




The Iron Triangle



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*Congress and the Solidification of the Military Industrial Complex between
1945-1973*

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Acknowledgments

As my studies draw to a close, I am lucky to look back on wonderful years at Utrecht University. It was a stimulating and fun period which has enabled the expansion of my skills and capabilities. Its multidisciplinary approach has allowed me to bring together many of my interests and even expand them.

My thesis has allowed me to work on a fascinating topic that had been gathering academic dust to a certain extent. My idea came from an interview by the Daily Show's Jon Stewart with former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. I took up this topic because I enjoy a challenge and I was not familiar with the influential military industry in the U.S. This enabled me to examine the unknown and learn many new things while also incorporating my old love of political analysis. It was not easy but I have certainly become much more informed through this process.

However, I could not have done this without the help of certain people. First of all, I am grateful to my supervisor Jaap Verheul for his patience and constructive criticism. Secondly, I would like to thank my parents, Frans Hartemink and Willy Bervoets for their tireless support and tolerance of my constant complaints. I'd also like to thank Richard Podkolinski for his endless encouragement and for being a strict editor as well as a spirited designer. This thesis would have been much uglier in general without his efforts. Furthermore, I have to thank some of my friends. Mirjam de Bruin, you have my gratitude for always being positive about my capabilities and even donating a mascot. Finally, Roos van Leijenhorst for reminding me of the fact synonyms exist. Without all their help, this process would have been much more difficult.

In May of 2010, during an address in honor of the 65th anniversary of the Allied victory of the Second World War, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates took the opportunity to elaborate on his plans for the future of the Department of Defense (DoD) and its budget. He announced that “military spending on things large and small can and should expect harsher scrutiny,” expressed his desire for “changing the way we operate and achieving substantial savings” and suggested he would make “choices that will displease powerful people both inside the Pentagon and out.”¹ He also suggested he would take these steps, even if that would create tension with Congress. To compound the point, the location of the speech was the Eisenhower library. President Eisenhower believed it was crucial to give the necessary funds to defense, but not a penny more and he also coined the term ‘military industrial complex’ in his 1961 farewell address. Gates referred to President Eisenhower as an example and he said would continue his mission.

Combining the fact that Gates named Eisenhower as his inspiration with the intentions he had formulated in his speech, it is not surprising that some interpreted his speech as a sign that action with regards to the defense budget would ensue and that this would have consequences for the defense industry. In the press, many news outlets connected the speech with Eisenhower, for example National Public Radio’s Morning Edition mentions:

In today’s government, Eisenhower has a fan in his fellow Kansan Secretary of Defense Robert Gates — who keeps a portrait of the former general in his office at the Pentagon, Bowman says. Speaking at the Eisenhower Library last year, Gates talked disapprovingly about America’s insatiable appetite for more and more weapons.²

The link here between the two is made clear as they newscaster not only refers to both Gates and Eisenhower being from Kansas, but Bowman also mentions that Gates is a fan of Eisenhower and even keeps his portrait. Finally, Bowman mentions the ideas Gates

¹ Robert M. Gates, “Speech on Defense Spending” (Abilene, Kansas, May 8, 2010), 2, 3, 5, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1467>.

² National Public Radio, “Eisenhower’s Military-Industry Complex Warning, 50 Years Later : NPR,” *Morning Edition* (Washington, D.C. National Public Radio, 2011), para. 18, <http://www.npr.org/2011/01/17/132942244/ikes-warning-of-military-expansion-50-years-later>.

discussed which are similar to Eisenhower's. Another journalist that shares Bowman's opinion is John Taplin, as he states that Gates reminds the United States about the current relevance of Eisenhower's cautioning speech.

Secretary of Defense Bob Gates went out to the Eisenhower library to remind the nation that Ike's warning about the 'unwarranted influence of the Military Industrial Complex' was more prescient than ever.³

Taplin finds the resemblance between Eisenhower's intentions and those mentioned in Gates' speech similar and is convinced of the fact that the secretary is quite serious about the matter.

This reference to Eisenhower emphasizes the relevance of his warning even in the present. Therefore, this thesis will look at how Congress manages its relationship with the Military Industrial Complex of which the Department of the Defense is an integral part, because this is the area in which Gates is trying to instigate reforms. A look at history will illustrate that this is not an easy task. Throughout history oversight committees have played an essential role in this process. Therefore, this thesis will examine how Congressional oversight committees attempt to manage the Department of Defense and the defense industry. The relationship between the Department of Defense and Congress is powerful, both due to the importance of defending the nation and the extensive budget available for this task. In this relationship all three actors try to defend their interest and achieve what they perceive as the best outcome.

A great shift took place in the relationship between those three actors after the Second World War when the defense industry became a permanent factor in American society. This caused ulterior motives to come into play within the oversight process. Eisenhower perceived this and warned his nation against the possible dangers of that development.

Gates' speech in fact was taken more seriously due to the references to President Eisenhower because of the relationship this president has to the Military Industrial Complex. United States President Dwight David Eisenhower introduced the world to the term Military-Industrial Complex in his farewell address to the nation of 1961. His speech was written by Ralph E. Williams and Malcolm Moos, who had originally introduced the term as the 'Military-Industrial-Congressional Complex'.

Yet, despite Eisenhower's overwhelming concern over the developing nexus between government institutions, the armed forces and military industry, the president refused to explicitly address the role that his political colleagues in Congress fulfill in this cycle. Even without the reference, Eisenhower's warning to constrain the rise of this influential connection was viewed as disproportionately strong, especially given his background. He was, by all accounts, a reliable friend of the military. A career soldier, serving in both world wars,

3 Jon Taplin, "Gates Takes on The Military Industrial Complex | TPMCafe," *Talking Points Memo*, May 11, 2010, para. 1, http://tpmcafe.talkingpointsmemo.com/2010/05/11/gates_takes_on_the_military_industrial_complex/.

who had chosen to remain in the armed forces during the interwar years while so many of his peers sought wealthier prospects in the private sector. He would eventually become a decorated five-star general and the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, playing a critical role in the resolution of the Second World War. It was because of this exceptionally distinguished record that the warning evoked surprise. But it is exactly this military biography that provided Eisenhower with the most appropriate perspective to understand the profound consequences of this evolving relationship. His unique position and experience added further authority to this warning.

The speech by Defense Secretary Robert Gates because of its intentions and the connotations surrounding Eisenhower evoked intense reactions. Republican J. Randy Forbes reacted negatively to Gates' suggestions as he stated that the announced cuts represent the "piecemeal auctioning off of the greatest military the world has ever known".⁴ Many other Senators and Representatives rushed to do the same. Although the deficit was at an all time high and budget cuts were called for, Gates' intentions worried many congressmen. The debate Gates instigated stirred the media as well as Congress as Gates' speech was perceived, or by some even encouraged, as an attack on the influence of the Military Industrial Complex. These intense reactions and the debate surrounding them show that to this day defense spending remains a relevant and high profile issue.

Specifically, this research will examine the role and the findings of the Congressional oversight committees for the Department of Defense and the accompanying industry until 1973. Although oversight is a constantly changing process, for this research it is considered a process, in committee form, that aims for optimization of expenses through congressional review. For this research, the actions under review are those also described by Joel Aberbach. These are the actions of the Department of Defense, other federal agencies, and "commissions and of the programs and policies they administer, including review during program and policy implementation as well as after the fact."⁵

These Congressional oversight committees stem from Congress' desire for change, in this case of the DoD and the defense industry. The committees intend to find methods for that change. The committee's expertise then provides credibility to the methods which should make it easier for Congress to achieve the desired changes. The process of review has taken place through two different kinds of mechanisms to study and make recommendations on how to address problems in the Department of Defense and its predecessors. The first, and most common, form is investigations initiated by Congress. The second type of commissions, Blue-Ribbon panels, is usually appointed by the President. However, only one Blue-Ribbon panel falls within the scope of this research and it had Congressional members. Therefore, both types of oversight fall under congressional oversight in this case.

4 David Martin, "Gates: Days Of Pentagon Waste Must End - CBS News," *CBS News*, August 9, 2010, para. 10., <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/08/09/politics/main6757123.shtml>.

5 Joel D. Aberbach, *Keeping a Watchful Eye: The Politics of Congressional Oversight* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1990), 219.

Neither method of investigation however is intended to prescribe legislative action. That step remains to be taken by Congress, so in both options it is effectively Congress that decides what action to take in regards to the recommendations that are made about the Department of Defense and potential reform. This thesis will provide an answer to the question why reforms in the Defense sector remain so controversial.

An important element in this review process by these committees is the procurement of defense contracts. Procurement was surrounded by controversy during that period due to the redistribution of power after the Second World War and in the context of the Vietnam and Korean wars. The process of procurement is considered to involve the effort to acquire government contracts by the defense industry as well as the appropriations process within the Department of Defense. Despite the fact that Congress is not directly involved in this process, it has the power of the purse and is responsible for oversight on this process which is considered essential to this research.

The cut-off date of 1973 has been chosen because of the specific controversies that surfaced at that time, which can be considered instrumental to the later development of the debate on this issue. The main discussion that arises in this time-frame serve as an example for the later debates as many of the issues discussed in this period return time and again in later decades. Also, during this time the discussion about defense procurement seems to play a larger part in the general debate than it does currently. After 1973 the general debate surrounding defense issues becomes less intense as a general acceptance of a strong defense industry seems to take hold. Also, with the end of the Vietnam War through the Case-Church amendment the defense budget is relieved of some pressure. After this, other issues start to play a larger role and the main discussion shifts to the debate on mastering inflation and reviving the economy.

This thesis concentrates on Congress, the Department of Defense (DoD) and the defense industry because they represent the three essential and most influential groups involved in the procurement process. The Department of Defense, for example, has the power to make budget suggestions, reward contracts to defense contractors and decide on reforms. Congress has the power of the purse, meaning the power to approve the annual national budget, and therefore to determine the amount of money to be ascertained for the Department of Defense. It also has the power to legislate, and the power to investigate.

Furthermore, the defense industry is extremely large and a very important employer in the United States. The defense-related production in the United States has been estimated at approximately 712 billion dollars for 2009 by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) while the number of people working in the arms producing branches of defense contractors in the United States was already estimated at 2,425,000 employees in 2000 and the industry continues to grow.⁶

6 Anup Shah, "World Military Spending — Global Issues," *Global Issues*, (July 7, 2010): para. 22, <http://www.globalissues.org/article/75/world-military-spending>. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *The SIPRI Yearbook 2010: Armaments, Disarmaments and International Security*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 197.

Although the defense industry does not have legal powers, it has a very strong influence through its lobbyists and contacts with the DoD and Congress, as a good working relationship is mutually beneficial to the status and power of all groups involved. It is interesting to note that the official, legal role that has been assigned to these actors does not always coincide with current practice and power and that influence sometimes overrides legal precedents. Especially with regards to the current practice of war powers, the line between the legislative's responsibilities and that of the White House has been eroded but this shall be further discussed later on.

Another important actor that is not considered as a separate actor in this thesis is the president. Even though the U.S. president, as Commander-in-chief, plays an important role, he is usually not involved in specific tasks like the procurement process. The president can be involved with the policy-making, but this is usually done through or by the Secretary of Defense who functions as a representative of the president and his policy. This thesis will illustrate that the Secretary of Defense often executes reforms that are a part of the president's policy. The power of the president to appoint oversight panels plays an important role, however, little execution is possible without Congress' consent. Therefore, in this thesis the president's policy-making role is considered to be represented by the Secretary of Defense, while for his oversight role the president will be considered together with Congress.

However, it has to be acknowledged that ever since the end of the Second World War, the president has become an even larger actor in defense policy. The 1947 National Security Act created the National Security Council (NSC) originally meant to function as an advisory organ to coordinate the actions of the different services like the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and the Intelligence Agencies but it soon became an organ operating to advise the president. According to the White House official history of the NSC, "[t]he view that the NSC had been created to coordinate political and military questions quickly gave way to the understanding that the NSC existed to serve the president alone."⁷ Within this structure a Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, predecessor to the National Security Advisor, was also created. These developments have since 1947 lead to an expansion of the president's influence on matters of national security. This development coincides with the corrosion of the power of Congress to declare war as more military actions are executed on command of the president because it is arguably not considered an act of war. However, despite all this, the actual process of procurement is still a main responsibility of the Department of Defense. With regards to oversight the president's insight will sometimes be considered a source as he has the power to install oversight committees and some presidents have had experience with or expert knowledge of this process.

Although this thesis leaves certain actors out of the equation, this does not suggest that those actors do not influence this process. An important reason is that these three main actors that have been selected play an essential role in the process of defense procure-

7 The White House, "History of the National Security Council," *White House.gov*, para. 3, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/nsc/history>.

ment. Other actors, while still important, play a more marginal or distant role in this process and are therefore not considered here. Therefore, in the interest of keeping the lines in this relationship clear only the main actors will be analyzed. For example, the media are not included as they do not have a professional stake in this process. The media fulfills the role of observer and commentator. Although it can reshape certain messages, this role is not considered outside of the scope of this research as this is not a main role in the procurement process. The main roles in the defense procurement process, as in most procurement processes, are the buyer, the sellers and the overseer, the media does not fulfill any of these three main roles.

Furthermore, the think-tanks are sometimes also considered a separate actor, but are in this case regarded as part of the defense industry as they are often also financed by the defense contracts.

The type of analysis that this thesis makes use of was chosen because it gives a broad, chronological overview of the different developments of the main actors in the procurement process and the debate surrounding them. By observing and analyzing the changes in the Military Industrial Complex a broader understanding is created of the different narratives in the debate on this topic. Despite the many possibilities in analysis of this relationship like management theory, discourse analysis, symbolic interactionism, this thesis shall make use of historical analysis as it shows the diversion from the original way the relationship between the three main actors was formed and intended as well as the causes for this shift.

The analysis will start with an extensive overview of the literature on this topic to describe the most important topics in the academic debate on the military industrial complex. The following chapter will also describe the main rights and responsibilities of the three main actors in this thesis. In this context the constitutional division of power is examined also and used as a basic frame of reference as it provides the 'original intent' of the Founding Fathers which serves as a starting point for the balance of power. It will also introduce a theoretical model to serve as an analytical tool for the relationship between Congress, the DoD and the defense industry.

Furthermore, the second chapter will continue with a historical sketch of the origin and the development of this triangular relationship to provide a background to the following analysis. It will examine the many oversight committees that have looked at the relationship between these actors and its effectiveness ever since it came into being, as well as the implications of their findings and the ensuing action. The scope of the research of these committees as well as their findings tends to vary, however a clear trend surfaces. Over time the scope of research for these committees has narrowed considerably. Where early on the scope was the entire triangular relationship, meaning Congress, the DoD and the defense industry, over time the committees focused more on the DoD and its efficiency alone.

Finally, it must be noted that in this paper the military industrial complex is used as a descriptive term that reflects the relationship between Congress, the Department of Defense and defense contractors. It does not imply a conspiracy of any sort, where some actors consciously have the intention of prolonging wars or other evils for profit and their own personal gain. Suggestions like this have been made in the past, an example that has become quite well-known is the belief that the attacks on September 11th, 2001 were an 'inside job', either caused or approved of by a secret organization within the U.S. government. In 2006 still, an Ohio University poll reported that one third of Americans believed government officials were in some form involved in the attacks with the ulterior motive of going to war. "More than a third of the American public suspects that federal officials assisted in the 9/11 terrorist attacks or took no action to stop them so the United States could go to war in the Middle East".⁸ Entire websites, articles and even many YouTube movies are dedicated to disproving the official theories about the attack, many of which are convinced that the Military Industrial Complex is in some way involved or even to blame for the attacks on September 11th, 2001.⁹ The Military Industrial Complex is often pointed at as warmonger because they have a direct interest because this sector profits from war. This fact has fueled many conspiracies surrounding many different conflicts, but these theories often lack scientific evidence for their arguments.

However, this thesis aims to objectively examine the congressional oversight of the Department of Defense and the defense industry. From Eisenhower and his predecessors up to Gates and his successors, the relationship between Congress, the Department of Defense and the defense industry will remain influential. Therefore this thesis aims to provide a deeper insight into the power balance of this relationship.

8 Thomas Hargrove, "Third of Americans suspect 9-11 government conspiracy | ScrippsNews," *Scripps Howard News Service*, August 1, 2006, para. 1, <http://www.scrippsnews.com/911poll>. For further information on 9/11 attacks and alternatives to the official narrative, check Scholars for 9/11 Truth and Justice <http://stj911.org/hypotheses/alternative.html> and 9/11 Truth, <http://www.911truth.org/>.

9 A quick web search provides us with approximately 6000 movies and nearly 5 million websites somehow covering this topic.

The Military Industrial Complex and The Iron Triangle Model

This topic has been most extensively researched from the second half of the 1960s to early on in the 1980s. After this period, the Military Industrial Complex as an academic topic diminished and the term is only sporadically used in academic research. This chapter will highlight some of the most relevant research conducted from 1965 to 1981 as well as describe the topic's eventual decline. This thesis will utilize the Iron Triangle concept as the basis of analysis. This concept will be described in this chapter with emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of the main actors involved as proscribed by the U.S. Constitution.

Most of the research conducted on this topic originates from the period between 1965 and 1981. Although a valid research topic before this time, the events of those decades fueled an increase in the publications on the Military Industrial Complex between 1965 and 1981. The strain the U.S. military involvement in Korea, Vietnam and Cambodia put on the nation, led to the rise of a more negative view of the Department of Defense and the war industry. This negative perspective combined with the opposition to the draft for the Vietnam war enabled the Civil Rights Movement, which had organized against the segregation laws, to develop and expand. These developments lead to the formation of the 1960s American counterculture which carried anti-authoritarianism as one of its central values. This *zeitgeist* of antiwar protests and distrust of authority proved to be ideal for inspiring research on the Military Industrial Complex. Researchers were examining the inner workings of government to assess whether, or more likely to what extent, their distrust of authority was justified. This seems the main reason for the bulk of research being conducted on this topic between 1965 and 1981.

Most research from the period between 1965 and 1981 seems to fit into either one of two categories. The first of these categories consists of studies based on theory and literature review. They provided a broad overview on the different ideas, theories and concepts surrounding the Military Industrial Complex. Both proponents and opponents of this issue

are more or less equally represented, which created a balanced view of the issue and allows the reader to make up his or her own mind on the implications of this issue. However, these types of studies and their conclusions are mainly based on theory and literature research which still makes them valuable but leaves a niche.

A clear example for the first category is Carrol W. Pursell Jr.'s *The Military Industrial Complex* which is a theoretical exploration of the questions surrounding this topic. Pursell Jr. was a trained historian who focused on the impact of technology within a society. Pursell's research shifted towards the effects of technology on people's lives. A publication like *The Politics of American Science* is a prime example of this shift as it describes how science entered politics and in doing so became integrated in American life.¹⁰ In the context of this shift, Pursell became the editor of *The Military Industrial Complex* which describes and analyzes the historical development of the concept the Military Industrial Complex. It also examines the origins of the complex itself, meaning the relationships between the actors involved, which are far older than the term often used to describe it. The book demonstrates a strengthening of the ties between the Department of Defense, the defense industry and Congress. It does so by describing the historical development of these bonds. Some chapters analyze the effects these ties had on the way defense contracts were procured. One of these effects is a decrease in open bidding as more contracts are given to a specific company so there are fewer opportunities to present bids. A negative consequence of this is a rise in prices as there are fewer possibilities for competition. Finally, some authors discuss the actors involved, their roles and related ideas like a Civilian Complex or Pentagonism¹¹.

Another example of this type of research is *Testing the Theory of the Military Industrial Complex* compiled by Steven Rosen, a political scientist with a background in international relations. This volume analyzes military spending and the U.S. economy. For example the large overlap between the largest military contractors and the top industrial corporations in 1968 as the 19 largest military contractors were in the top 50 of industrial corporations.¹² The different positive and negative views on the Military Industrial Complex are also discussed as well as the comparison with other nations. For example, the Military Industrial Complex in the former U.S.S.R. is considered to be a "symbiotic sharing of interest" as all the actors involved in the military, the industry and the ruling party were part of the communist party. So there were no separate groups that could become intertwined due to the communist system.

10 Carroll W. Pursell, Jr., eds., *The Politics of American Science: 1939 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972). Richard G. Hewlett, "Books Reviews - The Politics of American Science, 1939 to the Present" 8, no. 1 (Jan, 1967), 125.

11 The former being an idea by Republican Senator Barry Goldwater from Arizona in defense of the military and their corporate suppliers. In Carrol W. Pursell Jr.'s *The Military Industrial Complex* (p. 264-270) Goldwater argues that the American left wing politicians have developed a 'complex over a complex'. The latter is an idea by Juan Bosch, former President of the Dominican Republic, that represents a new form of colonialism in which the American people have become colonials with the Pentagon as the new mother country.

12 Steven Rosen, eds., *Testing the Theory of Military Industrial Complex* (Lexington, Massachusetts, Toronto, London: Lexington Books, 1973), 64.

The second category consists of more specific actor-based research, not unlike investigative journalism. These types of investigations try to provide convincing evidence about the actors involved in the Military Industrial Complex, the scale these relationships take place on and what can be done against the negative effects found in some instances. Furthermore, it tries to prove names and numbers for the total amount spent in the arms industry, the sales of individual companies, the recipients in Congress of donations by companies in the defense industry, grass-roots mobilization in contractor-lobbying, the influence of trade associations, personnel transfers between the main three actors of this research and auditors just to name a few.

The second category is represented by publications like Gordon Adams' *The Politics of Defense Contracting: The Iron Triangle* which comes close to investigative journalism. Gordon Adams is a professor of U.S. foreign policy and was an analyst of political and military affairs for the Council on Economic Priorities, a group measuring corporate social responsibility. The book involves an intensive survey of eight key defense industries, and the personnel changes from those eight industries to the government sector and vice versa. The study shows that the eight selected corporations had hired 1672 staff from the Department of Defense and National Aeronautical Space Agency (NASA) between 1970 and 1979 and 270 company employees have been hired by the DoD and NASA. This was an increase compared to the previous period from 1969 to 1973.¹³ Unfortunately, it was impossible to compare to periods before 1969 because there had not been a reporting requirement for job change before that year. The study also reviews the role each group played in conjunction with the DoD, NASA, and the Research and Development subcommittees of Congress. The focus of this study was on collecting data to prove the entanglement of the three actors this thesis focuses on, perhaps supplemented by some others.

Together the categories provide an overall picture and a thorough insight into the Military Industrial Complex. As these two categories supplement each other perfectly, one with its focus on theoretical analysis while the other has a stronger emphasis on investigative journalism. The picture they paint of the Military Industrial Complex is balanced as both the positive and negative effects of this relationship are described. Also the combination of theory and investigate research avoids both an ivory tower description of reality as well as a publication without sufficient background research.

Since the 1970s this fascinating topic has been somewhat neglected. The counterculture movement died down due to the end of the Vietnam war, the death of many notable figures of the counterculture and the general disdain of mainstream culture amongst other things. As a consequence of this fact, the antiwar sentiments decreased and as antiwar protests ceased other topics became prioritized. As a consequence of these events, publications on the Military Industrial Complex become rarer.

Few academics have consistently commented on this issue since the early 1980s. Apart

13 Gordon Adams, *The Iron Triangle: The Politics of Defense Contracting (Studies / Council on Economic Priorities)* 9780878710126 (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 1981), 78.

from some experts like Winslow Wheeler at the U.S. Center for Defense Information and William D. Hartung, director of the Arms and Security Initiative at the New America Foundation.¹⁴ Winslow Wheeler looks at the involvement of Congress in defense legislation and generally seems disillusioned which a(n in)famous article about the post 9/11 defense bills from his hand illustrates *Mr. Smith Is Dead: No One Stands in the Way as Congress Lards Post-September 11 Defense Bills with Pork*. Hartung is an expert on conventional defense spending and the economics of military spending. He has analyzed the Military Industrial Complex in studies like *How Much Are You Making on the War Daddy? A Quick and Dirty Guide to War Profiteering in the Bush Administration* and *And weapons for all*. He also frequently publishes articles in magazines and newspapers and is generally considered an expert on the Military Industrial Complex. However, as the titles of the aforementioned studies show, Hartung is not afraid to speak out strongly against some effects of the relationship that is the Military Industrial Complex. Apart from what these few experts publish, there remains little analytical research on the Military Industrial Complex today.

Perhaps an explanation for the lack of interest in the Military Industrial Complex today might be due to the militarization of the universities as Henry Giroux argues in *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military–Industrial–Academic Complex*. He states that after the 1970s and especially since 9/11 universities and the rest of society has accepted a more fundamental and pervasive celebration of a basic military ethos and its underlying assumptions.¹⁵ This normalization of this military ethos, argues Giroux, has made it acceptable for universities to do business with the Military Industrial Complex and this is how the increased militarization influences the research agenda. The Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security have the ability to fund specific research programs, but this is not the only way in which the research agenda can be influenced, according to Giroux. The defense community also has the possibility of funding of students with a commitment to work for the agency or organization that funded the student after graduating. Giroux argues that this not only compromises the study of these students, but their possibility to do research in other nations is also compromised due to the requirements for certain defense and national security positions.¹⁶ This influencing of the academic world by the Military Industrial Complex is likely to have contributed to the decreasing number of academic publications on this topic as defense-related studies often have a different focus than in the research conducted in the period 1965-1981.

Although the media occasionally pay some attention to this relationship, real academic analysis has become rarer. Most publications on the Military Industrial Complex now carry titles like “The Complex: How the military invades our everyday lives” and “Washington

14 New American Foundation, “William D. Hartung, Director of the Arms and Security Initiative,” <http://newamerica.net/user/22>.

15 Henry A Giroux, *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military–Industrial–Academic Complex* (Boulder, Colorado: Paradigm, 2007), 35-37.

16 *Ibid.*, 45-47.

Rules: America's Path to Permanent War".¹⁷ Today the bulk of publications surrounding the Military Industrial Complex seem to be rather biased and prejudiced, either positive or extremely negative, or even fear-mongering. This seems like a sharp divide when looking at the research from the 1970s and before when the relationship between the three major actors was portrayed much more balanced, providing positive and negative perspectives on the topic.

This can already be considered an interesting indication of a possible change in ideas. Adding to this change is the fact that the Military Industrial Complex remains a popular topic in the blogosphere. There are many websites on the topic itself as well as many blogs on the topic or on recent events that are then related to the influence of the Military Industrial Complex. Although the academic value of most of these blogs are arguably less than sound, it is notable that this topic still receives attention on a less regulated medium as it implies not all of the interest in this topic is waning.

However, the research from that the period 1965 to 1981 remains relevant today, which is why this thesis utilizes a method of analysis called the Iron Triangle from Adams' *The Iron Triangle: The Politics of Defense Contracting*. An Iron Triangle is a political relationship that combines three main actors in a clearly delineated area of policy-making; Federal bureaucracy, key committees and members of Congress, and private interest groups.¹⁸ This method of analysis is useful to be able to historically analyze the relationship between the main actors; U.S. Congress, the DoD and the Defense industry.¹⁹ As Adam argues,

In defense, the participants are the Defense Department (plus NASA and the nuclear weapons branch of the Department of Energy); the House and Senate Armed Services Committees and Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, as well as the Congressional members from the defense-related districts and states; and the firms, labs, research institutes, trade associations and trade unions in the industry itself.²⁰

Although this relationship can be found in many different sectors, the actors involved in defense are one of the most influential due to the large sums of money involved in the defense budget. The Iron Triangle for defense functions like a balance of power. The next section will describe this separation of powers and explain how the relationships in the Iron Triangle function in a similar manner.

17 Nick Turse, *The Complex: How the Military Invades Our Everyday Lives* (New York: Metropolitan Publishers, 2009) and Andrew Bacevich, *Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War* (New York: Metropolitan Publishers, 2010).

18 Adams, *The Iron Triangle*, 24.

19 Winslow Wheeler, *The Wastrels of Defense: How Congress Sabotages U.S. Security* (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 2004). Gordon Adams, *The Iron Triangle: The Politics of Defense Contracting (Studies / Council on Economic Priorities)* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 1981). Herbert I. Schiller and Joseph D. Phillips, eds., *Super-State: Readings in the Military Industrial Complex* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970). Steven Rosen, ed., *Testing the Theory of the Military Industrial Complex* (Lexington, Massachusetts, Toronto and London: Lexington Books, 1973).

20 Adams, *The Iron Triangle*, 24.

According to the separation of powers laid out by the U.S. Constitution, the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government balance each other's lust for power. These three branches would prevent abuse of power by the other branches. James Madison, one of the Founding Fathers, argued for the separation of powers and played a leading role in convincing the Framers of the U.S. Constitution to include the concept of balanced government powers.²¹ Federalist 51 argues that the structure of the government must have the proper checks and balances between the different branches and is accredited usually to Madison, but occasionally to Alexander Hamilton.²² Each of the branches would have an instrument to ensure the others would not become too powerful. This separation of powers was created to function in all matters of government, but in national defense a specific separation of powers can be found.

In the case of national defense, the U.S. Constitution was designed by the framers to impose restrictions on entering into wars. The executive branch, in person of the U.S. president, can restrain Congress through the power of veto over a bill. The executive also has the power to appoint judges, with the Senate's advice. To separate the war powers, the framers have divided these responsibilities as well. The President is given the exclusive power of Commander-in-chief while Congress is endowed the power to declare war and appropriate funding.²³ According to article II, section 2 "[t]he President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States."²⁴

The legislative branch has the power to appropriate the budget as well as form oversight committees to formulate reports on improving the different departments. Historian Arthur Schlesinger noted that "the Founding Fathers supposed that the Legislative branch would play its part in preserving the balance of the Constitution through its possession of three vital powers: the power to authorize war, the power of the purse, and the power of investigation."²⁵ With regards to the war powers, Congress has the power to declare war and maintain the army. Article I, section 8 of that same document declares:

The Congress shall have Power: To declare War, grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal, and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water; To raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer Term than two Years.²⁶

21 Irving Brant, "James Madison (president of United States)," Online Encyclopedia, *Britannica Online Encyclopedia*, para. 1, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/355859/James-Madison>.

22 "Federalist Papers Authored by James Madison," *Founding Fathers.info*, <http://www.foundingfathers.info/federalistpapers/madison.htm>.

23 "War and Treaty Powers of the U. S. Constitution," *Exploring Constitutional Conflicts - University of Missouri - Kansas City*, para. 2, <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/conlaw/warandtreaty.htm>.

24 James Madison et al., "Transcript of the Constitution of the United States - Official," *U.S. Government Archives*, art. II sec. 2, http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html.

25 Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "Introduction," in *Congress Investigates 1792-1974*, eds. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. and Roger Burns (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1975), XI.

26 Madison et al., "Transcript of the Constitution", art. I sec. 8.

Apart from those exclusive powers there are also countervailing powers which can be executed by both Congress and the President. In that area, Congress has the possibility to counteract the power of the president, but unless it explicitly does so the president has free reign. This separation of powers was created to avoid entering into war too whimsically. However, this separation of powers has a different outcome in modern days with the need for quick responses to foreign threats and the relatively slow workings of Congress.²⁷ In theory Congress has the more dominant powers of war. Nonetheless, currently Congress has become less powerful as it is incapable of reacting timely to the rapid progression of national and international crises situation. This leaves more room for the president to operate and exert his war powers. In spite of this, the power to support armies remains with Congress which is therefore responsible for defense spending and oversight over the Department of Defense.

The judicial branch has the power of judicial review, which allows a court to strike down a law or presidential order that it deems unconstitutional. However, this power is not proscribed by the Constitution. This principle has been established through precedent, even though it is mentioned in the Federalist Papers. The judicial branch does not have a specific war-related power. It can use its judicial review on all types of legislation, but has no specific legal responsibilities in war.

The legislative and executive powers that are part of the *trias politica* can also be found in the Iron Triangle. In this case the executive is represented by the Department of Defense and not by the president. As these the legislative and the executive maintain a balance, they also form a system similar to the separation of powers together with the defense industry. The two actors have certain powers over the defense industry, but the industry also has influence over the other two. How this triangle functions shall be examined in the final sections of this chapter. First, the following section describes the goals and responsibilities of the main actors in the Iron Triangle.

The first actor to be examined is the U.S. Congress. The U.S. Constitution charges Congress to “raise and support armies”, “provide and maintain a navy” and “make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces.”²⁸ Congress is initially responsible for creating and governing the U.S. forces. To assist Congress with the task of creating and governing the U.S. armed forces, the Department of War was created in 1789, which would later be succeeded by the Department of Defense. The role Congress fulfills in the Iron Triangle is protecting its own interest, as the other two actors also do. When it comes to defense spending, Congress intends to maintain an army that can defend the nation. It also has another goal. Congressmen, as representatives of the people, intend to protect the interest of those who voted them into office. Congressmen’s professional goal is re-election or leaving a positively-valued legacy. The first aim can be reached by leaving a favorable impression on the people the congressmen represents. This can be achieved by creating jobs in the home state or district, for example through

27 “War and Treaty Powers of the U. S. Constitution,” 2.

28 Madison et al., “Transcript of the Constitution”, art. I ,sec. 8.

allocating budget for defense projects in those areas. The funding for project or jobs in the home state or district of a Congressman is known as pork. Therefore, it is in Congress interest to provide the best possible defense for the nation, preferably manufactured in their backyard.

The second actor in the Triangle is Department of Defense. It was created as the Department of War and meant to function as a civilian agency to administer the field army under the President as Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of War. In 1947 the Department of War became the Department of Defense.²⁹ The tasks of this executive department are laid down in title 10 of the United States Code, the section that outlines the role of the armed forces. It provides the legal basis for the roles, missions and organization of each of the services and the Department of Defense. Title 10 consists of five subtitles, each deals with a separate component of the armed services, namely General Military law, the Army, Navy and Marine corps, Air Force and Reserve Components. The Department of Defense rules “the military forces needed to deter war and protect the security of our country.”³⁰ This makes the department directly responsible for strategy and efficiency, but leaves the approval of budgetary matters and the declaration of war to Congress. Its main interest for the spending of the defense budget is providing optimal defense capabilities. The department’s main focus is on creating or purchasing the most effective equipment and materials, preferably without a cost limit on this. However, as all departments have to stay within their budgets, the Department of Defense’s goal is to purchase the most effective material possible within the range of the budget.

The third actor in this triangle is the defense industry. Its role is not legally appointed, but remains important in the Iron Triangle. Although the defense contractors have no role appointed to them by the Constitution or any other legal document, they have their interest in the defense spending process. These corporations strive to protect these interests and ensure profits, which is the main means of their survival. They try to influence the policy-making process and their business with the department in a way that guarantees an outcome they benefit from. Prosperity for the company, and thus profit for the shareholders, is the goal of corporations in all sectors. So it is only natural that they, and their lobbyists, do what they can to affect that outcome. Therefore, each corporation tries to gain as many contracts as possible. The profit margin in the defense industry is remarkable higher than in many other sectors, partially due to the fact that the projects are usually classified and the work is patented. Also the one-time-use of many products like ammunition provides higher profits for the defense industry. The goal of the defense industry is to avoid direct competition as much as possible to make sure prices can stay up while at the same time trying to gain many, well-paid contracts. This large role makes them an important actor in the triangle as these large corporations are important employers and have enormous amounts to invest. Also, the U.S. is dependent on these corporations for

29 Richard H. Kohn, *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America* (Detroit: Free Press, 1975), chap. Introduction.

30 “United States Code: Title 10 Armed Forces,” *U.S. Government Printing Office*, December 23, 2008, <http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/usc.cgi?ACTION=BROWSE&title=10usc>. Department of Defense, “DoD Mission Statement 1994,” *University of North Texas*, para. 1, <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/status/mission/mdod.htm>.

research and development as these companies have the resources and capabilities to do this type of research while the government usually does not possess these resources. Because of this dependency the DoD often funds R&D research or considers the development part of the procurement process.

The interaction between the three groups is based on influence and money. Usually either party has one of the two and wants the other, so an exchange is made. Congress' main instruments to balance the powers of the other actors are its power of the purse and its ability to conduct oversight into the Department of Defense. The former allows Congress to appropriate or withdraw funding for the DoD. The latter is conducted through Congressional committees or presidentially appointed Blue Ribbon panels that review processes in the Department of Defense and relationships between the department and the defense industry. This highly important means allows for Congress and citizens to be kept informed of the situation in the executive branch as well as suggest reforms in that branch. Without it transparency would suffer, with consequences for American liberties. Winslow Wheeler even predicts these liberties "would wither on the vine."³¹ Congress can control favorable or unfavorable legislation or oversight to maintain the power balance with the defense industry.

Secondly, the Department of Defense is dependent on Congress for their funding, but the Department can allocate the funding given to it to specific projects. As discussed before, Congress has an interest in where the defense projects take place and whether or not this benefits their voters. The department is dependent on the industry for the creation of quality products and benefits from a mutually friendly relationship with the industry. It can create an environment of low regulation to benefit the industry or high regulation to maintain control. However, the DoD benefits when the lobby of the defense industry exerts pressure on Congress to raise the defense budget. Therefore, both actors benefit from a positive relationship with the other.

Finally, the defense industry might not have any legally proscribed role, but it has found effective means to exert its influence. Its main goal is to attain government defense contracts and earmarks. The defense industry has the ability to raise funding and electoral support for politicians or their opponents. For example, the defense sector has contributed nearly \$24 million to political candidates and committees during the 2008 campaign cycle, split evenly between Democrats and Republicans. Despite this reasonable amount, the sector is not even in the top 10 of industry donating to Members of Congress for 2010. This is due to the fact that donations are not the main means for the defense sector to exert its influence. It also has a large lobbying presence. In 2009 the sector spent \$136.5 million on lobbying with more than 1,100 lobbyists representing almost 400 clients.³² In

31 Winslow Wheeler, "Chapter 1: A Mixed History in Congress and the Executive Branch," in *Military Reform: An Uneven History and an Uncertain Future*, eds. Lawrence Korb and Winslow Wheeler (Stanford: Stanford Security Studies Press, 2007), 2.

32 The Center for Responsive Politics, "Defense | OpenSecrets", para. 2-5, <http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/indus.php?Ind=D>. The Center for Responsive Politics, "Top Industries Giving to Members of Congress, 2010 Cycle | OpenSecrets", fig. 1, <http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/mems.php>.

this way the sector tries to influence the policy-making. In this way, the sector can provide electoral support for Congress, whereas Congress has the ability to provide friendly legislation for the industry. Through its lobby influence, the defense industry can also positively influence the budget of the Department of Defense from which this department benefits.

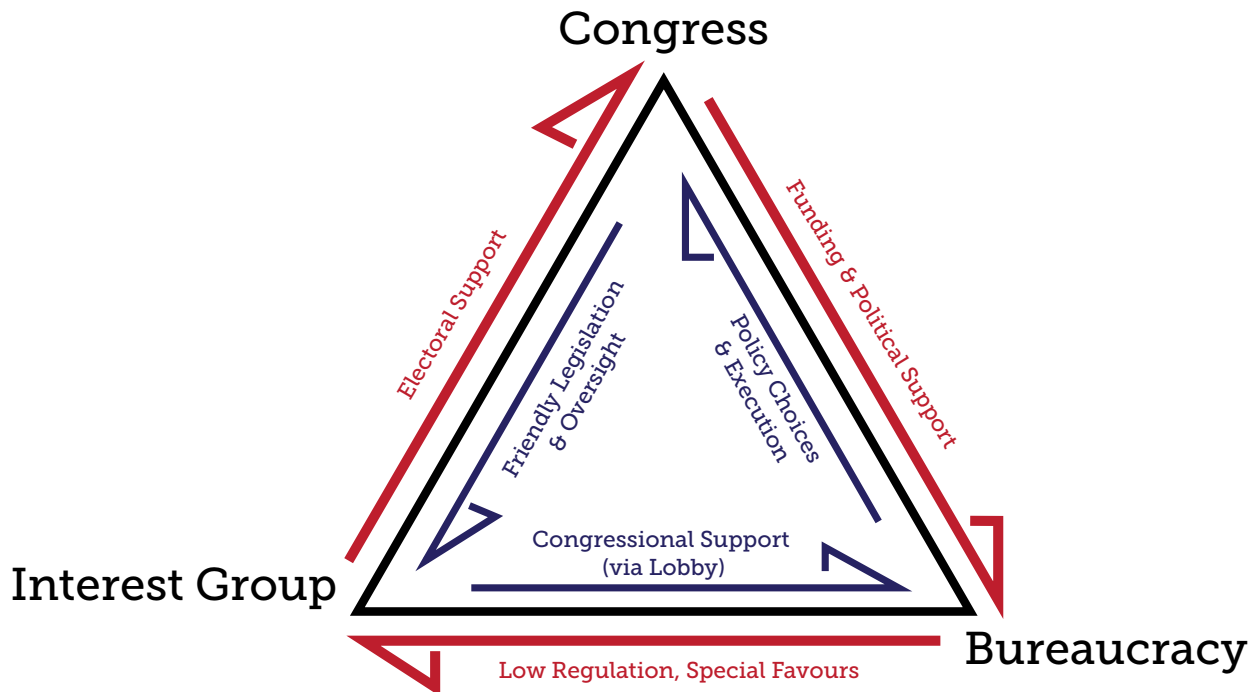


Figure 1: The Iron Triangle³³

The Iron Triangle relationships can be found between U.S. Congress, the executive and many different interest groups. The interdependence in these types of relationships is necessary for beneficial working relationships between all the parties and it should ensure that none of the other actors abuses their power. These three parties should come to a balanced *status quo*, which would ideally be the best course of action for the country. However, what this analysis should clearly illustrate is the fact that all actors benefit from a positive relationship with the other actors. Each actor can benefit from the influence of the other groups. How this relationship transpires in reality will be examined in the next chapter, which covers the development of Congress' oversight role.

33 [Tdaxp] "Describing the Military-Industrial-Sysadmin-Complex: How We Will Win the 5GW to Shrink the Gap," *High-minded, fanatically malthusian perspectives*, July 7, 2007, para. 2, <http://www.tdaxp.com/archive/2007/07/07/describing-the-military-industrial-sysadmin-complex-how-we-will-win-the-5gw-to-shrink-the-gap.html>.

In the defense sector, the interaction between the groups involved in the procurement process has been the subject of much controversy. Ever since the Civil War, the arms industry and its relationships with the military and Congress have been under scrutiny. This chapter will examine how oversight developed from a first attempt by one man to a structural process of review in committee form. This development took place on a small scale as the arms industry had not fully evolved. There were only a few companies venturing into arms manufacturing so there was not that much activity to oversee in the first period of review attempts.

The Truman Committee is considered the pinnacle of this early development of oversight. This committee can be considered the end of the development process as the review process in committee form has fully developed because it has become a respected and influential force. Furthermore, with the Truman Committee the political element starts to become seriously involved with the work of these types of committees. In this development, the main motivations for a committee play an important role in its success. This historical overview examines three important committees with different motivations, namely economic, political and military. All have their flaws, but finally Truman's motivation as a former officer proves the most effective. This development started with the first attempt at oversight during the Revolutionary Wars.

Although the U.S. military industrial complex matured during the First World War, this did not mean the process of arms procurement was without oversight prior to that. Already in 1782, the Continental Congress requested arms manufacturer, Robert Morris, to investigate "fraud, negligence or waste of public property" in Revolutionary Wars purchasing.³⁴ This attempt at oversight will illustrate the effects of an economic conflict of interest of the reviewer. As the U.S. treasury was in debt \$25 million and public credit had collapsed, Congress was forced to take action. So it granted dictatorial powers to Robert Morris and

34 David C. Morrison, "The Defense Reform Merry-Go-Round," *National Journal* (March 22, 1986): 718. Wheeler, "A Mixed History", 4.

even “acquiesced to his condition that he be allowed to continue his private commercial enterprises.”³⁵ He was the owner of a large arms and ammunition manufacturer. Although this can be considered a conflict of interest, Congress needed someone with expertise to conduct oversight and Morris was also Superintendent of Finance at the time. Although he and his firm profited handsomely, without his efforts at raising funds for the war with England and tightening accounting procedures the nation might not have been able to avoid bankruptcy.³⁶ Morris’ oversight, however, was simplified because it was conducted by only one man, who was often distrusted. However, Morris even invested his own fortune in the war effort and took out loans from friends to finance, for example, soldiers’ pay. His support placed strain on his personal credit but Morris’ firm also benefited from government contracts. After the war, he has been reported saying his finances “came out about even”.³⁷

Morris’ investigation resulted in a recommendation to introduce competitive bidding for contracts for arms and other war-related efforts as this would reduce overpayments to war profiteers. Wheeler mentions “[t]his was the first of two centuries of attempts to impose change, in this case the free market system, on U.S. defense purchasing.”³⁸ Unfortunately, this initial example also illustrates one of the obstacles to defense reform. Despite the fact that Morris made a clear recommendation on how to avoid war profiteering, he did little to implement it. Even worse, he ignored it. David Morrison states that he continued “to award contracts to personal friends without the bother of competing them against others.”³⁹ Arguably, this was accepted as he raised funds both privately and professionally for the Revolutionary Wars.

As Morris’ firm had potentially been guilty of profiteering during the Revolutionary Wars, his judgment and loyalty were questioned. Although the results of Morris’ efforts were effective in saving the nation from bankruptcy, he also ignored his own recommendations for improving oversight. This example illustrates the issues that arise when someone with an economic ulterior motive. This causes him to have a conflict of interest when he tries to conduct oversight. When an arms manufacturer also conducts oversight over his own branch, this is likely to lead to a favorable view of the arms industry. Or in this case, despite the fact that the view was not entirely positive, but the results were few. Morris had no incentive to create tough legislation for his own company. As an arms manufacturer will be less likely to push the branch to become more effective, efficient and competitive because it will undermine the profitability of their own business. Although expertise is a requirement in oversight, conflicts of interest diminish its efficiency.

35 “Biographical Sketches - Signers of the Declaration (Robert Morris),” *National Park Service*, para. 4, http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/declaration/bio33.htm.

36 *Ibid.*, 3.

37 *Ibid.*, 4.

38 Wheeler, “A Mixed History”, 4.

39 Morrison, “The Defense Reform Merry-Go-Round”, 718.

Congress' Joint Committee on the Conduct of War, originating from the American Civil War, was the second major attempt at oversight. By that time an official Navy and War Department had been created. This committee illustrates the issues that arise when a politically motivated committee lacking military experience attempts oversight. This committee was formed after the Union army was defeated in the first battle of Bull Run in December of 1861.⁴⁰ Several Members of Congress had traveled to Virginia to observe the Union army's battle while enjoying a picnic. The loss of the Union army and the deserting soldiers shocked the delegation of Congressman which led to the creation of the Conduct of War Committee. The committee was to investigate military contracts, illicit trade with the Confederate States and the causes of Union battle losses and was chaired by Republican Senator Benjamin Wade.⁴¹ Although the committee's hearings were not open to the public, the committee leaked classified information to the press to generate public support for their work. For example, the committee leaked the statements of a General Frémont whose actions in the field were considered controversial. The committee intended to gain public support for Frémont's actions as to ascertain his reappointment. Throughout the war the committee tended to support antislavery, Republican generals in favor of their Democratic counterparts who remained neutral on the topic regardless of their strategic success.⁴²

The committee used secret testimony to discredit certain soldiers and military officers.⁴³ As this was a civil war, the committee often questioned the loyalty of soldiers who had lost a battle or were slow to pursue the enemy. Sometimes the committee would even accuse officers of being traitor and then press the president for a change in leadership. This created a negative, politically charged atmosphere which negatively affected the Union army's performance. Furthermore, the committee had little knowledge of military strategy and a simplified perception of war due to this lack of knowledge and belief in Northern superiority. This led the committee to interpret acts of caution exerted by trained officers as cowardice. It would also disapprove of military leaders that would not execute aggressive, offensive operations.⁴⁴

The committee members themselves were not unsatisfied with their own performance and felt their work had made a considerable contribution to the war effort. They had led President Lincoln "to more carefully consider the strategy and evaluate the performance of his top field commanders."⁴⁵ However, the Committee on the Conduct of War was considered well-intentioned but inexperienced in Congress in general. The military had a more negative perspective, it found the committee lacked "military experience and seemed unquali-

40 Wheeler, "A Mixed History" 4.

41 "U.S. Senate: Art & History Home > Origins & Development > Powers & Procedures > Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War," *United States Senate*, para. 1, http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/investigations/JointCommittee_ConductofWar.htm#Public_Relations. Bruce Tap, *Over Lincoln's Shoulder: The Committee on the Conduct of the War (Modern War Studies)* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 5.

42 "Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War", 4.

43 Tap, *Over Lincoln's Shoulder*, 165.

44 "Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War", 4.

45 *Ibid.*, 7.

fied to analyze war-related decisions and commanders who made them.”⁴⁶ This committee inserted itself so far into military affairs with negative consequences that Confederate commander Robert E. Lee even commented that “the Committee was worth about two divisions of Confederate troops.”⁴⁷

Even though Congress would remain involved afterward, the nature and the depth would never be larger than at the time of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of War as the rest of this thesis will illustrate. It has become a historical example of how Congressional investigations should not be done. It illustrates that a lack of expertise combined with a political motivation can lead to dangerous results. The committee’s ulterior motives in this case were political as they tried to influence policy and military appointments.

Although there was less evidence of corruption than in the case of Robert Morris, the committee also delivered fewer results. The committee made clear that Congress should leave some subject areas, like battle-strategy, to the military staff and some expertise on the topic is desirable.⁴⁸ The Conduct of War Committee illustrates that there was much left to improve in the functioning of these oversight committees. Also, the broad scope of this committee without members that were able to restrain themselves was considered dangerous. This mistake would not be repeated in future committees.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the number of corporations dependent solely on income through arms manufacturing and other defense-related activities was still next to none. Corporations would perhaps have a branch that was oriented towards defense activities or they would adapt their production line when the situation required, or made it profitable, to do so. However, this would soon change. During the First World War some companies, either independent organizations or subsidiaries of larger corporations, turned to defense production as the primary source of income.

When the First World War ended, the availability of these government contracts dried up and led to the disappearance of many firms for whom no alternative sources of income existed beyond government contracts. In an attempt to avoid the disappearance of their companies, industry leaders argued that retaining their business possibilities would have significant detrimental effect on the market and employment rate. This approach enabled the industry to elicit the assistance of both the financial community and government officials. The government considered it beneficial to supply their voters with defense jobs while the financial community as shareholders benefited from their return on investment. The financial community and the government were instrumental in crafting national policies that made it easier for defense contractors to survive during peacetime. The major incentive for these policies was to keep critical personnel in working teams and keep production facilities open, even though this essentially led to a subsidized private defense

46 Ibid., 6.

47 David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 258. See also Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. and Roger Burns, eds., *Congress Investigates: A Documented History, 1792-1974* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1975).

48 Ibid., 258.

industry. The consistent defense procurement, air mail subsidies and beneficial Federal regulations are only a few examples.⁴⁹ Although these regulations were introduced during the First World War, by that time most defense contractors had already gone under. This would not be so the second time around.

After the First World War many books and articles were published which argued the arms manufacturing industry had had a strong influence on the U.S.' decision to enter into this war.⁵⁰ In response to these accusations Congress formed the Special Senate Committee Investigating the Munitions Industry in 1934. This committee was under leadership of progressive Republican Senator Gerald Prentice Nye of North Dakota. This senator was known for his anti-big business sentiments. He had earned the name Gerald the Giant-killer in the previous decade during the Teapot Dome scandal.⁵¹

The Senate Committee on Public Lands and Surveys of which Nye was the chairman researched claims published by the *New York Times* against Secretary of the Interior.⁵² The paper accused Secretary of the Interior Albert Fall of having leased, without competitive bidding, the U.S. naval petroleum reserve at Wyoming's Teapot Dome to a private oil company. In the committee's final report it not only produced proof of the claims made by the *New York Times*, it also discovered the oil company had donated funds to the Republican National Convention in return for the lease.⁵³

Senator Nye was considered an excellent candidate to chair the Special Senate Committee as he was young and had courage. The Senator who pushed for Nye's appointment claimed he was "the only one out of the 96 whom he deemed to have the competence, independence and stature for the task."⁵⁴ However, Nye was isolationist and at least somewhat prejudiced against the arms industry as he had stated: "when the Senate investigation is over, we shall see that war and preparation for war is not a matter of national honor and national defense, but a matter of profit for the few."⁵⁵

In the committee's final findings this was not the case. This proves that despite Nye's prejudice, he was an empiricist. Despite the committee's factual report, the findings were considered highly controversial. The report took a strong stance against the lobbying practices of the defense industry. Just to give a brief impression of the tone the Nye Committee used:

49 Adams, *The Iron Triangle*, 21.

50 Pursell, *The Military Industrial Complex*, 118.

51 "Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War," para. 2-4.

52 Burl Noggle, *Teapot Dome: Oil and Politics in the 1920s* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1962), 198.

53 Robert W. Cherny, "Graft and Oil: How Teapot Dome Became the Greatest Political Scandal of its Time," *History Now. The Historians Perspective*, para. 3-8, <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/historynow/historian5.php>.

54 Barbara W. Tuchman, *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), 382.

55 "U.S. Senate: Art & History Home > Historical Minutes > 1921-1940 > 'Merchants of Death'", para. 3, http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/merchants_of_death.htm.

I understand the morning after the (appropriations) bill went through, every east coast shipyard had its representatives in Washington with their tongues hanging out and all teeth showing ready to fight for their share of the plunder, and the only thing that kept the west coast yards from being here was the fact that they couldn't come bodily by telegraph.⁵⁶

This disapproving tone indicates the committee's negative impression of the defense industry's behavior while attempting to acquire government contracts. However, this was not the only defense industry behavior the committee criticized. It was also displeased by the high profits the munitions companies demanded for their production and services. The Nye Committee criticized the expectations of high profits by the munitions industry in the following manner. "...the munitions companies insisted throughout on their pound of flesh in the form of high profits for their production and did not let their patriotism stand in the way of their 'duty as trustees' to the stockholders."⁵⁷

Finally, the committee had a strong opinion on the way corporations dealt with the competitive bidding for government contracts. It even claimed to find evidence of collusive bidding, which the committee strongly condemned. It described this type of collusion on government contract bids in the following words. "If there was no collusion, there was sympathetic understanding among the big companies of each others' desires. If there were no conversations about bidding among them, there was telepathy."⁵⁸

The committee also mentions the impossibility of enforcing legislation that tries to influence the *status quo*. For example, the committee's inability to enforce the existing laws. The Vinson-Trammell bill of 1934 was one of the attempts at regulating the defense industry's high profit margin. This bill allowed for a maximum profit of 11.1% for the defense industry. However, this bill was impossible to enforce unless a huge police force of accountants was available. Such a force was available and therefore it was impossible to check if companies abode by this legislation. Though the Nye Committee discovered this was often not the case.⁵⁹

Furthermore, the committee did not only look at issues in the defense industry, but also at the relationship between the industry and the Department of Defense. It uncovered several instances of unhealthy cooperation between the two. The following example from the Nye Committee hearings illustrates their attitude towards this type of cooperation. The first example explains the negative consequences of the close ties between the defense industry and the DoD. These two actors took action against their political enemies to ensure their common goals, a pro Navy Congress and a higher budget, would be ascertained:

56 "Congressional Record", 74 Congress, 2nd Session, June 26, 1936, 10134.

57 Ibid., 10135.

58 *Congressional Record*, 26 June 1936, 10135.

59 Pursell, *The Military Industrial Complex*, 126.

the Navy League of the United States has solicited and accepted contributions from steamship companies...on the ground that these would profit from a large navy... [and] together with various Navy officials have engaged in political activity looking toward the defeat of congressmen unfavorable to Navy League and Navy views.⁶⁰

Despite the stern tone in the earlier statements by the committee, the description of this cooperation is fairly neutral. The committee describes its evidence in a neutral way and refrains from judgment until the conclusion. In the conclusion, the committee warns against the dangers that spring from this unhealthy cooperation between departments and industry. A political power which only satisfies its own selfish interest is a dangerous direction for the U.S. according to the Nye Committee:

close association between munitions and supply companies on the one hand and the service departments on the other hand... constitutes an unhealthy alliance in that it brings into being a self-interested political power which operates in the name of patriotism and satisfies interests which are, in large part, purely selfish.⁶¹

This committee did not only look at the ties between the defense industry and the Department of Defense, it also examined the interaction between Congress and the industry. It found a strong lobby presence of the defense industry. Apart from this, the committee found some companies in the industry engaged in bribing Congressmen to attain their goals. The committee's report notes:

The committee notes the claims of the Washington representative of United Drydocks in 1934 that he could get a bill through Congress for \$50,000 [in bribes], and that 'there is no virtue in being quixotic at this stage'. It notes the placing of Congressmen on certain committees at the request of the shipbuilders. It notes the claim to have helped the Navy on certain bills and to have elected Members to the House Rules Committee.⁶²

Despite the extensive reports and critical attitude of the committee, opinions on its value vary greatly. Winslow Wheeler mentions the negative attitude towards the committee.

The Nye Committee has been trashed by most historians as conspiratorial, leftist, and isolationist. It concluded World War I was caused by a scheme of arms manufacturers seeking profit; it recommended nationalization of major portions of the arms industry, and its protagonists were highly active in isolationist causes before World War II.⁶³

60 "Congressional Record", 10134-10137.

61 Idem.

62 Idem.

63 Wheeler, "A Mixed History", 5.

However, there are not only negative opinions on the Nye Committee. Carroll W. Pursell, Jr., values the committee's findings as he states that in the voluminous Committee reports

the operations of a [military industrial] complex were clearly revealed, but subsequent events proved that despite Progressive hopes, disclosure and public censure are insufficient defense against the machinations of a profitable and powerful alliance of public and private interests.⁶⁴

The fact remains that evidence was found of intimate and unhealthy cooperation between the military service and defense industry, as well as proof of strong ties between both of those actors and Congress. Although some of the close ties that the committee points out have become generally accepted in the present, this thorough analysis of the process was groundbreaking at the time. The committee also took all relevant actors into account and criticized all behavior it deemed inappropriate or unhealthy. Therefore the Nye Committee deserves at least some credit for identifying a web of very complex interactions and criticizing the negative aspects of this network.

The committee's findings did bolster isolationist sentiments due to the negative portrayal of big business. The committee reported that between 1915 and early 1917 the U.S. had loaned the United Kingdom and its allies almost a 100 times more than to Germany.⁶⁵ This was one of the facts that led to conspiracies about the reason behind the U.S. entry into the First World War. The committee's work led to the passage of the Neutrality Acts of 1935, 1936, 1937, and 1939 outlawing arms trade with and providing credit for all parties in a war.⁶⁶

Before the U.S. entered into the Second World War, the defense industry blossomed once again due to contracts with nations already at war. President Roosevelt, before his election to the highest office, had pledged to "take the profits out of war" and made a statement about the arms race of that time.⁶⁷ He claimed it was a "grave menace ... due in no small measure to the uncontrolled activities of the manufacturers and merchants of the engines of destruction and it must be met by the concerted action of the people of all nations."⁶⁸

However, after his election as president, Roosevelt changed directions. As historian Bruce Catton phrased it, "Dr. New Deal had been dismissed and Dr. Win-the-War had been called in to prescribe for the dangerously ailing nation."⁶⁹ The Roosevelt Adminis-

64 Pursell, *The Military Industrial Complex*, 117.

65 "Merchants of Death", 5.

66 Jerald A. Combs, "Embargoes and Sanctions," *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, 7, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_gx5215/is_2002/ai_n19132406/pg_7/.

67 "TIME Person of the Year: Story Archive Since 1927, Franklin D. Roosevelt," *Time Magazine*, 1935, para. 28, <http://www.time.com/time/subscriber/personoftheyear/archive/stories/1934.html>.

68 "Weekly Report," *Congressional Quarterly* 6 (1964): 265-278.

69 Pursell, *The Military Industrial Complex*, 141.

tration had decided to prioritize winning the war, and to do so with as little disruption of existing institutions as possible. Even before the United States had entered into the war, President Roosevelt had started asking for appropriations of billions of dollars for the prewar build up and loans to the warring parties. By the 1st of December 1940, over \$10 billion had been appropriated for new defense contracts. That amount is approximately \$180 billion in 2006 dollars.⁷⁰

During that time, Senator Harry S. Truman from Missouri, later Roosevelt's last Vice-President and the 33rd U.S. President, made himself famous by executing oversight on the growing defense industry. Truman considered improving the defense sector a personal mission, partially due to his personal experience in the military serving as an artillery officer during the First World War. Compared to Truman's visits, today's inspections by Congressmen are a virtual circus. Truman went on these visits unaccompanied and sometimes even unexpected. As McCullough describes,

Truman drove in his own personal car (an 'old dodge') and was not accompanied by a gaggle of military escorts to arrange his meals and lodging, make pleasant conversation, and otherwise ensure life was comfortable for him. He did not even take along his staff. He was utterly alone; unless asked, he did not even identify himself as a U.S. senator.⁷¹

After his expeditions, Senator Truman met with President Roosevelt in private to persuade him to take action to improve the situation. Truman had been not at all pleased with his findings: "huge waste everywhere, corporations making giant profits with no incentive from competition to be more efficient, and military and government officials doing nothing about any of it."⁷² However, the White House did not consider Truman's findings a priority considering the political climate at the time. Although the U.S. had not entered into the Second World War yet, the defense industry was geared up and profiting from arms trade with Europe. Also, the involvement of the U.S. in that war was not out of the range of possibilities.

As Truman's plea was not heard in the White House, he delivered a speech to the Senate in which he proposed a special committee to further examine his own findings.⁷³ The Senate voted in March 1941 and made Truman chairman of the Special Senate Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program. The committee had a broad mandate which included the study of defense contracts and the bidding for them, their geographic distribution, their effect on labor and migration, the performance of and benefits to con-

70 Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Congress Investigates*, 330. Inflation adjustment is calculated from National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 2002, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), March 2002 and from discussion with staff of Congressional Budget Office.

71 McCullough, *Truman*, 256.

72 Wheeler, "A Mixed History", 7.

73 McCullough, *Truman*, 256.

tractors, and “such other matters as the committee deems appropriate.”⁷⁴ Truman’s committee and its staff earned a reputation for professionalism, fairness and independence. He went on a path to expose corruption, inefficiency and waste, but kept out of topics that were beyond the committee’s reach like tactics and strategy. This in contrast to the behavior of the 1861 Committee on the Conduct of War, which illustrates the lessons learned from earlier mistakes. Although the committee in theory had an unlimited scope, Truman refused to focus on anything that he considered an unsuitable task for civilians. The Committee’s 51 reports were perhaps voluminous but not without reason, as straight forward assertions filled the pages. For example, the committee found evidence of fraud in competitive bidding. As the report observed “[s]o called competitive bidding, [which] has often been used as a cover for collusive bidding in Government contracts.”⁷⁵

Although this was an important discovery, the committee also focused on problems that had received little attention up until its reports. A clear example of this is the mass production of products which suffered design flaws. These unfinished designs led to corrections on a mass scale or models that would not function as intended. The report recommended “we should not attempt mass production of an entirely new model incorporating a whole series of major improvements until after it has been tested and proved.”⁷⁶

Another problem the committee took issue with was false advertising. This misrepresentation of products by either the Department of Defense or the defense industry was condemned by Truman and the committee members. As the committee’s report summarized:

The committee particularly condemns advertising such as the Curtis Helldiver advertising which was intended to give the public the erroneous impression that the Curtis Helldiver was the world finest dive-bomber and was making a substantial contribution to the war effort when the fact is that no usable plane has yet been produced... The fact that such advertising was approved by the Navy and was based upon a speech of a Navy Admiral does not justify it.⁷⁷

These strong criticisms of civil-military interaction were not an attempt to undermine the war effort. Truman’s achievements gave citizens “the impression that their interests were being protected and the selfish and inept were being rooted out.”⁷⁸ When the U.S. entered into the Second World War, Secretary of Defense Robert Patterson recommended to Roosevelt to suspend the Truman committee as not hurt the public morale. However, Truman saved his research by appealing to Roosevelt and arguing that the committee supported the administration and had no intention of criticizing the military conduct of the war. Apart from that, the committee’s findings led to significant savings, some even estimate

74 Schlesinger, *Congress Investigates*, 330.

75 Congressional Record, March 4, 1944.

76 Congressional Record, July 10, 1943.

77 Idem.

78 Wheeler, “A Mixed History”, 8.

these savings at approximately \$15 billion dollars, which would currently roughly translate to \$270 billion dollars.⁷⁹

Despite all the positive recognition he received, Truman did have to compromise his efforts as he was not able to examine racial discrimination and segregation within the U.S. forces, something which he would later somewhat make up for as president by desegregating the armed forces. Regardless of this, his attempt at critical oversight of the armed forces can be considered as one of the most successful. While the Joint Committee on the Conduct of War from 1861 served as a negative example, Truman's committee became a shining example of how defense oversight was to be conducted. The committee gained results and did not have its loyalty or professionalism questioned. It was well-respected and considered independent. For this reason, the Truman Committee can be seen as the pinnacle of defense oversight. During Truman's time the defense industry blossomed, yet his committee remained a force to be reckoned with as their judgment was stern but fair. The fact that Truman is a former member of the military and therefore has some experience with the branch he was overseeing proved successful. It also added to his credibility. Further recognition of this fact is the reference to the Truman Committee in difficult situations after the Second World War. This is illustrated by Congresswoman Slaughter's call for a committee of the Truman Committee's quality and standards for the U.S. wars in 2005.⁸⁰

The Truman Committee allowed its chairman to evolve from a marginal senator to a respected leader. The positive attention Harry Truman received because of the Truman Committee made him known and respected on the national stage, which would later enable him to become Vice-President. Due to Truman's altruistic motive and expertise on the topic his committee became a success. This gave him national publicity and acknowledgment, but this was not Truman's main reason for undertaking his mission. There lies the difference with the other committees up until this point. They all had ulterior motives which led the task of oversight to become engulfed by political power-play. Morris had an ulterior economic motivation to protect his own branch, the Committee on the Conduct of War wanted to exert its political influence and the Nye Committee was prejudiced against big business which eroded their credibility. The Truman Committee did not suffer any of these problems.

However, after the Truman Committee other politicians tried to follow his example as defense oversight became one of the ways to climb the Washington ladder. As politicians realized the positive addition defense oversight could bring to one's career, defense oversight almost seemed to become a fad.

This chapter describes the evolution from an initial attempt at oversight over the defense industry to a more fully developed screening of the entire system in committee form. This

79 Schlesinger, *Congress Investigates*, 338.

80 Louise Slaughter, "Our Troops Deserve a Modern Day Truman Commission," *Huffington Post*, para. 4, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rep-louise-slaughter/our-troops-deserve-a-mode_b_772.html.

development was necessary to keep up with the growing defense industry. The industry reacted to industrial development and the size of conflicts, and the related size of demand for their products. During the Revolutionary Wars, there was hardly a defense industry to speak of but during the First World War the number of companies producing war-related products increased exponentially. This reflection of technological and economic development provided the prerequisites for a permanent defense industry. The growth in production led to a stronger defense industry and Defense department. The ties between the three actors of the Iron Triangle had formed, but only by the time the Second World War ended did these relationships become so strong that they could be typified as an Iron Triangle.

The growing production of war-related products meant that the oversight over this sector also needed to develop to maintain a balance. For Congress to maintain influence over the growing defense industry and the growing war, or later, defense bureaucracy its oversight activities needed to increase in frequency and in quality. This illustrates that when part of an Iron Triangle is strengthened, the other actors will make an effort to maintain the balance. In this case, Congress allowed for friendly legislation for the defense industry. This legislation, combined with a growing demand because of the First and Second World Wars, led to a growing defense industry. Related to this is the growth in the Department of Defense itself. This was initially due to an increase in military activities during war, but this increase in bureaucracy was maintained. This was partially because of its employing potential, but also due to the fact that the defense industry needed to be maintained and screened. The interaction between the growth of the defense industry and the Department of Defense illustrates the dependence between the different actors in the triangle.

Congress tried to maintain balance in its relationship with the Department of Defense and the defense industry which is why the oversight committees grew in scope and frequency. In this development all actors tried to expand, or at least maintain, their power. This 'in-fighting' led to some balance in the relationship between the three actors. A main cause for this is the Congressmen responsible for the review process have the national interest at heart. The following chapter will illustrate how this will change in the following decades.

Oversight and Solidification of The Iron Triangle between 1944 and 1973

After the Second World War the defense industry became a permanent feature of American society. This had certain consequences for oversight as the permanent defense sector influenced all actors involved in the oversight process. The main difference for the defense industry itself was the change from an ad-hoc industry to a permanent one. Prior to the Second World War, the U.S. defense industry had consisted of several small firms that had weapons production as one of their business lines. They would only broaden their armament scope when the U.S. was involved in a conflict. After the Second World War, big business would come to dominate the arms sector, some of which had arms production as their only source of income. “[T]he record of the war years shows a constant increase in the importance of big business and a constant decline in that of the little concerns [small business].”⁸¹ The permanence of the defense industry was only possible due to the government’s decision not to dismantle the industry as it had done following the First World War.

New ideas about the benefits of a defense industry led the government to decide against amending regulations, which would have taken apart the arms industry. The idea that the defense positively influences the nation’s economy, coupled with a new interpretation of the American role on the global stage established a permanent military industry. As Pursell argues,

powerful forces within the United States saw a *Pax Americana* backed up by armed force as the most desirable state for the postwar world. Both world wars had lifted the nation from depression, and informed opinion feared a return of hard times with the end of fighting in Europe. [...] The decision was made that this country should become the policeman of the world. [...] a strong military, backed up by a strong munitions industry, became a cornerstone of public policy.⁸²

81 Pursell, *The Military Industrial Complex*, 154.

82 Ibid., 129.

The idea of the U.S. as an exceptional nation on the global stage came to drive foreign policy. American exceptionalism replaced isolationism which had consequences for the national perspective on defense. As an exceptional nation, the U.S. needed a powerful military to back up their strong international position. Furthermore, Congress came to realize the benefits of having a permanent defense industry as it would continually generate employment and employed voters were more likely to facilitate reelection. Thus, Congress benefits from defense industry investment. Congress was able to afford this increase in defense spending due to the introduction of the income tax during the Second World War. As this tax was never abolished after the Second World War, the U.S. could afford expanding the national budget.

The Department of Defense was also influenced by this paradigm shift. Due to a larger budget, the Department of Defense became able to continually possess well-trained and prepared armed forces with the ability to react to emergency situations. The idea of American exceptionalism fueled arms stockpiling. This combination contributed to the expanding arms race with the Soviet Union. As a result, the Department of Defense was required to constantly improve and expand their arsenal for which consistent and ever-increasing funding was necessary. This permanent requirement for national defense is illustrated by the symbolic name change of the department. Prior to the Second World War, national defense was only necessary when the U.S. was in a war or conflict which was always a temporary situation. After the Second World War, the U.S. found itself in a seemingly permanent Cold War which required permanent investment. In this context the name of the Department of War was changed to the Department of Defense in 1949. This symbolic name change illustrates the shift from temporary defense during war to a long-term defense of the nation. The spending required for this shift fueled the permanent defense industry. The name change also signified the unification of the Department of War with the Department of Navy. This change also required some restructuring.

As a result of this new state of permanence the relationship between the defense department, Congress and the defense industry changed. Oversight committees were no longer focused on short-term savings in a temporary system and individual cases of war profiteering. Instead the oversight committees focused on keeping a perpetual system functioning as efficiently as possible as well as condemning endemic corruption within the system. The military was no longer viewed as a temporary expense and the military budget continued to increase.

Another result of the permanent defense industry was a change in oversight over the DoD and the defense industry. These two actors now fell under two types of oversight committees. The Department of Defense became subjugated to another type of oversight apart from defense specific oversight. Committees established to oversee efficiency in the entire government started to take the Department of Defense into account. These types of committees had broad mandates examining government efficiency in general. Prior to the Second World War, these types of committees were unlikely due to the smaller scope of government. Adjacent to the general government review committees, the committees with a focus solely on defense remained. All of the committees intended to prevent financial

mismanagement, but the earlier committees also had another motive. As the executive branch was confronted with a permanent need for the defense and a permanent military industry, it needed to create order in the political system. Therefore, the oversight committees also functioned as a way for the government to regulate the military establishment.

However, each of the committees had ulterior motives apart from preventing financial waste. The previous chapter described economic, political and military motives behind the initial attempts at oversight of the temporary defense industry. After the defense industry becomes permanent this trend does not change because Congress attains an ulterior motive apart from creating an efficient department. Congress benefits from conducting oversight with as a goal attaining more pork on behalf of their voters. The previous chapter illustrated that the ulterior motives of these committees influence their success. Therefore, this chapter will also examine ulterior motives and the effects these have on a committee's efficiency. The first part of this chapter analyzes the work of the committees with a focus on improving general government efficiency. The section after that will discuss the committees that focus specifically on the Department of Defense and its relationship with the defense industry.

As the previous chapter indicated, President Truman aimed to create better government through improvement of its management. However, the congressional majority did not agree with his views. They considered economy and savings the goal of reorganization. Truman also indicated that he considered an issue that each government agency forged alliances with its clientele and its congressional oversight committee. This Iron Triangle or 'triangle of power' as Truman referred to it, considered any presidential reorganization a threat to its influence.⁸³

In his first term, Truman submitted several reorganization plans to Congress but all were rejected. Although Truman was disillusioned by this fact he did not capitulate. His unlikely friendship with former president and Truman's political adversary Herbert Hoover ultimately became beneficial.

Officially established in 1947 by the National Security Act as the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government, President Truman appointed former President Herbert Hoover to chair the commission, whom it then was named after. The U.S. government at that time had greatly expanded due to the reforms of the New Deal and the mobilizing of the nation for the Second World War. Members of both political parties considered it time for reducing the size of government. The Commission was bipartisan, but contained more Democrats than Republicans. However, several of the Democrats were opposed to Truman's policies, which did not simplify Hoover's chairmanship of the commission. Their goal was to streamline government efficiency and "to find ways to reduce the number of federal government departments and increase their efficiency... post-World War II."⁸⁴

83 William E. Pemberton, "Truman and the Hoover Commission," *Whistle Stop, the Newsletter of the Harry S. Truman Library Institute* 19, no. 3 (1991): 14-15.

84 Encyclopædia Britannica, "Hoover Commission (United States government)," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, para. 1, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/271415/Hoover-Commission>.

Hoover already had established a reputation as a former president. He considered this attempt at government efficiency a personal mission. Apart from his clear Republican stance, Hoover did not seem to have an ulterior motive apart from creating a more limited government. However, Congress had limited the committee's scope by instructing it to create a management assessment and refrain from evaluating policy. A special task force was created under the Hoover Commission to focus on the newly created Department for Defense. Officially this group was called the Task Force for National Security Organization. However, it was nicknamed the Eberstadt task force after its chairman Ferdinand Eberstadt.⁸⁵ This task force wrote the final report on the national security structure which was published as part of the Hoover Commission's reports.

In 1949, the commission presented their initial recommendations to President Truman which proposed additional centralization of power. The Commission recommended "further centralization of authority around the Secretary of Defense to reduce costly duplication in procurement and waste in utilization among the three services."⁸⁶ This reinforced civilian control of the military. The civilian control resulted in the increasingly politicized military procurement. These recommendations intended to avert the infighting between the Joint Chiefs of Staff about the division of the budget.

The Hoover Commission was a fairly successful attempt at reform because it achieved tangible results. The findings "resulted in an extensive reorganization of the executive branch of the federal government."⁸⁷ Congress implemented most of the Commission's 273 recommendations. A later review by the Second Hoover Commission notes that "116 recommendations were fully realized, 35 were mostly carried out and 45 were partially implemented."⁸⁸ Most of these were executed under the 1949 Reorganization Act. Congress enacted this legislation giving enforcing presidential reorganization powers.⁸⁹ Part of its success was due to the fact that Truman considered administrative reforms of the highest priority, but the bipartisan effort also played an essential part as "members of Congress on either side of the aisle advocated government streamlining, both for efficiency and as a curb on excessive control and regulation of the private sector."⁹⁰

For the Department of Defense this meant a stronger Secretary of Defense and more civilian control over the military. However, the issue of interservice conflicts was not fully resolved and as a consequence of this defense budgets continued to rise. The Hoover Commission's report on National Security Organization claims that the Joint Chiefs were

85 Charles B. Coates, "Book Review - A Hook in Leviathan, a critical interpretation of the Hoover Commission Report," *Political Science Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (Jun., 1950): 287.

86 Wheeler, "A Mixed History", 10.

87 Dennis Bilger, "Truman Library - Hoover Commission Special Subject Guide", October 1, 2001, para. 1, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/hoover/hoover.htm>.

88 Herbert Hoover, "Mr. Hoover's personal papers concerning his services as Chairman of the two U.S. Commissions on Organization of the Executive Branch," *Herbert Hoover Presidential Library*, para. 3, <http://www.ecommcode2.com/hoover/research/hooverpapers/hoover/postpres/hpphcom1.htm>.

89 Ferrel Heady, "The Reorganization Act of 1949," *Public Administration Review* 9, no. 3 (Summer, 1949): 165.

90 Pemberton, "Truman and the Hoover Commission".

instructed to create a budget for 1948 that was not allowed to exceed \$15 billion. After consultation all services, three at the time, provided a budget of \$10 billion, totaling \$30 billion dollars.⁹¹ This example illustrates how important each of the services considered itself. It also indicates how well the Joint Chiefs of Staff followed political orders. Despite all this, the Joint Chiefs of Staff maintained a powerful position and consolidation of power around the Secretary of Defense would become a recurring theme. Furthermore, the report commented on a lack of cooperation in the broader field of U.S. security. The committee recommended a healthier cooperation between the already existing agencies, like the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the armed forces, and the newly created Central Intelligence Agency.

Partially due to the Hoover Commission's recommendations, the National Security Act of 1947 was amended in 1949 to create the Department of Defense from the Departments of War and Navy, increased the Secretary of Defense's authority and removed the services secretaries from the cabinet level. Finally, this amendment created a chairman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁹² However, the Hoover Commission refrained from commenting on the political situation as Congress had ensured this was not part of the committee's scope.

This fact that military procurement became increasingly politicized was not only to avoid infighting between the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was also due to the fact that Congress tried to reassert its power over the Department of Defense which had grown exponentially during the Second World War. Both the individual actors within the Iron Triangle as well as their interconnectedness had increased in strength during the 1940s, due to the increase in the war economy. However, Congress felt it had lost power to the military side of the Triangle. Therefore, this strengthening of civilian control of the military is one of the initial indications that Congress, the Department of Defense and the defense industry became more intertwined and were starting to form the balancing act that is the Iron Triangle.

A second Hoover Commission was established in 1953 because the national debt was still of unprecedented size and the post-war budgets kept spiraling despite previous efforts at reform. The Republican Congress also felt that the Hoover's previous attempt at controlling the growth of big government had not gone far enough. Therefore, the scope would be far broader during Hoover's second attempt at government reform. Despite being on the same side of the aisle, Eisenhower was not enthusiastic about a commission formed outside of his sphere of influence. However, there was little he could do as the idea became popular in Congress.⁹³ Therefore another bipartisan commission lead by Hoover attempted to review government operations once again.

Congress intended to diminish the size and budget of the executive as to restore the balance of power between the two branches. Congress believed that this balance had

91 Coates, "Book Review" 287.

92 Douglas Kinnard, *The Secretary of Defense* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1980), 192.

93 Ronald C. Moe, *Administrative renewal. Reorganization Commissions in the 20th Century* (Lanham, Maryland: United Press of America, 2003), 75.

suffered from the bestowal of vast war powers to the president.⁹⁴ The main difference between the two Commissions under Hoover was the scope. Although the first commission was considered successful, there remained much waste and inefficiency to be discovered. The second Hoover Commission was additionally asked to express an opinion “on the elimination of nonessential services and activities competitive with private enterprise.”⁹⁵ Consistent with the first Hoover Commission report, this Commission presented findings in 1955 which recommended further streamlining and consolidation of clear lines of authority for the Secretary of Defense. Although some action had been taken after the previous report strengthening the position of the Secretary of Defense, this had not gone far enough.

However, even before the committee’s findings were presented, another reorganization of the Department of Defense took place. Due to pressure by President Eisenhower, the office of the Secretary of Defense was strengthened further by centralizing more functions under this office. This came at a cost to the power and influence of the services. However, the position of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was consolidated. This was intended by Congress as an attempt to convince the military leadership to take a broader strategic outlook and forsake infighting. Despite of this restructuring, the Second Hoover Commission still recommended a further centralization of authority around the Secretary of Defense.⁹⁶

These coinciding committees illustrate that Congress and the President were not always of the same opinion. This demonstrates that the Iron Triangle is only a simplified model as it does not stipulate a specific space for the role of the President. The same holds true for the role of the Secretary of Defense. Some Secretaries of Defense preferred the military ‘corner’ of the Triangle while others sided with Congress and/or the President. However, as both Congress and the President tried to strengthen the civilian element within the Department of Defense, their common goal was less military control. The fact that the actors differed to which degree military control should be lessened is less relevant.

The final general commission in this period was created by President Eisenhower as a second opinion to the Second Hoover Commission. President Eisenhower disliked obtaining his information from one source, especially a source that did not report primarily to the president.⁹⁷ This committee was officially known as the President’s Advisory Committee on Government Organization, but nicknamed the Rockefeller Committee.⁹⁸ The committee had several objectives relating to government efficiency and had Nelson A. Rockefeller as its chair until 1958. Rockefeller would later become Vice-President under Gerald Ford. He had great social standing as he was a noted businessman and former president of the Rockefeller Center, art collector and philanthropist.

94 Hoover, “Mr. Hoover’s personal papers”, 5.

95 Ibid., 7.

96 Moe, *Administrative renewal*, 81.

97 Ibid., 82.

98 “U.S. President’s Advisory Committee on Government Organization: Records 1953-61” (U.S. Government Printing Office, August 23, 1966), 2.

The commission's objectives included the review of "the executive authority of the President and of the heads of Departments and Agencies to facilitate administration within the Executive Branch" and also "improving Government-wide procedures within the Executive Branch, in the fields of personnel management and budget controls, with a view to facilitating and strengthening Departmental Management."⁹⁹

These aspirations led the committee to seek to enable the DoD to achieve broad objectives by increasing efficiency and to maximize its provision of services while minimizing the cost. Following suit with the Hoover Commission and in accordance to the objective of centralization, this committee further recommended centralization of authority around the Secretary of Defense. It also urged a decrease of the power of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the committee perceived them as having a limited perspective. As Wheeler describes, "they were found to fail to rise above the particular views of their respective services."¹⁰⁰

This small, bipartisan and expert committee which worked with little publicity is considered highly effective.¹⁰¹ However, because their work took place mostly outside the public sphere is it difficult to determine their ulterior motives. Despite of this fact, it remains another attempt at strengthening civilian control of the military.

The general committees illustrate an attempt at controlling spending and integrating the defense establishment into the political system. Some committees are moderately successful at this, but the reorganization of the Department of Defense turned out to be more effective. Through this latter goal Congress gains more control over how the Defense budget is allocated.

The other form of oversight, which was continued from before the Second World War, consisted of committees that focus solely on the defense sector. After the Second World War, Lyndon Johnson initiated an attempt at overseeing the Department of Defense and its contractors in 1948. In the context of the Korean War, Johnson appealed to his mentor Richard Russel who was chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Johnson started chairing his Special Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee in 1948, and led it for two years. According to biographer Robert Caro, Johnson did this in a conscious attempt to imitate Truman.¹⁰² As defense oversight had become a way to further one's political career. Although Johnson's subcommittee produced a large number of reports, the quality and originality of these publications was questionable. As Wheeler argues:

Over two years, Johnson issued forty-three reports on subjects reminiscent of the Truman Committee on rubber, nickel, tin, and wool defense production, and many other subjects. Johnson's and his sub-

99 Ibid., 3.

100 Wheeler, "A Mixed History", 10.

101 Moe, *Administrative renewal*, 83.

102 Robert A. Caro, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Master of the Senate* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 309-341.

committee's report, however, were frequently junk. Virtually all of the reports from Johnson's Special Preparedness Subcommittee were either overhyped nonentities or simply stolen from other sources, or sometimes both.¹⁰³

Johnson appeared to have been more concerned with acquiring recognition than actually producing proper, factual reports as his position required.¹⁰⁴ Caro describes Johnson frequently leaking information to the press in exchange for a favorable account for the committee, Johnson was not involved in research or travel, nor did he hold many public hearings. Furthermore, Johnson would feign bipartisan support by making any and every change to a report that committee members suggested, so they would sign off on the report.¹⁰⁵ Another of Johnson's biographers, Robert Dallek, claims that despite his political motivation Johnson did have good intentions. "The mission was a temporary exposure to danger calculated to satisfy Johnson's personal and political wishes, but it also represented a genuine effort on his part, however misplaced, to improve the lot of America's fighting men."¹⁰⁶ One of Johnson's own staff members said "the whole thing was to get Johnson's name in the papers."¹⁰⁷ According to Winslow Wheeler, Johnson managed to keep up appearances because of a non-vigilant press. None of the members of the press core did the thorough research to realize that Johnson's reports were weak or plagiarized.¹⁰⁸

The committee also investigated the U.S. missile and satellite programs after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first orbital satellite, in October 1957. Concerns rose about a possible 'missile gap' as a result of the committee's hearings on this topic. This was considered a danger as it exposed the U.S. to a potential Soviet attack. These feelings were later exploited by John F. Kennedy for his 1958 Senate re-election campaign as well as his presidential campaign. However, despite Kennedy's belief in the 'missile gap', the numbers turned out to be extremely inflated. It was actually the U.S. that had more missiles and the strategic advantage.¹⁰⁹ Due to these types of rumors, spending on conventional military capabilities actually increased under Johnson's committee.¹¹⁰

Despite Johnson's meager performance on oversight, the committee did provide him with the publicity he desired. Partially thanks to this platform, Johnson would later become Kennedy's Vice-President. This illustrates that Johnson succeeded in attaining his goal,

103 Wheeler, "A Mixed History", 9.

104 Caro, *Master of the Senate*, 339.

105 Wheeler, "A Mixed History", 9.

106 Robert Dallek, *Lone Star Rising: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1908-1960 Volume 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 237.

107 Caro, *Master of the Senate*, 329.

108 Wheeler, "A Mixed History", 9.

109 "The Committee on Armed Services: The Russell Era: 1955-1968," *National Archives*, para. 4, <http://www.archives.gov/legislative/finding-aids/reference/senate/armed-services/1955-1968.html>. Christopher A. Preble, "Who Ever Believed in the Missile Gap?: John F. Kennedy and the Politics of National Security," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (December, 2003): 801, 822.

110 Stephen I. Schwartz, eds., *Atomic audit: the cost and consequences of U.S. nuclear weapons since 1940* (Washington, D.C.: R.R. Donnellery & Sons Co., 1998), 21.

but also that he had an ulterior motive for conducting oversight. Not only did he aspire to climb the political ladder in Washington, it also allowed him to influence defense policy.

This use of defense oversight committees would become more common. Unlike the committees discussed in the previous section, these committees focused only on the Defense oversight and not on general improvement of efficiency in government. This fact makes these committees more relevant to the Iron Triangle as they are Congress direct influence over the Department of Defense and the defense industry. It is in this context that Congressmen began to realize the value of what is now referred to as 'pork'. As described ear Defense projects in their home states meant employment for their constituents which is beneficial to their political careers. In the next section, the expanding oversight power over the Department of Defense is described.

Johnson's subcommittee was formed during a time when Richard Russel was chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. He had a great influence on the development of this committee. According to the official history of the Senate, "Senator Russell solidified the committee's traditions of the strong chairman, bipartisanship, and the committee as the forceful voice for a strong defense in the Senate."¹¹¹

Russel was the main driving force behind the expansion of the committee's influence in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The senator was one of the main sponsors of amendment 412(b) of the Military Construction Act of 1959 which required authorization by the Senate Armed Services Committee of missiles, aircraft and naval vessels prior to appropriations.¹¹² Even though Eisenhower and the Pentagon strongly objected to this amendment, Russel had Congress' support. This development greatly increased the committee's influence on policy. However, this was insufficient for Senator Russel as he cautiously continued to increase his committee's scope of authorization. Eventually, this led to more political influence over the defense procurement process because finally the entire defense budget became subject to approval of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

In 1962, the committee gained the power of authorization over research, development, testing and evaluation of all weapons subject to clause 412(b). A year later, the committee extended this requirement to the Department of Defense. In 1965, the committee added tracked combat vehicles to the authorization requirement. The committee did this after discovering the cabinet had depleted the inventory of tanks because of transfers to allies.¹¹³

These developments driven by Senator Russel led to a growing expansion of the power of the Senate Armed Services Committee. He started with requiring approval for only a small part of the defense budget, but expanded this further and further. In the end, the Senate Armed Services Committee needed to authorize the entire defense budget. A

111 "The Committee on Armerd Sevices", 1.

112 Ibid., 5.

113 Ibid., 5-6.

consequence of this was more influence for the committee on the Department of Defense. It also led to a politicization of the budget process for the DoD. However, the increased influence for the committee did not lead to an increase in savings for the Department of Defense.¹¹⁴

This powerful Armed Services committee illustrates a successful attempt of Congress to affect processes within the Department of Defense in way that is beneficial to the constituents of individual Congressmen. However, a consequence of this expansion was that the budget of the Department of Defense kept increasing, as did the pressure these expenses put on the national budget.

In 1965 and 1966 Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara suggested major defense cost reductions to combat the ever increasing defense budget. McNamara insisted that cuts were necessary to cope with the rising defense budget due to the arms race with the Soviet Union and the Vietnam prewar build up. The Armed Services committee was strongly opposed to McNamara's plans which closed many military installations in the U.S. and abroad, reduced funding and delayed decisions on major weapons.¹¹⁵ Despite this opposition, McNamara managed to execute a great deal of his plan. However, this was to little avail with regard to the budget. The committee ensured that there were projects to expand bases that remained open to compensate the amount that McNamara intended to cut from the budget.

The opposition to McNamara's approach is an illustration of the clash between Congress and the Secretary of Defense. However, in spite of the fact that the role of the Secretary of Defense is part of the Department of Defense in the Iron Triangle model, McNamara was a civilian and he did not specifically further the influence of the military within the DoD. In this case, another political actor influenced the balance between Congress and the military. Although the Iron Triangle is a model its actors do not exist in a vacuum and will always have to take other actors into account in reality.

However, due to the fact that McNamara cannot be placed in either 'corner' of the Iron Triangle, both the military and Congress did not view all of his attempts as beneficial. Although the military staff within the Department of Defense had a greater appreciation for McNamara than the Armed Services committee, neither considered him a total ally.

This increase of power of the Senate Armed Services Committee illustrated a clear issue with the permanence of the defense industry. This permanence allowed the defense industry to provide incentive for Congress to create friendly legislation for the defense industry. As Congressmen will in return benefit from the jobs provided for their constituents. This development has enormously strengthened the leg of the Iron Triangle between Congress and the defense industry. Although Congressmen assuring their constituents

114 Ibid., 6.

115 "SecDef Histories - Robert McNamara," *The U.S. Department of Defense*, para. 22, http://www.defense.gov/specials/secdef_histories/bios/mcnamara.htm.

are employed is a way of representing the people, the consequence of this is an ever-increasing defense budget.

Although the Senate Armed Services Committee became the most powerful committee with regards to the Department of Defense, it was not the only committee in this area. In 1970, the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Government Operations Committee of the Senate started an investigation into a new fighter-bomber for the Defense Department.¹¹⁶ This committee was considered the Truman Committee's successor. Founded in 1962, the committee had a broad mandate to investigate inefficiency, mismanagement and corruption in government. Although this might seem as one of the committees that were covered in the first section, this committee oversaw very specific defense projects and is therefore covered in the defense specific section of this chapter.

The committee only occasionally investigated the Department of Defense, but once focused on the procurement of the new F-111 fighter-bomber. The design of this jet had been competed between General Dynamics and Boeing. However, the aircraft's performance as a fighter-jet turned out to be appalling while its maintenance proved to be extremely labor-intensive and expensive. Apart from that, the plane also disappointed in other areas, Wheeler describes it as "overpriced, overweight, and delivered late."¹¹⁷ The fighter-bomber was intended as a plane that could serve both the Air Force and the Navy's demand for new jets which was an extra challenge in designing this plane.¹¹⁸ Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara decided that despite the differences in the demands of the different services, both the Navy and the Air Force would get a different version of the same fighter. Although this seems to be in line with the recommendations of most of the previous Commissions trying to improve Government efficiency, reality took a different turn.

The Government Operations Committee discovered that McNamara had overruled the selected board's recommendation. They had unanimously selected Boeing's design as having the most potential. However, McNamara chose General Dynamics, the other final competitor, to receive the contract. Perhaps coincidentally, General Dynamics happened to be located in then Vice-President Lyndon Johnson's home state, Texas.¹¹⁹ This illustrates the possible clash that arises with civilian control of the military. After these findings the Committee wondered if the results of the consolidation of power around the Secretary of Defense, as recommended by previous committees and commissions, were optimal.¹²⁰ This committee's report strengthened of the military's claim to have a stronger influence on the policymaking and major decisions within the Department of Defense. The military wanted to counterbalance the influence of Congress on defense policymaking and the procurement of expensive, nationwide defense projects.

116 Wheeler, "A Mixed History", 10.

117 Idem.

118 Bill Gunston, *Bombers* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), 36.

119 *TFX Contract Investigation*, Hearings before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Government Operations (Washington, D.C., 1970), pt. 1, 12,16,18.

120 Wheeler, "A Mixed History", 10.

Finally, after the advice of Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, President Nixon appointed a Blue Ribbon Defense Panel in 1971 to resolve many of the issues that had been uncovered by its predecessors but had not been resolved. It was lead by Gilbert W. Fitzhugh, chairman of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.¹²¹ Although industrial leaders had been involved in the oversight process in previous committees, but they were not often chairmen. This committee, however, was appointed by the President and not by Congress. Nixon could choose whomever he wanted to serve on the committee. The fact that Nixon selected someone from outside Congress was a clear indication that this committee would deviate from the path set by its predecessors. The conclusions of the Fitzhugh panel on the previous decades, and centuries, can be summarized briefly; these efforts had solved little, or perhaps had even exacerbated the situation. The panel found that “there are too many layers of both military and civilian staffs, and the staffs are too large... The results are excessive paper work and coordination, delay, duplication and unnecessary expense.”¹²²

Furthermore, the panel expressed disapproval of the staffing of military operations through the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Military Departments. As this

provides a forum for interservice conflicts to be injected into the decision making process for military operations; and it inhibits the flow of information between the combatant commands and the President and the Secretary of Defense, often in crisis situations.¹²³

Finally, the panel mentions the issues with defense procurement. The panel stated that R&D and procurement had become too costly and were under-performing.

The policies of the Department on development and acquisition of weapons and other hardware have contributed to serious cost overruns, schedule slippages and performance deficiencies. The difficulties ... require many interrelated changes in organization and procedures.¹²⁴

The Fitzhugh panel concluded that despite the good intentions of the many groups before them that have made recommendations on efficiency in government, more specifically the Department of Defense, little has been achieved to improve the situation.

After extensive research, the Fitzhugh panel offered 113 recommendations to President Nixon. He delegated to Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard, known as the co-founder of information technology corporation Hewlett-Packard, the responsibility to im-

121 Charles R. Schrader, *History of Operations Research in the United States Army, Volume II: 1961-1973* (Washington, D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2008), 180.

122 The Blue Ribbon Defense Panel, *Report to the President and the Secretary of Defense on the Department of Defense* (Washington, D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), 1.

123 Ibid., 2.

124 Idem.

plement all the Fitzhugh panel recommendations to resolve the issue of inefficiency once and for all. Although Packard was Deputy Secretary at the time his ties to his own company, which was somewhat involve in the defense sector, remained strong. Both before and after his time serving President Nixon, David Packard was chairman of the board of Hewlett-Packard.

One of the main reforms Packard was supposed to execute was the concept of 'fly before you buy' as advocated by the Fitzhugh panel. This concept was originally supported by Truman. It was a simple concept meant to let weapons systems adjust fully to reality. It should be able to deliver the results it promises, and not still be in a research phase, when it is taken into production. The 'fly before you buy' process would allow systems to demonstrate their actual merits and makes it possible to adjust certain elements that were not functioning optimally before starting multibillion dollar production. The extensive testing process involved would also prevent expensive retrofits for certain parts that needed to be modified after mass production, which would allow for major savings.

Implementing 'fly before you buy' would have been a major improvement compared to a system where often empirical demonstration of actual performance was not required or held less weight than a contractor's or military advocate's hope or promise. Despite the fact that acquisition programs that are assessed late and rushed to production usually costs billions of dollars extra, nothing had been undertaken to improve this process. Although late testing can lead to huge delays as errors are discovered late in the process which can increases the costs of retrofiting parts, the system of 'fly before you buy' was not implemented. "As weapon system advocates in the research and development community retained real control and continued to permit, and in some cases even insist on, compromised tests."¹²⁵ Although Packard did create an office to oversee weapons testing that was also intended to execute the 'fly before you buy' concept, this never occurred. Although there is no clear evidence for the fact that Packard actively opposed implementing 'fly before you buy', fact remains that these regulations that would negatively affect his industry were not implemented.

This latter example illustrates that the defense industry plays a more subtle role in the Iron Triangle. Although Packard was Deputy Secretary at the time and therefore part of the Department of Defense, he undeniably had ties to a company that directly or indirectly produced products for the Department of Defense. The fact that he did not strengthen industry regulations means the benefits the defense industry receives from selling their unfinished or untested products remained.

Other recommendations made by the panel were implemented by Secretary of Defense Laird. He gradually abandoned McNamara's corporate management system and tried to gain the cooperation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for reducing the defense budget. While maintaining his own position and that of the deputy secretary, Laird decentralized operations and even policy-making to a limited extent. However, he did maintain centralized

125 Wheeler, "A Mixed History", 10-11.

management in areas such as the Defense Investigative Service, the Defense Mapping Agency, and the Office of Net Assessment. To ascertain their cooperation, Laird gave the Joint Chiefs of Staff as well as the service secretaries a larger role in the development of budgets and force levels.¹²⁶ With this Laird restored some of the balance in between the political and the military spheres of influence.

The military leadership was positive about Laird's decentralization efforts as it provided more influence for the military element in the Department of Defense. However, during Laird's time in office the total military personnel declined from approximately 3.5 million in 1969 to 2.3 million in 1973. Although the Vietnam War made it less appealing to serve in the armed forces, but because of the draft at the time, it is unlikely that this had an effect on the number of personnel. Laird choose to fund more weapons project and in order to afford this, the number military staff was decreased. Laird believed strategic weapons systems like the B-1 bomber, the Trident nuclear submarine, and cruise missiles were more essential to the army than a large conventional force. The *Washington Post* even reported: "Around the military-industrial complex these days they're singing 'Praise the Laird and pass the transformation.'"¹²⁷

Laird was equally respected in Congress, as a Congressional veteran who had also served in the Navy during the Second World War. As Secretary of Defense, he cooperated with Congress and recognized the general support for cuts in defense spending. In his initial years, Laird accommodated Congress by pruning the budget and acceding to additional cuts as much as possible. However, despite opposition in 1972 and 1973 Laird managed to gain budget increases for his department.¹²⁸

In this last oversight panel and the developments surrounding its report, it becomes clear how the oversight panel was used politically. In the case of Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird it is difficult to determine if he strongly favored one of the actors in the Iron Triangle. However, it seems more likely that he tried to maintain his own position by balancing the power of Congress and the Department of Defense and the defense industry. Although Laird managed to cut the budget when that demand was most important to Congress, he also raised the budget in the following years. The specific reforms pushed by Laird benefited the defense industry as military personnel were subject to budget cuts more than strategic weapons systems. Therefore, the defense industry could continue to gain government contracts and develop projects even during financially difficult years. This was a positive influence for certain Congressmen as it kept their constituents employed.

This entire chapter demonstrates an Iron Triangle that is only becoming stronger as the positive influence of one actor's benefits on the others becomes clearer. After the Second World War Congress, or at least the political actors, reasserted their powers and strongly

126 "Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird," *U.S. Department of Defense - Historical Office*, para. 4, <http://osdhistory.defense.gov/SODs/laird.html>.

127 "Melvin R. Laird", para. 5-7.

128 *Ibid.*, 8.

increased their influence over the processes within the Department of Defense. This effort culminated in the required approval of the Senate Armed Services committee for almost the entire defense budget. Only after that did the reaction of the military to these developments begin to find support. As a consequence of this, the growing budget was somewhat constrained but not indefinitely. In a system where all actors benefit from spending money, it will be nearly impossible to convince them of the necessity to spend less if this decreases their benefits from this spending.

The consequence of this strongly politicized system is an ever-increasing national budget. Some examples illustrated committees or Secretaries of Defense that have tried to reconcile the strength of the actors in the Iron Triangle with cutting the budget or improving efficiency, but this has proven to be an extremely complicated task.

There appears to be a trend in reviewing the DoD that started with the very first oversight attempt. Very few have managed to not be a part of this trend. Superintendent of Finance, Robert Morris ignored his own findings on improving efficiency of defense procurement in 1782. Since then many have followed in his footsteps and either ignored findings or chose not to execute them. As well-known advocate of defense reforms, Thomas Christie, has noted, the first oversight initiative proved an example that turned out to be a recurring pattern. Just as Superintendent Robert Morris ignored his own findings, "it may be that laws and regulations are fitting and appropriate, but the people charged to enforce or implement them are not doing their job."¹²⁹

This chapter will summarize the main findings from this thesis. First, even though the initial oversight committees tried to control the system of defense spending, they soon outgrew this role. Although a lack of implementation will always be an issue, after the Second World War implementation actually was more actively used as a political strategy. As the Iron Triangle strengthened and the relationships within it became more accepted, critique of the system itself grew rarer. This also led to a limitation in the scope of the oversight committees. Instead of overseeing the department as well as the industry, this development led to a focus in oversight only on the Department of Defense itself. Finally, this chapter will explain why the Iron Triangle enables the actors within it to almost continually expand their powers.

Although not all of the committees were equally successful, a lack of implementation is stronger in the earlier committees. After the Second World War, the oversight committees become a way of enacting a political strategy. In this strategizing the Iron Triangle is reflected because it is a way of controlling the Department of Defense. By strengthening the position of the Secretary of Defense after the Second World War Congress and the President tried to maintain their influence over the military. However, after Congress realized this strategy does not produce an efficient DoD, it agreed to another approach.

129 Wheeler, "A Mixed History", 4.

This reflects the constant balancing act the Iron Triangle induces. Any change within the Department of Defense will always be subject to political discussion. The reasons behind this are quite straightforward. The issue of national security and the huge defense budget are always considered of high priority. This means that if change is implemented there are almost always those who feel the financial consequences of this change.

This was clearly the case with the Blue Ribbon panel in 1971, which fitted perfectly in the strategy of Defense Secretary Melvin Laird. Part of the political strategy consists of how the Department of Defense is managed. Initially, from the 1940s onwards, there is a strong trend towards civilian control of the military as Congress tries to reassert itself. Also, the services were subject to infighting amongst themselves for a higher budget and each considered themselves the most essential to the national defense. To avoid this infighting, Laird streamlined the armed forces and ensured the areas of overlapping responsibility were next to none.

However, an influential Secretary of Defense proved precarious because of a lack of military expertise. Due to this lack of power, the military attempted to reassert its power in the Iron Triangle. As the research by the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Government Operations Committee proved, this civilian control provided another disadvantage. It made the budget decisions and procurement process more politicized than under military control. Also, the risk of having someone with less military expertise and combat experience decide on weapons programs, might lead to uninformed decision-making. As illustrated by McNamara's decision on the F-111, a Secretary of Defense could overrule his advisory board which generally has more expertise. In this case this led to a contract being awarded to General Dynamics which had far less experience with building jets than its competitor Boeing. This led to an extremely expensive project which produced a plane that fulfilled only half its goal. The Air Force was pleased with its new fighter-bomber, but the Navy was extremely disappointed. It only ordered a small number of the F-111 and spent the rest of the budget on a new plane of its own.

McNamara's budget cutting intentions were undermined by this project as well as his approval of the antiballistic missile system just before he left office. As a consequence, a strong managerial Secretary of Defense was perceived negatively and his successor Melvin Laird decided to try a different approach. This shared control between the military leadership and a civilian Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense was quite successful in achieving certain reforms. However, from a long-term perspective it did not contribute significantly to reducing the defense budget because Laird raised the DoD budget in the early 1970s.

While Congress and the military tried to assert their power over the Department of Defense and to organize the department according to their own views, the third actor in the Triangle was also involved. As the balancing act between Congress and the military

continued, the defense industry tried to influence both parties. With the goal of benefitting financially regardless of which actor would be more influential at a certain time.

Another trend that becomes obvious is that the assessment of the entire Defense sector splits into two types of oversight. Incidental committees tend to address efficiency within the government in general, while subject specific committees have been formed to address specific sectors. Before the Second World War committees examined the Department of Defense, the relationship with the defense industry and Congress' performance. After the war, however, the scope of committees and panels becomes progressively narrower. The temporary, general committees tend to address all the branches within the government while the more permanent committees address the Department of Defense and to a limited extent the defense industry. However, congressmen serve on both types of committees. This generally excludes the relationship between Congress and both other actors in the triangle from the scope of oversight. The more recent committees have had a stronger focus on the Defense Department itself, emphasizing streamlining the DoD over regulating the defense industry. As the DoD became the predominant instrument through which Congress regulates the defense industry.

The Iron Triangle may be partially responsible for this. Before the Second World War, the defense industry was not considered as an employment creating force and the Department of Defense had a far less massive bureaucracy. Although the American system is set up so that the individual powers keep each other in check and maintain balance, within this context this appears to be unsuccessful. With committee after committee, the Iron Triangle only seems to solidify. Due to the fact that all three actors in the triangle benefit from friendly relations with the other actors, a *quid pro quo* system developed. In this system, all actors can choose to positively or negatively affect one another. As one negative act will most likely be followed by retribution, all parties are eager to avoid a negative spiral where each attempt at retribution is followed by the next one. As a consequence of this, however, a positive spiral has emerged where none of the actors dared to act to fiercely against the others. In principle, this state of positive relations sounds ideal, however, a consequence of this is an ever-increasing defense budget. This increase, combined with other government overspending, leads to a constantly rising national debt which is problematic for the financial situation of the nation.

The interaction between Congress and the defense industry became less direct after the creation of the Department of Defense. Although Congress still created legislation that had a direct influence on the defense industry, oversight over the industry changed. Oversight committees try to control the industry by making the Department of Defense more efficient. So instead of influencing the industry directly through recommendations from oversight committees, Congress tried to reorganize the instrument through which the government had contact with the defense industry; the DoD. This was recognized by Packard when he became chairman of a defense oversight commission himself. The

Packard Commission's final report notes "the truly costly problems are those of overcomplicated organization and rigid procedure."¹³⁰

Although Congress intended to streamline the Department of Defense which often requires budget cuts, individual congressmen also benefited from the home state pork the defense industry provides. As all politicians representing the American people in Congress are chosen by a specific district or state and commonly care about reelection, this left corporations with a powerful tool. Defense projects often provided employment on a large scale for the district or state they took place in. Therefore Congressmen had a strong interest in keeping those projects going. Even if these projects were not producing effective products, keeping the people in their home state or district employed could become the main interest for the congressman. People who become unemployed during his or her term are likely to vote for another candidate next election which could be considered a severe risk.

Although creating employment through government spending is a common tool, this focus on the local level caused budget issues on the national level. Although it cannot be argued that it is in the interest of people on the local level to become unemployed, their employment can collide with the national interest of having effective national defense. Until the national debt becomes more important, the defense budget will most likely continue to rise.

Some critics like Seymour Melman and John Galbraith have even described the defense industry as "a corporation that is dominated by a Government".¹³¹ They see this interdependence as government control. The Department of Defense controls an industry, which consists of many millions of employees that design, produce, use and repair weapons.

The same interaction hold true for the other relationships. The Department of Defense wished to maintain a good relationship with both the industry as well as Congress. As Congress could provide a higher budget in a positive situation, while the industry could positively influence Congress through lobbying. Therefore, the Department of Defense tolerated the high margins of the defense industry as part of these profits was reinvested in lobbying for a common goal.

The corporations within the defense industry had come to expect certain standards in their dealings with their customers. Many corporations expected the government to accept their prices. According to Adams, the defense corporations expected it would not have "to do business at a loss, they assume that their productive capacity will be maintained and that profit margins will be ensured as their costs are reimbursed."¹³² Furthermore, the attitude of the Department of Defense perpetuated these practices, as most

130 Evan Thomas, Barret Seaman and Bruce van Voorst, "Defensive About Defense," *Time Magazine*, March 10, 1986, 2, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,960862-2,00.html#ixzz0oIlCyhgT>.

131 Adams, *The Iron Triangle*, 22.

132 Ibid., 21.

defense contracts were negotiated instead of competitively divided. The Pentagon had an interest in keeping the military budget high to avoid having to restrain itself, and perhaps keeping their power or influence as large as possible. In this way, it was also in their interest to keep the relationship with the military contractors positive. The Pentagon, to avoid having its budgets cut, was sometimes willing to spend more than competitively necessary to maintain the defense industry as it strengthened the bond between the two actors.

Finally, the defense industry was dependent on the Department of Defense for the majority of its business. Especially because there were export restrictions on business with foreign governments, the U.S. defense industry looked to U.S. government agencies to provide them with the bulk of their contracts. As the defense industry could offer electoral support to Congress and congressional support to the DoD, this left them in a favorable position for doing business. Businesses desired to create profit and deliver dividends to shareholders. The defense industry could, through lobbying, somewhat influence the height of the defense budget and appropriations within it. The drive for more profit caused the industry to continually push for higher budgets and more projects.

The checks and balances system seemed unable to cope with the strong ties that turned into an Iron Triangle. The government has once made the decision to maintain a large, privately-owned defense manufacturing capacity. This has led to a variety of Federal procurement policies. According to Adams, many of these policies “foster a high degree of intimacy between the Pentagon and its contractors and inhibit cost control.”¹³³ The powerful ties in the Iron Triangle were a direct result of this decision. Due to this development, oversight became eroded because ulterior motives like career development, pork for home states and lobbying altered the interests of Congress.

However, in the situation that the U.S. is currently in, with the national deficit at an all-time high, an interesting struggle will ensue between all actors involved. Secretary of Defense Gates' intentions for defense reform seem legitimate. He intends to focus on the military's core business and wants to decrease projects for military contractors and overhead costs. Therefore, there will be a smaller piece of the cake for the defense sector. However, the defense industry will try to maintain its original slice. Congressmen will also consider closing major projects in their districts or states unfavorable. Although budget considerations might force them to at least consider these steps. However, from past experiences it can be seen that is possible to cut the budget for defense contractors as long as the one idealist who is respected by all actors drives the downsizing. Although a strong Iron Triangle is now the *status quo* and its relationships have to be taken into account, it does not mean that budget reduction is impossible. As a former Air Force lieutenant and political veteran who has worked for both Republican and Democratic administrations, he might be one of those rare few that can create agreement and cut the budget.

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