underscore the importance of politics and political behavior in the foreign policy decision-making process.

Did Actors Employ Bargaining Advantages in the Decision-Making Process?

The NSC enjoyed the especially salient bargaining advantage of proximity to the president. Hadley spoke with the president every day during the strategy review and surge decision-making process, and the NSC deputies also could count on President Bush hearing their arguments in favor of a surge. Bush said: "I wanted them to challenge every assumption behind our strategy and generate new options. I soon came to view them as my personal band of warriors."⁶⁶ The NSC also ensured that the surge was always included in the menu of policy options that were presented during the strategy review.

General Petraeus developed a bargaining advantage through cultivating a close-knit working relationship with President Bush. President Bush effectively linked his presidential legacy to Petraeus' ability to reverse the tide of the Iraq War. Bush leaned heavily on Petraeus, believing in him enough to bypass several levels of the military command to give the general a privileged voice in White House deliberations over Iraq.⁶⁷ Bush and Petraeus instituted weekly video conference briefings that further solidified their professional relationship. "I spoke to General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker by secure videoconference at least once a week, sometimes more often. I believed a close personal relationship and frequent contact were critical to making the new strategy succeed."⁶⁸ This close working relationship with the president, unusual for a field commander, enhanced Petraeus' political power and influence within both the administration and military.

Surge opponents found themselves in decidedly weak political positions. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld experienced a pronounced decline in political influence and reputation as the Iraq War descended into a protracted insurgency. Rumsfeld effectively lost favor with the president, who decided in fall 2006 that new leadership was necessary at the Pentagon. Bush also decided that new military commanders were necessary to implement any new strategy in Iraq, thus directly imperiling Casey and Abizaid. "I decided a change in strategy was needed. To be credible to the American people, it would have to be accompanied by changes in personnel. Don Rumsfeld had suggested that I might need fresh eyes on Iraq. He was right. I also needed new commanders."⁶⁹ While Bush had not committed to a surge in the fall of 2006, he had committed to replacing several of the more vehement opponents of the surge.

Did the Decision-Making Process Feature Politics and Political Behavior?

The role of General Jack Keane represents a critical example of the influence of politics in the surge decision-making process. As an ad hoc participant, Keane developed an unprecedented level of direct access and personal influence within the administration. "By late summer of 2007, Keane had established an unusual back-channel relationship with the president and vice president; a kind of shadow general advising them on the Iraq war."⁷⁰ Bush reflected on Keane's role in the surge review. "I liked and respected Jack. He had provided valuable advice during the decision-making process and supported the surge publicly."⁷¹ Keane's creation of an informal back-channel also reflects the role of politics as he provided an intermediary for active-duty junior-level commanders like Petraeus and Odierno to subvert the traditional chain of command. Additionally, Keane formed political alliances with like-minded civilian officials in the administration. The prosurge coalition proved to be a powerful political counterweight to the various opponents of the surge. In effect, surge supporters outplayed, outwitted, and outlasted their political opponents.

The intense bureaucratic struggle between the senior leadership of the military and junior-level field commanders underscores the permeation of politics in the decision-making process. Petraeus and Odierno, at odds with their superiors over the proposed surge strategy, bypassed the chain of command and formed political alliances with administration officials to press for adoption of the surge. The junior-level commanders' disregard for the chain of command provoked an intense reaction from the Joint Chiefs who viewed such political maneuvering as insubordinate and a threat to their formal advisory role. Generals Casey and Abizaid, in direct command of U.S. forces in Iraq, echoed the frustrations of the JCS as each were outmaneuvered and politically isolated by the prosurge coalition.

A final element of the role of politics in the decision-making process was the significant logrolling that occurred. Logrolling refers to when political actors trade favors in order to secure support for a particular policy. President Bush, in an effort to address the objections of Schoomaker and Marine Commandant General James Conway, agreed to increase the size of the Army and Marine Corps. The president also agreed to incorporate the suggestions of the JCS regarding a "civilian surge" that would bolster the number and capabilities of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), and put pressure on the Maliki Government to acquiesce to full freedom of maneuver for any U.S. surge forces. "Finally, I would accept three key recommendations from the Joint Chiefs. Condi would lead a surge in civilian resources. I would obtain public assurances from Prime Minister Maliki about our troops' freedom to maneuver. And I would call on Congress to increase the size of the Army and Marine Corps by ninety thousand forces."⁷² The president's clear logrolling was necessary to secure the tacit, almost begrudging support of the JCS for the surge, and is a significant example of the effect of bureaucratic politics on the Iraq surge decision-making process. Politics dominate the surge decision-making process and the examples of political behavior in the case support this key element of the bureaucratic politics model.

This inquiry will now examine the role of the president in the surge decision-making process in order to further examine and test the explanatory power and descriptive accuracy of the bureaucratic politics model in the case.

Bureaucratic Politics and the Role of President George W. Bush in the Iraq Surge Decision-Making Process

George W. Bush's management style allowed for bureaucratic politics to guide and influence the strategy review in the fall of 2006. "President Bush's overall decision-making style was similar to that of Ronald Reagan: he set broad strategic objectives, gave general guidance, and then let advisers develop the details. He was less involved in the specifics than some of his predecessors, like Clinton."⁷³ The president, true to his management and decision-making style, expressed his broad goal of revising Iraq strategy. "Although Bush knew the strategy in Iraq was in trouble, he didn't know what to do about it."⁷⁴ Bush did not indicate his support for a troop surge

until December 2006, well after the NSC and Generals Keane, Odierno, and Petraeus had developed the option. Bush recounted in his memoir how he traveled to meet with Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki on November 29, 2006, and decided on the return flight to support the troop surge. "After seeing Maliki, I believed we could count on his support. The surge was our best chance, maybe our last chance, to accomplish our goals in Iraq."⁷⁵ Only at this point in the decision-making process did the president become actively involved in the details of policy formulation.

As this study has illustrated, the rival coalitions of surge advocates and opponents continued to engage in political behavior in an effort to convince the president to either press ahead with the surge or reduce the numbers of troops deployed and outright reject the strategy. A full month passed until the final NSC meeting at Crawford established the form and duration of the surge, who would command the U.S. forces in Iraq, and whether counterinsurgency would become the new official doctrine of U.S. forces. Bush was clearly influenced by surge advocates as he would essentially grant everything that the NSC, Keane, Odierno, and Petraeus had requested. Bush decided that a troop surge was necessary but again expressed his emerging preference in broad terms that continued to allow for bureaucratic politics to dominate the strategy review. This month-long set of deliberations again reflected the interrelated nature of Bush's management style and bureaucratic politics. The president's prolonged detachment from details and the formulation of policy options allowed for advisers to compete politically in an attempt to persuade the president to adopt their particular policy preference.

President Bush's management of the Iraq surge decision-making process supports Rosati's (1981) conclusions regarding the nexus of bureaucratic politics and level of presidential involvement in the decision-making process.⁷⁶ Rosati argues that a low level of presidential involvement in the decision-making process results in bureaucratic dominance. Conversely, an actively involved president can thwart emerging bureaucratic politics. Bush, while receiving daily updates of the strategy review from Hadley, was not directly involved in the formulation of policy options and strategies until the closing weeks of the decision-making process. Bush ordered the NSC to unify the various strategy reviews in November 2006, was briefed by Keane and outside experts on December 11, met with the Joint Chiefs on December 13, and issued the critical set of policy decisions at the December 28 meeting in Crawford. However, Bush did not actively chair and attend the majority of the strategy review meetings and preferred to receive summaries from Hadley.

Bush did not develop the surge strategy, or any other strategy under consideration, and he largely tasked Hadley and the NSC with managing the strategy review in the fall of 2006. Bush's delegation of details and policy formulation to his advisers provided the medium for bureaucratic politics to strongly influence the strategy review and decision-making processes. The commander, size, scope, and strategy of the troop surge, were the products of advisers who convinced the president to order a full, five-brigade surge to mount counterinsurgency operations in Iraq. Bush, as this study has demonstrated, did not simply select from a menu of objective policy

Table 2. Summary of Findings

Model/prediction	Result in the case
Rational actor model	
Administration acted as a single actor	Significant division within administration/ military
Surge as an optimal choice	The surge was an example of satisficing
Policymakers agree on the surge	Agreement was never achieved
Objective cost–benefit analyses	Limited and influenced by bureaucratic role
Bureaucratic politics model	
Actors' preferences are influenced by role	Highly salient influence on policy preferences
Surge decision came through action-channels	Formal and informal action-channels present
Competition among actors in the process	Bargaining advantages exploited by multiple actors
Politics and political behavior dominate the process	Coalition-building, logrolling, and exclusionary tactics

options. Instead, the options Bush considered were themselves the products of bureaucratic politics.

Conclusion

The Intersection of War and Politics

This study concludes that the bureaucratic politics model provides a compelling explanation of the decision-making process surrounding the Iraq troop surge. The policy preferences of the principal actors in the case appear to be clearly influenced by bureaucratic role, mission, and essence. Formal and informal action-channels were also in evidence in this case study. The final outcome in the case was a victory for surge advocates who engaged in prolonged political combat with surge opponents throughout the decision-making process. The Iraq surge decision-making process was highly political and reflects the fundamental tenets of the bureaucratic politics model. Table 2 summarizes the key findings of the study.

The importance of informal action-channels in this case presents a possible research gap and area for further development of the bureaucratic politics model. While Odierno, Keane, and Petraeus formed informal, ad hoc relationships with the NSC and the president, these generals were neither senior combatant commanders nor members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. These three generals exercised considerable bureaucratic will and skill and effective power within the executive branch decision-making process. The NSC strategy review process also incorporated key actors outside the executive branch. Indeed, one of the main features of this case was the ability of ostensibly outside actors to maintain effective influence and bargaining advantages within the administration. This inconsistency

presents a potential area of future research as the bureaucratic politics model may have to be refined in order to more accurately describe the role of nonexecutive branch actors.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Bio

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