
Part II Protests against Choice: Decision Making in Russian Military Policy

'Leaders have a degree of choice making policies. Depending on their skill and intelligence in seeing real alternatives, they can increase that discretion, but they are constrained by structural conditions and reactive decisions by subordinates and other people affected by their choices. Interactions of policies, conditions and other people create the dynamics of politics (and military operations in peace and war). And the top policy maker's choices are often decisive in the creation of a particular dynamic between policy and its impact on structural conditions and reactive choices by all of those people affected'

William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Army*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 392

Introduction

The management of organizational change is a complex and comprehensive process.¹³⁶ Once the need for innovation is recognized and thoughts about change are summarized in a reform plan, a new phase begins in which these ideas are implemented, monitored and possibly adjusted. Consequently, the introduction of innovation in an organization may be theoretically subdivided into two separate stages: the so-called 'decision-making' and 'implementation' stages. Military reform is in this part of the thesis considered as a strategic decision making process. Accordingly, the complex process of introducing organizational innovation in general, and military reform in particular, is limited and it includes the stage in which a suitable strategic plan of programmed reform is identified, selected and decided upon. It is during this phase that the need for change is consciously recognized, that new ideas are discussed and diagnosed, that different plans are designed and evaluated, and finally, that a strategic plan of reform is approved. The different stages of the decision-making phase are illustrated in Figure 1. Clearly, this is an 'ideal' representation of the decision-making process that does not correspond precisely with reality. It is a theoretical reference that outlines the limits of the analysis conducted in this part of the thesis.

¹³⁶ Although change, reform and innovation have slightly different meanings in the literature on organizational change, they are used here as synonyms. This is because this study is particularly interested in the dynamic process of introducing change in organizations and not necessarily in the idea of change 'an sich'.

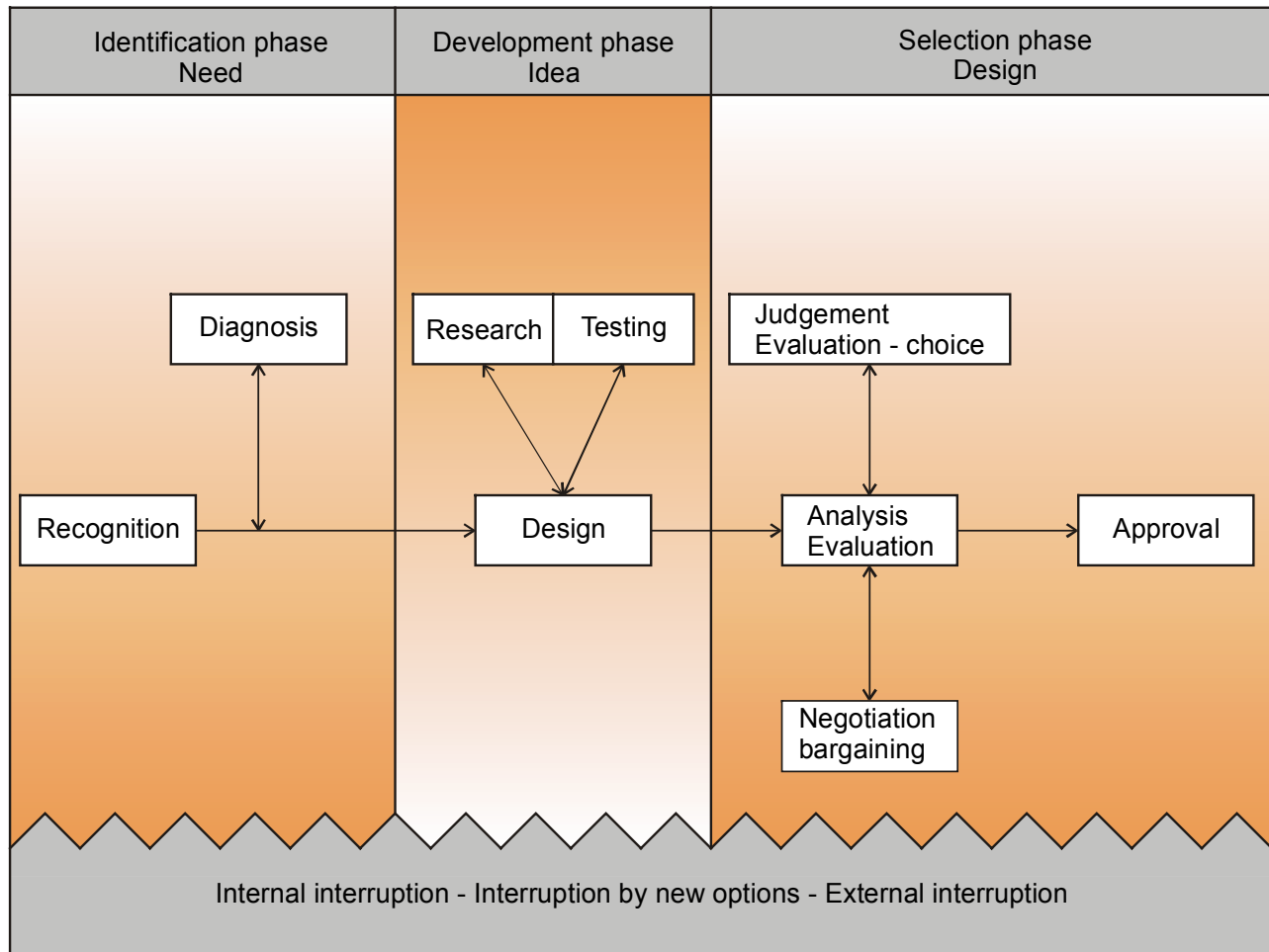


Figure 2: Theoretical Phases in the Decision Making Process

To obtain a deeper insight into the decision-making process on the All-Volunteer Force issue in Russia, it is necessary to look at decision-making theory, which provides a framework that demonstrates how ideas of the All-Volunteer Force have developed over time in the Soviet-Russian context. It also illuminates the characteristics of military policy making and political culture during the Gorbachev-Yeltsin era. We will focus on four traditional models in decision making theory: the ‘rational’ model, the ‘bounded rational’ model, the ‘Carnegie’ model, and the ‘incremental decision-making’ model. These academic constructs each emphasize different aspects of the decision-making process, but are seen as a cumulative whole where each model adds to the analyst’s knowledge of decision-making in military reform.

In **the rational model** of decision-making, change and thinking about change always starts from the idea that there is a need to adapt an organization to a new environment. A new idea can be generated inside or can be borrowed from outside the organization. In the latter case we speak about ‘managerial imitation’.¹³⁷ Both notions of need and idea are the fundamental starting points

¹³⁷ The concept of organizational imitation is used in the field of organizational sociology. (See for example Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, ‘The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields’, Walter Powell and Paul DiMaggio, *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991, pp. 63-82; and J. Soeters, *Verschuivende en Vergruizende Grenzen, Over de doordringbaarheid van organisaties (met toepassing op de krijgsmacht)*, Breda: Koninklijke Militaire Academie, 1994, pp. 8-11) The policy of imitation can also be found in the historical literature where it is considered as an important lever of historical change. (See for example: David B. Ralston, *Importing the European Army, The Introduction of European Military Techniques and Institutions into the Extra-European World 1600-1914*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990). Finally, in the field of international relations, the idea that actors in a competitive international system are socialized to adapt similar policies and strategies is an accepted common

in the process of change. Subsequently, the 'high command' must choose the best option available by completing a comprehensive analysis of the problem, defining the goals of the organization and considering alternative proposals. To this end, the nature of the reform ideas, their origins and the moment when they are generated, must be closely scrutinized. Moreover, the 'high command's perception of who originally drew attention to the needs and shortcomings of the organization significantly affects the subsequent commitment to solving organizational problems.

Needless to say, such a clear cut and fluent decision making process is an ideal type and does not exist in reality. Rather, actual decision making is based on the assumption that managers cannot readily transform a complicated web of facts, assumptions, objectives, and educated guesses into clear decisions that people in an organization can act upon. Therefore, more realistic models have to be presented. One of the pioneers in this respect is Herbert Simon, who has adjusted the rational model of the decision making process to his **theory of 'bounded rationality'**, which has replaced the idea of 'comprehensive rationality'.¹³⁸ He argues that decision makers are limited by inadequate information about the nature of the problem and its possible solutions, a lack of time or money to compile more complete information, an inability to remember large amounts of information and the limits of their own intelligence. The search for the perfect or ideal decision is therefore often replaced by a solution that will adequately serve the purposes of the organization. Instead of maximizing or optimizing a solution, decision-makers usually accept the first satisfactory decision that they uncover. In the words of Simon, managers are 'satisficing'. Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman have researched the theory of bounded rationality and state that decision-makers rely on heuristic principles.¹³⁹ They state that managerial decisions are mostly judged by the decision-makers' memory, their personal experiences, their pre-existing categories and some of their initial values. In other words, intuition, more than rationality becomes the predominant factor in managerial decisions. The experience, memory and mentality of military and civilian decision makers, are therefore important indicators in our research as they influence the process considerably.

Not only are the individual decision-makers bounded in their rationality. Organizations themselves limit the potential of decisions being made, due to the 'logic of their existence' i.e. their inherent bureaucratic structure. The so-called **Carnegie model** developed by Cyert, March and Simon claims that many managers are involved in the decision making process and they present solutions based on coalitions between themselves. Coalitions are alliances between several managers who agree on certain organizational goals and the priority of specific organizational problems. Uncertainty and conflict in an organization generate the need to form coalitions in order that a decision will be made. In the highly mobile process of coalition formation the bargaining process is immanent. The bargaining process is a game of give and take in which particular psychological elements such as status, prestige and power are the medium of exchange. A system where coalitions are needed to implement a decision is not the most favorable situation for decision making to take place and in the case of military reform, a 'bargained' consensus between coalitions is the norm.

The nature of the military organization itself means that the political system can potentially interfere in all aspects of the reform process itself. From a democratic point of view this interference can be interpreted as a form of legitimate control imposed by the civilian world on military institutions. From the point of view of the decision maker, however, this interference

assumption. (See for example: Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, New York: Mc Graw-Hill, 1979, p. 127)

¹³⁸ Herbert A. Simon, *Models of Man: Social and Rational*, New York: Wiley, 1957; and Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision, Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1971, pp. 71-72.

¹³⁹ Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, 'Judgement and Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases', *Science*, Vol. 18, 1974, pp. 1124-1134.

complicates the process of decision making.¹⁴⁰ Graham Allison, who advanced the ‘Governmental (or bureaucratic) Politics Model’ has found that the political participants of the process;

“...focus not on a single strategic issue but on many diverse intra-national problems as well; ...act in terms of no consistent set of strategic objectives but rather according to various conceptions of national, organizational, and personal goals;...make government decisions not by a single rational choice but by the pulling and hauling that is politics.”¹⁴¹

The political actor is simultaneously the primary and most important (extra-military) partner needed by military decision makers to establish a reform plan, but, the non-military nature of the political actor makes the coalition formation process more complicated. Although a plan for military reform may be regarded as an important document in the security policy of a state, it is at best a plan of consensus rather than a plan that matches rational military needs with solutions. In this sense, every published reform plan can be termed a ‘failure’ because: (1) it is by definition impossible to obtain a comprehensive rational plan, and (2) in the bargaining and coalition formation game there are always losers. Consequently, assessing where criticism and praise for a certain plan come from is vital. More importantly, no single player can be blamed or praised in the ultimate evaluation of the military reform process: military reform is always a shared responsibility.

In addition to Allison’s findings, Henry Mintzberg emphasizes that decision making is not a steady and progressive process. Bureaucratic choice consists of partial decisions, which is explained by ‘**the model of incremental decision making**’, in which the process is constantly interrupted.¹⁴² These intrusions may find their origin in the internal coalition formation process or in the extent of external, political interference. In other words, Mintzberg reminds us of the evolutionary aspect of the process and the important aspect of timing. Figure 2, summarizes the conceptual framework of the presented models on decision making.

¹⁴⁰ The difference between the political and the managerial logic of military organizations or, according to James Burk, the complex relationship between the ‘functional’ and the ‘social’ imperatives on the military-represent an important element in the discussion on the gap that separates the military from the larger society. This is the so-called civil-military gap hypothesis, which is put on the academic and political agenda since 1997 in the United States. See for instance: Thomas Ricks, ‘The Widening Gap Between the Military and Society’, *Atlantic Monthly*, 280, July 1997, pp. 66-78 and the elaborated academic study on this issue led by Peter Feavor and Richard Kohn: Peter Feavor and Richard Kohn (editors), *Soldiers and Civilians, The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001.

¹⁴¹ Graham T. Allison, *Op. Cit.*, London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1971, p. 144.

¹⁴² Henry Mintzberg, Duru Raisinghai and André Théoret, ‘The structure of “unstructured” Decision Making Processes’, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, June 1976; and Henry Mintzberg and Others, ‘Opening-Up Decision Making: the View From the Blank Stool’, *Organization Science*, Vol. 6, Nr. 3, May-June, 1995.

Decision making models	Key notions	Critical issues	Hampering elements
Comprehensive Rational Model	Idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Existence, timing and origin of ideas ● Internal and external information flow ● External consultancy and expertise ● Grass root level idea generation (empowerment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complexity of the issue ● Number of participants ● Uncertainty of the environment
	Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Problem identification ● Commitment to problem solving 	
	Plan Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants to and timing of decision-making process ● Stability of decision-making platforms 	
Bounded Rational Model	Heuristic Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Experience, memory and mentality of decision-makers 	
Carnegie Model	Coalition Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formation and participation in coalitions ● Stability of coalitions ● Political, public and military actors in coalition formation 	
Incremental Decision-making Model	Interruptions and Set-backs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Timing and scheduling of the whole decision-making process ● Internal, external interruption or interruption through new options 	

Figure 3: Selected Phases in the Decision-Making Process

In conclusion, military reform is *an overwhelmingly complex problem* in terms of content and the decision making process itself. The process develops in *an uncertain environment* in which institutions, such as the state and its political and military apparatus, become highly unstable. The *multitude of actors* involved, each with their own agenda and rationale, underlines the ratio of bounded rationality, coalition formation, bargaining procedures interruptions and setbacks in the decision making process. Moreover, banal accidents or international incidents make the process of reform even more susceptible to a variety of external (and unpredictable) factors.

In this study, a strong emphasis is deliberately placed on the process of decision-making in the military reform debate. Traditional definitions of military reform have emphasized the components of military reform while ignoring the process itself. This is especially true in the case of Soviet-Russian decision making practices. The Russian definition of military reform, as stipulated in the *voennyi entsiklopedicheski slovar'* [Military Encyclopedic Dictionary], for example, may illustrate this:

“Military reform is a profound reorganization (transformation) of the military system of the state, implemented by the decisions of the highest organs of state

power. Military reform is influenced by new political missions of the state, the existence of new weapon systems, economic considerations, changes in production levels, the means and methods of conducting war (battle) and other elements. Military reform is legally determined (fixed) by laws, military directives and other documents.¹⁴³

In this definition military reform is reduced to a static and smooth process wherein success is simply dependent on a sound intellectual analysis and clear-cut decisions being made. In direct contrast, the ensuing analysis accentuates the dynamic and problematic character of the reform process; in so far as it can obstruct or destroy the reform effort. The key notions and critical issues of the decision-making process, which are presented above, will be analyzed in the context of the Soviet-Russian military reform effort. Hence, the main political events and the institutional environment in which military affairs evolved will be reviewed. The important interdependence between the socio-political evolution and military development must be stressed, in order to explain the context of different reform designs. This interdependence also explains various forms of reasoning, which are the foundations for the various reform plans.

¹⁴³ S.F. Akhromeev and others (Eds.), *Voennyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, Moskva: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1986, p.633.