The Fog of Intervention: Uncertainty, Postwar Planning, and Post-Intervention Strategy

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Abstract

What effect does uncertainty over the capacity of local political institutions in a foreign territory have on armed intervention outcomes and armed intervention strategy? While traditional theories of uncertainty and conflict tend to focus on uncertainty over capabilities, resolve, or other factors, I argue that uncertainty over local institutions and local contexts is crucial to understanding many seemingly puzzling decisions over armed intervention. In this paper, I theorize about the conditions through which uncertainty over local institutions and local contexts can impact armed intervention decisions and outcomes, specifically highlighting how it helps explain traditional theories of poor postwar planning and how interveners can often end up in lengthy institution-building missions they did not intend to engage in prior to the initial intervention. Using the case of the American occupation of the Dominican Republic, this paper highlights the inherent problems of planning for prospective armed intervention, and re-evaluates the capacity to accurately predict the likely strategy required prior to a military arriving in a foreign territory.

Introduction

Prior to the launching of the invasion of Iraq, American military planners recognized that the post-Saddam period would require a transition to a new regime, but the American planners did not know the exact strategy necessary to achieve their political goals.[1] While American planners did invest modest resources into thinking about the broad contours of a postwar Iraq, which included parallel planning processes occurring in the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the State Department, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the National Security Council (NSC), among other agencies,[2] detailed and well-defined plans for the post-invasion period did not emerge. As the invasion was launched, neither the invasion force nor the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance for Iraq (ORHA) had a firm grasp of exactly what plans would be implemented in the immediate aftermath of a successful invasion. Instead the coalition forces were left waiting for the military mission to conclude before determining the appropriate strategy for the post-invasion period.[3] As Lieutenant General William Wallace apocryphally radioed back to his command after securing downtown Baghdad: "Okay, Bubba, we're here. Now what?"[4] What plans did exist optimistically assumed that the United States would be welcomed as liberators, and the Iraqi military would provide security and stability in the postwar environment.[5]

However, after capturing Baghdad and proclaiming that the mission was accomplished, American officials recognized that they faced a major problem. The tentative plans built by OSD and CENTCOM called for a light post-invasion footprint that would keep the

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1. Even today, there remains an unsettled debate over the goals of the Iraq War, whether it was for countering perceived threat of WMDs, a Wilsonian desire to promote democracy, or whether it was performative to demonstrate the strength of American power. For more on this debate see: Alexandre Debs and Nuno P. Monteiro, "Known Unknowns: Power Shifts, Uncertainty, and War," *International Organization* 68, no. 01 (2014): 1–31; Robert Jervis, *Why Intelligence Fails: Lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Brian C. Schmidt and Michael C. Williams, "The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War: Neoconservatives versus Realists," *Security Studies* 17, no. 2 (2008): 191–220; Ahsan I. Butt, "Why did the United States Invade Iraq in 2003?," *Security Studies*, 2018, 1–36.

2. Nora Bensahel et al., *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008), 31-33.

3. In fact, CENTCOM only finalized OPLAN IRAQI RECONSTRUCTION in April 2003, which was after the complete takeover of Baghdad and the looting of the city had already begun. ibid., 10.

4. Colonel Joel D. Rayburn and Colonel Frank K. Sobchak, eds., *The US Army in the Iraq War, Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, United States Army War College Press, 2019), 111.

5. "Planning was based on a set of optimistic assumptions that was never seriously challenged: that the military campaign would have a decisive end and would produce a stable security environment; that U.S. forces would be greeted as liberators; that Iraq's government ministries would remain intact and continue to administer the country; and that local forces, particularly the police and the regular army, would be capable of providing law and order." Bensahel et al., *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq*, xxvii.

majority of institutions and military in place to help transition to a more favorable leader.[6] American planners for the foreign rule mission had "assumed that the most senior levels of ministry leadership – the minister and a few senior Ba'athists – could be replaced without substantially undermining the work of the ministries. The large civil service staffs in the ministries would keep them running under new leadership. As Condoleezza Rice expressed the concept, 'we would defeat the army, but the institutions would hold'."[7] However, the conditions that the initial planners assumed would exist in the broader Iraqi bureaucracy did not materialize. Rather, prior to the invasion "little understanding was shown about the nature of the Iraqi state, and whether its administrative mechanisms would be able or reliable enough to manage the demands of a post-conflict situation."[8] The pre-intervention discussions of strategy did not foresee the local landscape that was present in Iraq after the fall of Saddam. As Undersecretary of Defense Feith claimed, "the changing situation on the ground led us to a different analytical conclusion than what we had come to in March."[9] In order to achieve their political goals, the U.S. needed to build new, stronger institutions, a mission that the American foreign rule mission did not initially intend.[10]

The uncertainty over what the local institutional context would look like after the invasion helps explain the seemingly poor postwar planning by Bush administration officials.[11] It created a set of assumptions that drove the planning in some parts of the American defense bureaucracy whereby the Defense Department argued that it would be most prudent to engage in a quick turnover to Iraqi opposition parties and leave the country quickly after invasion. This meant maintaining the current bureaucratic landscape of the Iraqi state while transitioning to a new regime. While this was the default position in many agencies tasked with planning, in the end, "disagreements about the postwar plan remained unresolved right up to the invasion...[which] arose from differing assessments of prewar conditions in Iraq and what the consequences of deposing Saddam would be."[12] As the recent Army War College

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6. Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Vintage, 2006), 176-178.

7. James Dobbins et al., *Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), 107-108.

8. Ali A Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 96-97.

9. Dobbins et al., *Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority*, 57.

10. It was calculated in 2008 that the Iraq conflict would cost over three trillion dollars in economic impact on the United States. This includes future economic obligations for veterans' medical care. Linda J. Bilmes and Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008).

11. As Condolezza Rice stated it, "We do not know what we'll find on the ground once the regime is gone."Condoleezza Rice, *Dr. Condoleezza Rice Discusses Iraq Reconstruction*, White House Press Release, April 4. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/04/20030404-12.html, 2003.

12. Stuart W. Bowen, *Hard lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience* (Washington, DC: Special Inspec-

history of the war stated it bluntly: "In retrospect, the most significant aspect of the Iraq invasion planning was not the shortage of troops or the lack of Phase IV planning, but rather the gaping holes in what the U.S. military knew about Iraq. This ignorance included Iraqi politics, society, and government—gaps that led the United States to make some deeply flawed assumptions about how the war was likely to unfold."[13]

The faulty postwar planning process and the late emerging strategic choices in the Iraq War leads to some crucial questions: Why do foreign rulers and their militaries not invest more in postwar planning, so as to understand the challenges that local environments might provide? Simple resistance to postwar planning is not a satisfying answer, as there is good empirical evidence that carrying out these institution-building missions can have vast negative impacts over a long period.[14] The reticence or inability of major powers to engage in adequate postwar planning and agree on a defined postwar strategy remains a puzzling recurrence. While many have identified the trend of militaries being unwilling to think about the political context of the postwar phase of military operations, it remains a puzzle as to why this is still the case even after scholars, policymakers, and even the military itself has identified this as a problem.[15] Even with the clear importance of the postwar period for achieving the intervener's political goals, "military and political leaders have consistently failed to devote appropriate attention and resources for the political requirements of" the post-intervention mission.[16]

If potentially billions of dollars or major military casualties are at stake, it seems logical that militaries should prioritize planning for the postwar period. And yet we have evidence in many cases that planning for the postwar or post-intervention period is largely left until after troops have arrived on the ground.[17] However, if more emphasis on planning for

tor General, Iraq Reconstruction, 2009), 4.

13. Rayburn and Sobchak, *The US Army in the Iraq War, Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, 43.

14. Goran Peic and Dan Reiter, "Foreign-Imposed Regime Change, State Power and Civil War Onset, 1920-2004," *British Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 3 (2011): 453–475; Alexander B Downes and Lindsey A O'Rourke, "You Can't Always Get What You Want: Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Seldom Improves Interstate Relations," *International Security* 41, no. 2 (2016): 43–89; David A Lake, *The Statebuilder's Dilemma: On the Limits of Foreign Intervention* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

15. James Jay Carafano, *Waltzing into the Cold War: The Struggle for Occupied Austria* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 10-22; William Flavin, "Planning for Conflict Termination and Post-Conflict Success," *Parameters* 33, no. 3 (2003): 95–112; Nadia Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance: Consolidating Combat Success Into Political Victory* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017); Isaiah Wilson III, *Thinking Beyond War: Civil-Military Relations and Why America Fails to Win the Peace* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

16. Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance: Consolidating Combat Success Into Political Victory*, 2.

17. A good example of lack of planning being identified as a problem, but then not subsequently fixed, can been seen in the analysis of the American intervention in Panama. Richard H. Shultz Jr, "The Post-Conflict Use of Military Forces: Lessons from Panama, 1989–91," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 16, no. 2 (1993): 145–172.

postwar periods was all that was necessary to achieve success in these foreign rule missions, it would be more readily instituted and we should see more investment in planning prior to any armed intervention. Given the frequent critiques of postwar statebuilding missions for their poor planning, there must be an explanation for why the reticence to plan continues unabated even when identified as a problem. It also remains puzzling as to why if prospective interveners want to refrain from engaging in costly institution building missions, how the end up using these strategies anyways. However, if the capacity of local institutions is largely unknown prior to intervention, uncertainty about the strength of local institutions can lead to optimistic assumptions and leads organizations to not prioritize planning for postwar periods, relegating strategic decisions until after armed intervention. Only after the military has landed can they assess the local institutional context and develop a final strategy for how to achieve their political goals and realize the strategy and true cost needed to meet their needs.

In this article, I propose that the presence of uncertainty over local institutions can help explain both the regular recurrence of a lack of postwar planning and seemingly sub-optimal decision making to engage in institution-building missions. Rather than certain leaders or certain military organizations performing sub-optimally, I contend that the fundamental uncertainty that exists over assessing local contexts creates the conditions that can explain the emergence of the eventual institution-building mission and the lack of planning for it. While certain leaders and militaries might approach this uncertainty in different ways, when certain policymakers and militaries decided upon engaging in armed intervention, the lack of planning can be explained as a response to the uncertainty that does exist. In the rest of this paper, I first discuss the literature on uncertainty and conflict and the literature on poor postwar planning to highlight how uncertainty over local contexts is missing from both. Next, I lay out the process through which uncertainty over local context contributes both to poor postwar planning and seemingly poor post-intervention strategy decisions. Finally, I use the least-likely case of the American occupation the Dominican Republic to highlight how uncertainty can have insidious effect of contributing to poor planning processes and making institution-building strategies emerge when it was not the original intention.

Uncertainty, Armed Conflict, and Postwar Planning

Uncertainty has been shown to be a crucial variable in explaining a variety of conflict outcomes, and helps explain how wars emerge and how they end. Chiefly, uncertainty over military capabilities, national resolve, intentions, the offense-defense balance, the will to fight, and other factors have been argued to contribute to sub-optimal international conflict

outcomes. In the bargaining theory of war literature, uncertainty can inhibit the ability to make a prewar bargain that both states could credibly commit to, and thus uncertainty removes the ability to avoid war through a diplomatic bargain. In the canonical formulation, Fearon argues that uncertainty due to private information can lead to an increased probability of war occurrence through states having incentives to misrepresent their relative strength and resolve.[18] Uncertainty, then, has the unintentional effect of making war more likely to occur even when states are acting rationally.[19] In other formulations, uncertainty over who is more powerful can only be resolved on the battlefield. Once it is revealed and uncertainty is ameliorated, bargaining for a solution more likely.[20]

Beyond questions about the distribution of capabilities, uncertainty over other aspects of a state have also been shown to impact security competition and other conflict outcomes. First, uncertainty over intentions can create conditions where states are locked in to engage in security competition, leading to arms races and spirals.[21] Uncertainty about military investment decisions and their role as signals about future intentions have also been shown to drive war decisions and preventative war.[22] Uncertainty over intentions has been shown to have contributed to the inability to create a bargain prior to the 2003 Iraq war, as uncertainty over future intentions made it difficult for Saddam Hussein to make a credible commitment in Iraq.[23] Some argue that only once actions are taken are intentions fully revealed.[24] Similarly, uncertainty over national resolve or the willingness to fight can also create the optimistic

18. James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no. 03 (1995): 379–414. See also: Adam Meirowitz and Anne E. Sartori, "Strategic Uncertainty as a Cause of War," *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 3, no. 4 (2008): 327–352; Robert Powell, "Bargaining Theory and International Conflict," *Annual Review of Political Science* 5, no. 1 (2002): 1–30; William Reed, "Information, Power, and War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 4 (2003): 633–641; Branislav L. Slantchev and Ahmer Tarar, "Mutual Optimism as a Rationalist Explanation of War," *American Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 1 (2011): 135–148; Erik Gartzke, "War is in the Error Term," *International Organization* 53, no. 3 (1999): 567–587; Philip Arena and Scott Wolford, "Arms, Intelligence, and War," *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (2012): 351–365; Barbara F. Walter, "Bargaining Failures and Civil War," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (2009): 243–261.

19. Kirshner interestingly points out that simply revealing more information is not a solution to problems created by uncertainty identified by the bargaining theory of war literature, as even to this day historians cannot agree on what caused the quick defeat of France in World War II. Jonathan Kirshner, "The Economic Sins of Modern IR theory and the Classical Realist Alternative," *World Politics* 67, no. 1 (2015): 155–183; Jonathan Kirshner, "Rationalist Explanations for War?," *Security Studies* 10, no. 1 (2000): 143–150.

20. Geoffrey Blainey, *Causes of War* (New York: Simon / Schuster, 1988); R. Harrison Wagner, "Bargaining and War," *American Journal of Political Science* 44, no. 3 (2000): 469–484.

21. Sebastian Rosato, "The Inscrutable Intentions of Great Powers," *International Security* 39, no. 3 (2015): 48–88.

22. Debs and Monteiro, "Known Unknowns: Power Shifts, Uncertainty, and War."

23. David A. Lake, "Two Cheers for Bargaining Theory: Assessing Rationalist Explanations of the Iraq War," *International Security* 35, no. 3 (2010): 7–52.

24. Charles L. Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

assumptions which serve as necessary condition for international conflict.[25] This goes beyond the initial phase of the war as uncertainty over each side's relative ability to bear the costs of war can contribute to war duration even after revealing the relative capabilities of each side.[26] In offense-defense theory, some have argued that uncertainty over the offense-defense balance can contribute to offensive military doctrines that favor war when defense should dominate.[27] Relating to armed intervention, Sullivan has shown that uncertainty over the cost to achieve political objectives can contribute to intervention decisions.[28] She illustrates how intervening states can spend more blood and treasure than they ever intended because the uncertainty at the outset over the cost of their goals can lead to faulty intervention decisions. Others have shown that risk acceptant and risk adverse leaders differ in how they approach uncertainty over prospective armed intervention, and how the uncertainty is communicated and internalized matters for intervention decisions.[29]

It is important here to simply illustrate that uncertainty over both tangible and intangible aspects of states and their militaries have been shown to serve crucial roles in creating sub-optimal conflict outcomes. The key throughout the entire gamut of this literature is that it is the uncertainty itself that allows for both optimistic assumptions and beliefs, even those that do not hold up to *post hoc* scrutiny. One form of uncertainty that has not received much attention in this literature however is uncertainty over local institutional contexts. While Sullivan does implicitly think about local conditions in her discussion about how uncertainty over costs to achieve objections can lead to bad intervention outcomes, there has been scant few systematic looks directly at how uncertainty over local institutional strength can lead to seemingly irrational intervention outcomes, including poor postwar planning and *ex ante* inefficient strategies. This is a problem, as Lake admits, because "the costs of postwar peace – and uncertainty over those costs – need to be integrated into any theory of war."[30]

However if there are other explanations that can account for poor postwar planning and relegation of strategic choices, then its not clear if focusing on uncertainty over local institutions provides any meaningful explanatory power. Currently. there are two main schools of thought that some argue explains the regular recurrence of poor planning for postwar

25. Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 90-91; Joshua D. Kertzer, *Resolve in International Politics*, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 148-150.

26. Zachary C. Shirkey, "Uncertainty and war duration," *International Studies Review* 18, no. 2 (2016): 244–267.

27. Stephen Van Evera, "Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War," *International Security* 22, no. 4 (1998): 5–43.

28. Patricia L. Sullivan, "At What Price Victory? The Effects of Uncertainty on Military Intervention Duration and Outcome," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 1 (2008): 49–66.

29. Yaacov YI Vertzberger, *Risk taking and decision making: Foreign military intervention decisions* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1998).

30. Lake, "Two Cheers for Bargaining Theory: Assessing Rationalist Explanations of the Iraq War," 40.

periods: psychological explanations and organizational explanations. First, psychological explanations tend to focus on the different mindsets or psychological dispositions that lead to a relegation of planning for the postwar period. These arguments all generally focus on leaders not planning because they assume that it will be quick and easy to solve the postwar puzzle. First, Aaron Rapport argues that 'construal level theory' (CLT) leads leaders who are goal-oriented to focus more on the goals themselves rather than planning on how to achieve those goals.[31] As he states "military operations that policymakers believe will take place in the more distant future will be evaluated largely on the desirability of the goals they are meant to achieve." Foreign rulers focused on goals and ends fail to consider the means that it will take to achieve their goals. As goal "desirability becomes more salient, decision makers are prone to underestimate the costs and risks of future actions."[32] Ironically, it is the leaders who are not focused on the goals who are more likely to plan because they feel the goals are less likely to be achieved.[33]

Additionally, psychological biases towards overconfidence can lead poor postwar planning.[34] Dominic Johnson argues that evolutionary predilections towards positive illusions creates psychological biases towards overconfidence that allows for leaders to start armed interventions assuming they will win quickly. This makes them unwilling to engage in lengthy postwar planning as they have overconfidence in the ability to achieve their goals.[35] Similarly, Johnson and Tierney also have argued that leaders who have made the decision to 'cross the Rubicon' and go to war become optimistic in their assessments and do not plan for the postwar period as a means to deal with difficult psychological emotions that come with the decision to launch an armed intervention.[36] Politicians, given their desire to achieve political goals, often also ignore the uncertainty that intelligence agencies report, and become overconfident in their convictions on how certain military actions will play out. There is a perverse tendency for leaders who most easily recognize uncertainty also to have overconfidence in

31. Aaron Rapport, *Waging War, Planning Peace: US Noncombat Operations and Major Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

32. Ibid., 2.

33. Similarly, Kupchan highlights how policymakers consistently have optimistic assumptions about how simple they will find the postwar operating environment and make it easy to achieve their goals after a quick military strike. Charles Kupchan, "Getting in: The Initial Stage of Military Intervention," in *Foreign Military Intervention: The Dynamics of Protracted Conflict*, ed. Ariel Levite, Bruce W. Jentleson, Larry Berman, et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 241–206.

34. Others have argued that false optimism in military success, or overconfidence, through uncertainty over what the the battlefield results will be promotes the likelihood that a military power will start an international conflict. See Blainey, *Causes of War*, 35; Van Evera, "Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War," 14-34.

35. Dominic D.P. Johnson, *Overconfidence and War: The Havoc and Glory of Positive Illusions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

36. Dominic D.P. Johnson and Dominic Tierney, "The Rubicon Theory of War: How the Path to Conflict Reaches the Point of No Return," *International Security* 36, no. 1 (2011): 7–40.

their ability to ameliorate uncertainty. This can lead to leaders having overconfidence in their ability to manage all aspects of an armed intervention.[37] This prevents policymakers from fully ascertaining the uncertainty they are facing and they "typically do not believe they are making errors."[38]

Finally, Mitzen and Schweller highlight that due to ontological concerns, leaders often have misplaced certainty because they cannot accept that there are 'unknown unknowns' and thus become supremely confident in their ability to assess how the postwar process will go rather than planning for the mission.[39] As they say, "with misplaced certainty a decision maker places a bet without really acknowledging is is only a bet. The evidence is indeterminate," but the decision maker continues to assume they have the correct answer.[40] Intervention decisions then often occur in periods when there are problems with overconfidence and misplaced certainty in a intervener's ability to achieve the policy goals they seek. Together this leads to a possible problem of what others have deemed imperial hubris, where foreign rulers become overconfident in their ability to achieve their political goals in far away territories without real analysis of what the actual mission might portend.[41]

The second common explanation of poor postwar planning is organizational preferences and biases. Organizational preferences, some argue, can push the military to focus on the initial intervention phase, due to an organizational bias in militaries against post-conflict planning. They contend that military organizations prefer to focus on the initial planning for the armed intervention mission because there they can have more control on the initial outcome. This logic holds that militaries spend resources on preparing for the initial conflict period because they both have more control and do not want to devote resources that could be used to more successfully carry out the initial intervention.[42] For instance, in the case of Vietnam, Krepinevich has argued that the Army Concept, or how the army thinks wars ought to be fought, lead to the organization focusing on combat tasks rather than thinking

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37. For instance, Porter highlights how often those in national security bureaucracies highlight the problem of uncertainty but then have supreme confidence in their own ability to forecast and anticipate all potential threats. Patrick Porter, "Taking uncertainty seriously: Classical realism and national security," *European Journal of International Security* 1, no. 2 (2016): 239–260.

38. Robert Schub, "Are You Certain? Leaders, Overprecision, and War" (Working Paper. Available at https://robertschub.com/research, 2015), 13.

39. Jennifer Mitzen and Randall L Schweller, "Knowing the Unknown Unknowns: Misplaced Certainty and the Onset of War," *Security Studies* 20, no. 1 (2011): 29.

40. Ibid., 21.

41. Stefano Recchia, "Restraining Imperial Hubris: The Ethical Bases of Realist International Relations Theory," *Constellations* 14, no. 4 (2007): 531–556.

42. This is similar to how some have argued that the American way of war can hamper organizational ability to create new doctrine for new conflict tasks. Russell Frank Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1973); Wilson III, *Thinking Beyond War: Civil-Military Relations and Why America Fails to Win the Peace*.

of how to win the post-conflict peace.[43]

Within the military organization itself, Colin Jackson has shown in the context of counterinsurgency that the 'military operational code' and the organizational interests of military leaders push them to reject emphasizing postwar planning because it would require them to assume tasks and missions they see and against their own interests and against the promotion incentives in their profession.[44] Those tasked with thinking about the postwar phase are often relegated to lower importance, and often not involved in the initial decision-making. This manifests itself in military organizations, where civil affairs divisions and post-conflict operation planning is treated as a tertiary interest at best, and not priorities for promotion boards.[45] Schadlow has illustrated this trend of not focusing on civil affairs tasks in the US military since its first use in the Mexican-American war, and has continued in the organization to this day.[46] The organizational preference in militaries is to focus on defined conflict tasks, and invest their resources on winning the conflict rather than on determining strategy for imposing foreign rule in the postwar phase.[47] This leaves few resources for planning and training for the post-intervention period and also pushes military leaders to not focus on civil affairs tasks that might help plan for these missions.

Some further argue that organizational preferences in the broader foreign policy bureaucracy can also lead to poor postwar planning. Brooks contends that when civilian leaders do not show interest in postwar planning, then military leaders will only focus on initial combat tasks..[48] In a different vein, Schub argues that when organizations that typically pay attention to political matters are not included in the decision-making process, concerns over postwar planning are relegated.[49] He argues that since militaries are not organizationally interested in examining political institutions, they do not plan for the postwar political solution. When the State Department is included in the decision process, then their focus

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43. Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr, *The Army and Vietnam* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 4-5.

44. Colin Francis Jackson, "Defeat in Victory: Organizational Learning Dysfunction in Counterinsurgency" (Ph.D. dissertation., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2008).

45. As Thompson says regarding the U.S. Army and its views toward planning for postwar periods: "Train for war adapt for peace, with just enough and just in time!" Lieutenant Colonel Burt K. Thompson, ""Nation Building: A Bad Idea Who's Time Has Come?"," in *A Nation at War in an Era of Strategic Change*, ed. Williamson Murray (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2004), 264. See also Wilson III, *Thinking Beyond War: Civil-Military Relations and Why America Fails to Win the Peace*.

46. Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance: Consolidating Combat Success Into Political Victory*.

47. Maj. Gen. John Hilldring summed up this view up best in 1943 when in writing to Secretary of State Dean Acheson complaining about being asked to prepare for civil affairs tasks in Europe. He stated "the Army is not a welfare organization. It is a military machine whose mission is to defeat the enemy on the field of battle." Carafano, *Waltzing into the Cold War: The Struggle for Occupied Austria*, 12.

48. Risa Brooks, *Shaping Strategy: The Civil-Military Politics of Strategic Assessment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

49. Schub, "Are You Certain? Leaders, Overprecision, and War."

on assessing domestic political conditions makes planning for postwar periods more likely to occur. Yahri-Milo similarly argues that organizational differences between intelligence agencies and politicians can also explain poor assessment and interest in postwar planning.[50] She argues that political leaders pay attention to vivid signals of behavior that fit with their own pre-existing world views, whereas intelligence organizations often focus on more material factors and capabilities. This implies that different institutions inside the foreign ruler will look for different signals, and may disagree about how to plan for postwar periods. While these studies do not discuss the how assessment directly affects postwar planning, the same logics that apply to planning and assessing for war should also carry over to postwar planning failures.

Both the psychological and organizational explanations of poor postwar planning seek to explain the regular recurrence of poor postwar planning or variation in postwar planning performance through a non-rationalist lens that drives these poor policy outcomes. However, when examining these arguments more closely, their theoretical stories all seem to crucially omit the importance uncertainty over the postwar institutional context plays. It is not that leaders are purposely omitting planning for postwar periods when there is consistent information available. Rather, I contend, the assumptions regarding the postwar period originate from the fundamental uncertainty over local institutional contexts that drives these poor choices. It is unsatisfying to think that a string of psychological biases continually omit sound planning. It is also unsatisfying to think that military organizations simply decide that they are just unwilling to spend resources on planning if they knew that simple allocations would improve their organization's performance. Given the recurrence of postwar governance tasks since 1848, there must be a more satisfying answer as to why the US military continues to resist these tasks beyond continued non-learning by an organization. I contend rather that leaders, organizations, and institutions all face fundamental uncertainty over local institutions and this precludes the assessments required for sound postwar plans. This fundamental uncertainty over postwar context serves as a pre-condition for the psychological and organization explanations of poor postwar planning to take hold, as local conditions drive the strategy required and cannot be assessed until after intervention occurs. Rather than these theories being competing hypotheses, I argue that they all can operate to contribute to poor postwar planning due to uncertainty over local conditions. Once integrating the uncertainty into their theoretical stories, they complement each other to make poor postwar planning over-determined. In the next section, I articulate the link between uncertainty and postwar planning and broader post-intervention strategy in more detail.

50. Keren Yarhi-Milo, *Knowing the Adversary: Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

Uncertainty, the Fog of Intervention, and Strategy Formation

While uncertainty about strength, intentions, arming, goals, military capabilities, resolve, are all crucially important to explain how rational states can end up in sub-optimal conflict outcomes, there is one other aspect of uncertainty that has often gone unconsidered in the context of armed intervention. Uncertainty over local contexts, namely uncertainty over both the local institutional strength present in the territory and the institutional capacity for armed resistance, are important when thinking about armed intervention and the post-intervention strategy. I contend in the rest of this article that uncertainty over local institutional strength and its role in prospective armed resistance against the intervening state can impact postwar planning processes. Rather than organizational and psychological deficits inhibiting sound decision-making, I contend that the uncertainty present make knowing the true state of the postwar institutional landscape impossible, allowing for these biases to play a role, and relegates strategic decision-making to after the proverbial boots arrive on the ground.

Uncertainty over the true capacity of local institutions prior to armed intervention also helps to explain how interveners can end up in institution-building missions against their original intentions. A fog of intervention over the strength of local institutions often prevents the intervener from defining strategy for the post-intervention period. Only after the intervener's military arrives in the local territory does the military begin to assess the strength of the local institutions, and then that knowledge is used select a post-intervention strategy. Prior to intervention, the foreign ruler might have a preferred strategy that he or she would like to utilize in the territory, but only once the fog of intervention has been lifted can they truly assess what strategy is required. In the remainder of this section, I define the concept of uncertainty, make a claim as to why uncertainty over local institutions and post-intervention contexts exists, and illustrate why uncertainty hampers post-intervention strategy formation.

Uncertainty and the Lack of Postwar Planning

Interveners face fundamental uncertainty over how capable they will find local institutions after armed intervention. Fundamental uncertainty is the inability to know with any degree of certainty what the true nature of local conditions will be after interventions. With fundamental uncertainty, there is no ability to obtain perfect information, and even if information

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flows improve, it still faces subjective interpretation that leads to problems of assessment.[51] Interveners and their militaries respond to this fundamental uncertainty in different ways that hamper postwar planning, and relegates any definite decision-making over strategy until after the military has arrived in the local territory. While some planning may still occur, the choice of strategy to be implemented is relegated to after landing in the territory.

When discussing local institutional contexts, I am referring to fundamental uncertainty over how capable local institutes are and the capacity for local resistance to the goals of the intervener. This is distinct from knowledge over the local political system, the formal rules of the political game, and current holders of political power in the local territory. Rather, this refers to the local institutional strength of the territory, or what Mann deems infrastructural power.[52] It is knowledge of whether institutional bureaucracies exist that are strong enough to carry out the goals of the prospective intervener. Further, it is both the current strength of these institutions and how these institutions will respond to armed intervention and whether any latent strength will be destroyed. While diplomatic and intelligence service officials can be tasked with understanding the local politics of a prospective territory facing armed intervention, it is fundamentally uncertain how strong and capable those institutions will be to carry out the goals of the intervention *ex ante*. Additionally, it is uncertainty over local institutional contexts makes it difficult to truly know the resistance capacity of a local territory and how the organizational ties that exist in current institutions can transfer to prospective resistance organizations. What is important to note here is that uncertainty over local conditions means that interveners do not have sound information on how capable local institutions are and how likely current existing institutional capacity might transfer into resistance organizations.[53]

Origins of Uncertainty

It is fundamentally impossible to assess from afar how local institutions will look after armed intervention occurs. This uncertainty manifests in two distinct ways. First, there

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51. Uncertainty occurs, as Keynes claims, when something is unknowable rather than something being able to be known with a certain probability. John Maynard Keynes, "The General Theory of Employment," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 51, no. 2 (1937): 209–223. As Kirshner elucidates it, "uncertainty describes a world characterized by crucial unknowns and unknowables." Kirshner, "The Economic Sins of Modern IR theory and the Classical Realist Alternative," 178. Similarly Mitzen and Schweller argue that information is unknowable if it is related to future outcomes. Mitzen and Schweller, "Knowing the Unknown Unknowns: Misplaced Certainty and the Onset of War," 25.

52. Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results," *European Journal of Sociology* 25, no. 02 (1984): 185–213.

53. This is related to what Sullivan calls uncertainty over costs of achieving goals. My focus on uncertainty over local institutional strength complements her focus on uncertainty over cost of achieving goals by showing what factors in the local territory drive that uncertainty over goal attainment. Sullivan, "At What Price Victory? The Effects of Uncertainty on Military Intervention Duration and Outcome."

is fundamental uncertainty over what the level of institutional strength will be after the armed intervention that could cause severe changes to those institutions. Second, even prior to the actual intervention uncertainty exists over local contexts as decision-makers and militaries lack the information to assess local contexts due to contrasting signals that exist from various sources. It is not a matter of gathering more information, but rather that information is difficult to ascertain regardless of the desires of the intervener to plan for the postwar period. While interveners may gather information on the territory from intelligence agencies, diplomatic corps members, or other sources, they do not possess a clear, unbiased view of the strength of the political institutions that will exist after intervention.

The fundamental uncertainty over local institutional strength is mostly driven by the fact that the intervener cannot know how local institutions will respond to the introduction of armed force into their political context. In any regime change, especially one that includes armed force, the act of simply changing leaders or introducing foreign military force will affect the strength of local institutions in ways that could not be planned for.[54] Once military force is introduced, a number of different things could occur including the institutions holding, institutions dissolving, or constituting themselves in a different manner all as a direct result from the presence of armed troops arriving in the territory. The process of fighting and defeating that side of conflict can also destroy or weaken some of their governing institutions, or reveal that they were weak to begin with. Even in cases where intervention does not entail long military presence, the mere fact of landing foreign troops can affect how institutions respond. Alternatively, institutions could reveal that they are more resilient than a military might initially think and the mere act of defeating a military does not harm the infrastructural power of the institutions. As Gilpin states, militaries do not get the armed interventions "they want or expect; they fail to recognize the pent-up forces they are unleashing or the larger historical significance of the decisions they are taking." Rather, militaries "seldom can predict the train of events they set in motion, and they frequently lose control over social and political forces."[55] In general, it is fundamentally uncertain how these institutions will respond to the introduction of force, making assessment of local institutional contexts prior to intervention an uncertain business.[56]

The Iraq war provides an ideal example of how introducing force can both reveal and

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54. Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); H. Hegre et al., "Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816-1992," *American Political Science Review* 95, no. 1 (2001): 33–48; Peic and Reiter, "Foreign-Imposed Regime Change, State Power and Civil War Onset, 1920-2004."

55. Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 74, 202.

56. Covert interventions can also have much of the same uncertainty. See Lindsey A. O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change: America's Secret Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

change the institutional strength of the local territory, creating the uncertainty that existed before intervention occurred. Beyond the initial assumptions the Bush administration held about the Iraqi state and the strength of Ba'athist institutions, the invasion changed how the institutions related to the rest of the state, while also revealing themselves to be weak due to decades of coup-proofing and sanctions, and papering over real dissent among the other non-Sunni populations in Iraq.[57] Prior to the invasion, there was not much consideration of the possibility that the Iraqi centralized bureaucracy would not be strong and functional. But rather than finding a stable centralized bureaucracy to lean on in the initial occupation period, the Americans found that the central administration of the Iraqi state had essentially collapsed, and the defeat of the Ba'athist regime had left a weakened institutional infrastructure in its wake. The lack of local governance in provinces appeared once the centralized state apparatus collapsed, as "during the Ba'ath regime, a system operated that was highly centralized, where no local decisions could be made without reference to the relevant ministries in Baghdad."[58] When forces arrived in various provinces, the type of local bureaucrats they expected to find to carry out their edicts did not exist as the intervention and deposition of the Iraqi Ba'athist regime completely disrupted the weak institutional status quo.

Second, uncertainty over local institutional contexts is also driven by the difficulty in getting accurate information. There are many potential sources from within the territory itself willing to portray the institutional context a certain way in order to achieve their preferred policy goal. Prospective interveners often look to local opposition groups or elite emigres when planning for intervention against foreign regimes.[59] This in an effort to co-opt local forces to make achieving political goals with force less costly but also provide more information on the regime and the ability of the opposition groups to carry out the goals of the intervener. Interveners look for local agents who can give information on the territory, or support their intuitions. Knowing this, however, potential agents in local territories can misrepresent basic features about their territory to make themselves appear to be more or less capable agents, and more problematically, also provide misleading information about local institutions to try to make it more likely policymakers will support their own views on the future of their territory. Similarly, foreign leaders who want to make it look like

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57. In one example of how the the collapse of the Iraqi regime through armed force produced new outcomes, "reprisal attacks against the former regime began almost immediately. The Badr Corps militia led by Hadi al-Amiri had spent months preparing lists of regime loyalists it intended to target once Saddam was no longer in power." Rayburn and Sobchak, *The US Army in the Iraq War, Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, 125.

58. Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*, 118.

59. For a detailed accounting for the logic behind looking to local opposition groups, see: Melissa Willard-Foster, *Toppling Foreign Governments: The Logic of Regime Change* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

armed intervention against them may be costly might inflate the strength of their local institutions to make it look like armed resistance capacity will exist after intervention. In general, the point here is that beyond the fundamental uncertainty that exists over assessing local institutional contexts exists even before intervention has the opportunity to change the state of local institutions because local groups have incentives to send contrasting signals.

In Iraq, Iraqi National Congress leader Ahmed Chalabi and other Iraqi exiles provide an example of this behavior. Chalibi incessantly argued that the Saddam Hussein regime was weak, and thus the bureaucrats would gladly welcome regime change, while the local population would welcome the Americans with open arms.[60] Prior to the invasion, American planners were told by Chalabi that"Iraqis who were not loyal to the Ba'athist regime would welcome U.S. and allied forces with parades, flag-waving, and an eagerness for democratic government."[61] Beyond Chalabi, the State Department's 'Future of Iraq' program enlisted the help of other Iraqi opposition leaders and exiles to, in theory, plan for the postwar period.[62] This however just contributed further to the view that American planners held about the relative strength of Iraqi institutions and the feasibility of toppling the regime quickly, even using the liberation of France in World War II as a mental map.[63] Thus, the exile community largely reinforced the assumptions held in Washington that quick turnover to Iraqi opposition was a feasible strategy, and accepted uncritically their view that American forces could easily topple the regime and replace them with a more stable democratic regime.

Combined, uncertainty over local contexts exists both due to the fundamental uncertainty of what local institutions will look like after armed intervention and also the inability to get clear, unbiased assessments prior to intervention. The only clear way for this uncertainty to be resolved is the actual presence of the interveners troops on the ground to assess the local context and work with local institutions to determine if they are actually up to the task of carrying out the goals set forth.

The Impact of Uncertainty

Recognizing that uncertainty over local institutions can only be resolved after actual armed intervention, I contend that the impact of this uncertainty is to make military organizations relegate postwar planning to low importance and also allows for leaders and decision-makers to create psychological shortcuts that can lead to poor intervention decisions. Militaries

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60. Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 56-57.

61. Rayburn and Sobchak, *The US Army in the Iraq War, Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, 35.

62. Bensahel et al., *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq*, 31-33.

63. Rayburn and Sobchak, *The US Army in the Iraq War, Volume 1: Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War, 2003-2006*, 35.

have long recognized the impact that uncertainty plays in making strategic choices contingent. From Clausewitz onward, military strategists have noted that "war is the realm of the uncertain," where military strategists must be willing to update their plans based on new information as they receive it..[64] Von Moltke famously quipped "no plan of operations extends with any certainty beyond...first contact,"[65] while Moregenthau has argued that military campaigns are unpredictable, given the multitude of uncertain factors that cannot be planned for prior to the launching of the operation.[66] While traditionally these maxims refer to major interstate wars, these maxims are even more applicable to the postwar phase as there has been more time for the facts on the ground to change.

Military and foreign policy officials tend to view war and military operations in terms of distinct phases, and this affects how leaders and top officials think about risk and potential problems in military operations.[67] There is a natural preference to focus on the short-term possibilities of military operations, and a reticence to plan for longer periods beyond the immediate next steps of a military operation because it is impossible to know how local conditions will change after the initiation of armed force. "War plans tend to only cover the first act," and interveners recognize that their strategies for the foreign rule mission will have to adapt to the local conditions as they find them.[68] This is not to say that there is never any planning for post-intervention periods by the foreign ruler. Indeed while militaries do not like to invest in planning, various groups in organizations often do get tasked with imagining the post-intervention dynamics and begin to create a host of possible plans. But the organization preferences pushes focus to the initial phase and also demotes the importance to the organization those tasks that come after initial combat operations.

This is similar to how Posen argues that uncertainty reduction is a key reason militaries often prefer offensive military doctrines.[69] When faced with uncertainty on the battlefield, militaries often use offensive doctrines that will allow them to take initiative in the military engagement and structure the operation according to their terms. In terms of armed intervention and foreign rule, this can often mean that militaries only plan for successful

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64. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Edited, Translated by Michael Howard, and Peter Paret. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 101.

65. Helmuth Graf von Moltke, "Plan of Operations," in *Moltke on the Art of War: Selected Writings*, ed. Daniel J. Hughes, trans. Daniel J. Hughes and Harry Bell (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1993), 92.

66. Hans Morgenthau, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 138-140.

67. Rapport, *Waging War, Planning Peace: US Noncombat Operations and Major Wars*; Alexander L George, "The "Operational Code": A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-making," *International Studies Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1969): 190–222.

68. Fred Iklé, *Every War Must End* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 8.

69. Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 47-50.

offensive operations at the onset of the armed intervention mission, rather than planning for contingent missions once the foreign rule period begins.[70]

Hence the means military organizations use to deal with the uncertainty they face obscures the issue of post-conflict planning. There is a recursive process that enhances these organizational pathologies. Not only do militaries respond to the inherent uncertainty by focusing on the initial intervention, but they can help heighten uncertainty by only focusing on the tasks required by the armed intervention. This makes logical sense, as a military cannot reach the post-conflict period without achieving success in the initial military operation. Thus, militaries insist upon waiting until they have intervened into the territory before they make defined judgments on the strategy necessary to accomplish to goals given to them by their commanders. Poor postwar planning in military organizations is a reaction to uncertainty.

In addition to fundamental uncertainty over local contexts helping explain militaries reticence to plan for postwar periods, it can also help explain why leaders and decision-makers make optimistic assumptions about the feasibility of their intervention goals. Leaders do task intelligence organizations to help assess these institutions and local contexts, but the intelligence institutions themselves echo the fundamental uncertainty that is present. As Rovner illuminates this perfectly when he claims "that intelligence is inherently ambiguous" leading intelligence agencies to "attach caveats to their conclusions and loathe making exact predictions."[71] Further, "intelligence often focuses on issues that are impossible to address with certainty" and "also deals with questions where certain answers are possible in principle, but infeasible in practice."[72] In other words, intelligence agencies recognize that intelligence assessments are inherently uncertain, reflecting the fundamental uncertainty over local contexts. Properly functioning, intelligence agencies should embrace uncertainty to highlight the contingent nature of the many choices that decision-makers may have.

However, how leaders sometimes to respond to these assessments that embrace uncertainty highlights again the way uncertainty over local context permits the psychological pathologies against postwar planning that can lead to sub-optimal outcomes. At times, foreign rulers feel compelled to reduce uncertainty, but it is more difficult to reduce uncertainty than many leaders realize, and this often leads to sub-optimal decision-making. Rovner

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70. See also Jack Snyder, "Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984," *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 119-120 and Van Evera, "Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War" for additional evidence on how uncertainty can create a military preference for offensive military doctrines and planning.

71. Joshua Rovner, *Fixing the Facts: National Security and the Politics of Intelligence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 12.

72. Jeffrey A. Friedman and Richard Zeckhauser, "Assessing Uncertainty in Intelligence," *Intelligence and National Security* 27, no. 6 (2012): 825.

argues that politicians often turn to the intelligence community to provide certain assessments so as to sell their preferred foreign policy goals to domestic audiences.[73] However, in so doing, politicians seek to remove the uncertainty in their assessments and to force the intelligence institutions to portray judgments as definite, creating false sense of certainty in the intelligence assessment and politicizing the assessment of foreign territories. As Betts and Jervis contend, politicization of the intelligence agencies can only lead to sub-optimal decision-making when embarking on military operations and carrying out foreign rule missions.[74] As Mitzen and Schweller further note, fundamental uncertainty often can have the perverse effect of making leaders and decision-makers have misplaced certainty in their views of local conditions and how the postwar phase will go.[75] Combined with the military's own organizational responses to uncertainty, the rejection of uncertain assessments and the desire to control the outcomes as best as they can creates the perfect storm for poor postwar planning after leaders decide upon launching of the military mission. The psychological biases are even starker due to a desire to reduce uncertainty.

Thus, it is clear that uncertainty over local institutional contexts exists largely due to inability to know how institutions will respond to intervention and also the incentives actors have to either misrepresent or overlook the true nature of local institutions and resistance capacity due to the political goals they seek to achieve. The effect of this is that it helps drive organizational and psychological biases and preferences that can actually enhance the uncertainty or make it more difficult to reconcile with the uncertainty present once the decision to intervene is made. Uncertainty makes postwar planning highly contingent, not valued in military organizations, and can promote psychological biases.

The Fog of Intervention and the Relegation of Strategy

After understanding how uncertainty over local institutions and how it can contribute to poor postwar planning, it is important to discuss the further tangible effects uncertainty can have on strategic decision-making. I argue that rational interveners respond to uncertainty by, at best, only tentatively planning for the post-intervention period, and often delegate the decision-making to local military commanders once the initial military mission ends. Strategy requires understanding the constraints and capabilities of the local institutional environment the foreign ruler will be facing. It requires the knowledge of the means required

73. Rovner, *Fixing the Facts: National Security and the Politics of Intelligence*.

74. Richard K Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence: Knowledge and Power in American National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Robert Jervis, "Why Intelligence and Policymakers Clash," *Political Science Quarterly* 125, no. 2 (2010): 185–204.

75. Mitzen and Schweller, "Knowing the Unknown Unknowns: Misplaced Certainty and the Onset of War."

to achieve the political ends of the mission.[76]

If it were possible to fully learn local institutional contexts before intervention, rational interveners should invest more time and resources into planning for the postwar period, given that they know the political goals they wish to achieve. However the uncertainty over local institutional contexts precludes the opportunity for interveners to agree on a strategy prior to an armed intervention. Only after the military intervenes in a territory can they begin to asses the current institutional environment and likelihood of armed resistance to their extended presence. Only then can they decide on what strategy to use after this assessment period occurs. While policymakers may have distinct preferences and goals they wish to pursue, the strategies themselves only emerge after the military can assess the local status quo. Interveners can spend resources thinking about the broad contours of post-intervention strategy, but they generally only make tentative plans and establish decision making structures for determining the strategy following intervention. The planning that does go on is contingent, and a consolidated strategy does not emerge until after intervention has occurred.[77] The uncertainty inherent to the implementation of strategy ultimately leaves civilian and military planners resistant to focusing on a defined, unwavering strategy until they have landed in the territory. Instead, they plan for multiple contingencies, and a selection of strategy is delayed.

Working groups, civil administration training staffs, and policy planning organs can emerge, yet the uncertainty prevents development of a well-defined strategy. Various proposals and ideas may emerge, but the decision of strategy remains contingent upon the military actually being on the ground so it can assess the local institutional environment. The presence of working groups and strategy documents does not indicate a consolidated strategy, but rather simply indications of planning for the beginning of the post-intervention phase. Instead of a well-articulated strategy, different strategic operations and guiding documents emerge, and different groups of elites in the foreign ruler's decision-making organs debate over which is best to implement. Uncertainty does not prevent the ability to plan, but rather prevents the ability to discern what plans will actually be required once in the territory.

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76. Strategies are the means that states use to reach their preferred political ends, and are conceptually separate from the political ends they wish to achieve. Gray defines strategy as "the bridge that relates military power to political purpose," or "the use that is made of force and the threat of force for the ends of policy." Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17. More broadly, Frieden argues that, strategies are particular means to an end, or "ways to achieve goals given the anticipated actions of others...and knowledge and information" of the preferences of the actor. Jeffry A. Frieden, "Actors and Preferences in International Relations," in *Strategic Choice and International Relations*, ed. David A. Lake and Robert Powell (Princeton: Princeton University Pess, 1999), 45.

77. As Keynes admits, when faced with uncertainty, human nature compels actors to attempt to calculate and assess the most likely outcomes of the future based on present knowledge.Keynes, "The General Theory of Employment," 214.

There is consistent evidence that foreign rulers frequently disregard the planning documents and pre-intervention preferences once arriving on the ground. Instead of dogmatically forcing troops to implement a pre-planned strategy, interveners often push the pre-planned documents aside and instead formulate a new strategy with the fresh information they have gathered. Even after major wars that involved many years of high-level strategic planning and intelligence operations, such as the American occupation of Germany following World War II, the American postwar strategy did not coalesce until the troops arrived and the commanders began reporting on the ability of various local governments to aid their administration.[78] While many plans for postwar Germany were discussed throughout the war, including the infamous Morgenthau Plan to de-industrialize Germany, the newly imposed military governors largely assessed their local environments and pushed Washington to finalize a strategy that comported to the environment they found themselves in.[79] Rather than dogmatically imposing the strictest interpretation of de-Nazification and de-industrialization of the Morgenthau Plan, the local commanders came up with a different strategy that would suit the particular circumstances and local conditions in West Germany. More local bureaucrats were utilized than initially planned for, and different economic strategies emerged after assessing the postwar local context of the foreign territory.

Once troops arrive on the ground there is an assessment process that the military often carries out as they take more control over different territories. During the intervention itself, the military will report back local resistance they are facing and whether the local institutions they are cooperating with are performing their tasks amicably. There are also civil affairs units and other parts of the military force that are tasked with working with locals to achieve initial goals, and their reports are then sent to local commanders to assess how local institutions are performing. Once intervention occurs and assessment can happen, any pre-existing information is pushed aside by new facts on the ground that then shapes the strategy chosen. In sum, uncertainty beyond poor planning can have the effect of delaying consideration of strategy, which can affect the choice to engage in armed intervention in the first place. Poor decisions to launch interventions emerge directly from the uncertainty prior to armed intervention. This means that foreign rulers can end up in lengthy institution-

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78. For a good account of this process see: Carolyn Woods Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Harry Lewis Coles and Albert Katz Weinberg, *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1964).

79. See Earl Frederick Ziemke, *The US Army in the Occupation of Germany: 1944-1946* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1975); Walter M. Hudson, *Army Diplomacy: American Military Occupation and Foreign Policy After World War II* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015); Coles and Weinberg, *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors*; Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-1949* and Frederick Taylor, *Exorcising Hitler: The Occupation and Denazification of Germany* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011) for illustration of this point.

building missions when they have little intention of engaging in one in the first place.

Assessment, Uncertainty Amelioration, and Strategy

Given that uncertainty inhibits adequate postwar planning and decisions over strategy, then it should be the case that after intervention occurs, militaries have an assessment process that can begin to ameliorate the uncertainty of local institution to allow for strategic decision-making to occur and plans emerge. This is precisely what occurs, and can only occur once the units are actually placed on the ground to determine the true state of local institutional strength. This comports with other theories of uncertainty and conflict that posit uncertainty can be ameliorated after military forces arrive on the ground. Discussions about war and war termination center on the arguments that forces on the battlefield can solve information problems and make bargaining for a solution more likely. Similarly, some arguments about state motivations and intentions contend that motivations are revealed on the battlefield, and only once the difficult problem of assessing the intentions and motivations of other states is resolved. In offense-defense theory, some have argued that the offense-defense balance is difficult to measure ex ante, but after forces meet in battle it is possible to ascertain the balance.[80] Thus, similar to these various theories that posit difficulties in assessment prior to militarized action, the fundamental uncertainty that makes assessment difficult are possibly resolved once military intervention occurs.[81]

Unfortunately, previous studies that have focused on choices made in response to assessments of institutional strength do not explicitly lay out how assessment of local institutions

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80. Van Evera, "Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War."

81. It is important to note that while other theories of strategic assessment do not deal with local institutional strength, the concepts that theories of assessment deal with are often more nebulous. For example, Press, Fearon, and Weeks have all illustrated how states can assess credibility and how states can attempt to send signals to illustrate their credibility Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); James D Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands Versus Sinking costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 1 (1997): 68–90; Jessica L Weeks, "Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve," *International Organization* 62, no. 1 (2008): 35–64. Yarhi-Milo, Edelstein and others have argued it's possible to assess state intentions, whereas Kydd has argued that states can assess other states as trustworthiness. Yarhi-Milo, *Knowing the Adversary: Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in International Relations*; David M Edelstein, "Managing Uncertainty: Beliefs about Intentions and the Rise of Great Powers," *Security Studies* 12, no. 1 (2002): 1–40; Andrew H Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). Owen argues that assessment of adversaries' ideology is possible and has tangible effects on interstate outcomes. John M Owen IV, *The Clash of Ideas in World Politics: Transnational Networks, States, and Regime Change, 1510-2010: Transnational Networks, States, and Regime Change, 1510-2010* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). Given how credibility, intentions, trust, and ideology are less tangible than institutional strength, and yet we have confidence that not only do states assess these concepts but some can do so relatively accurately, we should also have confidence that military commanders have the means to assess the relative strength of local political institutions after arriving in the territory.

occurs.[82] Instead, they all focus on the response of the local political actors after arriving in the new territory, giving credence to my claim that assessment occurs upon arrival and that assessment can drive strategic choices. However, examining cases of post-intervention military assessments provides a lens to see the kinds of actions that militaries take after arriving and help illustrate how assessment processes bridge uncertainty and strategy. Primarily, militaries attempt to maintain the status quo to the extent they can after arriving in a territory to allow for assessment of the current institutions and see what strategy is needed to achieve their goals. During this period of assessment, the military can set up formal assessment institutions, seek out locals to liason with, gather intelligence material left behind, and report back to local commanders and policymakers about what they are observing in terms of local compliance, institutional strength, and resistance capacity to allow for more sound strategic decision-making.

One example of this process is how American civil affairs units reacted upon landing in Sicily in 1943. While the civil affairs units had prepared for the mission in Italy through attending a preparation course, there was uncertainty over the facets of local governmental organization that they had to decipher only upon landing. One civil affairs officer went so far as to recommend in wake of his experience after landing that "more instruction given in (a) the language and (b) the present organization [of local institutions] and less the history of the country."[83] Instead, once they arrived they civil affairs officers began identifying the key members of government institutions and civil society in each town, took public opinion polls to see what local institutions had the greatest public support, and more importantly reported back which local officials, even those who were formally affiliated with the fascist party, were most capable in carrying out the edicts of the American military governors.[84] There was a clear accounting of which institutions works and which bureaucrats they could work with to achieve American political goals. Yet this is evidence that even after extensive planning for the mission, there still was uncertainty over what local institutions looked like on the ground, who would resist, and what types of post-invasion strategies were needed to achieve the political goals in the liberated areas of southern Italy.

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82. John Gerring et al., "An Institutional Theory of Direct and Indirect Rule," *World Politics* 63, no. 03 (2011): 377–433; Ana Arjona, *Rebelocracy: Social Order in the Colombian Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Michael Kevin McKoy, "The Overthrow Option: The Strategic Choices of Interstate Conflict and Foreign-Imposed Regime Change." (Ph.D. dissertation., Princeton University, 2012); Jeremy Ferwerda and Nicholas L. Miller, "Political Devolution and Resistance to Foreign Rule: A Natural Experiment," *American Political Science Review* 108, no. 03 (2014): 642–660.

83. To S.C.A.O Caltanissetta Province, Aug 29 1943. AMGOT Lessons From Sicilian Operations Aug-Oct 1943 10000/100/697. Headquarters, Allied Military Government. Allied Control Commission Italy. Records of the Allied Operational and Occupational Headquarters, Record Group 331. Box 45. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

84. Coles and Weinberg, *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors*, 275-305.

The point of this quick example is that militaries often resolve the problem of uncertainty only after they arrive in the territory and use tools to assess whether the bureaucracy that existed before is functioning as they prefer, and what role local resistance might play against their political goals. These can be guessed about prior to intervention, but the uncertainty cannot be ameliorated until this assessment process occurs. And more importantly, the assessment processes they carry out cannot be done prior to the intervention itself because it is not clear how the institutions will change in the wake of intervention. Once the intervention occurs and the military takes this local control, then the assessment process begins and can drive strategic choices that make the initial planning period look completely inadequate. Combined, this argument presents a logic that uncertainty over local institutions drives the regular recurrence of seemingly poor postwar planning and the selection of strategies that seem *ex ante* inefficient. The inability to ameliorate uncertainty and truly assess the capacity of local institutions to carry out political goals of the intervener precludes strategizing and permits militaries to focus on the initial phase of the intervention and foreign policymakers to make optimistic assumptions in the face of uncertainty.

However, empirically illustrating that prospective interveners possess uncertainty and how this can be ameliorated is difficult. What evidence can be mustered to be sure that my argument regarding uncertainty holds? I contend that if my argument regarding the importance of uncertainty in explaining strategy formation and poor postwar planning, we should see a few observable implications in cases of post-intervention foreign rule to confirm my argument. First, in terms of the planning for the armed intervention and possible foreign rule mission, there should only be tentative planning done, and an explicit recognition that any plans are tentative an depend on what the military finds after intervention. Second, local military commanders should assess local contexts and transmit information back to the decision makers in the foreign ruler's capital. This includes military leaders and foreign rulers looking to find local actors who can serve as their agents in order to attempt to learn more information from and assess whether the current local institutions are suitable for the territory. Finally, the actual choice of post-intervention strategy should explicitly occur only after the military mission has landed in the territory and there is clear-cut discussion of assessment following the intervention. If the strategy is selected before the military arrives and there is no updating of the strategy, then local conditions were not important in explaining this choice.

Uncertainty in the American Occupation of the Dominican Republic

Case Selection

To examine the plausibility of my argument about the role uncertainty over local institutional contexts plays in both the lack of postwar planning and also the strategic decision-making process after intervention I turn to the least-likely case of the American occupation of the Dominican Republic in 1916.[85] The logic behind using this case is that a variety of factors that should have made it difficult for uncertainty to affect postwar planning and strategy. First, the unique extended diplomatic presence on the island ever since the 1907 customs receivership agreement was signed should make it easier to how sound knowledge of local institutions.[86] After the customs receivership agreement was signed the US spent the next decade intimately involved in most aspects of domestic politics on the island trying to find ways to make the government debt decrease, including being involved in two other militarized crises on the island in 1912 and 1914 over potential new leaders.[87] With the extended diplomatic presence and in control of Dominican finances, the United States should have been in an advantageous position to make accurate assessments and ameliorate uncertainty. These shows of force and negotiations of different leaders being placed in power should have provided the United States with a sound understanding of the relevant political actors and institutions.

Second, the military, including the specific commanders of the mission, had been involved in other similar interventions and occupations themselves recently in the region, and should have provided good sense of the tasks required.[88] Further given the way the Department of

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85. For more on least-likely cases see: Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 121; Aaron Rapport, "Hard thinking about hard and easy cases in security studies," *Security Studies* 24, no. 3 (2015): 431–465.

86. In 1905 the United States, under President Roosevelt, reached an agreement with the Dominican government to create a customs receivership for the country, under which the United States would take control of collecting customs taxes and ensure they were used to pay back foreign creditors, ameliorating the justification for German intervention. Lester D. Langley, *The Banana Wars: An Inner History of American Empire, 1900-1934* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1983); Sumner Welles, *Naboth's Vineyard: The Dominican Republic, 1844-1924*, vol. 2 (New York: Payson & Clarke, 1928). The customs receivership was ratified as a treaty in 1907, where its first steps included having the United States issue a loan to the Dominican government to pay the totality of their foreign loans and make the United States their only creditor.

87. Noel Maurer, *The Empire Trap: The Rise and Fall of US Intervention to Protect American Property Overseas, 1893-2013* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 96-98; Ellen D Tillman, "Militarizing Dollar Diplomacy in the Early Twentieth-Century Dominican Republic: Centralization and Resistance," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 95, no. 2 (2015): 288-291

88. Langley, *The Banana Wars: An Inner History of American Empire, 1900-1934*, 120-124 They had previously been involved in the 1914 in Veracruz Mexico, 1915 in Haiti, and now 1916 in the Dominican

the Navy and the US Marine Corps operated in the early 20th century, the organizational interests against civil affairs tasks had not developed.[89] This should have made the marines carrying out these missions more willing to take heed of the important local factors and the the organizational preferences that can push postwar planning aside were not present.

Finally, traditional thinking about President Wilson proposes that the psychological preferences of Wilson should mean that he would always have ordered an institution-building mission regardless of what local conditions were on the ground.[90] If this is the case, then uncertainty should not have played a role because the strategy would have already been decided, one that would allow the administration to teach the Dominicans to "elect good men."[91] There should be evidence of a defined post-intervention strategy, and if only tentative plans on what the post-intervention governing structure would look like are present, then Wilson's psychological predilections did not drive the initial strategic choices and postwar planning. Overall, this case provides an ideal means to test the whether uncertainty exists prior to intervention and the effects of that uncertainty on planning and strategy.

Tentative Planning

In 1916, the long simmering crisis of governance in the Dominican Republic erupted. In May of that year, following months of political instability, interim presidents, and mini-revolts, a large-scale crisis emerged when General Desiderio Arias orchestrated an attempted ousting of President Jiménes through a sham impeachment proceeding in the Dominican legislature.[92] Faced with continued instability and rising debt levels during the presidency of Juan

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Republic, to say nothing of the occupations following the Spanish-American war.

89. For instance, see: Keith B Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps' development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Ivan Musicant, *The Banana Wars: A History of United States Military Intervention in Latin America from the Spanish-American War to the Invasion of Panama* (New York: MacMillan, 1990).

90. Traditional views of Wilson contend his had a preference for exporting democratic political institutions abroad through armed force as he saw it both as a moral imperative and beneficial to American security interests Elizabeth N. Saunders, *Leaders at War: How Presidents Shape Military Interventions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 189-191. As Tony Smith, *Why Wilson Matters: The Origin of American Liberal Internationalism and Its Crisis Today* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 16-22 argues, Wilson believed that "America's mission was therefore to sponsor the expansion of democracy as best it could" and that democracy promotion was the defining element of Wilson's foreign policy beliefs.

91. This canonical statement by Wilson was in reference to his initial policy towards the Mexican revolution. Cited in: Arthur S. Link, *Wilson, Volume II: The New Freedom*, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), 375.

92. Arthur S. Link, *Wilson, Volume III: The Struggle for Neutrality, 1914-1915*, vol. 3 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 543. General Arias was a frequent revolutionary against the Dominican Government. The United States consistently argued that anyone was preferable to lead the Dominican Republic than Arias, and yet each new President had to deal with and worry about Arias and his supporters. The United States was committed to preventing Arias from gaining power, given how much he had hampered American goals on the island. U.S. Department of State, "The Secretary of State to Minister Sullivan," in *Papers Relating to*

Isidro Jimenes Jiménes, President Wilson grew exasperated as he could not find the means to achieve the American goal of reducing Dominican debt. After the crisis began, Secretary of State Lansing informed all factions, including Arias, that the United States would support President Jiménes and the United States would refused to accept his resignation and impeachment.[93] Jiménes was receptive of American aid and initially requested the United State send arms and provisions to help break Arias' hold over Santo Domingo. Instead, the United States landed a group of 150 American marines to meet with President Jiménes and help him create a plan for retaking the city.[94] While Jiménes requested the Americans only provide arms and logistical support, the American Marines, under the command of Admiral William Caperton, denied the request and retook the city on their own, launching the eight year occupation.[95] After landing, the Marine force took control of the city and began to seek out where Arias and his rebels had retreated. With the capture of Santo Domingo, the United States took the first step in the eight year long foreign rule operation that would eventually involve the entire country.

This crisis erupted relatively quickly, even as it was long brewing, and the Wilson administration was "lost in bewilderment and ready to adopt any expedient that offered some hope of solution."[96] Prior to this landing, many different plans were discussed, but most focused on finding the proper leader to help maintain power and reduce the domestic debt.[97] But with no firm post-intervention plans made before the landing, Caperton and other military commanders on the ground complained as they remained unclear about what the official strategy was. The legation in Santo Domingo went so far as to cable Secretary Lansing to clarify policy, as they wanted guidance "so that our entire policy here may be understood and the machinery of the whole country placed in working order."[98] Even worse, few if the American military officers in Santo Domingo spoke Spanish or had any background in Dominican (or even Latin American) affairs, the diplomatic staff seemed to lack basic knowledge of Dominican institutions.[99] Prior to the intervention, Wilson mostly focused on the goals he was

the *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1914* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), 223–224.

93. U.S. Department of State, "The Secretary of State to Minister Russell," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1916* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925), 225.

94. Stephen M. Fuller and Graham A. Cosmas, *Marines in the Dominican Republic, 1916-1924* (Washington D.C.: History / Museums Division Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1974), 7.

95. U.S. Department of State, "Minister Russell to the Secretary of State," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1916* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925), 227.

96. Link, *Wilson, Volume III: The Struggle for Neutrality, 1914-1915*, 510.

97. President Wilson and Secretary of State Lansing even regularly discussed imposing a dictatorship if the Dominican legislature impeached Jiménes. U.S. Department of State, "The Secretary of State to Chargé Johnson," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1915* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924), 288.

98. U.S. Department of State, "Clerk Brewer to the Secretary of State," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1916* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925), 245-246.

99. Dana G. Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean 1900-1921* (Princeton: Princeton

seeking in the Dominican Republic and did not create a consolidated plan for what would occur on the island after intervention. The fundamental uncertainty over local conditions led him to believe that there was no need to develop a post-intervention strategy if he could simply find the correct person to run the country and place them in power.

The continued threat of rebellion, economic malaise, and increased debt would make one expect the Wilson administration to formulate a sound post-intervention plan during this period, especially given the recent occupation of Haiti in 1915. Yet, throughout the Jiménes presidency, the Wilson administration never began formulating a post-intervention strategy for Santo Domingo beyond the continued focus on finding a suitable leader to run the country. Kelsey, writing contemporaneously as the Dominican occupation unfolded, recounted that "under such circumstances one would naturally assume that the officials in the Dominican Republic would be given a policy to be carried out. No trace of any such policy can be found. Seemingly Washington has drifted along in a hopeful attitude, settling problems as they have arisen but holding no clear vision of what it wants to do."[100] Despite plans and competition between the Departments of War (and their Bureau of Insular Affairs), the Department of the Navy, and Department of State over what strategy to use in a prospective foreign rule mission in the Dominican Republic, "there is no evidence that Washington had at the outset, or...developed...any well-thought out policy or program."[101] Instead competition over who would manage the post-intervention period, rather than any serious strategic consultation, took precedence in Washington.

Assessment on the Ground

It was after landing in Santo Domingo, the American marines and occupation force began assessing local conditions and the reactions of local institutions in the Dominican Republic to guide strategic decision-making back in Washington. A key concern was how the Dominicans would respond to American intervention, and how the institutions in Santo Domingo could operate within American interests. However, there was not clear guidance from Washington on how the invasion force should proceed. The Wilson administration, the State Department, and the Department of the Navy largely left Captain Harry Knapp and Minister William Russell to develop the initial policy on their own and report back after consolidating a set policy.[102] While eventually an institutional strategy was imposed in Santo Domingo,

University Press, 1964), 320.

100. Carl Kelsey, "The American Intervention in Haiti and the Dominican Republic," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 100, no. 1 (1922): 178.

101. Ibid.

102. Bruce J. Calder, *The Impact of Intervention: The Dominican Republic During the US Occupation of 1916-1924* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 23. Captain Harry Knapp was eventually appointed

as Calder notes, "no one, not even U.S. officials realized in May and June of 1916 that intervention would expand" into an institution-building mission.[103]

Throughout this period of military action, Admiral Caperton and Minister Russell continued to uphold and work through the current Dominican government. Caperton proclaimed in his occupation announcement to Santo Domingo that he wished "all public officials...to remain at their posts and cooperate with me and my representatives in maintaining order."[104] Caperton delivered this intention to the Dominican people when he publicly proclaimed "it is not the intention of the United States Government to acquire by conquest any territory in the Dominican Republic nor to attack its sovereignty, but our troops will remain here until...such reforms as are deemed necessary to insure the future welfare of the country have been initiated."[105]

The assessments made by Caperton and Knapp in Santo Domingo concentrated on the capacity of local bureaucrats and institutions to carry out the reforms and policies demanded by the United States. Following the initial intervention, the assessment process fixated on the proposed constitutional reforms and the ability of bureaucrats to accomplish electoral reforms prior to the November election date. As military and diplomatic leaders assessed the institutions in Santo Domingo, the focus was on the institutional capacity and ability of the local bureaucrats to carry out the reforms Washington demanded. Knapp and others to devote their initial months on the island assessing how well institutions performed, and particularly how they operated while trying to pass constitutional reforms. As Knapp explicitly reported back to Washington: "I made such study of the conditions here as were proper in [Rear Admiral Pond's] presence, and immediately after relieving him, I pursued my investigation of the conditions and the attitude of the Provisional Government."[106]

However, while Knapp undertook the assessment of local Dominican institutions, he watched as they proved unresponsive and unable to push through Washington's reforms for a variety of constitutional, institutional, and popular opinion reasons, much to the chagrin

the military governor of the Dominican Republic, after the proclamation of military government was issued following Admiral Caperton's successful completion of the armed intervention. From that moment he was the de facto head of state of the Dominican Republic. Philip Marshall Brown, "The Armed Occupation of Santo Domingo," *The American Journal of International Law* 11, no. 2 (1917): 394–399. Minister William Russell was the chief diplomatic presence on the island. Link, *Wilson, Volume III: The Struggle for Neutrality, 1914-1915*, 541.

103. Calder, *The Impact of Intervention: The Dominican Republic During the US Occupation of 1916-1924*, 10.

104. U.S. Department of State, "Admiral Caperton to the People of Santo Domingo," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1916* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925), 228.

105. U.S. Department of State, "Minister Russell to the Secretary of State," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1916* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925), 231-232.

106. U.S. Department of State, "The Secretary of the Navy to the Secretary of State," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925), 709.

of American policymakers. As Knapp reported bluntly, he found the Dominican government simply "could not undertake the measures of reform desired by the United States Government."[107] To carry out the assessment, Knapp ordered various censuses and reports of the current state of the Dominican State, as he believed that "the solution of the problem of good government will be found in the better education of the people. There is no accurate census showing the proportion of illiteracy in the country, but I have had it variously estimated from eighty-five to ninety-five per cent; at any rate it is very high."[108]

After assessing local institutions in Santo Domingo, Knapp found that the Dominican Public Works Department was largely at a standstill (as one would expect given the rebellions of the previous years), and similar to the education system he ordered a review and audit of the entire department.[109] He found a lack of competent administration of public works and a lack of capable bureaucrats to institute public work projects that were deemed necessary.[110] These included road, railroad, and public sanitation projects at the outset, which were deemed most essential.[111] Knapp and others were very cognizant of the importance of monitoring possible resistance in Santo Domingo and elsewhere, and took great care to anticipate whether different factions were willing, or more importantly, possessed the capacity to revolt against an American military government. Yet during this period of initial observation, no resistance materialized and any threat of significant resistance to American rule seemed unlikely.[112]

Strategy Consolidation

As the military government began carrying out assessment, the lack of capacity in Dominican institutions became evident. On July 31st, Francisco Henríquez y Carvajal was installed as a negotiated caretaker president until future elections could take place.[113] However, as part of the negotiation to bring Henríquez y Carvajal to power, the government also agreed to hold a constitutional convention to reform the 1908 constitution and to set new electoral

107. U.S. Department of State, "The Secretary of the Navy to the Secretary of State," 710.

108. ibid., 714. Beyond these three areas, Knapp was also shocked to discover the lack of censuses and geological surveys undertaken by the Dominican government and called for them to be undertaken as soon as possible. This provides more evidence that the current institutions of the state did not produce the capacity to carry out the reforms of the American foreign rulers ibid.

109. Ibid., 714-715.

110. Calder, *The Impact of Intervention: The Dominican Republic During the US Occupation of 1916-1924*, 51-52.

111. Kelsey, "The American Intervention in Haiti and the Dominican Republic," 182-184.

112. Fazal notes that "Dominican resistance was practically non-existent," and to the extent there was any resistance, it only emerged much later in the occupation period and in remote areas. Tanisha M. Fazal, *State Death: The Politics and Geography of Conquest, Occupation, and Annexation* (Princeton University Press, October 2011), 143-144.

113. Welles, *Naboth's Vineyard: The Dominican Republic, 1844-1924*, 776-781.

rules for elections to be held in five months in November. If the reforms were not passed, then the election would be held with the outdated electoral rule.[114] Recognizing that the interim President, like all other prospective leaders in Santo Domingo, could not deliver the constitutional reforms Washington demanded, the Wilson administration deemed the interim president ineffective and Dominican institutions lacked the capacity to produce change.[115]

Further, "Knapp, as he became more familiar with the Dominican situation, noted areas of Dominican life which he believed needed improvement."[116] In particular, the assessment over potential presidents, governmental control, and the lack of necessary reforms led both Captain Knapp and Minister Russell to conclude new institutions were needed, and so they recommended that the U.S. military contingent declare martial law and impose military government. Wilson approved this course on November 26th and by November 29th, the United States' formal occupation of the Dominican Republic was underway.[117] Even when President Wilson authorized the occupation mission, he noted that "it is with the deepest reluctance that I approve and authorize the course here proposed, but I am convinced that it is the least of the evils."[118]

Upon the imposition of military government Captain Knapp still attempted to maintain as much continuity with current Dominican institutions as he could, but while he wanted to maintain Dominicans in positions of high office, their institutions continually failed to perform adequately.[119] Yet, Knapp consistently reported that finding qualified Dominican locals to work with him was difficult. In his first military government annual report, Knapp noted "This action was forced upon me by the attitude of the members of the Dominican Government. It did not appear possible to get Dominicans of the proper caliber who would accept these high administrative offices."[120] He further lamented that the high rate of desertion from bureaucracy made it impossible to not place military government in charge of various institutions.[121]

The assessment process also revealed that American intervention helped quell much of the resistance that had previously plagued the island, allowing for institution-building strategy

114. Welles, *Naboth's Vineyard: The Dominican Republic, 1844-1924*, 783-784, 789.

115. Link, *Wilson, Volume III: The Struggle for Neutrality, 1914-1915*, 546-547.

116. Calder, *The Impact of Intervention: The Dominican Republic During the US Occupation of 1916-1924*, 26.

117. U.S. Department of State, "The President to the Secretary of State," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1916* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925), 242;U.S. Department of State, "Clerk Brewer to the Secretary of State," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1916* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925), 243.

118. Welles, *Naboth's Vineyard: The Dominican Republic, 1844-1924*, 792.

119. Kelsey, "The American Intervention in Haiti and the Dominican Republic," 178.

120. U.S. Department of State, "The Secretary of the Navy to the Secretary of State," 712.

121. Ibid., 711.

to appear more viable. Much of the local Dominican population welcomed US administration and only well-known dissidents and rebels tried to lead resistance against the American military government. Russell reported that he had "been impressed with the manner in which the people have accepted the new order of things. Disappointed petty politicians are the only people dissatisfied."[122] While Russell was seeking to make American policy appear successful, the fact that even the formerly rebellious politicians were largely abstaining from uprising against American rule was noticeable and led many native Dominicans to appreciate the sense of security that did fall over the island. As evidence of this trend, Knapp reported that he had "been asked, almost begged, by Dominicans not to disturb the existing order of things for a long period; not to think of putting Dominicans in these offices, but to continue the administration of affairs through the American officers."[123] Minister Russell noted "the people have accepted the Military Government with remarkably good grace, and throughout the Republic a feeling of security obtains not experienced for some time."[124] The acquiescence of locals illustrates *ex post* the low strength of local institutions, and the rebel bands constantly attacking Dominican institutions were merely a symptom of the weak institutions present in the country. Instead, active cooperation in public health, sanitation, public works, infrastructure, and police reform projects helped strengthen Dominican institutions.

Assessment of the level of resistance capacity indicated that deposed institutions did not possess enough residual organizational ties and strength to challenge the implementation of an institutional strategy, the American military government and began an institution-building mission, including the establishment of a new constabulary and the destruction of the former military organization. That this did not create a sustained revolt against American foreign rule provides evidence that the institutions in the Dominican Republic lacked strong capacity. Only once the military government undertook an assessment process, one which revealed organizational weakness inhibiting local reform efforts to depoliticize the military, that they decided to scrap the military bureaucracy and build a new institution. These factors provide convincing evidence that uncertainty amelioration over the strength of local institutions drove the strategic decision-making of the American foreign rule mission

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122. U.S. Department of State, "Minister Russell to the Secretary of State," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1916* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925), 249.

123. U.S. Department of State, "The Secretary of the Navy to the Secretary of State," 712.

124. U.S. Department of State, "Minister Russell to the Secretary of State," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925), 707–708. This is not to say there were no individual or small scale acts of revolt. Rather, no organized rebellion against American foreign rule materialized. The largest sustained resistance to American rule over the eight years of Military government was in the Eastern provinces of the Dominican Republic, but the resistance never grew to threaten American control over the territory. See Calder, *The Impact of Intervention: The Dominican Republic During the US Occupation of 1916-1924*, 133-156 for a discussion of resistance in the eastern part of the island.

in the Dominican Republic, and uncertainty over these institutions relegated this choice of strategy until after the intervention in Santo Domingo.

Overall, Captain Knapp summed up the importance of uncertainty amelioration and local assessment in his annual report back to Washington, where he stated that while he knew some about local conditions "before leaving Washington,...after arriving" in Santo Domingo he "learned much more about it."[125] It was the reduction of uncertainty through the assessment of local conditions that led to the choice of an institution-building mission, an assessment process determined largely by the reports of local military commanders. Pre-existing plans and preferences from Washington did not impact the final strategy in the Dominican Republic. Only after the uncertainty around local conditions was resolved did an institution-building strategy emerge.

Conclusion

Overall, the case of US marines occupying the Dominican Republic provides important insight into how uncertainty over local conditions can help drive what appears as unwanted intervention outcomes and poor postwar planning. If organization explanations alone could explain why the the American marines did not plan for the post-intervention occupation in Santo Domingo, we should have seen them try to use the organizational lessons from Haiti and only recent interventions to prepare them for their broader mission. Given Latin America was their primary theater of operations, there should have been more troops thinking about potential utility of spanish language skills and civil affairs tasks given their utility in previous missions. Additionally, if psychological explainations were sufficient to explain the choice of strategy, there should have been dogmatic belief in the utility of one strategy prior to intervention and a resistance to change once on the ground. The fact that Wilson of all Presidents was hesitant to launch an institution-building mission, did not have firm plans, and was willing to listen to ground commanders on what was needed provides evidence that the psychological beliefs are permitted due to the presence of uncertainty, but once local conditions are revealed they take precedence in strategic decision-making.

In this paper, I have attempted to outline the role uncertainty over local institutional contexts can play in explaining poor postwar planning and relegation of strategic decisions. I have argued that traditional theories of poor postwar planning overlook the role uncertainty plays in driving these processes, and once integrating uncertainty back into these theories, it becomes more clear how the regular recurrence of poor postwar planning continues. Further, once integrating uncertainty over local institutional contexts into theories of poor postwar

125. U.S. Department of State, "The Secretary of the Navy to the Secretary of State," 709.

planning, it also becomes clear how states end up in institution-building missions against their own wishes. The relegation of final strategic decision-making until after arriving on the ground and the process of assessing local institutions in the effort of ameliorating uncertainty largely drives these strategic processes. Overall, I argue that poor postwar planning is more expected that typically assumed and the uncertainty inherent in the process means that the only way for interveners to avoid lengthy institution-building missions is to resist the urge to intervene in the first place.