

**Sharpening a Knife Cleverly:  
Organizational Change, Policy Paradox, and the  
'Weaponizing' of Administrative Reforms**

by

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## **Abstract**

Prior research has leavened substantially our understanding of how, why, and with what consequences public organizations respond to pressures for administrative reforms. Left largely unexplored and underdeveloped theoretically, however, is the hypothesis that agency actors may also assess the ability of administrative reforms both to advance their policy goals and to become "weapons" in battles within agencies for advancing them. To explore this possibility, this article analyzes how the Clinton administration's National Performance Review and related Defense Reform Initiative interacted with its efforts to "green" the U.S. military in the post-Cold War era. Analysis of this clash in defense and environmental values indicates that: (1) agency actors did evaluate the potential impacts of administrative reforms on their policy goals before supporting or opposing them; (2) they tried to hijack those reforms as weapons for advancing their policy goals in intra-organizational battles; and (3) the "weaponizing" of these reforms produced policy complications and consequences that proponents neither anticipated nor welcomed. Thus, reform in the administrative domain created unanticipated consequences by spilling over into the policy domain and being hijacked, weaponized, or otherwise miscarried or used opportunistically in intra-organizational policy battles. The study concludes by arguing that these dynamics merit more attention than they have received previously from either administrative reform proponents or researchers seeking to develop theories of administrative reform.

## **Sharpening a Knife Cleverly: Organizational Change, Policy Paradox, and the 'Weaponizing' of Administrative Reform**

Among the most famous words written in American public administration are those of Woodrow Wilson urging a late-19th century democratic republic to adapt administrative principles derived from historically authoritarian European nations: "If I see a murderous fellow sharpening a knife cleverly, I can borrow his way of sharpening the knife without borrowing his probable intention to commit murder with it" (1887, 200). Yet most of the administrative "knives" borrowed by governments in the United States since Wilson's classic essay alluding to a politics-administration dichotomy have not come from European governments but have borrowed so-called "best business practices" from the private sector.

One recent iteration of this reform predisposition came to the federal government in the 1990s in the Clinton administration's National Performance Review (NPR). NPR proponents claimed that borrowing the best business practices of private corporations and applying them to public agencies would lead to heightened economy, efficiency, and program benefits, as well as to greater innovation, higher customer satisfaction, and better results for taxpayers (e.g., see Barzelay with Armajani 1992; Kelman 2005; Osborne and Gaebler 1992). Included in this administrative reform arsenal were such best business practices as becoming customer focused, downsizing agencies, flattening hierarchies, decentralizing authority, privatizing non-core functions, reengineering processes, managing for results, and linking budgets to performance.

Given the appeal, import, and implications of administrative reform initiatives like NPR for governance in the United States, a robust research effort quickly ensued. This literature has substantially improved our understanding of why variations occur in the adoption and implementation of reforms. Left largely unexplored and underdeveloped theoretically, however,

is the possibility that organizational actors may assess not only the impact of administrative reforms on their policy agendas in evaluating them, but also the capacity of reforms to become "weapons" for advancing their policy goals in intra-organizational battles. This de facto "policy-administrative reform dichotomy" is puzzling. Public administrationists have long appreciated that policy and administration are linked, that "administration is policy," and that administrative tools can advance policy ends (Durant 1992; Howell 2003; Nathan 1983; Waldo 1984).

To explore this "weaponizing" hypothesis, this study examines how the Clinton administration's NPR and NPR-related Defense Reform Initiative (DRI) interacted with its policy goal of "greening" the U.S. military. The latter refers to the military incorporating environmental protection into its day-to-day operations. As hypothesized, analysis indicates that (1) agency actors evaluated the potential impacts of administrative reforms on their policy goals before supporting or opposing them; (2) they used them as weapons for advancing their policy goals; and (3) weaponizing administrative reforms sometimes produced paradoxical consequences by complicating both the White House's administrative reform and greening agendas. Unintended consequences of administrative reforms or public policies are well-known by practitioners and scholars. What is novel in these findings, however, is confirming that reform or change in the administrative domain can spill over into the policy domain and be hijacked, weaponized, miscarried, or used opportunistically in intra-organizational policy battles.

Analysis begins with a review of prior research accounting for variation in the fate of administrative reforms, followed by a discussion of why the Clinton administration embarked on its efforts to green the U.S. military. With this as context, the study next examines how efforts to green the military through base cleanups, energy conservation, chemical weapons demilitarization, pollution prevention, and natural resource management interacted with various

NPR and DRI initiatives. The study concludes by arguing that the weaponizing hypothesis deserves more systematic research attention and practitioner consideration than it has previously received. In Wilson's terms, both practice and theory-building will suffer if we fail to understand better how actors can "borrow" administrative reforms, "sharpen them cleverly" to attain their policy goals, and produce unanticipated or unwelcome policy consequences.

The data informing the analysis are culled from extensive archival research of documents afforded by the agencies and interest groups involved; congressional hearings; General Accounting Office (GAO, now Government Accountability Office) and Congressional Budget Office testimony and reports; studies by the National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council; and books, studies, and monographs by academic and military writers. The study also relies heavily on a systematic review of all articles appearing between 1993 and 2005 in the leading industry newsletter, *Defense Environment Alert (DEA)*. Also informing the study are articles appearing in the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, local newspapers near military facilities where issues have arisen, a variety of law and military journals, and the *Federal Facilities Environmental Journal*. These data were supplemented by interviews (and follow-up interviews) conducted between 1990 and the present with over 100 individuals involved in or authorities on the greening of the U.S. military. Interviewees included top, middle, and field-level officials in the Pentagon, in the military services, in regulatory agencies at the federal and state levels of government, in national and grassroots environmental organizations, and in academia.

The study uses the conventional practice of referring to "the military" and "the services." This does not mean that all in the military were opposed to greening. Rather, it reflects the services' position that the substance, scope, and pace of greening should take place on the

military's terms only. Relatedly, "DoD" (Department of Defense) refers to the career military, not to political appointees in the Pentagon who often held different policy positions from the services. Nor should readers infer from the study that administrative reforms are inherently bad or should not be pursued. The point instead is that their fate and consequences can be affected by a factor underdeveloped theoretically in prior research: the potential for administrative reforms to become weapons in intra-organizational policy debates.

### **Weaponizing as a Link Gone Missing: Administrative Reform in Analytical Perspective**

As noted, a formidable and valuable body of research assessing the factors conditioning the successful implementation of administrative reforms has occurred in the United States and abroad (e.g., Berman and Wang 2000; Brudney and Wright 2002; Grizzle and Pettijohn 2002; Hood and Peters 2004; Julnes and Holzer 2001; Rainey and Thompson 2006; Riccucci 2005; Thompson 2000; Thompson and Fulla 2001). Treating reforms as dependent variables, scholars and practitioners have long appreciated how variations in their implementation across agencies is conditioned by realpolitik (e.g., Hood and Rothstein 2001; Kelman 2005; Seidman 1997). Researchers, for example, have amply demonstrated how affected actors assessed the personal, organizational, and political stakes of these reforms and responded accordingly.

Included among the explanatory factors identified by researchers are actors' perceptions of the stakes administrative reforms pose for ongoing administrative turf battles, for rendering them more vulnerable to political interferences or control, for undermining bureaucratic capacity, and for organizational survival (Wamsley and Zald 1973). Other constraints on implementation are the existing ability of agency personnel to carry out the new administrative tasks involved (e.g., Wildavsky 1966); the extent of behavioral change and costs involved (Hood and Rothstein 2001; Kelman 2005); and bureaucrats' ability to "wait out" reformers with token efforts, delays,

or massive resistance (Golden 2000). To these, other scholars have added more positive constraints, including the existence of a desire to improve customer service, to alleviate excessive job burdens, and to reduce discontent with existing systems (e.g., Kelman 2005).

Much less frequently, researchers have treated administrative reforms as independent variables with intended or unintended consequences. Some scholars argue with varying levels of evidence and rigor that the prescriptions of the New Public Management (NPM) are intended to advance a minimal state rather than a positive state approach to governance (Barzelay 2001; Clarke and Newman 1997; Durant 2000; Suleiman 2003). Others fear that its American variant—the NPR—was designed to gut public sector unions through privatization and competitive sourcing and to jeopardize merit protections. Still others argue that the NPM is designed to thin the administrative state's capacity to act (Terry 1998) and that privatization in most areas has not worked as advertised. They are countered by researchers studying administrative reforms more generally who demonstrate how reforms can increase the efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, productivity, and accountability of public managers (e.g., Barzelay with Armajani 1992; Berman 2006; Holzer and Callahan 1997; Kelman 2005).

Other researchers viewing administrative reforms as independent variables have chronicled their unintended consequences. Some examine how contemporary administrative reforms can diminish procedural protections for citizens (e.g., Rosenbloom and Piotrowski 2005). Others demonstrate how performance measurement can lead to negative unintended consequences (Radin 2006). Similarly reported is how actors used the Clinton administration's reinvention laboratories to further their pet policy agendas (Rainey and Thompson 2006; Thompson 2000; Thompson and Fulla 2001).

Yet whether treated as dependent or independent variables, administrative reform efforts

like the NPR have been studied in isolation from ongoing *policy* battles in public agencies. In effect, a kind of "policy-administration reform dichotomy" has dominated prior research. Even when addressed, the linkage between reforms and policy goals is not fully specified in terms of its implications for reformers pursuing and scholars studying administrative reform. As the following analysis of the greening of the U.S. military illustrates, this underdeveloped or "missing link" in prior research is not an insignificant oversight.

### **The Anatomy of a Greening Dilemma for the U.S. Military**

Until late in the Cold War, most U.S. citizens placed great faith in their own military's culture of the warrior. They wanted the services to do whatever it took to counteract Soviet aggression and asked questions later. Bequeathed, however, to the post-Cold War era was a bill for cleaning up contaminated military and energy department facilities that, depending on the standards applied and breakthroughs in technology realized, will cost taxpayers from \$350 to \$750 billion. Apparent, too, was the source of the Pentagon's toxic legacy (Durant 2002, 2006, 2007; Dycus 1996; Shulman 1992). Military leaders argued that they, not regulators, knew how best to reconcile environmental and natural resource (ENR) protection with military readiness. The services also made their operations as opaque as possible to avoid regulatory and citizen scrutiny, and resisted shifting old or new monies for ENR-related activities unless done on the Pentagon's terms.

Prompted by these revelations, the first decade of the post-Cold War era (1991-2001) witnessed a concerted effort to foster a corporate sense of responsibility within the armed forces for meshing green values with national security needs. And with Bill Clinton's election as president in 1992, the planets seemed distinctly aligned for a perestroika in Pentagon thinking about ENR protection (for an in-depth treatment of these factors, see Durant 2007). The U.S. was

the world's only remaining superpower, Clinton's party held environmentally sympathetic majorities in Congress, and Vice President Al Gore was a strong critic of the military's failure to embrace ENR values. Also, the defense industry was undergoing massive consolidations, the production of global weaponry was rising, and the nascent international standards movement (e.g., the ISO 14000 standards) was trying to bolster trade by reducing cross-national differences in ENR regulations. This made major military contractors worry about meeting more stringent ENR standards to maintain business viability in an increasingly worldwide weapons market. Similarly, the joint military operations anticipated for the post-Cold War environment also put pressures on contractors and the Pentagon to ensure the interoperability of weapons and their compliance with international standards.

Clinton first elevated the stature of the greening of the military by issuing executive orders affecting all military operations and creating a Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Environmental Security (DUSD[ES]) position. He then picked a former and well-connected staffer from Senator Sam Nunn's (D-GA) Armed Services Committee to fill the slot. DUSD(ES) Sherri Wasserman Goodman then pledged to accelerate compliance, cleanup, conservation, pollution prevention, and technology development while ensuring military readiness. Her effort was known by its acronym: the "C<sup>3</sup>P<sup>2</sup> plus technology" initiative.

Critics in the military and in Congress portrayed such a formidable effort at large-scale organizational change as potentially detrimental to national security. Specifically, they argued that funding for greening on anything but the military's terms was nondefense-related spending that diverted resources from military readiness and modernization. In contrast, greening proponents in the Clinton White House, in Congress, among federal and state regulators, and among national and grassroots activists viewed greening investments as inherently defense-

related expenditures. If the military failed to reduce its ecological, health, and safety "footprint," the services risked fines that would divert funding from readiness and weapons modernization. ENR violations also could lead to shutdowns of military training grounds (as happened at the Massachusetts Military Reservation in the 1990s).

But with military budgets stretched to the limit after sizeable post-Cold War cuts amid spiraling troop deployments during the Clinton years in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and the northern and southern Iraqi no-fly zones, critics of greening staunchly opposed it on anything but the military's terms. Cuts carried out successively by the George H. W. Bush and Clinton administrations brought defense spending down dramatically to 16 percent of the budget by 1998 (\$237 billion) from a little over a quarter of the budget in 1989. Nor was the military's resistance to greening initiatives on anything but its terms necessarily wrong or animated by a wish to flout ENR laws. Base commanders face nearly 20 federal and international environmental statutes, with approximately 10,000 pages of regulations, and with each spawning pages of state and/or local regulations that are oftentimes inconsistent. Evaluations like these are complex enough in the private sector without the complexity of reconciling national defense and environmental values. In the end, significant but inconsistent progress *was* made in greening the military during the Clinton years (see Durant 2007). What *was* consistent, however, was how readily the fates of greening and NPR-related initiatives were joined during implementation.

**Weaponizing Administrative Reform:  
The NPR, the DRI, and the Greening of the U.S. Military**

Commenting on the sorry state of DOD management structures in the mid-1990s, an exasperated GAO official put it bluntly: "If [DOD] were a private company and didn't go bankrupt because of inefficient management practices, they wouldn't be allowed to sell stock" (Barrett and Greene 1995, 44). Amid this yawning management gap came the Clinton

administration's NPR and Pentagon-specific DRI efforts. Informed by the NPR's focus on best business practices, Defense Secretary William Cohen launched the DRI in 1998. Its aims were reducing overhead and streamlining infrastructure at all levels of DOD and the military services; devolving authority; focusing on core competencies; deregulating the acquisition process; building cross-agency partnerships; and privatizing activities whenever alternative suppliers existed. Not only, however, did actors evaluate the NPR and the DRI in terms of their implications for greening, but they sharpened them cleverly into weapons for advancing their policy agendas. Produced were paradoxical policy complications that White House administrative and policy reformers neither anticipated nor desired.

### **Overseeing Cleanups of Contaminated Sites on Military Bases**

Late in the George H. W. Bush administration, DOD estimated that its military bases harbored nearly 20,000 toxic waste sites, covering nearly 27 million acres of contaminated property. Contamination from gasoline, diesel and jet fuel, cleaning compounds, and degreasers existed at 60 percent of DOD sites, while 2 percent suffered low-level nuclear waste contamination from equipment treated with radium. At the same time, congressmembers like John Dingell (D-MI) and Mike Synar (D-OK) joined the Sierra Club, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Military Toxics Project, the National Association of Attorneys General, the International City Management Association, and state and local governments in condemning the military's cleanup efforts as too slow, confrontational, and lacking in good faith. This occurred as the recession grew and as the Base Realignment and Closure process downsizing Cold War military infrastructure was hitting electoral vote-rich states like California and Texas hard. Local officials wanted to expedite the transfer of these properties into private hands for economic development.

In response, President Clinton launched his Community Reinvestment Program to "fast track" cleanups in 1993. With the pace remaining unsatisfactory, however, Deputy Secretary of Defense John Deutch announced that the efficiency and accountability of the military's base cleanup program depended on breaking up the then-centralized ENR funding account (viz., the Defense Environmental Restoration Account, or DERA). Until then DERA was managed by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) in order to get a Pentagon-wide view of cleanup priority setting and to prevent the services from raiding DERA funds for their warfighting mission. DERA, however, was now broken into separate accounts managed, funded, and monitored, respectively, by the Army, Air Force, and Navy. According to the military, devolving the DERA account was long overdue and aligned well with the Clinton administration's NPR principles to devolve authority and responsibility to those closest to the problem (Dismantling DERA 1996, 30). This, Deutch maintained, would force the services to take more responsibility for cleanups, make the process more cost-effective, and expedite cleanups for transfers to developers (Excerpts: DOD 1996).

In pushing for devolution of separate DERA accounts, however, the services also understood that it would increase their control over the substance, scope, and pace of cleanups. Without the OSD involved, the military services acquired more policy leverage for their views when negotiating with federal and state regulators over cleanup standards and remedies at military bases (Navy, State 1996). They were less likely to compromise on service-specific defense priorities than the civilians were in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and they would later gain control over the allocation of DOD grants to states for cleanup oversight. Neither, however, did Deutch's best business practices rationale for devolution blind environmental groups to devolution's consequences. They doubted that green values in cleanup

decisions would fare well when pitted against core warfighting funding in service budgets. Nor were their concerns diminished by DOD's request to Congress to approve DERA devolvement: "As the [services] identify requirements they will continue to look for the most cost effective method of fulfilling those requirements to avoid funding environmental restoration *at the expense of mission requirements*" (emphasis added) (Excerpts: DOD 1996, 27).

The states also feared further disruption of cleanup processes and the marginalization of state input into cleanup policy and decisions at sites. Mary Jean Yon, president of the Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials, put her membership's policy concerns bluntly: "[W]e question how placing environmental cleanup budgets in direct competition with other service requirements [as they would in the shift] will affect the Defense Environmental Restoration Cleanup program; how the maintenance of various funds will affect the DOD prioritization process[;]...and how...other pertinent [i.e., ENR] stakeholders will participate in this process" (Text: ASTSWMO's 1996). Noted a congressional staffer, "DERA [and hence, ENR protection] loses...if you relegate DERA to the service level, in effect, cleanup has to compete with other [core military] programs" for funding (DOD Makes 1996, 9). Added another observer, "this [competition] is likely to result in a net decrease in funding for environmental accounts" generally, and "[t]here aren't a hell of a lot of believers out there" in the military chain of command who see any advantage to investing in the environment to get future savings (Dismantling DERA 1996, 30).

But the military and its congressional allies immediately saw the favorable policy implications of weaponizing all NPR-based administrative reforms and fought to get congressional approval for them. By the end of FY 1997, Secretary Cohen's DRI resulted in Goodman's budget falling from \$5.64 million in 1994 to \$2.98 million. In addition, positions

related to the advocacy of environmental restoration, conservation management, environmental research and development and technology, and weapons demilitarization were transferred from Goodman's control to the services (Army Audit 1998). As EPA Region IX federal facilities cleanup branch head, Dan Opalski, described his disappointment with the process four years later, "Take a real close look and check the scales to see where the [policy] authority [really] is [i.e., it was with the military services, not regulators]" (Protracted California 1999, 11). In the process, not only had organizational actors assessed NPR reforms for their impacts on greening. Greening opponents weaponized reforms, producing results that administrative reformers in the White House did not anticipate and greening proponents did not welcome.

### **Cleanups, Energy Conservation, and Core Competencies**

Also couched in the best business practices-inspired rhetoric of Secretary Cohen's DRI were Pentagon initiatives to privatize base cleanups, as well as all water, wastewater, natural gas, and electric utilities (Need for Modernization 1999). In this instance, organizational actors weighed these NPR-inspired reforms in terms of their impact on greening and weaponized them accordingly. Identifying ENR responsibilities as non-core military competencies complicated greening in two ways. First, privatization cut ENR capacity in Goodman's office, and second, it removed the military from the immediate crosshairs of federal and state regulators.

Consonant with best business practices, this load-shedding (Clarke and Newman 1997) of responsibilities was justified by Pentagon and military officials as a cost-cutting measure, as well as for the monies and manpower that would accrue from the military focusing on core war preparation and fighting missions. As budgets decreased for training, military benefits for soldiers, and weapons purchases, these cost savings could be shifted to traditional warfighting needs. Savings were anticipated of approximately one-third of the military's \$1 billion-per-year

non-recurring environmental compliance and operations and maintenance costs, as well as a portion of its \$900 million recurring costs (DOD Extends 1999).

But there also were significant policy effects for those bent on the military controlling the substance, scope, and timing of greening. As noted, part of the "savings" diminished the ability of Goodman's office to oversee cleanups by the services. Fully aware of these policy consequences, greening proponents went on the offensive. In 2000, the International City Management Association said it would not support privatization of cleanups without formal Pentagon assurances that the military would do two things with significant policy implications that they were reluctant to do: commit to involving non-military stakeholders earlier in privatization decisions and to basing privatization on locally developed land-use plans (Cleanup Privatization 2000). Debates continued throughout the Clinton presidency over these issues, and the military learned that finding utilities willing to bid on these projects was difficult. What was clear, however, was that another NPR-inspired reform couched in management rationales was viewed through a policy prism and became a weapon in battles over greening the military in ways unanticipated by either administrative or policy reformers.

### **Chemical Weapons Demilitarization**

Enacted in 1992 and activated in 1997, the international Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) required the U.S. to eliminate its Cold War inventory of 30,000 metric tons of chemical weapons by 2007. But as the Pentagon's lead agency, the Army had been demilitarizing chemical weapons for decades and had decided that incineration was the best way to do so. It also tried tenaciously to continue this approach throughout the Clinton years, despite a burgeoning and litigious group of incineration opponents that sprung up to demand non-incineration alternatives. They worried about carcinogenic emissions like dioxin from incinerators, worries that only grew

stronger when chemical smoke pots burning at the Lexington Bluegrass Army Depot in 1979 created a toxic cloud that hospitalized over 40 people. Nor did it help that the Army took nearly two weeks before accepting responsibility for the incident.

Into what became a political, organizational, and technological maelstrom over chemical demilitarization throughout the Clinton years, the Army lobbied for a series of NPR-inspired and DRI-justified reorganizations that divided chemical weapons disposal responsibilities among different offices in the Army and the DOD. These only further clouded transparency, insulated Army actions from scrutiny, and marginalized ENR values in its chemical weapons demilitarization program. Rationalized as administrative improvements that would help to accelerate chemical weapons disposal as the Army fell seriously behind schedule *and* to speed the development of incineration alternatives, these reforms readily morphed into weapons sharpened by the Army and its congressional supporters on the Armed Services Committees.

The Army's longstanding policy preference for incineration of chemical weapons began after environmentalists stymied efforts to bury them on land or dump them into the ocean. With over a decade of sunk costs in incineration by the time Clinton took office, service officials argued that non-incineration technologies were unproven and would likely make the U.S. miss the CWC's 2007 deadline for disposal of all chemical weapons. They also claimed that the longer these weapons were stored while awaiting a non-incineration breakthrough, the more volatile (i.e., explosive) they would become and, hence, the less safe local citizens would be.

Incineration opponents living near or representing the nine existing and planned disposal sites fundamentally disagreed on the explosivity issue, and over time, both internal DOD and external studies supported them. The Military Toxics Project, Greenpeace, the National Toxics Campaign Fund, the Sierra Club, and the Chemical Weapons Working Group joined with allies

in Congress like Senators Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Peter DeFazio (D-OR), and Ben Nighthorse Campbell (R-CO) and governors like Bill Owens (R-CO) and Evan Bayh (D-IN) to launch a sustained campaign pushing non-incineration alternatives. Their efforts paid off in 1997 when Congress altered the program's original structural design by creating the Assembled Chemical Weapons Assessment (ACWA) program to do non-incineration research. Fearing that ACWA initiatives would not be welcomed, Congress also stipulated that the Army's Office of the Program Manager for Chemical Demilitarization could not manage the program because it had tenaciously resisted incineration alternatives in the past. The Pentagon then took exclusive program oversight away from the Army and placed it within the OSD.

The Army continued to hold a policy advantage by the mid-1990s, however, because of the opaqueness of the chemical weapons demilitarization program. This advantage then increased in 1997 when Deputy Secretary of Defense John Hamre announced that the Pentagon wanted legislative authorization to *re-delegate* all chemical weapons program functions, oversight responsibilities, and funding authorities from the OSD to the Army (Hamre Orders 1998). In the interim, Hamre launched the program administratively. As a DOD spokesperson said in invoking the logic of NPR-inspired "steering versus rowing" dichotomies, the OSD was merely "trying to 'get out of the business of managing [program] activities' at the secretariat level...[we should] be 'involved in policy, not management of an activity'" (Reform Plan 1997). Also consonant with NPR principles, Hamre justified devolution as decentralizing authority to program managers "out in the field" who were closest to the problem.

But non-incineration opponents also viewed these NPR-justified administrative reforms through the lens of their policy implications. As one incredulous critic noted in challenging Hamre's objective-sounding NPR justification, what he was doing was "putting the pilot program

for ACWA [i.e., for developing non-incineration alternatives] directly in the camp of the very people who were specifically legislated out of this program" because no one trusted them to implement it (Army Backs 1999, 9). An independent analysis of the demilitarization program by experts in management science, financial management, and legislative affairs also later argued that devolvement of management responsibilities alone from the OSD had "forced the program and its former OSD leader down the chain of command...[leaving]...uncertainty as to lines of authority and responsibility" in its wake (DOD Plans 1997, 4). Significant frustration continued throughout the Clinton years. Rife were "leadership weaknesses..., a fractured program, and the failure of management to keep up with a maturing program" (Independent Assessment 1998). What the weaponizing of NPR and DRI reforms had done policy-wise was clear: "It's like the fox guarding the henhouse" (Citizen Environmental 1997).

### **Pollution Prevention: Ozone Depleting Chemicals, Environmental Management Systems and Environmental Life Cycle Cost Accounting**

Also demonstrating the capacity for administrative reforms to get weaponized in unanticipated ways during policy imbroglios are the Clinton administration's efforts to green the military's acquisition processes. With funding shrinking and cleanup costs rising, Goodman argued that pollution prevention was critical to military readiness funding. The Army, for instance, estimated that 75 percent of its operating costs for weapons, 20 to 25 percent of its labor costs for weapons systems, and 10 to 20 percent of its training costs for armor penetration munitions were attributable to compliance requirements (Army Exploring 1999).

Significant progress was made on pollution prevention during the Clinton years. However, DOD's inspector general consistently found that pollution prevention plans were "not being finalized and program deficiencies [were] occurring in funding, training, and awareness" (IG Finds 1997, 6). Moreover, one major component of Goodman's pollution prevention

efforts—the greening of the Pentagon's acquisition process—was complicated by the weaponizing of administrative reform efforts. The patterns of politics accompanying three aspects of greening the acquisition process illustrate how, why, and with what consequences this occurred. These are (1) eliminating ozone-depleting chemicals (ODCs) from military purchases; (2) incorporating environmental lifecycle cost accounting (ELCCA) into weapons purchase decisions; and (3) adopting environmental management systems (EMSs).

**ODC Elimination.** The Clinton administration's travails in greening the military's acquisition processes began with Executive Order 12843 ("Procurement Requirements and Policies for Federal Agencies for Ozone-Depleting Substances"). The order sought to accelerate reductions in the use of ODCs (e.g., chlorofluorocarbons, halon, and carbon tetrachloride) scheduled for phasing out under the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. This meant amending the Pentagon's procurement policies (i.e., their military specifications for purchasing particular items, or "milspecs") to reduce ODCs "to the maximum extent practicable."

In practice, however, the Clinton administration was inadvertently trying to implement two contradictory policy principles in its dual acquisition reform efforts: its context-specific goal of eliminating ODCs called for *regulating* the acquisition process (i.e., disallowing ODCs and requiring ODC alternatives), while its government-wide NPR goal called for *deregulating* it. The Pentagon's short-term solution was pragmatic. The services were to use ODC standards as "guidance" rather than "how-to" prescriptions, leaving both proponents and opponents of greening with institutionalized best business practices-related justifications that could be used as neutral-sounding administrative weapons for challenging each other's positions (Guidance Offers 1996).

Nor were these problems helped when the Pentagon team assigned to reform ODC-related military specifications initially gave short-shrift to ENR policy considerations as weapons acquisition leaders tried to control how, when, and how much green values would be incorporated into purchasing decisions. Congressman Mike Synar (D-OK) commissioned a GAO study on whether or not the military's NPR-driven acquisition reform initiative was ignoring environmental concerns. Synar then made sure that Goodman's director of the pollution prevention office became the lead DOD person on the GAO probe (Congress Probing 1993). This ensured a policy outcome more favorable to greening.

**Environmental Lifecycle Cost Accounting.** Yet another example of how actors weighed NPR-related initiatives in light of their affect on, or ability to advance, their policy agendas involves Goodman's efforts to incorporate environmental lifecycle cost accounting (ELCCA) into weapons acquisition decisions. ELCCA involves computing the environmental impact, remediation, and compliance costs of weapons from cradle to grave, including those associated with materials acquisition, research and development, testing, use and maintenance, upgrading, and disposal. When she began her ELCCA campaign and framed it partially as an NPR-related focus on results, some in her office worried about a revolt of flag officers and generals if the proposal placed "an additional workload [on the military] when resources are coming down" (Draft Memo 1994). It also would definitely increase the costs of weapons. And with competition growing among the services for different weapons platforms in an increasingly zero-sum funding environment, the military feared that ELCCA would give a price advantage or disadvantage to one service's weapons systems over another's. Proponents also understood that greening was seriously disadvantaged in Pentagon policy debates when the environmental life-cycle costs of purchases remained hidden.

The issue was joined in 1994 when Secretary of Defense William Perry mandated ELCCA for *all* products purchased by the services, including weapons systems (Perry: DOD 1994). Not surprisingly given the stakes noted above for service weapon acquisition battles, foot-dragging by the services began immediately. For instance, the military repeatedly packaged ENR-reporting data in opaque ways that made it difficult for pollution prevention generally to gain as much traction as it might in acquisition decisions. They also made ENR cost measures indistinguishable from other cost components. This made it nearly impossible for program managers to anticipate where, when, or how environmental cost savings might accrue.

Transparency-reducing and conflict-spawning constraints on greening continued throughout the Clinton years. This occurred most notably in the military's persistent failure to compute its total environmental liability accurately (In First 1998). Under the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990 and the Federal Management Reform Act of 1994, each federal agency has to report annually its total assets and liabilities to the Treasury Department. Yet the DOD inspector general found that each service's FY 2000 liability estimates lacked "supporting documentation" and were premised on "procedures and controls" so inadequate that reported values lacked credibility (DOD IG 2001, 5). Not until the late 1990s did DOD even afford installations guidance about what constituted "environmental costs" when calculating liabilities. At that time, results-oriented and transparency-inducing reforms were again weighed and resisted by the military for their policy effects and for their impact on power, influence, and turf.

**Adopting Environmental Management Systems.** Also part of the Clinton administration's focus on NPR-inspired acquisition reform was finding ways to cut the time and costs involved in reviewing thousands of military specifications to reduce ODC usage. These reviews involve identifying milspecs that require or encourage the use of ODCs and eliminating

them unless acceptable substitutes were not available for mission-critical activities. The "cheaper, faster, smarter" mantra of reinvention proponents was a powerful one both inside and outside the services. As one contractor put it, "We in industry can't wait seven years for these [milspec] tests to be run to change to alternatives" (Industry, Military 1996, 12). Nor did the military want to devote any more scarce resources to the milspec review process than necessary to stay mission-ready. As such, Secretary Perry pushed for adoption of more process-oriented international standards, in particular ISO 14000 and National Aerospace Standard 411. The epitome of best business practice thinking, the former is a set of environmental quality process standards featuring environmental management systems (EMSs), while the latter is an aerospace industry design for reducing, eliminating, or controlling hazardous substances in weapons systems.

To the military, however, the advantages of EMSs lie just as much in their policy effects. Even environmentalists were intrigued by EMSs that required *external* certification by independent auditors that they were working properly (Mazurek 2004). But part of the attraction of EMSs for the military was that ISO 14000 standards could be predicated on *self-assessments* and *self-policing* by the military. ISO 14000 also did not compel polluters to *disclose* publicly any details of actual environmental performance, or even to be in compliance with ENR laws. As the military envisioned EMSs, all the services needed to do was self-certify that an EMS was in place and operating. But greening proponents saw self-certification as an effort to limit the transparency of the weapons acquisition process. It also allowed the military to avoid the public relations problems (i.e., negative valence) that reports of ENR violations always brought.

Yet by the end of the Clinton years, the services began rethinking their position. Tad McCall of Goodman's office might have been correct in arguing in 1996 that ISO 14000 was a

"bridge" that the military services had to cross because contractors selling global weaponry were doing so. But as ENR activists pilloried the Pentagon for not wanting independent auditors to review those systems, EMS adoption with self-certification grew more difficult. By September 2004, two-thirds of the 649 Air Force, Army, Defense Logistics Agency, Marine, and Navy installations deemed appropriate for EMSs had completed policy documents and assessments to launch these efforts. Yet only 27 had EMSs in operation. Nor had any of the services issued more than 50 percent of their guidance documents for operating EMSs, while the Defense Logistics Agency had policies in place at only 10 percent of its installations (DOD Continuing 2004). And even where they *were* all in place, determining what constituted a successful EMS was left to the military rather than co-determined with EPA and the states, just the kind of negative policy effect that greening proponents had feared.

### **Integrated Natural Resources Management on Military Installations**

The Clinton administration's efforts to develop integrated natural resource management (INRM) plans for all military bases also illustrates how administrative reforms were viewed in terms of policy impacts, got weaponized by actors, and produced policy effects unanticipated by administrative or greening reformers. These plans required bases to integrate into routine installation management the ENR impacts of their operations. Justified partly by NPR's results-oriented rhetoric, Goodman's 1994 "Ecosystem Management Policy Directive" called for all military installations to use ecosystem management to: "(1) restore and maintain ecological associations that are of local and regional importance and compatible with existing geophysical components (e.g., soil and water); (2) restore and maintain biological diversity; (3) restore and maintain ecological processes, structures, and functions; (4) adapt to changing conditions; (5)

manage for viable populations; and (6) maintain ecologically appropriate perspectives of time and space" (DOD Touts 1996, 20).

Goodman's efforts, however, were not helped when the Clinton administration simultaneously incorporated "regulatory relief" into its NPR initiative for pilot projects in the military. The administration did so in order to try to recapture the regulatory reform agenda from congressional Republicans after the 1994 congressional elections. Seizing on the NPR program, DOD drafted a cooperative agreement for review by regulators, one allowing the military more flexibility in meeting environmental protection requirements, including INRM planning standards. Also consistent with the performance-based philosophy of NPR, Goodman's office set about writing less prescriptive and more outcomes-based regulations. These, the White House argued, would lead to more cost-effective environmental outcomes generally.

The merits or demerits of this approach aside, the White House's NPR-predicated deregulatory initiatives became weapons used by military and congressional opponents of INRM like Congressman Richard Pombo (R-CA) and Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC). What the Clinton White House effectively signaled was that arguments based on costs (if not cost-benefit analyses) could sway the extent to which INRM efforts survived reviews by the Office of Management and Budget. Then, in trying to protect the services' dominance in crafting INRM plans at service installations, the military tried to limit the extent to which bases had to gain formal consent for the plans from federal and state regulators. In the process, another best business practice-inspired NPR administrative reform was weaponized successfully by opponents of greening the military on anything but the services' terms.

### **Conclusion**

Presently appreciated yet grossly underdeveloped theoretically in the literature is the

notion that administrative reforms have substantive policy consequences. This study of how administrative reforms launched by the Clinton administration interacted with its goals to green the U.S. military indicates that: (1) agency actors did evaluate the potential impacts of administrative reforms on their personal policy goals before supporting or opposing them; (2) they tried to hijack those reforms as weapons for advancing their policy goals in intra-organizational battles; and (3) the "weaponizing" of these reforms produced policy complications and consequences that proponents neither anticipated nor welcomed. Obviously, the notion of unintended consequences is not a novel one when it comes to administrative reforms or public policies. What is novel, however, is confirming that reform in the administrative domain can create unanticipated consequences by spilling over into the policy domain, where it can be hijacked, weaponized, or otherwise miscarried or used opportunistically in intra-organizational policy battles. This is not to say that weaponizing will always occur, but rather that reformers and researchers must entertain this possibility in their work.

These findings, in turn, suggest that those anticipating or studying variations in the adoption of administrative reforms across agencies and programs (i.e., who study reform as a dependent variable) and those accounting for its consequences (i.e., who study reform as an independent variable) need to broaden their research horizon. They must examine more rigorously than they have previously how organizational actors weigh the impact of administrative reforms on policy goals, how they consider the ability of reforms to advance those goals, and how these perceptions interact with other factors identified in prior research as affecting the adoption of administrative reforms.

As noted earlier, the NPM movement has long been associated with a top-down neoliberal state agenda, and scholars have long understood that "administration is policy"

(Nathan 1983). For example, the administrative presidency is predicated on these realities (Durant 1992; Golden 2000; Nathan 1983), while the policy implementation, public management, and governance literatures bespeak the power of administrative tools (e.g., manipulating budgets, decision rules, and structures) to advance or jeopardize substantive policy goals (e.g., Hill and Hupe 2002). What has *not* received adequate attention in the literature on administrative reform (either in studies of the NPM or NPR), however, is how political appointees and careerists *within* public agencies weaponize the tools of administrative reform to advance their own policy agendas. Perpetuating the decontextualization of administrative reform from policy context will only hinder theory-building. Thus, administrative reformers should be prepared to overcome opposition related to both management *and* policy effects during implementation of their initiatives. Similarly, scholars seeking to explain and predict the fate or consequences of administrative reforms must broaden their analytical scope to include both management-centered and policy-centered concerns within public agencies.

What might such a research agenda look like? Given the nascent state of our understanding, one place to start is with descriptive and typology-building work. For example, and most broadly, classification of various types of weaponizing and their dynamics is in order. In addition to the weaponizing of administrative reforms in intra-organizational battles, at least two other types are referenced in the introduction to this article: government-wide reforms pushing neoliberal market philosophies (the NPM) and the opportunistic use of reforms to advance policy aims that do not involve intra-organizational battles (e.g., using reinvention labs to pursue policy interests). Whether other types exist is an empirical question for future research.

Focusing specifically on weaponizing for intra-organizational policy battles like those discussed in this study, researchers might describe and classify the patterns of politics driving, or

driven by, choices to weaponize or not weaponize reforms. Are there administrative reforms that are more amenable to weaponizing? Does this propensity vary across different types of organizations (domestic, intermestic, or national security), policy types (distributive, regulatory, or redistributive), or policy domains (e.g., national defense, environmental policy, or health policy)? If it does vary, how and why does this occur? Does the ability to weaponize reforms vary across different types of organizations, policy types, or policy domains? Do the strategies and tactics used to weaponize administrative reforms vary across types, or are weaponizing strategies more or less likely to succeed across them? If so, what accounts for differences?

This study also suggests a variety of hypotheses related to explaining variation in adoption of administrative reforms or their consequences. One hypothesis is that actors evaluate administrative reforms in terms of their effects on the "organizational essence" of their agency. This is the view of an organization's dominant coalition about what its mission is and what it needs to accomplish that mission (Halperin and Clapp 2006). One might posit that administrative reforms are more likely to be contentious and less likely to be accepted when they either threaten or can help protect or advance what actors perceive as their organization's core policy missions. They also will be more problematic if they affect negatively the means for realizing those missions or if they compromise the support of key external actors for those policy missions. Another hypothesis is that administrative reforms perceived as having direct policy consequences will be more difficult to implement than those that affect policy only indirectly or not at all. Another is that administrative reforms perceived as useful for weaponizing by policy proponents will be more contentious than those that are not, and that the most heated battles over implementing reforms will occur when both policy proponents and opponents perceive high stakes involved for their respective agendas.

In addition, a robust research agenda testing the interaction of this weaponizing hypothesis with other known obstacles to administrative reform is in order. One hypothesis is that reforms perceived as having major policy consequences *and* requiring extensive behavioral change by managers or their subordinates will be the most contentious to implement. One might also expect that reforms spawning management concerns, but not directly perceived by actors as affecting policy concerns, will be less difficult to implement than those that are linked to policy goals because of the lower stakes involved. A related hypothesis is that weaponizing is less likely to occur when policy gains are less clear, thus making managerial factors and concerns dispositive. Another is that weaponizing is less likely to be used to promote policy goals when the issue salience of a policy is high, but more likely when legislative stalemate exists. Administrative tools for advancing policy tend to work better below the radar screen and to be more attractive when legislative stalemate exists (Durant 1992; Howell 2003; Nathan 1983).

This study also suggests that reformers need to anticipate, and scholars need to incorporate within their research, the idea that government-wide administrative reforms like NPR can have unanticipated consequences that reformers themselves cannot predict and may not want. Witnessed repeatedly were NPR and DRI-initiated reforms proposed and/or implemented by Clinton appointees that worked against the Clinton administration's efforts to green the U.S. military. As such, the analysis offers additional reasons why scholars should take seriously concerns about government-wide administrative reform movements having unintended policy and program outcomes (Radin 2006). The analysis also suggests that champions of these types of reforms should be prepared to wield "knives" of their own to deal with the unintended and paradoxical consequences reforms might spawn for other policy goals that they treasure.

Regardless of the research agenda pursued, however, this study suggests that

"sharpening" administrative reform "knives" cleverly to advance policy agendas merits more attention than it has received previously. Caveats about generalizing from a single case study, of course, are well-known and well-founded. This makes assessing how widely or frequently the weaponizing of administrative reforms takes place in public organizations an empirical question awaiting further research. What *is* clear, however, is that assuming a "policy-administrative reform dichotomy" in all cases is no less risky for practice and theory-building than is assuming the validity of Wilson's politics-administration dichotomy. Depending on one's perspective in any given case, "murderous" fellows may borrow administrative reforms, sharpen them cleverly to advance their own policy agendas, and complicate or derail the original intentions of management and policy reformers. Consequently, proponents of administrative reform and researchers studying the topic may pay a high practical and theoretical price for ignoring these dynamics in their work.

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