

COPYRIGHT NOTICE:

**Kimberly Marten Zisk: Engaging the Enemy**

is published by Princeton University Press and copyrighted, © 2001, by Princeton University Press. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from the publisher, except for reading and browsing via the World Wide Web. Users are not permitted to mount this file on any network servers.

For COURSE PACK and other PERMISSIONS, refer to entry on previous page. For more information, send e-mail to [permissions@pupress.princeton.edu](mailto:permissions@pupress.princeton.edu)

## Introduction

---

MANY POLITICAL SCIENTISTS have recently become interested in the study of military organizations and the development of military doctrine. Most work in this area has argued that military organizations suffer from dysfunctional organizational biases. Military organizations are seen to be primarily bureaucratic actors, focused on domestic battles for resources and autonomy from civilian control. Military organizations are believed to value their own prestige and organizational stability and predictability above all else. This is thought to distort officers' views of the objective strategic situation that their state faces.<sup>1</sup> Barry R. Posen in particular concludes from this perspective that military organizations resist innovation in doctrine, and remain wedded to doctrines that have become routine. He posits that military organizations are likely to innovate only when they or their close allies suffer obvious defeat on the battlefield, or when they are forced to adopt new doctrines by civilians who intervene in the military decision-making process.<sup>2</sup> Most scholars whose work falls within this perspective believe that civilian intrusion into the military doctrine formulation process is considered a challenge to military autonomy, and therefore leads to pitched bureaucratic battles.

This book explores and challenges these common propositions. Its theoretical framework recognizes that military officers, like members of other organizations, often prefer to maintain policies that have been worked out in the past, and often resist efforts to introduce innovative thinking into the organizational decision-making process. It also recognizes that military officers try to protect and expand their budgetary resources and the autonomy of the military institution from civilian control. However, I argue that a more complex set of arguments from organization theory should be used to provide a better understanding of how military organizations respond to the idea of change.<sup>3</sup> I do not accept the thesis that organizational resistance to change and forceful civilian intervention into the decision-making process alone are sufficient to explain the development of military doctrine over time. Three additional variables are necessary for a complete explanation.

First, I argue that professional military officers are attuned to changes occurring in the military doctrines and force postures of their potential future enemies. Officers are often concerned not only about their own institutional interests in domestic politics, but also about the protection of state security interests from foreign threats. When military officers no-

tice that a change in their adversary's doctrine for future war has potential significant ramifications for the conduct of that war, they are likely to reexamine their own doctrinal precepts to determine whether they are still adequate. If current doctrine is found to be inadequate, innovation in doctrine can result without civilian interference into military affairs. Innovation in one state's military doctrine can therefore lead to a reactive innovation in the doctrine of its potential future opponent. When military officers' views about the hostility of potential future enemies and about the need for adequate future war preparation are brought into the equation, doctrinal innovation within the military organization is no longer an anomaly.

For the purposes of this book, "doctrinal innovation" will be defined as a major change in how military planners conceptualize and prepare for future war. In particular, it involves a reconceptualization of what sorts of military tasks need to be performed in wartime, or major alterations in how existing tasks are performed.<sup>4</sup> Civilian leaders may propose doctrinal innovations, and may in fact believe that such innovations have been implemented through their own policy decisions. However, according to my definition, innovations have only been realized when they are reflected in the actual war plans and preparations of military commanders. Examples of innovation discussed in this book include significant departures from previous military thinking and planning on questions such as whether war will be nuclear or conventional, whether nuclear war will be total or limited, and whether initial preparations for war must be offensive or defensive.<sup>5</sup> I define "reactive innovation" as a major change in thinking about and preparation for future war that occurs because of a change in war thinking or preparation made by a potential opponent. The reactive innovation may, but need not, mirror the opponent's innovation. This definition, which recognizes that innovation in one state may copy innovation in another state, is consistent with the definitions of many political scientists who have studied innovation: a policy innovation occurs when a new idea is adopted by an organization or a state, and followed by policy action, no matter how long the idea has been present in the world, and no matter how many other states have adopted the policy beforehand.<sup>6</sup>

Second, I argue that not all military officers from a particular institution act according to a simple, conservative calculation of that institution's organizational interests. Instead, officers are individuals who bring unique political and personal considerations, as well as organizational considerations, into policy debates. Some individuals are more inclined than others to propose or accept innovative ideas. Receptivity to innovation may depend on such factors as age, length of service, educational experience, and psychological predisposition. Not all individuals in any

institution value stability and predictability above all else. Some individuals value change.

Individuals with different perspectives on policy form a community of experts on national security issues. In some cases, this community includes civilian defense experts as well as members of the military institution. The decisions made by national security organizations about doctrine will reflect the interplay of a community of individuals, reacting to a changing environment. As this community of individuals reacts to the environment, innovation can be introduced into an organization that otherwise would seem to value conservative, incremental policy-making. Some individuals act as innovation entrepreneurs.

Third, I argue that civilian intervention into military doctrine formulation can take several forms, and that various forms of intervention are accompanied by varying degrees of bureaucratic infighting and inter-organizational hostility. When civilian leaders decide that they want to encourage innovation in military doctrine in ways that are inimical to the interests of the military institution, they can choose among various political strategies to accomplish their goals. They may decide to try to force particular policy changes on the military, and this can result in a pitched bureaucratic battle and strained civil-military relations. If time is of the essence in the eyes of these civilians, they may not have a choice other than conflict; they may decide that they need immediate change in the behavior of the military organization. However, if they have time to experiment, then they may decide instead to try to broaden the defense policy community. They may force military officers merely to interact with and listen to civilian experts who have alternative viewpoints on doctrinal issues, rather than forcing officers to accept particular predetermined policies. By broadening the defense policy community, civilians can build coalitions with reformist segments of the officer corps, and thus gain political power through the persuasive power of ideas.

Thus civilian intervention into doctrinal decision-making does not have to be characterized by the pure conflict of bureaucratic interest groups. In fact, in cases where the military organization controls the diffusion of information that is necessary to plan and execute doctrinal innovation, bureaucratic conflict is detrimental to civilian policymakers. Only by building coalitions within the organization can such civilians obtain the information they need to make policy and verify its implementation.

The addition of these three new arguments about the development of doctrine leads to the conclusion that the timing and content of military doctrine innovations are a result of the interaction of international and domestic political factors, of foreign doctrine changes and of domestic civilians' political strategies.<sup>7</sup> The need for clear theoretical delineation of

the effects of international and domestic stimuli on foreign and military policies of states is now widely accepted in the international relations literature. Sometimes, this problem is posed in terms of testing various levels of international relations analysis against each other. The question then asked is whether elegant international system-level theories, such as those presented by Kenneth N. Waltz or other balance-of-power theorists, best explain the motives of foreign policy decisionmakers, or whether bureaucratic and organizational politics theories such as Graham T. Allison's describe those motives better.<sup>8</sup> This levels-of-analysis testing approach can help to demonstrate the relative power of various political science theories.

However, I argue that security policymakers, both military and civilian, do not choose between being state actors oriented toward finding the best solutions to international problems, or being bureaucratic actors oriented toward preserving the health of their organizations. They are both, and both orientations, along with their unique characteristics as individuals, go into their choice of policies.<sup>9</sup>

There is no question that military officers tend to see challenges to state security through a lens provided by their organization. The organization provides them with a social construction of reality that differs from the constructions of those outside the organization. Yet that organizational lens does not always blind them to foreign challenges to their state's security. It may color or even distort their views; yet it is not accurate to portray that lens as only pointing inward, at the domestic scene. As the empirical case studies presented here demonstrate, in periods of low civil-military conflict, militaries spend a great deal of time analyzing the impact of doctrinal innovations made by their potential future enemies. Furthermore, the lens of each individual in the organization is slightly different from the lenses of all the others. It is not surprising that some officers are more attuned to issues of organizational stability, while others concentrate on international problems. It is thus impossible to achieve a complete picture of officers' views on military doctrine if they are portrayed simply as monochromatic bureaucratic actors who merely use foreign threats as excuses for their inherent organizational policy preferences.

Several recent studies of foreign policy decision-making recognize that policymakers have a combination of external balancing and internal bureaucratic and political motives, and turn to political structures or strategies to explain how these motives are expressed in policy.<sup>10</sup> This book is an attempt to apply the insights from these synthesizing works to a different policy area and a different body of theoretical literature. The question asked is not whether doctrinal thinking and policy are a result of reaction to the international arena or of domestic politics, but rather how the combination of the two processes leads to policy outcomes.

Analysis of this interplay can contribute to the building of foreign policy theory, theory that bridges the gap between international relations and comparative politics. The in-depth study of one state over time can be particularly useful, especially if during that time the state undergoes demonstrable changes in its domestic bureaucratic power structure. Such an example fits well the requirements of Alexander George's method for structured, focused, comparative case studies: extraneous variables (such as national strategic culture, geography, and major changes in the international balance of power) are held constant, while the impact of one independent variable—the domestic political situation—on policy can be traced.<sup>11</sup>

This book examines the development of military doctrine in the Soviet Union during the post-Stalin era.<sup>12</sup> It takes as its case studies Soviet reactions to the three major changes in doctrine for future war in Europe that were adopted by the United States or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) during the Cold War era: the American and NATO adoption of the Flexible Response doctrine in the 1960s; the American adoption of the Schlesinger Doctrine in 1974; and the combination of the American adoption of the AirLand Battle doctrine and the NATO adoption of the Follow-on Forces Attack (FOFA) doctrine in the early 1980s.

This set of cases was chosen because of its completeness; every major change in Western doctrine for future war in Europe from the mid-1950s through the end of the Cold War is examined as a possible stimulus for Soviet doctrinal innovation. But it has an additional important property: in each case, the conditions of Soviet domestic politics and civil-military relations were different. In the first case, at the time that the United States first adopted the Flexible Response policy in 1961, the Soviet military was already engaged in a bitter bureaucratic struggle with Communist Party First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev about the content of Soviet military doctrine and about the distribution of resources between the civilian and military sectors of the economy. The foreign stimulus hit at a time when the Soviet military was already busy defending its autonomy from civilian interference in a different direction. In the second case, when the United States adopted the Schlesinger Doctrine, Soviet civil-military relations were calm, and General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev appeared to be willing to give the military all the resources and doctrinal policy autonomy that it demanded. The military appears to have been free to react to the foreign stimulus as it saw fit. In the final case, as U.S. and NATO leaders shifted toward the adoption of deep-strike doctrines that were intended to match perceived Soviet doctrinal strengths in Europe, the Soviet Union was in the midst of budgetary and foreign policy crises that would eventually lead to reconsideration of the resource share and policy role of the Soviet military institution. Most important, Soviet General Secretary (and later, President) Mikhail Gorbachev supported the entrance of a new set of

actors—civilian national security experts—into the doctrinal policy community, to act as a counter to the voices of military officers. This community changed in the midst of the Soviet reaction, and therefore it should not be surprising that the reaction itself was altered as well.

The development of Soviet military doctrine over time is interesting both from a practical perspective, and from a theoretical perspective. At the practical, policy level, it remains important to understand the Soviet military institution and military policy-making. The military institutions that eventually coalesce from the ruins of the Soviet state are likely to carry significant portions of the Soviet military's institutional culture into the future. In the uncertain future of post-Soviet East-Central Europe, the remnants of the Soviet military officer corps will remain potentially influential players in both domestic politics and security policy issues. The Russian state in particular will still have a huge arsenal of military power at its disposal, and could reemerge in future decades as a military powerhouse. It is therefore vital to understand what stimulated change in Soviet military policy, and how foreign developments and the varying character of civil-military relations interacted to create either stagnancy or innovation in Soviet military doctrine. The issue of military doctrines in Europe is far from being settled, even though the competition between NATO and the former Warsaw Pact has faded. It is not clear whether the security situation in Europe will be more stable or less so in the post-Cold War world;<sup>13</sup> undoubtedly the remnants of the Soviet military will play a role in determining that outcome.

The Soviet case is also interesting for two theoretical reasons. First, the Soviet military is an important example of a general staff military planning system. General staffs are structured in ways that discourage interservice rivalry; they stand in sharp contrast to the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) system. Whereas the American military is structured so that representatives of each service branch (the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy) compete with each other in the top-level decision-making process, general staff representatives are encouraged to lose their distinctive service identities early in their careers, and to make policy arguments based on national security interests as a whole. In the Soviet case, the General Staff's tools for promoting interservice cooperation included a holistic staff culture, as well as integrative structures and promotion policies.<sup>14</sup>

This difference in the two systems is not always obvious to those who are not Sovietologists. It can have an impact on the theoretical approach that American scholars take to the question of military doctrine decision-making. If the American JCS example is taken as the norm for theory development, then the incidence of bureaucratic conflict and infighting will be expected to be quite high. Officers at the very top of the military

planning process have their attention constantly directed toward domestic battles over resources and missions.<sup>15</sup> If a general staff system is taken as the norm for theory development, then organizational and bureaucratic concerns might be seen to play a lesser role in military officers' preferences; officers' concerns about state security will receive more attention. Military officers are less likely to focus on internal resource competition, and more likely to focus on meeting foreign threats to state security, when interservice rivalry is not a constituent part of their daily lives. Theories developed for militaries with general staff systems may not describe the policy-making process in the United States as well as JCS-based theories do; but many powerful states now have or did have general staff systems (including France, historical Prussia, interwar Germany, Israel, and the People's Republic of China).

The second major reason that these particular Soviet cases are interesting from a theoretical perspective is that they provide a decades-long example of one state's concern about a continuing international military competition. While other enemies (such as China) waxed and waned in importance in Soviet eyes during this time, NATO and the United States remained the primary probable future military opponent for over forty years. Analysis of whether or not the development of U.S. and NATO doctrine acted as a stimulus on Soviet doctrine development allows us to draw conclusions about whether or not international "doctrine races" exist.

Reactive innovations in doctrine are likely to feed off of each other. Each side wants to protect and enhance its ability to fight the kind of war it believes is likely. Often, when one side believes that its innovation enhances its own security, the other side perceives the innovation as something which threatens its security. When the second side reacts to that threat with an innovation of its own, a new, and probably threatening, strategic situation will be perceived by the side which innovated first. The end result is a competition in doctrines, where one innovation provokes another ad infinitum. Arms competitions (sometimes called "arms races"), especially the one between the Soviet Union and the United States, have been rigorously studied; theories have been developed about how domestic and/or international factors aggravate or ameliorate them.<sup>16</sup> However, doctrinal competitions have not received this attention.

The study of the Soviet case over time can help analysts to understand the role of doctrinal competition in perpetuating a competitive military relationship. At a broader level, it can help us to understand an often neglected factor which may need to be overcome if the Cold War is to be put permanently behind us. If it is indeed true, as most theorists argue, that militaries tend to prefer offensive doctrines that involve heavy resource investments, this suggests that doctrinal competitions may con-

tinue to spiral upward even as quantitative disarmament takes place. Decreases in weapons numbers alone may not lessen military competitions, if the weapons which remain are developed and deployed according to concepts which the other side finds threatening. As U.S. and NATO policymakers debate their future approach to security in Europe, they must take into account the likely reactions of the remnants of the Soviet military to Western doctrinal developments. Otherwise, we may be doomed to repeat the dangerous military competition of the Cold War era.