Chapter 111

CIVILIAN MILITARY INTERACTION IN
THE PENTAGON - 11
Chapter III

CIVILIAN-MILITARY INTERACTION IN THE PENTAGON - II

The period of escalation of the war in Vietnam extends from about the middle of 1965 to the end of March 1968. On 31 March 1968 President Johnson announced that he would not seek the second term. A few days earlier, McNamara had left the Pentagon. It is proposed to carry our discussion up to the exit of McNamara because the time-gap between that date and 31 March is not very big, and there does not appear to have taken place any significant change in the civil-military equation during that period. The period of escalation is also the period of increasing tension between the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon. The prospect of rifts developing becomes greater when success in the attainment of the objective gets delayed or becomes somewhat doubtful in the context of resources that could be committed as well as other variables.

It appears that the civil-military conflict on Vietnam was influenced by the differences between civilian and military elements of the Pentagon on other defence matters. In the beginning of the last chapter, various factors that seemingly led to the rift between the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon have been pointed out. Some of those forces continued to operate throughout McNamara's tenure as the Secretary of Defence, because they happened to be the functions of his basic approach to decision-making. In the TFX case, he had exposed himself to the charge of having ignored the unanimous advice of his experts. In
order to prevent such a situation in future, the Secretary further centralized the decision-making process on defence. He made it a rule that it was the function of his military officers to advise him on the selection of sources for the development of advanced weapon systems rather than to recommend one to him. Another regulation provided that the Secretary was responsible for selecting the source though he might choose to delegate the authority to one of the Service Secretaries. Much to the chagrin of the JCS, the Secretary of Defence reaffirmed it in January 1965 in an oral directive of 1961. According to this directive, the military witnesses were required not to offer personal opinions opposing any of the Budget decisions of the Administration unless "pressed by Congressmen" and if they did so, they must state the reasons why the Secretary had overruled them. These changes in the direction of further centralization seem to have considerably angered the military. As a protest against "overcentralization" and "over-management" of the Defence Secretary, two senior Admirals resigned from their posts on 27 October 1965.


Meanwhile, there had taken place a significant change at the top of the military echelon. The new JCS members were General Harold K. Johnson, Chief of Staff of the Army, General Joseph McConnell, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Admiral David McDonald, Chief of Naval Operations and General Earle Wheeler, the Chairman. The new chiefs were the members of a relatively new generation of the military. Hardly any one of them had won any war-time laurel as their predecessors. As Korb says, they were primarily "staff men; men more at home behind a desk than in the field, planners and administrators and not heroes and gladiators." This had a significant impact upon the internal equation of the JCS vis-à-vis the Secretary. The new chiefs realized that none of them could rely upon his past glory to fight individually with the Secretary of Defence. Their recourse, therefore, could only be to pose a united front both within the Executive and before Congress in case of major differences with the Secretary. From fiscal 1966 to fiscal 1968, they were unanimous in their opposition to the Secretary on some important weapons programmes (i.e., Nike X, AMSA, RS-71, F-12A, and SSN's). In fiscal 1966, the President upheld McNamara's stand. In fiscal 1967, the Secretary overruled the unanimous JCS opinions on calling up the reserves and the activation of a Navy cruiser from the Mouthball Fleet. During the same year, Admiral McDonald

4 Korb, n. 2, p. 15.

5 Ibid.
raised a storm in a tea-cup by refusing to endorse the defence budget during the Congressional hearings. The issue at conflict was relatively unimportant, but the episode had a significant impact upon the civil-military relation in the Pentagon. It revealed the strained relationship between the Secretary and the JCS.

The strained civil-military relationship reached its nadir during the Congressional debate on the ABM issue in fiscal 1968 when the Chairman of the JCS publicly voiced disagreement with the Secretary of Defence. Since the creation of the position of the JCS Chairman in 1949, he had been mostly acting as the "party whip." He was the chief military defender of the Government's defence policies. In a way his position was complementary to that of the Secretary of Defence. This tradition was broken when General Wheeler broke with McNamara on the ABM issue during the Congressional hearings. He was followed by the three other chiefs, each of whom contradicted the Secretary's position. By this time the strained equation between the Secretary and the JCS had considerably intensified. In the context of this progressive deterioration in their interrelationship, the civil-military interaction in policy-making on Vietnam may be studied.

Secretary McNamara in 1965 and thereafter, turned out to

6 The conflicting testimonies of the Defence Secretary and the JCS on ABM before Congressional Committee in 1967 will be dealt with in Chapter V.

be the main focus of public as well as internal debates on Vietnam. He frequently rushed to Saigon to exchange views with American officials and the Saigon Government. He conferred several times with his colleagues and advisers at Honolulu on Vietnam. Both in Congressional hearings and press conferences, he emerged to be the main defender of the Vietnam policy. More than anybody else, he was identified with the Vietnam policy. Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon charged that the Vietnam war was "McNamara's war." But those who wanted a quick and decisive "victory" criticized his policies as inadequate. He was thus the main target of both pro-war and anti-war elements.

The available documents reveal that the Defence Secretary was not quite what he appeared to be in public. No doubt, he had so far been an ardent advocate of strong American military posture in Vietnam. It is also true that the ongoing Vietnam policy was largely moulded by him. But as time advanced when the results that had been hoped for remained elusive and when the costs appeared to be heavy, the Defence Secretary began to develop doubts about the war. As early as 16 July 1965 McNamara asked General Wheeler to make a study on whether the US could "win" in South Vietnam if "we do everything we can." A study group consisting of civilians and military officers in the Pentagon observed, "Within the bounds of reasonable assumptions, there appears

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to be no reason we cannot win if such is our will and if that will is manifested in strategy and technical operations." The lurking diffidence and uncertainty on the part of civilians of the Pentagon was betrayed by their negative attitude. Assistant Secretary McNaughton, in a memorandum dated 2 July 1965, defined "win" as success "in demonstrating to the VC that they cannot win...." The victory for the US, from another angle, McNaughton stated, would be "with a high degree of probability, a way station toward a favourable settlement in South Vietnam." This was far from the positive American objectives in Vietnam, contained, from time to time, in public pronouncements. A little more than a year ago, William Bundy had told a Congressional Committee, "We are going to drive the Communist out of South Vietnam," even if that eventually involved a choice of "attacking the countries to the north." The contrast between the tones of these two statements is revealing even making allowance for the fact that Bundy's statement was intended for public consumption.

McNamara, who visited Saigon from 16 to 20 July 1965, submitted a memorandum to the President on his return to Washington. His recommendation in favour of 44-battalion concept of Westmoreland was, in effect, of not much consequence because the President had already approved that while the Secretary was in

10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., p. 4.
Saigon. This memorandum, however, was significant in another respect. It reflected the Secretary's optimism at its zenith which he was not to reflect--except in public--during the rest of his stay in the Pentagon. With Wheeler's "win"-study report, the Secretary was encouraged to state that there was a good chance of achieving an acceptable outcome within a reasonable time in Vietnam.

The "Forty-four battalions" plea was not the last of General Westmoreland's requests for increase in the strength of American ground troops in South Vietnam. He tended to ask for more and more as Washington continued to accept his proposals, though not always in full. On the ground that heavy infiltration was allegedly going on from the North to the South, the General requested in November 1965, an increase of 154,000 men. On receiving this request, McNamara visited South Vietnam, 28-30 November 1965. In his memorandum to the President, dated 30 November, the Secretary recommended the despatch of an additional 40,000 American personnel to South Vietnam by the end of 1966. He added that an additional 200,000 men might be needed the next year. However, he went on to warn that deployments as recommended by him, would not guarantee success. "US killed-in-action can be expected to reach 1,000 a month, and the odds are even that we will be faced in early 1967 with a 'no decision' at a higher level...." The optimism, contained in his memorandum of 20 July

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13 DOD Documents, n. 9, pp. 10-12.
14 Ibid., p. 25.
1965, was missing here. The 30 November memorandum underlined Secretary's own lurking doubts and suspicions about the Vietnam involvement.

General Westmoreland was apparently not the man to remain content with any "stabilization ceiling." Hardly was the ink on the 30 November memorandum of McNamara dry when a request came from the CUMUSMACV that the total of American ground troops in South Vietnam be raised to 443,000 by the end of 1966. This request was promptly supported by Admiral Sharp, the CINCPAC. The next month General Westmoreland made another request to increase the troop strength to 459,000. Such requests, made from time to time by military actors, became a regular feature of the civil-military interaction in regard to policy-making on the ground war in Vietnam. In response to such a request of the CINCPAC, dated 18 June 1966, which had been recommended by the JCS on 5 August, McNamara stated on the same day, that "it is our policy to provide the troops, weapons, and supplies requested by General Westmoreland at the times he desires them, to the greatest possible degree." However, he added that he desired and expected a detailed, line-by-line analysis of these requirements to determine that each was truly essential to the carrying out of the war plan. "We must send to Vietnam what is needed, but only what is needed." He warned that deployments on a bigger

15 Ibid., pp. 26-27.
16 Ibid., pp. 53-54; Emphasis added.
scale might weaken the economic structure of South Vietnam. This memorandum marked an implicit warning to the military that their requests would thenceforward be subjected to thorough examination—impliedly by system analysts who would use cost-effectiveness criteria. McNamara's posture was rather unusual in the sense that a civilian was warning his military advisers while a war was in progress that their recommendations concerning requirements for the conduct of a war would be examined by some "whiz kids." It must have been a bitter pill for the military actors to swallow. It also underscored the growing doubts of the Secretary. To what extent McNamara had been displeased with the military's pressure for increasing the American ground involvement in South Vietnam may be gauged if his memorandum is examined in the perspective of a Presidential directive only about a month earlier. On 28 June 1966 President Johnson, in a memorandum for the Secretary of Defence, had stated that the schedule of moving men to South Vietnam should be accelerated as much as possible so that Westmoreland could feel assured that he had all the men he needed as soon as possible. That the Secretary could send such a note of warning, in spite of the explicit desire of the President, indicates that McNamara's misgivings concerning the appraisals by the JCS had sharply increased. The Secretary's memorandum presaged a period of increasingly bitter competition between civilian and military elements of the Pentagon in relation to Vietnam.

17 Ibid., p. 49.
McNamara again expressed his opposition in October 1966 to the policy of escalation which was supported by the military. In September 1966, Admiral Sharp had recommended, on behalf of General Westmoreland, that the projected strength of US forces designated for Vietnam should be raised from 445,000 to 570,000 by the end of 1967. On 7 October the JCS had urged a "full-blown" mobilization of 688,500 reservists which might make it possible to send more men to South Vietnam. That McNamara had very serious reservations concerning the approach is brought out by the recommendations he made to the President after his return from South Vietnam on 14 October 1966. Tactfully he began with an expression of satisfaction about the progress on the military front. "We have done somewhat better militarily than I anticipated. We have by and large blunted the communist military initiative--any military victory in South Vietnam the Viet Cong may have had in mind 18 months ago has been thwarted by our emergency deployments and actions...." The Secretary followed it up with a more sombre appraisal of the prospect in Vietnam. He stated that he saw no hope of bringing the war to an early end. He saw "no sign of an impending break in enemy morale." He expressed his great disappointment with the results achieved in respect of "pacification"--thereby tacitly acknowledging the lack of noteworthy success in combating the appeal of the Viet Cong and winning popular support for the Saigon regime. To quote him, "Pacification has if anything gone backward." He recommended

18 Ibid., p. 82.
that the US force level in South Vietnam should be stabilized at 470,000. A new and significant note sounded by the Secretary related to placing emphasis on the objective of limiting further infiltration from the North. This was a defensive approach whose spirit was sharply at variance with that underlying the demand of the JCS for additional troops. The Secretary suggested that between ten thousand and twenty thousand men of the force level suggested by him might be put in charge of constructing and maintaining an infiltration barrier. A small group of eminent scientists, constituted by the Defence Department, had recommended in early September 1966 the installation of an electronic barrier as an anti-infiltration move. Apparently the Secretary was impressed by the possibilities that such a venture could open up, especially in view of his misgivings concerning bombing, as the means of combating infiltration. McNamara then went on to refer to an extremely sensitive issue—a negotiated settlement. He urged that efforts should be made for creating a better environment for negotiations. He recommended that steps should be taken to increase the "credibility of our peace gestures in the minds of the enemy." The US might totally stop the bombing of North Vietnam or confine it only to the "zone of infiltration," he suggested. The Secretary proposed that the US should make efforts to split the Viet Cong away from Hanoi and develop a "realistic plan" which

19 Ibid., p. 83.
20 Ibid., p. 87.
could offer a role to the Viet Cong in future negotiations and government of South Vietnam. It could, thus, be seen that significant differences had emerged on major issues between the Secretary and his military advisers.

The JCS made no secret of their disagreement over the force level suggested by the Secretary and the feasibility and efficacy of the proposed anti-infiltration barrier. They also disagreed with the Secretary’s view that the US should make fresh offers to induce the enemy to come to the negotiation table. Any fresh offer in this direction, they feared, would tend to betray American weakness.

The 14 October memorandum marked a great change in the Defence Secretary's attitude towards the Vietnam war. McNamara's reservations about the war, which were implicit in his 5 August memorandum were made explicit in the 14 October memorandum. The most important aspect of the latter was the importance he assigned to "negotiations" and his support for a role to the Viet Cong. From this time onwards, the Secretary was to continue to push this line. The "gut" question is how this change occurred in McNamara. The misgivings that he had voiced in his 5 August 1966 memorandum had sharply "escalated" by October. The Secretary perceived that the military escalation had failed to produce the kind of results that he had anticipated. He was probably deeply concerned over

21 Ibid., p. 88.
22 Ibid., pp. 92-94.
the implications of further and deeper involvement with no certainty of an early and favourable outcome. Signs were not lacking that the prolongation of the war, the mounting toll of casualties, and the receding mirage of "victory" were triggering increased criticism from the Congress and the public. The Secretary reposed considerable faith in the value of specialized studies as a tool of decision-making. He had before him the so-called JASON study which brought out the inadequacy of the results attained both by bombing and in ground war.

It is noteworthy that the members of the JCS were not unanimous in their opposition to the concept of anti-infiltration barrier. While the Chairman was inclined to favour experimenting with such a barrier, his other colleagues in the JCS and the

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that McNamara showed no disposition to press his point of view unambiguously and forcefully on the President at this point. McNamara was not ready at this point to push matters to a point where his separation from the Administration might be the inevitable culmination. Probably his intention was to initiate efforts to find allies and make converts in other agencies before initiating further moves.

Another round of civil-military encounter took place in the first half of 1967 on the question of sending more men to South Vietnam--later known as "200,000 requests." In a message to the JCS on 18 March, General Westmoreland outlined two strategies for ground deployment, namely, "minimum" and "optimum" strategy. The minimum strategy would need an additional two and one-third divisions--roughly 100,000 men--"as soon as possible but not later than 1 July 1968." The optimum strategy, he said, would require four and two-thirds divisions in all--201,250 more troops. Westmoreland's request was recommended by the JCS to the Defence Secretary on 20 April. Amongst other things, the Chiefs proposed a reserve call-up in spite of the President's known opposition to it. The military again pressed for this reinforcement when Generals Wheeler and Westmoreland met the President on 27 April 1967. This push by the military actors invited strong

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24 Ibid., pp. 61-63.
25 Ibid., p. 75.
26 Ibid., pp. 82-83.
retaliation by their civilian colleagues in the Defence Department.

One of the sharpest attacks on Westmoreland's 18 March request was made by Alain Enthoven, Assistant Secretary of Defence for Systems Analysis. It may not be accidental that the studies made by the talented systems analyst generally tended to be supportive of McNamara's views. After a thorough examination of this request, Enthoven observed:

...(a) VC/NVA /Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army/ losses don't go up in proportion to our forces, they haven't in past 18 mos.

(b) even if they did, additional 200,000 U.S. forces wouldn't put VC/NVA losses above their ability to sustain or their willingness to accept.

(c) Our studies indicate VC/NVA control their losses, within wide limits. They start most fights. Their losses go up when they're attacking. 27

He further pointed out that the deployment of additional forces would damage the economy of South Vietnam. He expressed his concern that it would result in eroding the incentives of South Vietnamese people to help themselves. It might give a wrong signal to Saigon, he argued, that "We will carry any load, regardless of their actions." In conclusion, he said, moving more men to South Vietnam would be a step in the wrong direction. He recommended that additional forces for Southeast Asia should not be approved. Another of his recommendations was that the MACV be directed to

27 Ibid., p. 113.
28 Ibid., p. 122.
submit plans by 1 August 1967 to increase the effectiveness of the forces of South Vietnam and those of the US and other "Free World Military Allies." The thrust of the Enthoven study, was that it would be futile to place reliance on additional reinforcements and that the military leadership should concert measures to make the better use of forces already available.

The military request was also severely attacked by another civilian adviser of Secretary McNamara. McNaughton, Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs, seemed to have been disenchanted with the Vietnam war since the beginning of 1966. As early as 19 January 1966, he had stated that the US was engaged in an "escalating military stalemate." He had expressed his serious concern about the creeping American entanglement in Vietnam. "At each decision point we have gambled; at each point, to avoid the damage to our effectiveness of defaulting on our commitment, we have upped the ante. We have not defaulted, and the ante (and commitment) is now very high." He had even recommended that the US should be prepared to accept, as a condition of settlement, a coalition government including Communists. His growing uneasiness and pessimism about South Vietnam may be inferred from notes he made a conversation with an official who had just returned from Saigon. His notes read:

29 Ibid., p. 124.

"Place (VN) is unholy mess
"We control next to no territory
"Fears economic collapse
"Militarily will be same place year from now.
"Pacification won't get off ground for a year.

McNaughton's disenchantment with the ongoing escalation policy seems to have considerably increased by the time 200,000--more request was under consideration. In a DPM (Draft Presidential Memorandum), dated 5 May 1967, he pointed out the failure of Rolling Thunder. As regards sending more troops, he was not prepared even to accept the suggestion that Westmoreland might be given 80,000 men instead of 200,000 he had requested. It is not clear from the documents who in the Defence Department had initiated this suggestion. McNaughton asserted that provision of additional troops would be compounding the mistakes that had been made during the previous three years. It would be futile to argue to yield to the request for more troops and to pray that they would properly be used while some constructive diplomatic action was initiated. He asserted that time had come for fighting out the issues of exactly what "philosophy" the war was supposed to rest on. The President should, in his opinion, give General Westmoreland his "limit" as President Truman had done to General MacArthur at the time of the Korean war.

31 Sheehan, ibid., p. 485.
32 DOD Documents, n. 23, p. 147; and Sheehan, n. 30, p. 546.
Apparently the Defence Secretary's appraisal of the situation was reinforced by the views of such trusted civilian associates as McNaughton and Enthoven. It is equally possible that they too were not unaware of the shift that had been taking place in McNamara's own thinking. No indication of a similar stand is to be found in the available documents in the reactions of the Service Secretaries at this stage. In the absence of any reports of serious divisions or conflicts in the civilian component of the Defence Department it is perhaps reasonable to infer that the Service Secretaries were ready to go along with McNamara or at least that the Secretary was not confronted by any noteworthy challenge from the Service Secretaries.

The climax of efforts by the civilian elements of the Pentagon to contain the policy of escalation so fervently favoured by the military elements, was reached with the preparation of the DPM, dated 19 May 1967. It represented the broad range of thinking on the part of the civilian elements of the Pentagon regarding the war. Though it appeared to be directly based on McNaughton's 5 May note, it also reflected McNamara's increasing pessimism which had been earlier expressed, though not in such a strong manner. The Secretary and his Assistant Secretary argued that the deployment of 200,000 more men in South Vietnam would require call-up of reserves which, in turn, was likely to lead to intense political polarization at home. The

33 DOD Documents, ibid., pp. 146-66.
memorandum provided for a small increase of 30,000 men. For the first time the Defence civilians challenged the usefulness of sticking to the objective set forth in a basic document of the war—NSAM 288 of 17 March 1964. NSAM 288 had set forth as the American objective in Vietnam the establishment of "an independent non-Communist South Vietnam." The civilians were prepared to accept a much more limited objective in order to bring about the termination of American involvement and they offered a rationalization of such a course. Their memorandum argued that the American commitment was only to see, the people of South Vietnam were permitted to determine their own future. That commitment would cease to be operative if South Vietnam ceased to help herself. The United States need not regard herself as irrevocably committed to ensure that any particular person or group remained in power in South Vietnam. She was not committed to guarantee that a government chosen by the South Vietnamese themselves should necessarily be non-Communist. It was not incumbent on the United States to insist that an independent South Vietnam ought to remain separate from North Vietnam. These views marked a radical break with what had all along been regarded as the official line flowing out of NSAM 288.

The reaction of the JCS to the 19 May DPM was very sharp. Within four days they wrote four memoranda in which they repeated

34 For the text of NSAM 288, see Sheehan, n. 30, pp. 291-3.
their plea for 200,000 more men. On 31 May they charged that the "drastic changes" in American policy advocated by the Defence Secretary, would seriously undermine the rationale for American presence in South Vietnam. They urged that the 19 May DPM should not be forwarded to the President (The JCS did not know that the President had already gone through it twelve days back). This phase of the rift between the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon in regard to 200,000-request came to an end when McNamara and Westmoreland, during the former's visit of Saigon, 7-12 July, agreed on a compromise figure of 45,000-man increase. This figure was closer to the position of the civilian than to that of the military elements. In this sense, this marked a victory for the former, though not decisive, over the latter. The military lost a battle vis-a-vis the civilian elements of the Pentagon, but not yet a war.

Before the year 1967 was over, the civilian and military elements of the Defence Department disagreed on yet another issue relating to the ground war in Vietnam. On 1 November, McNamara addressed to the President a long memorandum with the title "Outlook if Present Course of Action Is Continued." After making a gloomy prognosis of the future of the American war in Vietnam, he recommended that the US should announce the stabilization of

36 DOD Documents, n. 23, pp. 165-71.
37 Ibid., p. 177.
38 Ibid., p. 209.
her military operations both in the South and North and indicate that there would be no increase in the size of her combat forces beyond those already planned. Besides seeking the advice of his other advisers, official and non-official, the President referred McNamara's memorandum to Westmoreland. The General did not challenge at that point the 525,000-man limit, but he did not agree with McNamara's suggestion that the US should announce it. It would be "foolish" to do it, the General asserted. On 18 December, the President put his own thoughts on this issue in a memorandum for the permanent files. He did not find it advisable then to increase the number of American ground troops in South Vietnam. He expressed his opposition to the idea of announcing a policy of stabilization, as urged by McNamara. It is important to note that the President's views exactly coincided with those of General Westmoreland whereas they were at variance with the views of the Defence Secretary. On this point the President moved away from the Defence Secretary and toward the military.

The last round of the conflict between the civilian and military actors of the Pentagon in relation to the Vietnam war was played in the wake of the Tet Offensive. Of course, by that time, McNamara might have lost some of his influence within the

40 Ibid., p. 376.
41 Ibid., pp. 377-8.
Administration because of the official announcement, already made, that he would step down from his office on 1 March 1968. Nevertheless he continued to fight till the end; there was hardly any indication in his actions that his leverage vis-a-vis the military had been greatly eroded or that he was constrained to function as a lame-duck Defence Secretary. There were conflicting appraisals of whether the almost simultaneous attacks carried out by the Viet Cong on a number of places indicated the failure of the American military effort. Administration apologists tried to argue that the Vietcong had engaged in a desperate gamble and having suffered serious casualties had been left weaker than before. The argument did not sound convincing to many who sought to draw an unfavourable contrast between earlier claims of the Administration concerning the progress in the war and the extensive onslaughts that the Vietcong succeeded in mounting. Kissinger was to subsequently point out that the Tet Offensive mounted by Communists marked a great "political and psychological defeat" for the US, though not a military one. And in a guerrilla war, the psychological aspect is the most important one. The question of further expansion of American ground involvement in South Vietnam which seemed to have been shelved was reopened, with rival factions in the Pentagon sticking to their guns.

Both the Pentagon Papers and President Johnson's The Vantage Point indicate that on 12 February 1968, General Westmorela

asked for the earliest possible assignment of six manoeuvre battalions (about 10,000 men). In their work *Roots of Involvement*, published in 1971, CBS correspondents Marvin Kalb and Elie Abel refer to messages that allegedly passed between President Johnson, General Wheeler and General Westmoreland before Westmoreland made his request. The President and the JCS, if Kalb and Abel are to be relied on, suggested to Westmoreland that he could go ahead and make the request. Before Westmoreland made his request for new reinforcements, General Wheeler seems to have tried to convince the President that such reinforcements were very urgent but Westmoreland would not make a request to that effect because of the fear of its rejection by the Secretary. Wheeler appears to have succeeded in procuring from the President some sort of a promise that "Westy's" request for more troops would be honoured. And the Chairman might have duly passed over this assurance from the President to CUMUSMACV. This understanding among the President, Wheeler and Westmoreland was apparently reached over the head of McNamara. One thus gets the impression that the President and the military actors were moving in the same direction at this point while the Secretary of Defence who was unable to share that approach was on his way out. The President's drift toward the military and away from the Defence Secretary had reached its


culmination.

The Tet Offensive provided an opportunity for the JCS to push their proposal of reserve call-up. After hearing from General Westmoreland, they developed three plans each of which, they said, would make the strategic reserve in the US so thin that it would affect its worldwide commitments. They recommended to the Secretary that, if such a course was adopted, the decision to send more men to South Vietnam might be deferred. However, they added, preparatory measures should be taken then in anticipation of the possible dispatch of the 82nd Airborne Division and two-thirds of a Marine Division air wing team. Perhaps the Chiefs were playing a smart game. They were probably aware that the President was going their way and was disinclined to "bow out" of South Vietnam. The President might buy their proposal for reserve call-up which would be a preparatory step for expanded action in the future. But the JCS received a jolt on 13 February when McNamara, without recommending a reserve call-up, approved immediate deployment of 10,500 men which raised the total of American troops above the 525,000 ceiling.

On 28 February, the President decided to form a small group under the chairmanship of Clark Clifford to advise him on the issue. Clifford was an old name in Washington. He had been around the town for a pretty long time. He was a White House

45 Sheehan, n. 30, p. 608.
46 Ibid., pp. 608-9.
"counselor" during the Truman Administration. He assisted President Kennedy in managing governmental affairs when the latter took over the office from Eisenhower. Reputed as a trouble-shooter and a hawk, Clifford was named by Johnson as McNamara's successor. The President, who was having a tough time with his advisers already divided amongst themselves on Vietnam, might have hoped that the new Defence Secretary would support his strong posture in Vietnam and put the house in order.

On 4 March, the Clifford group submitted its report to the President. It recommended that nearly 23,000 men might be immediately sent to South Vietnam and that the decision on the rest of 205,000 package requested by Westmoreland and supported by the JCS might be made on the basis of week-by-week examination of requirements. The Committee also recommended a reserve call-up of about 245,000 men. Thus, the report of the Clifford Group further consolidated the position of the military over the Secretary of Defence on the issue concerned. Both the main proposals of the military were accepted. The 205,000 package remained valid and a big reserve call-up was approved. One is not clear to what extent President Johnson's own preferences would have influenced the recommendations of the Committee headed by a man who was soon to step into McNamara's shoe.

47 Ibid., pp. 611-17.
THE EFFICACY OF THE AIR WAR AND THE ISSUE: "BOMBING PAUSES"

The Pentagon expected that the application of American air power could produce results in softening the enemy by making him aware of the price that he may have to pay for continuing his ways. It was felt that if he was slow to respond to the message represented by initial selective strikes, he could be made to realize his folly by graduated escalation of bombing. Even though, on the basis of studies made of effects of the bombing of Germany during the Second World War, some elements in the civilian component and, perhaps, even of the Army might not have been able to share completely the optimism of the Air Force in regard to the efficacy of bombing, there was apparently not much controversy about the initiation of the air war, and over the acceptance of the principle of graduated escalation.

When Operation Rolling Thunder launched on 2 March 1965 failed to yield the expected results, McNamara recommended to the President on 1 July 1965 stepped up offensive military operations including the sharp escalation in bombing operations. The Secretary argued for a total quarantine of the movement of war supplies into North Vietnam by sea, rail and road. In order to achieve the objective, he recommended that all ports of North Vietnam including Haiphong should be mined, all rail and road bridges connecting China and North Vietnam be bombed and fighter airfields and SAM
sites in North Vietnam be destroyed. These recommendations were immediately supported by the military. The JCS, in their memorandum of 2 July, emphasized the urgency of the mining of ports, and attacks on POL targets and SAM sites.

After a lapse of nineteen days, however, McNamara modified his position. Now he recommended the mining of North Vietnam's harbours as a possible "severe reprisal should the VC or DRV commit a particularly damaging or horrendous act." He, however, urged that the number of strike sorties against North Vietnam be raised from 2,500 per month to 4,000 or more with the caveat that strikes on population and industrial targets, not very much connected with North Vietnam's supply of war materials to the Vietcong, be avoided. McNamara's 20 July memorandum indicated his continuing support for escalation but with a difference. The interposition of many qualifications and restrictions in that memorandum signified some change in McNamara although this change was not so big as to indicate a major reversal of his stand on the air war. Why did this change, though small, take place in McNamara's thinking? Why did he fail to go all out for the "kill" although his optimism was at an all-time high? He might have sensed some opposition to his position as laid down in his memorandum, dated 1 July 1965. McNaughton had advocated on 13 July

48 DOD Documents, n. 30, p. 9.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., pp. 11-12.
that population targets, targets close to China's border and SAM sites should not be bombed. These reservations were included in the Secretary's 20 July memorandum. It is, therefore, reasonable to argue that McNaughton's 13 July memorandum might have exercised some influence on the Defence Secretary. It is not clear if other "Vietnam principals" put some pressure on McNamara to change his earlier stand. The possible role of Under Secretary of State, George Ball, will be discussed in the next chapter. The other variable which might have acted upon McNamara was his visit of South Vietnam, 14-20 July 1965. During this tour, he found the situation in South Vietnam "worse" than before. Nevertheless the Secretary was optimistic about the final outcome and ready to recommend a major escalation. Perhaps it reflected his appraisal of the trend of Johnson's thinking. Perhaps each reinforced the other's view. The Secretary could also confidently count on support for his course of escalation from the JCS.

In regard to American bombing of North Vietnam, the issue of attacking POL (Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants) targets of North Vietnam generated more controversy than any other issue. More specifically, it continued to divide the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon till McNamara's exit. As time passed, it became the symbol of civil-military conflict and both parties tended more and more to consider it as a prestige issue. This

51 Ibid., p. 11.
rift did not remain confined for long to the original adversar­ies. In course of time, different segments of the three "con­centric circles" took sides. The battle royal was fought in the spring of 1967 when Secretary McNamara confronted the Pre­paredness Investigating Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee in August 1967.

On 2 September 1965, the JCS recommended air strikes against the POL and other lucrative targets of North Vietnam. They argued that the destruction of POL targets would seriously cripple Hanoi's capacity to supply war materials to the Viet Cong. This proposal was not accepted by McNamara on the ground that it was too dangerous an escalatory step. Before the year expired, the Joint Chiefs again pressed their proposal for POL attacks. No decision on this proposal was taken at the higher level before the 37-day bombing pause began on 24 December.

Before the year 1965 ended, the civilian and military ele­ments of the Pentagon were again ranged in opposite camps--this time on the question of a bombing pause. As early as 20 July 1965, the Defence Secretary had argued for a pause. He impli­citly repeated it in his 30 July memorandum in which he advised, "Minimize the loss of DRV 'face'." According to him, it would be politically easy for North Vietnam to come to the negotiation

53 The phrase "three concentric circles" has been coined by Roger Hilsman, discussed in the Introductory Chapter.
54 DOD Documents, n. 30, p. 64.
55 Ibid., p. 20.
table and/or to make concessions at a time when her territory was not currently bombed. McNamara pushed this proposal with much vigour in the month of November. In two memoranda, written on 3 November and 30 November (just after his return from South Vietnam), the Secretary advocated a bombing pause. He added that if there was no favourable response from Hanoi, the ground operations in the South and the bombing of the North might be greatly intensified. It is important to note that while in his 20 July memorandum the Secretary had argued for a 6-8 week pause, in his 30 November memorandum he proposed a three-to-four week pause. It appears that these two gestures on the part of the Defence Secretary—his warning that the war could be greatly escalated if Hanoi failed to favourably respond, and his recommendation for a 3-to-4 week instead of 6-8-week pause—were concessions to his bureaucratic adversaries, in the present context, the military and other civilian actors, to elicit their agreement to his proposal.

The 37-day pause began on 24 December 1965. Soon after this, there ensued a debate on whether the pause served any tangible purpose and on the shape of operations in the future. First the controversy centred round how one was to know that the "pause" failed. At what point would the US be satisfied that North Vietnam accepted or rejected her conditions for negotiations?  

56 Ibid., p. 21.  
57 Ibid.
In other words, how much concessions did Washington expect of Hanoi? McNamara, in his 3 November 1965 memorandum, stated that under a "hard-line" pause, the US was strongly determined to resume bombing if Hanoi failed to meet America's declared terms. "Under a soft-line pause," he added, "we would be willing to feel our way with respect to termination of the pause with less insistence on concrete concessions by the Communists." McNamara added that a "soft line" pause implied that the US was prepared for a "compromise" settlement. He hastened to add that he himself stood on the side of a "hard-line" pause. By opting for the stronger dose, the Secretary seemingly sought to pre-empt, in the bureaucratic game, the moves by his competitors who were known to be taking a hard line—especially the JCS and other military actors.

The second point on which the opinion in Washington was divided was on the nature of bombing operations, if a decision to resume bombing were to be taken. Should it resume with a "bang" or should it move slowly? McNamara and his Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, McNaughton, pleaded that the resumption of bombing should not begin with a "dramatic strike." It should begin at a low level and then gradually escalate. McNamara's advocacy of the "pause" and of resumption of bombing at a low level, if the pause failed to yield results, gave

58 Ibid., pp. 26-27.
59 Ibid., p. 28.
rise to the inference that some reservations on the escalation, albeit embryonic, had begun to form in the Secretary's mind. McNamara's views, on starting at a low level of air strikes, was not accepted by the military. They not only wanted that bombing should be resumed quickly, but also urged that it be fast and aggressive. They urged that from the very beginning of resumption, the US should go for strategic bombing. They recommended that the US should attack the POLs of North Vietnam, interdict all LOCs (Lines of Communication) from China and close all her ports. The Secretary sought to buttress his position vis-a-vis the JCS by indicating that he too was for a "hard line" ultimately but not as a starter when the pause ended.

The bombing was resumed on 31 January 1966, but not in a dramatic fashion. Thus the President apparently sought to maintain balance between the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon by resuming bombing—a view strongly urged by the military—but deciding in favour of an initial "soft-line" resumption which was advocated by the civilian actors of the Pentagon. But the POL controversy was not set at rest. The JCS began to push their proposal for attacks on POL targets. On 1 March the JCS recommended to McNamara that POLs and LOCs should be bombed and North Vietnam's harbours mined. After ten days they repeated this recommendation with the addition that it had the approval of Ambassador Lodge and Admiral Sharp. On 23 March the Secretary

60 Ibid., pp. 32-33.
61 Ibid., pp. 85-86.
asked General Wheeler certain specific questions relating to bombing. One of his queries was whether POL attacks would produce significant results if not accompanied by mining of North Vietnamese ports. This query indicates the direction in which the Secretary was thinking. It seems that he had by this time made up his mind to agree to the proposal of striking POLs if the JCS would not insist on the mining of harbours. By now the Secretary had probably come to believe that the mining of harbours was potentially very dangerous. Both McNamara and McNaughton had earlier pointed out that this step might provoke Moscow and Peking to get in. Sensing that the Secretary might be induced to go part of the way, the military made a concession. In response to the Secretary's query, General Wheeler said that the Chiefs attached the highest importance to the POL operation, "even if enemy harbors remained open." The Chiefs also strongly recommended attacks on adjoining industrial targets and LOCs. In late March McNamara recommended to the President that seven out of nine POL storage facilities in the Hanoi-Haiphong area should be bombed. He also proposed attacks on some plants, roads, bridges and railroads.

Thus, the late-March Pentagon recommendation on POL attacks was the product of mutual concessions made by the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon. For the time being the military

62 Ibid., p. 87.
63 Ibid.
withdrew their insistence on mining harbours and the Defence Secretary changed his earlier opposition in regard to attacking POLs. It is in line with our hypothesis stated at the outset that each decision in a bureaucratic process is not only a "compromise" among competitive actors, but also "incremental" in nature. A decision is the cumulative product of many successive steps taken earlier. When the JCS first pressed for POL attacks, the Defence Secretary tried to satisfy them by recommending the intensification of bombing—an increase in the level of bombing from 3,000 sorties per month to 4,000 sorties per month. For the time being he put aside the POL decision, but could not kill it. On the other hand, by yielding a few inches to the military he prepared the ground for the next move by the military. It was not a surprise that the military's next move was again POL attacks and mining of harbours. Secretary McNamara this time yielded on the POL question and postponed a decision on mining harbours. But again the Secretary paved the ground for the next higher bid by the military. Thus, in such an escalatory process, each bureaucratic decision contains within it the seeds of the next decision, the next increment. Each rung in an incremental ladder has its own momentum which spills over to the next higher rung.

Some time toward the third week of June 1966 the decision was taken at the highest level to attack POLs and on 29 June strikes were launched. Official reports were very optimistic.
McNamara congratulated the field commanders involved in planning and executing the strikes. But this jubilation was short-lived. Soon the Secretary was to discover that the strikes had failed to pay dividends. Toward the end of July, the CIA reported that while the recent POL strikes had destroyed over 50 per cent of North Vietnam's petroleum storage capacity, substantial stocks still survived. North Vietnam would be able to import sufficient fuel to keep at least the essential military and economic traffic moving. This discouraging report might have had some impact upon the Secretary in shaping his attitude towards bombing. But the stronger force which brought about a decisive change in him in this respect was the JASON study report, referred to earlier in connection with the issue of installing an electronic infiltration barrier.

Under the sponsorship of the Defence Department, a group of eminent scientists had been constituted in the summer of 1966 to study the results of Rolling Thunder. They submitted their report on 29 August 1966. The report stated that the bombing of North Vietnam including the recent POL strikes had not substantially affected the ability of North Vietnam to support the military operations in the South at the current level. The damage done to North Vietnam had been more than compensated by the increased flow of aid from her "allies," the USSR and China. Despite the bombing, the flow from the North to the South had been

64 Ibid., p. 143.
accelerated. Indeed, bombing had led to strengthened unity of
the people of North Vietnam and improved relationship of Hanoi
with Moscow and Peking. After making these appraisals of bombing,
the study group went on to suggest that an anti-infiltration
barrier be introduced as a substitute for bombing.

The views of the study group probably served to resolve
for McNamara the dilemma that he had wrestled with for some time.
It was too the kind of report that he wanted to receive at that
time in view of his own misgivings over the continuance of the
bombing campaign. The device of "study group" is not infrequently
resorted to by a leading player to strengthen his own hand. Not
infrequently the members selected to constitute "study groups" are
conscious of or are subtly made aware of the role expected of them.
Taking advantage of such a situation the leading elements in a
study group may put in "plugs" for a few subsidiary courses in
which they are interested, while providing a justification for the
course which the player commissioning the report is believed to
favour. It is not argued here that this was what actually happened
in respect of the JASON study. Evidence was not encountered
bearing on this aspect. The scenario is mentioned as one of the
possibilities.

From that time onwards McNamara took a decisive stand
against expanded bombing operations pressed for by the JCS. Within
the Administration he emerged to be the most persistent critic of

65 Ibid., pp. 150-60.
their demands. He was vigorously supported by his civilian colleagues of the Pentagon in this direction. In the second week of October 1966, McNamara, along with McNaughton, Wheeler, and Katzenbach, the Under Secretary of State, visited South Vietnam. After his return he wrote to the President that the bombing had failed to stop infiltration. He proposed an anti-infiltration barrier, as recommended by the JASON study group. He also proposed a bombing pause which might improve the climate for negotiations.

The JCS strongly disagreed with McNamara's memorandum. They believed that bombing was yielding results. They opposed any reduction in bombing or a pause. They did not believe that a pause would enhance the prospect for negotiations. They argued that bombing was one of the two trump cards that the President could play against the "Communists" (The other being the presence of American troops in South Vietnam). "It should not be given up without an end to the NVN aggression in SVN." On the other hand, the JCS urged, the US should give a "sharp knock" to North Vietnam's military targets. Though McNamara had taken Wheeler along with him to South Vietnam, the latter, apparently, did not share the Secretary's appraisal. The JCS closed ranks and a near-complete cleavage between them and the Secretary appeared to exist on the issue. The President did not authorize

66 Ibid., pp. 163-6.
67 Ibid., pp. 167-8.
the expansion of the air war which was strongly advocated by the military. But the President did not completely alienate his military advisers. He authorized an increase of B-52 sorties from 600 to 800 in February 1967, but it was a very small gesture on his part to keep the military on board. The Defence Secretary, as in earlier rounds, won over the military this time too.

To the discord between civilian and military elements of the Pentagon on a bombing pause, another element came to be added early in 1967. The Secretary of Defence supported another Tet truce hoping that it would improve the climate for negotiations. All the segments of the military—the JCS, the CINCPAC and the CUSMACV—strongly opposed it. The President sided with the Secretary and the Tet truce was observed. The second issue on which the Secretary and JCS were at odds related to the mining of internal waterways in North Vietnam. The JCS sought to repeat the tactic of scaling down an earlier demand. Resiling for the time being from their old proposal for the mining of all the harbours of North Vietnam, they recommended selected inland waterways and selected coastal areas to be mined to interdict internal water transportation in North Vietnam. That meant that Haiphong and some other strategic ports of North Vietnam were to be excluded but other "waterways" were to be fair game. It is not clear whether McNamara supported their recommendation or not. However, on the basis of the past behaviour of the Secretary, one may

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68 DOD Documents, Book 6, IV.C.7(b), vol. 2, p. 8.
hazard the guess that he would have agreed to go along with a scaled down demand in order to avoid widening the breach with the military. The President approved of the aerial mining of internal waterways of North Vietnam on 22 February.

The Secretary might have yielded to the JCS on the issue of mining the internal waterways. But it did not mean that he had withdrawn his effort to undermine the basic position of the military "adversary." The effort took the form of the preparation of a DPM by Assistant Secretary McNaughton. His DPM of 5 May, (referred to also in the earlier section on the escalation of the ground war) challenged the domino theory and sought to reformulate American objectives in Vietnam. It implied the replacement of the objectives spelled out in NSAM 288 by efforts towards a political solution. McNaughton suggested that the US should be mentally prepared to accept in Saigon a coalition government consisting of Communists. In regard to bombing, McNaughton argued that the bombing of the interior of North Vietnam was entailing heavy losses of civilian lives. He feared that the mining of ports would involve a risk of confrontation with the Soviet Union. He voiced doubts on whether American bombing could irreparably damage the ability of North Vietnam to send economic and military aid to the Vietcong. He approvingly cited Consul-General Edward E. Rice of Hong Kong to the effect that "we cannot by bombing reach the critical level of pain in North Vietnam and that below that level, pain only increases the will to fight." In view of

69 Ibid., pp. 31-32.
these considerations, the Assistant Secretary recommended that the US should concentrates her strikes on the lines of communication south of 20°, the "funnel" through which the flow of men and materials passed from the North to the South. McNaughton's draft apparently reflected the Secretary's own thinking at this time. His views were substantially reproduced in McNamara's DPM of 19 May. He recommended a bombing programme involving concentration of effort on the infiltration routes near the south of North Vietnam. He added that all of the sorties should be flown in the area between 17° and 20°. 70

On 20 May the JCS stated that the bombing of North Vietnam had so far failed to achieve the objectives fully because of the "restraints" imposed on it. They demanded that those restraints 71 should be removed. On 24 May General Wheeler argued that a complete or partial cessation of bombing would help the enemy immensely. Such a step could be "an aerial Dien Bien Phu," he warned. The JCS memorandum of 1 June which was a reply to the DPM of 19 May was even more sharp in its tone. The Chiefs charged that the concept of a "funnel" was misleading, since the flow of aid to the South was coming from all sides. They argued that the restraints imposed upon bombing would, instead of creating favourable conditions for negotiations, spoil the prospects for

70 Ibid., p. 49.
71 Ibid., p. 54.
72 Ibid.
negotiations. The deescalation of the war in the North and the South was "conceptually questionable," they asserted. The JCS bluntly declared that the Secretary's DPM "lacked adequate foundation for further consideration," and recommended that the DPM NOT be forwarded to the President."

Many memoranda circulated within the Pentagon, representing the positions of different actors on the bombing debate initiated by the DPM of 19 May. The most important of them was another DPM written by the Defence Secretary on 12 June. It posited three alternatives. Alternative A required intensive attack on the Hanoi-Haiphong base. Under this alternative, all ships entering North Vietnam and going out of her would be attacked. Specifically, harbours would be mined, and foreign shipping would be "shouldered out" of Haiphong by air strikes. Under alternative B, emphasis would be put, not on preventing materials from coming into the North, but on preventing men and materials from going out of the North into the South. Alternative C was a compromise between alternatives A and B. Secretary McNamara, Deputy Secretary Vance and the Secretary of the Navy supported alternative B. The JCS endorsed alternative A while the Secretary of the Air Force supported alternative C. It is thus clear that no other actors of the Pentagon except the JCS stood for alternative A. This indicates the near unanimity among the

73 Ibid., pp. 55-57.
74 Ibid., pp. 69-71.
civilian elements of the Pentagon in regard to the rejection of the actions envisaged under alternative A--actions that the JCS regarded as necessary and desirable.

When a dispute on a major issue between more or less equally powerful actors reaches an acute stage, it does not long remain a secret confined to the organization concerned. One or the other or both the principals may tend to project the issue outside the organization into an arena in which its position can be promoted. Apart from inspired newspaper "leaks," Congressional hearings are sought to be harnessed for the purpose. Congressional Committees too are usually on the look-out for such issues which provide them opportunities to project themselves in the decision-making process. Sometimes one side or the other involved in the conflict in the Executive takes the initiative to stimulate Congressional interest in the matter. The side concerned will understandably stimulate that Committee which it expects to be favourable to its own point of view.

Hearings were called by the Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on the Armed Services. Most of the members of the above Subcommittee including its Chairman Senator Stennis (Dem., Mississippi) were known to be strong defenders of the Air Force and ardent supporters of the military vis-a-vis the civilians. The witnesses invited to give testimony for this hearing were Secretary McNamara, the members of the JCS and Admiral Sharp, the CINCPAC. The Subcommittee first heard the military actors and the Defence Secretary subsequently. It is
noteworthy that on 9 August—the day the hearings started—the military were authorized to bomb sixteen additional targets, six of which were within the 10-mile range of the inner circle of Hanoi. This authorization appeared to be a pre-emptive step on the part of the Defence Secretary in order to take away a good deal of wind out of the sails of the military. It might also have been meant to soften up elements in the Committee that were known to favour increased pressure on the enemy.

In the course of the hearings the Generals tried to make three points. They stated that the bombing had done serious damage to North Vietnam. It had considerably reduced the flow of men and materials from the North to the South. The argument put forth by McNamara in ressional hearings held in the beginning of the year that if ports were mined, North Vietnam could still import adequate materials through rail lines and roads, and that she could send aid to the South by "bicycles, and back-packs," was strongly rebutted. The Chiefs argued that the bombing programme could have become more effective but for the "doctrine of gradualism." Because of the slow nature of bombing, the "enemy" could find sufficient time to report its losses, they contended. They asserted that the application of air power against North Vietnam was going to contribute in the overall to the "shortening of the war."

75 Ibid., p. 91.

McNamara appeared before the Subcommittee on 25 August. He must have been aware that he was likely to face tough and hostile questioning. The military had had their say and their testimony was hostile to the course that he favoured. Given composition of the Subcommittee and the known views of several of its members, McNamara could hardly have been optimistic that he could make his views prevail. But with daring and skill, he formulated his replies in such fashion that regardless of the immediate outcome, they could have a longer-term impact on the Administration, the Congress, and the American public.

McNamara argued that bombing had not succeeded in breaking the morale of North Vietnamese. The people of North Vietnam were accustomed to live in difficulties and no amount of damage done by bombing would bring them to a level where they would be unable to keep on sending war supplies to the South. Nor would it make them withdraw their support for the Hanoi regime, the Secretary added. "There is nothing in the past reaction of the North Vietnamese leaders that would provide any confidence that they can be bombed to the negotiating table." The Defence Secretary declared that the bombing of North Vietnam had always been considered as a supplement to and not a substitute for an effective counter-insurgency operations in South Vietnam. Obviously aiming at the military actors as well as other critics of "our present bombing policy," McNamara said:

77 Ibid., part 4, pp. 275, 325, 335.
Those who criticize our present bombing policy do so, in my opinion, because they believe that air attack against the North can be utilized to achieve quite different objectives. These critics appear to argue that our airpower can win the war in the South either by breaking the will of the North or by cutting off the war-supporting supplies needed in the south. In essence, this approach would seek to use the air attack against the North not as a supplement to, but as a substitute for the arduous ground war that we and our allies are waging in the South.  

In spite of his skilful performance, the Defence Secretary failed to convince the Subcommittee. The report of the Subcommittee, released a few days later, contained scathing criticisms of McNamara. (These aspects will be discussed in greater detail in the fifth chapter dealing with the Congressional interaction with the Pentagon on Vietnam.)

The McNamara-military rift on bombing continued till he left office at the end of February 1968. The final issue on which they differed related to military's advocacy of bombing Phuc Yen airfield near the Chinese border and bombing and mining Haiphong and other harbours of North Vietnam. The Defence Secretary was opposed to these steps. Eventually, however, a compromise was reached. The decision was taken to hit Phuc Yen and some targets in Haiphong, but not to mine the Haiphong port. In a conflict situation, an adversary may retreat, step by step, from its initial position and may progressively move towards the

78 Quoted in DOD Documents, n. 68, p. 95.
79 Ibid., p. 105.
position of the opponent. But a point may be reached representing what may be described as "irreducible minimum demand" of the actor. He may be fearful that if he permits himself to be pushed beyond this point, his viability as an actor might suffer grievous damage since the cause he believes in would, in his opinion, suffer grievously. McNamara was placed at that time in a similar situation in relation to the mining of Haiphong. McNamara believed that the cause advocated by the JCS might greatly increase the danger of Chinese and Russian intervention. Intelligence reports appeared to confirm this fear. Though the JCS could wring a partial concession from the Secretary on the eve of his departure, their victory was to prove to be pyrrhic. The Secretary with whom they had developed sharp disagreements was to make his exit. The JCS remained in position. But their common principal, the President, had finally moved towards an acceptance of the views of the departing Secretary and away from the position of the JCS. Johnson continued to refuse the military's demand for mining Haiphong and set his course in the direction of ending the operations that had so sharply divided not merely the Pentagon but the nation itself.

The Role of Extra-Pentagon Variables

In evolving its approach to an issue, the Defence Department has to reckon not only with the President, and rival federal actors in other agencies, but also with Congress, the media, various interest groups, and "public opinion." The interaction
of the Department with the federal actors and with Congress are dealt with in Chapter IV and Chapter V respectively. A brief discussion of the other variables may appropriately be attempted at this point.

Given the general disposition of the American public to rally round the President and the Armed Forces in a period of crisis and especially in the initial phase when US troops are involved in actual fighting, the Pentagon usually encounters little difficulty in receiving very substantial support from the media, service associations, veteran organizations, organized labour and other interest groups, and the general public. Indeed, to a substantial extent, the volume of public support probably has significant impact on the entities that have been referred to. It is noteworthy that the Vietnam venture continued to receive significant public support during the whole period under review, even though some erosion had set in in the later phase.

Both the civilian and military components of the Department have a common stake in mobilizing and retaining, to the maximum extent possible, the support of the public as well as other entities for the national effort as well as the Department's own role in support of the effort. They, therefore, tend to work in harmony, in pursuance of that objective. When criticisms began to appear and to intensify in the media, they sought to evoke appraisals favourable to their point of view and to utilize service associations, veteran organizations, and other interest groups to stimulate public support. The situation became somewhat
complicated when major differences developed within the Department itself between the civilian and military components. In that context, the same tactics of mobilizing support were sought to be employed by each group with some care being taken to avoid undue injury to the basic objective that they shared as well as the prestige and integrity of the military establishment, and constitutional provisions and conventions relating to the lines of authority in decision-making.

The reaction of the general American public towards the policies in respect of Vietnam was influenced by the information that was made available to them by the media and by the exposition of issues by governmental and other political leaders. The perception of Communist danger to the "free world" led by the United States and endorsed and propagated over the years by both the civilian and military actors in Washington had produced a situation in which the general public largely believed in the existence of the threat and the necessity of responding militarily to it whenever necessary. A nation-wide poll conducted by Gallup soon after the American air attack on North Vietnam in early February 1965 pointed out that 67 per cent of the respondents approved of the American action, 15 per cent expressed disapproval while 18 per cent were undecided. A Harris survey conducted in late April of the same year revealed that 57 per cent of the respondents supported President Johnson's military policy in Vietnam. As

the Vietnam war escalated resulting in increased American casualties, there was gradual increase in the number of the people who felt that the American involvement in Vietnam was a mistake and who became highly critical of Johnson's handling of the war. In August 1965, a Gallup poll showed that 23 per cent of the respondents were of the view that the American involvement in Vietnam was a mistake. The number of people who shared this view in October 1967 was exactly doubled. In August 1965, 57 per cent of the respondents, in a Gallup poll, approved of the President's conduct of the war. This number was reduced to 40 per cent in December 1967. In spite of the increased criticism of Johnson's handling of the war, and the growing feeling that sending troops to Vietnam was a mistake, the view that the US should withdraw from Vietnam did not enjoy the support of the majority of those polled till February 1968. In November 1967 when Johnson had reached the lowest point in his popularity in poll surveys, a Gallup poll found out that 59 per cent of the respondents favoured continuing American military efforts and 55 per cent advocated an increase in the American military involvement in Vietnam. While by the beginning of 1967 the civilian elements of the Pentagon had


85 Ibid., 11 November 1967.
started to be disenchanted with this policy, they had still to reckon with the state of public opinion which could not be changed overnight. The continuing public approval of the "militaristic" solution of the Vietnam problem perhaps strengthened the hands of the military vis-a-vis the civilians of the Pentagon in relation to Vietnam. Its case began to suffer when its differences with the civilians began to surface and when the public began to be perplexed by reports that harmony and unity no longer prevailed at the very top in the Pentagon on the right course to be adopted to promote American interest.

The second variable which influenced the interaction between the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon were the media of mass communication. Hardly any newspaper took a critical look at the Vietnam policy in 1964 and 1965 when the active military involvement began. Some like the New York Herald Tribune favoured the use of force in South Vietnam. On 4 February 1965, it warned against the "defeatist talks" in Washington and expressed suspicion that President Johnson was preparing "to run up the white flag in expectation of another Dienbienphu." 86 On 18 February the same newspaper charged that those who were urging "negotiation" were really asking the American people to "surrender." 87


Except Walter Lippmann and perhaps James Reston, no other nationally known columnist joined issue with the Administration's Vietnam policy during this critical phase. On the other hand, several of them ardently supported the policy of the Administration, and, at times, advocated even more hawkish course. Important among them were Joseph Alsop, William S. White, and Roscoe Drummond. Alsop tried to whip up nationalist emotions by presenting before the American people the bleak prospect of the impending American defeat in Vietnam. He warned on 4 January 1965, "...if the loss of China poisoned American public life for a decade, this defeat that looms ahead will poison our public life for a generation." On 21 April 1965, he accused Senator Fulbright and Professor Hans J. Morgenthau of suffering from "pompous ignorance." (Fulbright and Morgenthau were at that time arguing for a negotiated peace.) From time to time White and Drummond continued to attack the "doves" and defend the Administration policy in Vietnam. Even the group of young American newspaper reporters in Saigon whose critical comments on the Saigon regime created considerable sensation among the American public in 1963

88 Ibid., 1 January 1965.
89 Ibid., 4 January 1965.
and 1964 were not really opposed to overall American policy, but only to the American tactics. In 1965, David Halberstam, the New York Times correspondent stated that the US could not agree to a neutral Vietnam which would create a "vacuum" for Communist "subversion." American withdrawal from Vietnam would encourage Communists to attempt "Vietnam-type insurgencies" throughout the world, he added. In 1966, Neil Sheehan said that there was no alternative to the American strategy of continuing to prosecute the war with the hope that enough killing would force the enemy's collapse through exhaustion and despair. (Subsequently the two correspondents turned very critical of US policy.) Halberstam's book, The Best and Brightest, a biting expose of American policy-making on Vietnam, won for him the coveted Pulitzer prize. Sheehan edited for the New York Times the Pentagon Papers which disclosed the internal story of American decision-making on Vietnam. The changed tone of the so-called "Young Turks" in 1965 and 1966 indicates a general lack of an effort on the part of "opinion elites" to challenge the main thrust of American course in Vietnam.

However, as the war progressed and "victory" appeared to be elusive, the "opinion elites" began to be divided in regard to Vietnam. While some of them continued to support the ongoing policy and/or advocated a deeper American military involvement in


Vietnam, some others began to take a critical look at it. The latter began to express their concern against the escalation of the Vietnam war. The most consistent and prominent members of the former group were Joseph Alsop and Hanson W. Baldwin, the military correspondent of the New York Times. From time to time, Alsop stated in his syndicated columns that Communists were facing defeat in Vietnam and that American policy was a success. At times he would reflect the military's views regarding the need of further escalation both in ground involvement and aerial attacks on North Vietnam. Similar was the stand taken by Baldwin on Vietnam. In regard to the civil-military conflict within the Pentagon on Vietnam, Baldwin took the side of the military. In February 1966, he strongly supported the military's demand for the limited mobilization of reserve forces which was then opposed by McNamara. On 27 February 1966, he wrote a major article in the New York Times Book Review which sought to advocate the case of the escalation of the Vietnam war. He said:

It is my conviction that the President has relatively little choice; the enemy controls escalation as well as we. Given the present situation in Vietnam and our other commitments throughout the world, it is high time--more than time--that Congress declare a state of national emergency, that there be a limited mobilization of reserves, the appropriation of more billions for the war, a major increase

95 Ibid., 21 February 1966.
of United States strength in South Vietnam, and intensification of the bombing of North Vietnam. 96

Baldwin echoed the military's demand for 600,000-700,000 US troops in South Vietnam in order to spur the pacification programme. When the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon were fighting over the question of increasing the tempo and the scope of the bombing of North Vietnam, Baldwin asserted that bombing was very effective. When Harrison Salisbury's report from Hanoi, published in the front page of the New York Times charged that the American air attacks on Hanoi were resulting in large civilian casualties, Baldwin was quick to echo the line of the military. He countercharged that Salisbury's reports were "grossly exaggerated." It was not a surprise that the military also strongly attacked Salisbury's reports.

National Review edited by the conservative columnist William F. Buckley, Jr., consistently advocated a policy of escalation in Vietnam. It would even urge a nuclear attack on North Vietnam if that would expedite American victory in Vietnam. The weekly charged that Fulbright and others who advocated negotiated

98 Ibid., 30 December 1966.
settlement really wished "unconditional surrender" by the United States. James Burnham, a regular writer in the weekly, severely attacked the restrictions imposed on the bombing of North Vietnam by the US. He took to task "the appeasers within his President's official family" who stood for an "inhibited Vietnam strategy." He lamented that the military actors were not given a free hand in conducting the war. He said, "This is the first war that has been fought according to the prescriptions of the game theorists." Lending his support for the military's demand for an offensive role for the Army, Burnham urged that it should be encouraged to spring a "surprise," instead of being "pinned down to enclaves" as advocated by Lt. Gen. James M. Gavin.

On the other side, some columnists and intellectuals began to shift their position and started to criticize the escalation of the war, especially the "ascendancy" of the military. Joseph Kraft, a liberal columnist based at Boston, stated on 30 December 1966, "McNamara has been put on the defensive. The military has gained the whip hand over the Secretary of Defence. The last resort of the civilian authority is at the mercy of the soldiers."

100 "Unconditional Surrender," ibid., 4 October 1966, p. 968.
James Reston of the New York Times who had first expressed his misgivings about the American involvement in Vietnam in 1965 began to urge that the US should unilaterally stop bombing and seek to settle the Vietnam problem by political means. C.S. Sulzberger of the New York Times who, as late as in early 1967 supported the Administration's "firm" policy in Vietnam, began to change his tone as the war escalated. At the height of the escalation debate both within the Administration and in public, Sulzberger advocated that there should be a "pause" in bombing and efforts should be made to reach a political settlement. James Wechsler of the New York Post warned against the increasing dominance of the military in policy-making on Vietnam.

It is not certain if there was any tacit alliance between these columnists and the civilian elements in the Administration who were advocating a similar approach as the former in regard to Vietnam. But the campaign of these columnists against escalation might have helped the cause of McNamara and his supporters vis-a-vis the military.

As is usually the case, when major differences develop between powerful contending factions in agencies, an effort is made to reach initially the "attentive public" by both contenders. What begins as discreet floating of rumours soon escalates to


105 Ibid., 29 January 1967.

enlisting the services of friendly newspaper writers to support one's point of view and knock down that of the contender. As the battle warms up, both sides leak even secret and confidential materials for self-serving purposes. Very often, the faction which believes that it may lose the contest "leaks more profusely than the other." General MacArthur took recourse to such device more than once when his recommendations were rejected by Washington. The Navy also reportedly leaked many secret data to the press during the "admiral's revolt" in 1949. Similar leaks were made during the Thor-Jupiter controversy. In the present case, when the differences between civilian and military elements of the Pentagon became serious, the latter, as on similar previous occasions, sought recourse to mobilizing extra-Pentagon pressures in its favour. Hanson Baldwin's regular front-page reports in the New York Times advocating the points of view of the military vis-a-vis the civilians of the Pentagon seemed to have been inspired by the leaks made by the military. His charge that the military was running short of arms and weapons, his advocacy of the escalation of war and his opposition to a pause in bombing constituted the kind of support that the generals relished—and probably sought to inspire. Neil Sheehan and William Beecher who


was later appointed as the spokesman of the Defence Department seemed to take the side of the civilians as against the military. By "leaking" such inside information as the military's pressure to intensify the bombing of North Vietnam, they appeared to warn the civilian elements of the Pentagon and other actors both in the government and outside to counter this pressure. The civilians probably had as much interest in "inspiring" such sympathetic reporters as the military in its Baldwins and Alsops.

The continual screening of scenes of war, the toll of casualties, and the agony of the local people on the television, had perhaps a very significant cumulative effect. Optimistic statements by the Administration and its supporters came to have diminishing impact as the fighting continued. They probably evoked growing disquiet among an increasing circle of citizens. Even though a substantial number continued to support the Administration's course in Vietnam, the enthusiasm of the initial phase was greatly reduced. Perhaps it led to the undermining of the cause of the military actors who favoured continued escalation.

The Air Force, Navy, and Army have their respective service associations to articulate their interests. The Air Force Association, the Navy League and the Association of the United States Army exercise considerable pressure on behalf of the military vis-a-vis the civilian actors of the Pentagon. In the present case, they launched strong offensives against McNamara for having

110 Ibid., 3 July 1966.
"downgraded" and "muzzled" the military. The Journal of Armed Forces, which seeks to champion the cause of all the branches of the military, scored the Department of Defence of being increasingly "civilianized"—obviously at the cost of the military. It said, "Top Brass Civilians within the Defence Department have mushroomed like an atomic cloud during the tenure of Secretary Robert S. McNamara." This military journal also supported the military vis-a-vis the Secretary of Defence in relation to the question of ABM deployment. In a sharp rebuke to the Defence Secretary, the Air Force and Space Digest, which is the spokesman of the Air Force Association, reported Admiral H. Rickover having said, "Our society is threatened by any man who knows method but not meaning, technique but not principle." Adm. Rickover sniped at the man who tried to operate in a professional field in which he was unqualified, any man who depreciated wisdom, experience, and intuition. He further charged, "cost effectiveness has become the modern superstition. The Christian notion of the possibility of redemption is incomprehensible to the computer."

Dennis Joseph Donogue who has made a content analysis of the publications of the service associations from 1960 to 1969 observes, "The service associations as a group were critical of

112 Ibid., 13 May 1967, pp. 1 and 31.
the civilian personnel in the Department of Defence throughout the 1960s. He asserts that the combined editorial and article findings support such a conclusion. He further says, "Statistically, the service associations were as strongly critical of the civilians in the Pentagon in the first half of the decade as in the second half...."

The service associations carried on similar attacks against the Secretary of Defence with regard to Vietnam. This attack gradually increased in intensity as the civil-military confrontation within the Pentagon on Vietnam began to escalate. They scored the restrictions imposed by the Secretary on conducting the war. They tried to "sell" to the American public the military's version that the United States was winning the war in Vietnam and could bring the task to a successful conclusion if only the military was not hamstrung by various restrictions imposed by the civilian authorities. John B. Spore, the editor of Army, visited South Vietnam in the first quarter of 1966 and wrote, in two parts, his observations on the progress of war. He asserted that the enemy had suffered defeats unprecedented in its experience since the Americans were committed to action. William Beecher, the New York Times correspondent in South Vietnam, wrote in Army


of January 1967 that the American military officers in South Vietnam were bitterly critical of the restraints imposed on the conduct of military operations. In a symposium on "The Air War against North" organized by the Air Force Association's 21st anniversary convention, Major General Gilbert L. Meyers, who had retired from active duty, urged that restrictions on the air war against the North should be lifted. (Gen. Meyers was the Deputy Commander of the Seventh Air Force in Vietnam from July 1965 to August 1966.) He urged that in that case the American interdiction efforts would be more successful and the American forces would be less exposed to a combat environment. The Journal of the Armed Forces, in its editorial of 2 September 1967, bitterly accused McNamara of having imposed restrictions on the air war. The Secretary had stated that there were only 57 targets recommended by the JCS against which strikes had not yet been authorized. In a sharp criticism of this statement, the Journal editorially said, "What we do question is the number-game. Number of targets might be less important than six or a dozen of the fifty seven rejected targets." In an editorial, the following week, the Journal again attacked the Secretary for having allegedly


tried to misguide the Congress with regard to the bombing of the North. It added:

If the Secretary of Defense has learned nothing else about Congressional relations during his almost seven years in office, he should have learned that it is next to impossible to present 'selected' information to a House or Senate Committee. All of the facts eventually came to the surface, and the witness whose testimony is overstated invariably ends up looking rather silly, if not downright dishonest.... (119)

One of the most vehement attacks against McNamara was made by C. W. Borklund, the editor of Armed Forces Management. He vigorously supported the JCS' criticism of the Secretary regarding the restrictions on the air war against North Vietnam. He charged that the general failure of the Johnson Administration to heed more carefully the advice of military experts had led and might continue to lead to many of the "security aches and pains."

Apart from the service associations, some other associations having connection with the military actively campaigned on behalf of the military vis-a-vis the civilian elements of the Pentagon. The most important of them was the American Legion which extended strong support to the continuing American policy of escalation in Vietnam. Its invitation to President Johnson and Secretary Rusk to address its annual convention of 1966


indicated its position on Vietnam. The contingent of 8,500 American Legionnaires present at the convention applauded the President for his vows of firmness. More thunderous was the applause when their national commander, L. Eldon James, hailed Johnson as a "fighting" American and thanked him for his military intervention in both Vietnam and the Dominican Republic. (In 1965, President Johnson sent the American marines to Santo Domingo in order to prevent a "Communist" government from taking office there.) More significant was the Legion's invitation to Richard M. Nixon as one of the guest speakers at the convention. Nixon at that time was not in any important political position. The ex-Vice President who lost the presidency by a very small margin in 1960 and who had the mortification of being defeated in California's gubernatorial race in 1962, was attempting a comeback in national politics. Since 1965 Nixon began to talk more and more on Vietnam. He emerged to be one of the strongest critics of the US policy, which, in his opinion, was too "soft" to contend with Communists. Addressing the Legion's national convention, he warned that if Vietnam fell, the Pacific would be transformed into a Red Ocean and the road would be open to a third world war. He urged that the Johnson Administration should cut off by 95 per cent North Vietnam's oil and other supplies which came by sea. He also advocated that the strength of American ground troops in South Vietnam should be increased by 25 per

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It may be mentioned that the military actors were, at that time, advocating similar measures.

The pro-escalation stance of the American Legion, expressed in the national convention of 1966, was repeated the next year. The personalities invited to address the national convention of 1967 were known to be ardent supporters of an escalation policy. General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., Commandant of the Marine Corps, urged the Legionnaires to take to the people the message that the Vietnam war was the nation's "most pressing problem." Senator John Stennis, the Chairman of the Defence Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee, and known to be a great friend of the military, said, "Never before as a nation have we stopped in the middle of a war to debate how we got there, or why. We should not do so now." Gerald Ford of Michigan, the Republican leader in the House and a member of the House Defence Appropriations Subcommittee, was more direct in his attacks on the civilian elements of the Pentagon. He charged that McNamara was "a disciple of defeat." He further charged that nearly half of the significant military targets of North Vietnam had not yet been authorized.

The Legion itself in a series of resolutions passed in the annual convention, pressed for the intensified bombing of North

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122 Ibid., 1 September 1966.
123 Ibid., 31 August 1967.
124 Ibid.
Vietnam. It demanded the removal of the restrictions imposed by the civilian actors upon the attacks against the strategic targets in North Vietnam. It also advocated that the port of Haiphong should be closed "by whatever military means are considered most feasible." These demands touched upon the main point of contention between the civilian and military elements of the Pentagon which was going on at that time.

The Association of Jewish War Veterans also extended consistent support to the military as against the civilian actors on Vietnam. Their motivation mainly seemed to be the linkage between the American policy in Israel and the same in relation to Vietnam. Israel went to war with Arabs in 1967 for the third time in her history and that year was the peak period of civil-military confrontation on Vietnam. Many Jews--veterans in particular--in their efforts to insure American support for Israel against the Arabs, felt impelled to support the policy of escalation in Vietnam.

All during this period, the Department as well as the Administration could count on a very substantial volume of support from the leadership of the American Federation of Labour, Congress of Industrial Organization (AFL-CIO). Its president, George Meany, was a staunch anti-Communist and consistently lent powerful support to the Administration's course. The International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the largest union outside the fold of AFL-CIO, was also a vigorous supporter of the American military

125 Ibid., 1 September 1967.
effort. The AFL-CIO adopted a resolution on 24 August 1966 which commended President Johnson for "demonstrating to the world that our country is neither irresolute politically nor weak militarily while it is ever ready to negotiate the war's end." It also took a decision to boycott the ships which would be having trade with North Vietnam.

While some individual leaders in the AFL-CIO hierarchy might have had certain reservations, no challenge to the Meany-line materialized during the period. Leaders of some Locals in a few trade unions were associated with anti-war elements, but they were unwilling to push their efforts beyond a certain point. It is generally believed that unlike among intellectuals and white-collar elements, support for the Administration remained substantially higher among blue-collar workers. Vociferous support for the war and criticism of anti-war groups emanated from those elements of workers who came to be characterized as hard-hats.

As the war debate intensified, other segments of the American public got themselves aligned on rival sides. Many teachers and students protested against the escalation of the war. Sit-ins were organized in several campuses and protest marches were held in big cities. Draft cards were burnt, ROTC centres in several university campuses were attacked and there was angry

126 Ibid., 25 August 1966.
127 Ibid., 23 February 1966.
demonstration by anti-war protestors before the Pentagon building. Never before in American history were seen thousands of students marching in big cities in protest against American involvement in a war. Some of the intellectuals, apart from addressing anti-war gatherings, expressed their views in writings. In this connection one may cite the articles of Professors John Kenneth Galbraith, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Hans J. Morgenthau, and Henry Commager. All four of them were noted for their liberal views and the first two of them had served the Kennedy Administration. Some other Kennedy officials like Roger Hilsman and Richard Goodwin also took an active role in the anti-war movement.

The number of teachers and students who supported the escalation policy was very small in comparison to others who opposed it. Young Americans for Freedom was one of the few student organizations which extended support to the ongoing policy in Vietnam. The Administration, however, got support from other ad hoc groups which were organized to countervail the anti-war pressures. One of them was the Free Society Association for Stronger Action whose honorary chairman was Sen. Barry Goldwater. On 5 April 1967, it adopted a resolution urging the Administration to take stronger action in Vietnam. The other important group that was formed with a view to supporting the policy of escalation was the Citizens Committee for Peace with Freedom on Vietnam. Two ex-Presidents—Harry Truman and General Eisenhower, the only other

28 Ibid., 6 April 1967.
surviving "five star" general and Second World War "hero" Omar Bradley, and an important ex-Senator, Paul H. Douglas (Dem., Illinois) were some of its original members. On 25 October 1967, the committee gave strong endorsement to the Administration's policy of escalation. Moreover, Eisenhower and Bradley favoured the military's demand for "hot pursuit" into North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The civilian elements of the Pentagon were opposed to the demand.

The preceding discussion suggests that in the initial phase of the American military involvement in Vietnam, the civilian and military components of the Defence Department were able to carry along with them the media, service associations, veteran organizations and other interest groups. The majority of the American people supported the main American military objectives in Vietnam throughout the period under study, even during the period when the existence of conflict between the civilian and military elements of the Defence Department came to be known. Towards the end, there was some erosion in this support, but apart from the anti-war student demonstrators, there was no menacing scourge of sentiment among the public against the Defence Department or the Administration's course in Vietnam. The civilian and military actors of the Pentagon sought, when differences on issues occurred between them, to bring to their respective

129 Ibid., 26 October 1967.
130 Ibid., 29 November 1967.
support not only other federal actors and Congressional members, but other variables like the media, service associations, veteran organizations, and other articulate segments of the American public. "Leaks" were occasionally made by both sides to push forth their respective points of view. But neither side chose to push such tactics to a point that might have endangered the basic tasks to which both were dedicated. The game was played with some broad implicit understandings on the part of both players about the need to avoid any hurt to American objectives, to uphold the prestige and integrity of the military establishment and to maintain civilian control of the military.