

2. Military Force as an Instrument of Grand Strategy (Thu Feb 14)

Mail:

Dear all,

I added all of you to my dropbox folder, where you will find the readings that are not online.

The central points we will address Monday are:

How does military force act as a political instrument?

What is military doctrine and what does it mean in practice?

How does military doctrine relate to types of strategy, and to diplomatic elements of strategy

What are the trade-offs inherent to choices on doctrine?

A few notes on the literature:

The Art and Schelling chapters both discuss the political nature of force, and argue that it should be considered more broadly than as the simple dichotomy of war and peace. Before reading the Art chapter, I suggest first looking up the concept of 'fungible', and specifically its use in the field of economics. Think a bit about what this implies for Art's usage of the term. Come up with three examples of the fungible nature of military force (countries/situations, either historical or contemporary) beyond those already mentioned, and argue why these are the case. Also, consider possible critiques of the concept that hinder its usefulness. Schelling is one of the most famous thinkers on nuclear strategy, and this opening section of his book should make clear why.

The Posen and Biddle readings also go well together. Barry Posen explains the types of military force at their most abstract level, namely in terms of doctrine. Think about how the various doctrines fit or do not fit different types of overall grand strategy, by considering what political goals different doctrines can accomplish. Also here, come up with three examples from the modern or contemporary eras that illustrate each of the doctrines.

In turn, Stephen Biddle highlights some of the more specific implications of the doctrine, concepts, and training. This should make the political-strategic implications of choices over force postures more concrete. His article is also one of my favourite papers, because it is such a good example of a well thought-out research design.

While readings these pieces, try to apply Luttwak's points on paradox, and the application of linear goals in a non-linear context, to military doctrine.

If you have any questions, please send them, and I will address them at the session. As a reminder, all assignments are due by Monday morning, 09:00.

Have a good week, best,

Paul

Notes

- Incorporate schelling
- Threats to doctrine
- Discuss concepts, doctrine, training, uncertainty-reducing
- Biddle – Gulf War example of strategy is not outcome, or rather outcomes can be deceptive (general problems of causality in social reality, but problem here is more pressing)

3. Diplomacy as an Instrument of Grand Strategy (Thu Feb 21)

Mail:

Dear all,

Last session we treated force more or less as a stand-alone strategic instrument and explored the various ways in which its compositions and possible political goals are linked (or should ideally be cohesively linked). As the 'fungible' chapter already argues, and my references to Clausewitz underline, in my opinion it is neither sensible to see force as unconnected from other domains or to try to separate them. Just as military force derives meaning from political goals, and the credibility of goals derives from force composition, the meaning and credibility of diplomacy and alliances derive from goals and force (and vice versa again). How force and diplomacy (and the other instruments) are (or are not) coherently related to one another, and then to the state's domestic context, is the major theme of the course as a whole.

This session has three readings to demonstrate these points. The first two readings are the Morrow and Weitsman articles (which can be found through the UVA digital library / google scholar). The Morrow article delineates the logics of alliances, the role that credibility plays. Particularly worthwhile to understand are: the trade-off between security and autonomy; the closely related trade-off between abandonment and entrapment/entanglement; and the tension between commitment and signaling. Don't worry about the utility function: the expressions are explained on page 66. The Weitsman article is in its own way excellent, because it illustrates the versatility of the political goals that pacts and alliances accomplishes. Intuitively, we think of alliances as directed at threatening states... which remains true, but is also more complex than assumed. I added some contemporary examples of alliances and diplomacy under the primary sources heading.

During the session we will also discuss an important group of theory that focuses on the relations between civilian and military policymakers. Desch summarizes these and extends the consequences to structural realist approaches: changes in the threat environments shape civil-military relations and likely behavior. As you read the chapter, link these to Mearsheimer's offensive realist, as well as to liberalist explanations. Think also here of how political contexts and the types of armed forces fit together, also in relation to more permanent geographic conditions and the types of threats they generate.

Like last session, the assignment is the same: (a) use examples to illustrate/apply the concepts; or (b) come up with a discussion point. In both cases, explicitly discuss and reference the literature.

Any questions, comments or requests, please send them.

Until Monday, best regards,

Paul

7. Inter-bellum and World War Two (Thu Mar 21)

Mail:

Dear all,

Next week we'll read a significant portion of the Posen book. Why have I placed so much emphasis on this book? Understanding Posen's analysis takes us to the dilemmas at the heart of grand strategy, shows how force and diplomacy are inseparable, and it does so in a very systematic fashion, by illustrating trade-offs both between strategic choices, and between the domestic and international level. In short, in several ways the Posen book exemplifies the arguments and themes I raised in the course so far in one single, sustained set of case studies.

Some suggestions:

- First, understand the strategies that each of the three states ended up with and why these were or were not coherent with their goals; go through the explanations (pages 58-59 and 78-79) for why they chose their particular strategies; go back to the predictions in chapter 2 and see if these make more sense now; critique them.
- To understand the interplay between force, diplomacy, goals and context, and the coherence between them (or lack thereof) work through the example of the French strategy preceding WWII. Specifically, what were its policies towards its allies - Belgium, Britain, and the Eastern European states – and how were these incompatible with France's military doctrine?
- What are the reasons Posen gives for France choosing a defensive doctrine?
- Why were the Lowlands so important to British strategy? What was its policy towards Eastern Europe? How was its military doctrine incompatible with these goals? How did Britain reconcile its European security goals with its goals of empire? What were British policies towards France and how did France reciprocate?
- What does the shift of the RAF from a strategic bombing doctrine illustrate, according to Posen? What does that tell us about the reasons for overall British doctrinaire choices?
- What were the clear advantages of German doctrinaire choices and how were they compatible with Hitler's short- and long term political goals? To what extent were they unable to accomplish these? Was German doctrine preceding WWII more or less compatible with its diplomatic policies than those preceding WWI? What factors explain the doctrinaire outcome of German military planning, according to Posen, apart from Hitler's unique vision?

Any questions towards clarification, suggestions on more or less attention to specific subjects,