SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS
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Among the conclusions that the present study points to, the following may be cited:

1. The Pentagon—the civilian and military components of the Department of Defence—was not a monolithic behemoth formulating its own course on policy-making relating to Vietnam and imposing it on the rest of the Executive branch of the United States Government.

2. The tradition of civilian control of the military never came under any severe strain as policy was formulated and implemented. The President's authority was never even remotely questioned or challenged by the Pentagon. Within the Pentagon the authority of the civilian Secretary of Defence was real and not nominal.

3. At no point did the Pentagon act as though it could take the legislative branch for granted. While using various techniques for influencing Congressional opinion, the Pentagon nevertheless functioned with a continual awareness of the constitutional powers of the legislative branch.

4. The Pentagon did not at any point act as though public opinion was an irrelevant factor. While employing various techniques of propaganda, public relations, and news management, it functioned with the awareness that public opinion would be of crucial importance in determining the future of a course favoured by it.

5. In the making of policy towards a foreign country or region, the Pentagon's role increases in a crisis situation and
becomes even greater when the shooting starts.

6. The Pentagon has to reckon with other federal actors who influence foreign policy-making area including the State Department, the CIA, the White House Staff (especially the National Security Adviser), and other extra-Executive actors including Congressional leaders and friends of the President whom he may bring in from time to time. Because of organizational rivalry, bureaucratic politics and clashing personal interests, the possibility exists of conflict among actors who eventually tend to reach compromises through bargaining.

7. If the Pentagon itself is in a position to achieve internal unity and harmony on a given issue, it is better placed to win acceptance for its point of view and to exploit possible differences among non-Pentagon agencies. The reverse becomes possible if the Pentagon is unable to present a united front.

8. The Pentagon itself may at times be a divided house. Rifts may develop between the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon. A rift on matters relating to the development, production and procurement of weapons may have spill over effects affecting their interaction in foreign policy.

9. The Secretary of Defence is in a strong position to deal with his non-Pentagon bureaucratic competitors when he is able to carry with him the whole organization--both the civilian and military components included. When he is able to maintain unity and harmony among the civilians subordinate to him, he is in a better position in his bargaining with the JCS. Similarly,
the JCS will be on a good wicket in dealing with the Secretary when it achieves unanimity and commands the support of senior officers down the line.

10. During the entire period including the spells of sharp disagreement, no disposition was seen on the part of either of the components of the Pentagon to defy established constitutional procedures. That such was the case in the midst of a very trying, divisive national ordeal was a commentary on the stability of the American political system.

The Defence Department is a vast bureaucracy. The relationship between the civilian and military components of the Department of Defence may be strained either due to their differences relating to weapons matters or due to their conflicting approaches to some foreign policy issues with national security implications. As weapons policy and foreign policy are interrelated, the conflict between the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon in one area may spill over to the other area. Such conflicts may occur at several points and on several levels. There may arise a rift between one service and another service or more than one service. The civilian and military elements of one service may fight against the civilian and military elements of another service. Conflict may also spring up among the military branches themselves over roles and missions, rival weapons programmes and rival war strategies.

In regard to their role in shaping the foreign policy, both the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon have to
compete with other federal actors. They have to take into account the attitude of the President and of Congress. At times the President, the ultimate decision-makers, himself becomes an adversary in the bureaucratic game of decision-making when he is seen to be tilting significantly towards a point of view advocated by a rival actor or coalition of actors. In such a case, the Pentagon, as an entity or that component that finds its point of view not getting the desired degree of acceptance by the President, seeks to mobilize whatever leverage it may be able to bring to bear in order to induce the President to reconsider his position. Some times the President retreats from his position and adjusts to a different viewpoint.

So long as there is a broad agreement between the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon regarding any issue, the prospect of the Pentagon having its way will be greater, with some accommodation in respect of the views of other major federal actors so as to evolve the appearance of a consensus. Only when there arises a rift between the two segments of the Defence Department, other federal actors tend to come in and utilize such differences to their advantage. However, if there is a broad consensus between the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon, the military actors do not tend to allow their differences, if any, over matters relating to the production and procurement of weapons, to vitiate that consensus. But when the military members find that the Secretary of Defence advocates a course in foreign policy much different from theirs, they might blend the two issues
in indicating their divergence from the Secretary and thus laying the latter open to criticism from Congress, the media and from other federal actors as well.

When a conflict arises in the Pentagon between its civilian and military components, they tend to seek "allies" from the outside. They would compete for winning the co-operation of other federal actors, Congressional members, pressure groups, the press and others who are in a position to influence the decision-making. Extra-Pentagon actors, especially those with their interests at stake, sometimes volunteer their help and take sides in the conflict. The military elements have their "natural allies" in weapons-related industries, and service associations which are, in terms of men and money, powerful and well-organized. The civilian elements of the Pentagon also have the support of these entities, but when they develop differences with the military, the support is not forthcoming in similar measure. In such a situation, they do not have dependable, identifiable allies. As a result, a pro-military campaign is launched quicker than the pro-civilian one. The elements which would rally behind the civilian components of the Pentagon are disparate, lacking existing unified organization.

When a serious breach occurs within the Executive, especially within the Pentagon, the adversaries tend to "leak" sensitive materials to outside friendly and sympathetic elements. As the conflict prolongs and one party seems to be winning over another, the latter would be inclined to be more active in "leaking"
information selectively in order to reverse the trend of the game. During the period of the intensification of the conflict between the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon over the Vietnam war, "leaks" occurred frequently and the military which, at the outset, felt disappointed due to the resistance of the Defence Secretary to its move for escalation, seemed to have indulged more in leaking than the civilian elements of the Pentagon.

Apart from "leaks", the adversaries within the Pentagon tend, when matters advance beyond a certain point, to give indication of their differences and even use cautiously-phrased criticisms in Congressional forums. Friendly elements in Congress are inclined to make speeches on the floor in support of their respective allies in the Pentagon. They also tend to launch and run Congressional hearings in order to enable their allies to express their viewpoints in the most advantageous manner. Apart from the witnesses from the Pentagon, Congressional Committees generally invite persons from the outside who would support the dominant point of view, though an opposing point of view cannot be altogether shut off since unanimity is seldom achieved among all Committees themselves. When the rift between the civilian and military components of the Pentagon over Vietnam reached its nadir, the Senate Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee conducted, in August 1967, long, prolonged, and intensive hearings in which all but one (McNamara) were only military witnesses. Another example of this sort was
a hearing on Vietnam conducted by Senator Fulbright's Foreign Relations Committee which invited, amongst others, George Kenan and Lt. Gen. James Gavin who were known to be opposed to escalation.

Continuity in service, better organization, and greater resources are factors that help the military in any duel with the civilian elements of the Pentagon, but they may not ensure the victory to the military. Because of the well-entrenched traditional civilian control they do not push their opposition to a point of no return. Other factors like the domestic and international public opinion, developments in the battlefield, the attitude of other federal actors, Congress and the President would finally determine the outcome of the duel.

In peace time the Pentagon plays second fiddle to the State Department in the field of foreign policy, but once a crisis situation involving national security is seen to develop and even more when shooting starts, the former tends to move increasingly to the centre in respect of decision-making. Before the shooting starts, the general on the field generally tends to follow the lead of his superiors in the Pentagon. But once the fighting starts, he tends to increasingly assert himself vis-a-vis the latter. As American soldiers in large numbers are deployed in the field and as the war escalates, his influence in policy-making tends to increase. General Westmoreland stood in the wings and the Washington players and Ambassador Taylor occupied the centre of the stage from the Tonkin incident of August 1964 to June
Then Westmoreland made a big push for increased American ground involvement in South Vietnam. As the war escalated, the general exercised increased influence in policy-making in regard to Vietnam.

Federal actors, while taking decisions on foreign policy, keep in mind the "shared interest", i.e., the picture that the dominant persons in Washington have on a particular issue and also the public opinion at home concerning the issue. This hypothesis, however, is subject to two qualifications. The higher an official is placed, the greater is his awareness of these factors and vice versa. Secondly, an actor on the field abroad might tend to be less concerned about domestic public opinion than the actors in Washington.

Coming to the Pentagon, the Secretary and his civilian colleagues tend to give more weightage to the "shared interest," political constraints and compulsions, and the public opinion at home than his military colleagues both in Washington and on the field abroad. Among the military elements, the JCS tend to be more influenced by such considerations than these lower down. That was mainly responsible for the differences over Vietnam between McNamara and the military in general, and between the JCS and the CUMUSMACV in the initial phase of American military involvement in Vietnam -- up to June 1965. Only after the war escalated and the civil-military line was drawn in the Pentagon, the JCS and Westmoreland bridged the distance between themselves and took a common stand against the civilian elements of the
Pentagon. In this case, the JCS, as often happens, tended to support the assessment concerning reinforcements put forth by the field commander.

Decision-making is influenced by organizationalism. While taking a stand, an actor would tend to take into account the interest of his organization. But this awareness would progressively diminish upward. In other words, the higher an official is placed, the less he is affected by organizational consideration, the more he is inclined to be influenced by "shared image", personal interest and other extra-organizational considerations. The lower an official is placed in the organizational ladder, the more he tends to be bound by the interest of his organization.

Secretary Rusk preferred to be a judge than a manager. He avoided being caught in inter-agency conflicts. He did not show much interest in assuming for his Department inter-agency leadership. But given Rusk's general attitudes, Kennedy increasingly looked for inter-agency leadership to the Defence Department headed by Robert McNamara who showed traits of dynamism and leadership. As a result, the task of defending the interest of the State Department fell upon Rusk's deputies like Bowles, Ball, Harriman and Bilsman. These officials were very much concerned over the constitution of a Vietnam Task Force under the chairmanship of Gilpatric, the Deputy Secretary of Defence. Immediately they made efforts for reconstituting the Task Force and within a short time succeeded in replacing Gilpatric by Ball as its chairman. Similarly these officials were disappointed
when Rostow and Taylor were sent to South Vietnam in October 1961. They felt bad because such an important mission was not led, -- indeed, did not even include -- a high official of the State Department. For the most part of 1963 before the coup against Diem took place, Harriman and Hilsman of the State Department fought bitterly with the civilian and military members of the Pentagon.

Information is an important source of power. It is capable of significantly influencing the formulation of a policy. Besides access to information, the way it flows within an organization or among the various agencies constituting the decision-making machinery is of much importance. In order to play an active and vigorous role in policy-making, President Kennedy often bypassed the regular channels and tapped some lower officials to elicit information. When, in August 1963, the National Security Council decided to seek some information from the Saigon mission regarding the state of affairs in South Vietnam, the JCS immediately used their "back channel" to advise General Harkins, the head of the American Military Assistance Command, Saigon, the way he should answer some of the questions of Washington. Independent of the controversy over the manner in which the 24 August 1963 State message to Ambassador Lodge was cleared by some principal actors who were outside Washington on that day, the fact that such an important and controversial message could be cleared, in a short time, by the various agencies and sent to the American Ambassador in Saigon suggests the extent to which the control over information and communication-flow may influence the outcome of a
policy. In August 1964 the Executive managed to win the quick approval of Congress for the Tonkin resolution by telling the latter only a part of the story and by suppressing some relevant, important information about the incident.

Policy-making is a bureaucratic game which involves conflict, bargain and compromise. Conflict occurs because of organizational interests, bureaucratic politics, personal interests and cultural background of various actors. Conflict is accepted as a part of the game, but it is not overstretched, because it may endanger the game itself. Hence arises the need of compromise which is reached through bargaining. An actor has to concede some points in order that he may retain the rest of his package. He cannot bargain away something which he considers vital for him. The conflict-bargain-compromise process takes place not only within the Executive, but also inside each agency. Throughout the period under review there was a prolonged conflict between the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon in regard to weapons matters as well as to Vietnam, especially from 1965 to 1967. The more the military pressed for intensification of the war, the more the Secretary sought to restrain them. But at the end of each round, the decision was a compromise. Each time the military was offered a part of the package it had asked for which succeeded in keeping the military on board. Each concession to the military, however, had its own momentum—and the military leaders were conscious of it. In successive rounds the military was able to bring increased concessions from the Defence Secretary and the President. In other
words, policy-making is incremental. Each policy is a cumulative product of a few successive decisions, each successive decision being increasingly closer to the final outcome.

The present study suggests that none of the three models described at the outset would, by itself, be able to explain the formulation of foreign policy. Systemic interaction, organizational interest, and bureaucratic politics, are important variables affecting policy-making. Sometimes one of these factors may alone be responsible for a policy, or it may be the most dominant factor influencing its outcome. But often a combination of these variables determines the emergence of a policy. An actor, while making his debut in policy-making, keeps in mind the broad national goals, the interest of his organization, his personal interest, the "shared image" dominant among Washington actors, the public opinion at home and abroad and the attitude of the ultimate decision-maker. It would be difficult to accurately predict the relative importance of these variables at any given point of time. The importance of any variable would vary from situation to situation, from time to time. In the present study, both the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon were influenced, more or less, by the above forces while taking part in policy-making in regard to Vietnam. Secretary McNamara was perhaps not less ardent at the outset than any other federal actor in championing the domino theory and in advocating the mission of "containing international Communism." He was interested not only in asserting civilian supremacy in the Pentagon, but
also in claiming for his Department an ever-increasing role, in relation to others, in the field of foreign policy-making. He might also have liked to build his personal image -- a task which became increasingly easier for him. He had probably a clearer knowledge than others of the Kennedy mind, as for instance, the President's inclination in November 1961 to take a tough stand in Vietnam as well as his reluctance at that time to send American ground troops to that country. He also sought to bear in mind the state of domestic public opinion.

The military members of the Pentagon were also aware of political considerations, though not to the same extent as their civilian Secretary was. Several times, after stating first their "pure military" recommendations, they said that if those recommendations were not acceptable because of political considerations, they would propose a different modified package. The Defence Secretary is a political appointee, personally responsible to the President and at any time he may be fired by him. But the status of the military is different. They are "regular" officers in the military service, selected and promoted through established procedures, having tenure till the prescribed age of retirement. A general may be shifted from an important position to one less important if the President is not happy with him. But he cannot be thrown out of his job before his normal retirement age even if he gives indication of reservations about some policy of the Administration. The difference in the nature of the jobs of the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon is partly responsible
for the difference in their susceptibility to be influenced by public opinion and political compulsions and constraints. It was, therefore, not a surprise that towards the end of 1966 and in the beginning of 1967 when American public got increasingly restive about the American military involvement in Vietnam, it was McNamara, not the JCS, who changed his tone regarding the war.

It is difficult for an actor to dissociate himself from an ongoing policy or to oppose it if in the past he had been intimately associated with it or strongly identified with it. McNamara started developing doubts about the Vietnam policy since the beginning of 1966 and he became disenchanted with it by the middle of that year, but he could not break with the policy overnight. In the public's eye, he was the main architect of the ongoing policy. It would have been very difficult for him to convince others of the rightness of any sudden change on Vietnam. Slowly he prepared the way for his final breach in May 1967 with the policy pursued by the Administration. Largely for this reason it was difficult for William Bundy in late 1967 to completely identify himself with McNamara's changed position in regard to Vietnam. On the other hand, it is relatively easier for an actor to challenge a policy if he had not been intimately involved in the past in its formulation. Ball was mainly pre-occupied with European affairs before he started taking keen interest in Vietnam. Similarly, Katzenbach did not have any association with Vietnam before he was appointed as the Under Secretary of State in place of Ball. As a result, these two
actors did not face much psychological constraints in challenging the ongoing Vietnam policy during the period of escalation.

The present study does not substantiate either of the hypotheses that the military as a part of the "power elite" controls foreign policy and the military is a conduit for the civilians for representing the latter's interest in foreign policy. At no point of time during the period under review did the military control the policy-making in regard to Vietnam. Its importance in decision-making varied from time to time. Its influence gradually increased as the war escalated. But it was not even then the sole or even decisive controlling force. Many influential civilian actors in Washington also favoured escalation. Therefore, it would be wrong to infer that the military dominated the making of Vietnam policy, even its escalation phase.

It would also be equally wrong to suggest that the military was just the instrument of civilians for ensuring the reflection of the latter's interest in foreign policy. The military is an independent entity with its own life and interest. It would co-operate with civilians as long as their interests are identical. When their interests clash, the military would tend to pay serious attention to its organizational interests. It will present its demands and place on record the implications of a refusal or reduction of its demands. It cannot afford to jeopardise the image of the organization and its
future role. The military is not always a unified house.
Nor are the civilians. Both houses may get divided on issues
and several varieties of coalitions of the components of both
sides take place. The military, in pursuance of its objectives,
would join hands with military industries, service associations,
and friendly elements of Congress having the same or similar
interest. But in doing so, the military does not see itself
as just serving the interest of these "allies". It enters
into such an alliance only in the pursuit of its perceived
interests. The military neither controls foreign policy-making,
nor does it play simply the role of an instrument or a conduit
for serving the interests of civilians. The truth lies some­
where between the two.