

Central Organizations of Defense



edited by Martin Edmonds

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Preface

The notion of compiling and editing a volume on central organizations of defense had been with me for several years—in fact, since I began teaching civil-military relations in the mid-1960s. Each year I took the easy way out and gave my students general outlines of the countries that seemed most relevant at the time. But as the years passed and as defense expenditures everywhere mounted, I perceived an increasing need for a volume that spelled out the issues associated with the making of defense policy and described the context within which it was made. The last straw came about two years ago when discussions of Soviet and U.S. strategic policy and of European responses to plans for strategic stability in Europe were articulated and analyzed in highly personalized terms, with no recognition of, or apparent reference to, the interplay of political, bureaucratic, military, scientific, and economic forces that constrain options and shape preferred solutions.

The time had come, I felt, to remind everyone that the defense policies of nations and states are the product of the interplay of powerful interests, all operating within well-defined structures, according to generally recognized and prescribed processes and within a wide range of different political systems. Furthermore, the interaction of these powerful forces takes place within the wider context of domestic and international economic, political, and social considerations.

The volume seemed to be an important contribution to the ongoing discussions of defense and strategic issues, but it also offered a rare opportunity to encourage a fresh look at the problems associated with comparative political analysis, in particular the comparison of a major department of government across a variety of states in an area of central political concern.

Once the commitment to embark on the project had been made, two further decisions were necessary. The first was to ask contributors to work within a common analytical framework, which is outlined in Chapter 1; the other was to ask for contributions from “indigenous” authors. The common framework was meant to create some semblance of analytical commonality and to facilitate the highlighting of contrasts and similarities; the local authors were to ensure that the nuances of

central organizations of defense would not be overlooked because of a lack of immediate and intimate familiarity.

But neither objective was wholly achieved. Several contributors pointed out that the political systems and historical contexts of their particular state did not lend themselves to the comparative framework I had given them; their compromise was to employ it where appropriate and depart from it where necessary. The second objective foundered on the rocks of the reluctance of relevant authorities, but in most cases our authors succeeded. To them I owe a debt of gratitude for their great efforts, especially those who wrote for an essentially foreign audience in a foreign language.

This was not possible in all cases, and I must record my most sincere thanks to all those who helped me to translate and get the best from those contributions that were not in English. In no specific order of relevance I thank sincerely and warmly Michelle Fournier, Anne Mandeville, Bob Baker, and Fiona Knowles-Lote for their linguistic help and support and for their kind forbearance when I insisted on altering their more elegant prose, and colleague David Weston for his reassurance that I was not always too far off the mark.

To Lynne Rienner and Deborah Lynes at Westview Press and to Frances Pinter, I wish to record my appreciation of their respective support for and confidence in the pertinence of this volume and of their quite remarkable patience. To Christine Arden at Westview I owe a particular debt of gratitude for her exceptional copy editing, which improved the volume immeasurably. And to Valerie Mingay, for typing, retyping, word processing, and generally enduring my irascibility throughout the project, I give my special thanks.

Martin Edmonds

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Introduction

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Almost without exception—and the exceptions scarcely warrant close attention in any case—every state in the world possesses armed forces. There is wide variation in composition, type, function, role, capability, and size of armed forces. In some cases the emphasis is more on the domestic arena and in others, the international; but in all instances there is, within the structure of political authority of each state, a government department, ministry, organization, bureau, or directorate—the titles are as multifarious as the types of armed forces—that is charged with the responsibility for, and the direction, use, and control of the activities of armed force. More often than not, there is more than one such government institution. This fact alone offers the opportunity, if not the challenge, for comparative analysis, with the promise at the end, *ceteris paribus*, of a better understanding of how and why different states are more or less successful in exercising control over their armed forces and of an answer to the ever-relevant question, *Quis custodiet custodes?*

Why choose the central organizations of defense as the vehicle for comparative institutional and political analysis? Two considerations stand out. The first is the truism that the armed forces of any state constitute bodies of men and women who are organized, equipped, and trained to be able to bring physical coercive force to bear as a means—an option—at the disposal of those in political power to resolve national or international political disputes. For the most part, armed forces are established principally to meet or deter perceived external threats to the interests of the state and its citizenry, both at home and abroad. The majority of states differentiate between the armed services and the police, whose primary responsibility is, if the occasion warrants it, to bring coercive force to bear in disputes that are perceived to constitute a threat to the stability and domestic order of the state. The distinction, of course, is neither universal nor customary, and examples abound, on the one hand, of the involvement of the armed services and paramilitary forces in the maintenance of domestic order and, on the other, of the use of police and parapolice abroad (although this is less common).

It stands to reason, therefore, that armed forces, by dint of their specific functions and the coercive power they possess, constitute a

potential independent political force. Alternatively, they can be a tool at the disposal of a nongovernmental domestic political faction, a course of action that would be inimical to constitutional order and customary political practices. As S. E. Finer so appositely pointed out in his pioneering study of the military, the pertinent question is not so much why the military intervenes in politics, but why it does not.¹ In the same vein, but from a different ideological perspective, C. Ackroyd and J. Margolis noted that the armed forces at the disposal of state authorities are no more neutral than the state itself; on the strength of this premise, it is fallacious to assume that the coercive power of the police and the armed services will not be employed in defense of the existing political regime, defined here as both the holders of political power and authority and the political system itself.² It is thus a matter of paramount importance to know and understand both the constitutional provisions for the existence of organizations and institutions that can exercise coercive power within any state and the statutory provisions for their control.

If the first reason for focusing our attention on central organizations of defense were not enough, the very magnitude of spending on armed forces, within individual states (whether expressed as a percentage of the gross national product—GNP—or in absolute terms) and throughout the world, should give cause for proper consideration of the provision of adequate means of their control. But the sheer magnitude of spending on armed forces today, together with the effect of that expenditure on national economies and its opportunity cost, is not the only consideration: Since World War II, spending on armed forces has also inexorably risen at an almost exponential rate. This fact, however, pales almost to insignificance when compared to the phenomenal increase in the destructive power of modern weapons systems, their extended range of effectiveness, their greater reliability and accuracy, and—as a consequence of complexity, production lead times, and labor intensiveness—their constant state of readiness. Nowhere is this consideration more critical, and the question of control more imperative, than in the provision for the effective and, as far as possible, guaranteed control over those who are responsible for the deployment, protection, state of readiness, and, ultimately, use of nuclear weapons. Contemporary public concern in European states over the control of U.S. nuclear weapons stationed in Europe and a more general worldwide concern over the control of nuclear weapons by the nuclear powers—as the consequences go far beyond the parties immediately involved—highlight this problem.

The potential influence of armed forces and the wider effect today of meeting their perceived requirements in terms of money, men, and materiel are two clear reasons for which a close scrutiny of the central organizations of defense among, at least, the major military powers in the world is pertinent. Indeed, within the central organizations of defense of all states is found the very essence of civil-military relations within any society, and the core of the relationship between armed force and society. It is that locus where the armed forces, as both the executors

of policy and the institutions responsible for the operational functions for the security system of the state,³ meet and work in conjunction with the political representatives of the population, who, depending on the state, have been either elected, delegated, or mandated to prosecute approved and legitimate policies concerned with the external and internal security of the state and the "protection of internal values."⁴

In some states the relationship is clearly one of the armed forces' subservience to their political masters, with the inevitable qualification that the former—as professional bodies possessing a virtual monopoly of experience, expertise, and information in matters, especially, of physical defense and deterrence against external threat—must exercise influence over security policy. In other states, this is less obviously the case; at one extreme, there are those in which the armed forces, or an element of them, have taken over the government and hence the differentiation between political and police/military authority no longer applies, and, at the other, there are those that constitute single-party or totalitarian systems in which the armed forces and the government authorities are both subservient to and, in a practical sense, under the control and direction of a single-party leadership.⁵ Nevertheless, even in this second category the central organization of defense remains the forum in which the determination of policy and the management and execution of that policy is deliberated and, finally, decided.

An analysis of central organizations of defense necessarily raises many conceptual and definitional problems, particularly when comparisons are drawn between one state and another. It is not sufficient to assert that, to a large degree, the armed forces and their functions—defined by Morris Janowitz as the constrained management of violence⁶—are elements that all states have in common, partly because differences in the size, composition, and technical complexity of the armed forces of states are in such orders of magnitude that to draw comparisons would be tenuous, and partly because not all states differentiate between armed forces designed and trained specifically for defense against external threat and armed forces exclusively employed in the domestic arena. Customarily, the distinction is one drawn between the armed services and the police force, although many states also have paramilitary and parapolice forces, and many others equip, deploy, and staff their armed services specifically for operations in the domestic arena.

Two examples may be used to illustrate this point: One concerns Britain, which differentiates between its armed services and its police force, both in the structural arrangements for each set of institutions and in the provisions for their respective accountability to the legislature. It is also worth noting that, with a few exceptions, the British police do not carry arms; moreover, the British Army has been used since 1969 in Northern Ireland, for which role it has been specially equipped and trained. The other concerns France, whose Gendarmerie Nationale is as much a fourth armed service as it is a national police force; this duality is reflected in its accountability to three political masters: the

Departments of Defense, Interior, and Justice. Further complications are associated with the degree of inconsistency that exists even in those states that differentiate quite clearly between the armed services as the agencies responsible for external defense and the police as that for internal law and order. Then there is the number and type of organizations classed as "armed services." Most states possess armies, navies, and air forces; Britain, Spain, and Germany are clear examples. The Soviet Union, however, has found it necessary to have five, and the United States and France, four each.

To some extent, these distinctions between different states are secondary to the central issue, even though it is prudent to bear them in mind. Central organizations of defense are directly concerned with the defense of the state against external threat, and consequently they are not concerned entirely with the broader issue of national security. Assuredly, defense is nevertheless the most important, and arguably the most dominant, element in national security, but the two concepts or objectives of state policy are not synonymous. For this reason, the analysis of central organizations of defense is concerned with those agencies—for all intents and purposes, the uniformed armed services—for which it is politically and publicly accountable. Other armed forces, as with the police, special task forces, bureaus of investigation, and so on are excluded, unless they are directly accountable to constitutionally and legally defined organizations, ministries, or departments of defense.

For this reason, the point of departure for the study of central organizations of defense is the constitutional and legal standing of the relevant department of government and of the armed services and other defense-related agencies for which it is responsible, as well as the procedures that prescribe both the relationship between these two elements and the way they go about their business. The juridical principles upon which the political systems of different states are based vary significantly, and contrasts between the states' central organizations of defense will be immediately apparent on these grounds alone. Take, for example, those states in which Marxist principles prescribe the constitution and the organic laws outlining the powers and functions of state institutions: In the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, a foundation has been firmly established that integrates the administrative structure of government, including defense, with the structure of the Communist party. Britain, with a political system based on common law principles and lacking any single formal constitutional document, stands in marked contrast with its European continental partners whose constitutions are both written and founded on the principles of Roman law. The United States, constitutionally a mixture of both British and European influences and traditions, is different again, for which reason it is significant to note that the constitutions and structural arrangements for the central organizations of defense of both Germany and Japan were established with strong U.S. influence after World War II.

Constitutions do not determine the policies of governments or the behavior of officials; nor do they necessarily prescribe who should decide policy. They do, however, define the parameters and structure of formal authority within the state and the responsibilities, duties, and authority that are vested in the institutions and offices of state. Those who hold positions within those institutions ostensibly may exercise power only within the terms of the constitution and as defined by law; reality would suggest, however, that such considerations as expediency, custom, and opportunism are sufficient reasons why this is not always the case, even in states with a "mature" political culture, and why departures from constitutional and legal norms not only frequently occur but also go unnoticed, unchecked, or unremedied.

Constitutions exist as a codification of the structure of the political system; moreover, in prescribing and defining both the powers that office-holders may exercise within the law and the processes of decisionmaking in matters affecting the state as a whole, they serve as guidelines and guarantors of democracy, and of popular sovereignty, in the sense of ensuring provision for public participation in political processes, government accountability, and access to information and authority. These legal prescriptions apply not only to questions of the selection of individuals to hold public office, but also to matters associated with the formulation and execution of public policy. Generally speaking, they relate in liberal democratic societies to universal suffrage and to the sets of arrangements concerned with the election of public representatives to legislatures. Public participation in central government decisionmaking is much less evident for purely practical reasons, and such involvement as exists is conducted through political parties, interest articulation and pressure groups, and, to an increasing extent in modern advanced industrial societies, a more corporate approach of governments to policymaking.⁷

But democracy is much more than public involvement in elections and accessibility to those in authority. The hallmark of any effective democratic system is the degree to which governments and those who exercise political power are accountable and answerable to those whom they ostensibly serve, and in whose names policies are formulated and executed. Depending on the nature of the political system, its philosophical and juridical foundation, and the particular structural arrangements codified in the constitution and in statutory law, so the mechanisms of accountability differ.

In parliamentary democracies, where the elected legislative assemblies are assumed to be sovereign in that they are the only source of legislation, one form of accountability is manifest in terms of the public's participation in elections. The government forms the executive branch, which, for the most part, seeks legislative endorsement of and financial backing for the policies it feels necessary to pursue in the nation's interest. Among such policies is that of defense, for which legislative endorsement is generally required in relation both to the policies the government wishes

to pursue and to the resources required to turn those policies into effective action. It is central to notions of democracy under these sorts of arrangements that governments should be accountable to legislative assemblies not merely for their policies, but also for the efficiency and fiscal propriety with which they implement them.⁸

In the field of defense, the accountability of the government and of those of its departments responsible for the formulation and execution of defense policy raises one critical issue in particular—the right and the need, respectively, of the public to know what the details of defense policy are and how those responsible have gone about their duties and with what degree of fiscal propriety. Assuming legislative assemblies to be paramount in these matters as the institutions that reflect popular sovereignty and, therefore, popular will, the issue should be clear: Governments, by definition, should be fully accountable. But the issue of defense raises the question of national security and the protection of the state and its citizens against external threat; consequently, open access to government information on defense policy, operational planning, military weapons, intelligence appreciation, and so on can itself constitute a threat to those very institutions established to protect the state and its citizens. Different societies place different emphasis on access to defense and military information, a fact invariably reflected both in the opportunities to raise relevant matters before the government in public and the degree of comprehensiveness with which explanation and answers are given.

In nonparliamentary democracies, particularly one-party states or those with specific philosophical underpinnings to their constitutions, processes of accountability, especially in defense matters, are significantly different from those characteristic of liberal democratic societies. The latter case is not necessarily one of less accountability in a practical sense; rather, accountability operates and is expressed through mechanisms parallel to the formal administrative structure of the state, invariably the constitutionally recognized single political party. On the premise of one party, and of one philosophical principle upon which the state is based, accountability therefore becomes as much an issue of the conformity of government behavior and policies to prescribed philosophical tenets as one of responsiveness to the public at large, which holds or reflects alternative, and opposing, values, preferences, and demands.

The relationships between central organizations of defense and governments, and between the government as a whole and its department of defense as well as the sovereign legislative bodies of the state, are essential to the understanding of how defense policies are formulated and implemented over time. Defense and foreign policy has been defined as “high politics” in the implied sense that they are areas too complex, too central, too sensitive, and too fundamental to be comprehended by the public at large and too important for the survival of the state to be subject to the vagaries and vicissitudes of popular fashion, opinion,

or whim.⁹ Conversely, there are policy areas that, in some cases, carry with them implications for the very survival of mankind, if not the whole of that country's society, in that they involve massive investment of human, material, and financial resources of the state and have an impact that stretches far into the future—all of which would suggest that an imperative of any democratic political system is the existence of effective mechanisms for public accountability regarding defense policy and the availability of adequate information on strategic, security, defense, military, and foreign affairs matters with which to formulate a balanced judgment.

The question of who should be accountable, and for what, turns attention directly back to the central issue area here—that of the central organization of defense. Defense accountability and answerability is concerned, respectively, with (1) policies (the defined ends of any state's defense and military efforts); (2) programs (the choices exercised among many alternative options with which to achieve policy ends); (3) processes (the management efficiency with which governments and their agencies execute these programs); and (4) proprieties (the assurance that the resources allocated to the defense effort have been expended according to the amounts and terms agreed by the legally constituted authorities, that is, the legislature). Within the central organizations of defense of states, the apportionment of responsibility for those aspects of government action for which the four dimensions of accountability apply is not always clear, and constitutional and statutory provisions do not always satisfactorily point to or provide the answer.

Military and party dictatorships aside, the responsibility for formulating defense policy is the exclusive concern of governments, which act on behalf of the people; it follows that such responsibility is a civilian matter that reflects the generally accepted principle of all democracies that the military and other defense forces should be subservient to such a political authority. Structurally, this is usually the case in most states, such that the prime minister or minister of defense (or his or her equivalent) serves in the name of the government as a whole as the top authority in matters concerning defense. Subservient to this post are its departments and the armed services of the state. In some instances, the armed services are directly subject to the head of state, who is either a president or a monarch (in a titular sense), although defense policy itself and the appropriation of funds and resources often fall within the realm of government authority.

In short, line charts of authority may be relatively easy to determine in most states, but they invariably give a misleading picture of what really goes on and whose influence prevails at any one time. One explanation for this is the distinction between the responsibility for formulating defense and military policy on the one hand and the responsibility for its execution on the other. The former principally pertains to politicians, who, almost by definition, are not experts in military and defense matters; the latter responsibility is, by law, exclusively

that of the senior staffs of the armed services. The complexity, cost, and magnitude of military command, operational planning, and service operations—separately, on land, by sea, and in the air, and together in combined operations—are such that the importance of expertise and experience in defense matters is heavily weighted on the side of the service professionals. In the forums of decisionmaking within central organizations of defense, the balance of influence between political power and authority, on the one hand, and service expertise and responsibility in time of war or military action, on the other, is a delicate and potentially vulnerable one.

In many states, questions are continually being raised as to how political authority can be exercised over the armed services without at the same time jeopardizing their morale, commitment, and cooperation, or how it can be exercised without appearing to disregard legitimate professional advice from the services. The issue is more complex still in those instances in which the services operate institutionally independent of one another and enjoy a greater degree of autonomy than would be the case if they were incorporated either into a single defense force (as in Canada), or had a single defense department, to which they are all accountable, in place of separate service ministries (as in Great Britain).

The debates over the appropriate structure and processes of central organizations of defense have, in different states and at different times, emphasized more than just the central question of political supremacy over the military. In recent years, defense spending has almost universally increased, and the costs pertaining to men and materiel have risen significantly. With the abandonment, in some cases, of conscription as a source of manpower to be replaced by permanent all-volunteer professional forces, manpower has become an expensive and highly qualified element in modern defense budgets, and even in those states that have retained conscription, the proportion of conscripts and full-time professionals has changed with increasing technology in the direction of the latter, especially in the more capital-intensive services such as the navy, the air force, and missile-based forces. Weapons costs have risen exponentially not merely among the advanced industrial nations but also among those states whose political and military leaders are not prepared to accept either second-hand, obsolete, or relatively unsophisticated weaponry from the major weapons-producing states.

The overall result of these rapidly rising defense costs has been to put pressure on defense policy planners, not just to ensure cost-effective solutions for defense policies, goals, and commitments, but to effect management efficiency also among those who administer the central defense machinery, those who train and prepare the armed services for operations, and those who research, develop, and produce defense materiel. The supposition widely held in most advanced industrial states is that adjustment to the defense decisionmaking policy processes, the wide application of analytical techniques as a part of that process,

structural alterations to prevent duplication and waste, vigilant central financial control, and functional costing will have the desired effect of combining operationally rational planning with a strengthened central, and therefore political, financial management and control.

Then there are the debates that revolve around the appropriate command structure of the armed services and the distinction between peace and war. Ideal structures and processes in time of peace, which are geared to the constrained control over the armed services and optimal forward defense planning at minimum cost, are not necessarily (and as the past record of many states would suggest, probably are not) the most appropriate basis of higher defense command in time of war. Peacetime objectives place an emphasis on defense structures and decisionmaking processes that is different from those of war. To begin with, time scales are different. Moreover, decisionmaking must often be delegated, given the exigencies of war, to those commanders in the field with a full intelligence appraisal of the situation, rather than retained by politicians and civilians who are distanced from the conflict in time, place, and knowledge. It is recognized in most states, however, that the major decisions—those of declaring war and terminating it, and of certain military strategies and tactics that carry with them longer-term political implications—have to be the responsibility of those with political authority, and this is provided for in constitutions. However, the command and control of forces engaged in war as a matter of expediency are likely to be delegated, with a relatively high degree of autonomous authority, to senior service staff. Not all central organizations of defense provide for wartime defense planning and control; the final arrangements (unless a supranational body such as either the North Atlantic or Warsaw Treaty Organization is present) tend to be ad hoc, according to the specific circumstances.

In recent years there has been much debate in several advanced industrial states about the relationship between the defense industries and weapons producers with central organizations of defense. The main questions raised concern the extent to which weapons procurement and the management of defense research, development, and production should be incorporated within central defense structures, merely monitored by them, or delegated to private industry under contract. The dilemma between close supervision and surveillance leading to duplication and extra cost, and delegation of responsibility to defense-oriented enterprises working under contract to meet the needs of the armed services, is one that everywhere must still be resolved. In most states the structure is mixed between centrally owned and controlled defense-oriented industries with procurement agencies or directorates responsible for their operations and products, and government contracting agencies responsible for placing contracts with defense industries on behalf of the armed services. As a general rule, fundamental, or pure, defense research and development tends to be assumed by government institutions under the direction and control of the central defense organizations.