



Pasi Tuunainen

**FINNISH MILITARY
EFFECTIVENESS *in*
the WINTER WAR
1939 – 1940**



Finnish Military Effectiveness in the Winter War 1939–1940

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Pasi Tuunainen
Department of Geographical
and Historical Studies
University of Eastern Finland
Joensuu Finland

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*This book is dedicated to my late grandfathers, both of whom were citizen
soldiers and veterans of the Winter War*

PREFACE

The Winter War was a conventional total war fought in an Arctic setting. In the context of World War II it was merely a northern sideshow waged in the early stages of the conflict. In the former Soviet Union, it was not even considered a war but a ‘border clash’. Yet Stalin aimed at occupying the whole of his Western neighbor. Thus, for the Finns it was a struggle for national survival. During the war the Finns closed their ranks. The world’s attention turned to the north because it was relatively quiet on other fronts. Finland, waging a just defensive war, received a great deal of sympathy from many nations. A small nation fought practically alone for 105 days, almost to the brink of collapse. In spite of overwhelming odds the well-prepared—led and—motivated Finnish Army did not disintegrate, and the hostilities ended in a negotiated settlement. The Finns lost the war but gained a victory in defeat. This can be attributed to overall Finnish military effectiveness which is the topic of this monograph. It is a multifaceted phenomenon.

The Winter War was Finland’s finest hour. Universal conscription kept the army close to their people. Their spirits, in the field and the home front alike, remained exceptionally high during the entire conflict. The experience of the Winter War is still often referred to. It has been an important ingredient of Finnish national identity ever since.

This study is a kind of synthesis. It has been possible because I am well acquainted with the archival sources pertaining to the Winter War. Moreover, my knowledge of literature related to the Arctic conflict has developed since I have over 2000 titles in my personal Winter War book collection. I have focused on the theme from various viewpoints for over

25 years: taught courses, given public talks and written several monographs, book chapters and articles on it. Therefore, I have been able to build on my earlier works and occasionally cite my own publications. In the midst of many other commitments this laborious book project has taken me over six years to complete.

Many people have helped me during this project. My family has allowed me to spend countless hours in preparation of this book which I truly appreciate. I am grateful to many individuals with whom I have discussed my research. In particular, I am indebted to Professors Allan R. Millett, Ohto Manninen and Pasi Kesseli. I am also most grateful to many colleagues at UEF's Department of Geographical and Historical Studies, at Finnish National Defense University's Department of Warfare, on the Board of the Association for Military History in Finland, and my fellows on the editorial board of *Sotahistoriallinen Aikakauskirja* (Finnish journal of military history). Furthermore, I warmly thank Mr. Timo Pakarinen for drawing the map, and the language specialists at AAC Global for checking my text. Lastly, I thank Palgrave Macmillan for publishing my monograph and their various contact persons for fruitful cooperation at every stage of the process.

Over the years, I have received economic support from different sources. In addition to my home department, I wish to extend my humble thanks to various funding organizations. They are Eevi ja Eemil Tannisen säätiö, Jenny ja Antti Wihurin rahasto, Kaatuneiden Muistosäätiö, Karjalaisen Kulttuurin Edistämissäätiö, Otavan kirjassäätiö, Sotavahinkosäätiö, Sotaveteraanien tuki- ja perinnesäätiö, Suomen Marsalkka Mannerheimin Sotatieteellinen Rahasto, Suomen Tietokirjailijat, Uuden Päivän rahasto and WSOY:n kirjallisuussäätiö.

University of Eastern Finland
Joensuu, Finland
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Pasi Tuunainen

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ABBREVIATIONS

AK	Armeijakunta (Army corps)
AKE	Armeijakunnan esikunta (Army corps headquarters)
ark.	arkisto (archive)
D	divisioona (infantry division)
E	esikunta (headquarters)
FGH	Finnish General Headquarters
FHC	Finnish High Command
i	ilmatorjunta (anti-aircraft)
IlmavE	Ilmavoimien Esikunta (Air Force headquarters)
<i>JMH</i>	<i>The Journal of Military History</i>
<i>J.O.</i>	<i>Jalkaväen ohjesääntö (infantry manual)</i>
JR	jalkaväkirykmentti (infantry regiment)
Järj.	järjestely (marshalling)
K	komppania (company)
KA	Kansallisarkisto (Finnish National Archives)
<i>K.TYÖ.O.</i>	<i>Kenttätöohjesääntö (field works manual)</i>
Kev.Os.	kevyt osasto (light detachment)
<i>K.O.</i>	<i>Kenttäohjesääntö (field manual)</i>
kok.	kokoelma (collection)
Kom.	komento (personnel)
Koul.	koulutus (training)
KTR	kenttätykistörykmentti (field artillery regiment)
LeR	lentorykmentti (wing)
LR	Lapin Ryhmä (Lapland Group, LG)
Lääk.	lääkintä (medical)
Maav.	maavoimat (army, ground forces)
MPKK	Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu (Finnish National Defense University)

Op.	operatiivinen (operations)
Os.	osasto (branch/section)
Pion.	pioneeri (engineer)
PK	pikkukokoelma (small collection)
P-KR	Pohjois-Karjalan Ryhmä (North Karelia Group, NKG)
Pky	päiväkäskey (order of the day)
PLM	Puolustusministeriö (Finnish Ministry of Defense)
PLN	Puolustusneuvosto (Finnish Defense Council)
PM	Päämaja (Finnish High Command, 1939–40)
PSHY	Pohjois-Suomen Historiallinen Yhdistys (The Historical Association of Northern Finland)
P-SR	Pohjois-Suomen Ryhmä (North Finland Group, NFG)
Prop.	propaganda
Pst.	panssarintorjunta (anti-tank)
PU-36	<i>Puna-armeijan väliaikainen kenttäohjesääntö vuodelta 1936</i> (Helsinki: Otava, 1939) (The provisional field regulations for the Red Army 1936)
Pvk.	päiväkirja (diary)
PvPE	Puolustusvoimain Pääesikunta (Finnish High Command 1940–41)
RGVA	Rossiiskii Gosudarstvenni Voennyi Arkhiv (Russian State Military Archive)
RT	Ryhmä Talvela (Talvela Group, TG)
Sal.	salainen (secret matter)
SAL	<i>Sotilusaikakauslehti</i> (Finnish military professional journal)
SHAIk	<i>Sotahistoriallinen Aikakauskirja</i> (Finnish journal of military history)
SHS	Suomen historiallinen seura (Finnish Historical Society)
SJO	<i>Syöksyjoukko-opas</i> (storm troop guide)
Sk.	Suojeluskunta (Civil Guard)
SKK	Sotakorkeakoulu (War College)
SKS	Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura
Spk.	sotapäiväkirja (war diary)
Spol.	sotapoliisi (Military police)
Stal.	sotatalous (war economy)
STT	Suomen Tietotoimisto (Finnish News Agency)
SVT	<i>Suomen virallinen tilasto</i> (Official Statistics of Finland)
T&A	<i>Tiede ja ase</i> (Finnish General Staff officers' yearbook)
Takt.tsto	(Päämajan) Taktillinen toimisto (High Command's Tactical Office, HCTO)
Telttä.O	<i>Telttäohjesääntö</i> (tent manual)
Tied.	tiedustelu (reconnaissance)
Tsto	toimisto (office)
T.S.K.K.	<i>Talvisotakäsikirja</i> (winter warfare handbook)

<i>TSH</i>	<i>Talvisodan historia</i> 1–4 (Porvoo: WSOY 1977–79)
Tväl.	taisteluväline (ordnance)
USAMHI	US Army Military History Institute
YE	Yleisesikunta (Finnish General Headquarters, FGH)
Yl.	yleinen (general matter)
yo	yliopisto (university)

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Introduction: Understanding Military Effectiveness

On the morning of 30 November 1939 the Red Army launched an all-out attack on its small neighbor, Finland. This unprovoked invasion marked the outbreak of the Winter War, the only contemporary armed conflict in the age of total war fought in its entirety in Arctic conditions. The odds were badly against Finland. Yet the unexpected happened. A country with a population of 3.9 million lasted for 105 days against a 170 million-strong nation. The hostilities ended on 13 March 1940 in a negotiated settlement. The Finns ceded territories and leased a naval base to the Soviet Union. The Finnish armed forces had been able to frustrate Soviet plans to occupy Finland. Thus Finland avoided capitulation, and survived the conflict as a democratic and independent nation.

The conclusion that the Finnish Army performed effectively on the battlefields of the Winter War has often been reached simply by judging its outcome. In many works on the Winter War, Finland's relative military success is attributed to the determination, training and equipment of the Finnish soldiers. Some authors have commented on the problems of the Red Army, especially on how weather and terrain worked against the Soviet troops and their heavy weapons, rendering them unable to exploit their personnel and technical superiority. After becoming apparent that it was not going to be an easy undertaking for the attacker, the Finns received a great deal of international sympathy and admiration but very little tangible support. Reports by foreign war correspondents contributed to the widespread image of a little nation fighting together for a common cause against a formidable foe.¹

Without rebutting these rather simplistic interpretations of Finnish relative military effectiveness, I argue that they are not based on thorough research since the authors rarely have had access to the full range of the belligerent's own sources or the linguistic abilities to use them. There must be more to Finnish military effectiveness than is presented in these previous accounts of the Winter War. It is a truly multifaceted phenomenon.

THE WINTER WAR IN A NUTSHELL

The subtitle of Olli Vehviläinen's political history *Finland in World War II, Between Germany and Russia*,² aptly encapsulates the larger security environment and the context of European power politics facing Finland in the late 1930s. After the signing of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Non-aggression Pact on 23 August 1939, Finland became part of the Soviet sphere of influence. The Soviet Union threatened Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania with invasion unless they granted the USSR military bases. Subsequently, in June 1940, Soviet troops occupied the territories of the independent Baltic nations and put in place pro-Soviet governments. The Soviets had envisioned a similar future for Finland. According to the Soviets the security of Leningrad was jeopardized by the proximity of the Finnish border.³

While negotiations for territorial concessions were still going on in early October 1939, Finland mobilized its entire army under the guise of 'special maneuvers'. The Finnish Army, Navy and Air Forces initially consisted of some 280,000 men with considerable material shortages of heavy weapons and munitions. Prewar defense budgets had been strained, affecting procurements. The Finns had some 400 useful artillery pieces, mainly of small caliber, and just 32 obsolete tanks. Their Air Force consisted of 110 aircraft, of which only 75 were suited for air combat. The Finnish Navy was small but possessed reasonably modern vessels. At the outset of the war, the Leningrad Military District, which was responsible for the Finnish campaign, had a half million troops at its disposal to execute its offensive plans. They had the support of 5700 field guns, over 6500 tanks and 3800 planes. The Red Navy (Baltic Fleet) was also powerful.⁴

The Finnish strategy rested on the basic assumption that national survival was at stake in the event of a large-scale war against the Soviet Union, which was deemed the only possible enemy. Everyone at the highest politico-military levels, as well as the majority of the population, understood this. The Finns generally trusted their democratically elected leaders, and their army enjoyed popular support. They highly treasured their freedom, territorial integrity and independence, which had only been

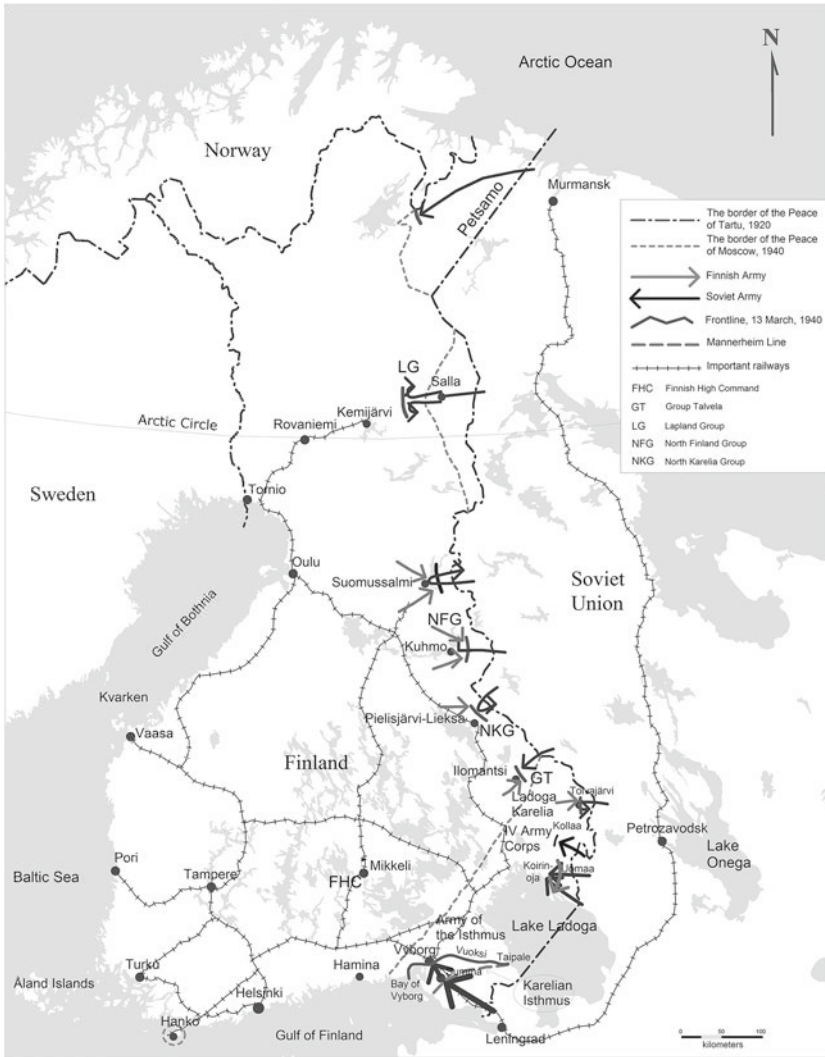
achieved in 1917. The Soviet Union had installed a puppet government headed by the Finnish communist O. W. Kuusinen, which made the Finns question Soviet motives. The extensive bombings of civilian targets also deepened these sentiments among the Finnish population.⁵

The bulk of the fighting in the Winter War occurred in cold weather and deep snow. The Finns were familiar with the terrain and weather conditions and had been trained and equipped for winter warfare, but the Red Army was not equally prepared in field-craft and survival skills. Moreover, many Finnish soldiers had unmatched local knowledge as many were literally defending their homesteads. Understandably, this boosted their morale and increased their already high level of determination not to give in. The battlefield performance of the Finnish Army was enhanced by the fact that the majority of Finnish soldiers were—on average—better marksmen than the Soviet soldiers.⁶

Finland was a ‘nation in arms’. There was a long tradition of voluntarism in Finnish defense. Many had voluntarily improved his fighting skills in the 100,000 strong Civil Guard Defense Corps paramilitary organization. Most of the reservists had received refresher training since 1935 and thus they knew their wartime tasks. The troops had been formed on a territorial basis, which gave the units cohesion. The firing methods of the Finnish artillery were far more sophisticated than those of the Soviet artillery. Yet the Finns had problems integrating all arms.⁷

The Finnish–Soviet border regions comprised one theatre of operations. Within it the areas of operation were different in terms of military geography. The Finns had accurately anticipated that the Karelian Isthmus, between the Gulf of Finland and Lake Ladoga, would be the location for the main Soviet thrust because it was closest to Leningrad and the terrain with its road network was suitable for tanks. The nature of the war there would be trench warfare and attrition. In the northern sectors the Finns were surprised that the Soviets dispatched large formations along almost every road. Yet in these vast forests the Finnish troops had more space to maneuver and in most areas the operations became mobile (Map 1.1).⁸

After crossing the border the Red Army operating on the Karelian Isthmus had orders to advance and reach the Finnish capital, Helsinki, in three weeks. Their main offensive was to be supported by an attack north of Lake Ladoga aimed at the rear of the main Finnish forces. In the central part of Finland the Red Army had orders to cut the country in half. The first phase of the war was characterized by Finnish withdrawal from the border to prepared, and sometimes well-fortified, positions. During this phase the Finnish forces employed delaying tactics and conducted counter-attacks.



Map 1.1 The Battles of the Winter War, 30 November 1939–13 March 1940

On the Karelian Isthmus, where Finnish troops were mainly on the defensive, the situation was stabilized as the Finns were able to bring the Soviet offensive to a halt. The second phase constituted trench warfare at the main defensive position, the Mannerheim Line, named after the Finnish Commander-in-Chief Marshal C. G. E. Mannerheim. After the Red Army had twice attempted in vain to breach the Finnish defenses, the Finns launched an ill-fated major counter-attack just prior to Christmas on the Karelian Isthmus. Meanwhile, elsewhere during December 1939, the Finns managed to defeat a couple of Soviet divisions with their over-snow mobility. These first victories, and the fact that the Soviet attacks were successfully contained, restored Finnish confidence in their own capabilities and thus were psychologically very important.⁹

The situation for the Finns was sometimes critical in many sectors. Along the long Finnish–Soviet border Finnish operations were based on active defense, flanking attacks and envelopments, even in the Soviet territory. In order to spare their main resources, the people, the Finns avoided frontal attacks. Instead their ski troops conducted many encircling attacks by which the road-bound Red Army columns were hemmed in from all sides into pockets or *mottis*. The cut-off units were split into smaller segments to be destroyed piecemeal. These stormed *mottis* yielded them large quantities of war booty. Yet due to a lack of men and heavy weapons, the Finns were not always capable of defeating the encirclements.¹⁰

In mid-February the Red Army, after having made considerable reforms, started its well-prepared major offensive on the Karelian Isthmus, which led to a breakthrough at the central sector in Summa. During this third and final phase of the war the Finns, conducting a strategic retreat, fell back to the middle position and after two weeks to the rear position, where the onslaught was repelled. The Gulf of Finland rarely froze completely, except suddenly during the extremely harsh winter of 1939–40, thus in March these special conditions allowed the advancing Red Army to seize the initiative by opening a new front on the ice cover of the Bay of Vyborg. The Finns were able to send their troops from Lapland, where a brigade of Swedish volunteers had taken responsibility. The Finnish leadership had, in vain, entertained the idea of large-scale Swedish support. Germany, the Soviet Union's partner at the time, also watched from afar, and held some weapon shipments to Finland until the end of the Winter War.¹¹

The Finnish war effort depended on the total support of the home front. The women and other non-combatants freed men from the farms and munitions factories to the firing lines. Similarly, the 100,000 members of the Lotta Svärd, the Women's Voluntary Auxiliary Corps, served in various

supply, headquarters (HQ) and air surveillance duties. The transportation system was based on utilizing the Finnish State Railways. The maintenance system to keep the troops fighting generally functioned. The training centers sent fresh units into battle, and the total strength of the Finnish Army peaked at 340,000 against one million Soviet soldiers. Finland's ability to continue the war was seriously hampered by the fact that its last line reserves had been committed.¹²

The fighting at sea took place only during the first month of the war. The freezing of the Baltic Sea paralyzed the naval action by Christmas. Thus the sea front was reasonably quiet, and did not play a significant role in the conflict. The Finnish coastal artillery secured the coast and also supported the ground forces in some places. In cooperation with the Finnish Navy, they were prepared to prevent landings. The Navy protected the Åland Islands and the vital sea-lanes despite the Soviet naval blockade of Finland.¹³

The Soviets enjoyed air superiority, yet in the beginning of the war, due to poor flying weather, the Soviet planes were grounded for long periods of time. There were enough anti-aircraft units to protect only 14 localities of the home area in southern Finland. More than 600 targets of the Red Air Forces were completely without protection from the air. The Finnish Field Army was lightly protected. The role of the Finnish Air Force was largely limited to defense of their home territory and reconnaissance.¹⁴

During the Winter War the Finnish Army was able to win many battles against the Red Army. The outcome of the war was decided on the Karelian Isthmus. By March 1940, the Finnish Army encountered serious difficulties. The Finns waited for the spring thaw that would have slowed down the Soviet advance. The Franco-British intervention plan was even more important, but the Finnish government never made an appeal and Sweden refused to allow for transit. The international environment was changing fast, and, by March 1940, the Soviets, who knew about the schemes of the Western powers, could not afford to be caught up in fighting the Allies.¹⁵

The war ended at the eleventh hour for the Finnish Army. Both belligerents suffered greatly. The Finnish combat losses amounted to approximately 26,000 fallen, compared to up to 140,000 Soviet dead. The Red Army lost over 3500 tanks. The Finnish Air Force lost 62 planes but the Red Air Force's overall losses were some 1000 aircraft. The Moscow Peace Treaty stipulated that Finland had to cede approximately 10 percent of its land area and some islands and lease a naval base to the Soviets. More than 400,000 Karelian evacuees had to be resettled. Despite these peace terms, Finland survived the war as an independent nation.¹⁶

THE RESEARCH TASK, CONCEPTS AND INTERPRETATIVE FRAMEWORK

Why did Finland prevail against the Soviet Union during the Winter War? That is the broad question explored throughout this research. More specifically this study seeks to discover how the Finns were able to develop and maintain their military effectiveness in the Winter War. I will also compare Finnish and Soviet performance because effectiveness does not only depend on one's own capabilities and mission, but also on those of the adversary. The larger context of the book is the place of the Winter War in the evolution of warfare as practiced by European nations during the early stages of World War II.

Scholars generally agree that victory is not a good criterion for military effectiveness. The elusive concept of victory is actually the outcome of battle, and it merely implies an imposed peace or conquest. Thus it could not be used to describe what military organizations do in battle or, in the Finnish case, their organized resistance in defeat. Finland lost the Winter War but, as Nikita Khrushchev later admitted, the Soviet Union also suffered a huge moral defeat. According to Allan R. Millett, Williamson Murray and Kenneth H. Watman, who regard the Finnish Army in the Winter War as an example of an effective military in their seminal three-volume study *Military Effectiveness*, proportional costs and organizational activity and process should be included in the measurement of effectiveness. Suzanne C. Nielsen agrees, and writes that regardless of the Soviet victory, 'a detailed look at the manner in which the conflict was fought makes it implausible to argue that the Soviets had the more "effective" military'.¹⁷

Richard Overy argues that deeper factors that affect military victory and failure in a full-scale war are industrial strength, fighting ability, the quality of leadership and moral considerations. For Overy, abundant material resources or technical ingenuity do not necessarily guarantee the effective use of weapons. Insufficiently armed troops can outfight a better-equipped and superior force. Fighting power needs to be accounted for by looking at training, organization, morale and military élan.¹⁸

Moreover, Stephen Biddle, exploring the reasons for military victories and defeats, emphasizes force employments, doctrines and tactics over sizes of armies, equipment and technology. He adds that real combat outcomes are produced by the interaction between force employment and materiel, for example the manner in which technology is used. Biddle argues that military effectiveness 'shapes military outcomes'. Ryan Grauer

and Michael C. Horowitz stress the need to find possible links between unit-level explanations of military power and the organizational-level force employment as indicators to examine the relative importance of force employment as a cause of military victory.¹⁹

Jason Lyall categorizes the existing explanations on the sources of military effectiveness. When assessing the military capabilities of different countries and explaining the differences in states' level of military effectiveness, political scientists tend to stress material preponderance or democratic triumphalism. Historians have often been preoccupied with ideational explanations. The supporters of the traditional school see that the outcomes of battles and wars depend on force strengths and relative military and economic power. The second group of explanations posits that political institutions (regime type), and its adherents consider democracy and victory as explanatory variables for military effectiveness. The third group often point to non-material factors (modes of military organization).²⁰

A group of political scientists, using quantitative data, has investigated conventional interstate wars from the Napoleonic wars to the 1980s. They argue that there is a strong correlation between regime type and military effectiveness. David Lake, for example, has claimed that democracies have won over 80 percent of the wars in which they were belligerents. Autocracies emerged as victors in merely 43 percent of the wars they participated in. Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam III assert that if democracies decide to go to war, they are likely to win them. Western democracies are claimed to possess an advantage over autocracies because of their good human capital and well-functioning civil–military relations. Furthermore, Reiter and Stam III point out that military leadership can develop and display stronger initiative in democracies because the officers can concentrate on their business and external threats wholeheartedly and do not need, unlike in autocracies, to show that they are 'politically unthreatening'. Similarly, Ulrich Pilster and Tobias Böhmelt maintain that in democracies the officer corps exhibit loyalty, and the democratic leaders do not need to be afraid of the military seizing power. This positively affects their battlefield performance and military effectiveness.²¹

Based on their study on the effects of democracy on war outcomes, D. Scott Bennett and Allan C. Stam III question the benefits of a democratic form of governance in long wars. According to them, the likelihood of victory is high for democracies in wars that last less than 18 months. After that, democracies have exhibited more willingness towards quitting and settling for draws or losses. Bennett and Stam III also point out that

there is variation in relationships between war outcomes and some control variables like military-industrial capacity and military strategy. Similarly, Kathryn McNabb Cochran and Stephen B. Long, measuring military effectiveness by utilizing combatants' loss-exchange ratio datasets, conclude that 'democracy does not appear to have a statistically significant effect'.²²

Michael C. Desch is also skeptical about democratic triumphalism as the primary source of military effectiveness because it depends on the international environment. Military power requires a well-functioning organization, material assets and the right decisions concerning strategy, doctrines and training. For Michael Beckley, those who place emphasis on non-material factors tend to overlook economic development, the 'critical determinant of (military) effectiveness'. He asserts that economic development determines military power, and culture and human capital are irrelevant. 'Democracy actually seems to degrade war fighting capability', Beckley writes. Charles A. Miller, who supports Beckley, has examined the political economy of military effectiveness in conventional combat. Miller sees that the primary motivation for entering the Army, 'rank order tournament', is the advancement of one's career, which can be achieved if one masters military skills and performs well in combat. Literacy, development, political stability and culture of hierarchy all strongly influence this 'destructivity'. On the other hand, low literacy rates, political promotions and weak post-retirement career prospects in state bureaucracies are key restrictions that affect 'destructivity' negatively. For Miller, peer monitoring is the single most effective control mechanism in preventing the soldiers from shirking and motivating them to fight. Interestingly, ethnic diversity does not undermine combat power provided that the units experience combat together.²³

Literacy is also important in all regimes as it promotes nationalistic sentiments. Barry R. Posen argues 'that nationalism increases the intensity of warfare, and specifically the ability of states to mobilize the creative energies and the spirit of self-sacrifice'. Mass literacy among the conscripts increases their ability to absorb new military technology, and literate conscripts are also more easily subjected to propaganda and indoctrination. 'A more literate population also makes the training and organization of very large forces easier, facilitating mass mobilization', Posen adds.²⁴

The conventional wisdom about civil-military relations in democracies holds that after political leaders have decided upon the war aims, they should give leeway to senior officers in the conduct of operations. This inculcates military professionalism, and officers voluntarily opt not

to interfere in politics. Professionalism fosters military effectiveness, and civilian control of the military can be ensured if both spheres have large autonomy. Views like this are often based on the works of Samuel P. Huntington who viewed civil–military relations as an explanatory variable. Morris Janowitz shared most of Huntington’s assertions but also argued that since militaries are not homogenous they will be at least slightly politicized. Thus strict civilian control is needed, and the politicized military cannot be granted full autonomy. Eliot A. Cohen challenges these traditional notions when examining the roles and relationships of statesmen and soldiers in wartime. He asserts that some active statesmen have interfered in, and even defied, the activities of their military leaders. By questioning and pushing the actions of senior military leadership, civilian leaders actually assisted their subordinates to successfully accomplish their difficult missions. Cohen highlights the fundamental subordination of soldiers to civilian oversight, and covers the ever-present tensions and mutual mistrust between civilian and military leaders. Suzanne C. Nielsen presents criticism towards Huntington’s premises. For her, Huntington’s patterns of civil–military relations pertain to the American case during the Cold War. Nielsen adds that Huntington misinterpreted Carl von Clausewitz’s notions and that professionalism, as Huntington described it in the late 1950s, ‘is problematic as an adequate indicator of (military) effectiveness’.²⁵

According to Desch, the line between the civilian and military spheres is not clear in all cases, good civil–military relations do not automatically happen in a coup-free nation, and good civil–military relations do not necessarily guarantee good policy decisions. However, cohesion and interplay increase as threats grow. Those countries operating in high external threat situations and having low internal threats are likely to have quite stable relations between political and military leaders, while the effectiveness of internally oriented militaries is often decreased. For Desch, the level of civilian control is best determined by looking at ‘who prevails when civilian and military preferences diverge’. Doctrines also affect civilian control because they shape the structure of military organizations, military organizational cultures, and act ‘as a focal point for the convergence or divergence of civilian and military ideas about the use of force and the international environment’. Externally oriented doctrine usually strengthens the role of those civilian institutions overseeing the military. Desch regards civilian control as a necessity in ‘developed democracies’ since larger intervention of senior officers in national-level policies can

even jeopardize the successful conduct of war, and low control by the civilians can be harmful to the nation and its military.²⁶

Caitlin Talmadge, who looks at how political interventions into the military can guarantee battlefield effectiveness, focuses on large structural material resource variables like economic wealth and demography and non-material variables such as culture and regime type ('what states do with what they have'). The latter is important to understand the ability of each state to generate overall military power. Yet, as they do not change fast, they are poorly suited to explaining much of the variation in performance of different armies. Talmadge also advises caution in the use of resource-based material variables ('what states have'), and she critiques those scholars emphasizing non-material variables or 'force multipliers or dividers' such as regime type, threat environment, culture and society, and civil-military relations. Instead, she emphasizes promotion patterns, training regimens, command arrangements and information management. Talmadge argues persuasively that the most effective militaries are able to produce cohesive units with proficiency in basic preferred tactics and have the ability to conduct complex operations. In order to have their armies perform with maximum battlefield effectiveness, the officers should be promoted based on their merits and competence, and the troops should be trained rigorously, realistically and frequently at both the small- and large-unit levels and in the fashion that allows them to create bonds and build trust. Command arrangements should be decentralized: command structures should be integrated and unified in order to secure rapid decision-making and coordination. Field commanders should have the authority to improvise and exhibit initiative. Finally, information management policies should not include any breakdowns in the flow of information and no delays in reacting to vital enemy information. She posits that caveats or anomalies in any of the four key areas of military activity (promotion patterns, training regimens, command arrangements and information management) will decrease the overall battlefield effectiveness. Talmadge asserts that 'states that adopt best practices can be expected to fight harder, resist longer, and impose significantly higher costs on their adversaries than might otherwise be expected based on an assessment of their material resources'.²⁷

Against this backdrop, the strategic appraisal and evaluation of potential enemies' military capabilities have been an important but difficult task for decision-makers. Murray and Millett point out that an accurate view is needed for preparedness and military effectiveness in possible coming

wars. The net assessments of one's own and enemies' strengths influence the decisions to wage war or to try to avoid it. They included projected performance of the armed forces, military technology and hardware, as well as economic, military and political power, ideology and leaders' intentions. The organizational structures and the flow of information count: correct information, factual analysis and structured policy options need to be forwarded to the decision-makers in a timely fashion. Moreover, Thomas G. Mahnken has discerned that intelligence organizations are likely to detect developments in armed services that resemble their own militaries. It is a difficult task for them to recognize foreign military innovation from scattered information unless it 'fits with their predispositions'. The military attachés often identify signs 'of new warfare areas on the battlefield or in realistic war games' than see them in theoretical documents. Intelligence services also tend to detect innovative developments 'in those areas that one's own services are exploring' as opposed to those they are not following or have rejected.²⁸

Risa Brooks asserts that strategic assessments during war times are affected by states' civil–military relations. Accurate assessments are conditioned by an easy exchange of information and a thorough analysis of a state's own relative capabilities and the larger strategic environment. If the relations between political and military leaders are strained, the highest-level decisions taken in war times can prove ineffective.²⁹

Military effectiveness is, to a large extent, a matter of careful planning. Prior to World War II the military planners of major European nations were faced with dilemmas of choosing offensive, defensive or deterrent strategies. Military planning and foreign policies were then clearly interwoven, and planning was affected by the interplay of social, political, diplomatic and economic factors with military concerns. Countries like France opted for defensive foreign policy leading to a defensive strategy that centered on the use of fortifications (the Maginot Line). On the other hand, the appeasement policy practiced by the British during the 1930s indicated a decreased level of military preparedness.³⁰

The changing nature of military technology in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries affected strategic planning (including military planning) and made it a difficult endeavor. Talbot Imlay and Monica Duffy Toft divided this uncertainty into three sets of difficulties: to identify the enemy, understand the nature of war and determine its timing. They demonstrate that peacetime military planning under conditions of uncertainty has proven a real challenge—or has offered good

opportunities—for governments and military organizations. Effective planning has required that the planners have been ‘flexible, imaginative and persistent in their efforts’.³¹

Effectiveness is also manifested in the way in which militaries are able to influence peacemaking efforts. Allan C. Stam III uses rational choice analysis and explores the relative effect on the war outcomes of leaders’ wartime choices and the resources they have had since the early 1800s. He shows that domestic political factors and constraints affect decisions on strategy, troop levels and defense spending. Decision-makers’ preferences are altered due to domestic politics, and strategies often fall short of the optimal strategies ultimately having an effect on the state’s ability to prevail. Dan Reiter’s bargaining theory of war termination uses the Winter War as one of his case studies. He alludes to the fact that ‘the problems of uncertainty and unenforceable commitments cause war, fighting serves to alleviate these problems, and war ends when these problems have been reduced sufficiently or eliminated’. Reiter focuses on an information-based approach and hypothesizes that concessions leading to war termination are the result of military defeats, whereas the belligerent’s own battlefield successes diminish willingness to make concessions and might even lead to additional demands of its enemy. On the other hand, Williamson Murray contends that the ending of wars does not follow certain patterns as they have occurred in very different contexts.³²

Some scholars have studied if and in what way the performance of nation states before a war conveys signals to its allies about its likely military effectiveness in times of war. Stephen B. Long looks at the reliability of possible allies, the mechanisms of violation or honor of one’s alliances. The decision whether or not to assist an ally in war depends on the credible information about ‘the likely effects of [the] decision’ and historical record of the ally’s military performance.³³

Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley argue that ‘strategy is a process, a constant adaptation to shifting conditions and circumstances in a world where chance, uncertainty, and ambiguity dominate’. It is difficult to quantify because it incorporates ‘human passions, values, and beliefs’. Strategic thinking and national strategic cultures are profoundly shaped by geography (size and location of a country), history, culture (including religion), economics and technology and governmental systems (including ideology and mass politics). The correct appraisal of the international environment is a prerequisite for formulating a sound strategic policy. Strategies are also, as Murray writes, ‘about balancing risks’. Great states,