PRINCIPLED AGENTS:
SERVICE CULTURE, BARGAINING, AND AGENCY
IN AMERICAN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

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By

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PRINCIPLED AGENTS: SERVICE CULTURE, BARGAINING, AND AGENCY IN AMERICAN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

In the United States, civilian control of the military is a robust and healthy norm. But the absence of the “man on horseback” does not signify the absence of all civil-military conflict. Why do the four military services comply with some policies but not others, and why do these responses vary at times across the four services?

To address these questions, I start with a standard principal-agent framework for civil-military relations and make two changes. First, I make a temporal distinction between creating policy and subsequently enforcing it, as the prevailing dynamics on either side of policy ratification exhibit key differences. Second, I disaggregate “the military” into the four services and study them as unique actors in the civil-military domain. I find that each of the four American military services has a deep and distinctive service culture that uniquely conditions its policy preferences and political behavior.

Through historical analysis of the four services and detailed process-tracing through two significant cases of civil-military policymaking, I evaluate my theory against several alternative explanations. First, I study the Army and Navy during the four-year period leading up the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act and find that the interaction of service culture with the anticipated agency environment best explains the varying responses of the two services. Second, I evaluate the Army and Marine Corps during the development of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force between 1977 and 1983. In this complex case of shaping military strategy, the pathway of
compliance was unclear and the military services responded largely from culturally informed interpretations of compliance, not from material cost-benefit calculations.

Consequently, I find that my modified agency framework offers a detailed explanation of civil-military behavior, but it applies differently across various policy contexts. During policy creation, the agency framework applies anticipatively, shaping the future climate of implementation. During implementation of clear policies, it applies actively through standard agency logics. Finally, during the implementation of ambiguous or intractable policies, the agency framework applies passively, receding into the background while the civil-military actors pursue their culturally conditioned understanding of what compliance actually requires in that particular context.
To my parents,
with my deepest thanks for your steadfast encouragement, keen interest, and heroic example.

And to my wife and son,
who brought joy, smiles, and life to every step of this adventure.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

He’ll sit here and he’ll say ‘Do this! Do that!’ And nothing will happen. Poor Ike – it won’t be a bit like the Army. He’ll find it very frustrating.
– President Harry Truman, on Dwight Eisenhower’s pending presidency¹

Civilian control of the United States military is a sacred ethic, foundational to our national security. Why then do we see the military services failing to comply with various policies to the satisfaction of their civilian superiors? Does such varied compliance threaten the ethic of civilian control, or does military compliance merely take varied forms, with the services interpreting the dictates of a policy in ways unique to their organizations? In August 1977, for example, President Jimmy Carter signed Presidential Directive (PD) 18, directing the four military services to “maintain a deployment force of light divisions” to respond to potential crises in the Middle East.² Two years later, however, when National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski inquired of Secretary of Defense Harold Brown about the services’ progress in implementing PD-18, he found that the services had done very little— their focus had been in Europe, not in the Middle East. Eventually, once sufficient pressure made some kind of compliance unavoidable, a fierce bureaucratic melee broke out among major factions in the defense establishment. The services’ advanced varying core interests, pushing and prodding the debate in different directions. Ultimately, in response to specific direction from Secretary Brown, the Joint Chiefs of Staff created the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF), the forerunner to US Central Command (CENTCOM), arguably the most important warfighting organization of the past twenty years. How then did the services’ manage to stiff-arm a Presidential Directive for so long, and why did they respond so differently in implementing the

¹ Neustadt 1960, 9
policy? Is this simply another case of parochial interservice rivalry, or are there deeper currents carrying the ship of state?

When the president, secretary of defense, or Congress directs the military to execute a given policy, these civilian leaders—and the American public—rightfully expect the military to comply faithfully. Such compliance with civilian direction is at the heart of democratic theory and the enduring norm of civilian control over the military. Indeed, civil-military relations in the United States are generally quite healthy, and the norm of civilian control is under no threat from a hostile coup. Still, while the norm is robust at the extremes, how does it fare in the trenches of policymaking and execution? If civilian control is a sacred ethic, why do we see the military faithfully executing some policies to the civilian’s satisfaction but not others? Furthermore, why do the four military services vary in their responses to certain policies, with some services complying while others actively resist? Understanding these dynamics is central to preserving the healthy functioning of our republic—one that is properly governed by civilian leaders acting on behalf of the American people. This dissertation attempts to answer these questions, and tests a theory of civilian control that builds on existing theories of American civil-military relations.

The overall dependent variable of this study is the response of a military service to a given civilian policy, during the bargaining phase of policy creation and the compliance phase of policy implementation. To explain variation in this outcome, I use the logic of principal-agent theory, a framework initially developed within economics and later applied to bureaucratic delegation. Building on Peter Feaver’s agency theory of civil-military relations (2003), this project makes two major theoretical moves: one that changes the strategic dynamics of the model, and a second that changes the relevant actors within it. First, I make a theoretical distinction between

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the bargaining dynamics of policy creation and the enforcement dynamics of policy implementation. By distinguishing these two phases, I specify more clearly the conditions that inform the military’s decision calculus in each phase, as well as the meaningful interaction between the phases. I suggest that during policy creation, the military services engage in strategic bargaining for their preferred policy outcome, arguing more or less fervently based on the anticipated climate of implementation associated with a proposed policy. During the policy implementation phase, I argue that the military services varying comply based on a logic of enforcement, informed by the size of the preference gap with the civilians, the relative unity of the civilian principals, and the actual implementation slack of the policy environment.

Second, I disaggregate the military into the four respective services, each of which has a deeply ingrained service culture that creates unique “diagnostic and choice propensities” (George 1979, George and Bennett 2005) in the policymaking process. I argue and find that these varying propensities translate into different policy preferences that echo throughout the principal-agent decision structure, ultimately yielding variation in service responses during both policy creation and implementation.

My analysis, therefore, involves a two-stage process, consistent with these two theoretical moves. First, I predict and explain each service’s policy preference, making logical deductions from their enduring cultural beliefs. Second, I take these policy preferences as an input to the decision-making environment, and then analyze the principal-agent context that ultimately yields each service’s response to a given civilian policy. Together, I argue that a focus on service culture and the interactions of the policymaking phases offers an improved theory of civilian control—one that explains the nuance and details of American civil-military relations better than existing explanations.
As a brief preview of my major finding, this research ultimately expands the agency framework and then exposes one of its theoretical limitations. In cases of high uncertainty and ambiguity where the pathway of compliance is unclear, traditional agency variables may fade while cultural scripts become more prominent. For ambiguous policies such as crafting complex military strategy, the four services take unique approaches to framing, resourcing, and tackling the problem, as informed by their unique histories and operational requirements. These disagreements generally constitute legitimate strategic debate, but can result in inefficiencies and delays that frustrate the civilian principal’s intent. While the military’s behavior departs from the civilian’s ideal point, however, that departure is not always motivated by a preference gap or loose monitoring. In these cases, the divergent behavior of the four military services is not a calculated decision to work or shirk, but a culturally informed judgment of what compliance requires in a given context. For an important subset of civil-military policies, particularly those steeped in strategic ambiguity where the path of compliance is unclear, military responses to civilian policies may spring from culturally informed interpretations of compliance, not from material cost-benefit calculations. The following chapters substantiate this finding at length.

1.1: What is the Research Question and Why is it Important?

This project explores the complex wrangling of American civil-military relations, and thus takes seriously the enduring paradox of civilian control—how can elected governments craft a military both strong enough to secure the state and subordinate enough not to threaten it? While military coups have been absent from the American experience, a core civil-military tension remains an irreducible component of our democratic experience, as noted by Alexis de Tocqueville in his sweeping survey of American political life. Tocqueville warns, “There is nothing more dangerous than an army amid an unwarlike nation. The citizens’ excessive love
of quiet puts the constitution every day at the mercy of the soldiers” (1969, 649). This delicate tension therefore frames my larger research agenda, within which I focus on two interrelated questions: Why does the US military comply with some policies and not others, and why do these responses sometimes vary across the four services?

The American people, like any other democratic polity, have a proper normative expectation of being governed by their elected leaders. When military leaders receive delegated power and authority for a specific set of tasks, their abiding charter is to execute faithfully the policies set by their electorally accountable civilian superiors. When the military insists upon a course of action, however, or fixes the terms of the debate to force a favored outcome, it trespasses the circumscribed perimeter of its proper authority. Similarly, while American military leaders rarely make a deliberate choice not to comply with a civilian policy, their preferred interpretations of compliance may still vitiate the normative ideal. Eventually, when consistent patterns of institutionalized conduct threaten this constitutional ideal, the health of our republic is impaired. At the broadest level, therefore, my dissertation has important normative implications for diagnosing the health of our democratic project, and assessing the extent to which the civilian’s “right to be wrong” is preserved (Feaver 2003, 6). Moreover, my research responds to Tocqueville’s suggestion that for democracies, “military revolutions...should be reckoned among the most threatening of perils which face their future existence. Statesmen must never relax their efforts to find a remedy for this evil” (1969, 649). This dissertation therefore makes a small contribution toward preserving our ongoing American remedy.

In addition to these normative motivations, my research draws primarily from the “demand side” of theory development, with support from the “supply side” of unexplained empirical cases. On the demand side, my assessment of current civil-military theories reveals
insufficient attention to two key dynamics: (1) the expected differences in civil-military interaction across the policymaking timeline, and (2) the core philosophical differences between the four military services. Moreover, those works that take service-level differences seriously generally ascribe service behavior to bureaucratic politics and simple interservice rivalry. Such explanations, however, are little more than “black box” descriptions of what any bureaucratic organization would do in a competition for resources, overlooking the unique constitutive characteristics of the organizations in question. I argue that rivalry explanations are too blunt, failing to appreciate that service interests have more texture than a mere drive for autonomy and budget share. To my knowledge, no work has yet offered a systematic empirical investigation of the four service cultures, articulated their strategic beliefs, and then connected these beliefs to real outcomes in the civil-military policymaking process.

On the supply side, we have various empirical examples of the military services responding differently to civilian policies—in ways that challenge the unitary-actor assumption, and unexplained by simple interservice rivalry. Why did the Army and Air Force, for example, favor the Goldwater-Nichols legislation, while the Navy and Marine Corps opposed it vigorously? When the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” was being debated in 2009-2010, why were the Marines so outspoken (and seemingly alone) in their opposition? Finally, extensive survey data reveal statistically significant differences between service attitudes on core issues

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4 Important works on interservice rivalry include Huntington 1961a, 1961b; Record 1983; and Horwood 2006.
5 Burk 1999 echoes this belief; in writing about the four services, he argues: “Yet more is at work than competitive self-interest. Each service fights in a unique environment to gain effective control over the land, sea, or air. The unique features of these environments affect weapons technology, the way force is organized and controlled and, as a result, the culture of the service and fundamental beliefs about the nature of war and the qualities of effective leaders” (455).
6 Builder 1989 offers an early attempt, but he employs a rather anecdotal methodology, does not study the Marine Corps, and focuses exclusively on strategic planning rather than civil-military outcomes more broadly. Ehrhard 2000 is a very important work and a wholesale improvement over Builder. Ehrhard’s focus was on development of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), and his analysis of service culture was focused on its applicability thereto. Additionally, I offer more historical and empirical support for the various cultures, attempting to explain not only the “what” of service culture, but the “why.” Mahnken 2008 also employs a systematic look at service culture, but does so less thoroughly than this work and focuses his analysis on technology development.
such as the when to use military force and how strongly officers should insist on a preferred course of action. What accounts for these substantively different prevailing attitudes?

Through this research project, I advance the literature on American civil-military relations by specifying and testing an improved theory of civilian control. In the process, I purport to make the following three contributions to the field. First, by describing the dynamics of civil-military policymaking with greater nuance than existing theories, I give both participants and observers a richer appraisal of our civil-military condition as a nation. Second, through my systematic empirical investigation of the services, I offer an analytically rigorous “empirical referent” (Johnston 1995) for the four service cultures. In this respect, I anticipate that my research on one of the independent variables (service culture) may prove as valuable as my treatment of the dependent variable (policy outcomes). I anticipate that my research will help to inform both civilian and military policymakers on the core assumptions that shape each service’s preferences and behavior, which I hope future researchers will employ to find evidence of service culture in other political venues. Third, by demonstrating the interactions of the different policymaking phases, I inform the principal-agent literature as well, demonstrating ways in which expectations of future enforcement can impact the tenor of present bargaining (Fearon 1998). These findings have important implications for understanding bureaucratic delegation, particularly with strong political actors who can bargain effectively for preferred terms of contracting and monitoring.

1.2: What has the Literature Said So Far About this Question?

As chapter two will demonstrate, the literature on civil-military relations is vast and varied. With scholars from political science, sociology, and history tackling issues as diverse as Latin American coups and the sociological gap between the American military and society, the

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7 For an early treatment, see the 1998-1999 Triangle Institute for Security Studies (T1SS) Survey on the Military in the Post-Cold War Era. For more recent and comprehensive survey analysis that shows remarkably different attitudes among the four services, see Mahnken 2008, Mahnken and FitzSimonds 2003, and FitzSimonds and Mahnken 2007.
field of civil-military relations spans a wide subject area. Within the subset of the literature on American civil-military relations, Feaver (2003) offers agency theory as a materialist alternative to normative models that prescribe how civilian control should work. Samuel Huntington (1957) and Morris Janowitz (1960), for example, offer seminal treatments of civil-military relations, but their prescriptions for ensuring civilian control rest largely on idealized notions of military professionalism. According to these scholars, the military abides civilian control because subordination is part of a professional military ethic—in other words, the military submits because it wants to. Both Huntington and Janowitz offer keen and enduring insights on how to structure the civil-military relationship, but the mechanism of control ultimately rests on the military’s self-conception as a professional body.8

Rather than relying on normative mechanisms, Feaver posits the civil-military relationship as a principal-agent problem, building on earlier work by Deborah Avant (1994, 2007). These scholars thus import the logic and incentives that are well established in the economic literature into the domain of civil-military relations.9 In a classic principal-agent scenario, a principal hires or contracts with an agent to perform some specified work on his behalf, manipulating the available incentives to affect the agent’s behavior (Miller 2005). The principal’s core dilemma is how to grant latitude to the agent to perform the work, while ensuring good-faith compliance with his directives. If the agent has a different preference about the work, or a preference for not working at all, particularly when the principal cannot monitor the agent effectively, the principal suffers “agency losses” as the cost of inefficient delegation (Hawkins et al 2006, 9). In the civil-military context, the civilian acts as the principal, contracting with a military agent to provide security for the state.

8 Burk 2002 offers an insightful comparison of these two theorists, noting that Huntington’s theory is rooted in a liberal conception of democracy focused on ends, while Janowitz’s theory is motivated by a civic republican vision of democracy focused on means.
9 For a full economic treatment of principal-agent dynamics, see Kreps 1990. For other applications of principal-agent theory in political science, see Miller 2005.
Feaver’s decision-theoretic model explains a great deal about the relevant incentives and interactions of American civil-military relations. The theory offers a useful heuristic for interpreting political events in the domestic political sphere and offers real explanatory power over why the relevant actors behave as they do. Furthermore, the rational materialist theory moves beyond normative prescriptions for civilian control and identifies the conditions that vary to yield different civil-military outcomes. Finally, the continuum of military behavior between working and shirking offers a more nuanced dependent variable than simply looking for military coups (Feaver 2003, 285).

Despite these strengths, the theory is only a starting point and not the last word on American civil-military relations. The model only considers two actors, and treats all civilian policies equally, from long-range ideas offered by the secretary of defense to formal set-piece legislation from Congress. Moreover, the model considers all civilian policies to be equally binding, neglecting the clear distinctions between the ambiguity of making policy and subsequently enforcing it. Finally, by treating the military as a unitary actor, the current model lacks an informed theory of preference formation as an input to the strategic choice model. If we can supply a deductive theory of preferences as a consistent input to the rational principal-agent framework, we improve the explanatory leverage and nuance of the theory. The theory offered in this dissertation explicitly addresses these limitations, building on the foundation of agency theory while improving its explanatory capacity.

1.3: What Theory Do I Offer Instead?

In this section, I describe the basic outlines of my theory, the relevant variables, and a proposed model that simplifies these complex interactions. I am interested in understanding when the military complies or resists, and when these responses vary across the services. To

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10 Legro 1996, Moravcsik 1997, and Nielsen et al 2006 show the utility of an informed theory of preferences as a logical precursor to evaluating strategic decision environments.
explain the overall pattern of compliance or resistance, I focus on the principal-agent decision-making environment; to explain the variation by service, I focus on the unique service cultures that provide divergent policy preferences into that decision-making context. Together, I argue that service culture explains each service’s policy preferences better than other explanations; additionally, I suggest that these preferences serve as one of the critical inputs into the policy-making environment that ultimately determines the fact and form of each service’s overall response to a given policy. Here, I consider these phases in turn, beginning with the larger strategic environment of principal-agent interaction, followed by a discussion of service culture and preferences.

Bargaining and Enforcement

My first innovation is to make an analytical distinction between making policy and enforcing it. On either side of the policy-ratification divide, we should see different explanatory variables, different manifestations of the dependent variable, and through backward induction, a strategic interaction between the two phases. Before a policy is ratified or established, the civil-military interaction looks more like bargaining, as each service advises the civilian principal on a recommended course of action. Once a policy is set, the logic of interaction shifts from bargaining to enforcement, as determined by the civilian’s monitoring capacity and the size of the preference gaps between the civilians and the military services. Consequently, I theorize that by making temporal distinctions in the policy process, we can explain the relevant dynamics more accurately.

Furthermore, I expect that these phases interact, as the anticipated climate of implementation affects the bargaining dynamics of policy creation. I suggest that while a policy is being debated and bargained, the interlocutors look ahead to the future political climate in which the policy will be implemented, assessing such factors as the policy’s specificity,
enforceability, durability, and imminence. When a policy imposes very specific requirements, has low-cost monitors (Dai 2002) or is self-executing, comprises a major change, or takes effect soon, the stakes are higher and the pre-policy bargaining will likely be more robust and fractious. Together, I treat these factors as a composite variable called “implementation slack,” which is low when a policy appears specific, easily enforced, durable, and imminent. Conversely, high implementation slack occurs when a policy appears vague or ambiguous, unenforceable, of routine significance, and temporally distant.

This insight emerges from Fearon’s (1998) study of international cooperation, in which he suggests that the anticipated enforcement of international agreements affects the bargaining process that gives rise to those agreements in the first place. He notes that anticipation of a treaty’s enforceability creates incentives for states to bargain more or less hard for favorable terms in that treaty. This creates the counterintuitive insight that agreements with a long “shadow of the future” (Oye 1986) may be easier to enforce, but are therefore harder to sign. If a state anticipates a treaty will be self-enforcing, thus promoting long-term cooperation, that state has a stronger incentive to negotiate aggressively for a favorable deal. Finally, Fearon notes that agreements with long-standing implications (i.e., establishing a regime) may see more strident bargaining than subsidiary agreements with fewer distributional consequences. The perceived durability of a proposed agreement can impact bargaining just as its anticipated enforceability does.¹¹

Together, these insights powerfully inform the two phases of civil-military interaction specified earlier. We can expect the anticipated climate of implementation to affect the fervor with which civilian and military elites advocate for their preferred position. If a certain policy specifies its requirements clearly, appears that it will be easily enforced or difficult to change in

¹¹ This dynamic informs the civil war termination literature as well. See, for example, Walter 1997.
the future, the military may push harder for its preferred outcome, knowing that its capacity to shirk will be limited in the future. Conversely, if a policy under consideration is ambiguous, unenforceable, or easily changed, we might see a surprising lack of resistance from the military, despite its contrarian policy preference. Finally, I expect these policy attributes to become bargaining issues themselves, as military and civilian leaders negotiate for more or less slack during a policy’s eventual implementation, particularly when their preferences diverge.

Figures 1.1 and 1.2 below capture these insights in graphical form, specifying the expected outcomes for various combinations of preference gaps and implementation slack.\(^{12}\)

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\(^{12}\) My third variable that shapes the outcome is the unity or division of the civilian principal. As chapter three will discuss, this variable is theorized to work in one of two ways: first, an increasingly divided principal increases the implementation slack (anticipated or actual). Second, a divided principal also creates a likely pathway by which the services will resist (i.e., appealing to the alternative principal for support). Overall, the preference gap predicts resistance, the policy attributes predict fervor, and the divided principal suggests a likely pathway.
variable is the response of a military service to a given civilian policy, on a continuum between compliance (“working”) and resistance (“shirking”). These poles represent ideal-types, with most responses likely falling somewhere in between. The following indicators operationalize some of these varied responses, which will be discussed further in chapter three.\textsuperscript{13} During the policy creation phase, we may see:

\textit{Good-faith Advising.} The military services have a statutory responsibility to provide good-faith counsel to their civilian superiors. This outcome certainly is the normative expectation and anchors the “working” end of the behavioral spectrum.

The other possible responses on the continuum represent a variety of ways in which the military services might try to influence the policy outcome more directly in their favor. I group these possible responses into three behavioral categories: shoot, move, and communicate.\textsuperscript{14}

1. \textit{Shoot.} The services could take direct action vis-a-vis their civilian principal to influence the policy decision. Such actions include:

   a. \textit{Inflating or Deflating.} When asked for its expert military advice on potential policies, the military can provide extremely costly estimates intended to over-determine the outcome away from disfavored policies. Conversely, the military could “low-ball” an estimate on the cost of a policy it \textit{does} prefer.

   b. \textit{Foot-dragging.} The military could drag its feet and passively resist through stalling, delays, and intentional bureaucratic inefficiencies.

   c. \textit{Deterring.} As Risa Brooks (2009) observes, military leaders might also attempt to force the principal’s hand by threatening to resign or retire unless certain terms are met.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13} This list includes representative behaviors, but any given case may reveal different forms of military response not specifically captured here.

\textsuperscript{14} These three categories correspond to three basic soldiering skills emphasized by the Army, particularly for its infantry soldiers.

\textsuperscript{15} Brooks describes this as “grandstanding”, which (perhaps unintentionally) implies an element of theater with limited intention of follow-through. I prefer the term “deterring”, to capture the very real use of political power involved in such a threat.
2. **Move.** Another tactic might involve changing the state of play by enlisting support from another actor with a stake in the policy. These responses might include:

   a. **End-Running.** The military can resist a given policy by seeking support from an alternative principal.\(^\text{16}\)

   b. **Partnering.** As a way of tilting the bargaining scales in their direction, the military could enlist outside support from third-parties—such as defense contractors—to petition Congress or the Executive on its behalf (Brooks 2009).\(^\text{17}\)

3. **Communicate.** Finally, a third set of tactics involves communication to external audiences, particularly in ways that make it difficult for the civilian policy-makers to override the military’s viewpoint. These communication efforts may involve:

   a. **Leaking.** In the midst of a disagreement over a preferred policy, the military could leak word of the conflict to the press in hopes of garnering public support or undermining the position of the civilian principals.

   b. **Speaking.** The military could make a public statement that undermines the integrity of the civil-military relationship.

What then do we expect to see during the policy implementation phase? While the tactics discussed above might still be used to discredit a policy and create political cover for

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\(^{16}\) The military’s Constitutional obligations to both the executive and legislative branches complicate any judgment of “end run” shirking. Indeed, Huntington captured this complexity when he called the Chiefs of Staff testimony to Congressional appropriations committees an “annual psychic crisis” (1957, 417). Thus, assessing the civil-military character of military-Executive-Congressional relations requires contextual and informed judgments about the nature and integrity of the advice (Feaver 2003, 62). Avant’s work (1994, 2007) focuses on this divided principal dynamic, and she notes that such end-running is practically expended in the American system; in her work, this response would likely not be categorized as shirking but rather an artifact of the system.

\(^{17}\) Brooks’ (2009) term here is “alliance building.”
noncompliance or policy change, we should now expect to see varied levels and interpretations of compliance with the enacted civilian policy. These responses include:

*Compliance* (or “working”). The military services could salute smartly and execute the civilian’s established policy in a way fully consistent with the civilian’s preferences.

*Grumbling Compliance.* Military service leaders could begin to implement the policy, while expressing their displeasure within the organization. Such grumbling might also be used to keep the issue alive in hopes of revisiting the outcome.

*Cheap Talk.* Conversely, the military service leaders could express support for the civilian policy, while taking no costly actions to implement it.

*Foot-dragging or Slow-rolling.* As above, the military could drag its feet and passively resist through stalling, delays, and intentional bureaucratic inefficiencies. Similarly, the service can slow-roll a policy by going through the motions of policy compliance, while withholding the requisite resources and effort to make it successful.

*Non-compliance.* The military services could subtly or explicitly avoid carrying out a policy in the way that the civilian principal would wish them to do. More than likely, the military service is not wantonly disregarding the policy, but rather interpreting it generously and complying with a more favorable translation of the policy than the context warrants (or than the civilian principal would prefer).

*Service Culture as Operational Code*

Distinguishing between policy creation and implementation represents my first key innovation to agency theory. My second innovation turns on this question: where do preferences come from? Actors’ preferences play critical roles in strategic decision-making models, but too little attention is focused on the origins and explanations of these preferences. Where then should we look to explain and predict the preferences of the military?
Organizational theorists argue convincingly that organizations have distinctive cultures (Schein 1989), and these cultures constitute a “way of life” that powerfully informs organizational preferences (Wildavsky 1987; Thompson and Wildavsky 1986). The culture of an organization helps its members to make sense of the ambiguity in their operating environment. Like a paradigm in the natural sciences, an organization’s culture impacts what its members see, ignore, amplify, and discard. While definitions of culture vary, and while scholars have called this phenomenon many different things, the weight of the literature agrees: due to their unique historical roots, collective memories, and mission responsibilities, the four military services have distinct personalities informed by a different pattern of assumptions. Consequently, my second key innovation is to disaggregate the “US military” into the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps, studying them as unique organizations shaped by unique service cultures.

In this study, I argue that service culture affects an organization in the same way that “operational codes” affect individual decision-makers (Leites 1951; George 1969, 1979; Holsti 1977). I suggest that service cultures: (1) can be researched systematically (2) affect an organization’s diagnostic and choice propensities (George and Bennett 2005); and (3) can be assessed for causal impact on policy preferences through deductive analysis. Toward that end, I take a fairly broad view of service culture, which I define as an integrated and widely shared pattern of basic assumptions about why the service exists, what it exists to do, and how best to

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21 Hudson 1999 and Malici 2006 have applied this framework usefully toward organizations. Janowitz 1960 uses the term “operational code” to describe each service’s culture as a “pattern of thinking which penetrates an entire organization” (257).
do it. In short, service culture is a *prevailing belief structure about ends, ways, and means.*

Ultimately, I contend that systematic research of the services can yield a reliable pattern of each service’s basic assumptions, which can then serve as a stable “empirical referent” (Johnston 1995) for discerning the effect of these cultures on the policymaking process. And while each service no doubt has distinctive and powerful subcultures within it, both theory and data suggest that these internal divisions have less strategic bearing than the macroscopic differences between the services themselves. Chapter three explores these ideas further, offering more depth and description on the idea of service culture, how it is formed, and how it can be researched profitably.

Throughout this study, I use terms and expressions that show up throughout the literature, employed in various ways by different scholars. For my purposes, I define my terms and specify their conceptual linkages in the following way:

- **Cultural assumptions:** resilient beliefs about ends, ways, and means.
- **Preferences or Interests:** desired outcomes for a given situation.
- **Actions or Strategies:** actual behaviors selected to pursue one’s preference in a specific political context.

How then do these definitions connect with each other? First, to generate a service’s cultural assumptions, one can survey an organization’s history and characteristics, using a

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22 As Stanley (forthcoming) explains, the literature has treated the concept of culture as consisting of both ends-based beliefs and means-based behaviors, though few works have integrated both dimensions effectively. For theoretical consistency with the operational code literature, I conceive of service culture as a set of beliefs that influences preferences. But my concept of culture attempts to capture both beliefs and practices by describing the beliefs that the services have about their practices. Since one of my categories of belief is “ways,” this category attempts to capture each service’s prevailing practices that are inherently believed to be “right” or “normal.”

23 In his work on interservice rivalry, Huntington (1961) argues that the differences within the services are less severe than the differences across them. He likens this phenomenon to national loyalties in which sub-national identities are generally held less fervently than national ones. Survey data supports this argument, as Mahnken (2003, 2008) shows. He finds that Naval aviators and Air Force pilots have distinctly different opinions on key questions of strategy and tactics; similarly, Marine infantrymen and Army infantrymen likewise have very different views on important questions. These data suggest that being a Marine, a Sailor, a Soldier, or an Airman better predicts preferences than does functional sub-specialty.

24 These actions are theoretically distinct from the routine behaviors and practices that serve to shape the service’s cultural assumptions.
systematic approach of asking structured focused questions, to arrive at a slate of basic assumptions about ends, ways, and means. This step is theoretically informed by organizational culture theory (e.g., Schein 1989), and attempts to be methodologically self-conscious and transparent in its approach. The second connection, between cultural assumptions and policy preferences, is similarly informed by theory and serves as a testable hypothesis; following George’s lead (1979), I argue that observed policy preferences will be logically congruent with a service’s basic assumptions. Finally, I argue that these policy preferences enter a strategic environment of principal-agent interaction, the combination of which ultimately yields service action. These connections are summarized graphically in Figure 1.3.

**Figure 1.3: Conceptual Linkages**

At this point, my argument must confront lurking charges of circularity. How can I use behavior to define culture, and then use culture to predict or explain behavior? This is a legitimate critique, and represents one of the core challenges of using culture responsibly as an explanatory variable. Three points help to justify this approach. First, I make a temporal distinction in my treatment of culture, focusing largely on each service’s early history and circumstances, with behaviors that recur over time, up until the period of case study analysis.

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25 This represents an area where the existing literature can be much improved. Most current analyses of service culture do not connect current assumptions to historical events or functional requirements, and lack transparency in their analysis. Allard 1996 is a useful exception.

26 This connection is explicated most forcefully in Wildavsky 1987.
For each service, the historical research used to codify cultural assumptions precedes the civil-military interactions of the case studies. Second, my research on service culture focuses primarily on *symbolic* choices, noting for example which events are hailed as organizational successes or failures, and which people are hailed or villainized. These symbolic choices and behaviors lead to a certain palate of organizational preferences, which are often inconsistent with strictly material preferences assumed by many other theories. While these considerations do not comprise an ironclad defense against circularity, together they help to mitigate major damage to the integrity of the argument.

*Stages and Variables*

Having outlined the two principal innovations of my theory, the following sections integrate these insights into an informal model of a notional civil-military interaction. I briefly introduce the principal features of the model here, reserving a fuller discussion for chapter three.

I propose a five-stage model of civil-military interaction that incorporates the services’ culturally informed preferences, a pre-ratification bargaining phase, and a post-ratification implementation phase. The model of course simplifies a disordered and complex policy-making process, and is not meant to capture the precision of the process but rather suggests where to look in the narrative for important variables. The following discussion details the various stages of the civil-military interaction, specifying the variables that are inputs to the model and those that are created *within* it. I illustrate these five stages in Figure 1.4, then discuss the flow of the model and conclude with an integrated diagram that illustrates the five stages and the sequential flow of the relevant variables (Figure 1.5).
In the first stage of policy creation, the civil-military exchange begins with the introduction of a proposed policy. For any given policy, whether introduced by civilians or the military, each service and civilian principal is assumed to have some ideal policy preference related to that issue-area. The introduction of these varied preferences gives rise to one of the two outputs of this stage: each service’s preference gap between the civilian’s preference and its own. The second output from this first stage comes from particular attributes of the policy itself. A given policy proposal will exhibit varying degrees of future enforceability, durability, imminence and political salience, which we expect to influence the bargaining activity of the services.

In the second stage of policy creation, each military service evaluates its preference gap with the civilians, and decides whether to support or oppose the policy. This decision leads seamlessly into the third stage, in which several variables converge to shape each service’s decision on how strongly to respond and what form that response should take. The output from this stage is the dependent variable of the policy-creation phase: each service’s response to the proposed civilian policy. As noted earlier, we expect this phase to look more like bargaining than enforcement, with the military acting as expert advisor and thus expressing disagreements more vocally than would be expected during the implementation phase.

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27 The model makes an analytic distinction between the direction and magnitude of the service’s response during policy creation. While these no doubt blur in practice, I theorize that different variables inform each step, so the distinction is made in the model. The direction of the service’s response is the decision to cooperate support or oppose. The magnitude of a service’s response is a qualitative judgment involving the frequency of a given tactic, the use of multiple tactics, and the relative insubordination of the service’s rhetoric or behavior.
The fourth stage marks the beginning of the policy implementation phase, in which monitoring and enforcement inform the civil-military relationship more than bargaining. As in the first stage, the combination of the civilian preference with the four service preferences creates the first output from this stage: preference gaps. The second output is the implementation slack of the enacted policy. As discussed above, this implementation slack
represents an aggregate assessment of the implementation environment, based on attributes of
the enacted policy’s enforceability, durability, imminence, and political salience. The third and
final output from this stage is the extent to which the policy embeds rewards or sanctions into
the agent’s political calculus.

In the fifth and final stage, each military service decides how to respond to an enacted
civilian policy, duly considering the size of its preference gap with the civilians, how much
slack is available for implementation, the relative unity of the principal, and the promise of
rewards or sanctions. The output from this stage is ultimately the dependent variable of this
study: the response of a military service to a given civilian policy. Figure 1.5 summarizes these
stages and variables in a composite graphic, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter
three.

1.4: What are the Alternative Explanations?

The preceding discussion established the theoretical basis of agency theory, highlighted
my own modifications to the theory, and explicated a model of civil-military policymaking.
The discussion focused on specifying a robust theory to explain why the military cooperates
with or resists a given policy, and why the services might vary in their responses. In the
empirical case studies of this dissertation, I use my own theory and several alternative
explanations to predict and explain two key variables, consistent with the overall two-part
framework of this project: first, I use the various theories to predict the policy preferences of the
four military services; second, I invoke each theory to predict the fact and form of compliance or
resistance. Therefore, I will revisit each of these theories for the case studies, specifying more
clearly the observable implications of each argument in a given case.

In this section, I briefly identify the alternative explanations for this research question,
each of which represents a viable alternative to my own. Given the parsimony of these
alternatives, my theory has the burden of proof to show that its explanatory benefits justify the costs of complexity. Each of these alternative arguments will be developed and explained further in chapter two.

Four major sets of arguments serve as important alternative explanations for the military’s response to a given civilian policy. First, Feaver’s baseline model offers a compelling and simpler alternative to my own. Since my theory builds most explicitly on Feaver’s work, I evaluate the extent to which my additions are justified by the data, or whether Feaver’s more parsimonious model performs just as well at a significantly reduced price.

A second set of alternative arguments focuses on the military services as bureaucratic actors, working the levers of government to pursue their material interests of autonomy, turf, money, and power. Within this approach, I include Huntington’s concept of “interservice rivalry” and a more recent sociological variant developed by Andrew Abbott (1988). Abbott demonstrates that the military services are continually engaged in the contingent work of dividing expert labor, and his work represents an important corollary argument to Huntington’s treatment of interservice rivalry. I treat this bureaucratic argument as a simpler “black box” alternative to my own. Whereas I argue that the internal characteristics of the services strongly condition their specific policy preferences, this bureaucratic approach treats the services as undifferentiated bureaucratic organizations pursuing what any other organization would pursue: more autonomy, turf, money, and power.

A third alternative also comes from Huntington (1961a) in an argument I call “committee compromise.” While much of Huntington’s 1961 work deals with interservice rivalry, a complementary argument highlights the conforming dynamics of collegial bodies like the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). As the next chapter will discuss, Huntington argues that the JCS

functions as a legislative-style committee that must resolve its differences according to standard legislative tactics such as logrolling and ambiguous compromise. Consequently, this argument suggests that competition within the JCS may yield a weakly united front rather than variation among the services.

Finally, a fourth alternative set of arguments incorporates the external security environment into the civil-military calculus. Michael Desch advances a parsimonious theory rooted in structural realism, arguing that civil-military relations are healthiest when external security threats are high and domestic political threats are low (1999, 6). In his theory, Desch aims to explain the broad trends of national civil-military relations across many decades, not the micro-trends of why specific military services respond as they do to specific policies. A more tractable theory that incorporates the external security environment comes from Kimberly Marten Zisk’s (1993) work on military doctrinal innovation. Zisk argues that when military leaders face domestic threats to their organizations and external threats to the state, they attend to the domestic threat first to secure an important organizational means for then securing the state.

In sum, these four alternative arguments will be evaluated alongside my theory: (1) a baseline agency model; (2) bureaucratic politics / interservice rivalry; (3) committee compromise; and (4) external security threat. The next chapter reviews the important literature on civil-military relations and develops these alternative arguments more fully.

1.5: What Methodology Did I Use?

Broadly speaking, my methodology involved two central phases. First, I used structured focused questions to capture each service’s cultural assumptions. Second, I conducted within-case analysis for two major case studies, employing the congruence procedure and process-tracing to connect these cultural assumptions, policy preferences, and
bargaining dynamics in the policymaking process. In the following section, I offer greater detail on this approach, beginning with my method for researching service culture. Then, I specify my case study methodology, describing the type of case-study analysis I used, the relevant case population, and my rationale for case selection.

Methodology for Researching Culture

One of the motivating insights driving this project is that each service has a unique, long-standing, and pervasive worldview—a view that gets powerfully shaped by functional requirements and historical events, and that shows up in surprising ways to affect the fact and form of service behavior. This intuition is admittedly broad and thus difficult to research; consequently, I focus on particular elements of service beliefs and connect these beliefs to particular elements of service behavior.

As described noted earlier, I broadly define service culture as an integrated and widely shared pattern of basic assumptions about why the service exists, what it exists to do, and how best to do it. Methodologically, I connect this pattern of assumptions to specific preferences and behaviors in the policy process. As in George’s operational code analyses, these beliefs "serve as a set of general guidelines--heuristic aids to decision, not a set of mathematical algorithms that are applied by the actor in a mechanical way in his decision-making” (1979, 103). In my research, I demonstrate that enduring elements of each service’s culture perform the same function for the four military services: their broad cultural assumptions create diagnostic and choice propensities for their policymaking behavior.

Following George’s methodological lead, I ask a series of structured focused questions for each service; the answers to these questions, in turn, inform the slate of assumptions that I use as the empirical referent (Johnston 1995) for each service’s culture. These questions enable

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29 Other scholars have likewise appropriated the operational code methodology to the organizational level. See, inter alia, Malici 2006 and Hudson 1999.
me to bound my study of service culture, focusing on these specific elements and not on myriad other details that no doubt shape the subtleties of each service’s worldview. To establish this initial foothold on cultural assumptions, I focus on *ends, ways, and means* to capture the range of relevant beliefs for each service. Finally, because I wanted the services’ biased views of themselves, I researched these questions from each service’s approved narrative, as captured in its organizational histories, museums, and doctrinal publications. These structured focused questions are below.

*Ends*

- Why was the service created, and what was it created to do?
- What is the specific language of the legislation or documentation that created the service?
- What makes the service unique? What does it contribute to the national defense that no other service does?

*Ways*

- What are the functional requirements associated with the service’s core missions?
- What are the accepted beliefs (i.e., doctrine) about the best ways to accomplish those missions?
- What role do the *other* services play in accomplishing the service’s core missions?

*Means*

- What type of organizational structure is best for accomplishing the mission?
- What are the major functional and organizational subdivisions within the service, and what is the extent of their commonality with or difference from each other?
- What are the most important resources in accomplishing the mission?
- What are the technological requirements of performing the mission?

*Other Contextual Clues (answers to these questions ultimately help to answer the questions above)*

- Who are the service’s iconic heroes, and what ideas or accomplishments make them worthy of emulation?
- What are the service’s defining events, and what are the approved institutional lessons to be learned from these events?
What are the service’s notable idioms and phrases, and what lessons do these short-hand doctrines convey?

After conducting historical research into the four services, I synthesized and reframed the core insights into a slate of five or six strategic assumptions that captured each service’s prevailing belief structure about why it exists, what it exists to do, and how best to do it. This slate of assumptions therefore became my operationalization of service culture for analytical use in the case studies. With an empirically- and methodologically-prior referent for service culture, I guard against post hoc rationalizations in which any possible behavior can be explained by an ill-defined culture.

For each case, I use these cultural assumptions, along with the alternative explanations outlined above, to make predictions about each service’s policy preference on a given issue. In the case studies, I initially use the congruence procedure to assess the extent to which a given policy preference is consistent with one or more explanations (George and Bennett 2005). For many preferences and actions, multiple explanations actually offer a compelling story; for example, in some cases, interservice rivalry explanations make similar predictions to a cultural explanation. In these cases, however, I find that a cultural explanation ultimately proves more satisfying, offering greater nuance on the “whats” of policy preferences, a deeper story on the “whys”, and a unique story about the “hows.”

Furthermore, I argue that service culture can affect both the fact and form of policymaking behavior, in ways that other theories cannot explain. That is, I find that the organizational and philosophical approaches that each service takes to accomplishing its

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30 During this transformational step of specifying service assumptions, I corroborated my findings with existing analyses of the service cultures.
31 A similar approach was used very effectively by Ken Pollack in his dissertation on Arab culture and warfighting effectiveness. See Pollack 1996.
32 For a good example of the congruence procedure at work, see Khong 1992.
33 For a useful example on disentangling the predictions and explanations of these theories, see Bennett and Monten 2010.
wartime mission provide templates for accomplishing its bureaucratic mission as well. Navy units, for example, conduct their shore business according to the ethos of being on a ship. In land-locked office buildings, they stand watch on the “quarterdeck,” keep logbooks, call the boss “Skipper,” and give that Skipper a wide berth to run her ship (or staff) as she sees fit. These realities indicate that Navy staff work reflects the norms and practices of its seafaring culture and thus affects the civil-military policymaking process in ways that pure bureaucratic explanations overlook.

Cultural Caution

While the preceding discussion articulated my approach to researching and using cultural variables, I know that caution is in order. As numerous scholars attest, culture can be a powerful yet problematic explanatory variable in the social sciences (Johnston 1995). Culture is a social construct, and stipulating its content and boundaries—both what it includes and what it does not—is always open to interpretation. Using culture as a variable can also tempt researchers with methodological malpractice, as one can always generate a post hoc explanation for why a particular behavior is consistent with a particular culture.

Despite these difficulties, there are several reasons why I believe that culture has been handled responsibly in this project. First, while discerning culture can be difficult, doing so for an organization appears to be the optimal level of analysis. National cultures can be exceptionally heterogeneous, while individuals can be famously idiosyncratic. In between these levels of analysis, however, organizations have discrete and identifiable histories, shaping a prevailing way of life for their members by controlling paychecks, promotions, and places to live. Furthermore, the US military services offer a “best case” within the universe of organizations—the four services have as strong and visible a culture as one could hope to find.

34 For a skeptical view, see Desch 1996, 1998.
Consequently, this appears to be a case where the careful use of culture is justified: we have “best case” organizations at the “best case” level of analysis.

Case Study Methodology

To explain why the military resists or cooperates, and why these responses might vary by service, I conduct two major case studies in which I assess the explanatory power of my theory against the alternative explanations. My overall strategy involves using process-tracing to conduct within-case analysis of cases in which a civilian policy is applied to multiple services; in such cases, the existence of multiple services provides the basis for cross-comparison. Additionally, each of my cases is sufficiently broad as to capture a range of sub-issues within it, some of which provoke resistance while others do not. Thus, each case actually contains numerous sub-cases—both positive and negative—to help show when the services cooperate or resist, and when these responses vary by service. Finally, focusing on within-case analysis also allows me to hold other factors constant for a given case, as the same strategic environment applies to all of the services in a given policy context.

What then is the appropriate universe of cases for studying my research question? While I suspect that service culture is always at work in shaping diagnostic and choice propensities to some extent, theory also suggests that its effects are likely to be stronger and more apparent in certain environments. Thus, while my theory could potentially be applied to any civil-military policy, I restrict the relevant case population by choosing scope conditions in which cultural explanations have a strong but not uncontested likelihood of holding true. The scope conditions below therefore delimit my case population to include civilian policies that:

Apply to multiple services. Ideally, a policy would apply equally to all four services. This specification permits variation in outcomes across the services, while generally holding constant other variables.
Apply directly to the services within the scope of their statutory responsibilities, and thus activate the staffing function of the service bureaucracy. To animate the services’ core identities and functions, I focus on policies that affect the services’ legal responsibilities of organizing, training, and equipping. Furthermore, by focusing on staffed policies, the effects of culture are more likely to be apparent at the aggregate organizational level than for isolated individuals within that service.

Minimize interaction with joint organizations and international actors. As with #2 above, I focus on behavior between the military services (qua services) and their civilian principals. In this project, I am agnostic about the effect of varied heterogeneous service cultures on the behavior of joint organizations and thus scope my efforts when possible on the services themselves. Additionally, I focus on cases that are primarily civil-military in orientation and not on international cases (e.g., treaties) that exhibit more complex hierarchies of interaction.

Minimize debates about budgetary authority, acquisition of weapon systems, and uses of force. Issues focused on zero-sum budget decisions that split limited resources among the services are less valuable for my research. Budgetary cases do not permit varied implementation or “shirking,” as these policies get implemented on the services and not by them. Weapon system acquisitions involve the military-industrial complex and the Congress in particularly tortuous ways. While there are no doubt many interesting phenomena to explain here, for simplicity I choose to restrict the relevant actors and thus exclude the private sector of defense contractors.35 Finally, use-of-force cases are both interesting and important, and represent the next major issue-area to which I would like to apply my theory. For this project, however, I get better analytical traction on cases that involve fewer actors (domestically and internationally), have

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35 For more on the civil-military dimensions of weapons acquisition, see Hodgson 2010.
more systematic timelines of policy creation and implementation, and are less likely to be classified and thus available for research.

Occur after the Vietnam War (1973 – present). This temporal restriction limits my case population to a reasonable size, and accounts for the very important effects that the Vietnam War had on each of the service cultures. While service cultures may have shifted somewhat in the past thirty years, Vietnam represents a major culture-shaping event for each service’s conception of its ends, ways, and means.

After identifying the relevant case population, I evaluated the cases according to the following criteria (Van Evera 1997, George and Bennett 2005): (1) data richness; (2) extreme values on key variables; (3) large within-case variation; (4) useful contrast with competing theories; (5) typical, illustrative, or representative cases; (6) intrinsically or historically important; (7) resembles current policy problems; and (8) research viability. Additionally, I define a “case” as a more discrete element, specifying my case unit as a single service responding to a particular issue-area in a given time period. As such, large omnibus policies will have many cases within it: one for each service-issue-period combination. In fact, chapters eight and nine focus on two large cases of civil-military policymaking, but these chapters actually contain 66 sub-cases of a service responding to an issue in a specific time period of the larger case.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Force Policy (integration of guard, reserves and active forces)</td>
<td>1973 – present, with various key junctures</td>
<td>After abolishing the draft, the services were directed to integrate their guard, reserve, and active forces into a “Total Force.” Has been revisited periodically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF), forerunner to CENTCOM</td>
<td>1977-1983</td>
<td>In response to tension in Middle East, President Carter directed the services to create a new Rapid Deployment Force to handle non-NATO contingencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Space Command (SPACECOM)</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Consolidated military space assets into new unified command.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Quality Management program</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Instituted business best-practices across DoD to ensure quality products and processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Military Education (PME) policy, as directed by Congress in Skelton Panel</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Studied service and joint PME, and directed implementation of various improvement initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate over homosexuals in the military, resulting in “Don’t-Ask-Don’t-Tell”</td>
<td>1991-1994</td>
<td>One of the first defense policy issues addressed by President Clinton. Compromise solution put in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced restrictions on women in combat roles</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Integrated women further in all but a few combat specialties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoD standardized adultery / fraternization policy</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Following various sexual harassment incidents and other high-profile scandals, a one-size-fits-all policy was put in place across the services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumsfeld’s selection of Generals and Admirals for promotion</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Rather than allowing the services to promote their own senior officers, Rumsfeld took a much more hands-on approach for selecting senior officers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumsfeld’s Transformation agenda</td>
<td>2001-2004</td>
<td>A broad policy of seeking to make the military lighter, leaner, and more agile against 21st century threats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded reporting during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>DoD directed the services to integrate the press into various combat units for greater visibility of the war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Presence Policy</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>A new basing and deployment strategy directed by Rumsfeld to the services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Africa Command (AFRICOM)</td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>Created new type of unified command to centralize military presence and operations on African continent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Air-Sea Battle and the Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC)</td>
<td>2009 – present</td>
<td>Secretary Gates initially directed the Air Force and Navy to develop a joint doctrine for integrating air and sea power; joint community now involved through JOAC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Congressional legislation passed to allow homosexuals to serve openly in the military.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.6: Case Population**
As a first group of paired cases, I evaluate the Army and Navy during the four-year legislative battle to pass the Goldwater-Nichols reform legislation of 1986. This case is very well-suited for testing my theory, as it has significant historical importance, a wide array of sub-issues, and a long period of debate and bargaining. Additionally, this case confronts the common bureaucratic assumption that the military services, like other large organizations, uniformly pursue greater autonomy—the varied responses of the services suggests otherwise. Furthermore, the legislation holds contemporary significance as analysts frequently suggest the need for an “interagency Goldwater-Nichols” or for subsequent reform of the defense establishment. Understanding the cultural barriers and possibilities that shaped the original legislation should prove useful for those attempting to undertake a similar effort in the interagency domain.

For a second group of paired cases, I document the creation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) and the eventual creation of US Central Command between 1977-1983, focusing primarily on the Army and the Marine Corps. This is a largely understudied case, and offers three rich phases in a six-year span within which to evaluate both policy creation and implementation.36 Moreover, service behavior in this case is almost uniformly labeled as petty interservice rivalry (e.g., Record 1983, Odom 2006, Bliddal 2011)—consequently, this represents a hard case for service culture to inform the narrative. Thus, I tackle the interservice rivalry explanation on its own turf, showing that a cultural theory adds greater texture, nuance, and explanatory power to the story.

As a final word on my methodology, I offer a realistic appraisal of the promise and perils of this research agenda. First, I recognize that I am “at risk of over-intellectualizing the

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36 The most insightful treatments of the case are in Bliddal 2011, Odom 2006, and Njolstad 2004. This case was selected despite one of my selection criteria that sought to minimize the participation of joint military organizations. The case was selected, however, based on the common descriptions of interservice rivalry in most histories of the period. The importance of the joint organizations emerged in the context of the case research.
policy process” (George and Bennett 2005, 98). By specifying a model of civil-military interaction, I reduce a dizzyingly complex sausage factory into a well-mannered diagram of lines and boxes. Consequently, I am self-consciously ignoring a vast number of important political variables, any one of which may have causal significance in a given case. My intellectualization of this process ultimately subjects me to the possibility of both omitted variable bias as well as overreliance on a single explanation in which I force the narrative to conform to my simplified rendering. To combat this, I labored diligently to remain open in my data collection to important variables outside my extant theory and then modified my theory accordingly. Additionally, this dissertation offers only provisional and probabilistic findings, not claiming more for the theory than the evidence suggests. In the end, I hope I have heeded Aristotle’s admonition, that “it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits” (Nichomachean Ethics, ch. 3). The reader is left to judge whether I have done so successfully.

1.6: A Brief Roadmap

This introductory chapter offers an overview of the dissertation, laying out the research question, its motivation, my theory and its alternatives, and an outline of my methodology. Chapter two provides a more thorough literature review, offering greater depth on the existing literature on American civil-military relations and a closer look at the alternative explanations. This review helps to situate my project more specifically in the rich literature that currently exists. Chapter three offers a fuller explanation of my theory, going into more detail on principal-agent dynamics, service culture, and the variables that animate my model of civil-military interaction. Chapters four through seven detail my historical research on the four military services, discussing in turn the service cultures of the Navy, Marine Corps, Army, and Air Force. Chapter eight contains the first pairing of case studies, examining the Army and
Chapter nine details the second major pairing, profiling the Army and Marine Corps’ behavior
during the creation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force between 1977 and 1983. Finally,
chapter ten concludes the dissertation, offering implications for theory and practice, suggesting
other issue-areas to which my theory may apply, and indicating profitable areas for further
research.
CHAPTER 2
SETTING THE CONTEXT:
THE LITERATURE ON AMERICAN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

The point of civilian control is to make security subordinate to the larger purposes of a nation, rather than the other way around. The purpose of the military is to defend society, not to define it.
— Richard H. Kohn

This dissertation asks why the US military complies with some policies and not others, and why those responses sometimes vary across the four services. In its broadest sense, therefore, this project confronts an enduring dilemma of organized politics: who guards the guardians—and how? How can an elite group with exclusive coercive power be sharpened as the tool of the state, without becoming a threat to the state? Since Plato, philosophers and scholars have considered how a city’s guardian class could be made “fierce to their enemies but gentle to their friends” (1985, 71). These enduring questions frame the study of civil-military relations, and this dissertation contributes to the literature new ways of understanding the complex dynamics of civilian control over an armed military establishment. In the United States, the threat of a military coup is indeed remote; this does not mean, however, that American civil-military relations are uninteresting or peaceful. The lack of coups, in fact, makes the American case all the more puzzling. In his classic work on the military and politics, Samuel Finer insightfully questions why the military ever submits to civilian control: “Instead of asking why the military engage in politics, we ought surely to ask why they ever do otherwise...The military possess vastly superior organization. And they possess arms” (1962, 4). Finer’s insight reframes a seminal observation from Alexis de Tocqueville, who recognized that in democratic nations like the United States, “the army finally becomes a little nation apart, with a lower standard of intelligence and rougher habits than the nation at large. But this little

1 Kohn 1997, 142
uncivilized nation holds the weapons and knows how to use them” (1969, 649). How then do elected civilian leaders—on behalf of the American people—ensure that military behavior remains appropriately circumscribed?

This chapter situates my research by surveying the literature on American civil-military relations, focusing specifically on the dynamics of civilian control. I begin by describing the very broad contours of the literature, briefly describing the major areas of scholarly attention within the field. Next, I delve more deeply into the question of civilian control, laying out the prominent theories that explain varying patterns of control. Finally, I conclude by describing recent additions to the literature, identifying notable shortfalls that this dissertation addresses, and highlighting the key theories that serve as alternative explanations to my own.

2.1: The Wide-Angle Lens

While the bulk of this chapter focuses on a few key arguments, I begin with the broader intellectual context that these works help to define. The study of civil-military relations is diverse and varied, and the focus of this dissertation—the dynamics of civilian control—is by no means the only area of scholarly interest. Consequently, this section traces the major moves of the American civil-military literature, from its founding scholars in the late 1950s through the so-called crisis of the 1990s. To begin, where does civil-military relations fit within the scholarly universe of social science?

The field of civil-military relations appears curiously liminal, attracting the overlapping peripheries of political science, history, and sociology. Its unique nexus of actors, processes, and outcomes animates the interest of many diverse fields, thus creating a distinctly multi-disciplinary literature (Feaver 1999). Historians, political scientists, and sociologists all engage one another’s work, drawing on the strengths of each field to generate an empirically and theoretically rich literature. Even within the domain of political science, civil-military relations
is a liminal field, with scholars from International Relations, Security Studies, American Politics, and Comparative Politics all slicing it with different tools to explain different dependent variables. This section highlights this multi-disciplinary nature but emphasizes the contributions within political science and focuses on the American case in particular.

*Founding Fathers*

The civil-military literature began in earnest after World War II, as a new security dynamic created new political realities for the United States. Informed by this new context, Samuel Huntington penned his seminal work *The Soldier and the State* (1957), establishing himself as the undisputed titan of American civil-military relations. Since its publication, Huntington’s work has set the terms of the debate, and continues to anchor the field in important ways.

In this work, Huntington confronted the new tension of maintaining a massive Cold War military in a predominantly liberal society. He wrote as an historically informed political scientist, looking at the interactions between political institutions, security imperatives, and prevailing societal values. Ultimately, Huntington advocated “objective control” of the military, in which civilian leaders grant the military an autonomous domain in which to cultivate the professionalism of willing subordination. While his work has generated no shortage of theoretical and empirical critiques, he still has the first word in the field—any major work thereafter must respond to Huntington.

One of the first meaningful responses came from sociologist Morris Janowitz. In *The Professional Soldier* (1960), Janowitz offered an insightful “social and political portrait” of the American military. Writing as a sociologist, Janowitz delved deeply into the relationship between the military and the surrounding society that it protects. He explicated the unique

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2 The seminal works of Huntington and Janowitz are profiled in greater depth later in this chapter. This section is an overview to chart the larger trajectory of the field.
logic of military culture, etiquette, and norms, contrasting them with the prevailing worldview of civilian society. Informed by the same security imperative that motivated Huntington, Janowitz pondered how the United States might maintain the civic virtues of the minuteman citizen-soldier with such a large standing force. He concluded that the U.S. should create a constabulary force rather than a military one, committed to the pragmatic use of only limited force. While Huntington’s primary concern was the political relationship between the soldier and the state, Janowitz concentrated on the sociological relationship between the professional soldier and the society he represents and protects.³

The different perspectives of Huntington and Janowitz ultimately gave rise to the two principal tracks of civil-military research that subsequently emerged. Huntington’s focus on political institutions and civilian control spurred a vast literature on civil-military relations in emerging democracies. The most enduring contribution to follow Huntington in this vein came from Finer (1962), who offered a systematic examination of the military’s disposition to intervene in politics as a function of its motive, mood, and professionalism.⁴ Additionally, this politically oriented track offered insight into the volatility of civil-military relations in nascent democracies, exploring the dynamics of coups in fragile states (e.g., O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986, Quinlivan 1999). Janowitz’s sociological focus sparked the second primary track, founding the robust literature on the military in American society, carried forward by scholars like Charles Moskos (1970, 1971). Both tracks captured the interest of multi-disciplinary scholars, boosted by exogenous events such as the Vietnam War, but with little new theorizing to explain broad trends. A majority of the literature through the 1970s and 80s continued to plow the important fields sown by Huntington and Janowitz.

³ The different political visions that underscore Huntington’s and Janowitz’s theories are insightfully reviewed in Burk 2002.
⁴ For a related argument, see Stepan 1971.
The Clintonian Crisis, the Gap, and Beyond

The two tracks of the civil-military literature experienced a resurgence of interest in the post-Cold War period of the 1990s. On the subject of civilian control, the fractious civil-military environment of the Clinton era prompted voluminous critiques of the dysfunctional relationship between the president and the military. With military leaders blocking the acceptance of gays in the military and offering public advocacy against the use of military force abroad (e.g., Powell 1992), the level of military activism in politics appeared to reach new heights. Headlined by Richard Kohn’s description of an “out of control” military (1994), the scholarly literature clamored to explain the pervasive friction. Explanations for the crisis varied significantly, with some suggesting that the military was resisting unappealing missions (Dunlap 1992, Avant 1996), or that military leaders had broken ranks and assumed too much political power (Weigley 1993). Still other scholars pointed to the altered bureaucratic incentives wrought by the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols legislation (Gibson and Snider 1999, Bourne 1998), while Dauber (1998) argued that the military gained the upper hand in the argumentative structure of the debate itself.

A similarly vibrant literature emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s on the civil-military gap, the ever-widening gulf between military and civilian society. Thomas Ricks’ sparked this research area in 1997 with his portraits of Marine Corps basic training and the growing sociological divide between the Marines and the society they defended (1997a, 1997b). To evaluate whether Ricks’ thesis could be substantiated empirically, the Triangle Institute for Strategic Studies administered a comprehensive survey instrument to civilian and military leaders (1999). Codified in an edited volume by Feaver and Kohn (2001), this project studied the history and implications of a military society increasingly divorced from its civilian roots, with important contributions from Holsti, Desch, Burk, and Cohen. Subsequently, Feaver and
Gelpi (2004) carried these insights forward and connected the civil-military gap to the difference in American attitudes concerning the use of military force abroad.

Finally, the abundance of civil-military literature in the 1990s and early 2000s launched a new round of thoughtful theorizing as well. Michael Desch (1999) helped explain the civil-military friction of the 1990s with a structural theory that accounted for both international and domestic threats. Eliot Cohen (2002) offered a normative view, levying a useful critique of the so-called “normal theory” of civil-military relations and justifying the prudential involvement of civilians in a wide range of military affairs. Lastly, a group of scholars imported the insights of principal-agent theory from economics, modeling the civil-military relationship as a civilian principal contracting with a military agent. Building on Brehm and Gates (1997), Avant (1994), and Zegart (1999), Feaver (2003) offered a comprehensive and systematic agency theory, identifying the material incentives that shape the civil-military delegation.

Having outlined the major trends of the civil-military literature, the next section goes into greater depth on five of the major arguments outlined above. After the in-depth discussion of these five core arguments, the third section will identify where the literature has moved since, where it is going, and what remains to be done.

2.2: Foundational Theories of Civilian Control

Where the previous section went broad, this section goes deep. I begin by looking more closely at the foundational works of Huntington (1957) and Janowitz (1960), and then comment on an updated corollary argument from Andrew Abbott (1988). Next, I fast-forward to a trio of

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5 In addition to the theories discussed in this paragraph, several other scholars also advanced new civil-military theories during this prolific time period. Schiff (1995) offers concordance theory, which predicts less domestic intervention by the military when the military, political elites, and the polity agree on the proper role and composition of the state’s military forces. Bland (1999) articulates a unified theory of shared responsibility, in which stable civil-military relations follow periods in which civilian and military leaders converge on a common state regime for how they will share power and responsibility. Finally, Langston (2003) advances a theory of civil-military relations that focuses on post-war realignments, arguing that civilian and military leaders must accommodate each other’s political and institutional interests after a war. Each of these theories offers interesting insights, but none has garnered the attention or made the impact of those outlined in this section.

Huntington

In *The Soldier and the State* (1957), Samuel Huntington confronted a sea change in American civil-military relations: how to reconcile the need for a standing military force with the nation’s long-standing liberal aversion to militarism. Before the Cold War, the nation could ask, “What pattern of civil-military relations is most compatible with American liberal democratic values?” (1957, 3). In light of the pervasive Soviet threat, however, Huntington suggested that the new question became, “What pattern of civil-military relations will best maintain the security of the American nation?” (1957, 3). The new requirement for standing military forces fundamentally altered the patterned relationships and historical expectations between the elected government, the military, and society.

Huntington embedded his analysis in a rich Constitutional and historical context. While scholars agree that civilian control is a Constitutional principle, Huntington noted that the framers of the Constitution deliberately created a system of *weak* civilian control. Since the framers had no expectation of maintaining a large standing army, their primary concern was to limit the *civilians* instead; as Huntington observed, “The Framers’ concept of civilian control was to control the uses to which civilians might put military force rather than to control the military themselves” (168). Consequently, the Constitution divided control of the military between the executive and legislative branches, a move that draws the military into political conflicts and fractures unity of command. Similarly, he noted that for much of its life, the United States was able to grow with secure borders, enjoying the benefits of geography over
military security. In turn, this dynamic caused civilian control to grow “extraconstitutionally,” as a function of political tradition more than codified principle (190). Together, these historical and Constitution factors contribute to a pattern of civil-military relations that is statutorily weak but traditionally strong. How then did a changed security environment threaten that tradition?

Huntington considered two aggregate variables that interacted to create varying patterns of civil-military relations: functional and societal imperatives. The functional imperative is the external security threat—the primary *raison d’être* for having a military force. The societal imperative consists of two components, the prevailing worldview of society and the legal-institutional structure in place (i.e., the Constitutional framework). Historically, the functional imperative had been absent, so the societal imperative could be decidedly liberal in orientation. With the new and pervasive Soviet threat, however, Huntington suggested that a conservative military would be fundamentally incompatible with a liberal society. Consequently, he argued that the societal imperative—specifically, the prevailing liberal worldview—must change and sacrifice its uniformly liberal commitments.

With an empowered military force in a decreasingly liberal society, how then should civilians seek to assert control? Here, Huntington offered what became his most enduring insight. He distinguished between *objective* and *subjective* control of the military, differentiated by the degree to which the civilians attempt to politicize the military. Objective control recognizes an autonomous sphere for the military, seeks to make the military politically neutral, and does so by granting it autonomy in the performance of its duties. Subjective control, conversely, blurs the distinction between military and political domains, and politicizes the military by drawing them into political conflicts. “Subjective civilian control achieves its end by civilianizing the military, making them the mirror of the state. Objective civilian control achieves its end by militarizing the military, making them the tool of the state” (83).
How then does objective control encourage military subordination to its civilian leaders? According to Huntington’s logic, by granting autonomy to the military, civilians encourage the growth of unique military professionalism for the management of violence. The military professional, in Huntington’s view, is defined by the “sense of social obligation to utilize his craft for the benefit of society” (15). This definition of professionalism is the motive force that allows his causal logic to obtain; Feaver captured the causal chain this way: “autonomy leads to professionalization, which leads to political neutrality and voluntary subordination, which lead to secure civilian control” (1996, 160). In sum, Huntington’s theory of civilian control rests on a reciprocal exchange between civilians and the military: civilians exercise objective control, giving autonomy to the military in exchange for professional voluntary subordination.

Huntington’s work became—and remains—a classic in the field, and nearly everything that followed was obligated to confront his seminal contribution. While its strengths are obvious, the critiques against it are many. To summarize, two lines of critique appear to be most salient. First, while Huntington offered sophisticated nuance on the civil-military division-of-labor, his emphasis on objective control and military autonomy invites a dangerous divide between politics and war. Despite grounding his theory in the Clausewitzian continuity between war and politics, Huntington’s prescriptions for objective control offer mixed and inconsistent guidance. Granting autonomy to the military may cultivate professionalism, but it also encourages a counterproductive and dysfunctional separation of military means from their political ends. Although Huntington did offer considerable nuance on this point, the inconsistencies of his work clearly invited pervasive confusion.6

Second, Huntington’s causal logic required a self-serving definition to sustain its forward motion. Feaver (1996) levied this critique most convincingly, noting that the

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6 This critique will be explored in greater depth when discussing Cohen 2002.
mechanisms linking autonomy, professionalism, and willing subordination to civilian control are *stipulations*, not empirical observations. The causal chain—autonomy leads to neutrality and professionalism which lead to subordination—is a function of Huntington’s unique definitions of those concepts. A different definition of professionalism, one that emphasized strong advocacy for superior military policy for example, would cause Huntington’s causal chain to collapse. Furthermore, Huntington’s own observations about the Constitution challenge the viability of military autonomy. The military serves both the executive and legislative branches, and thus gets drawn into political conflicts as a function of the domestic political structure. Granting the military autonomy may be viable in theory, but apparently not in practice. Despite these shortcomings, however, Huntington laid the cornerstone on which nearly every future scholar built.

*Huntington (Reprise) and an Updated Corollary*

In addition to his seminal work on American civil-military relations, Huntington (1961b) also offered compelling insights into the military services’ interactions *with each other*. Two important arguments have particular relevance as alternative explanations for military behavior: (1) interservice rivalry and (2) committee compromise within the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Each is discussed in turn.

First, in his extensive work on interservice rivalry, Huntington offered a strong and prevailing view for why the services might respond differently to the same civilian policy: they are bureaucratic actors competing for limited resources. According to this view, once the services became unified under one Defense Department in 1947, their budgeting and oversight processes were no longer separate. A unified Defense Department meant that the services had to outbid one another for a limited pool of funds, prestige, and bureaucratic turf. Consequently,

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7 Finer (1962) offers a similar critique, and argues that professionalism does not inherently lead to subordination as Huntington suggests.
service behavior was no longer civil-military in orientation, but military-military; the services battled against each other instead of against their civilian superiors.

Before discussing Huntington’s second argument of interservice relations, I consider an important sociological argument developed by Andrew Abbott (1988) that amplifies Huntington’s ideas on interservice rivalry. Abbott focused on the ways in which professions in general divide expert labor, particularly when multiple professions (e.g., optometry and ophthalmology) have an existential stake in a fixed supply of professional work (e.g., caring for eyes). “The central phenomenon of professional life,” Abbott argued, “is thus the link between a profession and its work, a link I shall call jurisdiction. To analyze professional development is to analyze how this link is created in work, how it is anchored by formal and informal social structure, and how the interplay of jurisdictional links between professions determines the history of the individual professions themselves” (1988, 20). To secure this jurisdiction, Abbott noted, professional organizations seek to demonstrate their superior capacity to perform the work in question, particularly by appealing to the “client” population that requires the professional work to be done.

By Abbott’s logic, therefore, one aspect of what is traditionally labeled interservice rivalry is merely a contest among the military services for secure jurisdictions of expert labor. The military domain is a professional sphere that the four military services inhabit together, separated by contingent borders of specific expertise. Moreover, the security of the services’ jurisdictions hinges on the satisfaction of their client—the elected government and the American people. The services therefore compete to demonstrate their superior fitness to provide security for the nation, marketing their particular ability to satisfy their client the best.

Returning to Huntington, his second argument about interservice relations actually predicts conformity rather than variation from the services. In his history of the early years of
the Cold War, Huntington noted that the five-member Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) actually operated according to the three conditions of legislative – rather than executive – decision-making: (1) the actors had roughly equal power and therefore had to bargain for preferred outcomes; (2) the members disagreed about the goals of policy; and (3) many possible alternatives existed for any given policy (1961b, 146). These conditions actually described the JCS quite well, particularly before the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols reforms that made the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff the principal military advisor to the President. Consequently, the JCS had to resolve its differences according to the logic and procedures of legislative compromise: (1) avoiding or delaying difficult issues; (2) “compromise and logrolling,” in which smaller interests are sacrificed to secure larger ones; (3) creating vague, ambiguous, or weak compromises that minimally satisfy all parties; and (4) building policy prescriptions on unrealistic premises (1961, 162-165). These insights suggest that while there may be rivalry going on within the Chiefs’ internal deliberations, the external result at the civil-military level may actually be a united front of delay tactics, weak compromises, or unrealistic assumptions.

In sum, Huntington’s diverse body of work captured many fundamental dynamics of American civil-military relations. In particular, his theories on civilian control, interservice rivalry, and the legislative-style compromises of the JCS all inform this dissertation significantly.

Janowitz

Three years after Huntington’s seminal 1957 volume, Morris Janowitz offered a rich sociological portrait of the professional American soldier (1960). Motivated by the same strategic context that spurred Huntington, Janowitz noted that the military doctrine of deterrence required large “forces in being” rather than the traditional reliance on wartime conscription. How then did these forces-in-being affect the sociological relationship between
the military and the surrounding society? Janowitz considered this question with remarkable scope and depth, but for this discussion, three areas are particularly salient: (1) his thick description of military doctrine and culture to create a textured portrait of military society, (2) advocacy for a new constabulary force, and (3) a sociological perspective on civilian control.

First, Janowitz offered an incisive social and political portrait of the professional American military. He detailed the unique sociological markers of military society, its distinctive pattern of thinking, and how these differed from civilian society. Departing from Huntington, Janowitz further noted that the distinct functional lines between military and civilian roles had become increasingly blurred. In light of the increasingly technical work performed by the military, the growth of the military-industrial complex, and the altered strategic calculus of nuclear “push-button” warfare, the once-clear demarcation between military and political roles had eroded. This fusion of roles, coupled with the social separation between military and civilian society, sparked concern for Janowitz—how could society ensure that the military, created as a means to a political end, did not become a self-serving end unto itself?

In response to this question, Janowitz proposed a new strategic force posture—what he called the “constabulary force.” In his view, the United States needed to create something akin to a global police force, committed to limited pragmatic uses of force to maintain order around the world. Such a force would be a deliberate departure from the “absolutists” of the nuclear age, for whom the capacity of total war invited the appetite of unlimited political aims. Instead, Janowitz advocated a smaller, limited force to police the globe with a decidedly minimalist engagement strategy. In sum, he suggested that limiting the military in size and scope, while keeping them embedded in—not separated from—civilian society, offered the best path toward stable civil-military relations and international relations.
In this strategic context, how did Janowitz portray the dynamics of civilian control? Initially, he noted several political devices by which civilians maintain authoritative control over military forces. By controlling budgets, allocating roles and missions, and offering directives on political-military affairs, civilians could build the set on which the drama of civil-military relations unfolds (363). Beyond these political devices, however, Janowitz offered little insight on how best to maintain civilian control, largely because he did not anticipate a viable threat. He noted, in fact, how “striking” it was that military leaders chose to limit their political influence. “In their day-to-day activities,” Janowitz asserted, “[military leaders] live according to the self-conception that they are public servants, and according to their own formulation of civil-military relations, namely, that ‘there is no question about who is in control’” (368).

Similarly, in his discussion of a proposed constabulary force, Janowitz envisioned that officers would remain subject to civilian control based on the rule of law, tradition, and “self-imposed professional standards” (420). Ultimately, Janowitz offered few prescriptions for maintaining firm civilian control because he saw the military controlling itself voluntarily.

While Huntington and Janowitz offered different views of the political-military division of labor and the relationship between the military and society, on the subject of civilian control they were remarkably well aligned (Feaver 1996). Huntington defined professionalism to include willing subordination, while Janowitz relied on the military’s “self-conception” to keep it subordinate. Neither scholar was particularly concerned with “guarding the guardians” because, in their view, the guardians were duly professional and self-limiting. Consequently, both scholars appear to invoke American exceptionalism to explain the relatively stable pattern of American civil-military relations—neither specified how civilians should actively exert control because the American military appeared uniquely self-controlled.
Desch, Zisk, and External Security Threats

Working within the tradition of structural realism, Michael Desch (1999) offered a structural theory of civil-military relations to help explain the friction of the post-Cold War era. For Desch, civil-military relations were healthy and good when civilian preferences prevailed over the military; conversely, such relations were unhealthy when military preferences prevailed instead. He explained the variation in these civil-military patterns as a function of two variables: internal and external threats. External threats were viable threats to the state’s existential security, while internal ones threatened the domestic stability of the political elites. Desch did not dispute the importance of variables identified by other scholars—individual personalities, military organizations, state structures, and societal worldviews—but suggested that these were *intervening* variables that were themselves affected by the threat environment. That is, other variables mattered, but they co-varied with the structural security environment and were thus subsumed by his theory.

In Desch’s theory, civil-military relations will be best when external security threats are high and internal threats are low. In such an environment, the civilians and military will focus on a common threat, and civilian preferences are expected to prevail over military ones. Conversely, Desch argued that civil-military relations are worst in conditions of low external threats and high domestic ones. Here, civilian and military leaders lack a common external enemy, and the fractious domestic political environment draws the military into the political fray. Desch suggested that these dynamics obtained in the post-Cold War decade of the 1990s, explaining much of why military preferences consistently prevailed over civilian ones.

With this structural theory, Desch made a valuable contribution to the literature that boasted numerous strengths. First, he offered a deductive framework, grounded in parsimonious theory, which admirably captured broad trends in civil-military relationships.
Desch did not attempt as ambitious a work as Huntington and Janowitz, and thus succeeded in crafting a cleaner story with fewer explanatory variables. Second, his theory had broad explanatory reach, moving beyond the American case to explain civil-military patterns abroad as well. Desch used case studies in Russia, Germany, Algeria, Japan, and Latin America to substantiate his theory, and he usefully captured the macro trends in each context.

These strengths, however, contributed to the inherent limitations of Desch’s work as well. As with any structural theory, its explanatory power was generally limited to macroscopic trends and thus did not explain variation within a particular era. For example, while Desch’s theory helped to explain the increased overall trend of civil-military friction in the Clinton era, it could not explain why friction occurred in some cases and not others during this span. Additionally, Desch was not altogether clear in distinguishing between external and internal threats, as these categories easily blur in theory and practice (Brenner 2003).

Furthermore, his definition of “internal threats” was problematic, as any domestic disagreement could potentially be perceived as threatening. Desch was unclear in defining the threshold at which routine political friction becomes an internal domestic threat.

While Desch’s work was too macroscopic to inform the micro-trends in military behavior that this project focuses on, a related theory from Kimberly Marten Zisk (1993) appears more tractable as an alternative argument to consider. While Zisk’s dependent variable was military doctrinal change, not civil-military behavior per se, her insights can be imported usefully into this work. Zisk argued that senior military leaders maintain dual responsibilities of securing the state and securing their service as an essential means toward that end. In Zisk’s words, “the officer as servant to the state and the officer as bureaucrat tend to coexist inside a single mindset” (1993, 13). Military leaders therefore face threats both foreign and domestic—foreign threats to the state and domestic threats to the well-being of their organizations. When
faced with both simultaneously, Zisk argued, military leaders will handle the domestic threat first, as long as the external threat is not acutely imminent (i.e., the nation is not at war). Doing so preserves the essential organizational means by which the state can then defend against the external threat. For this dissertation, Zisk’s argument serves as a useful alternative to Desch, incorporating the same sensibilities of the external security environment while offering greater explanatory power over specific military behaviors in a given policy context.

Cohen: A Critique of the “Normal” Theory

Shortly after Desch, Eliot Cohen (2002) offered an important normative and strategic theory of civil-military relations that continues to impact the literature. Cohen provided an historical corrective to a prevailing view he called the “normal theory” of civil-military relations. In the process, he made a normative case for strengthening civilian control, while making the strategic case that greater civilian involvement in military affairs ultimately achieves better policy.

According to Cohen, a simplistic (mis)reading of Huntington, combined with the prevailing civil-military narratives of Vietnam and the Gulf War, mutated into the “normal theory” of American civil-military relations. The normal theory preaches a strict political-military divide between politics and war and advocates a clean division of labor between politicians who set the ends and military leaders who decide upon the means. As discussed above, Huntington’s preferred method of “objective control” can be used as a proof-text to justify this division of labor, and many adherents of the normal theory use Huntington as their chief defense. Further, Cohen noted that the prevailing narratives of Vietnam and the Gulf War reinforce the idea that politics and war should be separate and distinct. President Johnson’s personal involvement in choosing bombing targets is famously correlated with American failures in Vietnam—and the correlation is conflated with causality. Similarly, the approved
history of the first Gulf War holds that President Bush outlined political objectives and then gave his military commanders free rein to decide upon the military strategy. In both cases, Cohen clearly demonstrated that these prevailing narratives are misleading at best, wrong at worst, but nevertheless pervasive in crafting a baseline expectation of “normal” civil-military relations.

Cohen’s critique of the normal theory stood on both normative and strategic ground. That is, he argued that an alternative view of civil-military relations was both normatively desirable, as well as more strategically effective for crafting sound policy. In making his case, Cohen returned to Clausewitz and explicated the logical continuity between politics and war. The two domains cannot be separated because they constitute a continuum of diplomatic dialogue, invoking a common logic with unique grammar. Furthermore, democratic theory insists on the superior political wisdom and authority of elected officials. Consequently, Cohen argued, “Civil-military relations must thus be a dialogue of unequals and the degree of civilian intervention in military matters a question of prudence, not principle, because principle properly opens the entire field of military activity to civilian scrutiny and direction” (12). Cohen clearly recognized that civilian and military leaders have unique competencies and should divide their labor somewhere—he argued, however, that civilians always maintain the prudential prerogative to decide where that division will be.

Finally, Cohen detailed four historical case studies to demonstrate that proactive civilian involvement in military affairs is not only normatively permissible, but strategically desirable. He profiled the civil-military adventures of Lincoln, Clemenceau, Churchill, and Ben-Gurion to show that civilians must challenge—rather than abdicate to—their military leaders. In each case, Cohen demonstrated the improved strategic results that come from civilian leaders

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pushing and prodding their military subordinates, forcing strategic debate to achieve optimal national policies.

Cohen thus offered a valuable corrective to misguided conventional wisdom. His work, however, should be interpreted as historical advocacy and not pure political science—his sample of cases, for example, is decidedly non-random. He seeks to persuade, not to explain, and offers a normative corrective with selective historical support. Consequently, Cohen does not attempt to explain the conditions under which civilian control is most likely to be challenged, or the conditions that inform varying levels of civil-military friction. For an analysis of such micro-foundations that explain greater variation, we turn to Feaver’s agency theory.

Feaver, Avant, and Principal-Agent Frameworks

The last major approach to explaining military behavior includes the argument on which this dissertation builds most explicitly. Building on earlier work by Deborah Avant (1993, 1994, 1996), Peter Feaver (2003) posited the civil-military relationship as a principal-agent problem and thus appropriated the logic and incentives that were already well established in economics (e.g., Kreps 1990). In so doing, Feaver plowed new methodological ground in the civil-military literature, using a formal model and a rational-choice framework to explain the micro-foundations of civil-military behavior. How then did Feaver employ principal-agent dynamics to inform the soldier and the state?

In a civil-military context, the civilian acts as the principal, contracting with a military agent to provide security for the state. The military’s behavior as agent, therefore, is a function of asymmetrical information, asymmetrical preferences, the civilian’s monitoring of military behavior, and the military’s expectation of punishment for stepping out of line. Consistent with the principal-agent literature, Feaver specified his dependent variable as a behavioral continuum between the ideal-types of “working” and “shirking,” which he defined this way:
“working is doing things the way civilians want, and shirking is doing things the way those in the military want” (2003, 60). The independent variables that shape these outcomes are the respective civilian and military preferences, the civilian’s monitoring costs, each side’s payoffs for achieving its preferred outcome, the probability of the civilian detecting any shirking, and the probability that the civilian will punish any shirking it detects. Together, the model turns on the civilian’s cost-benefit calculation of monitoring, followed by the military’s cost-benefit calculation of heeding the civilian’s preferred path or pursuing its own.

Feaver’s decision-theoretic model helped to explain the relevant incentives and interactions of American civil-military relations. The theory offered an insightful interpretation of events in the domestic political sphere, and provided real explanatory power over why the relevant actors behave as they do. Furthermore, the rational materialist theory moves beyond normative prescriptions for civilian control, and identifies the political conditions that vary to yield different civil-military outcomes. Finally, the continuum of military behavior between working and shirking offers a more nuanced dependent variable than simply looking for military coups (Feaver 2003, 85). Similarly, it offers a way to explain fine-grained variation that Desch’s structural theory cannot.

Despite these strengths, the theory is only a flexible starting point, not the final word on explaining American civil-military behavior. For example, the model only considers two actors, and treats all civilian policies equally, from long-range ideas offered by the secretary of defense to formal legislation from Congress. Moreover, the model does not distinguish

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8 Feaver’s use of the term “shirking” is in its sterile principal-agent context, and is not meant to imply laziness, negligence, or dereliction of duty. Rather, it is any behavioral deviation from the civilian’s stated preference.
9 For Feaver’s full formal model of this interaction, see chapter 4 of Armed Servants (2003).
10 Coletta (2012) adds a recent and specific critique of agency theory, noting its diminished utility during the George W. Bush administration. He argues that the principal-agent framework obscures Huntington’s more useful typology of “vertical” and “coordinate” systems by which Presidents structure the power and reporting arrangements in the defense department (Huntington 1957, 188). Coletta finds the oscillation between powerful Secretaries of Defense and influential military leaders, as suggested by Huntington’s typology, to be the more useful device for explaining variation in recent civil-military relations.
between the different dynamics that obtain before and after a policy is set. We can expect, for example, that a logic of bargaining will shape the civil-military relationship during policy creation, while enforcement logics govern the relationship during policy implementation. Furthermore, these phases likely interact, with expectations of future enforcement affecting the fervor with which the parties bargain for their preferred outcome up front (Fearon 1998). Feaver’s model fails to capture these important and pervasive dynamics.

Additionally, by treating the military as a unitary actor, the current model lacks an informed “theory of preferences” (Legro 1996) as an input to the rational choice model. This blunt rendering of military preferences overlooks the content of actual preferences that vary by service, thus missing important variation that a more refined level of analysis would capture.

Finally, Feaver’s use of a unitary civilian actor subsumed the important insights generated by Avant’s earlier work (1993, 1994). Avant’s study of civil-military behavior focused on a key element of democratic civil-military relations: the unity or division of the civilian principal. When an agent works for two or more principals, any division among those principals can set the conditions for the agent to pursue its own path. In the United States, the military’s constitutional obligations to both the executive and legislative branches creates this very dynamic.11 “Confronted with two sets of directions,” Avant argued, “military agents can choose the direction that best suits their interests, or they can play the two off against one another to generate a policy more to the military’s liking” (2007, 82). This insight represents an important contribution to the literature and thus informs the theory that I develop in the next chapter.

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11 Avant (2007) offers a comparative analysis of the American presidential system versus the British parliamentary system. She finds that presidential systems invite the divided principal problem, but have the benefit of stronger and more capable military forces. Parliamentary systems have the opposite strengths and weaknesses; the unified principal keeps the military responsive but at the expense of its strength and capacity.
2.3: Next Steps and Key Alternative Arguments

The important arguments outlined above continue to shape the literature on American
civil-military relations, supplying the terms and conditions of the debate. Huntington and
Janowitz offered such enduring treatments that anything since then continues to situate itself
relative to these giants. Cohen spoke authoritatively into the normative debate on the best way
to structure the civil-military relationship, arguing clearly for prudential civilian involvement in
both political ends and military means. Desch and Feaver offered deductive, explanatory
theories that identified the conditions under which the civil-military relationship varied. Desch
captured the broad trends informed by international structure, while Feaver used a rational
model to explain the subtler variation endemic to daily civil-military interactions. Where have
civil-military scholars moved since, and what areas are currently being studied?

As the literature moved forward, most scholars leveraged existing theoretical
frameworks while altering the assumptions and actors. Coletta and Feaver (2006), for example,
extended Feaver’s agency model to consider the impact of improved technological monitoring
on the civil-military relationship. Brooks (2008) similarly invoked an agency model, but made
civil-military relations her independent rather than dependent variable, examining the impact
of civil-military relations on a state’s effectiveness in strategic assessment. Sowers (2005) carried
the agency framework abroad, considering the principal-agent dynamics of international uses of
force by NATO or the UN—dynamics complicated by multiple, overlapping principals with
divergent preferences.

Similarly, Avant (2005) changed the relevant actors within the agency framework,
examining the civil-military implications of contractors at war. She considered how agency
relationships change when the armed agent is an income-motivated contractor without the
strong military norm of civilian control. Here, the principal-agent framework took an
intriguing turn back toward its roots in economics, such that the original economics literature may apply more directly and powerfully than ever before. Finally, Gibson (2008) offered a “Madisonian approach” to civil-military relations, building on Feaver’s agency theory but conceiving of civilian appointees and military leaders as co-agents of the elected principal. Gibson argued that elected civilians have normative, democratic superiority over the military but appointed civilians do not. He suggested that civilian appointees—such as the secretary of defense—were also delegated agents, tasked by elected leaders to offer professional expertise for the common defense. In turn, Gibson argued for a new normative framework for civil-military relations in which civilian appointees and military leaders had equal access to elected civilians, serving as counterbalancing co-agents for elected principals.

Setting the Stage

With this survey in place, what profitable work remains to be done? The research question I address in this dissertation emerges from my appraisal of the literature and its insufficient attention to two key dynamics. First, I argue that the American case deserves greater descriptive fidelity by disaggregating the unitary military actor. Our current theories of civil-military relations treat the US military as a singular entity, but history and experience suggest that this level of aggregation belies meaningful variation. The literature overwhelmingly points to deep and abiding differences between the four US military services—different histories, origins, and functional requirements that give rise to unique service cultures (see, for example, Halperin 1974, Hadley 1986, Wilson 1989, Builder 1989, Rosen 1991, Murray 1999, Snider 1999, Ehrhard 2000, Mahnken and FitzSimonds 2003, Mahnken 2008). These unique cultures, in turn, create different baseline preferences (Wildavsky 1987) that generate varying civil-military outcomes. Consequently, this work rigorously examines how service-
level differences ultimately concatenate into varying levels of cooperation and resistance with civilian principals.

Second, as the critique of Feaver suggests, I argue that current theories pay too little attention to qualitative differences in political behavior across the policymaking timeline. Most treatments of civilian control appear to focus on creation or implementation, or in treating both they conflate the two. Instead, as chapter three describes, I argue that these phases are analytically distinct, with unique variables and processes generating unique outcomes.

In sum, this chapter offered a macroscopic view of the literature on American civil-military relations, with focused attention on key theories and particular shortfalls. This wide-angle lens helped to situate my work in the larger body of scholarly literature that grapples with questions of who guards the guardians and how. The more focused attention on key theories of civilian control honed in on my research question specifically, and identified the theories that most aptly serve alongside my own.

Alternative Explanations

In view of the theories and arguments detailed above, I conclude the chapter by summarizing the major alternative explanations that I will use alongside my own theory in the empirical case studies. In light of my research question that asks why the US military complies with some policies but not others, and why these responses sometimes vary across the services, the focus of these alternatives is on the motivations and actions of the military services. Why do the military services do what they do?

The first alternative argument is simply the existing state of the art on which I attempt to build, Feaver’s (2003) agency theory. This simple, flexible, and powerful model achieves significant explanatory power with considerable parsimony. My theory intentionally complicates the picture by expanding the number of civilian and military actors and looking at
differences across the policy timeline. Feaver’s baseline represents an important alternative to my theory; if the simplified framework explains the data just as well, then the added complexity of my theory is not worth the cost.

The second alternative focuses on the services as bureaucratic actors, pursuing material interests of autonomy, turf, and larger budget share. According to this approach, the motivation and behavior of the services are rather predictable: they covet greater material resources and power and therefore work within civil-military structures to obtain them. I include in this category Huntington’s theory of interservice rivalry as well as Abbott’s variant on dividing expert labor. These two arguments are included because the motivation is largely the same, while the manifestation will be different. The motivation remains the acquisition of autonomy, turf (or jurisdiction), and budget share; but given a fixed pool of resources, the services must battle it out between themselves to obtain the best result for their service. The result is a predominantly inter-service battle, not a civil-military one, but this behavior by the services can have important civil-military implications.

The third alternative explanation captures Huntington’s argument concerning the process and output of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In this “committee compromise” argument, Huntington suggests that the JCS functions as a legislative-style committee that must resolve its differences according to standard legislative tactics such as logrolling and ambiguous compromise. Consequently, this argument suggests that competition within the JCS may yield a weakly united front rather than variation among the services. For cases in which the JCS figures prominently, this represents an important argument to keep in view.

The fourth and final argument incorporates the variable of an external security threat. Rather than using Desch’s structural theory, which is too broad for the question being asked

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here, this fourth alternative focuses on Zisk’s (1993) conception of foreign and domestic threats. When military leaders face domestic threats to their organization and external security threats simultaneously, Zisk hypothesizes that these leaders will handle the domestic threat first as an essential precondition to tackling the external threat.

Each of these alternatives has something important to say about my research question, and for each case study, I test the explanatory capacity of my theory against these compelling alternatives. Before doing so, however, I offer a fuller elucidation of my theory of civilian control in the next chapter.
Chapter 3
A Theory of Bargaining and Culture

But the fact remains that the services are not alike, that no wit of man can make them alike, and that the retention by each of its separate character, customs, and confidence is essential to the conserving of our national military power.

— S.L.A. Marshall, The Armed Forces Officer

This chapter advances the literature on American civil-military relations by specifying an improved theory of civilian control. The overall dependent variable of this study is the response of a military service to a given civilian policy, during the bargaining of policy creation and the compliance phase of policy implementation. To explain variation in this outcome, I use the logic of principal-agent theory, a framework initially developed within economics and later applied to bureaucratic delegation. Building on Peter Feaver’s agency theory of civil-military relations (2003), this project makes two major theoretical moves: one that changes the strategic dynamics of the model, and a second that changes the relevant actors within it. First, I make a theoretical distinction between the bargaining dynamics of policy creation and the enforcement dynamics of policy implementation. By distinguishing these two phases, I specify more clearly the conditions that inform the military’s decision calculus in each phase, as well as the meaningful interaction between the phases. I suggest that during the policy creation phase, the military services engage in strategic bargaining for their preferred policy outcome, arguing more or less fervently based on the anticipated climate of implementation associated with a proposed policy. During the policy implementation phase, I argue that the military varyingly complies based on a logic of enforcement, informed primarily by the size of the preference gap with the civilians and the implementation slack afforded by the political environment.

As a second theoretical move, I disaggregate the military into the four respective services, each of which has a deeply ingrained service culture that creates unique “diagnostic and choice propensities” (George 1979, George and Bennett 2005) in the policymaking process. I argue that these varying propensities translate into different policy preferences that echo throughout the principal-agent decision structure, ultimately yielding variation in service responses during both policy creation and implementation. Together, these two moves create an updated theory of civilian control that boasts greater explanatory leverage over the complex wrangling of American civil-military relations.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I very briefly review the logic and dynamics of agency theory on which my theory builds. Next, I introduce my first major theoretical move, motivating the need to distinguish between policy creation and implementation, and specifying the relevant variables and interactions. In the third section, I introduce my other major change to agency theory, justifying the theoretical reasons for disaggregating the unitary military into four unique services. Once these two moves have been introduced, the fourth section of the chapter pulls them together into a combined model of civilian control, specifying its relevant variables and interactions. Finally, the chapter ends with a brief discussion of the theory’s falsifiability and a concluding summary of its contribution to the literature.

3.1: An Agency Approach to Civil-military Relations

As discussed in chapter two, Feaver (2003) offers agency theory as a materialist alternative to normative models of civilian control. Rather than relying on normative mechanisms, Feaver posits the civil-military relationship as a principal-agent problem (1998, 2003) and imports the logic and variables that already inform the economic literature (e.g., Kreps 1990). In a classic principal-agent scenario, a principal hires or contracts with an agent to perform some specified work on his behalf. The principal’s core dilemma is how to grant
latitude to the agent to perform the work, while ensuring good-faith compliance with his
directives. If the agent has a different preference about the work, or a preference for not
working at all, particularly when the principal cannot monitor the agent effectively, the
principal suffers “agency losses” as the cost of inefficient delegation (Hawkins et al 2006, 9).

A principal faces tradeoffs between monitoring costs and agency losses—the closer the
agent is monitored, the more likely the work will conform with the principal’s desires but the
more inefficient the delegation. Principals reduce agency losses, therefore, by minimizing the
preference gap (Brehm and Gates 1997) or by implementing monitoring strategies such as “fire
alarms” or “police patrols” (McCubbins and Schwartz 1984). A principal’s fire alarms serve as
embedded monitors within the agency relationship, with both the information and incentive to
report non-compliance. Police patrols, conversely, involve routine oversight of the agent
through regular reporting requirements, periodic testimony, or similar patterns of routinized
monitoring. How then do these dynamics apply to civil-military relations?

First, for democratic polities like the United States, there is a nested principal-agent
relationship in which the polity delegates governing power to elected officials, who in turn
delegate certain aspects of national security to the military (Avant 1994, 7). In the first-order
relationship, the government acts as the agent to the polity-as-principal. In the second tier of
delegation, the elected civilian government acts as the principal, contracting with a military
agent to provide security for the state. The military’s behavior as agent, therefore, is a function
of preference gaps between civilian officials and the military, the civilian’s monitoring of
military behavior, and the military’s expectation of rewards or punishment. These core
principal-agent dynamics continue to inform my own theory, even while I make modifications
to the baseline model.
3.2: Policy Creation and Policy Implementation

The first innovation of my theory is to make an analytic distinction between making policy and enforcing it. On either side of the policy-ratification divide, we should see different explanatory variables, different manifestations of the dependent variable, and through backward induction, a strategic interaction between the two phases. In this section, I offer the theoretical justification for making such a move, and discuss the different variables that apply to each phase. Next, I suggest how the two phases are likely to interact, with the anticipated climate of future implementation affecting the bargaining dynamics of policy creation. The section concludes with several testable hypotheses that emerge from these theoretical propositions.

Why Separate The Phases?

Why should we distinguish between making policy and enforcing it? The first reason is because the American military is both agent and advisor to its civilian principal. The military has a statutory responsibility to provide its best professional advice to civilian policymakers, and its informed counsel is expected during fractious policy debates (Gibson and Snider 1999). It is axiomatic within the military to provide one’s best counsel to a decision-maker while a given policy is being considered but then to salute smartly and execute whatever policy is decided. The pistons of military society move by obeying orders, and a crucial qualitative change occurs when an order is given. Consequently, the military’s understanding of its proper role is considerably different on either side of establishing a given policy. Before a policy is decided, the civil-military dialogue should look more like bargaining; once a policy is set, the dynamics shift to one of monitoring and enforcement.

This distinction, however, does not justify aggressive or disingenuous advocacy by the military for its preferred position — the relationship remains an “unequal dialogue” between a
superior civilian and subordinate military (Cohen 2001, 2002). While offering professional expert advice, the military can still shirk relationally (Feaver 2003) by taking advantage of its asymmetric expertise (i.e., offering half-truths) or compromising the relational integrity of its subordinate position. Ultimately, ideal military conduct during policy creation involves walking the precarious line of providing informed advice, offered in honest good faith, without any unscrupulous attempts to overdetermine the outcome for the civilian.

The second reason to distinguish the two phases is related to the first. Civilians tolerate—and even encourage—spirited debate because American civil-military relations are not a pure principal-agent problem as it is classically conceived. In its standard economic formulation, the principal and agent have fundamentally different interests, as the agent is assumed to want maximum pay for minimal work, while the principal prefers just the opposite. In the civil-military context, the civilian principal and military agent putatively share a common interest in providing optimal security for the state; they may differ, however, in their preferred means for accomplishing that end. This shared interest in securing the state affects the tenor of the principal-agent dialogue; a debate about means is more like collegial bargaining than hierarchal enforcement (Roman and Tarr 2001, Burk 2002). Unlike the slothful agent who wants to work for nothing, the military agent wants to work hard toward its common goal with the civilian principal. Sharing common ends creates latitude for a debate about optimal means.

Third and finally, we should separate creation from enforcement because of the qualitative difference in ambiguity that exists between them. Ambiguity is at the heart of principal-agent dynamics—principals cannot possibly prescribe every behavior for the agent nor monitor that behavior perfectly. We expect, therefore, that agency losses will likely increase

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3 Feaver notes this departure from classic principal-agent logic, but does not incorporate it into his model.
4 This observation does not suggest that civilian and military leaders always have perfect motives—indeed, self-serving preferences are a key element of this complex relationship. Nevertheless, the normatively shared interest in defending the country alters the analytic calculus from that of a pure principal-agent problem in which the agent cannot be trusted to do any kind of work at all.
in environments of greater ambiguity. When it is unclear what the principal wants done, the agent has increased latitude to pursue its own preferred outcome. This difference in ambiguity is particularly significant for civil-military relations, as military society thrives on having established guidance for its behavior, reflexively looking to written rulebooks to govern its conduct. When the military lacks clear guidance from its civilian principal, as during a policy debate, it can take advantage of that ambiguity to pursue its own preference. Conversely, when a policy is decided and promulgated, ambiguity decreases, thus making faithful compliance more likely.

How Do the Two Phases Interact?

If policy creation looks more like bargaining, and implementation looks more like enforcement, how does anticipation of one impact the other? That is, how does the anticipation of the future implementation climate affect the bargaining dynamics of policy creation?

James Fearon (1998) explores a similar interaction in his study of international cooperation. In his analysis, Fearon suggests that the dynamics of enforcing international agreements affect the bargaining dynamics that give rise to those agreements in the first place. Moreover, he notes that anticipation of a treaty’s enforceability creates incentives for states to bargain more or less hard for favorable terms in that treaty. This creates the counterintuitive insight that agreements with a long “shadow of the future” (Oye 1986) may be easier to enforce, but are therefore harder to sign. If a state anticipates a treaty will be self-enforcing, thus promoting long-term cooperation, that state has a stronger incentive to negotiate aggressively for a favorable deal. As Fearon observes, “we should sometimes observe costly, non-cooperative standoffs in precisely those circumstances where received cooperation theory would predict cooperation” (285). Finally, Fearon notes that agreements with long-standing implications (i.e., establishing a regime) may see more strident bargaining than subsidiary
agreements with fewer distributional consequences. That is, the perceived durability of a proposed agreement can impact bargaining just as its anticipated enforceability does.\textsuperscript{5}

Extending Fearon’s insights to the civil-military realm, I argue that the anticipated climate of future implementation affects the bargaining dynamics of policy creation. I suggest that while a policy is being debated and bargained, the interlocutors look ahead to the future political climate in which the policy will be implemented, assessing four factors which inform the anticipated climate of implementation: the policy’s specificity, enforceability, durability, and imminence. When a policy uses very specific language, is self-executing, comprises a major change, or takes effect soon, the stakes are higher and the pre-policy bargaining will likely be more robust and fractious. Together, I collect these multiple assessments of the future environment into a composite variable called implementation slack, which is low when a policy appears very specific, easily enforced, durable, and imminent. Conversely, high implementation slack occurs when a policy appears vague or ambiguous, unenforceable, of routine significance, and temporally distant.

These dynamics suggest that we look at a given policy’s specificity, enforceability, durability, and imminence as variables affecting the magnitude of civil-military bargaining. Furthermore, I argue that these policy attributes themselves will become bargaining issues, as military and civilian elites jockey to shape the future implementation climate. When the military services oppose a given policy, I expect that they will attempt to influence its specificity, enforceability, durability, and imminence to create greater implementation slack after ratification. These attributes, therefore, create new foci for bargaining, complementing the substantive dimensions of the policy itself. The following section discusses these four attributes further.

\textsuperscript{5} As noted in chapter one, these arguments comport with key arguments in the civil war termination literature. See for example Walter 1997.
Key Policy Attributes

First, we expect the specificity of a proposed policy to affect the bargaining dynamics considerably. Given the nature of agency relationships, the more explicit and specific a given policy or contract, the less ambiguity the agent can exploit to pursue its own preferred outcome. Consequently, when proposed policies use very specific language to direct outcomes that the military disfavors, we can expect the military to push for more broad, vague, or ambiguous terms of reference to govern the agency relationship.

Second, the enforceability of a proposed policy should affect the bargaining dynamics similarly. Where then should we look to assess whether a proposed policy has self-enforcing mechanisms? McCubbins and Schwartz (1984) note that empowered stakeholders can act as fire alarms, alerting the principal when the agent fails to comply. These empowered stakeholders garner unique benefits from the policy, and thus have a built-in incentive to alert the principal of any deviance—that is, these individuals uniquely have the incentive and the information to report. The repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” legislation, for example, uniquely empowers homosexuals serving in the military; this empowered constituency serves as a built-in fire alarm for Congress, should the military services fail to comply with the policy.

This insight finds useful corroboration from the vibrant literature on enforcing international agreements through domestic constituencies. Beth Simmons (2009), for example, finds that an empowered domestic constituency is one of the key causal mechanisms pushing states to abide by their international agreements. “Like other formal institutions,” she argues, “treaties are causally meaningful to the extent that they empower individuals, groups, or parts of the state with different rights preferences that were not empowered to the same extent in the absence of the treaties” (125, emphasis in the original). Similarly, Xinyuan Dai (2002, 2005) finds that non-compliance victims serve as “low-cost monitors,” thereby affecting the overall costs of
monitoring and efficacy of enforcement. These findings bolster the insight that empowered stakeholders of a given policy serve as effective low-cost fire alarms, thus increasing the tendency for compliance. In our civil-military context, therefore, we should expect that proposed civilian policies that empower built-in stakeholders will appear more enforceable, with less implementation slack, and are thus more likely to see strident bargaining.

Third, we should expect that a given policy’s anticipated durability affects the military’s bargaining calculus. A policy that purports to make long-lasting changes will trigger more fervent bargaining than a short-run measure. Similarly, a policy that is harder to overturn or amend will likewise inspire greater bargaining.

Fourth, we can extend Fearon’s logic to consider the impact of policy imminence on the bargaining process. That is, we can expect the onset-time of a policy to affect its implementation slack, and in turn, the military’s bargaining calculus. When does the policy go into effect, and how soon will its impact be felt? Not all civilian policies take effect immediately, as policymakers can use grandfather clauses or similar devices to delay either the policy’s enactment or its effect on current stakeholders. As a policy’s implementation timeline moves later in the future, we can expect two mutually reinforcing effects to dampen military bargaining. To the extent that a policy does not affect current stakeholders, we expect to see less strident bargaining. Similarly, if there is a long time period before policy enactment, there is a higher likelihood that a given policy could be overturned by subsequent political action. Consequently, to the extent that a policy does not take effect for a long period of time, we expect to see less strident bargaining.

What Should We See On Either Side of Policy Ratification?

In light of these dynamics, we can expect the civil-military relationship to operate differently on either side of the policy-ratification line. More specifically, we should expect (1)
more vocal and varied levels of military resistance before a policy is set, and (2) different manifestations of the dependent variable on either side of the line.

As discussed above, the military understands that part of its duty is to provide informed counsel to its civilian principal. Moreover, this counsel is offered toward the common goal of securing the state. Finally, the military thrives on established guidance and is likely to fill any ambiguous policy space with its preferred solutions. Together, these three propositions lead to the hypothesis (which will be formalized later in this section) that outspoken military resistance will be more likely during policy creation than during policy implementation. Furthermore, we expect more variation among the four services during policy creation, as any difference in preference will likely translate into different responses.6

This theory therefore predicts more resistance before a policy is set, but also predicts different manifestations of the dependent variable on either side. What might the dependent variable look like during the policy creation phase? We should expect to see attempts by the military services to bargain for their preferred position, shaping the information environment to their own advantage.7 Such tactics include:

Good-faith Advising. The military services have a statutory responsibility to provide good-faith counsel to their civilian superiors. This outcome certainly is the normative expectation and anchors the “working” end of the behavioral spectrum.

The other possible responses on the continuum represent a variety of ways in which the military services might try to influence the policy outcome more directly in their favor. I group these possible responses into three tactical categories: shoot, move, and communicate.8

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6 The logic of this hypothesis is clarified later in the chapter, during the discussion of the model itself.
7 Some of these various tactics are discussed in Feaver (2003), but not in the context of what to expect before and after a policy is set.
8 These three categories correspond with three soldiering skills emphasized by the US Army.
1. **Shoot.** The services could take direct action vis-a-vis their civilian principal to influence the policy decision. Such actions include:

   a. **Inflating or Deflating.** When asked for its expert military advice on potential policies, the military can provide extremely costly estimates intended to over-determine the outcome away from disfavored policies. Conversely, the military could “low-ball” an estimate on the cost of a policy it *does* prefer. This tactic reflects the inherent information asymmetry of any principal-agent relationship, as the agent generally has superior subject-matter expertise. The principal is left to evaluate the extent to which estimates are self-serving or offered in good faith. Given the motive force of information asymmetry here, we can expect this tactic to be more likely for issues that are highly technical, ambiguous, or that rely heavily on purely military expertise.

   b. **Foot-dragging.** The military could drag its feet and passively resist through stalling, delays, and intentional bureaucratic inefficiencies. We can expect this tactic to be favored when a policy’s political imminence is low, thus creating more implementation slack. When significant political events such as elections are approaching, for example, military agents can easily “wait out” a disfavored policy in expectation of future change.

   c. **Deterring.** As Risa Brooks (2009) observes, military leaders might also attempt to force the principal’s hand by threatening to resign or retire unless certain terms are met.\(^9\) Such resignations clearly create political difficulties for the principal, and thus represent an act of political deterrence by the military leader. This tactic is likely to be used very sparingly, given the risks involved for all parties and the clear civil-military crisis that it signifies. This tactic is thus most likely to accompany a proposed policy with very little anticipated implementation.

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\(^9\) As noted in chapter one, Brooks describes this as “grandstanding”, which (perhaps unintentionally) implies an element of theater with limited intention of follow-through. I prefer the term “deterring”, to capture the very real use of political power involved in such a threat.
slack, as the military leader likely sees no way to avoid or minimize future compliance with a strongly disfavored policy.

2. Move. Another set of tactics involves changing the state of play by enlisting support from another actor with a stake in the policy. These responses might include:

   a. End-Running. The military can resist a given policy by seeking support from an alternative principal.¹⁰ For example, the military attempts an end run on its executive branch principals when it petitions Congress to engage politically on its behalf. This tactic may be more likely when the executive and legislative branches are not yet divided over an issue, prompting the military agent to try to create and exploit a political fissure.

   b. Partnering. As a way of tilting the bargaining scales in their direction, the military could enlist outside support from third-parties such as defense contractors, other government agencies, or think-tanks. In effect, these bureaucratic alliances create a stronger bargaining position for the military by involving more interest groups in the negotiation (Brooks 2009, 219).¹¹

3. Communicate. Finally, a third set of tactics involve communication to external audiences, particularly in ways that make it difficult for the civilian policy-makers to override the military’s viewpoint. These communication efforts may involve:

   a. Leaking. In the midst of a disagreement over a preferred policy, the military could leak word of the conflict to the press in hopes of garnering public support or undermining the position of the civilian principals.

¹⁰ The military’s Constitutional obligations to both the executive and legislative branches complicates any judgment of “end run” shirking. Indeed, Huntington captured this complexity when he called the Chiefs of Staff testimony to Congressional appropriations committees an “annual psychic crisis” (1957, 417). Thus, assessing the civil-military character of military-Executive-Congressional relations requires contextual and informed judgments about the nature and integrity of the advice (Feaver 2003, 62). As discussed earlier, Avant’s work (1994, 2007) focuses on this divided principal dynamic, and she notes that such end-running is practically expected in the American system. In her work, this response would likely not be categorized as shirking but rather an artifact of the system.

¹¹ Brooks’ term here is “alliance building.”
b. *Speaking*. The military could make a public statement that undermines the integrity of the civil-military relationship. For example, overtly expressing displeasure with a civilian policy or asserting political rather than military judgments would constitute relational shirking (Feaver 2003). Given the escalation and civil-military breakdown that this tactic represents, it is most likely to be used when large preference gaps exist, when the principals are not already divided, and when the anticipated implementation slack is minimal.

What do we expect to see during the policy implementation phase? While the tactics discussed above might still be used to discredit a policy and create political cover for noncompliance or policy change, we should now expect to see varied levels of compliance with the stated civilian policy. These responses include:

1. **Compliance** (or “working”). The military services could salute smartly and execute the civilian’s established policy in a way fully consistent with the civilian’s preferences.

2. **Grumbling Compliance**. Military service leaders could begin to implement the policy, while expressing their displeasure within the organization. This variation on the “two-level game” (Putnam 1988) attempts to satisfy the civilian principals while expressing preference-solidarity with the members of one’s own organization. This may be more likely when a military service has significant preference cleavages within its own ranks. Such grumbling might also be used to keep the issue alive in hopes of revisiting the outcome with the civilian policy-makers.

3. **Cheap Talk**. Conversely, the military service leaders could express support for the civilian policy, while taking no costly actions to implement it. This seems more likely when a military service is solidly and uniformly against the policy.
4. Foot-dragging or Slow-rolling. As above, the military could drag its feet and passively resist through stalling, delays, and intentional bureaucratic inefficiencies. Similarly, the service can slow-roll a policy by going through the motions of policy compliance, while withholding the requisite resources and effort to make it successful. As above, this tactic is most likely when approaching political events appear likely to alter the political environment.

5. Non-compliance. The military services could subtly or explicitly avoid carrying out a policy in the way that the civilian principal would wish them to do. More than likely, the military service is not wantonly disregarding the policy, but rather interpreting it generously and complying with a more favorable translation of the policy than the context warrants (or than the civilian principal would prefer). This seems most likely for policies that are ambiguous, very difficult to implement, or for which resources are scant.

Hypotheses

The preceding discussion advanced numerous theoretical propositions on the differences between policy creation, implementation, and their expected interactions. What then are the testable hypotheses that emerge from these propositions?

Hypothesis 1: Vocal military resistance will be more prevalent during policy creation than during policy implementation.

Hypothesis 2: Variation in the responses of the services will be more prevalent during policy creation than during policy implementation.

Hypothesis 3: The more specific the language of a civilian policy, the harder the military will bargain for its preferred outcome.

Hypothesis 4: If a civilian policy contains self-enforcing features such as empowered stakeholders, the military will bargain harder for its preferred outcome.
Hypothesis 5: The more comprehensive and durable a civilian policy is, the harder the military will bargain for its preferred outcome.\footnote{The hypotheses that predict “harder” bargaining suggest the existence of a baseline— that is, “harder” than what? This baseline will be established by looking at the responses of the other services, other issue-areas within an omnibus policy that vary by enforceability, and the baseline tenor of civil-military dialogue in the particular historical context. Additionally, even when a baseline is difficult to establish, when the services turn these policy attributes into bargaining issues, it reveals the extent to which the future climate, in addition to the policy substance, mattered.}

Hypothesis 6a: The sooner a civilian policy takes effect, the harder the military will bargain for its preferred outcome.

Hypothesis 6b: The more a civilian policy affects current military stakeholders, the harder the military will bargain for its preferred outcome.

Hypothesis 7: If the military opposes the substance of a given policy, it will attempt to bargain over the policy’s specificity, enforceability, durability, and imminence – in addition to the substantive issues of the policy itself.

3.3: Preferences and Culture

The second innovation of my theory is to disaggregate the military into the four respective services, thus providing better traction on their “pre-strategic” preferences (Moravcsik 1997) and ultimately, greater explanatory leverage over civil-military outcomes. In this section, I begin by explaining how use of a rational principal-agent model can be improved by theoretically explaining its incoming preferences. Second, I outline where one might look to deduce the content of military preferences and motivate the logic of analytically separating the unitary military into four separate services. Next, I show how the respective service cultures provide a rich source for deducing the service’s baseline policy preferences and then describe my methodology for researching and employing culture as a variable. Finally, the section concludes with composite predictions of my theory, as I specify the expected outcomes from varying levels of preference gaps and implementation slack.
Why Focus on Preferences?

Agency theory, like other rationalist models, treats preferences as exogenous to the model—that is, preferences are an input to the model, not something explained by the model itself. Nevertheless, preferences are not exogenous to everything; they do not emerge ex nihilo without any explanation whatsoever (Wildavsky 1987). If we can improve our explanatory power over actors’ preferences, we improve our input to the rational model, and ultimately improve the output as well. Consequently, we can combine the strengths of both rationalist and ideational perspectives into a unified model: an ideational approach predicts and explains the incoming preferences, while the rationalist framework explains the dynamics of the subsequent strategic interaction. Ultimately, we can improve a strategic choice model by paying theoretical attention both to the decision-making context and the actors’ preferences (Chai 1997; Frieden 1999; Legro 1996; Nielsen, Tierney, and Weaver 2006). By understanding what actors preferred before the interaction started, we can better appreciate the constraining effects of the decision-making environment (Dahl 1969, Moravcsik 1997).

Currently, agency theory supplies a spare notion of military preferences: it assumes the military to have (unspecified) preferences over policy outcomes and a uniform preference for autonomy and loose monitoring (Feaver 2003, 63). This specification of preferences emerges from generic organization theory and a stylized portrait of a monolithic military institution. While Feaver’s specification is a reasonable place to begin, evidence suggests we can do better. As the next section suggests, the services’ organizational cultures can provide a robust empirical referent (by inductive observation) for predicting and explaining policy preferences (by deduction).
Theories of Military Preferences

Where should we look in the theoretical literature to explain what “the US military” prefers and why? One school of thought stipulates homogeneous preferences for military forces, suggesting that militaries enduringly prefer autonomy, offensive doctrines, prestige, larger size, and bigger budgets (Posen 1984, Van Evera 1984, Snyder 1984). Similarly, in his famous portrait of the American “military mind,” Huntington describes the abiding military ethic as “pessimistic, collectivist, historically inclined, power-oriented, nationalistic, militaristic, pacifist, and instrumentalist in its view of the military profession. It is, in brief, realistic and conservative” (1957, 79). While these descriptions offer a valuable composite portrait of the US military, closer examinations reveal significant service-level variation belied by such aggregate accounts.

A more convincing school of thought parts company with the homogeneous approach, and argues that the four services have distinct personalities, cultures, and in turn, preferences. Janowitz (1960), Halperin (1974), Hadley (1986), Builder (1989), Wilson (1989), Rosen (1991), Ehrhard (2000) and Mahnken (2008) all studied and discovered remarkable variation among service preferences. A more convincing school of thought parts company with the homogeneous approach, and argues that the four services have distinct personalities, cultures, and in turn, preferences. Janowitz (1960), Halperin (1974), Hadley (1986), Builder (1989), Wilson (1989), Rosen (1991), Ehrhard (2000) and Mahnken (2008) all studied and discovered remarkable variation among service preferences. Don Snider’s study of the American military likewise found tremendous variation among the services, suggesting that “good policy analysis and debate should, indeed must, recognize and account for these differences” (1999, 127). Military historian Williamson Murray concurs, “There is no monolithic American military culture. Rather, the four services, reflecting their differing historical antecedents and the differences in the environments in which they operate, have evolved cultures that are extraordinarily different” (1999, 34).

13 For additional sources that justify the need to disaggregate the military services, see Farrell 1996; Avant 1994; Stulberg and Salomone, 2007, 20; Legro 1995; Murray 1999; Scroggs 2000; and Mahnken and FitzSimonds 2003.
**Service Culture**

Organizational theorists argue convincingly that organizations have distinctive cultures (Schein 1989), and these cultures constitute a “way of life” that uniquely informs preferences (Wildavsky 1987, Thompson and Wildavsky 1986). The culture of an organization helps its members to make sense of the ambiguity in their operating environment. Like a paradigm in the natural sciences, an organization’s culture impacts what its members see, ignore, amplify, and discard (Schein 1989; Swidler 1986; Cameron and Quinn 1999; Legro 1994; Legro 1995; Kier 1997). While definitions of culture vary, and while scholars have called this phenomenon many different things, the weight of the literature agrees: due to their unique historical roots, collective memories, and mission responsibilities, the four military services have distinct personalities informed by a different pattern of assumptions.

Appreciating these differences is especially important given the rare power of their respective cultures. The military services are profoundly insulated organizations, with only one way in and one way up (Smith 1998). Members enter at the bottom of the hierarchy, reaching the top only with time and steady promotion from within. From day one of a military career, the force-feeding of service culture begins. Military trainers baptize new recruits into their service norms, teaching them new ways to walk, talk, eat, clean, and dress. Because there are no lateral transfers into the upper ranks, the majority of those who survive to lead have tacitly embraced the cultural norms of the service. For these reasons, Elizabeth Kier suggests that military organizations “may be the most ‘complete’ societies of any ‘total’ organization”

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16 As Posen 1984 and Rosen 1991 observe, some “mavericks” do get promoted through the ranks, typically with the top-cover provided by senior officers.
Culture informs the worldview of any organization, but appears to dominate the worldview of a military service.

Finally, Wildavsky argues that cultures are formed in contrast to an “other” (1987), giving further reason to believe that the military service cultures will be particularly powerful. Since their inception, the military services have competed with each other for secure operational jurisdictions (Abbott 1988) and limited budgets, imprinting a pattern of sharp interservice rivalry across US military history (Huntington 1961a). Through decades of competing and defining themselves against each other, the services have honed their identities and cultures with remarkable clarity.

Wildavsky’s “cultural other” similarly informs the prevalence of powerful subcultures within each service. Moving from inter-service distinctions to intra-service ones, military members naturally define themselves in contrast to other communities within their own service. The Army, Navy, and Air Force all have distinct warfighting communities within them; the Navy, for example, naturally divides among the surface warfare officers (“black shoes”), submariners (“felt shoes”), and aviators (“brown shoes”). The other services subdivide similarly, based on unique functional requirements and organizational histories. While these subcultures are indeed unique and varied—and may well play a role in policymaking—their dominant norms generally remain consistent with the cultural assumptions of the service writ large (Huntington 1961a). By and large, subcultural distinctions vary by degree, not kind, with unique philosophies that reflect the parent culture. In the case study analysis that

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17 Huntington notes that intraservice rivalries, though real, are not as strong or pervasive as interservice ones. He insightfully likens this phenomenon to loyalties within nation-states: “loyalties to [the nation-state] tended to override sectional or class affiliations and also to be stronger than transnational loyalties” (1961a, 51). These intraservice distinctions are most likely to influence service-specific policies or more broadly, the dynamics of technological innovation (Rosen 1991).

18 The culture of the parent service appears to shape the functionally distinct subculture. Survey data supports this argument, as Mahnken (2003, 2008) shows. He finds that Naval aviators and Air Force pilots have distinctly different opinions on key questions of strategy and tactics; similarly, Marine infantrymen and Army infantrymen likewise
follows, I consider the structure and strength of these subcultures as a facet of each service’s culture, but I do not specify the unique cultural assumptions undergirding each service subculture.\textsuperscript{19}

\textit{Service Culture as Operational Code}

In this study, I argue that service culture affects a military organization in the same way that “operational codes” (Leites 1951; George 1969, 1979; Holsti 1977) affect individual decision-makers.\textsuperscript{20} That is, I suggest that service cultures: (1) can be researched systematically; (2) affect a military service’s diagnostic and choice propensities (George and Bennett 2005); and (3) can be assessed for causal impact on policy preferences through deductive analysis. Toward that end, I take a fairly broad view of service culture, which I define as an integrated and widely shared pattern of basic assumptions about why the service exists, what it exists to do, and how best to do it.\textsuperscript{21} In short, service culture is a prevailing belief structure about ends, ways, and means.

Ultimately, I contend that systematic research of the services can yield a reliable pattern of each service’s basic assumptions, which can then serve as a stable “empirical referent” (Johnston 1995) for discerning the effect of these cultures on the policymaking process.

My definition of service culture builds on other definitions in the literature, but is unique to the parameters and purpose of this project. Edgar Schein, the leading scholar in the field, defines organizational culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration” (1989, 17).

\textsuperscript{19} Using Ehrhard’s formulation (2000), I operationalize this subcultural variation by specifying each service as “feudal” or “monarchical” in orientation.

\textsuperscript{20} Hudson 1999 and Malici 2006 have applied this framework usefully toward organizations. Moreover, Janowitz 1960 uses the term “operational code” to describe each service’s culture as a “pattern of thinking which penetrates an entire organization” (257).

\textsuperscript{21} Stanley (forthcoming) rightly notes that the literature treats culture as consisting of both beliefs (ends-based) and practices (means-based). Few works integrate both views well, though hers does by looking at the role of technology in American strategic culture. For consistency with the operational code literature, I treat culture as an integrated belief structure, but I incorporate practices as one of the categories that the services have beliefs about. Since one of my categories of belief is “ways,” I attempt to capture each service’s prevailing practices that are inherently believed to be “right” or “normal.”
Central to Schein’s definition are the twin pillars of history and mission, as a group finds a way to adapt its mission to unique external and internal environments. Thus, my broad conception of service culture captures both history and mission, at the service’s founding and throughout its history, and focuses on the ideational space bounded by four attributes (two related to history, and two related to mission): (1) founding context, (2) notable successes and failures, (3) functional requirements of the mission, and (4) a need for perpetual uniqueness and institutional survival. These four attributes therefore inform the structured focused questions that guide the historical research presented in chapters four through seven. In turn, I synthesize the answers to these questions into a slate of basic assumptions for each of the four military services, which thus serves as my empirical referent of service culture for each.

My research and explication of service culture therefore attempts to capture the fundamental reasons why soldiers and sailors (for example) think differently about the world. In many respects, this intuition follows the path charted by Admiral J.C. Wylie’s classic essay, “Why a Sailor Thinks Like a Sailor” (1957). Wylie recognized that the mission of the Navy at sea, and the unique experiences that accrued to the Navy as an organization, gave sailors a worldview quite distinct from their ground-or air-centric brethren. In light of this appraisal, Wylie observes, "Strangely enough, the one aspect of the situation that has never really been publicly aired, nor even examined with enough perception and depth to make it worth the effort, is the underlying basis of the disagreement. Why do the soldiers think one way, and the sailors another, and the airmen still a third?” (1989, 150). This project dares to pick up the gauntlet thrown down by Wylie.

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22 In his important study on UAV development, Ehrhard (2000) also looks at service-level variation. Ehrhard subdivides his analysis of the services into functional, structural, and cultural differences. For Ehrhard, therefore, culture is a residual category that captures everything not already covered by functional and structural differences (62). My conception of culture is broader, as I include functional and structural considerations into my definition and analysis of culture. I argue that functional and structural differences inherently affect the overall belief structure of the service, and should therefore be considered together as a composite array of beliefs that distinguish one service from another.
Finally, I conclude this section by defining my terms. Throughout this study, I use concepts and expressions that show up throughout the literature, employed in various ways by different scholars. For my purposes, I define my terms and specify their conceptual linkages in the following way:

*Cultural assumptions*: resilient beliefs about ends, ways, and means.

*Preferences or Interests*: desired outcomes for a given situation.

*Actions or Strategies*: actual behaviors to pursue one’s preference in a specific political context.\(^{23}\)

How then do these definitions connect with each other? First, to generate a service’s cultural assumptions, one can survey an organization’s history and characteristics, using a systematic approach of asking structured focused questions, to arrive at a slate of basic assumptions about ends, ways, and means. This step is theoretically informed by organizational culture theory (e.g., Schein 1989) and attempts to be methodologically self-conscious and transparent in its approach.\(^{24}\) The second connection, between cultural assumptions and policy preferences, is similarly informed by theory and serves as a testable hypothesis in the case study analysis.\(^{25}\) Following George’s lead, I argue that observed policy preferences will be logically congruent with a service’s basic assumptions (1979, 104). Finally, I argue that these policy preferences enter a strategic environment of principal-agent interaction, the combination of which ultimately yields service *action*. These connections are summarized graphically in Figure 3.1, and my methodological process is summarized in Figure 3.2.

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\(^{23}\) As noted in chapter one, these actions are theoretically distinct from the routine behaviors and practices that serve to shape the service’s cultural assumptions.

\(^{24}\) Also noted in the introductory chapter, this represents an area where the existing literature can be much improved. Most current analyses of service culture do not connect current assumptions to historical events or functional requirements, and lack transparency in their analysis. Allard 1996 is a useful exception.

\(^{25}\) This connection is explicated most forcefully in Wildavsky 1987.
At this point, my argument must confront lurking charges of circularity. How can I use behavior to define culture, and then use culture to predict or explain behavior? This is a legitimate critique, and represents one of the core challenges of using culture responsibly as an explanatory variable. As highlighted in chapter one, three important points help to justify this approach. First, I make a temporal distinction in my treatment of culture, focusing largely on each service’s early history and circumstances, with behaviors that recur over time, up until the period of case study analysis. For each service, the historical research used to codify cultural assumptions precedes the civil-military interactions of the case studies. Second, my research on
service culture focuses primarily on symbolic choices, noting for example which events are hailed as organizational successes or failures, and which historical figures are hailed or villainized. These symbolic choices and behaviors lead to a certain palate of organizational preferences, which are often inconsistent with strictly material preferences assumed by many other theories. Finally, the circularity of the argument is reduced when the causal connection between culture and behavior is not viewed in a deterministic way. Instead, as Elizabeth Stanley suggests, “culture conditions, rather than determines, behavior.” While these considerations do not comprise an ironclad defense against circularity, together they help to mitigate major damage to the integrity of the argument.

Composite Predictions and Expected Outcomes

This section of the chapter has discussed the need to add an informed theory of preferences to the strategic interactions of the principal-agent model. This project therefore focuses on service culture as a stable vehicle for predicting and explaining the policy preferences of the services. Paying theoretical attention to preferences is particularly important in light of the key variable of preference gaps in principal-agent theory (Brehm and Gates 1997). A qualitative gap between the preferences of civilian principals and military agents creates the core incentive for military resistance. To conclude this section on culture, I therefore consider how this innovation works in partnership with the first innovation of my theory. I hypothesize that preference gaps and implementation slack work together to create an array of expected outcomes, during both policy creation and implementation. Figures 3.3 and 3.4 capture the expected outcomes of these two theoretical innovations working together.

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27 As I discuss later in the chapter, my theory does involve a third variable (unity of the civilian principal) that helps shape outcomes. But I conceive of these two ideas as doing the majority of the explanatory work.
### 3.4: An Improved Model of Civil-military Relations

Having explained the basic dynamics of agency theory and my two principal innovations, this section pulls them together into a unified model. Given the relative complexity of this informal model, the discussion proceeds step by step, seeking to be very clear about the inputs, processes, and outputs that take place at each stage. In general, the variables represent qualitative judgments and thus do not aggregate or interact via mathematical logic. Instead, the qualitative variables suggest where to look in the historical data to understand and then explain American civil-military outcomes. The purpose of the model, therefore, is to serve an interpretive roadmap for explaining a complex political narrative. It offers an analytical strategy for pulling apart complicated stories and does not purport to describe how these complicated stories actually unfold.

#### Stages and Variables

The following sections detail the various stages of the civil-military interaction, specifying the variables that are inputs to the model and those that are created within it.

#### Expected Outcomes for Policy Creation Phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preference Gaps</th>
<th>Anticipated Implementation Slack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Conflict</td>
<td>Negotiate to avoid the details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiate the details</td>
<td>Easy Agreement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Expected Outcomes for Policy Implementation Phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preference Gaps</th>
<th>Anticipated Implementation Slack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grudging Compliance</td>
<td>Resistance and Shirking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro-managing</td>
<td>Harmony</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Figure 3.3**

**Figure 3.4**
illustrate these five stages in Figure 3.5, then discuss the flow of the model and conclude with an integrated diagram that illustrates the five stages and the sequential flow of the relevant variables (Figure 3.6).

![Figure 3.5: Five Stages of the Model](image)

**Stage 1: Introduction of a Proposed Policy**

In this first stage of policy creation, the civil-military exchange begins with the introduction of a proposed policy. In both theory and practice, the proposal could originate from either the civilian or military side, and may be a recurring policy requirement or an ad hoc policy responding to a unique set of circumstances. For any given policy, whether introduced

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28 In the course of my research, I remain alive to the possibility of a selection effect here. Neither side is likely to introduce a policy with hopes of creating a big fight. At times, civilians may introduce an issue and be surprised by the magnitude of the resistance. At other times, they may choose to wait until favorable political context assures higher chance of policy success despite the anticipated resistance.

29 Brooks 2009 insightfully describes the military’s agenda-setting behaviors as “shoulder tapping.”
by civilians or the military, each service and civilian principal is assumed to have some ideal policy preference related to that issue-area. The introduction of these varied preferences gives rise to one of the two outputs of this stage: each service’s preference gap between the civilian’s preference and its own.

The second output from this first stage comes from key attributes of the policy itself. A given policy proposal will exhibit varying degrees of specificity, future enforceability, durability, and imminence. If these attributes portend very little implementation slack for a policy that the services oppose, I expect these attributes to become points of bargaining in themselves. In other words, I expect the actors to negotiate the agency climate in which the proposed policy will eventually be implemented.

**Stage 2: Military Services Determine Response Direction**

Stage 2

In this second stage of policy creation, each military service evaluates its preference gap with the civilians. At this point in the process, the policy is still being debated, nothing has been finalized, and the relevant dynamics resemble bargaining, not enforcement. Without a

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30 The model makes an analytic distinction between the direction and magnitude of the service’s response during policy creation. While these no doubt blur in practice, I theorize that different variables inform each step, so the distinction is made in the model. The direction of the service’s response is the decision to support or oppose. The magnitude of a service’s response is a qualitative judgment involving the frequency of a given tactic, the use of multiple tactics, and the relative insubordination of the service’s rhetoric or behavior.
ratified policy on the books, there is nothing to enforce—the military services respond as expert policy advisors offering counsel, not as delegated agents carrying out the wishes of their principal. Consequently, the sole inputs to this stage are the preference gaps generated in stage 1: do the services agree or disagree with the given policy? The output is each service’s decision to support or oppose, which at this point (analytically) is limited to the fact of support or opposition—not its form.

**Stage 3: Military Services Determine Response Magnitude**

In this third and final stage of policy creation, several variables converge to shape each service’s decision on how strongly to respond and what form that response might take. As discussed in stage 1, we expect that the anticipated climate of implementation will affect the fervor of military bargaining, as reflected in the policy’s anticipated specificity, enforceability, durability, and imminence. In addition to these variables, we expect that the relative (dis)unity of the civilian principal will affect the military’s decision calculus (Avant 1993, 1994, 2007; Brenner 2003). When the president, secretary of defense, and Congress are all united behind a

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31 For a strong example of using preference gaps in qualitative research on civil-military relations, see Brooks 2008.
given policy, the military has reduced opportunities to play one principal off the other. Conversely, when the military’s many masters bicker among themselves, it creates political ambiguity in which the military agent can maneuver for its preferred outcome (Miller 2005). Consequently, I expect the unity of the civilian principal to amplify the expected outcomes generated by the implementation slack and preference gaps (as seen above in Figures 3.3 and 3.4). I expect a divided principal to (1) increase the anticipated (or actual) implementation slack, and (2) create a likely pathway for military resistance (i.e., end-running).

The output from this stage is the dependent variable of the policy-creation phase: each service’s response to the proposed civilian policy. As noted earlier, we expect this phase to look more like bargaining than enforcement, with the military acting as expert advisor, and thus expressing disagreements more vocally than would be expected during the implementation phase.

*Stage 4: Civilian Policy Enacted*

Stage 4

**Input Variables:**
- Military service preferences

**Internal Variables:**
- Each service’s response to the proposed policy, thus updating the civilian policy preference

**Stage 4 Process:**
- The civilian principal decides upon its final policy position, and enacts the policy

**Output:**
- 1. Preference Gaps
- 2. Implementation Slack
- 3. Sanctions or Rewards

The fourth stage marks the beginning of the policy implementation phase, in which monitoring and enforcement inform the civil-military relationship more than bargaining. After
a period of civil-military bargaining during policy creation, the model allows the civilian preference to move. In this case, the civilian policy that gets enacted reflects this updated preference, informed by the professional military counsel it previously received. I argue, however, that the preferences of the military services remain relatively fixed in the short-run. That is, while an enacted policy may reflect a political compromise between the civilians and the military services, the services’ ideal policy preferences are largely unchanged by the interaction. I argue that these ideal policy preferences continue to reflect the enduring basic assumptions of each service’s culture, and thus impact the implementation phase accordingly.

As in the first stage, the combination of the civilian preference with the four service preferences creates the first output from this stage: preference gaps. The second output is the implementation slack of the enacted policy. As discussed above, this implementation slack represents an aggregate assessment of the implementation environment, based on attributes of the enacted policy’s specificity, enforceability, durability, and imminence. The third and final output from this stage is the extent to which the policy embeds rewards or sanctions into the agent’s political calculus. Principal-agent dynamics naturally involve the manipulation of incentives to influence behavior (Miller 2005), so I assess whether the enacted policy attempts to do so by specifying rewards for compliance or sanctions for non-compliance.

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32 In their study of improved information gathering in war, Coletta and Feaver (2006) introduce a similar step of a civilian policy that shifts in the course of civil-military dialogue.
33 Additionally, I argue that preferences within the services’ sub-cultures are most likely to remain fixed. Consequently, these intra-service cleavages provide opportunities for civilians to reach into a preferred pocket of the service to enlist support.
34 The specification of promised rewards or sanctions will be further evaluated to assess whether such incentives are likely to matter significantly to the military services.
In this final stage, each military service decides how to respond to an enacted civilian policy, duly considering the size of its preference gap with the civilians, how much slack is available for implementation, the relative unity of the principal, and the promise of rewards or sanctions. The output from this stage is ultimately the dependent variable of this study: the response of a military service to a given civilian policy. While any manifestation of the DV is theoretically possible, we expect—based on the military norm of saluting smartly and executing orders—that the services will not publicly contest the policy through end runs, press leaks, or public statements. Rather, we expect that the services will vary in the extent to which they actually comply and in their interpretations of what compliance looks like in a given policy context. Figure 3.6 summarizes these stages and variables in a composite graphic.

35 Such outspoken resistance is certainly possible, however, and would indicate a particularly extreme preference gap and an already compromised civil-military relationship.
Falsifiability

Having outlined my theory, including its relevant variables and interactions, I end by considering its falsifiability: what evidence would convince me that I am wrong (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994)? I argue that each step of the theory’s logic includes testable hypotheses that are open to the evidence and not predetermined for a specific outcome. For example, the explication of each service’s culture is methodologically prior to each case, which allows me to predict what the services will prefer for a given issue-area. If observed service
preferences are consistently at odds with these predictions, I have either mis-specified my theory (i.e., something other than service culture explains their policy preferences) or I have poorly researched and specified their cultural assumptions (calling into question the viability of the theoretical approach). Additionally, my theory about the effect of anticipated implementation on bargaining dynamics can also be falsified. If the case study evidence clearly shows, for example, that policies with little implementation slack and high preference gaps result in only minor civil-military disagreement, my theory is incorrect at worst and mis-specified at best. Similarly, other variables could be influencing the civil-military discussion more acutely than my own, such as the presence of internal or external threats to the state (as suggested by Desch). Ultimately, each of the hypotheses in this chapter is able and willing to be disconfirmed by the evidence. For each case, the explanatory power of my theory will be assessed relative to the alternative explanations, with an honest reading of the evidence adjudicating between them.

3.5: Conclusion

This chapter offered a theory of civil-military relations that seeks to explain why the four US military services respond as they do to civilian policies, and why those responses might vary between them. My theory takes Feaver’s principal-agent model as its theoretical starting point, and then makes two significant moves to improve it.

First, I distinguish between the bargaining logic that informs the policy creation phase and an enforcement logic that informs policy implementation. I argue that these are qualitatively different phases in the mind and practice of the US military, and therefore worthy of separate analysis. Furthermore, I suggest that these phases interact through a logic of backward induction. If a military service can anticipate that a particular policy is too vague or ambiguous to be enforced, we might see a surprising absence of resistance, despite clearly
asymmetric preferences. Conversely, we expect to see the services bargaining hard against policies that have self-enforcing mechanisms or a long shadow of the future. Finally, we expect that key policy attributes affecting the future implementation climate will become bargaining points themselves, as both sides negotiate for more or less implementation slack.

As a second innovation, I disaggregate the unitary military actor into the four respective services, and use organizational culture theory to deduce baseline preferences. By supplying a theory of preference formation as an input to the rational principal-agent interaction, I improve the empirical validity of the model. Moreover, having a theoretically informed idea of incoming preferences allows us to see the effects of the strategic interaction. Without an idea of what agents would otherwise prefer, we cannot accurately assess the impact of a principal’s monitoring or enforcement agenda. Finally, knowing baseline preferences can help identify the surprising “negative cases” in which we expect military resistance (due to asymmetric preferences) but see none (due to expectations of implementation slack). Strategic models require theoretical attention both to the decision-making context and actors’ pre-strategic preferences. Looking closely at the services’ cultures, then feeding these inputs into an improved principal-agent model, allows us to do both.

With these two moves in place, I specified a model of civil-military interaction that captured their insights. This informal model will serve as an interpretive roadmap for explaining a complex political narrative. It clarifies the stages, variables, and interactions to look for in the historical data, and ultimately offers improved explanatory power over complex civil-military interactions. With my theory in place, therefore, chapters four through seven offer a rich empirical analysis of the four military service cultures, beginning with the United States Navy.
CHAPTER 4

“THEY THAT GO DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS”:
The Service Culture of the United States Navy

To change anything in the Navy is like punching a feather bed. You punch it with your right and you punch it with your left until you are finally exhausted, and then you find the damn bed just as it was before you started punching!

—Franklin Delano Roosevelt

The United States Navy dominates the world’s oceans like none other in history. Boasting an extensive fleet of modern ships deployed across the globe, equipped with cutting-edge technology, and manned by professional sailors, the Navy is today’s “global force for good.”2 The Navy’s combat power, moreover, is matched by the enduring power of its unique culture—the Navy celebrates a rich history of seafaring heroes and maintains a firm attachment to its traditions and values. How then does this vivid organizational personality make its mark in the trenches of American civil-military policymaking? This dissertation seeks to explain when the military services cooperate with or resist civilian policies, and when these responses vary across the services. One of the two major components of my theory seeks to trace the influence of service culture on the political behavior of the services. Consequently, the next four chapters focus on identifying the enduring beliefs held by each service, as influenced by its operational environment, founding context, defining events, and celebrated heroes.

As discussed in chapter three, I define service culture as a pervasive belief structure about ends, ways, and means. This focus on ends, ways, and means seeks to capture the organizational beliefs most relevant for the general category of civil-military policymaking—why does the service exist, how does it seek to perform its mission, and with what resources? While this definition captures the broad contours of foundational beliefs, it deliberately overlooks some of

1 In Barnett 2009, 80. The quotation in the chapter title comes from the Old Testament book of Psalms, chapter 107, verse 23.
2 As of 2012, this is the Navy’s current advertising slogan. See, for example, the main banners at <http://www.navy.com>. Accessed 30 July 2012.
the more tacit elements that shape each service’s way of life. Those subtler dynamics, while important, are beyond the scope of this project in both research feasibility and theoretical applicability. Instead, I seek a via media with enough historical detail to substantiate the whats and whys of service beliefs, while remaining sufficiently broad to enable application to a wide array of policy contexts. In this regard, I attempt to build a Swiss Army knife of service culture, crafting a specific array of tools to cover a wide portfolio of situations.3 This chapter, for example, highlights six core beliefs of the Navy as an organization; for any given policy, one or two of these beliefs may prove more applicable and useful than the others in informing the Navy’s policy preferences and behavior. Together, however, this array of beliefs can cover many diverse policy contexts, and may thus prove useful for further research beyond the case studies of this dissertation.

**The Four Services in the National Context**

Before diving deeply into the cultures of the four services, however, a broader national context is required. None of the four US military services grew and developed outside the context of the larger American experience. Instead, each service culture is nested within a larger American strategic culture, refracting the national light through its service-specific prism. Many of the beliefs described in the next four chapters constitute a service-specific appropriation of a national belief into the unique operational environment and organizational history of the service. Some of these service beliefs, therefore, are differences of degree, not in kind. Consequently, this section briefly highlights key elements of the national strategic culture within which the four service cultures are nested.

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3 This methodology offers something new to the literature, improving on previous studies of military service culture. As chapter 1 explained, past studies have offered fairly little historical background to substantiate the service cultures, while applying these cultural beliefs to a specific issue-area (Builder 1989 to strategic planning, Allard 1996 to command-and-control, Ehrhard 2000 to UAV development, Mahnken 2008 to technological innovation, etc.). This project takes a different approach, going deeper on the historical background to substantiate the what and the why, while going broader in application to inform a wider array of issue-areas and political contexts.
One of the classic historical analyses of American strategic culture is Russell Weigley’s *The American Way of War* (1977). Weigley argues that with few exceptions, most of the American military experience trends toward conventional, mass-on-mass wars of annihilation and attrition, in pursuit of the enemy’s unconditional surrender. This trend, Weigley notes, includes a preoccupation with the means and processes of war rather than a focus on war’s ultimate purpose of securing favorable political outcomes. These beliefs tend to give Americans an all-or-nothing, crusading vision of warfare; like a binary on-off switch, you are either at peace or at war. If at war, then the nation should marshal overwhelming power to annihilate the enemy and force his unconditional surrender.

Colin Gray builds profitably on Weigley’s conception, and offers an insightful list of 13 characteristics of the American way of war (2006, 30-49). These characteristics shape the meta-context of American strategic culture, and the four military services reflect these larger beliefs to varying degrees. Gray argues that the American way of war is “apolitical; astrategic; ahistorical; problem-solving, optimistic; culturally challenged; technology dependent; focused on firepower; large-scale; aggressive, offensive; profoundly regular; impatient;logistically excellent; and highly sensitive to casualties” (30). Gray and Weigley thus offer very important and incisive observations about American strategic culture writ large. As the next four chapters will illustrate, the four American military services reflect many of these characteristics within the unique context of their operating domains. But the services do not reflect these characteristics to the same extent. As a preview of the next four chapters, I argue that this list most aptly describes the Army, closely followed by the Air Force; the Navy is a distant third, with the Marine Corps least representative of these national characteristics. By the end of chapter seven, the reader should be able to see why and can judge for herself whether she agrees.
Introducing the Navy

The historical analysis that follows relies on both primary and secondary source material, much of which was written by scholars associated with the Navy. In addition, I visited the Naval Academy museum, documenting the events and heroes that the organization canonizes as pillars of the Navy way. The contribution of this chapter is not in its discovery of new historical archives or data. Instead, the contribution is principally methodological, both in its approach and application. I contribute an inductively researched analysis that distills existing histories into a condensed form for use in case studies, while offering a structured focused comparison (George 1979) across the four military services. As chapter three described, I used a series of questions about ends, ways, and means to guide my historical research. These questions provided the parameters for research, which was then performed inductively, without any preconceived themes or ideas to prove. In turn, I aggregated the answers to those questions and synthesized the recurring themes into a series of six cultural beliefs about why the service exists, how it seeks to do its job, and by what means. Finally, given my desire to craft a “multi-purpose tool” for each service, the beliefs I identify are not crafted specifically for particular cases or issue-areas—they are general in scope, thus offering flexibility in application, both in this project and for future research.

My analysis suggests that these beliefs generally inform the Navy as an organization, and are thus widely shared among its members, particularly at the highest levels. The Navy, however, is far from monolithic. Using Thomas Ehrhard’s typology (2000), the Navy is feudal in structure, sharing senior leadership among its three principal warfare communities of surface

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4 These include professors at the Naval Academy, the Naval Postgraduate School, the Naval War College, and books published by the Naval Institute.
5 Organizational culture expert Edgar Schein (1989) suggests that organizations have both “espoused beliefs” and “basic assumptions”. My use here of “beliefs” spans these two categories, as some of these beliefs are explicitly upheld, while others are more assumed and implied.
warfare officers, aviators, and submariners. The Navy, like each of the services, is a “complex political community” that must make internal political decisions about “who should rule and how the ‘citizens’ should live” (Rosen 1991, 19). These internal divisions no doubt affect the service’s behavior (Zumwalt 1976), but this project proceeds on the assumption that these internal divisions will generally affect intra-service policies more acutely than civil-military policies. That is, when civilian principals craft policies that affect all of the services, I argue that service leaders typically transcend their internal divisions and operate from a consensus belief posture that spans the service. In his work on Navy strategic culture, Roger Barnett agrees that “when it comes to strategic culture, the three groups are in close, and even comfortable, agreement” (2009, xi). Nevertheless, civilian principals may find that the internal divisions within the services are actually useful for gaining support for a particular policy. Different subcultures may actually present alternative agents that the principal can task. If one warfare community within the Navy is likely to support a policy that another community might oppose, the civilians can exploit these internal differences to divide and conquer in support of its preferred position.

The chapter presents a purposefully selective history of the Navy, organized thematically around its salient beliefs. First, I discuss two cultural beliefs about ends—why do we have a Navy? What does it contribute to our national defense that no other service can? For each belief, I consider the influence of several key antecedents, identifying the contribution of the service’s operational environment, founding context, key events, and notable exemplars. Second, I explore two beliefs about ways—how does the Navy go about its business? What are the accepted practices that comprise the “Navy way”? Third, I highlight two beliefs about

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6 This observation does not suggest that the position of Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) is rotated among the three main unions in a scripted way. Rather, each community has at some point had a representative in the top post, and each can be expected to be considered for future openings.

7 This assumption is even more likely to hold for the universe of cases in this dissertation—in particular, cases that do not involve weapon system acquisition or technological innovation (Rosen 1991).
means—what are the major resources and organizational structures that best facilitate mission accomplishment? The chapter then concludes with a summary of its key points, reinforcing the six principal beliefs that inform Navy service culture and its participation in our national defense.

4.1: An Armed Embassy of America: Anytime, Anywhere

_The trident of Neptune is the scepter of the world._
– John Adams

What does the Navy uniquely and indispensably do for America? The US Navy is the dispersed muscle of American diplomacy, at home and abroad, and offers a unique instrument of national power. In a world dominated by water, the Navy offers sovereign US territory and combat power in almost any part of that world in very short order. Without needing to secure bases for aircraft or American boots, the Navy uniquely offers the nation a full and flexible range of political options by virtue of its very presence. The Navy serves as a distributed fleet of warrior-diplomats, securing favorable political outcomes by showing the flag in peace, while being prepared to escalate militarily at a moment’s notice. Consequently, naval power creates political effects by different mechanisms than standard land-based military operations, and must be appreciated as a distinct instrument of national power, somewhere in between military force and diplomatic presence. As summarized by Admiral Yates Stirling during World War II, “From whatever way we view it, the conclusion always must be that the nation needs a big Navy. Our Navy is our first line of defense. If it should fail because of its weakness, our army is not large enough to prevent a great nation, with many soldiers and many ships at its disposal, from doing enormous harm” (Stirling 1942, 25). While this belief captures a prevailing sentiment of America’s Navy, it is certainly not endemic to _every_ navy in the world—how then did the US Navy arrive at its self-conception as the battleship ambassadors of America?

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8 In Toll 2007, 143
Operational Environment

For each belief explored in this chapter, I begin by considering the influence of the operational environment itself. This project takes the empathetic view that each service maintains its cultural beliefs for justifiable reasons, rooted in both nature and nurture. That is, the inherent nature of the job—the operational environment—contributes to the belief structure, as does the nurture of political choice and the specific national environment in which the organization grows and develops. How then does the maritime environment inform the US Navy’s belief about its role as the nation’s first line of defense?

The world’s oceans cover over 70% of the globe, and 80% of the world’s population lives on or near the coastline. Consequently, ships at sea have the unique capacity to traverse the majority of the globe in the political sanctuary of international waters, while armed with a full range of strike capabilities. The pervasiveness of the world’s oceans, coupled with the higher human density near the world’s coastlines, gives a navy unique access to conduct discourse—armed or otherwise—with fellow states across the world.

Furthermore, ships at sea carrying the flag of their home state represent sovereign territorial assets of that state. When the Navy shows the flag and projects power abroad, it does so without needing the permission of a host state. Similarly, the mobility of ships at sea allows these sovereign assets to be moved where international events warrant, without the political liability of appearing to abandon allies or host countries. Such mobility gives national leaders the flexibility to be anywhere—and only where—they want to be. Barnett emphasizes this diplomatic flexibility and the uniqueness it confers to the Navy: “The involvement of Army or Air Force assets generally requires that hostilities have already commenced—because the

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9 These figures come from the Navy’s own summary of its current maritime strategy: <http://www.navy.mil/maritime/display.asp?page=stglance.html>. Accessed 8 August 2012. The Navy cites the 70-80-90 rule: 70% of the Earth is covered in water, 80% of the world population lives on or near the coast, and 90% of international trade moves by sea.
sovereignty of another must be infringed upon—or that the preemptive use of force has been decided upon” (2009, 60).

Finally, the operational environment influenced the Navy belief structure in another important way. For the first 150 years of our national existence, ships offered the only means of intercontinental travel and power projection. Before the advent of aircraft in the early twentieth century, a deployed navy was the only means whereby the United States could flexibly show its flag, boost its prestige, and conduct diplomacy in Europe, Africa, South America, and Asia. If a far-flung state like the US was going to be involved in world affairs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it would need a Navy to make that happen. As the next section will explain, the early experience of the US Navy confirmed this unique capability as it vigorously pursued US interests around the globe.

Founding Context

While the preceding section focused on the “nature” of the belief, this section begins an exploration of its contextual “nurture” — the specific constellation of events and circumstances that birthed this Navy to do these things. In general, organizational trajectories follow robust patterns, as “founding moments loom large” in establishing the fact and form of a given organization (Zegart 1999, 7).

Consequently, this section focuses on the early events that shaped the US Navy, while the next section considers how this seminal context was confirmed or re-shaped by later events.

Where then does the life of the US Navy begin? During the American Revolution, the rebel colonies cobbled together a Continental Navy, but this jury-rigged fleet appears to be more of an uncle than a father to the eventual US Navy. Raised for the exigencies of war, American naval forces during the Revolution included state navies from 11 of the 13 colonies,
small fleets raised and rented by Benedict Arnold and George Washington to support their troop movements, and the two official vessels of the Continental Navy, converted from private use to raid British ships as appropriated by the Congress on 13 October 1775 (Bradford 2008).\footnote{The resolution of the Continental Congress specifically ordered two “swift sailing vessels, to carry ten carriage guns, and a proportionable number of swivels, with eighty men, be fitted, with all possible dispatch, for a cruise of three months, and that the commander be instructed to cruise eastward, for intercepting such transports as may be laden with warlike stores and other supplies for our enemies, and for such other purposes as the Congress shall direct.” Journal of the Continental Congress, 13 October 1775, in William Bell Clark, ed, Naval Documents of the Naval Revolution, Vol. 2, p. 442 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966).} Together, this curious assemblage of ships did relatively little to win the war, prompting historian Ian Toll to regard the Continental Navy as “a wasteful and humiliating fiasco” (2006, 15). In fact, the most significant naval action of the Revolution came from the allied French fleet, whose victory over the British at the Battle of the Virginia Capes in September 1781 helped ensure the decisive defeat of Lord Cornwallis by George Washington’s army at Yorktown (Ketchum 2004). The Continental Navy, therefore, while nominally the forebear to the subsequent US Navy, was only created to help win a war. The more important organizational legacy emerged from the subsequent decision to create a standing Navy for war and peace.

The Constitutional debates, particularly as captured in The Federalist Papers, offer a vivid apologia for a national navy. As the colonies debated the merits of the drafted Constitution, a debate over the size, function, and cost of a navy raged along with it. The pro-Navy arguments advanced by the Federalists would ultimately shape the culture of the US Navy, as they preached the inseparability of national prestige, diplomatic legitimacy, and a strong Navy without which the first two would wither. James Madison argued in Federalist 41 that as a new player on the international stage, the United States would need a strong Navy as an indispensable adjunct to its diplomacy abroad. Alexander Hamilton clearly agreed, suggesting in Federalist 11 that even a small US Navy could tip the European balance of power by its friendship or neutrality, but “a nation, despicable by its weakness, forfeits even the privilege of
being neutral” (1888, 63). Finally, in light of the strength of British and French naval forces, Edward Rutledge of South Carolina argued, “we must hold our country by courtesy, unless we have a navy” (Elliot ed. 1881, 299). Ultimately, the arguments for a standing Navy prevailed, as the Constitution authorized Congress to “provide and maintain a Navy” (U.S. Constitution, Article 1, Sec. 8), though authorization for the first six frigates of the United States Navy did not come until 1794 (Toll 2006).

This decision to “provide and maintain” a Navy, in times of peace and war, charted a path for the purpose and mission of the eventual US Navy. Unlike an army that would only be “raised and supported” for two-year periods (U.S. Constitution, Article 1, Sec. 8), the Navy was cast in a different mold. The United States would have a Navy to serve as an adjunct to its diplomatic efforts abroad, providing legitimacy through strength and prestige through presence. At a time when a small island nation like Britain could rule the world through her navy, international greatness and naval power appeared inseparable.

Events and Exemplars

The early Constitutional debates offered the seminal context that later experiences confirmed in the naval mind. In many respects, the nation and her Navy sailed together throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as the Navy expanded its size and mandate to suit the emerging national character. The power and presence of the US Navy buttressed American foreign policy throughout the national history, underwriting presidential doctrines from Monroe to Roosevelt to Truman, Carter, Reagan, and beyond. As Barnett suggests, “The forward operations of the US Navy have always been, in large measure, for the purpose of lending operational muscle to these geostrategic policies” (2009, 63).

During the early and mid-nineteenth century, American foreign policy consisted largely of securing safe transit for American shipping, expanding commercial markets, and enlarging
its borders. The Navy would prove instrumental in the first two objectives, staying remarkably active as emissaries of American interests. To wit, many of the nation’s first treaties were negotiated and signed not by State department officials, but by enterprising captains of the US Navy. Several of these treaties, for example, came during the Barbary wars of the Jefferson administration, as the young US Navy sought to protect American shipping from the raiding corsairs of Morocco, Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis. When Commodore Edward Preble was dispatched to the Mediterranean in 1803 to replace his ineffectual predecessors, he found that Moroccan corsairs were increasing their harassment of US ships. With a declared war against Tripoli awaiting him to the east, Preble could ill afford to leave himself exposed to Moroccan harassment from the sea (Hagan 1991, 60). Preble therefore mounted an impressive show of force, dispatched a small fleet to Tangiers, and effectively convinced the Moroccans to reaffirm their 1768 treaty commitments with the US (Toll 2006, 181). Twelve years later in 1815, immediately after the Treaty of Ghent ended the War of 1812, Captain Stephen Decatur sailed back to the Mediterranean to clean up unfinished business with troublesome Algiers. Racing into Algiers harbor, Decatur dictated terms of a new treaty to the dey of Algiers; when the dey protested and suggested that he might receive powder instead of money as tribute, Decatur replied, “If you insist upon receiving powder as a tribute, you must expect to receive balls with it” (Guerber 1899, 68). Unsurprisingly, Decatur’s militant negotiation prompted the dey to sign the treaty on the deck of Decatur’s ship, effectively securing peace with the Barbary states.

The early work of Preble and Decatur set the stage for a remarkable period of robust international activity by ship captains of the US Navy. In his 1820 report to Congress, Secretary

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12 In Navy parlance, a distinction is made between the rank of Captain (the sixth officer rank, or O-6) and the position of captain. The rank of Captain is earned over time by promotion through the lower ranks. The position, or title, of captain is an honorific for the commanding officer of a ship or submarine—which can be held by someone in a rank other than Captain (O-6). Further, until the Civil War, the grade of Captain was the highest rank in the US Navy. The title “Commodore” was given on a per-mission basis to commanders of ship squadrons dispatched for a specific purpose. The US Navy did not have any admirals until David Farragut in the Civil War.
of the Navy Smith Thompson reported on the activity of his deployed squadrons, which were keeping the Barbary powers in check in the Mediterranean, protecting trade and fisheries in the Pacific, securing trade routes to China in the East Indies, and prosecuting the slave trade and pirates in the West Indies (Hagan 1991, 94). A decade later in 1832-3, the USS Peacock cruised Asian waters, her ship captain negotiating trade agreements with the king of Siam and the sultan of Muscat—the first such agreements with Middle and Far Eastern states (Boot 2002, 51).

Perhaps the most famous diplomatic excursion of this period came from Commodore Matthew C. Perry, who received orders from President Millard Fillmore in March 1852 as “an envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary” of the United States to Japan (Hagan 1991, 148). Perry, by virtue of his status as a distinguished naval officer and in command of the only means of access to the island empire, carried out the highest profile diplomatic mission of the United States. Perry and his accompanying fleet arrived in Edo Bay (Tokyo) in July 1853, returning the following spring to sign the historic Treaty of Kanagawa on 31 March 1854 (Schroeder 1997). This mission arguably represents the zenith of the US Navy’s international diplomatic heroism and is lionized as such in the Naval Academy museum. The museum signage declares that “No officer in the antebellum navy had as much influence as Perry,”¹³ whose diverse portfolio of accomplishments is headlined by this expedition to Japan.

These seminal diplomatic missions by Preble, Decatur, and Perry established a trajectory of purpose that continued throughout the US Navy’s history. The Navy provided the big stick that allowed elected politicians to speak softly, as suggested by Secretary of the Navy Hilary Herbert in his 1893 annual report to Congress, “We must make and keep our Navy in such a condition of efficiency as to give weight and power to whatever policy it may be thought wise on the part of our Government to assume” (US Navy Department 1893, 41). In 1907, for

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¹³ Personal visit and photo by the author.
example, in the midst of an escalating naval competition with Japan, the Navy launched its signature mission of big stick diplomacy. The Great White Fleet, comprised of 16 new battleships and their auxiliaries, executed a 15-month, 46,000 mile cruise, showing the flag—and the accompanying naval guns—to Japan and the rest of the world (Hart 1965).

In the border-waters of diplomacy and war, the Navy maintained a similarly flexible posture during the starkly absolutist days of the Cold War. As various international crises arose throughout the world, from the Suez to Lebanon to the Taiwan Straits, the Navy offered the nation flexibility, nuance, and militarily credible options across the diplomatic spectrum. Putting the “flexibility” in flexible response, the Navy reached the apex of its armed diplomatic credibility during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, executing a “quarantine” of Cuba and giving President Kennedy a robust military solution short of aerial attack and likely escalation (Hagan 1991, 357-61). While the Air Force competed during this era to be the new first line of defense, the airmen’s vision for doing so was largely all-or-nothing, going from silent alert to nuclear war with limited calibration in between (Sherry 1987). The Navy, by contrast, could provide a more measured response, as indicated by Admiral John S. McCain, Jr., in his testimony to the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee in 1962. Providing the nation with mobile “islands of seapower,” the Navy “must be prepared to move in all these different directions in order to be in a position to counter any aggression immediately before it can spread…Seaborne striking forces, because of their unique characteristics, are the ideal instrument for the execution of a policy of graduated deterrence or flexible response” (U.S. Senate 1962, 764, 766).

14 Even as late as the 1960s and 1970s, the Navy had unique authority and responsibility for diplomatic negotiation in securing port access in Bahrain and negotiating with the British over Middle East security arrangements (Palmer 1992, 94).
In light of its operational nature and political nurture, the US Navy maintains a belief in its unique capacity to sail the ship of state between the Scylla and Charybdis of diplomacy and war. This unique capacity, moreover, gives the Navy an esoteric conception of its role in American affairs. No other organization or government agency can fully appreciate or duplicate what the Navy provides, so the Navy should have maximum latitude to do what only it can. In his testimony to the Senate in December 1945, Fleet Admiral William Halsey insisted that “[i]f the Navy is expected to perform its highly specialized role as our first line of defense—if it is to remain the guardian of our far-flung borders—if it is to continue to assume this responsibility—I say then, it must be given the privilege of free decision” (U.S. Senate 1945, 540). In sum, the first enduring cultural belief of the US Navy is this:

The US Navy provides a unique instrument of national power by serving as a mobile archipelago of sovereign American presence and combat power anywhere in the world. The Navy therefore offers a flexible and full continuum of diplomatic leverage, from showing the flag to full combat operations. A President’s foreign policy is underwritten and made credible by a large, powerful, and deployed fleet.

4.2: America and Her Navy Prosper Together

If we mean to be a commercial people, or even to be secure on our Atlantic side, we must endeavor, as soon as possible, to have a navy.

— Alexander Hamilton, The Federalist No. 24

The US Navy not only executes robust diplomacy abroad, it uniquely enables American prosperity at home. This section traces the lineage of a second cultural belief about the Navy’s ends: its privileged role in protecting American commercial interests, thus permitting the nation to grow and thrive. When the new United States, stripped of its colonial protection from the Royal Navy, found its commercial shipping perilously at risk of interception by Barbary pirates and raiding privateers, its need for a Navy became acute. Born therefore to protect the nation’s
shipping more than its coastlines, the US Navy inherited strands of mercantilist DNA, in which the prosperity of the Navy and the prosperity of the United States moved together. The Navy’s role in defending America therefore included not only military protection of the homeland, but vigorous protection of shipping and expansion of commercial markets. One of the early nineteenth century textbooks at the US Naval Academy captured these twin purposes, imparting to future Navy leaders their full purpose: “To maintain the untarnished honor of the government and of the nation and, at the same time, promote its commercial interests in peace, is an obligation upon the Naval Officer equal with his obligation to defend his ship to the last moment in the hour of battle” (Karsten 1972, 35, emphasis added).

Operational Environment and Founding Context

For this belief that mates American and naval prosperity, the operational environment and the Navy’s founding context are inextricably linked. These two influences will thus be considered together, as the early commercial context of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries shaped the national decision to create a standing Navy. In this case, the operational context is largely a function of the economic environment, in which the seafaring states of a new nation found themselves reliant—and thus dependent—on international trade for their commercial development. Such trade necessarily moved on ships, making the open oceans our national highways for growth and the arenas for violent depredation from raiding pirates. The maritime commercial environment therefore required a maritime military response, for which a strong and well-equipped Navy would be the answer.

An acute awareness of the Navy’s vital role in national prosperity emerged clearly during the Constitutional debates. As the Federalists advocated for a new navy, they articulated the Navy’s role in providing diplomatic credibility and prestige (as profiled in the section above), as well as the essential role that navies play in protecting trade and building
economic infrastructure at home. In Federalist 11, Hamilton suggested that a federal navy could enable diverse prosperity across the union of states: “Every institution will grow and flourish in proportion to the quantity and extent of the means concentrated [sic] towards its formation and support” (1888, 65). Moreover, this prosperity would not be limited to the northern states, argued Hamilton, as each region had something to contribute: sturdy wood from the south, iron from the middle states, and experienced seaman from the “Northern hive” (1888, 65). While Hamilton thus pitched the potential benefit to the states of federal appropriations for shipbuilding, the vocal opposition to forming a Navy invoked the opposite side of the same coin. Importantly, opponents of a new navy argued their case largely on fiscal, not political, grounds. Navies are expensive to build, expensive to maintain, and provoked, in the words of Congressman William Giles, “a system of governing by debts” which would prove to be “the most refined system of tyranny” (Annals of Congress 1794, 491).

For a study of civil-military relations, these arguments are conspicuous more for what they omit than what they include. In the main, opponents to a navy feared the cost, not the very existence, of a standing US fleet. The beneficial purpose of a Navy was largely beyond debate, stipulated as a given by both sides. In Federalist 41, in fact, Madison commented on the rarity of such unanimous support for any provision in the Constitution. “The palpable necessity of the power to provide and maintain a navy has protected that part of the Constitution against a spirit of censure, which has spared few other parts” (1888, 254-5). The debate thus hinged on whether the “palpable” benefits justified the financial burden. As chapter six of this dissertation will reinforce, this experience offers a striking contrast to the early US Army, whose very existence and purpose proved contentious. While fear of a standing army pervaded the early republic, no such fear accompanied the Navy. Madison, once again, invoked this double-advantage in arguing for a strong navy, “The batteries most capable of repelling foreign
enterprises on our safety, are happily such as can never be turned by a perfidious government against our liberties” (1888, 255).

Once the Constitution was ratified, years passed until an exogenous shock convinced the nation to build the first ships of the US Navy. Proving quite vulnerable to Algerian corsairs, America’s merchant marine suffered mounting losses, adding economic losses to national humiliation. Debates raged in Congress over an appropriate response, as some argued for buying into the protection racket by paying annual tribute to Algiers, while others insisted on an armed naval response.

Ultimately, a compromise solution passed the Congress as “an Act to Provide a Naval Armament” on March 10, 1794, and was signed by President Washington on March 27, 1794. The Act provided for the construction and manning of six frigates, four armed with 44 guns and two with 36 guns, to meet and destroy the Algerian corsairs — with a compromise stipulating that these frigates were specifically to face Algiers, and their construction would stop when and if such peace were made. The first permanent ships of the US Navy therefore came into being explicitly to protect American commerce.

Moreover, these first US Navy ships soon remained in service explicitly to protect American industry. When diplomatic negotiations brought peace with Algiers in February 1796, the Act required construction of the six frigates — by this point, past due and over budget — to cease. Given the extensive infrastructure and financial commitments involved, President Washington convinced the Congress to keep the three frigates that were furthest along in construction. Washington argued that to cease construction of all six would risk “derangement in the whole system.”

These political decisions — to build six ships to protect shipping, and to keep three ships to protect industry — strikingly reveal the early entanglement

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of naval and national interests. The Navy and her ships thus ensured safe commerce at sea and provided jobs at home, both to good effect. Max Boot aptly summarizes this period and the Navy’s singular role in underwriting American prosperity, “With the navy’s help, US exports soared from $20 million in 1789 to $334 million in 1860. In short, naval captains were doing more or less the same job performed today by the World Trade Organization: integrating the world around the principle of free trade” (2002, 55).

Events and Exemplars

These early experiences of the nation and her Navy forged a strong belief within the naval service about the essential coupling of national and naval prosperity. In the periods that followed, this belief found its strongest reinforcement from one of the Navy’s most celebrated thinkers: Alfred Thayer Mahan. In 1890, Mahan published a collection of his Naval War College lectures as *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* to instant acclaim. In fact, naval historian Kenneth Hagan argues, “Never has one book on naval history and strategy meant so much to so many” (1991, 190). Mahan captured the rising naval sentiments of his day, distilling lessons from history on the importance of sea power for national greatness and prosperity. As a central tenet of his argument, Mahan posited, “Naval strategy has for its end to found, support, and increase, as well in peace as in war, the sea power of a country” (Mahan and Hattendorf 1991, 95). Sea power, as Mahan conceived of it, generally referred to two overlapping themes: first, commanding the seas with superior battle fleets; and second, creating national greatness and prosperity through expanding commercial markets and maritime commerce (Crowl 1986). Mahan’s concept of sea power wove together military strength and

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16 In 1991, Naval War College professor John Hattendorf collected and edited key writings of Mahan. This quote is Mahan’s from his 1890 work, but the page citation is from the 1991 edited volume.
17 The first of these two themes will be covered in a later section of this chapter. The second theme is most apt to the cultural belief profiled in this section.
national economic growth, with a superior fleet of warships enabling and supporting an ever-expanding market for commercial activity and prosperity.

Mahan’s popular, important, and influential work thus argued strongly for “a theory of national prosperity and destiny founded upon a program of mercantilistic imperialism” (Sprout and Sprout 1939, 203). Consequently, Mahan only tightened the knot coupling the national and naval interest, and captured the prevailing sentiments of the times. Not a lone zealot at odds with his cohort, Mahan merely served as an articulate spokesman of the late nineteenth century navy (Crowl 1986, Harrod 2012). “Far from being the atypical genius many have styled him,” argues Peter Karsten, “Mahan was a quite conventional member of his generation of the naval aristocracy” (1972, 326).

Mahan offered the Navy its clearest and most forceful exposition for the natural entanglement of national and naval interests. Naval officers, flush with Mahanian elixir, carried this belief into the making of national policy. In his sweeping study of American defense organization, Paul Hammond observes, “With Mahan to show that the Navy was an instrument of foreign policy in peace as well as in war, and with the record of a more constant rate of appropriation for the Navy in peace and in war than for the Army, naval officers, on the other hand, could approach the making of national policy assured (at least in their own minds) that the more rational the national policies were made, the more beneficial would they be to the Navy” (1961, 86). While the post-Mahanian generation thus believed that sound national policy would inevitably be good for the Navy, the reverse proposition became true in Navy minds as well. In Senate testimony, arguing against unifying the military services after World War II, Admiral Ernest King famously argued, “It follows that if the Navy’s welfare is one of the prerequisites to the Nation’s welfare—and I sincerely believe that to be the case—any step that is not good for the Navy is not good for the Nation” (U.S. Senate 1945, 124).
Summary of the Belief

The natural convergence of national and naval prosperity informed the early generations of the US Navy, but how long did this belief persist? Contemporary evidence suggests that the Navy’s organizational commitment to national prosperity continues. For the 200-year commemoration of the War of 1812, the US Navy promoted a campaign in 2012 that explicitly connected the continuity of the Navy’s purpose, using the epigram: “America’s Navy: Keeping the Sea Free for More Than 200 Years.” Additionally, the Navy online promotional material tells the viewer that “90% of all our imports arrive by sea. Since 1812, the US Navy has ensured they get here.” It appears that this dimension of Navy service culture indeed persists.

Since its earliest days, the United States has wanted and needed a strong Navy to expand and protect its commercial interests abroad. The Navy uniquely enabled a seafaring nation to expand its markets and continues to protect the freedom of the seas, police international waters, and punish those who would interfere with prosperous commerce. With nothing to fear domestically from a large fleet, what is good for the Navy is good for America.

4.3: Victory through Enlisted Order and Commissioned Judgment

If you have supposed that order may be unattended to in our naval service and that a democratic system is to govern on board our ships, I must inform you that the reverse is, and must be, the case.
— Captain Thomas Truxtun

The first two beliefs of this chapter focused on ends—how does the Navy understand its purpose and mission in service to the nation? This section profiles a third belief of Navy service culture, now focused on ways—what are the acceptable practices for how to perform the Navy’s mission? Using the same categories of influence used earlier, I survey the Navy’s operational environment, founding context, and key events and exemplars to discern core beliefs about the Navy way.

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18 Photo captured by author of display at USNA museum. The public relations campaign can also be viewed at <www.ourflagwastillthere.org>. Accessed 2 August 2012.
The first belief about ways focuses on the irreducible rigors of life at sea. Anchored in the harsh demands of the maritime operational environment, sailors in the US Navy quickly learn that survival at sea requires every seaman to do his job, fulfill his role, follow orders, and be prepared for anything. The sea is a dangerous place to live and work, and threats from the sea, extreme weather, or an enemy fleet can surface at any time from any threat axis. Unlike traditional ground combat in which opposing forces can map the battlespace with linear constructs like the Forward Edge of the Battle Area (FEBA) or Forward Line of Troops (FLOT), enemies at sea can stealthily emerge from all 360 degrees and in all three dimensions. To survive and win in this environment requires constant practice, drilling for any possible contingency, and a tight choreography of roles with every sailor doing her job purposefully and with dispatch. Furthermore, life at sea requires a double-standard for the ship’s crew: enlisted sailors must obey quickly and fully, but commissioned officers abide by a different ethic. In light of the unpredictability of the maritime environment, sound judgment is the coin of the realm for Naval officers at sea—knowledge is good, but seasoned wisdom and an appreciation for context are essential.

**Operational Environment**

Four key dimensions of life at sea contribute to this belief. First, the sea is a vast and restless environment in which to work. Nearly every naval commentator leads with this central insight, reinforcing that “a seaman’s first, visceral battle is with the environment. It is always trying to kill him” (Barnett 2009, 24). Given that “the first principle of a seaman’s outlook is the safety of the ship” (Schurman 1989, 106), this primordial preoccupation conditions a specific manner of thinking and behavior among sailors. To survive on the storm-vexed sea or in

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20 These terms, and hundreds more like them, can be found in Department of Defense Joint Publication 1-02 (www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf).  
21 Of course, many ground operations are not cleanly divided into linear constructs either. Insurgencies and civil wars, for example, are multi-dimensional 360-degree combat environments as well.
combat with the enemy across the horizon, everyone’s safety hinges on a collective commitment to knowing one’s job, doing one’s job, and following orders smartly (McKee 1991, 28). The uncompromising ocean will make no bargains with a lax, undisciplined, or cavalier crew.

In fact, the emphasis on doing one’s job is so profound in the Navy that sailors often refer to their shipmates not by their names or rank, but by their position. For example, “Admin,” “Ops,” “XO,” and “STAN” are all names that sailors use to address the Administrative Officer, the Operations Officer, the Executive Officer, or the Standardization Officer, respectively. It is no accident that job titles and personal identities are conflated in a Navy unit; as one officer described it, “[the job] is so much a part of you that it is you.”

Moreover, the Navy ritualizes this identity conflation with its practice of announcing the arrival and departure of senior officers and ship captains aboard US Navy ships. When a Commanding Officer (CO) or senior leader arrives on board the ship, a member of the ship’s crew announces not the name of the person, but the ship or organization that the officer commands (Mack, Seymour, and McComas 1998, 82). When the CO of the USS Nimitz arrives on a ship (his own or another), for example, the boatswain announces, “Nimitz arriving.” Should the Secretary of the Navy depart a Navy ship, the announcement would be, “United States Navy, departing.” Finally, at the top of the hierarchy, the president carries the very title of the republic itself. When President George W. Bush arrived on the USS Abraham Lincoln in May 2003, for example, the boatswain announced, “United States of America, arriving.”

Second, this cultural commitment to order and obedience derives from the simple truth that sailors live in their weapon. A common aphorism in the US military notes that the Army equips the man, while the Navy mans the equipment. As such, sailors at sea are never off-duty since the transition from peace to war, from placid seas to threatening storms, and from calm to

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chaos can be immediate. In this uncertain environment, a ship’s captain “must always be ready to take his ship into action on a moment’s notice. He must be able to use his ship as a single weapon in the way a swordsman uses his sword” (Ferguson 1956, vi). Being ready for anything—and responding as an integrated crew—requires vigilance, practice, rehearsal, and constant drill. Furthermore, even when the ship is not under active attack from an enemy or storm, the corrosive sea inflicts a steady assault against the integrity of the ship. Consequently, sailors must actively combat the persistent erosion with regular maintenance, servicing their home, their weapon, and their shelter with equal diligence. A central feature of Navy life institutionalizes this constant vigilance: the watch bill. As a scheduling document, the watch bill assigns each sailor to a specific rotation of being “on watch” and gets promulgated as a direct order of the Commanding Officer. Sailors on watch carry a profound psychic burden, acting on behalf of the CO, bearing the full measure of authority and responsibility delegated to them.

A third key dimension of the operational environment involves the curious mixture of the “romance of the open sea” with the pervasive boredom and tedium that saturates life underway. In his sociological portrait of the naval aristocracy of the nineteenth century, Karsten notes that these twin—and apparently contradictory—experiences of seafaring life coexisted. First, the allure of the seas beckoned sailors to the open ocean, with a compelling romance that can only be felt, not explained. This allure, however, quickly gave way to a pounding boredom, in which the flat expanse of the ocean offered a visual picture of the unending tedium of life afloat. “Most of the time on board a naval vessel,” explains Karsten, “was spent in eternal preparation for a situation—be it collision at sea, man overboard, a fire in the powder room, or war—that might never take place. Drills, routine upkeep, and watches filled the naval day” (1972, 53). For new midshipmen and sailors, such patterns and routines
brought order to the foreign and dizzying world at sea (McKee 1991). Finally, the habits and routines of ship life served yet another purpose of maintaining good order and discipline in the midst of restless monotony. The rowdy “jack tars” that comprised the ship’s company formed a striking contrast to the aristocratic officer corps (Fowler 1984); two completely separate societies thus co-existed, and “the gulf between the two was unfathomable” (Karsten 1972, 52).

Consequently, lest idle minds contemplate unsettling thoughts, ship captains ensured that the crew remained purposefully occupied, doing what ship crews have always done:

Standing watches was about all there was to do. It was what seamen had done when at sea for three or four hundred years—a set of routines, arbitrary, clearly defined. They had a role to play. If you were at sea for as long as they were—frequent cruises of three to four to five months—it was necessary, having a ship’s company that did not have too much to do, to have a set of rather arbitrary routines that held the whole society together. (Morison 1988, 414)

Finally, a fourth element of this maritime context builds explicitly on the first three outlined above. As detailed earlier, living and fighting at sea involves immersion in risk. The Navy inhabits an unpredictable environment, in which the stable routine of sailing in peaceful waters can be shattered instantaneously by a lurking enemy, a sudden storm, or the cumulative corrosion of the sea. Therefore, while the crew is expected to follow orders fully and quickly, those in command of the ship must follow a different ethic: “At sea, context rules” (Barnett 2009, 122). Ship captains cannot execute rote principles and rules when the shifting context calls for judgment and practical wisdom. Naval historian Clark Reynolds observes, “Practical common sense and the ability to improvise when short on doctrine or material are equally essential for survival at sea” (1983, 66). The implications of these observations become part of the Navy’s cultural belief system: if context rules, there is small value in specifying doctrine or a rulebook to cover every situation. The Navy thus holds a “long-standing aversion to written

23 As chapter 5 will detail further, the presence of US Marines contributed to this same purpose. In addition to serving as boarding parties, Marines served onboard ships to maintain order between the two societies of officers and enlisted sailors. Their role was significantly important to prompt Karsten to inquire, “Could it be that Marines were actually a kind of police without which the nineteenth-century American naval society might disintegrate?” (1972, 82).
doctrine,” and sustains a culture in which “definitions are often ignored when the chips are
down and expediency—or, at the extreme, life and death—rules” (Barnett 2009, 14, 18).

The Navy even takes intentional, ceremonial steps to reinforce this difference in
expectation between enlisted sailors and naval officers. At ceremonies to enlist sailors or to
commission (or promote) officers, many Commanding Officers provide commentary on the
important differences between the enlisted and commissioned oaths (Bailey 2012). Both oaths
begin by swearing to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all
enemies, foreign and domestic” and to “bear true faith and allegiance to the same.” At that
point, the oaths diverge. Officers affirm that they “take this obligation freely, without any
mental reservation or purpose of evasion,” and that they will “well and faithfully discharge the
duties of the office upon which [they are] about to enter.”24 The oath of enlistment, however,
strikes a very different tone. Enlisted sailors swear that they “will obey the orders of the
President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over [them], according to
regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice.”25 The officers swear to discharge the
duties of their office, while enlisted sailors swear to follow orders. While all four of the services
take these same oaths, some elements within the Navy take special care to emphasize these
important differences in their formal ceremonies (Bailey 2012).

Summary of the Belief

In light of these demands of the operational environment, a cultural belief in the
rightness of order, routine, vigilance, and judgment pervades the US Navy—and this has been
the case since its earliest days. One of the first six Captains of the US Navy, Thomas Truxtun,
sought to provide order and standardization across the nascent fleet, and thus drafted some

24 Department of the Army (DA) Form 71, 1 August 1959. This citation comes from the Army, but all services use the
same commissioning oath.

25 Department of Defense (DD) Form 4/3, October 2007. Available at
preliminary rules and guidelines for life at sea. Truxtun articulated specific duties and standards for no less than twenty-five different crew positions on board, from admirals to cooks to the drum and fife—each had a role and indispensable duty to perform (1794). Since the Navy’s birth, therefore, the four aspects of the operational environment highlighted above condition this belief about ways:

_Sailors afloat live in harm’s way. The sea is a ruthless host, and enemy ships may appear at any time from any direction. The crew must be prepared at all times to fight the sea or an enemy fleet, and such readiness can only come through vigilance, repetition, and total obedience. Leadership in this dynamic environment, however, requires experience at sea and sound naval judgment, not blind adherence to hard-and-fast rules._

**4.4: The Independent Glory of Command at Sea**

_I wish to have no Connection with any Ship that does not sail fast, for I intend to go in harm’s way._
– Captain John Paul Jones

A second core belief about “the Navy way” concerns the locus of authority, responsibility, and accountability in the US Navy: the Commanding Officer (CO). In his 2011 memorandum to prospective Commanding Officers in the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Gary Roughead opened with this line: “Command is the foundation upon which our Navy rests.” Furthermore, at the conclusion of the first paragraph, Roughead reinforced the mandate of authority placed in COs, and the historic legacy of this strong cultural tradition: “A Commanding Officer’s authority must be commensurate with his or her responsibility and accountability. This immutable truth has been the very foundation of our Navy since 1775.” As CNO Roughead’s memo suggests, the Navy takes very seriously the role of the Commanding Officer, entrusting COs with great responsibility and the latitude with

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26 As footnoted earlier, the US Navy had no Admirals at that time—in fact, not until the Civil War. That did not stop Truxtun from articulating the proper duties of Admirals anyway.
27 In Morison 1959, 223.
which to carry out their mission.\footnote{A Commanding Officer (CO) in the Navy could be the captain of the ship or the commander of a shore-based unit. While the focus of this section is on the legacy of shipboard command, the philosophy of at-sea command translates to the Navy’s operations ashore. This philosophical continuity plays an important role in informing the Navy’s “ways” as a political organization in the defense bureaucracy.} Armed with this institutional trust, COs in general—and ship captains more specifically—rule their domain with nearly impregnable authority. Consequently, “command at sea” becomes the holy grail and high-water mark of any career. Furthermore, the Navy not only prizes the fact of command at sea, but cherishes a preferred form as well. A pattern of bold and audacious naval command predates the country itself, with heroes like John Paul Jones shunning slow ships and bristling for a fight (Morison 1959, 223). These beliefs in the proper role and conduct of Commanding Officers run deep in the US Navy, and this section traces their heritage from the operational environment at sea, the founding context, and the bold exemplars of the Navy who refused to give up the ship.

\textit{Operational Environment and Founding Context}

Two principal elements of the operational environment contribute to the Navy’s belief in the proper role and authority of COs. The first influences the necessity of decentralized command and control, while the second contributes to the onboard sovereignty of the captain.

First, ship captains at sea are physically removed from their higher echelons of command and thus have the best awareness of the current conditions of the floating organism that is their ship. In the early days of the US Navy, the physical separation of a ship at sea also meant a communicative separation, as messages could only move from ship to ship at the rate of sail. Ship captains, therefore, received diplomatic or military guidance from superior military or political leaders and were trusted to exercise judgment in carrying out those orders in the best interest of the nation. While these physical realities changed with new technologies that brought ship captains and their headquarters within communicable reach, there were still operational justifications for trusting captains at sea. Across military culture, the “on scene
commander” is generally trusted to have the best information and thus capacity for decision-making. Therefore, even when ship captains had a steady drip of incoming message traffic from higher headquarters, they still had the advantage of being on scene and thus entrusted with decision-making authority. According to Barnett, “The propensity to discount distant authority when it differed from the commander’s perception of the local situation persisted in naval culture” (2009, 80). Furthermore, in an operational environment defined by avoiding detection by enemy fleets, ship captains had incentives to stay silent, avoid active transmitters, and rely on one’s own situational appraisal. Consequently, “the currents of ’unless I receive specific orders to the contrary I consider myself to be on my own’ — that is, ‘unless otherwise directed’ or ‘UNODIR’ — run deep and swift in Navy tradition” (Barnett 2009, 80). The Navy, in fact, is the only one of the four services to use the acronym UNODIR, reflecting its unique principle of “command by negation” (Department of Defense 2006, 87). Commanding officers are expected to inform their boss, not ask permission, and proceed as informed “unless otherwise directed.”

The second important dimension of the operational environment was profiled in the previous section: the demands of survival at sea require an intricate choreography of roles and deference to authority — authority that culminates in the person of the captain. The pervasive risk that saturates life at sea is the constant obsession of the ship’s captain, who bears a responsibility known by no other. In the foreword to his biography of Thomas Truxtun, historian Eugene Ferguson writes, “the captain of a ship of war has — and in this respect conditions have changed almost none at all in two hundred years — a continuously sustained, minute-by-minute responsibility that can be understood only imperfectly by a landsman” (1956, allard (1996) also cites work by Army General Paul Gorman comparing the operational requirements of the Army and Navy. As Gorman observes, the Navy has the highest-ranking commanders of sub-echelon forces, which further reinforces the tendency and incentive to delegate and decentralize authority (confident that the sub-echelon commander is of sufficiently high rank and experience). See Allard 1996, 159.
This shipboard reality confers a grave responsibility upon the captain, which in turn gives him nearly absolute authority to run the ship as he sees fit.31

Such near-absolute authority, however, comes packaged with a solitary burden. The authority, responsibility, and accountability that inhere to the captain ultimately cast a lonely shadow, as no one else on board can ultimately share the burdens of the position. The captain serves as the ultimate decider on uncertain seas, with no one else on board who can relieve the pressures of accountability and responsibility. With rich imagery, Admiral David Porter—once a midshipman under Truxtun—described the simultaneous authority and loneliness of command at sea. Writing from Constantinople, Porter observed that unlike the Ottoman Sultan Mahmoud who could afford to be kind to his subjects, a ship captain had no such luxury:

> The little tyrant, who struts his few fathoms of soured plank, dare not unbend, lest he should lose that appearance of respect from his inferiors which their fears inspire…Wrapped up in his notions of his own dignity, and the means of preserving it, he shuts himself up from all around him. He stands alone, without the friendship or sympathy of one on board; a solitary being in the midst of the ocean…A man of war is a petty kingdom and is governed by a petty despot, exacting from all his subjects, all the respect and homage, that are voluntarily and spontaneously bestowed on a higher order of legitimate sovereigns. (1835, 10-11)

The early days of the US Navy only reinforced these ideas. As highlighted in the first and third beliefs of this chapter, the captains and commodores of the infant Navy enjoyed unimaginable latitude in carrying out the broad mandate of their varied diplomatic and military missions. Once their high-masted ships slipped over the horizon, captains ruled their maritime universe largely free of any politicians’ gravitational pull. Furthermore, to maintain good order and discipline at sea, captains received absolute deference from below as a fitting complement to the autonomy they enjoyed from above. In a particularly apt summary, quoted at length for its quality, Boot describes this early period in the life of the US Navy:

> To simplify somewhat, the nineteenth-century navy may be described as aristocratic officers spoiling for a fight, leading equally combative, often tipsy enlisted men who were on the fringes

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31 Ship captains cannot of course do whatever they want on ship—they remain subject to Navy regulations, and the Navy has shown a consistent willingness to relieve ship captains for cause. Ship captains bear absolute responsibility for their ship, and are thus entrusted with near-absolute authority, subject to Navy regulations.
of society…Such men were constantly dispatched by the navy to the far corners of the globe to deal with chaotic situations in politically unstable lands populated by people with little understanding of Western notions such as private property and contracts. Far from home, with no way of communicating in less than a few months’ time with their superiors back in Washington, they had almost complete autonomy of action. Is it any wonder, then, that Americans became embroiled in so many small wars abroad? The only wonder, really, is that there were not more. (2002, 40-1)\(^\text{32}\)

**Bold Exemplars**

The operational environment and founding context of the Navy clearly shaped the service’s view of how to command at sea. The early generations of seafaring captains, moreover, cemented the Navy way and left a legacy of bold, fearless, and audacious command for subsequent Navy generations.

John Paul Jones occupies revered terrain in Navy hearts and on Navy grounds—though it was not always so. Entombed in an elaborate crypt underneath the Naval Academy chapel, Jones’ example only became cherished Naval tradition a full century after his obscure death in Europe.\(^\text{33}\) Nevertheless, the bold example wrought by Jones during the Revolutionary War has been canonized as an unalloyed model for naval excellence. During the fanfare that attended Jones’ internment in the Naval Academy crypt in 1906, President Teddy Roosevelt contributed to this canonization of Jones with high praise: “Every officer in our Navy should know by heart the deeds of John Paul Jones. Every officer in our Navy should feel in each fiber of his being an eager desire to emulate the energy, the professional capacity, the indomitable determination and dauntless scorn of death which marked John Paul Jones above all his fellows” (Stewart 1907, 16). Jones’ example during the Revolution included raiding the British coastline, wreaking havoc on British shipping, and winning a dramatic victory over HMS *Serapis* on 23 September 1779—a battle that christened Jones’ most famous line. While his ship was burning

\(^{32}\) Hagan adds his own description, reinforcing the truly unique command ethos of this period: “[The commodores] commanded the six squadrons of active ships with a degree of autonomy and absolutism unthinkable in the late twentieth century…Commodores moved about and took action without direct control from Washington or from any representative of the government” (1990, 141).

\(^{33}\) For useful commentary on the complicated historiography that surrounds John Paul Jones, see Bradford 1986.
and sinking, Jones received a demand for surrender from his British counterpart, to which Jones replied, “I have not yet begun to fight” (Morison 1959, 486). Jones’ pugnacity and disdain for death emerge in a letter falsely attributed to Jones but memorized as such by generations of Naval Academy midshipmen. In the letter, Jones exhorted a fellow ship captain, when faced with defeat by a superior foe, to “challenge the devotion of his followers to sink with him alongside the more powerful foe, and all go down together with the unstricken flag of their country still waving defiantly over them in their ocean sepulchre” (Buell 1906, 35).34

Jones’ pugnacious example in the Revolution found ample corroboration by fellow captains in the quasi-war with France (1798-1800) and the Barbary wars (1801-1815). In February 1799, in the first major action of the quasi-war, Captain Thomas Truxtun commanded the USS Constellation on its way to finding, chasing, attacking, and capturing the French frigate L’Insurgente (Toll 2006). When informed by the French captain that his actions were illegitimate given the official state of peace between their countries, Truxtun sent word to the Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Stoddert, “The french Captain tells me, I have caused a War with France, if so I am glad of it, for I detest Things being done by Halves” (US Office of Naval Records and Library 1935, 327). Truxtun became the hero of the quasi-war, and his example echoed through the ranks, inspiring the next crop of captains who would follow.35

Five years later during the Barbary wars, when the USS Philadelphia ran aground in Tripoli harbor, Captain William Bainbridge surrendered his crew and the ship, allowing it to fall into enemy hands. Rather than allowing Tripolitan pirates to use a US Navy ship, young

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34 Buell’s work is central to the complicated entanglements of Jones’ historiography. Buell attributes this quote to Jones in a letter to the naval committee of Congress in 1775. Later scholarship has shown that no such letter existed, and Buell likely fabricated the quote (see Bradford 1986 for more). Nevertheless, despite its specious origins, the quote survived in the Naval Academy “Reef Points” publication for a hundred years, which all incoming plebes receive and memorize. Its false attribution notwithstanding, the quote is cited here because of its centrality in Navy culture.

35 This observation in no way suggests that the Navy has internalized a renegade approach to starting wars with foreign powers. Truxtun’s remark is indeed a product of the times and of his personality, but his bold example of shunning half-measures remains a vibrant ethic of naval command.
Stephen Decatur volunteered to lead a special operations raid to scuttle the ship. Using a captured Mediterranean ketch, renamed the USS *Intrepid*, Decatur and his crew snuck into the harbor, boarded the *Philadelphia*, fought off its skeleton crew and set off an explosive charge to blow up the ship—an act that British Admiral Horatio Nelson dubbed, “the most bold and daring act of the age” (Homans 1835, 116). At age 25, Decatur became the youngest Captain in the Navy and a revered national hero.

In the War of 1812, the Navy christened another generation of intrepid ship captains, whose legacy ripples through Navy history. Historian Eric Larrabee describes the signature role that the War of 1812 plays in Navy tradition. “It must be the least remembered war in American history,” he writes, “the most disparaged as clumsy and inconclusive, yet it forged a national identity the Revolution had only begun to achieve—and the Navy remembers it” (2004, 162). The naval heroes of the war “created a naval tradition: seamanship, discipline, fairness, efficiency, courage, originality, a spirit of making do with what you had” (Larrabee 2004, 162). The War bequeathed some of the Navy’s most cherished mottos, such as Captain James Lawrence’s “Don’t give up the ship!”—a dying admonition to the crew of the USS *Chesapeake* in May 1813 (Toll 2006, 414). As tribute to his fallen friend, Captain Oliver Hazard Perry emblazoned that motto on a flag, which he flew on his ship—fittingly, the USS *Lawrence*—in action on Lake Erie in September 1813 (Symonds 2005). After a dramatic victory that forced an entire British squadron to surrender en masse, Perry sent a simple message to General William Henry Harrison: “We have the met the enemy and they are ours” (Mahon 1997, 67). Perry’s words feature prominently in the Naval Academy museum, accompanied by the original “Don’t Give Up the Ship” flag, a replica of which hangs prominently in the Academy’s ornate Memorial Hall.

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36 With fitting irony, Toll comments, “It was strange that these dying words, comprising an order (not obeyed) to commit mass suicide, were subsequently adopted as the navy’s unofficial motto” (2007, 414).
Finally, the Civil War and the Spanish-American War provide two other notable exemplars who reinforce this legacy of fearless naval command. Leading a column of ships to capture Mobile Bay in August 1864, Union Admiral David Farragut offered an image and quote that are enshrined in naval lore. Straining to see the action in front of him above the smoke, Farragut climbed the mainmast of the USS Hartford and had a crewman lash him in place—fixing his position on the ship and in naval legend. Subsequently, when the leading ship of his line hit a rebel mine, Farragut delivered an admonition for the ages, “Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead” (McPherson 1988, 761). Farragut’s dauntless example clearly inspired one of his proteges, George Dewey, who had his own opportunity to lead warships into an enemy harbor. Thirty-five years later, as the United States made war with Spain in 1898, Dewey sailed into Manila Bay in the Philippines, asking himself, “What would Farragut do?” (Dewey 1913, 50). When his nephew Lieutenant William Winder, eager for naval immortality, requested to lead the column of ships to detonate any potential mines ahead of the flagship, Dewey firmly replied, “Billy, I have waited sixty years for this opportunity. And much as I like you and know you are a fine officer—mines or no mines, I am leading the squadron in myself” (Healy and Kutner 1944, 174-5). Farragut and Dewey enjoy pride of place in the Navy pantheon, as their example confirmed the Navy’s earliest roots and inspired successive generations of the US Navy.

Summary of the Belief

This section traced the operational roots, the founding context, and the bold exemplars who shaped a distinctively Navy way to command at sea. In sum, these influences converge to create the following enduring belief:

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While today these terms have different meanings, “mines” and “torpedoes” were virtually synonymous during the Civil War period.
Ship captains have the unique responsibility to pursue American interests abroad, and they must be trusted fully to do so. On his ship, the captain is the sovereign, uniquely equipped with the most seasoned judgment, superior skill, and total authority. Command at sea is every officer’s rightful aspiration, and should be conducted with boldness, daring, and pluck.

4.5: A Professional and Permanent Navy

When our Navy and air force are large enough and efficient enough to keep all enemies at arm’s length, we never will need to conscript millions of our young men, and force them to spend most of their lives standing guard over us. The Navy, though, must always be ready, and its warships and airplanes fully manned at all times.
— Admiral Yates Stirling

The first four beliefs covered in this chapter focused on various ends and ways in the US Navy. This section and the next conclude the chapter by exploring two beliefs about means—what resources and organizational structures are best suited for pursuing the ends and ways previously discussed? Since the time of the Constitution and the specified power of Congress “to provide and maintain a Navy” (emphasis added), naval advocates have preached the importance of maintaining a standing navy with a fleet-in-being. Unlike an army militia that can be temporarily mobilized in a local community, with citizen farmers beating their plowshares into swords, navies cannot operate in the same way. All aspects of naval life—from shipbuilding to navigation to gunnery—require time, practice, infrastructure, and steady commitment. A credible naval fleet cannot be rallied to the village green by a town crier, but must be organized, drilled, and funded deliberately as a professional force. In short, minutemen cannot sail and fight ships—an effective Navy must be a professional and permanent Navy. While today there is little debate about the need for a standing navy, the importance of this belief over time merits its inclusion in this chapter; additionally, the effects of this belief may well be seen in various policy debates that cannot be anticipated ex ante.

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38 Stirling 1942, 22.
Operational Environment

The uniqueness of the Navy’s operating environment, coupled with the uniqueness of its role as America’s warrior-diplomats and defenders of commerce, create the ideological foundation for a professional full-time Navy. As the third belief in this chapter described, life at sea is a world apart, bearing few resemblances to landlocked life. The open ocean has little tolerance for amateurs, swallowing up neophytes whose inexperience can imperil an entire crew. To survive and win at sea, crews must know their role, execute orders, be ready for anything, and exercise seasoned judgment that only time at sea can impart. Credible navies, therefore, require expertise that only salty experience can provide. Any attempt to improvise a ship’s crew, let alone a naval fleet, is a fool’s errand that will no doubt result in a bottom-dwelling armada of Jones’s “ocean sepulchres” (Buell 1906, 35). In his December 1945 testimony to the Senate, Fleet Admiral William Halsey emphasized this fact: “Let me remind you that a navy cannot be improvised overnight—it takes a long time to make a fighting ship. Naval leaders and naval air leaders achieved their skills by living on the sea, fighting over that sea, and beating the sea at its own game. It is this knowledge of the sea which will permit us to fight the next war across the sea” (U.S. Senate 1945, 539).

Second, as the first two beliefs in this chapter profiled, for the Navy to be fulfilling its mission as the deployed archipelago of American sovereignty and protectors of American commerce, it must be forward. As the Armed Forces Officer guide explains, "The Navy culture is a deployment culture; deployments form the rhythm of Navy life for the Sailors and for their families" (2006, 86). The Navy cannot serve as warrior-diplomats or international trade police from home harbors, in dry dock, or “laid up in ordinary.” A militia serving as a last line of defense can be improvised from citizen-soldiers, but a navy serving as the first line of defense

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39 Ships that were “mothballed” or held in an inactive reserve status, awaiting refurbishment and reactivation were said to be “laid up in ordinary.”
has no such luxury. It must be active, deployed, forward, and in a permanent state of readiness to protect American interests in peace, and pursue American interests in war.

A third aspect of the maritime operational environment feeds into this belief as well. Recall the earlier aphorism that the Army equips the man, while the Navy mans the equipment. The warships that the Navy mans require extensive infrastructure, technological currency, and industrial capacity. From the first six frigates authorized in 1794 to the nuclear powered aircraft carriers of the twenty-first century, shipbuilding requires time, experience, funding, planning, and patience. A nation that would field a credible navy must maintain the backside infrastructure to build, support, and sustain it.

**Founding Context and Reinforcing Events**

Several events in the early life of the Navy reinforced the convictions suggested by the operational environment. First, the language of the Constitution, as described earlier, clearly differentiated the different roles of the Army and Navy. While Congress was given power to “raise and support” armies with a two-year appropriation, it had power to “provide and maintain” a Navy. The differentiation clearly mattered to the Constitution’s drafters, as the pervasive fear of a standing army did not bleed over into the Navy. The navalist arguments, which were reflected in the Constitutional text, recognized the need for a navy to be maintained, not temporarily raised and supported.

Second, the creation of the Navy Department in 1798 placed the US Navy on a firm foundation of professional permanence. When the first six frigates of the US Navy were appropriated in 1794, the War Department bore responsibility for both the army and navy. Once the administrative burdens of building the six ships and directing the mounting naval crisis with France became too much, Congress created a separate Navy department, with a cabinet-level officer – the Secretary of the Navy – reporting directly to the president. While the
appropriation to build the six frigates was an ad hoc response to the Barbary pirates—as reflected in the clause that terminated construction once diplomatic peace was made—the creation of the Navy department was the first full step in creating a standing Navy (Symonds 2008). This bureaucratic move constituted a significant commitment, fraught with debate, as opponents feared the organizational constituency that would inevitably develop. Albert Gallatin of Pennsylvania, a well-known fiscal conservative, argued against a separate Navy department, envisioning—quite keenly, it turns out—that any bureaucrat in charge of such a department would only seek its constant enlargement (Hagan 1991, 42). Nevertheless, Congress created the Navy department to the delight of navalists and ensured that “control of naval operations [would be] directly under the nation’s Commander-in-Chief rather than through the War Department—thus providing some insurance against the adverse effects suffered by other nations when naval operations had been subordinated to land warfare and sea power objectives were ignored” (Hooper 1978, 2).

Third, the nation’s brief experiment with an alternative structure—a small, defensive, militia-style navy—provoked rampant criticism by Navy advocates. As president, Thomas Jefferson did not support a large standing navy, advocating instead for an affordable and defensively deployed gunboat navy that could not be exploited by the merchant class (Toll 2006, 164). Reaping the brief peace dividend after the 1805 settlement with Tripoli, Jefferson pursued a new fleet of defensively arrayed small gunboats, while the larger frigates were put into inactive reserve status. Navalists of the period found such an arrangement “humiliating” (Symonds 2008, 27), while later historians decried the policy as “an unsound line of naval development” that clearly ignored the manifest lessons of the Revolution and the Barbary wars (Sprout and Sprout 1939, 58).
Finally, the writings of Alfred T. Mahan cemented this conviction in the Naval mind. Mahan’s influential counsel argued for the use of powerful fleets-in-being to pursue offensive and not defensive strategies. For generations of pro-Mahanian scholars and navalists, these convictions applied universally and not contextually, offering the lens through which to read all history. The Civil War, for example, offers “clear and unmistakable” lessons to Mahanian scholars that naval fleets cannot be improvised, fleets-in-being are paramount, commerce raiding is inconsequential, and command of the seas makes all the difference (Sprout and Sprout 1939, 164).

Summary of the Belief

Together, the operational environment, founding context, and influential writings of Mahan combine to create an enduring belief in Navy culture:

*A credible naval fleet cannot be summoned in short order like a militia, nor is a warship like a musket that can be pulled down from above the mantle. Fighting ships and able crews require vast resources, maritime infrastructure, shipbuilding expertise, and constant drilling by full-time professionals. Navies are effective when their ships and sailors are active and deployed, not laid up in ordinary.*

4.6: Size Matters: Bigger is Better

*What would be the real national loss if all gunboats were sunk in a hundred fathoms of water?*
— Captain Stephen Decatur

If the Navy should be organized as a standing force with a credible fleet-in-being, what should that fleet look like? The US Navy has consistently displayed a belief in the importance of organizing the fleet around major capital ships of the line, from its first robust frigates to battleships to aircraft carriers. As the following discussion illustrates, a pervasive belief that

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40 In Toll 2007, 284.
“bigger is better” recurs throughout the Navy story, with various alternatives for smaller or more diverse fleets spurring significant resistance from the Naval core.

**Operational Environment and Founding Context**

In many ways, bigger is indeed better. Particularly in the early days of the Navy, engagements between warships required the massing of firepower in a concentrated space. The number of guns onboard became the defining characteristic of naval ships, and this all-important number thus became shorthand for the class of ship—commentators still refer to these ships as “36s”, “44s,” or “74s”, for example. Whether or not such concentrated firepower was operationally suited to the national interest remains a prudential question of costs and benefits; nevertheless, if and when ships battled other ships, size and firepower were critical.

Size also enabled endurance, as larger ships could be self-sufficient for longer periods of time by carrying greater stores of provisions, thereby reducing the need for port visits (Barnett 2009).

Larger ships served another important function for naval society: they provided the best classrooms for training new midshipmen and sailors. The biggest ships carried the largest complement of crew members, with the widest variety of roles and duties, and thus the greatest demand for order, discipline, and tight standards. Furthermore, the biggest ships were the most seaworthy, so they sailed the farthest, explored the open oceans, and garnered a wider variety of experiences at sea and ashore. Finally, the biggest ships were commanded by the most senior and skilled officers, from whom junior officers and the crew could learn about all things Navy (Stirling 1942). In essence, the biggest ships were the Navy at its finest—the most orderly, most adventurous, and most skilled. “Agreement was nearly universal among the pre-1815 navy’s leaders: the place to learn professional skills, values, and culture was on shipboard, and preferably in a large warship; the best transmitters of these skills, values, and culture were the experienced officers who had already internalized them” (McKee 1991, 155).
For these reasons, combined with a desire for credibility and prestige, the Navy consistently advocated for capital ships of the line from its birth. The first six frigates, for example, represented the best in class of their day, with four 44-gun ships and two 36-gun ships that were bigger and faster than similarly classed ships of European navies (Toll 2006). These frigates, however, were no match for the mighty British battleships that boasted 74 guns or more, prompting the first Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Stoddert to push Congress for parity. During the quasi-war with France, Stoddert oversaw a naval expansion that included a Congressional authorization in February 1799 for six 74-gun warships. Even though Stoddert pitched the battleships as defensive weapons, ships of that class clearly excelled primarily in offensive fleet engagements. Hagan argues that for a small continental power like the early United States, such a fleet of offensive battleships was largely unnecessary, indicating a “political rather than logical” choice by the Navy and its supporters in Congress (1991, 46). At that point in the nation’s existence, a purely functional response to the threat environment may well have looked quite different.

What might an alternative response have looked like? As described earlier, the truce with Tripoli in 1805 concluded a major phase of the Barbary wars, prompting President Jefferson to attempt a more “logical” and cost-appropriate navy for the continental United States. Jefferson relished the idea of fielding a citizen’s militia of small gunboats for coastal and riverine defense. The Navy, however, had other ideas. After successful operations in the Mediterranean, having established its credibility on the high seas, the Navy loathed the idea of ceding oceanic control and retreating on gunboats into coastal defense operations (Symonds 2008, 27). Gunboats, moreover, had none of the appeal of the grander frigates and battleships.

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41 As Toll explains, frigates were an intermediate class ship between the larger battleship and smaller sloops or brigs. When these first six frigates were authorized, they were a temporary expedient to handle the Barbary threat, and thus represented a compromise in fact and form. Building even larger battleships was essentially out of the question—the frigates were expensive enough, and had to be justified extensively for the mission they were tasked to perform.
“The anathematic vessel was the gunboat,” writes McKee, “and the voices raised against it formed a nearly unanimous chorus” (1991, 156). Gunboats held none of the advantages of the frigates, with smaller crews, lax discipline, less experienced and professional captains, and few opportunities to excel in seamanship on open waters. Beyond these functional arguments, gunboats lacked the aesthetic and glorious appeal of triple masted frigates: “There was nothing at all heroic about [gunboats]: no soaring masts, no line of broadside guns, no showing of the flag overseas, no majesty” (Symonds 2008, 29). Whether Jefferson’s policy represented a prudent cost-benefit decision is an open question that can be debated as such; the Navy’s response to that policy, however, is firmly settled.42

Events and Exemplars

These early events in the life of the US Navy established a trajectory that continued throughout the 20th century, particularly in the Navy’s commitment first to the battleship and then to the aircraft carrier. After a post-Civil War period of ideological and technological vacuity, the triple convergence of Mahanian theory, the beginnings of a new steam and steel Navy, and the Spanish-American war launched the Navy into grand waters at the turn of the 20th century (Morison 1988).

As described earlier, Mahan’s treatise on sea power advocated fiercely for powerful fleets-in-being to command the seas and destroy the enemy’s fleet. “In naval operations,” Mahan argued, “such successes are wrought less by the tenure of a position than by the defeat of the enemy’s organized force—his battle fleet” (1991, 154). Mahan clearly preached that war at sea required the navy to hunt down and destroy the enemy’s navy (176), but more importantly, a powerful battle fleet was equally vital in peace. “The supreme essential condition,” he wrote, “to the assertion and maintenance of national power in external maritime

42 For greater background on these very debates, see Symonds 1980.
regions is the possession of a fleet superior to that of any probable opponent” (168). Mahan’s work met with instant acclaim, and found timely application in the “splendid little war” with Spain in 1898.\textsuperscript{43} After a period of rapid naval procurement, beginning in 1883 with the authorization for four new steel ships, the Navy built its first three battleships in 1895 and had six by 1898.\textsuperscript{44} With this new fleet, the Navy claimed dramatic sea victories, first by George Dewey in Manila Bay (May 1898) using armored cruisers, then by William Sampson in Santiago de Cuba (July 1898) with battleships. Despite the protracted inconvenience of spending the next four years in the Philippines with a brown-water navy performing inglorious coastal tasks (Linn 2000), the Navy’s approved lessons from the war were clearly battleship-centric. The powerful combination of popular Mahanian doctrine with the glory of battleship victories abroad created an intoxicating brew for the Navy; this confluence “permanently wedded the US Navy to [Mahan’s] preferred strategy of capital-ship warfare, the goal of which was command of the seas achieved through decisive engagements between battle fleets” (Hagan 1991, 226).

From that point forward — until the morning of 7 December 1941 — the Navy remained firmly committed to the battleship as the center of its battle fleet, strategy, and tactics. While the first World War gave the US Navy no opportunities for battleship engagements, the only major battleship clash of the war — the Battle of Jutland in June 1916 between the British and German navies — became a source of great study and wargaming at the Naval War College (Tuohy 2007, 29). Furthermore, as the development of submarines and aircraft carriers moved forward in the inter-war years, these new assets were largely viewed through a lens of supporting the battleship. Both submarines and carriers thus served initially as scouts for the battleships, with

\textsuperscript{43} Words of Ambassador John Hay to Theodore Roosevelt, describing the Spanish-American War.
no independent role or strategic advantage to consider.  

“The minds of the men in control were not attuned to the changes being wrought by advancing technology,” submariner Captain Edward Beach observed. “Mahan’s nearly mystical pronouncements had taken the place of reality for men who truly did not understand but were comfortable in not understanding” (1986, 443).

This resilient belief in the battleship persisted until the Japanese put the better part of the battleship fleet at the bottom of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. For the remainder of World War II, the aircraft carrier served as the preeminent capital ship, and its heroic success in the Pacific campaign became the stuff of legend (Reynolds 1992). The Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Midway turned the tide of the Pacific war in the summer of 1942, both of which were carrier duels in which opposing aircraft inflicted the principal damage on the other’s fleet (Wildenberg 1998). Since then, the aircraft carrier has assumed the sacred post once held by the battleship, with few mavericks being willing or able to challenge the tenets of carrier-based orthodoxy. Despite mounting evidence that carriers are vulnerable to much smaller boats, submarines, and anti-ship missiles (Czarnecki 2008), such vulnerabilities are rarely acknowledged. While there are certainly valid strategic reasons not to acknowledge publicly one’s vulnerabilities, evidence suggests that even the Navy’s internal narrative is largely resistant to dethroning the impregnable carrier. During various exercises and war games, for example, the Navy at times would not allow its carriers to be sunk (Thompson 2007). One submarine captain, in fact, was commended for putting six torpedoes into the hull of carrier,

45 For the history of carrier development, see Hone, Friedman, and Mandeles 1999. For analysis of the Navy’s adoption of the submarine, see Rosen 1991.

46 There have been recent challenges to this carrier orthodoxy, most notably by Navy Captain Henry Hendrix (2013), who published a critical paper through the Center for a New American Security (CNAS). Hendrix’s opening line is this: “The queen of the American fleet, and the centerpiece of the most powerful Navy the world has ever seen, the aircraft carrier, is in danger of becoming like the battleships it was originally designed to support: big, expensive, vulnerable—and surprisingly irrelevant to the conflicts of the time” (3).
which the exercise administrators catalogued as reducing the carrier’s effectiveness by a meager 2% (Thompson 2007, 106).

An internal challenge to this carrier orthodoxy revealed the strength and fervor of the belief. When Admiral Elmo Zumwalt became Chief of Naval Operations in 1970, he was the first non-aviator to hold the post in nine years and was selected over 33 more senior officers (Cutler 1997). Zumwalt perceived an imbalance in the fleet, as the carrier-centric Navy was prepared to project power across the globe, but not to control the seas and waterways of the world with a sufficient number of ships (Zumwalt 1976, 60). Compared to the growing Soviet navy, the US Navy had too few ships of the right mix, which Zumwalt sought to correct with a “High-Low” combination. High-end ships like nuclear-powered carriers required complementary low-end ships like Zumwalt’s proposed Sea Control Ship that could be fielded with less gross capability but in higher numbers and in different types of water (Czarnecki 2008). Zumwalt knew his vision challenged the Navy’s traditional insistence on “traveling first class” (1976, 72), and his proposals were indeed opposed vigorously by the aviation and submarine unions of the Navy (Cutler 1997, 427). As Czarnecki describes it, Zumwalt’s radical idea was “not acceptable to the naval leadership because it veered away from the very large, nuclear archetype that had become an idée fixe for U.S. naval strategists” (2008, 272). Finally, the Navy’s commitment to the carrier ultimately became written into law, as section 5062 of United States Code, Title X, stipulates: “The naval combat forces of the Navy shall include not less than 11 operational aircraft carriers” (10 USC Sec. 5062).

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47 Central to this story is the towering personage of Admiral Hyman Rickover, the potenrate of the nuclear Navy. The internal clashes between Zumwalt, Rickover, and the aviation admirals created profound bureaucratic inefficiencies for the Navy. Rickover ruled the nuclear enterprise in the Navy, largely free of oversight by the CNO, due to his dual-hatted post in a civilian agency and his untouchable insulation from Congress. For a brief and balanced introduction to this complex Naval figure, see Duncan 1997.

48 The focus of historical effort here is on the period up to approximately 1980 — the point at which the case study analyses begin. As a point of observation, however, the modern Navy still pursues a carrier-centric operational scheme, but is less wedded specifically to the carrier itself and is more willing to acknowledge its vulnerabilities.
Summary of the Belief

While the specific form has changed over the years, the Navy’s commitment to the biggest-as-best has remained strong and largely unbroken. In sum, this belief generally hews to the following line:

To project maximum power, the US Navy should be organized around capital ships of the line—once battleships, now aircraft carriers. To destroy enemy fleets at their source, away from our shores, we should assemble maximum firepower on superior ships.

Conclusion

When Roger Barnett arrived on his first Navy ship as a brand new officer, he received some straightforward advice: “Son, if you want to be successful in this man’s Navy, you need to do only three things: keep your sides clean, shoot straight, and stay off the ^#%*& radio!” (2009, ix). This shorthand transmission of Navy culture communicated the importance of “order and discipline” (keeping the sides of the ship free of stray lines and equipment), “fighting spirit” (employing the ship as a weapon of war), and “self-reliance” (captains were expected to handle matters themselves, not call home for mother-May-I guidance). This seminal advice from a salty seaman captures in twelve words what I have labored to describe in twelve thousand.

In this chapter, I have sought to give enough detail to substantiate both the what and why of the Navy’s beliefs, but can only scratch the surface of a deep and fascinating historical record. I have provided only a first cut into the personality of the Navy, romping through its history at an almost reckless pace. Still, this survey captures elemental characteristics of the Navy that endure over time, differentiating it from its sister services in ways that are relevant for civil-military policymaking. As such, this chapter is a first step in breaking apart “the military” by

49 The most conspicuous omission is a discussion of the Navy’s remarkable battle record in World War II. The Navy’s experiences in World War II are in many ways the culminating embodiment of these six beliefs. While a World War II tale could have amplified any of the six sections in this chapter, I focused by and large on earlier experiences that helped form the beliefs rather than the epic conflagration that cemented them.
introducing one of the four organizations that comprise it. As explained at the beginning of the chapter, my contribution is more methodological than substantive, both in my inductive approach to capturing the Navy’s “operational code” (George 1969) and in the condensation of my findings for subsequent deductive analysis. Figure 4.1 summarizes the beliefs of a complex Navy in a simple format; and inasmuch as these beliefs comprise an enduring cultural pattern for the Navy, we expect its policy preferences to follow logically from them (Wildavsky 1987). Consequently, for the case study analysis that follows, these six beliefs will be used first to predict and then to explain the fact and form of the Navy’s policy preferences and political behavior. But first we must learn about the other three services as well, so we turn our attention to the keepers of order on the Navy’s first ships: the United States Marine Corps.
## SUMMARY OF NAVY CULTURAL BELIEFS

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<th>SHORTHAND</th>
<th>FULL BELIEF</th>
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<td><strong>ENDS</strong></td>
<td><strong>FULL BELIEF</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>An Armed Embassy of America: Anywhere, Anytime</td>
<td>The US Navy provides a unique instrument of national power by serving as a mobile archipelago of sovereign American presence and combat power anywhere in the world. The Navy therefore offers a flexible and full continuum of diplomatic leverage, from showing the flag to full combat operations of any type. A President’s foreign policy is underwritten and made credible by a large, powerful, and deployed fleet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>America and Her Navy Prosper Together</td>
<td>Since its earliest days, the United States has wanted and needed a strong Navy to expand and protect its commercial interests abroad. The Navy uniquely enabled a seafaring nation to expand its markets, and continues to protect the freedom of the seas, police international waters, and punish those who would interfere with prosperous commerce. With nothing to fear domestically from a large fleet, what is good for the Navy is good for America.</td>
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<td><strong>WAYS</strong></td>
<td><strong>FULL BELIEF</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Victory through Enlisted Order and Commissioned Judgment</td>
<td>Sailors afloat live in harm’s way. The sea is a ruthless host, and enemy ships may appear at any time from any direction. The crew must be prepared at all times to fight the sea or an enemy fleet, and such readiness can only come through vigilance, repetition, and total obedience. Leadership in this dynamic environment, however, requires experience at sea and sound naval judgment, not blind adherence to hard-and-fast rules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Independent Glory of Command at Sea</td>
<td>Ship captains have the unique responsibility to pursue American interests abroad, and they must be trusted fully to do so. On his ship, the Captain is the sovereign, uniquely equipped with the most seasoned judgment, superior skill, and total authority. Command at sea is every officer’s rightful aspiration, and should be conducted with boldness, daring, and pluck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Professional and Permanent Navy</td>
<td>A credible naval fleet cannot be summoned in short order like a militia, nor is a warship like a musket that can be pulled down from above the mantle. Fighting ships and able crews require vast resources, maritime infrastructure, shipbuilding expertise, and constant drilling by full-time professionals. Navies are effective when their ships and sailors are active and deployed, not laid up in ordinary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size Matters: Bigger-as-Better</td>
<td>To project maximum power, the American Navy should be organized around capital ships of the line – once battleships, now aircraft carriers. To destroy enemy fleets at their source, away from our shores, we should assemble maximum firepower on superior ships.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1: Summary of Navy Cultural Beliefs
Jarheads. Leathernecks. Devil Dogs. Marines. The United States Marine Corps is one of the most iconic fighting organizations in recorded history. As first responders to any geopolitical crisis, the Marines are “first to fight” anywhere in the world, for all types of hazardous missions. The Marine Corps boasts an elite fighting record, tackling our nation’s far-flung and fiercest conflicts with bravado and grit, while cultivating a sharply defined culture that Marines guard as vigilantly as any embassy. The other military services refer to their members as common-noun soldiers, sailors, and airmen—but there is nothing common about Marines, capitalized and elite. The other services provide jobs; the Marines provide a new identity. The bold, unmistakable strokes of Marine culture thus make it the easiest to capture of the four US military services. While the other services often hold nuanced beliefs that must be inferred between the lines, the Marines come right out and tell you what they believe. Their ideational space is most clearly defined, and their organizational boundaries are most clearly delineated. Marked by an institutional history of having to justify and defend its existence, the Marine Corps has learned to be clear and forthright about why and how it exists. While the salience of Marine culture facilitates description by outsiders, writing authentically about the Marine Corps gets complicated by the fact that “there are only two kinds of people who understand Marines: Marines and the enemy. Everyone else has a second-hand opinion.”

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1 In Heinl 1962, 567.
2 The origin of this quote is difficult to capture precisely. It is widely cited in various compilations as belonging to an Army General William Thornson in 1956. According to official Army records, however, there has never been a General William Thornson. The Marine Corps historian’s office has no official documentation of this quote in any of their records. Curiously, portions of the full “Thornson” quote seen here (<http://www.e27marines-
Still, I believe even an outsider can effectively interpret the resounding themes of the illustrious Marine story.

Before profiling the salient cultural beliefs of the Marine Corps, two important facets of the institution deserve mention. First, the Marines are unique among the four services in that their original primary mission is no longer a contemporary justification for their existence. As soldiers of the sea, Marines were an essential component of a Navy ship’s complement, serving as guards to protect the officers, quell mutinies, track down deserters, shoot from the fighting tops during naval battles, and serve as boarding or landing parties when required. The importance of these duties largely evaporated with the new Navy of the late 19th century, so the Corps’ existence has had to be perpetually justified on alternative grounds. Rather than being a pure functional response to a consistent security need, the Marines have been a malleable response to a variety of contingent needs throughout American history. This reality has shaped Marine Corps culture in profound ways, as the forthcoming analysis will explain.

A second dimension of Marine Corps institutional life that distinguishes it from the other services is the inner coherence of its culture. As other chapters of this dissertation describe, the other three services have notable internal status hierarchies and subcultures within them. Not so the Marine Corps, which is institutionally uncomfortable creating elite divisions within an already elite service (Ricks 1997a). Other than aviator wings, dive qualification badges, and airborne badges, Marines do not wear job specialty badges on their uniforms (Mahnken 2008), nor do they display unit insignia for division, regimental, or battalion affiliations. When Marine Corps legend Lieutenant General Chesty Puller was asked about

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1 stmardiv.org/tribute/thornson.htm>, accessed 5 September 2012) are used in both Ricks 1997a (p. 19) and Bradley 2000 (p. 70-71) without any attribution.

3 Ricks notes that Force Recon Marines were treated with both respect and suspicion by other Marines: respect for their capabilities, while suspicious of any attempts to create a sub-identity within the supra-identity of being a Marine. In the post-9/11 generation, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld directed the creation of Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC). Notably, this elite subdivision was directed from outside, not from the inside, and involved some significant adjustments within the Corps (Gurney and Smotherman 2010).
changing this policy, he gruffly replied, “No unit insignia is required. Marine is enough” (Hoffman 2001, 217). The Marine Corps is therefore a monarchical culture (Ehrhard 2000), with the infantryman dominant and all other specialties firmly in support thereof. Furthermore, the institutional divide between officers and enlisted Marines is intentionally minimized—all Marines are Marines, baptized into the same rites and rituals (Krulak 1984, 155). Additionally, the Marine Corps limits the variation of its job specialties and has no doctors, nurses, dentists, medical corpsmen, or chaplains in the Corps—the Navy provides these services to the Marines. This lack of internal divisions, vertically in rank and laterally in specialty, strengthens the Marine culture and makes it the most consistent and pervasive of the services. Finally, the Marine Corps has the fewest number of 4-star generals, with only three or four in active service at any time. This gives the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) an unusual degree of authority within the service and permits the Corps to line up squarely behind a single coherent message (Ehrhard 2000, 100; Meese and Wilson 2011, 130). Consequently, in the world of civil-military policymaking, we can expect the Marine Corps’ service culture to affect its preferences and behavior more consistently than the other three services.

The methodology behind this chapter mirrors the previous chapter on the Navy. I use the same slate of focused questions to guide my historical research, using official histories of the Marine Corps, other authoritative historical works, biographies, official websites, and immersion in the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico, Virginia. I rely on both primary and secondary sources, paying particular attention to the institutional history that the Marine Corps itself highlights as most central to its ethos. In his work on Marine Corps innovation and culture, Terry Terriff notes, “The narratives that constitute cultural identity…are

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4 This more egalitarian social structure contrasts markedly with the Corps’s sister service, the US Navy. These differences can cause tension on board Navy ships, as Navy officers enjoy privileges that Marine Corps officers viscerally shun. Navy officers, for example, enjoy “head-of-line” privileges and eat separately from the enlisted, whereas the Marine Corps insists that “officers eat last.” See Darcey 2012.

5 The Marine Corps does, however, have its own lawyers.
not always composed solely of history *per se*, for they may mix historical fact with the apocryphal and the mythical. Self-identity, in other words, is bound up in the stories that…the Marine Corps tells itself, that individual Marines tell each other” (2006, 217). The portrait painted in the following pages therefore relies on official histories appropriately salted with approved legends and myths—with the distinctions noted in the text or footnotes. As with chapter four, the history presented below is neither comprehensive nor chronological, but topically organized around the salient belief being discussed.

Using the same ends-ways-means typology employed for the Navy, the chapter begins by highlighting two Marine Corps beliefs about its *ends*. The first belief captures the pervasive sense that the Corps is first a *sea service*, with a history and mission that are necessarily intertwined with the Navy. The second captures the contingent nature of the Marine Corps, whose existence has been threatened by presidents, saved by Congress, and sustained by the enthusiastic support of the American people. The next two sections capture Marine Corps beliefs about ways. First, I describe the primacy of the Marine *identity* in sustaining an elite warrior fraternity; second, I detail the can-do, make-do spirit of a frugal institution that provides the nation with a superior return on its investment. Finally, the fifth belief of the chapter captures a belief about means: the glory of the individual Marine with a rifle. The chapter concludes with a summary of its main points.

### 5.1: Warriors from the Sea, Anywhere, for Anything

*The Continental Ship Providence, now lying at Boston, is bound on a short cruise, immediately; a few good men are wanted to make up her complement.*

— Marine Captain William Jones, in the *Providence Gazette*, 20 March 1779

As soldiers of the sea within the Department of the Navy, the Marine Corps adds the terrestrial punch to the Navy’s power projection. The Marine Corps is inherently a sea service,

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6 In Simmons 1998, 17.
connected strategically and organizationally to the United States Navy, with a mission that varies accordingly. Much of the Marine Corps story complements the Navy story profiled in chapter four, as the Corps carved out new roles for its elite warriors embedded within an ever-changing naval service. While the Navy serves as a mobile archipelago of American sovereignty around the world, the Marines contribute the next step of political-military commitment, offering the complementary staying power of American ground presence anywhere in the world to do anything the president asks. This first section of the chapter profiles this belief in greater depth, explaining the sources of the belief as captured in the Marines’ operational environment, founding context, and key events and exemplars.

Operational Environment and Founding Context

The early operational environment and founding context of the Marine Corps contribute markedly to this belief in the Marines’ core connection to the Navy mission. The operational environment of eighteenth century sailing ships necessarily involved a cadre of armed soldiers to perform tasks that complemented the sailing crew’s core mission of fighting the ship against hostile seas and enemy fleets. Marines “were as much a part of a man-of-war’s furniture as its spars, or sails, or guns,” explains Marine Corps historian Edwin Simmons. “Marines preserved internal order and discipline. Marines gave national character to the ship. Marines were uniformed, sailors were not” (1998, 1). Marines were thus part and parcel of a naval service; early debates about whether to create a Navy did not spur a corollary debate about a Marine Corps—the two were largely seen as a package deal. When the Congress authorized the construction of the first six frigates in 1794, it likewise authorized a complement of Marines to serve aboard those frigates. Similarly, when Congress created the Department of the Navy in April 1798, it followed suit shortly thereafter on 11 July 1798 to organize a Corps of Marines within that Navy Department, largely without debate or controversy (Toll 2007, 98; Millett 1980,
In this early operational environment, Marines constituted an inherent component of naval warfare, serving as boarding parties, sharpshooters, ship guards, landing forces, or whatever other roles the ship captain might require of them.

The Continental Marines of the Revolutionary War operated in this naval context, while proving their amphibious character by serving ably on land as well. In early fighting on Lake Champlain in May 1775, Army General Benedict Arnold raised a complement of Marines to serve aboard his *ad hoc* fleet (Moskin 1992, 27). Five months later, the Continental Congress formalized the colonies’ need for Marines, specifically for an operation to invade Halifax, Nova Scotia (Smith 1975). In response to the recommendations of the Nova Scotia committee, the Congress resolved on 10 November 1775 “that two Battalions of marines be raised,” with careful consideration to include only “such as are good seamen, or so acquainted with maritime affairs as to be able to serve to advantage by sea when required” (Clark 1966, Vol 2, 972).

Originally, plans directed the Marines be culled from the ranks of George Washington’s army outside of Boston. Washington, however, objected that selectively plucking seaworthy soldiers from his Continental Army would “entirely derange” the organizational schema he had labored to build. Consequently, he asked whether these Marines might be recruited in New York and Philadelphia, “where there must be now numbers of Sailors unemployed” (Clark 1966, Vol 2, 1071). Congress concurred, and offered Samuel Nicholas the first commission as a Marine officer on 28 November 1775 (Heinl 1962, 5). Nicholas proceeded to recruit the first American Marines, often staging his efforts from Tun Tavern in Philadelphia, which Marines continue to hail as their organizational birthplace.

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7 The end of the 10 November 1775 resolution specified that the new force “be distinguished by the names of the first and second battalions of American Marines, and that they be considered as part of the number which the continental Army before Boston is ordered to consist of” (Clark 1966, Vol 2, 972).

8 In an example of approved mythology eclipsing the historical record, the official Marine Corps recruiting site discusses the historical timeline of the Corps and suggests that Congress actually passed the 10 November 1775 resolution at Tun Tavern (see http://www.marines.com/history-heritage/timeline?articleId=TIMELINE_OVW_1770). Better evidence suggests that Congress approved the
After a successful recruiting effort, the first 288 Marines launched with the Continental Navy in February 1776, serving under the command of Commodore Esek Hopkins (Heinl 1962). The Nova Scotia mission had been cancelled, so the Marines and sailors went south to New Providence Island in the Bahamas to attack and secure British stores (Smith 1975) – the Marines’ first amphibious assault in what would become a long and storied pattern. For the remainder of the war, the Marines served far and wide on land and sea. They fought capably on Navy ships, participating in all of the spectacular raids of John Paul Jones, boarding enemy ships, shooting from the fighting tops of the sails, and helping to quell mutinies (Moskin 1992, 31). On land, Marines fought across the colonial landscape, to include supporting Washington’s army as he crossed the Delaware River to fight the battle of Trenton in December 1776 (Heinl 1962, 6). To the very end, the Marines remained fundamentally linked to the Navy, as Marine officers and enlisted troops remained in service as long as Navy ships remained in commission. When the end of war spelled the end of the Continental Navy, the Marines likewise disappeared into the quietude of hard-fought peace (Millett 1980, 24).

When the Barbary wars and the quasi-war with France spurred Congress to authorize the first United States Navy ships, the Marines were likewise reborn. Furthermore, Congress saw fit to organize a coherent Corps of Marines, rather than raising them ad hoc to serve only on specific Navy ships. On 11 July 1798, Congress passed “An Act for Establishing and Organizing a Marine Corps,” specifying that “in addition to the present military establishment, there shall be raised and organized a corps of marines.” The Marines’ hybrid character, serving capably by land and sea, was firmly institutionalized in this act. The legislation directed that Marines

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9 Resolution in its session at the Pennsylvania State House (Independence Hall), while Tun Tavern was more likely used just for recruiting.
9 The text of this act is available online at <https://www.mcu.usmc.mil/historydivision/Pages/Speeches.aspx>. (Accessed 24 August 2012). Even though this 11 July 1798 date is the official birth of the Marine Corps, Marines energetically celebrate 10 Nov 1775 as their birthday. The Marines celebrate their organizational birthday much more passionately than any of the other three services.
were subject to the articles of war (like the Army) when serving on land, and subject to Navy regulations at sea (like the Navy). As the next section of the chapter will detail more fully, the Marines thus held liminal bureaucratic ground, uncomfortably wedged between the Army and Navy. Still, the Marine Corps was doubtless a sea service at heart, organized under the Navy Department, and thus fated to define itself in naval terms and in rhythm with naval developments.

Events and Exemplars

From these seminal days of the eighteenth century, the Marine Corps story continued to develop in parallel with the Navy. Wherever the Navy went, the Marines were with them; whatever glories the Navy compiled, the Marines helped make possible. As the Navy busily sailed around the world in the 19th century, showing the flag and negotiating treaties, the Marines were there planting the flag on foreign soil. Furthermore, the Marines often got “dropped off,” left ashore to handle protracted and thorny conflicts. Many pages of Marine Corps history recount its expertise in small wars, serving as colonial infantry and counterinsurgents in Nicaragua, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and elsewhere across the globe.10

The Marine Corps - Navy relationship experienced a major shock in the 1890s, when an epochal shift in the Navy prompted an equally important development for the Marine Corps. As chapter four described, the keel of the “new Navy” was laid in the closing decade of the 19th century, with a new fleet of steam-powered steel-hulled ships fulfilling the heady Mahanian doctrine of sea power. The logistical realities of these new ships, coupled with the organizational dynamics of an evolving Navy, conspired to push the Marine Corps into a new era. Logistically, the new steam-powered ships required an extensive port infrastructure to

10 The Marines’ expertise in small wars led to their publication of the Small Wars Manual in 1940, often regarded as a timeless classic of military strategy, and the foundation on which the Army and Marine Corps built the new US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual in 2007.
keep them supplied with coal. The transition from sail to steam bore tradeoffs; ships exchanged their reliance on the wind for a dependence on coal. Extended cruises at sea now required coaling stations for resupply, which had to be secured at foreign ports from foreign rulers. This new dependence presented a challenge to the Navy and an opportunity for the Marine Corps. The visionary leader of the Marines during this crucial transition was John Lejeune, who intuitively understood “the relationship between the global needs of the Navy and the creation and defense of overseas naval bases” (Krulak 1984, 73). Overcoming significant opposition within the Marine Corps, Lejeune recognized that the Navy’s hunger for coal would need to be sustained by advanced bases, held and defended by elite Marines (Bartlett 1991). Lejeune advocated the advanced base force idea with clarity and vision, eventually winning over his Marine brethren. In 1916, Commandant of the Marine Corps Major General George Barnett testified to Congress: “The fortification and defense of naval advance or temporary bases for the use of the fleet has been made the principal war mission of the Marine Corps” (Millett 1980, 285).

After World War I, an interest in defending advanced bases evolved into planning for the seizure of bases through amphibious assaults. While naysayers pointed to the failed Anglo-French landings at Gallipoli in 1915 to suggest that amphibious assaults were nearly impossible, Lejeune led the Marine Corps toward its defining mission of the twentieth century. In 1921, with the Japanese naval threat on the rise, Lejeune supported the research of Major Earl Ellis, who actively devised a plan for fighting the Japanese in the Pacific (Linn and Neimeyer 1995). Ellis’s influential study, “Advanced Base Operations in Micronesia, 1921” became the blueprint for the Navy and Marine Corps amphibious operations in the Pacific twenty years later (Bartlett 1991, 194). From that point forward, the Marine Corps began to organize, train, and equip its forces to perform amphibious assaults. In 1933, the Corps created the Fleet Marine Force to
serve “in a state of readiness for operations with the Fleet” (Navy Department, General Order 241, 1933), thus institutionalizing the force structure required for amphibious operations. Twenty years later, when obscure Pacific islands like Tarawa, Peleliu, and Iwo Jima became household names, the Marines’ obsession with amphibious operations became their signature contribution to the Allied victory.

During the Cold War, the Marines’ strategic attachment to the Navy remained largely in effect. Both sea services styled themselves as forces in readiness, with the Navy prepared to be anywhere at sea and the Marines prepared to do anything ashore. In an era of push-button nuclear absolutism, the Marines remained content to be decidedly conventional, expeditionary, and flexible. Marines deployed to hotspots like the Suez and Lebanon, putting forces ashore to perform varied missions at the direction of the president. In sum, the Marines’ organizational vision for the Fleet Marine Force in the decades after World War II was to serve as “minutemen…held in readiness to be moved instantly with the Fleet to any part of the world to strike hard and promptly to forestall at its beginning any attempt to disrupt the peace of the world” (Millett 1980, 451).

Summary of the Belief

From the outset, Marines have been—and remain—a sea service of a distinctly hybrid character. Tasked to serve on land and sea, one key aspect of Marine beliefs about their organizational ends includes this core attachment to the Navy. In the conclusion to his insightful portrait of the Marine Corps, Lieutenant General Victor Krulak observes, “For the Marines, the maritime nature of the globe creates at once a grave responsibility and an elegant

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11 This core attachment has weakened somewhat among the current crop of junior Marine Corps officers, many of whom have never been on a Navy ship. In recent years, during prolonged land campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Marine Corps has had to serve more like a second land army—a trend that unsettles Marine Corps leaders. In 2010, Commandant of the Marine Corps General James T. Conway, observed, “When I go to meetings and I hear ‘Army and Marine Corps’ talked about in the same breath, I get uncomfortable. It should be ‘Navy and Marine Corps.’ One day, again, it will be. But right now, we’re simply doing what the Nation asks us to do.” See Gurney and Smotherman 2010.
opportunity. It makes a powerful statement of a truth the Corps must never, never forget—that their future, as has their past, lies with the Navy” (1984, 227). In light of these realities, an enduring belief of the Marine Corps is this:

The Marine Corps is a maritime service, umbilically connected to the Navy through strategy and organization. The Marine Corps serves as an embedded ever-ready elite fighting force on the Naval archipelago, prepared to serve as needed on ships or on land. Marines are always prepared to fight their way to the shore, to secure a beachhead of American presence, and to conduct whatever mission the President directs.

5.2: Survive to Serve

In terms of cold, mechanical logic, the United States does not need a Marine Corps. However, for good reasons which completely transcend cold logic, the United States wants a Marine Corps.

– Lieutenant General Victor Krulak, USMC

Marines sail the seas with the Navy, fight on land like the Army, and fly tactical and transport aircraft like the Air Force. Moreover, they do so at a much smaller scale than the other three services. Is this a wasteful duplication of effort, or do the Marines offer a whole that exceeds the sum of its parts? As the previous section discussed, the Marines are indeed a sea service, strategically linked to the Navy; in practice, however, the Marines’ hybrid character puts them on contested ground. While the other three services have a clear domain of war that defines their existence, the Marines serve across all three domains of air, land, and sea. Like low-country inhabitants fighting the sea, Marines have had to create their own institutional turf by reclaiming land and fighting for every square inch.

Furthermore, the Marines’ fight for turf is a byproduct of their charter. By creating an organization to serve both by land and by sea, Congress birthed a military service that has lacked robust institutional protection for much of its life. Like a pinball swatted by the Army,

12 Krulak 1984, xv.
Navy, and various presidential administrations, the Marine Corps has only narrowly escaped being flushed into obscurity. At numerous points throughout its life, the Marine Corps has been unwanted surplus within the defense establishment, yet its unique attachment to the American public has ensured that Marines have had friends in Congress to keep them alive. Consequently, the Marines’ precarious position confers an abiding institutional paranoia and a concomitant passion for public affairs. Marines know that they serve at the pleasure of the American people, without whose confidence and esteem the Corps would likely have already perished. Absent a rational need, the Marines have to be wanted, and are thus passionate about being useful to the nation. This section traces the lineage of this institutional paranoia and mission diversity, from the founding of the Marine Corps through the multiple armed attempts on its life.

Operational Environment and Founding Context

The Marines have been wanted more than needed since before their much celebrated birthday of 10 November 1775. As referenced in the previous section of this chapter, the continental Marines were originally proposed by the Nova Scotia committee of the Continental Congress to pursue an invasion of Halifax. On 9 November 1775, the Continental Congress considered the report of the Nova Scotia committee, which specified the necessary arms and organization for two battalions of marines to conduct the invasion (Clark 1966, Vol 2, 957). Furthermore, the committee report recognized that while the proposed Halifax mission prompted the formation of marine battalions, the marines would prove useful even without that specific operation. The report offered this observation: “Should this Expedition by any Accident be found impracticable, these would be two Battalions of the Utmost service, being capable of serving either by sea or Land” (Clark 1966, Vol 2, 957). In other words, we are recommending two battalions of Marines to invade Nova Scotia; but should you decide to scrap the Nova
Scotia mission, we still recommend those two battalions of Marines – we will be glad we have them. The Marines’ have thus been wanted before they have been needed since the day before they were born.13

The Army and Navy, however, did not share this esteem.14 The presence of Marines onboard Navy ships, while an essential complement in the eyes of the officers, served as an insult to the ship’s sailors (Karsten 1972, 89). The presence of Marines implied that the ship’s crew needed constant oversight and could only be expected to obey at the point of a bayonet. Tension between Marines and sailors was thus built in to the very fabric of their work, with little respect flowing in either direction. As a keen outsider on the USS Constellation observed, “A marine is a sort of ambidextrous animal—half horse, half alligator. His duties alternate between those of a sailor and soldier. He is a being for whom the genuine [sailor] entertains very little respect, and on the other hand, his contempt is repaid, if not with interest, at least without abating a solitary farthing of the principal” (Wines 1833, 65).

Neither did the Army particularly care for the Marines, who constituted a partial duplication of its terrestrial mission. According to the 1798 Act that created the Marine Corps, the Marines serving on land as sentries and guards were subject to the Army’s regulations and processes, but the Army showed little interest in helping Marines with legal, administrative, or acquisition matters. Instead, one of the early Commandants of the Marine Corps, Colonel Archibald Henderson, found himself institutionally unmoored. In a letter to the Secretary of the Navy, Henderson complained, “Our isolated Corps, with the Army on one side and the Navy on the other (neither friendly) has been struggling ever since its establishment for its very existence. We have deserved hostility from neither, more especially the Navy” (Heinl 1962, 33).

13 Indeed, the Nova Scotia mission was scrapped but the raising of two battalions of Marines was not.
14 Marine legend holds that after the Revolutionary War, all that was left was a corps of mules and the two battalions of Marines. The Army and Navy flipped a coin to decide who got the mules and who got the Marines; the Army won, and chose the mules (Moskin 1992, 24).
From its earliest days, therefore, the Marine Corps has inhabited the institutional low ground in the defense establishment. Wanted by Congress while spurned by its fellow services, the Marine Corps’ early years foreshadowed a protracted fight for its life in the years ahead.

Events and Exemplars

Two major threads of events reinforced these early trends. First, the Marine Corps’ existence was threatened and attacked — but ultimately preserved by Congress — no less than fifteen times over its history (Krulak 1984, 13). Second, the Marines’ strategy in response to all of these attacks was to maintain a firm attachment to the American people, and to prove their inestimable worth in whatever missions they were given. Both of these threads will be considered in turn.

Institutional Assaults

While detailing all fifteen death-threats to the Marine Corps is beyond the scope of this chapter, a brief summary of three major events will sufficiently paint the picture. One of the first major battles came during the administration of President Andrew Jackson (Simmons 1998, 37). Spurred on by the Board of Navy Commissioners, Jackson sent a message to Congress on 8 December 1829 recommending that the Corps be merged into the Army’s artillery or infantry “as the best mode of curing the many defects in its organization” (Heinl 1962, 37). Despite additional recommendations from the secretary of the Navy to discontinue the Marine Corps, Congress held hearings in 1830 and saved the Corps for the first of many times. Still, Congress heard the many complaints and attempted a bureaucratic fix by passing “An Act for the Better Organization of the Marine Corps” on 30 June 1834. The Act specified the Corps as a separate service within the Navy department and simplified its governance by subjecting Marines to naval regulations at sea and on land. Further, it placed Marine officers on equal footing with

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15 For a scholarly analysis of the institutional dynamics of Marine Corps survival, see Marutollo 1990.
officers of the same rank in the other services, though it prevented Marine officers from “exercis[ing] command over any navy yard or vessel of the United States.” In sum, the Congress took action to preserve the Marine Corps, while subordinating its functions and status under the Navy.

A second frontal assault on the Marine Corps came at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. As the previous section of this chapter explained, the emergence of the New Navy in the late 1800s prompted a reconsideration of the Navy’s organizational life. Led by Lieutenant William Fullam, a group of naval reformers reinvigorated an old cry to remove Marines from navy ships. Fullam suggested that the presence of Marines retarded the development of a professional navy by creating a “penal colony” atmosphere of suspicious supervision (Millett 1980, 122). Instead, Fullam generously offered the suggestion that the Marine Corps focus on being an expeditionary force prepared to perform the advanced base mission. While Fullam’s suggestion proved prophetically invaluable to the life of the Corps, Marines were loath to give up any mission, even one whose utility was increasingly limited. A vocal debate raged for years between various factions in the Navy, with some calling for the removal of Marines from ships, others the abolition of the Corps, and still others for maintaining the status quo.

The debate climaxed in 1908 when Navy reformers convinced President Teddy Roosevelt to sign Executive Order 969 on November 12th. Roosevelt believed that the Marine Corps had grown too self-important and ordered that Marines be removed from Navy ships and relegated to garrison-protection duties. In a 19 November 1908 letter to his wife,

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17 The Marine Corps’s response and transition to this mission, as led by John Lejeune, was discussed in the previous section.
Roosevelt’s military aide Captain Archibald Butt quoted Roosevelt’s comment to him that day about the Marines:

I do not hesitate to say that their downfall...is due largely to themselves. They have augmented to themselves such importance, and their influence, which they have gained by pandering to every political influence, has given them such an abnormal position for the size of their corps that they have simply invited their own destruction. I do not hesitate to say they should be absorbed into the army, and no vestige of their organization should be allowed to remain. They cannot get along with the navy, and as a separate command with the army the conditions would be intolerable. (Abbott ed. 1924, 184-5)

Congress, however, had other ideas. The chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee was Thomas Butler, father of Marine Corps legend Smedley Butler, who would not let the Corps be dismissed so easily. Butler held hearings in January 1909, and the Marines’ appeals ultimately won the day. Congress passed an amendment to the appropriations bill on 3 March 1909 that put Marines back on Navy ships, thus preserving their original (though outdated) function. Allan Millett, one of the premier historians of the Marine Corps, notes how remarkable this bureaucratic feat truly was. The Marines repelled an assault from two presidents and major factions of the Navy and Army, while invoking unconvincing arguments to do so. “When a military service can defend itself on grounds other than its present and future utility,” Millett writes, “it has clearly reached a point of high institutional autonomy and stability. Such was the case of the Marine Corps in 1909” (1980, 144).

The third major attack on the Marine Corps began while bullets and bombs still streaked across Europe and the Pacific during World War II. While war raged, the American military services jockeyed domestically in the debate over unifying the services. The Army’s proposed post-war plan, which generally held sway with President Truman, involved unifying the services under a single Defense Department, with a single secretary of defense and a single military chief of staff (Zegart 1999, 57). Further, the proposed plan gave the secretary and the chief of staff power to determine service roles and missions, a possibility that entailed disaster
for the Marine Corps. A Corps at the mercy of the proposed secretary and chief meant a Corps marginalized to perform insignificant missions with a paltry force. Instead, the Marines vigorously pursued Congressional protection, asking that their amphibious role and mission be coded into law, thus shielding the Corps from the eradicating pen of a defense secretary.

The Marines’ advocacy climaxed on 6 May 1946 with the testimony of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Alexander Vandegrift. In his remarks, Vandegrift powerfully articulated the Marine position, noting first the nature of the threat, in which “the passage of the unification legislation as now framed will in all probability spell extinction for the Marine Corps” (U.S. Senate 1946, 106). After thoroughly describing the unique contributions of the Marine Corps to the national defense, Vandegrift reminded Congress of its unique role in creating and preserving the Corps:

In its capacity as a balance wheel this Congress has on five occasions since the year 1829 reflected the voice of the people in examining and casting aside a motion which would damage or destroy the United States Marine Corps. The Marine Corps feels that the question of its continued existence is likewise a matter for determination by the Congress and not one to be resolved by departmental legerdemain or a quasi-legislative process enforced by the War Department General Staff. The Marine Corps, then, believes that it has earned this right— to have its future decided by the legislative body which created it—nothing more. Sentiment is not a valid consideration in determining questions of national security. We have pride in ourselves and in our past but we do not rest our case on any presumed ground of gratitude owing us from the Nation. The bended knee is not a tradition of our corps. If the Marine as a fighting man has not made a case for himself after 170 years of service, he must go. But I think you will agree with me that he has earned the right to depart with dignity and honor, not by subjugation to the status of uselessness and servility planned for him by the War Department. (U.S. Senate 1946, 118-119)

Ultimately, the Congress did shelter the Marine Corps in the National Security Act of 1947, specifying its roles and missions so that no secretary or chief of staff could dismiss it with a pen. Moreover, Congress strengthened that protection five years later in the Douglas-Mansfield Act, passed on 28 June 1952, which stipulated the Marine Corps’ minimum force

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18 The animosity against the Marine Corps seemingly came from all corners. A Brigadier General in the Army Air Corps (soon to be Air Force) publicly described the Corps as a “small bitched-up Army talking Navy lingo. We are going to put those Marines in the Regular Army and make efficient soldiers out of them” (Caraley 1966, 151).
19 Further quotes from General Vandegrift’s testimony will note only the page number from the same Congressional record cited here.
structure as “not less than three combat divisions and three air wings” (Pub.L. 82-416, 66 Stat. 282). Additionally, the Act made the Commandant of the Marine Corps a statutory member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) for all matters “which directly concern the United States Marine Corps.” These pieces of legislation helped to establish the Corps on ever more solid footing, and reinforced the long legacy of Congressional protection for an oft-besieged body of warriors.

Anything for the American People

The constant assaults on the Marine Corps’ existence provide one important strand of this Marine belief. The complementary strand involves a willingness to perform any mission, big or small, as called upon by the nation. Marines recognize that their existence remains contingent on their excellence in whatever mission they are given, coupled with the esteem of the American people, as represented in Congress. Consequently, Marines across the decades took part in a remarkably wide array of missions and tasks, sometimes in the remotest corners of the world, and other times squarely before the public eye.

Since its organizational genesis, the Marine Corps has paid keen attention to serving the American people as directly and conspicuously as possible. The trend began with the very first Commandant of the Marine Corps William Burrows, who taxed each Marine officer ten dollars and used the funds to start the Marine Corps band. The band gave free concerts in Philadelphia and Washington and became much beloved by the public (Millett 1980, 32). The tradition continues to this day, as Marines still conduct public parades and concerts at the Marine Barracks in southeast Washington, DC, and at the Iwo Jima Memorial in Arlington, Virginia. In a much different public service role, Marines were called to guard the US mail against robbers and thieves in the 1920s and did so with typical Marine pluck. Secretary of the Navy Edwin Denby gave shoot-to-kill orders, and made it clear that the mail would arrive or

20 For a compelling recent work on this subject, focusing on the period between World War II and Korea, see O’Connell 2012.
there would be a dead Marine at his post (Heinl 1962, 251). Elsewhere, Marines were even called in to quell domestic riots and clean up civic police forces (Schmidt 1987).

Marine Corps hero Smedley Butler typified this public engagement while serving as base commander at Quantico, Virginia, in the 1920s. Butler, whose father chaired the House Naval Affairs Committee, understood the importance of endearing the Corps to the American people. He built a football stadium to host games between Marines and college teams, staged Civil War reenactments at various battlefields, and even deployed Marines to Union Station in DC to dig it out from a major snowstorm (Schmidt 1987, 130). Continuing Butler’s legacy during the unification debates of 1947-1948, Marines started the “Toys for Tots” program—which continues to this day—to provide new toys to poor or disadvantaged youth in local communities. Throughout its proud history, the Corps has understood the message placarded above the desk of Brigadier General Robert Denig, head of Marine Corps public affairs during World War II: “If the public becomes apathetic about the Marine Corps, the Marine Corps will cease to exist” (Cameron 1994, 100). Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal understood this core connection as the Marines raised the American flag atop Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima on 23 February 1945. On the command ship USS Eldorado, Forrestal remarked to Marine Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith that the raising of that flag “means a Marine Corps for the next 500 years” (Smith and Finch 1949, 261).21

**Summary of the Belief**

Ironically, elite Marine warriors have had to fight bureaucratic battles for survival after many of their combat victories abroad. Birthed by Congress into a liminal position between the Army and Navy, the Marine Corps has survived by doing any and every job, doing so with excellence, and by maintaining a close tie with the American public. These trends help to

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21 Krulak reports that out of Forrestal’s hearing, Smith then commented, “When the war is over and money is short they will be after the Marines again, and a dozen Iwo Jimas would make no difference” (1984, 15). Smith does not record such a comment in his autobiography (1949).
resolve how Marines can be “paradoxically committed to both tradition and change” (Warren 2005, 9). In its justified pursuit of organizational survival, the Marine Corps has glorified its proud and unbroken tradition of service to the American people, while pursuing the technological and organizational changes necessary to maintain a viable mission. These twin strands of Marine DNA create a dual commitment to tradition and change, inspiring this belief:

*The Marine Corps exists because the American people want it to exist. As the smallest of the four services, whose tasks span the domains of warfare dominated by the other three, the Marine Corps risks being eliminated or reduced to insignificance. Even though the Marine Corps’ originally prescribed mission has faded, now that America has the Corps, the country is—and has been—well served by using it. Consequently, the Corps cares less about how it is used and more passionately that it be used and perpetuated.*

### 5.3: Elite Warrior Identity

*You’ve got bayonets, haven’t you?*

— Colonel Chesty Puller, Commanding Officer of the 1st Marine Regiment, in response to a subordinate on Guadalcanal, running low on ammunition, who requested to fall back.22

The first two sections of this chapter highlighted beliefs about Marine *ends*—the north stars of purpose by which the Corps navigates. This section discusses a core belief about Marine *ways*, focusing on the dominance of the Marine identity as an elite warrior class. If the first two beliefs suggest the destination, this belief identifies the method of navigation. The Marine way is a clearly articulated and consistently reinforced commitment to *being a Marine*, assuming a new identity that subsumes all other sub-identities. Furthermore, the meta-identity of being a Marine involves being a steward of the Marine Corps legacy and cultivating the elite warrior ethos that sets the Corps apart. Importantly, this emphasis on Marine identity serves to reinforce the belief just discussed—by making service in the Marine Corps a matter of existential reality, Marines heighten their vigilance against institutional extinction. When

22 In Hoffman 2001, 189.
service in the Corps is not just something you do but who you are, any threats to the institution are therefore taken seriously and eliminated powerfully.

While members of the other three services often speak of being in the Army, Navy, or Air Force, members of the Marine Corps profess an identity: they are Marines. Service in the Marine Corps is not merely a punch-card profession, a way to pay for college, or a place to gain useful job skills for civilian life. Marine recruiting efforts, in fact, make no promises of career benefits or ancillary utility other than the opportunity to be a Marine. The other three services often recruit on the basis of college tuition benefits, the opportunity to see the world, or as a way to learn valuable computer, technical, or leadership skills. Marine recruiting, however, focuses on the elite warrior image and the opportunity for battle. Recruiting posters from 1907 illustrated these differences, as the Army hawked, “Join the Army and learn a trade”; the Navy offered the chance to “Join the Navy and See the World”; and the Marine Corps declared simply, “First to Fight” (Krulak 1984, 176).

Recruited on the basis of joining an elite warrior fraternity, new recruits find this message powerfully reinforced from their first moments of Marine recruit training at Parris Island, South Carolina, or San Diego, California. Recruits crossing the causeway onto Parris Island see a sign hailing their new home as the place “Where the Difference Begins.” From their first moments, recruits are physically and emotionally stripped of identifying traits like their haircuts, personal space, or proper names. Recruits are forbidden to use their own names, or even personal pronouns, and must identify themselves as “this recruit” (Ricks 1997a). Marine Lieutenant General (Ret.) Victor Krulak describes this process as an “egoectomy,” the first step in replacing a self-centered personal identity with the larger Marine identity (1984, 161). Through this ritual baptism, the Marine Corps achieves the “mystical alchemy” of transforming

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23 Ricks 1997a offers a useful journalistic view of a platoon going through Marine recruit training.
isolated individuals into a unified Corps (Krulak 1984, 159). As a result, named recruits become anonymous Marines and thus part of something much larger and more significant. “The molten crucible called Marine-recruit training,” explains Krulak, “has produced a line of furiously loyal men who have learned that the Marine is the Corps and the Corps is the Marine” (1984, 174). Consequently, individual greatness is not hailed in the same way as collective greatness. While the Army, for example, celebrates and venerates its great generals, the Marines do not. The great Army general is an important icon of its institution, but the Marines idolize the individual Marine rifleman whose name is unknown (Ehrhard 2000, 99).

Personal identities thus yield to a corporate Marine identity, rooted in the Marines’ glorious battle record and elite warrior ethos. Marines are deliberate about teaching and preaching their organizational history, using a fairly clear canon of events and battles that communicate what it means to be a Marine. As the following sections highlight, the Marine identity involves an aggressive willingness to run to the sound of the guns, fight doggedly, never retreat, and take care of one’s fellow Marines at all costs. What follows is a brief recounting of the Marine battle canon, describing the events and lessons that comprise the Marine identity.

Operational Environment and Founding Context

The Marines’ initial impetus for cultivating its elite status derived from the conditions explained in the first two sections of this chapter. The Marines’ attachment to the Navy created the first operational need for a disciplined, elite fighting force, distinct from the sailors onboard (Millett 1980, xvii). To inculcate a higher disciplinary standard required of peace-keepers, mutiny-suppressors, and deserter-catchers, the Marine Corps maintained strict protocols for drill, dress, and appearance. Furthermore, the first official Commandant of the Marine Corps, Lieutenant Colonel William Burrows, strove mightily to burnish the reputation of the Corps in
its earliest days (Heinl 1962). Fully aware of the Corps' cramped status in between the Army and Navy, Burrows turned the Corps' small size into an asset, cultivating its *eliteness* as its comparative advantage.

These institutional motivations for eliteness soon found support in the throes of combat. During the Barbary wars with Tripoli in the early nineteenth century, a minuscule detachment of Marines fought on the “shores of Tripoli,” in action that would be forever hallowed in the opening line of the Marine Hymn. While naval forces blockaded Tripoli in an effort to subjugate the Bashaw Yusuf Karamanli, Marine First Lieutenant Presley O’Bannon worked with American consul William Eaton to effect a different solution (Toll 2007). Eaton devised a plan to support Yusuf’s exiled brother Hamet in a plot to take the throne by force. To support Eaton’s mission, O’Bannon asked Navy Commodore Samuel Barron for 100 enlisted Marines to join him in the expedition; Barron granted only seven (Heinl 1962, 15). So Eaton, O’Bannon, and seven Marines gathered in Alexandria, Egypt, and cobbled together a force of several hundred Greek and Arab mercenaries to help Hamet snatch the Tripolitan crown from his brother. This polyglot band of warriors then marched 600 miles westward across North Africa and climaxed their efforts against Yusuf at the battle of Derna on 27 April 1805. Despite suffering 50% casualties with two Marines killed and two wounded, O’Bannon and his Marines proved victorious, and raised the American flag above the enemy fortification—the first time the stars and stripes were raised on foreign soil (Fredriksen 2011, 14). Indeed, “[t]he marines have raised it in many curious corners since” (Abbot 1918, 40).

Despite this great military victory, Eaton’s mission to put Hamet on the throne was superseded by a parallel American effort. On 4 June 1805, a separate diplomatic mission to Tripoli made peace with Yusuf, thereby undercutting the Marines’ mission with Hamet. Nevertheless, the action of eight Marines fighting courageously on foreign soil sank deeply into
the soul of the Corps. The rallying cry “To the Shores of Tripoli” served as the Marine Corps motto for a period and eventually became enshrined in the Marine Hymn. Marine Corps officers still carry the Mameluke sword, a curved blade reportedly given by Hamet to Presley O’Bannon as a grateful testimony to the courageous work of his Marines (Moskin 1992, 38). The political insignificance of the battle does not matter to Marines; the approved lesson of Tripoli is that they went where they were sent, in the smallest of numbers, and fought valiantly to great effect.

*Events and Exemplars*

The elite action in Derna set the stage for two hundred more years of gallantry in combat. Marines fought bravely and faithfully all over the world, serving as colonial infantry and counterinsurgents in Korea, Cuba, Samoa, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Panama, Mexico, Nicaragua, Mexico, Haiti, China, the Philippines, and beyond (Boot 2002). The following narrative does not attempt to capture the full scope of the Marines’ battle record, but focuses on the shining beacons that illuminate nearly every account of Marine Corps history. Recruit textbooks, the Marine Corps website, the National Museum of the Marine Corps, and definitive histories of the Corps reinforce a common canon of events that define the Marine warrior identity.

The War of 1812, the Indian wars in the American southeast (1836), the Mexican War (1846), the Spanish-American War (1898), the Boxer Rebellion (1900), and the military action in Veracruz, Mexico, (1914) all provide important instances of Marine Corps excellence in battle, but generally hold second-tier status in the Marine canon.24 One of the seminal first-tier battles to define the modern Marine Corps came on the outskirts of Paris during World War I, in the

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24 The Marines’ action in the Mexican War inspired the first line of the Marine Hymn: “From the halls of Montezuma.” This event is thus enshrined in Marine Corps legend, but more for the fact *that* it happened, rather than for what specifically occurred or how.
forests of Belleau Wood. There, the Marine Corps moved beyond its primitive role as colonial infantry and ship guards and met its first well-armed professional fighting force—"an acid test of the Marines’ grit and dash" (Abbot 1918, 302). In a month-long campaign to defend the eastern approaches to Paris in June 1918, the Marines fought harder and suffered more than ever before. Between June 6-12, the Marines lost 1,087 men, more than they had suffered in their entire history to that point (Fredriksen 2011, 81).

The ferocious action at Belleau Wood contributed many memorable phrases to Marine legend. When a retreating French officer counseled the newly arrived Marines to do likewise, Marine Captain Lloyd Williams retorted, "Retreat, hell! We just got here!" (Millett 1980, 301). Later, war correspondent Floyd Gibbons reported an audacious rallying cry from Marine Corps legend Sergeant Major Dan Daly, who urged the men of his platoon to join him in an assault by asking, "Come on, you sons-of-bitches. Do you want to live forever?" (Dieckmann 1960, 24).

Additionally, Belleau Wood birthed one of the enduring Marine Corps nicknames, as the German soldiers reportedly started calling the Marines "Teufelhunden," or "Devil Dogs." While no actual historical evidence documents this nickname in German records, the beloved nickname and apocryphal myth persist (Simmons 1998, 100). Finally, in the grandest of compliments, the French renamed the bloodied ground after its staunchest defenders, "Bois de la Brigade de Marine" (Moskin 1992, 123). The legend of Belleau Wood, therefore, is an enduring testimony of Marine grit and endurance, readiness for battle, and courage in the face of death. That legacy found its deepest reinforcement twenty-five years later in the islands of the Pacific.

Without a doubt, the defining campaign in Marine Corps history is its amphibious dominance of the Pacific in World War II. From Guadalcanal (1942) to Tarawa (1943) to Peleliu...
(1944), Marines fought savage battles against determined Japanese forces, refining and improving their skills in amphibious landings against an entrenched enemy force. The culmination of the Pacific campaign came in 1945 on eight square miles of volcanic ash against 22,000 dug-in Japanese fighting for their lives—the battle for Iwo Jima (Bartlett and Sweetman 2008, 291). From the moment Marines came ashore on 19 February 1945 until the guns fell silent a month later, the fighting and savagery eclipsed anything the most grizzled of Marines had yet experienced. “I’m a veteran of three wars,” recounted Major General Fred Haynes, then the Operations Officer of the 28th Marine Regiment on Iwo Jima. “None of the other battles I’ve seen or even heard of compare to Iwo Jima. There’s never been anything like it since...It was the definitive event of my life” (Warren 2005, 36). Four days into the battle, AP photographer Joe Rosenthal caught on film the iconic moment of the iconic battle: the raising of the American flag on top of Iwo Jima’s Mount Suribachi. Rosenthal’s epic photo captured the essence of the Marine Corps, with six faceless warriors striving mightily, corporately, to raise an American flag in the midst of raging battle. The six flag raisers typified the cost of the Marine effort: only two walked off the island, as three were killed and one wounded. Rosenthal’s photo became the template for the Marine Corps Memorial in Arlington, VA, and Iwo Jima became the undisputed centerpiece of Marine warrior culture. “Indeed, Iwo lies at the center of how Marines define themselves,” notes James Warren. “Attacking from the sea is what Marines do. And they do it to win. Marines never quit. Iwo Jima proved that” (2005, 7).

A third major event in the warrior life of the Marine Corps, and the last profiled in this section, is the Marines’ heroic contribution to the Korean War. First, the Marines infused new life and rugged strength into the weary battle lines of the Pusan perimeter in August 1950. As

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26 Bradley 2000 offers useful background on the personal stories of the six flag raisers: five Marines and one Navy corpsman.

27 Even the exterior architecture of the National Museum of the Marine Corps is a stylized representation of this epic flag-raising.
the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade deployed across the perimeter to strengthen the fragile lines, Commanding Officer Brigadier General Edward Craig forcefully declared, “It has been necessary for troops now fighting in Korea to pull back at times, but I am stating now that no unit in this brigade will retreat except on orders from an authority higher than the 1st Marine Brigade. You will never receive an order to retreat from me” (Heinl 1962, 539). The Marines fought effectively against difficult odds, prevailing and pushing back the North Korean forces. From the defense of the Pusan perimeter to the tactically demanding amphibious landing at Inchon on 15 September 1950 to the capture of Seoul, the Marines lived up to the warrior image enshrined at Iwo Jima.

The signature event of the Korean conflict, however, came in the impossibly bitter cold of the Chosin Reservoir campaign. After capturing Seoul, American forces under General Douglas MacArthur were ordered to race north toward the Yalu River in four dispersed columns along detached mountain valleys. The 1st Marine Division advanced north, in between the Army’s 3rd Division to the west and the U.S. 7th Division to the east (Russ 1999). The Marines advanced along a single narrow mountain road toward the Chosin Reservoir; “[a]nd here, in November 1950, winter came early, howling off the roof of the world, screaming across the frozen Yalu, the worst winter the world had seen for a decade” (Fehrenbach 1963, 239). Fifteen thousand Marines were strung out along the narrow mountain pass, perilously exposed to the secret envelopment of over 100,000 Chinese troops. In temperatures reaching 20 degrees below zero, the Chinese attacked the Marines on the night of 27 November 1950 at numerous points across the thin mountain line; when morning broke, “[e]verywhere, the Marines had held” (Fehrenbach 1963, 245).

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28 One Marine officer noted that the disposition of US forces was more suited to a quail hunt than a major war (Hoffman 2001, 337).
In desperately cold and brutal conditions, the Marines fought for their lives and were ordered by an Army major general to fall back—to retreat—to the Korean coast. Furthermore, the Army general ordered a rapid withdrawal and directed that any equipment, weapons, or supplies that slowed down progress should be jettisoned or destroyed. Marine Major General O.P. Smith replied that the Marines would fight their way out in an orderly and deliberate way as a unit, and would bring out all of their men and equipment (Heinl 1962, 563). The 1st Marine Division proceeded to make one of the epic fighting withdrawals in combat history—and brought out all of their equipment and men in the process. No Marines were left behind, as the wounded were carried out and the dead were properly buried. Along the way, in fact, the Marines actually accumulated extra trucks and equipment that the Army had left behind in their rush to the coast (Heinl 1962, 569). Furthermore, the Marines emphatically declared that this was no retreat. Colonel Chesty Puller, the most iconic Marine of them all (who will be discussed below), told reporters, “Remember, whatever you write, this was no retreat. All that happened was we found more Chinese behind us than in front of us. So we about-faced and attacked” (Hoffman 2001, 411). Whatever label one uses to describe it, the Marines’ action in the “Frozen Chosin” knows few equals in the annals of combat. “No other operation in the American book of war,” notes military historian S.L.A. Marshall, “quite compares with this show by the 1st Marine Division in the perfection of tactical concepts precisely executed, in accuracy of estimation of situation, in leadership at all levels, and in promptness of utilization of all supporting forces” (1963, 107). The Marines look to the Chosin campaign as a hallmark of enduring impossible conditions, persisting against great odds, and maintaining the military discipline to fight and care for one another no matter the cost.29

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29 The Marines’ pride in their performance at Chosin is amplified by the striking contrast with the Army, which did not perform as brilliantly under similar circumstances.
The Hero of the Corps

As stated earlier, Marines tend to exalt the anonymous Marine rifleman and not their great generals. The exceptions are few and only for the most deserving. And while the other services might name any of several heroes as their greatest, the Marine Corps clearly fixates on one—Lieutenant General Lewis “Chesty” Puller. “There is absolutely no doubt that Puller is the mythical hero of the Corps—the very icon of the entire institution. His larger-than-life image is etched indelibly in every Marine almost from the first day at boot camp or officer candidate school” (Hoffman 2001, ix). During basic training, recruits in the bunks intone together, “Goodnight Chesty, wherever you are!” (Sturkey 2010, 6). Marines doing pull-ups prod one another by exhorting, “One more for Chesty!” The Marine Corps mascot, an English bulldog that resides at the Marine Barracks at 8th and I Streets in southeast Washington, is named “Chesty.” Puller’s funeral in 1971 was attended by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, 43 general officers, and 1,500 former and active duty Marines (Fredriksen 2011, 124). Each year, a detachment of Marines continues to travel from Quantico, Virginia, to Puller’s grave in Saluda, Virginia, to lay a wreath on the anniversary of his death (Warren 2005, 12).

Puller’s legendary status comes through his embodiment of the Marine warrior image: a gruff aggressive combativeness coupled with a religious commitment to leading from the front and taking care of his Marines (Davis 1963). The most decorated Marine in history, Puller was awarded five Navy Crosses for valor in combat—a decoration second only to the Medal of Honor. Puller famously led his troops from the front, subjecting himself to all of the same dangers they faced. On Guadalcanal in 1942, for example, one of his fellow officers saw in Puller “the greatest exhibition of utter disregard for personal safety I ever saw” (Hoffman 2001, 160). Consequently, Puller could lead his men into the worst fights, suffering the highest casualty rates, while still earning their fierce loyalty and veneration. Puller embodied the
Marine ethos: he marched straight into the toughest fights, pulled no punches, never surrendered, served across the globe and across the range of military operations, and doggedly cared for his Marines at every step. He ably summed up his own philosophy to his platoon in 1936: “The motto of the Marine Corps is ‘Don’t let your buddy down!’... If you don’t prepare yourself to properly train him, lead him, and support him on the battlefield, then you’re going to let him down. That is unforgivable in the Marine Corps” (Hoffman 2001, 116).

Summary of the Belief

To be a Marine is to subsume one’s own identity into the larger Marine identity of an elite warrior fraternity. Marines thus know their organizational history and the high-water marks of Marine excellence that communicate what it means to be a Marine. The ghosts of Derna, Chapultepec, Belleau Wood, Iwo Jima, and the Chosin Reservoir all chant the same chorus: Marines fight bravely, courageously, and together. The Marine Corps thus believes:

Being a Marine is fundamentally an identity, not a profession. All other identities are subsumed and secondary, as Marines today steward the legacy of Marines past. That legacy perpetuates an elite warrior fraternity that runs to the sound of the guns, wins battles, never retreats, and takes care of its own.

5.4: Faithful Stewards of the National Trust

If we have the rifles, they’re not excess and if they will shoot, they’re not obsolete. Try the Army. They’ll give anything away.

- Major General William P. T. Hill, Marine Corps Quartermaster, 1954

While Marines proudly recount their many battle successes, they are equally proud to note that they win those battles while spending only six cents out of every defense dollar. Historically, the Marine Corps has received a much smaller proportional share of the defense budget than the other three services, and has learned to be creative and resourceful with what it

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30 In Krulak 1984, 148.
does have. Furthermore, Marines see themselves as faithful stewards of the national trust — as their motto Semper Fidelis suggests, a Marine is always faithful. If the American people will trust the Marine Corps enough to keep it around, the Marines will honor that trust by husbanding its tax dollars effectively and creatively. This belief in Marine frugality, faithfulness, and creativity will receive the shortest treatment in this chapter, but its length does not suggest its lack of importance. Frugal resourcefulness is a core element of Marine culture, with implications that may well affect its civil-military preferences and behavior.

Founding Context and Key Events

As the unloved stepchild in the Navy Department, the Marine Corps has had to scrap for its supper since its earliest days. Funded within the Navy Department but requiring equipment like the Army’s, the early Marine Corps had to clamor and fight for its every resource. Without a separate budget or cabinet-level representation, the Marine Corps relied on the secretary of the Navy to represent its interests sufficiently. In practice, this often meant that Marines received second-hand goods or manufacturing defects. Consequently, Marines cared religiously for the resources they did receive. Commandant of the Marine Corps Archibald Henderson, who held that post for 39 years, ensured that no Marine resource was wasted and “set the tune in establishing institutional frugality as a Marine Corps principle” (Krulak 1984, 141). Future Commandants would extend the legacy, such as John Lejeune’s commitment as Commandant always to return a portion of the Marine Corps' appropriation to the Treasury each year (Krulak 1984, 143).

As Krulak describes in a lively narration of Marine Corps creativity over the years, Marines have never discarded equipment just because it is old; such equipment is cared for and used until broken beyond repair. Further, Marines have a proud though illicit history of institutional “borrowing” — or, theft — from other military services or fellow units that were too
careless to guard their goods. According to Krulak, a resourceful sergeant once used entirely “borrowed” supplies to build a complete structure at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego. According to the official base register, the building did not even exist (1984, 151).

Summary of the Belief

The Marine Corps' ability to maximize its combat power on the cheap is a point of institutional pride. In his memorable testimony to Congress on 6 May 1946, General Alexander Vandegrift painted a striking contrast between the Army and Marine Corps' stewardship of the American taxpayer’s investment. Vandegrift reported to the Senate, “In the days of peace preceding the recent war, the United States was possessed of the world’s top ranking Marine Corps. In 1938, that investment in security cost the Nation about $1,500 per marine. At the same time the United States possessed the world’s eighteenth place army—at an annual cost of over $2,000 per soldier” (U.S. Senate 1946, 117). Clearly, Marines are committed to doing more with less, having grown accustomed over their history to maximizing every investment made in the Corps. Marines thus believe:

The Marine Corps is a faithful steward of the national trust and the American taxpayer’s investment. With can-do spirit, Marines make do with what they are given and care for it assiduously. Marines are the best “victory per dollar” investment in military history.

5.5: Every Marine a Rifleman

The deadliest weapon in the world is a Marine with his rifle.
– General John Pershing, US Army

The fifth and final belief of this chapter covers the means by which Marines pursue their ends. The Marine Corps believes, preaches, and lives the dictum that every Marine is a Rifleman, and every Marine officer is a rifle platoon commander. The most important resource, therefore,

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31 This testimony was discussed and quoted at length earlier in the chapter in the context of the unification debates.
32 In Sturkey 2010, 7.
on the Marine ledger is the potent and inseparable coupling of the Marine and his rifle. This belief derives from the first principles of using armed force in pursuit of political ends, memorably articulated by historian T.R. Fehrenbach, “You may fly over a land forever; you may bomb it, atomize it, pulverize it and wipe it clean of life—but if you desire to defend it, protect it, and keep it for civilization, you must do this on the ground, the way the Roman legions did, by putting your young men into the mud” (1963, 290). The enlisted Marine infantryman, equipped with his rifle, is thus the venerated icon of the Marine Corps. This final section of the chapter describes the centrality of the Marine-rifle icon, and then discusses the ways in which this belief about means consummates the previous four.

**Marines and their Rifles**

No other American military service has a *creed* about its weapons—the Marines do. The Army, Navy, and Air Force all profess creeds about the high calling and excellence demanded of being a soldier, sailor, or airman. These creeds are primarily about *ways*, seeking to canonize a virtuous ethos for *how* to perform the service’s mission. Since World War II, Marines have memorized, recited, and abided by a creed about *means*—the Rifleman’s creed written by Major General William Rupertus. The creed venerates the Marine-rifle coupling:

This is my rifle. There are many like it, but this one is mine. My rifle is my best friend. It is my life. I must master it as I must master my life. My rifle, without me, is useless. Without my rifle, I am useless....My rifle is human, even as I, because it is my life. Thus, I will learn it as a brother...We will become part of each other...Before God, I swear this creed. My rifle and myself are the defenders of my country. We are the masters of our enemy. We are the saviors of my life.33

The Rifleman’s creed clearly captures the mystical union of Marines and their rifles, prompting historian James Warren to suggest, “The rifle is at the core of the Marine Corps’ tumultuous history, its organizational mind-set, and its ethos” (2005, 11). Importantly,

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however, the rifle is not a disembodied weapon or glorified technology for the Marine Corps—it is always conjoined to its Marine sibling. Across the lifespan of the Marine Corps’ institutional saga, its most ardent and protracted fights were about Marines themselves, not their stuff or their mission. “For the Marine Corps,” writes Millett, “the first priority in defining the Corps has always been its people, not its functions or its technology” (1991, 611). This insight represents an explicit Marine Corps belief, as evidenced in a 2003 Headquarters publication: “Throughout our history, the Marine Corps has always known that people, not weapons, technologies, or systems, ultimately determine operational success during wartime and other contingencies” (HQMC 2003, 2). The Marine Corps emblazons this truth across the institution, even on recruiting posters that declare: “The lifeblood of our Corps is the individual Marine” (Sturkey 2010, 42).

The Culminating Belief

The Marine-rifle union clearly comprises the essential resource by which the Marine Corps performs its service to the nation. Marines do many things through many different career specialties, but all Marines are first trained as rifleman and understand that any other specialty is honorably in support of the rifleman on the front lines. Marine Corps aviators, for example, seek no independent role in their employment; instead, they specialize in providing close air support to Marine infantry, focusing all of their aviation doctrine and capacity toward that unifying mission. Major Alfred Cunningham presaged the Marines’ long-standing view on aviation in a 1920 article in the Marine Corps Gazette: “It is fully realized that the only excuse for aviation in any service is its usefulness in assisting the troops on the ground to successfully carry out their operations” (1920, 222).

In a sense, this belief in the primacy of the Marine-rifle union can be seen as the culmination of the other four beliefs in this chapter. The Marine and his rifle are a physical
manifestation of every other belief about ends and ways. The first belief of the chapter discussed the Marine Corps' role as an expeditionary force-in-readiness, the ground-based punch to the Navy’s sea-based projection. The legacy of the first Marines, serving on Navy ships with only their muskets, persists in spirit and truth. As light infantry forces in an expeditionary role, Marines must travel light and be prepared at all times. Rifles comprise the ultimate expeditionary weapon, kept in readiness by their conjoined Marine twins, prepared for anything.

The second belief presented in the chapter identified the Marine Corps' precarious institutional state and the corollary search for an ongoing viable mission. By focusing on the Marine and his rifle, the Corps defends an irreducible mission that is never outdated or irrelevant. “Trained men who will stand and fight are never obsolete,” writes Marine Corps historian Robert Heinl. “Men—the man, the individual who is the Marine Corps symbol and stock in trade—constitute the one element which never changes” (1962, 603). By circling its organizational wagons around the Marine and his rifle, the Marine Corps has ensured its institutional relevance—as a final arbiter, no technology or technique can replace armed young men in the mud.

The third belief highlighted the supremacy of the Marine identity and its elite warrior fraternity. The warrior image finds no greater fulfillment than a “man on the scene with a gun” (Wylie 1989, 72). Marine warriors employ rifles, shoot bullets, fix bayonets, and resist attempts to sterilize the bloody face of combat. “The Marines are an assemblage of warriors, nothing more,” writes Krulak. “Paper massaging and computer competitions do not kill the enemy, which is what Marines are supposed to do” (1984, 225-226). The fourth belief presented in the chapter highlighted Marine frugality and faithfulness, which of course a rifle exemplifies. A rifle costs relatively little, has a long service life, and is maintained religiously by its creed-
coupled Marine. Thus, the Marine Corps' veneration of the Marine and his rifle is a core institutional belief, as well as the image of the other four beliefs refracted through the prism of means.

Summary of the Belief

The Marine and his rifle are the central icon of the Marine Corps, its most important resource, and a physical reflection of the other four beliefs in this chapter. In sum, the Marine Corps clearly believes:

The last word belongs to the “man on the scene with a gun,” and the crux of battle is the Marine infantryman finding and closing with the enemy. All efforts must coalesce around the purpose of supporting the rifle-shooting Marine engaged on the front lines.

Conclusion

The Marine Corps has no ambition beyond the performance of its duty to its country. Its sole honor stems from that recognition which cannot be denied to a Corps of men who have sought for themselves little more than a life of hardship and the most hazardous assignments in battle.

– General Clifton B. Cates, 19th Commandant of the Marine Corps

When the Marines of the 1st Provisional Brigade arrived in Korea in 1950, their contribution was soon undeniable. A British liaison officer reported in August 1950:

I am heartened that the Marine Brigade will move against the Naktong salient tomorrow. They are faced with impossible odds, and I have no valid reason to substantiate it, but I have the feeling they will halt the enemy...these Marines have the swagger, confidence, and hardness that must have been in Stonewall Jackson’s Army of the Shenandoah. They remind me of the Coldstreams at Dunkirk. Upon this thin line of reasoning, I cling to the hope of victory. (Fehrenbach 1962, 155)

The Marine Corps comes by its swagger honestly, forged in the fires of fierce fighting, in service to the Nation and the Corps. Moreover, its battle record abroad only barely eclipses its combat prowess in defense politics. Often fighting for its life in bureaucratic battles, the Marine

34 In Heinl 1962, 605.
Corps has deftly managed to stay alive while remaining true to its maritime roots; it serves within the Department of the Navy, yet thrives as an institution all its own.

All the while, the Marine Corps has crafted an elite warrior fraternity that accomplishes the seemingly impossible: it successfully performs wholesale “egoectomies” on thousands of eighteen year-olds every year. Few institutions anywhere in the world have so consistently overcome the gravitational pull of teenage self-centeredness. This does not mean that Marines become pure self-denying altruists, but a personal identification with the Corps over the isolated individual remains an enduring legacy of the Marine Corps way. Finally, in its veneration of the enlisted Marine with a rifle, the Marine Corps glorifies the irreducible, irreplaceable, and timeless contribution of Fehrenbach’s legionary, who

will go where his colors go, without asking, who will fight a phantom foe in jungle and mountain range, without counting, and who will suffer and die in the midst of incredible hardship, without complaint...He does the jobs—the utterly necessary jobs—no militia is willing to do. His task is moral or immoral according to the orders that send him forth. It is inevitable, since men compete. (1963, 455)

These five cultural beliefs are summarized below in Figure 5.1, capturing the core ideas that distinguish the Marine Corps from its sister services. As with chapter four on the US Navy, these beliefs overlap and reinforce one another, like strands of a rope whose entanglement confers strength. Also like the preceding chapter, the history presented herein has been inductive and broad in its collection but deductively selective in its presentation. These beliefs emerge as consistent thematic elements of an ideationally neutral reading of Marine Corps history and legend. The events described here were thus collected as neutrally as human cognition allowed, but marshaled topically in the chapter for coherence and future application. These beliefs will therefore serve as the empirical Swiss-army knife of Marine Corps culture for use in the upcoming case studies. As the forthcoming analysis will demonstrate, these unique beliefs of the Marine Corps confer a unique set of preferences and behaviors in the trenches of
civil-military policymaking. Before probing those trenches, however, we leave behind the maritime services and turn next to the terrestrial giant of the US Army.

### SUMMARY OF MARINE CORPS CULTURAL BELIEFS

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<td></td>
<td><strong>Warriors from the Sea, Anywhere, for Anything</strong></td>
<td>The Marine Corps is a maritime service, umbilically connected to the Navy through strategy and organization. The Marine Corps serves as an embedded ever-ready elite fighting force on the Naval archipelago, prepared to serve as needed on ships or on land. Marines are always prepared to fight their way to the shore, to secure a beachhead of American presence, and to conduct whatever mission the President directs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Survive to Serve</strong></td>
<td>The Marine Corps exists because the American people want it to exist. As the smallest of the four services, whose tasks span the domains of warfare dominated by the other three, the Marine Corps risks being eliminated or reduced to insignificance. Even though the Marine Corps' originally prescribed mission has faded, now that America has the Corps, the country is—and has been—well served by using it. Consequently, the Corps cares less about how it is used and more passionately that it be used and perpetuated.</td>
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| WAYS                          | **Elite Warrior Identity**                     | Being a Marine is fundamentally an identity, not a profession. All other identities are subsumed and secondary, as Marines today steward the legacy of Marines past. That legacy perpetuates an elite warrior fraternity that runs to the sound of the guns, wins battles, never retreats, and takes care of its own. |
|                               | **Faithful Stewards of the National Trust**    | The Marine Corps is a faithful steward of the national trust and the American taxpayer's investment. With can-do spirit, Marines make do with what they are given and care for it assiduously. Marines are the best “victory per dollar” investment in military history. |

| MEANS                         | **Every Marine a Rifleman**                    | The last word belongs to the “man on the scene with a gun,” and the crux of battle is the Marine infantryman finding and closing with the enemy. All efforts must coalesce around the purpose of supporting the rifle-shooting Marine engaged on the front lines. |

*Figure 5.1: Summary of Marine Corps Cultural Beliefs*
CHAPTER 6
WASHINGTON’S OWN:
THE SERVICE CULTURE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

History’s moving finger has a way of establishing tradition, putting people, places and institutions on its records, no matter how impermanent their original status or design.
— Colonel R. Ernest Dupuy

The story of the United States Army is largely the story of the United States itself. The Army’s battle record comprises the shorter catechism of American history: Lexington and Concord, Valley Forge, Gettysburg, Appomattox, Meuse-Argonne, Normandy, and Saigon. The Army is the oldest of the services, tracing its roots quite explicitly to the Continental Army led by George Washington. During the Revolutionary War, in fact, the Army was the icon of the fledgling republic, an island of federalism in the colonial sea. Washington recognized that the failure of his straggling army would mean the ruin of their rebellious cause (Hogan 2000, 4). When the Continental Army ultimately prevailed, nationhood moved from dream to reality. The United States Army proudly and self-consciously proclaims its revolutionary origins and its essential role in birthing, developing, sustaining, and protecting the nation.

From its humble beginning as a rabble of militiamen on Lexington green, the Army has swelled into a vast, complex, and highly differentiated military service. With many tasks and missions to perform, the Army sub-specializes into an extensive array of branches and agencies. Further, the Army is sub-divided between federal and state control, with active forces controlled by the federal government while national guard forces serve under both state and federal control. Finally, the Army consists of multiple layers of readiness, with an active duty force, a national reserve force, and the state-based national guard. This fragmentation along functional, hierarchal, and organizational axes creates a massive, diffuse institution that defies easy description.

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1 1973, 44.
For the reader who has just digested chapter five on the Marine Corps, the Army presents a study in contrasts. Despite the fact that both services pride themselves on their reputations as warriors, the Army and Marine Corps are, in many important ways, cultural opposites. First, the Marines have been wanted but not necessarily needed throughout their organizational life, which animates the service with an organizationally-focused survival instinct. The Army, however, grew up amidst a national aversion to standing armies; the Army has therefore been needed but largely unwanted, thus generating a nationally-focused commitment to subservience. Second, the Marines are the smallest of the services, with the most cohesive and unified culture, centered around the Marine infantryman. The Army, by contrast, is the largest service, with the most diverse array of job specializations and mission foci, and consequently the least cohesive culture. As a side illustration, the Marine Corps is an exclusively federal service and unifies its history and iconography at the National Museum of the Marine Corps near Quantico, Virginia. An aspiring student of Army history and culture, conversely, can visit any of 105 Army museums, spread across 42 states and three countries, and dedicated to numerous branch and geographic subdivisions.²

As a third point of contrast, the Marine Corps exists as a middle-weight expeditionary quick reaction force, serving in effect as first responders to stabilize a critical situation. The Army is a massive heavyweight force, slower to deploy and even slower to leave, serving as the full hospital staff who must care for the patient for the long term, until death or discharge. Finally, Marines cultivate an elite image—Marines are different, representing America at its polished best. The Army instead fosters an egalitarian image, a close extension of the American people, serving as an armed microcosm of the nation itself.

This chapter grounds these observations in the Army’s historical record and internal commentary. Given the vast history of the service, I make few attempts to recount the specifics of famous battles, but instead focus on the lessons the Army as an institution drew from key events. To provide the structured focused comparison at the heart of this project’s methodology, my approach to this chapter mirrors the two preceding ones. I inductively surveyed the Army as an organization up through the immediate post-Vietnam period, focusing on its enduring ends, ways, and means. Furthermore, I paid particular attention to the Army’s internal historical narrative; the prodigious work of the Army’s Center for Military History and War College provided more than ample material. A thorough study of this material generated recurrent themes and beliefs that distinguish the Army as an organization and differentiate it from its sister services. In turn, I present six beliefs that capture the Army’s service culture as I define it—a pervasive belief structure about ends, ways, and means. This array of beliefs, while broad and macroscopic, offers a flexible and robust empirical referent for Army culture, which I hypothesize will inform its preferences and political behavior in the trenches of civil-military policymaking.

First, I discuss the Army’s self-conception as an apolitical servant of the nation, fully committed to civilian control, with a deep and visceral connection to the American people. The second belief focuses on the Army’s role in providing an essential land force to win wars, though it has often been used domestically as a force of last resort to do what no other organization could do. Third, I detail the Army’s long-standing belief about the right way to fight a war, with maximum political flexibility, firepower, and technology, culminating in

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3 As discussed in chapter one, to minimize the logical circularity that a cultural variable can create, I temporally separate my cultural research from the case study analysis. My historical research goes up through the “lessons learned” period of Vietnam, while my case population begins after that time. I do incorporate works and analyses written after this period, but the historical fact pattern used to interpret Army culture is limited to Vietnam and before. This approach helps separate the data used to substantiate my independent variable (service culture) from the data I analyze in my case studies. This is the case for all four service culture chapters.
complete victory. The fourth belief highlights the Army’s internal challenge to reconcile the inherent fragmentation of its force with its operational need for coordination, centralization, and synchronization. Fifth, the story of the Army is a recurring preoccupation with manpower; this belief focuses on the Army’s twin history of the regulars and the reserves, and the persistent search for the appropriate balance between them. Sixth and last, I discuss the Army’s belief in the importance of its people at various levels of aggregation: the individual soldier, the organized unit, and the great captains who lead them. The chapter concludes with a summary of its salient points and a composite table of the six beliefs.

6.1: Apolitical Servants of the Nation

The distribution of our little army to distant garrisons where hardly any other inhabitant is to be found is the most eligible arrangement of that perhaps necessary evil that can be contrived. But I never want to see the face of one in our cities and intermixed with the people.

– Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin (1802)

Given this project’s focus on the dynamics of civilian control, it is noteworthy to identify a military service whose culture includes a keen awareness of its civil-military posture. This is the case with the United States Army, whose commitment to civilian control of the military is branded into the soul of the institution. Born among a colonial people deeply averse to repressive standing armies, the Army has understood its tenuous place in American political life. From its earliest days, the Army has looked to the example of George Washington in the Revolutionary War as the paragon of military deference to civilian authority (Moten 2010). “The Army is fond of tracing its origins back to the Revolution,” observes military historian Richard Kohn, “depicting itself as the descendant of Washington’s valiant Continentals” (1975, 41). Steeped in this historical awareness, the Army remains openly committed to healthy civil-military relations and styles itself as a robustly apolitical entity. Furthermore, an element of this

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belief appears in the Army’s commitment not to the Army itself as an organization, but to the
nation writ large and to the historic profession of arms. Finally, as a bulwark against any
repressive potential, the Army considers itself to be of the people, an extension of the population,
sustained by popular support. To substantiate this belief and its varied components, this
section of the chapter identifies the founding context, key events and exemplars, and then
discusses the resultant elements of this belief within the Army.

Founding Context

Colonial America brought together disparate peoples, practices, and beliefs, with
relatively few universal precepts. One of the near-universals, however, was a shared hatred of
standing armies (Dupuy 1973, 17). The American colonists viewed the British army, like most
European armies, as arbitrary instruments of repression and coercion (Symonds 2008). The
social and political structure of these armies, Kohn observes, created few incentives for self-
control: “Composed of officers from the aristocracy and soldiers from the bottom of society
brutalized by harsh discipline, isolated from the rest of society, loyal not to an ideal or to a
government but to a commander and to its own traditions, the standing army could not be
fettered by any of the traditional checks that preserved liberty” (1975, 2). Moreover, fueled by
excesses like the Boston Massacre and the forced quartering of British soldiers, the antipathy to
standing armies became a central plank in the Revolutionary platform.

At the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, when the founding fathers debated the
structure of military defense for a newly independent United States, a related fear emerged.
The deep-rooted aversion to standing armies evolved into a dread of what an unchecked
political power might do with such an army. The American preoccupation with its army
ultimately had less to do with what the army might do on its own, and more to do with the
evils of a military co-opted by unrestrained political power (Higginbotham 1988, 159).
Consequently, “[t]he Framers’ concept of civilian control was to control the uses to which civilians might put military force rather than to control the military themselves” (Huntington 1957, 168).

The specific language of the Constitution illustrates this idea in sharp relief. The Constitution divides the power over the military between the executive and legislative branches, as well as between the federal and state governments (Allard 1996, 21). The president serves as Commander in Chief, but Congress has the power to declare war and to create and structure the armed forces themselves. Article 1, Section 8, of the Constitution gave Congress power “to provide and maintain a Navy,” implying a perpetual arrangement for a standing Navy. The enumerated power to create the Army looks ephemeral by comparison, giving Congress the power “to raise and support armies, but no appropriation of money for that use shall be for a longer term than two years.” This language has none of the permanence of the naval appropriation, and deliberately implies the perpetual expansion and retraction of a short-term force called to arms for a specific purpose and duration.

*Events and Exemplars*

Embedded within a nation wary of its existence, the Army found its shining exemplar in George Washington. The Revolutionary War shaped the US Army in many ways, but the most explicit legacy of the war appears to be the deference to civilian authority that guided Washington’s steady conduct. In a short historical piece authored for the Army’s Center for Military History, historian David Hogan avers that “[h]aving won independence, the Continental Army now made perhaps its most important contribution to the nation—deference to civilian authority” (2000, 6). Washington arrogated no powers to himself that were not specifically granted by the Congress and respected civil authority at seemingly every turn (Higginbotham 1988).
Washington’s civil-military finesse stands out in two principal areas. First, Washington’s words and actions exemplified a healthy civil-military balance in both directions, to the Army and to the Congress alike. That is, Washington showed the Continental Army the importance of abiding by civilian control and tempered his conduct accordingly. An often-overlooked contribution of Washington’s example, however, is the way he dampened Congressional (and national) suspicion of the army. In a letter to Congress in September 1776, Washington showed an appreciation for the universal aversion to standing armies, but he had the wisdom to consider the situation contextually: “The Jealousies of a standing Army, and the Evils to be apprehended from one, are remote; and in my judgment, situated and circumstanced as we are, not at all to be dreaded; but the consequence of wanting one, according to my Ideas, formed from the present view of things, is certain, and inevitable Ruin” (Fitzpatrick ed. 1931, VI, 112). Similarly, later in the war, Washington noted that Congressional actions revealed a deep-seated dislike for the regular army; using straightforward logic, Washington told the Congress that such dislike was only an encouragement to create a reciprocal dislike from the army, possibly fomenting the very rebelliousness they wanted to avoid. Instead, Washington counseled the Congress to see the army’s sacrifice as a testimony of its unity with the people and the Congress: “We should all be considered, Congress, Army, &c. as one people, embarked in one Cause, in one interest; acting on the same principle and to the same End” (Fitzpatrick ed. 1931, XI, 291).

The second aspect of Washington’s exemplary conduct came at the war’s conclusion in 1783, when the remaining elements of the Continental Army were encamped at Newburgh, New York. Deeply frustrated by a persistent lack of pay by Congress, the army contemplated taking Congress by force and making its demands at the point of the bayonet. Washington requested an opportunity to speak to the group, and his subsequent address has since become
the stuff of legend. Reaching into his pocket to read a letter from a member of Congress, Washington fumbled and paused. “Unaffectedly, the tall general murmured that he had grown gray in the service of his country, and now found himself going blind. The assemblage was stunned. A year’s frustration, a week’s excitement and expectation, then the unbearable strain of confronting their beloved commander, seemed to hang suspended in that one moment” (Kohn 1975, 32). In the light of such vulnerability and self-sacrifice from their beloved general, the selfish clamoring of the disaffected soldiers suddenly seemed crass by comparison. The army’s unseemly plans evaporated, and Washington preserved the fragile purity of civilian control in the infant United States.

Echoes in the Army

How has this example impacted the mindset of the United States Army? Of the four American military services, the Army appears uniquely concerned with its civil-military relationship. To wit, much of the contemporary civil-military scholarship generated by military members comes from Army officers, many of whom have been on the faculty at West Point or the Army War College. Former Secretary of the Army and Member of Congress Jack Marsh reinforces the Army’s unique interest, “Deeply ingrained in the Army’s ethos is its subservience to civilian control; much more so than you find in the Navy, or Marine Corps or more recently the Air Force. The selfless service legacy of George Washington, in our revolutionary Army, and his sensitivity to civilian concerns that went beyond the Army institution’s self-interests were ingrained in the Army” (Scroggs 2000, 145).

Apolitical, For Better or Worse. This institutional commitment to civilian control shows up then in both helpful and harmful ways. The Army professes a staunchly apolitical nature, fully

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5 Modern civil-military works by retired or active Army authors include: Adams 1990; Allard 1996; Bacevich 1998, 1999; Dempsey 2009; Gibson and Snider 1999; Gibson 2008; Nielsen and Snider 2009; Scroggs 2000; Snider and Carlton-Carew 1995; Sowers 2005; and Urben 2010. Officers from the other services have certainly contributed to the literature, but no other service rivals the contribution or interest shown by the Army.
obedient to its political masters, and thus works hard to keep its distance from all things political. This admirable desire to remain above the political fray, however, can have the pernicious effect of keeping the Army sidelined in its legitimate political sphere — thus illustrating Lieutenant General Thomas Burnette’s wry observation that “[t]he Army has an ingrained belief that if it’s worth doing, it’s worth overdoing” (Matthews 2005, 78). Stephen Scroggs (2000) details the Army’s discomfort “liaising” with Congress, noting the service’s fears that it may be misperceived as improper “lobbying.” “Senior Army leaders,” writes Scroggs, “have difficulty adopting a perspective that views proactively engaging Congress on behalf of their service’s interests as a legitimate and appropriate component of their professional responsibility” (2000, 1). The Army’s noble high-mindedness results in a lack of Congressional exposure to legitimate Army needs. “There is a belief in the Army,” observes former Under Secretary of the Army Norman Augustine, “that the merit of the Army cause speaks for itself. You shouldn’t have to involve yourself in politics in selling the greatness and relevancy of the Army. The Army cause by itself tells the story. No lobbying is necessary. Unfortunately, Washington doesn’t work that way” (Scroggs 2000, 111). The Army’s admirable refusal to engage in improper political conduct spills over into an institutional aversion to engaging in proper political conduct as well.

Nationally and Professionally Committed. As reflected in its Congressional relations, the Army does not want to be its own cheerleader. By contrast, as chapters four and five described, the Navy and Marine Corps have quite explicitly promoted the interests of their organizations throughout their history — not so the Army. Instead, the Army consistently preaches a commitment is to the higher ideals of the nation and the enduring profession of arms. Army

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6 This commitment to being apolitical is also a core tenet of the Army’s concept of professionalism, which will be discussed later in this chapter.
7 One senior Army officer wryly suggested that “[t]he Army’s preferred strategy for working its interests with OSD and Congress is preemptive capitulation” (Scroggs, 2000, 154).
officer and historian William Ganoe describes the supra-organizational identification of the American soldier: “It is his invariable rule when confronted with any task, to think first of his duty to his nation. His superiors often change, but his employer—his country—always stays” (1942, 461). Similarly, in describing the tenets of the Army’s professional ethic, Colonel Matthew Moten puts “[an embrace of] national service” and “loyalty to the Constitution” at the top two spots in the list (2010, 14).

Finally, the Army looks beyond its organizational perimeter to see itself as the national stewards of the profession of arms, an historic tradition with ancient roots. In 1986, for example, the Army’s Center of Military History republished Sir John Winthrop Hackett’s classic collection of lectures entitled The Profession of Arms (1962). In his introduction to the Army’s republication, Chief of Staff of the Army General John Wickham reminded his readers that “[i]n an age that sets high store on technological expertise, it is well for military officers to remind ourselves that we are members of an ancient and honorable profession” (1986). As a final illustration, the Army’s extensive project on “The Future of the Army Profession” identified four dimensions of the Army officer’s identity: Warrior, Member of Profession, Servant of Country, and Leader of Character (Snider 2005). Conspicuously, none of these identities are about the Army qua the Army, but instead point to higher callings of national service and professional legacy.

An Extension of the National Will. Since the Army looks beyond its borders and identifies with the nation as a whole, it nourishes an explicit identification with the American people. The Army largely sees itself as an extension of the populace, on whom it relies for manpower, funding, and most importantly, will power. To commit the American Army into a conflict, whatever its scale, is to make a prodigious statement of intent and a massive commitment of resources—both blood and treasure. Consequently, the Army wants to know that it is not being
sent abroad on cavalier missions at odds with the national will. Much of the Army’s internal historiography about the Vietnam War, for example, emphasizes this concern. As noted by former Chief of Staff of the Army General Fred Weyand:

Vietnam was a reaffirmation of the peculiar relationship between the American Army and the American people. The American Army really is a people’s Army in the sense that it belongs to the American people who take a jealous and proprietary interest in its involvement. When the Army is committed the American people are committed, when the American people lose their commitment it is futile to try to keep the Army committed. In the final analysis, the American Army is not so much an arm of the Executive Branch as it is an arm of the American people. (Summers 1981, 7)

Similarly, in his strategic assessment of Vietnam, widely accepted within the Army, Colonel Harry Summers concludes “[t]he failure to invoke the national will was one of the major strategic failures of the Vietnam war” (1981, 12).8

Summary of the Belief

In sum, the Army has historically been viewed with a wary eye by democratic peoples averse to standing armies. Following the example of George Washington, the Army has remained committed to its subservient role, self-consciously styling itself as an apolitical and obedient servant of the state. The Army looks beyond its organizational borders, professing a deep commitment to the nation, the American people, and the profession of arms. As a result, the Army believes:

The Army exists to serve the nation as an obedient and apolitical junior partner to its civilian leadership. The Army is thus a faithful extension of the American people, for whom and by whom it exists, and on whose steady support it relies. Army soldiers primarily serve the people of the nation, and are honorable members of the timeless profession of arms.

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8 A later section of this chapter will discuss Summers’ work further and will comment on the extent of and reasons for its popularity within Army circles.
6.2: A Land Force of Last Resort

It was the troops that cut the trails, built the roads, dug the wells, surveyed the land, braved the savage, suffered in silence and opened the chest of southern and western riches.
- William Ganoe⁹

The United States Army, like most armies in history, exists to defend territory and fight land battles. In this respect, the Army embodies the enduring truth suggested by Sir John Hackett that “[t]he very existence of any society depends in the last resort upon its capacity to defend itself by force” (1988, 509). Since human society is inherently terrestrial, a land army comprises an essential and irreducible force to settle a conflict, however tenuous that settlement might be. Land armies are thus a last line of defense and must be of sufficient strength and size to persist until their civilian leaders decide that political conditions are sufficiently favorable to end the conflict. Furthermore, a land army of last resort must be prepared for a wide spectrum of conflict, ready for anything. While the other military services can afford to operate like specialists in their specific non-inhabited domains, the army must have generalist sensibilities, with a robustly differentiated structure of sub-specialties. Finally, equipped with a wide array of skills, discipline, and organization, the United States Army has been used by the nation to perform some of its most unsavory domestic tasks. The Army thus offers not only the last line of defense but an organized force of last resort. When no other group has been willing or able to do a job, the Army has historically answered the nation’s call—to build railroads, cut canals, deliver the mail, explore the frontier, or “deal with” our continental forbears, the Native Americans. In many respects, the Army paralleled the Navy for our nation’s first century, doing in the interior what the Navy was doing abroad: exploring new land, showing the flag, negotiating treaties, and establishing a prosperous infrastructure for a new nation. This section of the chapter explores these ideas further, substantiating the Army’s belief in the essential role

⁹ 1942, 158.
of a land army, used by the nation to defend territory, finish wars, and carry out the inescapable jobs that had to be done.

*Operational Environment*

Core elements of any military service’s belief structure derive from the operational environment in which the service lives, moves, and fights. For the Army, the context of fighting on land conditions much of a soldier’s thinking, to include his inescapable function as the last line of his nation’s defense. Moreover, soldiers serve as the last line of their nation’s *offense* as well; for whatever type of war is being fought, wars rarely end without “boots on the ground” or at least their credible near-term potential (Wylie 1967). Navy Admiral John S. McCain, Jr. appreciated this function, remarking in his 1962 Senate testimony that “[a]ll wars are brought to a successful conclusion by a man with a gun on his shoulder going in, sitting down, and saying ‘This belongs to me’” (U.S. Senate 1962, 762). This insight is the glory and bane of the ground soldier—he must finish the job, whatever it might be, for there is no one else to whom he can hand the mess. The Marines, generally speaking, serve as a middleweight quick-reaction force to establish a beachhead in preparation for heavier follow-on forces. Airmen and sailors shape the battlefield in critical ways but do not have the capacity to *occupy* it. The Army is the nation’s long-term heavyweight force, entrusted with the mantle of occupying territory and *finishing* the task. And given that wars are typically much easier to start than to finish, the Army inherits complex political tasks that defy completion. “If the nation loses a war, the Army gets blamed,” lamented one Army senior officer. “*No one will blame the other services for losing our nation’s wars.* If the Air Force screws it up, it just means the Army has to finish it” (Scroggs 2000, 121; emphasis in original).
For the first hundred years of the republic, the Army’s institutional commitment to finishing a task surfaced in many venues other than fighting wars. The Army served as a trained and equipped body of men who did not have the option of quitting a task, so the service provided the infant United States with much of its developmental infrastructure. The government had difficult jobs to be done, and the Army could not say no. “As a young nation, the United States had only the Army to turn to for numerous functions. Fighting the nation’s wars was the fundamental purpose of its existence, but frontier protection and infrastructure-building dominated the early years of the Army’s existence” (Wong and Johnson 2005, 97). Army officers served as civil engineers for the nation, as West Point was founded in 1802 almost exclusively as an engineering school—only later did it take on the role of educating in military art and science (Weigley 1984, 105). Until 1835, in fact, West Point was the only school in the nation producing qualified engineers; this gave the Army responsibility for surveying roads, canals, railroads, bridges, aqueducts, the Capitol dome, the Washington monument, and the Smithsonian museum (Hogan 2000, 10). Finally, Army Captain Meriwether Lewis and his partner William Clark, himself an Army veteran, led the most memorable—but certainly not the only—Army expedition to explore the Louisiana Purchase and the western tract of the United States (Dupuy 1973, 60).

Elsewhere, the Army contributed significantly to some of the grandest engineering projects in American history. The Army Corps of Engineers, for example, celebrates the contribution of Major George Goethals, the chief engineer who overcame seemingly insurmountable challenges to complete the construction of the Panama Canal. President Theodore Roosevelt had labored to find someone who could handle the leadership of such an epic undertaking; after two civilian chief engineers both resigned following short periods on the
job, Roosevelt “announced that the next chief would be an Army officer, who, if he walked off
the job, would find himself facing a court martial.”

Goethals completed the job, ahead of
schedule and under budget, emblematic of the Army’s skill and fortitude. In other venues,
Army officers led the construction of the Union Pacific railroad (Ganoe 1942, 325), guarded the
national parks until the creation of the National Park Service in 1918 (Hogan 2000, 20), and
managed the Civilian Conservation Corps during the New Deal, providing camps, food, fuel,
leadership, and supervision (Hogan 2000, 23). Hogan rightly summarizes that the Army’s
“ready availability as a source of disciplined and skilled personnel has made it an attractive
option for American leaders confronted with a wide array of nonmilitary demands and crises”
(2000, 3).

In addition to these massive public works projects, the American government gave the
Army some of its most thorny domestic and foreign political-military assignments as well.
Samuel Huntington records the types of missions given to the Army, and more importantly, the
effects on Army culture that resulted; the Army inherited such complexities as:

Southern reconstruction, Indian fighting, labor disorders, the Spanish War, Cuban occupation,
Philippine pacification, construction and operation of the Panama canal, [and] the Mexican
punitive expedition. Accordingly, the Army developed an image of itself as the government’s
obedient handyman performing without question or hesitation the jobs assigned to it…It had no
particular field of responsibility; instead, it was a vast, organic, human machine, blindly
following orders from on high…By following all orders literally the Army attempted to divest
itself of political responsibility and political controversy despite the political nature of the tasks it
was frequently called upon to perform. (Huntington 1957, 261)

**Summary of the Belief**

The Army’s indispensable nature gives its officers a sense of grave responsibility and
inevitability. The Army recognizes that the inherent nature of its terrestrial capabilities makes it
the last line of defense, the force for the long haul, and the organized force of last resort to do

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10 Headquarters U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Historical Vignette #107:
the messiest of jobs. Consequently, these dynamics confer upon the Army a mindset that is strikingly opposite to the Marine Corps. The institutional body language of the Marine Corps communicates, “While you may not technically need us, you want us. You’re glad you have a Marine Corps.” The Army communicates a different message, even bordering on victimization: “While you don’t think you want us around, you desperately need us—more than you know, and more than we’ll ever get credit for.” In short, the Marines are not needed, but they are wanted; the Army has not been particularly wanted, but they have been indispensably needed.\(^\text{11}\) This sense of inevitability only reinforces the Army’s apolitical posture discussed in the previous section, reducing any motivation the Army might have to advocate its cause. One former Chief of Staff of the Army understood the Army’s position this way: “There has always been an Army. The Army is a product of the people of this country. The Army wins the wars of our nation. We don’t have to justify the need or relevancy of an Army. America requires an Army. The other services have to justify themselves in terms of their platforms or weapon systems…There will always be an Army” (Scroggs 2000, 123).

In sum, Army service culture tends to hold this belief:

_Wars end when soldiers with guns stand fast and hold territory. Land forces in sufficient mass are an essential precondition for victory in war, and the Army is and must be that indispensable last line of defense. Furthermore, the Army as an organized and skilled body of national servants must accept glorious and menial tasks alike, serving as a labor force of last resort to do the nation’s messiest jobs, prepared to take more blame than credit._

\(^{11}\) As chapter 5 explains, this insight comes from Lieutenant General Victor Krulak, who suggests that “in terms of cold mechanical logic, the United States does not need a Marine Corps. However, for good reasons which completely transcend cold logic, the United States wants a Marine Corps” (1984, xv).
6.3: The Army Way of Battle

> I'll be damned if I permit the United States Army, its institutions, its doctrine, and its traditions, to be destroyed just to win this lousy war.
> – Senior Army officer in Vietnam\textsuperscript{12}

Over the span of its history, the United States Army has developed a preferred conception of warfighting that prizes complete victories, earned through the enemy’s unconditional surrender, and fought with superior firepower and technology rather than sheer manpower. While the Army has been employed to do a great many things throughout its history, fighting a wide variety of conflicts with a variety of tactics, institutional approval has only accrued to one particular style of fighting, conducted in as apolitical an environment as possible. This pattern of an institution’s selective memory is at the heart of its culture, as a group chooses what to remember and what to forget. “What we choose to remember and the way we choose to remember it may unduly flatter or unfairly condemn our military forebears, may indeed be more legend than history,” writes Robert Utley. “Legends thus form a conspicuous part of our military tradition and are often far more influential in shaping our attitudes and beliefs than the complex, contradictory, and ambiguous truth” (1988, 527).

Here, the Army’s preferred way of battle reflects quite faithfully the “American Way of War” described by Weigley (1977) and Gray (2006) at the beginning of chapter four. One of the primary elements of this belief involves the preferred separation of the political and military spheres. Without expressing this sentiment explicitly, the Army mirrors the American strategic culture and tends to act as if “war replaces politics” rather than being the Clausewitzian continuation of it (Hackett 1988, 512; Clausewitz 1984). This idealized separation leads to a corollary preference for wars of annihilation, fought to complete victory through the unconditional surrender of the enemy (Weigley 1977). This preference suggests an illusory

\textsuperscript{12} In Jenkins 1970, 3.
belief in the binary nature of war and politics; war begins when politics fails, and politics resumes once the military has completely won the war and handed back to the politicians a signed document of total surrender. Other elements of the Army’s way of battle—again, service-specific reflections of the larger American way of war—include a commitment to overwhelming firepower and technological superiority as a substitute for manpower. Finally, the implications of this belief, coupled with the Army’s identification with the American people discussed in section 6.1, creates conditions in which the service is tempted to dictate terms of its employment to its civilian leaders, making sure that America’s Army is used in the “right ways.” The following section discusses these strands further, looking briefly at the operational environment, followed by the events self-consciously remembered or ignored by the Army that shape the contours of its belief.

Operational Environment

This project consistently avers that each service’s culture is a byproduct of factors both contingent and inherent. That is, elements of belief derive from political choice and selective memory but also from the visceral demands of the service’s inescapable operational context. Consequently, understanding the Army’s preferred way of battle requires an appreciation for the context of ground combat. In what ways then does the Army’s battle-milieu inform the belief reviewed in this section?

One particularly epic description of battle comes from one of the Army’s most celebrated citizen-soldiers from the Civil War. Colonel Joshua Chamberlain, a professor of rhetoric at Bowdoin College, joined the Union Army and led the 20th Maine throughout the war, most notably in defending the southern flank of the Union line on Little Round Top during the battle of Gettysburg. In a 1913 piece published in Hearst’s Magazine, Chamberlain recounts a scene from the melee at Gettysburg:
It was a stirring, not to say, appalling sight; here a whole battery of shot and shell cutting a ragged chasm through a serried mass, flinging men and horses like drift aside; there, a rifle volley at close range, with reeling shock, hands tossed in the air, muskets dropped with death’s quick reflex, or clutched with last, convulsive energy, men falling like grass before the scythe—others with manhood’s proud calm and rally; there, a little group kneeling about some favorite officer slain, — his intense spirit still animating the fiery steed pressing headlong with empty saddle to the van; here, a defiant regiment of ours, broken, slaughtered, captured; or survivors of both sides crouching among the rocks for shelter from the terrible crossfire where there is no rear! But all advancing—all the frenzied force, victors and vanquished, each scarcely knowing which—surging and foaming towards us; death around, behind, before, and madness everywhere! ([1913] 2006, in Martin ed. 2006)

As Chamberlain vividly captures, the wail of ground combat defies the imagination of the unbaptized. War devolves into a zero-sum business of *kill or be killed*, complicated by the inevitable fog and friction of battle (Clausewitz 1984). The Manichean distinctions of life and death that preoccupy the soldier can create mental patterns that are similarly stark and absolute (Grossman 1995). Those involved in the complicated and dangerous work of combat inevitably gravitate toward measures of simplification—anything that can render the sound and fury less deafening. If war can be simplified, its intractable political nature stiff-armed by military necessity, success on these terms can more easily be pursued. To subject an exceedingly complex enterprise like war to further complexity by suffusing it with political nuance can strike the soldier as criminal meddling. Politics necessarily involves ambiguity and compromise, tactics that are anathema to a warfighting soldier whose bottom line is an uncompromising and unambiguous choice between life and death. Consequently, while soldiers can acknowledge the logical continuity of war and politics, their experience of war incentivizes the decoupling, not the unity, of the two domains.

Finally, soldiers at war, whose lives are risked by their political leaders, do not want to feel like pawns sacrificed for obscure political ends. Those at greatest risk naturally want to hedge that risk through any reasonable advantage and with the full backing of the nation. The Army, while loyal and obedient to the nation, does not savor the image of the sacrificial lamb—
the Army will stand in the gap, but wants to stand with the resources needed to win and infused with the national will to do so.

Events and Exemplars

While the operational environment contributes inherent elements of a service’s belief, the service’s unique history confers its contingent elements. What then did the Army take away from its varied experiences in battle? Weigley’s sweeping analysis of the American experience at war is a story of the American army cultivating a novel practice of unlimited war, fought for unlimited political ends. The pattern of war in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe had been one of limited war, a pattern from which the American experience departed early. Weigley recounts the novel American experience:

War in America had been diverging from the European pattern of limited war almost from the beginning of the American settlements. When the English colonists in America fought the Indians, they often fought in what both sides recognized as a contest for survival…The logic of a contest for survival was always implicit in the Indian wars, as it never was in the eighteenth-century wars wherein European powers competed for possession of fortresses and counties, but always shared an awareness of their common participation in one civilization, Voltaire’s ‘Republic of Europe.’ (1977, 19)

The Army’s signature experiences at war reinforced this abnormal trend of unlimited war. The Revolutionary War, though fought defensively by George Washington, was an existential total war, necessarily fought to the finish to birth a new nation. After the Revolution, the Army was turned out to police the frontier and thus began its 100-year history of fighting the so-called Indian wars. Two key developments emerged from the Indian Wars: first, an institutional aversion to guerrilla warfare, and second, yet another experience of an existential war of survival. On the frontier, the Army refused to believe that its constabulary mission of fighting the Indians was worthy of explicit preparation in strategy, tactics, or materiel (Utley 1988). Instead, “military leaders looked upon Indian warfare as a fleeting bother” (Utley 1988, 530). Consequently, the Army was preoccupied with conventional orthodox war, all the while engaged steadily in unconventional guerrilla war on the frontier. In Weigley’s authoritative
history of the Army, he identified this preoccupation as part of a larger phenomenon: “A historical pattern was beginning to work itself out: occasionally the American Army has had to wage a guerrilla war, but guerrilla warfare is so incongruous to the natural methods and habits of a stable and well-to-do society that the American Army has tended to regard it as abnormal and to forget about it whenever possible” (1984, 161).

What the Army remembered, however, from the Indian Wars was the requirement to finish the task, to resettle the Indians to reservations, and to win the war of survival. The Army’s defining event of the nineteenth century — the Civil War — overwhelmingly reinforced this trend. Yet again, the Army found itself in an existential fight to the finish, as the Confederate Army fought for the unlimited aim of complete secession. “‘Complete conquest’ had to be the Union aim,” suggests Weigley, “because the southern people believed that their very way of life was at stake, and they would submit to nothing less…Henceforth the Civil War afforded the American Army its conception of a major war” (1984, 252). Naturally, the Civil War came to dominate the curriculum at West Point after the war, and wars of “‘power unrestrained’ unleashed for ‘complete conquest’” became the template for American Army warfighting (Weigley 1984, 253).

The Army’s experience in the World Wars, particularly the second, provided a culminating exemplar of the Army’s ideal ends, ways, and means. The Army fought yet another total war, pursuing unconditional surrender, using massive firepower and abundant materiel wrought by a fully committed homeland-turned-war-factory. It was the Army’s finest hour, which they would not soon forget. “Something happened to the Army in its passage through World War II that it liked,” observes Carl Builder, a defense analyst who studied each service’s unique approach to war and strategy. “[A]nd it has not been able to free itself from the sweet memories of the Army that liberated France and swept victoriously into Germany. That
heady experience has marked the Army with an image of itself that is distinctly different from that which it had before and, more important, from its experiences since” (1989, 37-8).

In Korea, the Army could not duplicate its glorious drive through France and Germany. Instead, the Army had to adjust to the chafing fetters of political restraint; in Korea, “Americans adopted a course not new to the world, but to them. They accepted limitations on warfare, and accepted controlled violence as the means to an end” (Fehrenbach 1963, x). Such limitations were accepted only begrudgingly, however, and not without challenge. In perhaps the most notorious civil-military conflict in our national history, General Douglas MacArthur sought to take the war aggressively into North Korea, accepting war with China as a result. MacArthur famously insisted that “we must win. There is no substitute for victory” (MacArthur 1964, 386). In his confrontation with President Truman, MacArthur ultimately fell victim to his larger-than-life status and took a preferred way of battle to an illogical extreme. “So MacArthur became a colossus bestriding Korea,” summarizes Weigley, “enforcing his own sometimes intuitive command decisions even when his interservice planning staff objected, or even when the Joint Chiefs demurred, until the nemesis of power at last overtook him” (1984, 512).

Finally, while all the services left Vietnam vowing “never again,” the Army’s experience there appears most devastating to the heart and soul of the service. Army historian Ernest Dupuy captures the essence of most Army accounts: “The Army’s role in Vietnam, the oddest, longest, most unpopular war in the United States’ history, was a phantasmagoria of savage combat, political and social entanglement and, above all, frustration” (1973, 296). The Army’s internal historiography surrounding Vietnam is varied, but one of the first and most popular accounts came from Colonel Harry Summers (1981) in his work On Strategy. Summers opined that the military’s tactical success was ultimately compromised by strategic failures, particularly on the part of politicians and civilian academic counterinsurgency experts. “Instead of
orienting on North Vietnam — the source of the war — we turned our attention to the symptom — the guerrilla war in the south” (1981, 56). In Summers’ view, the Army did everything that was asked of it, winning every battle it fought; in fact, he opens his book with a conversation between himself and a North Vietnamese colonel in 1975. “You know you never defeated us on the battlefield,” Summers remarked. “That may be so,” replied his Vietnamese counterpart, “but it is also irrelevant” (1981, 1). As former Army officer John Nagl observes, it does no good to beat the enemy at poker if you are supposed to be playing chess (2005, 27).

Still, Summers’ thesis that tactical military success was corrupted by strategic political failure yielded a common conclusion. “Prior to any future commitment of US military forces,” Summers declared, “our military leaders must insist that the civilian leadership provide tangible, obtainable political goals” (1981, 117). With a deft civil-military sleight-of-hand, this assertion amounts to a policy-review requirement, by which the military and the American people ensure that civilian leaders do not attempt to use the military for the wrong kinds of wars. Nevertheless, Summers’ work quickly took hold, became very popular, and essentially became the official Army view of what actually happened in Vietnam (Gates 1987, Krepinevich 1986, Linn 2007, Nagl 2005).

The most compelling intellectual counterweight to Summers comes from former Army officer Andrew Krepinevich (1986). Krepinevich identifies what he calls the “Army Concept,” a preferred way of fighting as described in this section of the chapter, and suggests the Army fought the only war they were tactically and culturally prepared to fight. The two key characteristics of the Army Concept include “a focus on mid-intensity, or conventional, war and a reliance on high volumes of firepower to minimize casualties — in effect, the substitution of material costs at every available opportunity to avoid payment in blood” (1986, 5).

13 Other useful commentaries on Vietnam from Army officers are found in Matthews and Brown 1987, McMaster 1997, Petraeus 1987, and Nagl 2005.
Furthermore, Krepinevich suggests that the Army’s commitment to its preferred Concept included the concomitant belief that by preparing for “the worst” (i.e., all-out conventional war in Europe), the Army would be ready for anything short of that as well. That is, the spectrum of conflict was viewed as being additive, not distinct. Instead of seeing big wars and small wars as wholly different strategic and tactical challenges, small wars were just considered “lesser includeds,” or easier forms of the big war. Consequently, the Army was ill-prepared for the type of fight it faced in Vietnam, so it defaulted to the only strategy it knew: firepower. “The Army’s conduct of the war was a failure,” summarizes Krepinevich, “primarily because it never realized that insurgency warfare required basic changes in Army methods to meet the exigencies of this ‘new’ conflict environment” (1986, 259). Krepinevich’s thesis supports earlier scholarship, written while the war still dragged on. Brian Jenkins of RAND wrote in 1970 that “the Army simply performed its repertoire even though it was frequently irrelevant to the situation” (1970, v). In sum, while the Army’s internal scholarship debates the strategic appropriateness of Army tactics in Vietnam, both sides agree on the general fact and form of the Army’s preferred way of battle.\(^\text{14}\)

After the war, the Army moved quickly to cleanse Vietnam from its collective memory, focusing back on conventional war in Europe and studying mid-intensity conflicts like the 1973 Arab-Israeli War (Krepinevich 1986, 271). Moreover, the 1976 edition of the Army’s operational Field Manual did not even mention counterinsurgency, and the Army’s Command and General Staff College scaled back training on low-intensity conflict from 40 hours to nine hours in 1979 (Nagl 2005, 206). The Army indicated by its actions that it was ready to move on from Vietnam – an experience better forgotten from an institutional perspective.

\(^\text{14}\) It should be noted again that this preference is the Army’s reflection of a national phenomenon, best described by Weigley (1977) as the American way of war.
The Army’s penchant for treating politics and war as autonomous domains derives from many sources. As discussed above, the related but disparate grammars of war and politics act to fracture their logical continuity. Additionally, as profiled in section 6.1, the Army commits itself to being an apolitical institution, quite deliberately removed from the dark underbelly of political machinations. Finally, the Army cultivates its craft as a true profession, “which require[s] that an exclusive sphere of expertise be defined” (Adams 1990, 6). This insight comports with the common reading of Huntington’s seminal civil-military analysis (1957), which advocates an “objective control” in which the military’s subordination to civilian authority is best achieved by granting autonomy to the military to cultivate its professional ethos (1957, 83). Furthermore, these natural reasons to separate war and politics were reinforced by American practice in the Revolution, the Indian Wars, the Civil War, and the World Wars. In total wars that end only with unconditional surrender, military and political action are indeed mostly decoupled in practice; in such wars, the end state for which the military fights is largely a military one of total disarmament and capitulation. The national experience and the Army’s institutional pattern were at odds, however, with the history of organized violence and warfare. Total wars are an aberration, not the norm. Sir John Hackett reminds us that “[a] policy of unconditional surrender is not a war aim at all but the acknowledgment of the lack of one” (1988, 512).

Interestingly, this belief sits in tension with the two beliefs already discussed. The Army’s civil-military subservience, coupled with its can-do approach to the nation’s dirty work, here encounter their practical limit. The service, while still professing its total submission to civilian control and its preparedness to do whatever is asked, has developed a particular conception of its proper usage, which it expects civilians to disregard only at their peril. If a
military service successfully dictates terms of its employment, however, it introduces a subtly corrosive influence on a democracy’s civil-military discourse (Dauber 1988). Nevertheless, the Army’s collective experience, reaching its zenith in World War II and its nadir in Vietnam, thus reifies a particular conception of how, where, and when to fight:

*The Army should be used to win complete victories with overwhelming firepower and technological superiority. When civilians send the Army onto the field of battle, they should send it in to win, with minimal political restrictions. Given the nature of war, there are things the Army should not be asked to do, and civilian leaders are wise to heed these limitations.*

6.4: Synchronizing the Fragments

*The new-fledged Army lieutenant soon learns that he can make no movement without coordination. He cannot go right, left, backward, or forward without informing units on his right and left, artillery, tanks, supply trains, his superiors – all in detail.*

— Arthur Hadley

As a large organization facing a broad array of potential tasks and missions, the US Army must be incredibly varied and sub-specialized. The core of the Army consists of its three principal combat arms branches—the infantry, field artillery, and armor (the lineal descendant of horse-mounted cavalry)—but the service sustains an incredibly diverse and ponderous organizational structure with over thirty other branches to complement the big three. Furthermore, the Army’s force structure is spread across both state and federal control, as well as along various degrees of readiness from active duty through reserves and guard forces. Consequently, the Army is the most fragmented of the services, divided along three principal axes of job specialization, governmental control, and state of readiness. Ultimately, the Army’s high degree of fragmentation confers an overriding operational need to coordinate and synchronize its forces, making teamwork and coordination a core tenet of Army operations.

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15 Hadley 1986, 67.
The nature of ground combat and the proliferation of Army units on the battlefield create an operational imperative for flexible, creative leaders imbued with audacity and initiative. While these attributes sound good in theory, actual Army practice runs in the opposite direction. The need to centralize operations and to coordinate and synchronize disparate units, all situated in a competitive culture that shuns mistakes, creates an environment that “stifles subordinate independence and autonomy” (Vandergriff 1999, 199). While recognizing that creativity and initiative should govern operations, the Army leadership structure instead incentivizes micromanagement and scrutiny from above. These opposing vectors create a schism between the institution’s espoused values and the actual theories-in-use (Argyris and Schön 1974). The following discussion amplifies these ideas further, paying particular attention to the inherent operational environment that largely informs the belief.

**Operational Environment**

Several factors in the Army’s operational environment generate the firm belief in the need to synchronize, coordinate, and centralize. The diversity of the job requirements, the vulnerability associated with persistent contact with the enemy, the Army’s dependence on the other services, and a combat leader’s need to direct his sub-echelon forces all combine to reinforce a common belief. I consider each element in turn.

The inherent complexities of fighting, moving, feeding, paying, equipping, and sustaining a massive land force create an organizational need for many branches and specialties. Even at the end of the Revolutionary War when the Continental Army was comparatively small and technologically simple, George Washington’s combat elements were supported by an Adjutant General, Inspector General, Judge Advocate General, Quartermaster, Commissary General, Medical Corps, and Corps of Engineers (Dupuy 1973, 39). Since that time, these essential functions continue to be represented in the Army’s force structure, along
with dozens of new branches that have developed since. As technology and society progressed, the Army expanded and divided accordingly. John Shy notes well that “[t]he chief human response to changing military technology has been organizational and pedagogical: increasing specialization in the new technology, more and more schooling to teach specialists the new tasks” (1986, 348). This ever-increasing specialization and sub-division creates recurring challenges for an Army attempting to act purposefully and with unity. As a compelling artifact of this fragmentation, in 1938 the War Department occupied no less than 20 buildings all over Washington, DC (Ganoe 1942), frustrating sincere attempts to coordinate Army policy—consequently, workers broke ground on the massively consolidated Pentagon three years later.

A second element of this belief, conditioned by the operational environment, comes from the vulnerability of exposed ground forces. The Army’s terrestrial exposure creates an essential need to secure its perimeter, to lash together adjacent units to coordinate fire support, and to maintain a flexible reserve to redeploy as needed, thus generating as much coordinated firepower as possible on the enemy. A deployed Army typically lives in a battle zone, and contact with the enemy is a constant threat and an ever-present concern. When surprise attacks come, the Army needs to be able to coordinate all available firepower quickly and effectively to deal with the attack. Consequently, the Army naturally wants to control as many of its supporting elements as possible; organic dedicated support can be counted on, while support from the other services may well get diverted to what someone else decides is a higher priority. “In order to do his job best,” observes Admiral J.C. Wylie, “the soldier feels he should control the forces that must function in his support” (1967, 47).

Nevertheless, the Army realizes that it cannot possibly control all of its support, and it is thus in a strikingly dependent posture on the other services. Again, Wylie notes well the soldier’s state: “[T]he soldier cannot function alone. His flanks are bare, his rear is vulnerable,
and he looks aloft with a cautious eye. He needs the airman and the sailor for his own security in doing his own job” (1967, 46). In his more contemporary analysis of Army culture, Stephen Scroggs recognizes that this belief persists, outlining this basic assumption of the Army: “To lead successfully as a professional Army officer on the field of land battle requires teamwork and dependency on other members of the team” (2000, 133). This assumption, however, eventually reaches an operational limit, conditioned by the Army’s vulnerability and role as the last line of defense that must finish the job. The Army knows that at the end of the day, it will be stuck with the mess, engaged with the enemy, and responsible for the outcome. While support from the other services is critical, it has also too often been absent when needed. Thus, in extremis, the Army may recoil into an Army-only defensive crouch, given that outside support is too hard to coordinate and too fickle to plan on. Consequently, while the Army is putatively reliant on the other services, its vulnerability can motivate a self-fulfilling prophecy: since we do not know for sure that external support will be there, we should act conservatively and make an Army-only plan. In the event, the Army pushes forward with its plan, uncoordinated with the other services, only to find that the supporting elements were not prepared and thus did not provide any support. In this respect, the Army’s vulnerability can generate counter-productive independence of action, which acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy, vitiating any support they might otherwise have received.

A final element of the Army’s operational environment generates yet another paradox of employment. Given the chaos and fog of battle, sound operational doctrine suggests the need to entrust sub-echelon commanders with authority to execute operations with creativity, flexibility, and initiative. Consequently, the Army emphasizes these ideals, but the ideal succumbs to reality. In his comprehensive study of Army organizational culture, James Pierce (2010) employed a survey instrument to discover what Army members perceive as the actual
versus ideal cultural attributes of the Army. Pierce found that members broadly recognized that Army culture should be one that “emphasizes flexibility, discretion, participation, human resource development, innovation, creativity, [and] risk-taking” (101). Instead of this ideal, however, the underlying assumptions that actually inform the Army emphasize “organizational stability and control” (80).

Here, the Army gets pulled in different directions by its twin nature as both a profession and a bureaucracy (Snider 2005, 3). The dictates of the profession encourage flexibility and creativity, while the ponderous inertia of the bureaucracy stifles any attempts to be flexible or creative. As a massive government institution, and one whose operational ethos involves constant coordination and centralized planning, the Army finds the centripetal force of bureaucracy pulling it toward controlled stasis. A 2001 study on officer training and development in the Army, authored by a 37-member panel, came to this conclusion: “Army officers suffer from stifling micromanagement—a fact long known and broadly acknowledged” (in Matthews 2005, 73). Leonard Wong’s study of Army leadership development practices finds this same contradiction at work: “[A] serious disconnect remains between current leader development practices and the type of leaders required by the future force. Put bluntly, the Army is relying on a leader development system that encourages reactive instead of proactive thought, compliance instead of creativity, and adherence instead of audacity” (2002, 3). An Army leader’s short-run incentive structure encourages this micromanagement, as leaders are ultimately accountable for everything that takes place in their unit; at the same time, there are no tangible rewards associated with developing the next generation of Army leaders by entrusting them with responsibility. Consequently, both dynamics push in the same direction—toward micromanagement and control.

17 Pierce employs the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) developed by Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn (1999). The four cultural typologies in their model are the market, bureaucracy, adhocracy, and clan.
Thus far, this section of the chapter has focused on an Army belief informed by its fragmented structure, its imperative to coordinate and synchronize operations, and its gravitational pull towards centralized bureaucracy. I conclude this section by identifying various ways in which this belief reverberates within the Army. First, the fragmentary nature of the Army leads to a primary identification with one’s branch, rather than with the Army as a whole. Members of the different branches are readily identifiable in their uniforms, with different branch insignia and even different colored accoutrements. Furthermore, the first professional journals in the Army were branch-specific technical journals, emphasizing the unique crafts of the infantry, cavalry, engineers or artillery (Dupuy 1973, 184-5). These dynamics work to dilute the coherence of an Army culture, as many members constitute their professional identity at multiple levels: with their branch, with the Army writ large, and then with the nation as a whole (as discussed in section 6.1). Whereas Marines identify themselves first and last with the Marine Corps, Army soldiers have their professional identities scattered more broadly.

A second echo within the Army is related to the first. Carl Builder describes the Army as a fraternity of professional “guilds,” each plying its trade in concert with the others (1989). These guilds—dominated by the Big Three of infantry, artillery, and armor—all have strong internal Army support and are led by very senior officers. With so many senior-ranking officers in the Army, each overseeing a disparate clan of soldiers, a climate of egalitarianism and fairness pervades (Meese and Wilson 2011). The job of the Chief of Staff becomes one of extensive coordination among the branches and various Army agencies; generating a coherent and consistent Army viewpoint is a Herculean task of persistent staff work (Rosenwasser 2004).

Branch insignia are no longer worn on the Army’s latest utility uniform, the Army Combat Uniform (ACU). They are still worn on the jacket of the Army Service Uniform (ASU).
These dynamics have three important effects. First, the Army’s extensive intra-organizational coordination efforts yield an _internal_, rather than external, orientation for the service (Scroggs 2000, 98). In its relations with Congress, for example, the Army suffers from an inability to translate its internal discourse into externally meaningful terms. “Overall, the Army message was described as murky, complicated, odd, and suited for internal rather than external audiences,” summarizes Scroggs. “Unlike the Marine Corps approach, the Army message tends to glaze rather than water the eyes of a sympathetic congressional audience” (2000, 104).

A second effect of this internal coordination involves the Army’s concept of its separate professional sphere—an arena of warfighting expertise in which the Army knows best. If the Army successfully reaches an internal consensus, it believes that its position must in fact be professionally sound and beyond reproach. A senior Army officer explained the dynamics this way:

> Having worked so hard internally within the Army to obtain the consensus of the four-stars, the senior Army military leadership sees that consensual internal Army decisions as the best professional judgement of its military leaders. This is what needs to happen. You should accept it on its obvious merits because it is the Army professional position. If Congress or [the Office of the Secretary of Defense] choose not to accept our recommendation, then there is nothing we can do about it but try to make do with what we are left with. (Scroggs 2000, 120)

An even subtler effect may be in operation as well, reinforcing the position identified above. The Army Chief of Staff must simultaneously satisfy both internal and external constituencies—he is, in effect, playing a two-level game (Putnam 1988). Once an _internal_ consensus has finally been reached, the Army Chief of Staff is hard-pressed to negotiate or compromise the Army’s position with an _external_ actor. The Chief of Staff may find his position more tenable within the Army if policy changes occur as fiat declarations from civilian leaders, rather than through proactive political compromises that the Chief then “owns” in his own organization.
Summary of the Belief

In sum, the Army is a massive institution, remarkably fragmented, but thoroughly driven by a need to coordinate, synchronize, and centrally direct its teeming combat elements. Former Chief of Staff of the Army General Edward Meyer likened the challenges of ground combat leader’s role to those of conducting a vast orchestra:

The challenge in applying effective military power in combat is how to orchestrate maneuver forces composed of over 10,000 ground maneuver elements, several thousand additional fire support, combat support, and service units working behind those maneuver elements and additionally several thousand air support elements. Each of these roughly squad-sized elements is about the size of a football team, and the composite force maneuvers on and over physical areas immense in size and diverse in geography and climate. (Meyer 1983, 294)

As discussed in the section above, the Army therefore holds the following belief:

The diversity of the Army mission creates a fragmented array of branches and specialties and units, but controlling and directing modern armies requires intricate coordination and complete synchronization. Furthermore, leadership within the Army structure should be flexible, creative, and marked by initiative, but the need for coordination and standardization is the stronger imperative.

6.5: Fielding an Army: Regulars and the Militia

Practically considered, then, the nation has no army in time of peace, though, when the clarion voice of war resounds through the land, the country throughout its vast extent becomes, if necessary, one bristling camp of armed men…It is a circumstance quite unique in character…It is so new that it has no precise parallel in all history: it belongs to the genius of the American Republic.
— John A. Logan, The Volunteer Soldier of America

How can a nation with a pervasive distrust of standing armies adequately prepare for an uncertain defense? In Weigley’s sweeping history of the United States Army, the most salient feature of that history — the subplot that overtakes the story — is the question of manpower. From the colonial days of a minuteman militia to the large standing army of the Cold War and beyond, the nation has haltingly searched for a right-sized army suited to the national character and defense requirements. Fearing the repressive potential and burdensome cost of a large

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19 Logan 1887, 464.
army, the default position has been toward a small army. Yet the nation needs an army of suitable size, strength, and readiness when war comes. These contradictory imperatives shape an enduring debate over the size and structure of the Army: how much of it should be regular (i.e., active duty), how much should we rely on a reserve citizen-militia, and how should the Army expand as needed to meet particular crises? While the Army itself has naturally preached the prudence of a large, well-prepared, professional force, the American people have tended to rally around the citizen-soldier who answers the patriotic call to arms, wins the war, and returns to his farm. Dixon Wecter insightfully observes that “Americans have a special affection for the man of peace—like Sergeant York in the World War—who leaves his trade only long enough to beat the military at their own game” (in Huntington 1957, 159). Weigley’s own analysis concludes that both the regular and the reserve components have shaped the character of the American Army: “The duality of the American military tradition has given the United States Army both many of its historic perplexities and its best qualities too. At once an expert army and a people’s army, it has served as the nation’s sword without endangering the nation’s democracy” (1984, 556).

This section of the chapter explores these ideas further, noting briefly the dictates of the operational environment, then highlighting the national experience of balancing regular and reserve forces, and concludes by suggesting an enduring belief that these factors inform. The composite portrait confirms the assessment of Army historian Edgar Raines, who noted that at its core the Army is essentially “a mobilization organization.”

Operational Environment and National Experience

The influence of the operational environment on the issue of manpower is rather straightforward. Deciding upon the size and structure of a national army requires the

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reconciliation of an army’s cost with the state’s anticipated needs. Sir John Hackett cuts quickly to the essence: “It is the business of armed services to furnish a constituted authority, a government, in situations where force is, or might be, used the greatest possible number of options. A government can have as many options as it will pay for” (1986, 29). Thus, the nature of a land army as a force of last resort requires that a state have enough ready strength to handle an initial attack, combined with a suitable apparatus for expanding rapidly to finish the task. The approach that each state adopts is ultimately a political question, and must be informed by the character of its national institutions (Palmer 1941, 141).

How then has the United States brokered this dilemma? An Army history textbook, developed for use in the Reserve Officer’s Training Corps (ROTC), answers the question this way:

The Army is essentially an institutional form adapted by American society to meet military requirements. The American military system has been developed so as to place a minimum burden upon the people and give the nation a reasonable defense without sacrificing its fundamental values. From the beginning, the United States has sought to reconcile individual liberty with national security without becoming a nation in arms. (Army Historical Series 1989, 14)

The following discussion touches on the highlights of the American experience, noting key events and thinkers that have shaped the Army’s structure.

Historically, the American colonists embraced the militia tradition of the citizen soldier that was deeply rooted in the British experience (Weigley 1984). This same militia character animated the embryonic violence of the Revolution, as citizen-soldiers in Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill stared down and traded blows with British regulars. These seminal battles “went far to create the American tradition that the citizen soldier when aroused is more than a match for the trained professional” (Army Historical Series 1989, 46)—an impression viewed rather unfavorably by the Regular Army.
George Washington’s own experience with the militia was less glowing than the national zeitgeist would otherwise suggest. Struggling mightily to keep a functioning Army intact, Washington constantly found himself losing militia soldiers whose enlistments expired—“[w]here the eager came by ones, the disheartened left by twos” (Ganoe 1942, 25). In September 1776, Washington wrote to Congress lamenting, “We are now as it were, upon the eve of another dissolution of our Army...To place any dependence upon Militia, is, assuredly, resting upon a broken staff” (Fitzpatrick ed. 1931, Vol. VI, 107, 110). But Washington’s dissatisfaction was neither an absolute condemnation of the militia nor an outright endorsement of full reliance on regular forces. Instead, as expressed in his Sentiments on a Peace Establishment after the war, Washington suggested the need for a strong core of regular forces, augmented by a well-organized militia, trained and standardized across the various states. “[Washington] therefore proposed enough professionals to do those things that manifestly cannot be done by citizen soldiers in time of peace. He wanted enough professional soldiers for these special purposes but no more” (Palmer 1941, 12; emphasis in original).

Congress, however, had other plans. In June 1784, Congress directed Henry Knox, then the senior officer in the Continental Army, to discharge all but 80 men to guard the military supplies at West Point and Fort Pitt (Weigley 1984, 80). With the entire regular army consisting of less than a hundred soldiers, the nation relied upon state militias to guard the frontier. After several years of these militia forces suffering inglorious defeats against Native American tribes, Congress created the Legion of the United States in December 1792 under Major General Anthony Wayne. After several years of regular training and successful battle experience, Wayne had crafted a credible fighting force—“[w]ith good reason he could be called the Father of the Regular Army” (Weigley 1984, 93). The War of 1812 yielded similarly ambivalent results, with the regular Army highlighting their brilliant successes at Chippewa and Lundy’s Lane and
pointing out the militia’s craven abandonment of the national capital in the battle of Bladensburg. Army historian William Ganoe vividly critiques the militia force as a “hodgepodge army [that] actually fled through the capital of the nation and left it open to plunder and rapine” (1942, 141). For the regular Army, “the lesson of the recent war [of 1812] was simple. The militia was utterly worthless” (Palmer 1941, 74). Further evidence comes from the Army’s ROTC textbook, which summarizes the relative performance of the regulars and the militia during the war: “The militia, occasionally competent, was never dependable, and in the nationalistic period that followed the war when the exploits of the Regulars were justly celebrated, an ardent young Secretary of War, John Calhoun, would be able to convince Congress and the nation that the first line of defense should be a standing army” (1989, 147).

The Regular Army’s attitude toward the militia found its most stark articulation at the end of the nineteenth century in the work of Major General Emory Upton. Published by the Army long after Upton’s death in 1881, his *Military Policy of the United States* offered analysis and critique of the American experience, informed by Upton’s extensive travels studying the armies of Europe. In short, Upton ridiculed the battle record of the militia, emphatically asserting that “in the race for military laurels the professional soldier usually distances all competitors” (1917, ix). Upton understood that his treatise would not be popular with the prevailing American view, but he charged forward with his conclusions nonetheless:

In treating this subject, I am aware that I tread on delicate ground and that every volunteer and militiaman who has patriotically responded to the call of his country…may possibly regard himself as unjustly attacked. To such I can only reply, that where they have enlisted for the period of three months, and, as at Bladensburg and on many other fields, have been hurled against veteran troops, they should not hold me responsible for the facts of history, which I have sought impartially to present. (1917, viii)

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21 One way the Army commemorated the brilliant victory at Chippewa was to model the gray West Point uniforms after the gray uniforms that the regulars at Chippewa happened to be wearing—the only color cloth their supplier was able to procure.
Upton’s hagiography of the Regular Army had wide but not universal appeal within the Army. The most compelling counterweight came from Brigadier General John Palmer, whose study and experience of army force structure gave him uncommon insight into the political nature of fielding an army. Palmer recognized that Upton’s analysis unduly glorified the Prussian model, a militaristic approach out of step with American democratic history. Instead, Palmer argued that the size and character of a national army must remain congruent with the political character of the state: “[T]he form of military institutions must be determined on political grounds, with due regard to national genius and tradition” (1941, 141). Ultimately, through various legislative attempts and national experiments with local and global war, the United States arrived at a tripartite system of regular (active) forces, reserve forces, and national guard forces—first established as such in the National Defense Act of 1916 (Dupuy 1973, 220). Since then, the essential logic and structure has persisted, though the specific forms have continued to evolve.

Echoes in the Army

This overriding question of manpower—how to structure and man a suitable defense—results in several corollary echoes within the Army organization. First, with manpower requirements in direct proportion to the scope of its potential tasks, a volunteer Army must expend considerable capital to recruit able-bodied members into the force. And given the scope and diversity of the Army’s requirements, its approach to recruiting is markedly different than that of the Marines, for example. While Marine recruiting focuses on being “first to fight” and never hawks any side benefits, the Army—with its greater requirement for bodies—takes a more egalitarian and populist approach. In the 1920s, for example, the Army promised recruits the chance to learn and do whatever they wanted from playing the flute to wood-carving (Dupuy 1973, 232). In the early 1970s, the Army’s pandering reached a new extreme in its
recruiting slogan, “Today’s Army Wants to Join You!” While the service replaced this slogan with “Be All You Can Be!” in the 1980s, the message was still focused on the individual, not on service, the Army, or the nation.

A second echo created by the manpower question is the vital requirement for readiness, training, and standardization (Meese and Wilson 2011). The Regular Army, first in the service to be hurled into the breach, must be ready, trained, and equipped for immediate action. Former Chief of Staff of the Army General Creighton Abrams considered “the basic task of the Army to be readiness” (Sorley 1992, 346). Most internal Army histories emphasize, however, how unusual such preparation has been, noting the perpetual cycle of unpreparedness that has marked American adventures in war. The flat-footed national response to the Korean invasion in June 1950 is often cited as the nadir of this unfortunate pattern. The tragic poster-boys for the Army’s lack of preparedness were the members of Task Force Smith, the first—and undersized— American force to meet the North Korean Army. “That forlorn hope spearhead—Task Force Smith, a name to be added to Army annals—shattered itself against the Red blow by July 5, 1950” (Dupuy 1973, 282).

The requirement to be ready at all times extends to the guard and reserve forces as well. These crucial augmentation forces must fulfill Washington’s design as a well-organized force, with standardized and routine training that comports with the tactics and organization of the Regulars. The core regular force must ably and seamlessly expand with the augmentation of reserve and guard forces cut from the same cloth. The Army therefore emphasizes standardization and breaks down nearly any endeavor into a uniform checklist, acronym, or procedure. Everyone must do each task the same way, forging interchangeable parts to equip the massive Army machine.

Summary of the Belief

How big? How ready? How many professionals and how many citizen-soldiers?

Which group is more effective? Which is more American? These questions have shaped the US Army since its inception, ultimately yielding a unique American response that has relied upon both professional regulars and a citizen reserve. Throughout this long experience, the following belief emerges and endures, particularly among the Regulars:

The Army must be prepared for war during times of peace, and must be in a position to expand rapidly and capably to whatever degree a crisis requires. Providing suitable manpower for the Army is the first and most critical aspect of providing for the national defense. The Regular, or active duty, Army forms the essential core, while the reserve and guard components must be trained, ready, and standardized.

6.6: Soldiers, Units, and Leaders

Leadership is intangible, and therefore no weapon ever designed can replace it.
– General Omar Bradley

Wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men. It is the spirit of the men who follow and of the man who leads that gains the victory.
– General George Patton

A sixth and final belief of Army service culture reflects the Army’s emphasis on soldiers, organization, and leadership. In essence, the Army is an enterprise of people, with an institutional focus on various levels of human aggregation: the individual, the unit, and the leader. A million-man Army is built one soldier at a time, so the Army emphasizes the individual soldier as the backbone of the service. These individual soldiers, however, must be organized into cohesive fighting units, so the Army venerates its various regiments and divisions as anthropomorphic patriarchs of the service, whose personalities persist despite rotations of their assigned personnel. Finally, the Army recognizes that units must be led, so it

celebrates the great battle captains who lead soldiers in the field. The service clearly holds a “muddy boots bias,” valuing and promoting leaders whose experiences have been in the field, in the mud (or sand), with soldiers, and leading combat units (Scroggs 2000, Matthews 2005, Linn 2007). Reflecting the Army’s institutional focus on heroic leaders, the central parade ground at the US Military Academy at West Point is flanked by statues of the Army’s iconic generals, not by empty hulks of its great tanks. Ultimately, the Army believes itself to be a profession of people, recruited individually, organized collectively, and led courageously.

Operational Environment

As the previous section of this chapter discussed, fielding an Army in peace and war involves a constant reconciliation of political, financial, logistical, and security interests. These concerns ultimately emanate from the need to recruit, train, and equip the individual soldier to fight when called upon to do so. Individual soldiers are the basic nucleotides that comprise the Army’s DNA, prompting General Creighton Abrams to insist that “[p]eople are not in the Army. People are the Army” (Sorley 1992, 346). Efforts at reform, change, or rehabilitation within the Army typically begin, therefore, with the individual soldier.

But soldiers do not fight as isolated individuals. Out of sheer logistical necessity, armies of people must be organized efficiently into fighting units. Like cups, quarts, and gallons that aggregate into ever larger units, the Army is a massive hierarchy of units and sub-units: squads, platoons, companies, battalions, brigades, divisions, corps, and field armies—commanded by ever-higher ranking officers. The first task of an assembled mass of soldiers is to organize. During the massive mobilization for World War II, for example, a young lieutenant recalled the phone call that notified him of his first assignment: “Ryder, come right on over, you’ve been

25 In keeping with the Army’s deep Revolutionary roots and the veneration of George Washington, the statue of Washington on horseback in central and towering. The other three statues bordering the Plain are of Douglas MacArthur, Dwight Eisenhower, and the “father of the military academy” Sylvanus Thayer.

26 Clausewitz noted that “the end for which a soldier is recruited, clothed, armed, and trained, the whole object of his sleeping, eating, drinking, and marching is simply that he should fight at the right place and the right time” (1984, 95).
selected and our first job is to write a TO&E [Table of Organization and Equipment] for the platoon” (Coffman 2004, 401). Similarly, General John Pershing recalled his early days in the Army when “[e]very army officer carried an army organization bill in his vest pocket” (Palmer 1941, 79).

This organizational emphasis on fighting units creates a distinctively anthropomorphic veneration of these units as historic and honored pillars of the Army. These heralded units each create their own sub-culture, traditions, uniform accoutrements, and slogans. Furthermore, units trace their lineage back to their initial commissioning, recounting the organization’s history much like a soldier’s biography. Unit patches and insignia serve as essential iconography, instantly recognizable to soldiers across the service. Division and regimental flags adorn the Army corridors of the Pentagon, with battle streamers indicating the unit’s proud contributions to major campaigns (Meese and Wilson 2011, 127). As a final illustration, when the Army activates its guard and reserve forces for deployment, great emphasis is placed on moving the unit, activating the flag, and keeping organizational identities intact. In sum, the Army’s great divisions and regiments have identities that subsume the soldiers within them. These storied units form an essential part of Army tradition, conferring upon modern soldiers a seamless identification with a warfighting clan within the massive Army that is older and bigger than they are.

The Army’s emphasis on people—beginning with soldiers, then organized and celebrated in fighting units—culminates in the great leaders who take the Army to battle. The Army’s renowned heroes are its senior generals who have led the Army to victory in war: Washington, Scott, Grant, Sherman, Pershing, Marshall, Eisenhower, MacArthur, Patton,

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Bradley, Ridgway, etc. The service therefore prizes and cultivates effective leaders, starting from a young lieutenant’s first leadership assignment as a platoon leader. The skill set required of a green lieutenant in leading a veteran platoon of enlisted soldiers is sociologically complex; one senior Army general observed that “[a] good platoon leader in combat is a good gang leader. He has to figure out what it will take to inspire, trick, or intimidate someone to get them to do what he desires” (Scroggs 2000, 135). Are these the same skills, however, required of more senior officers in leading companies, battalions, brigades, and so on? As an institution, the Army appears to think so; a senior officer suggests that “[t]he embedded assumption is that if officers were paragons at lower levels, they will automatically be able to meet the demands of higher levels—no matter how different such demands might be from those encountered earlier” (Matthews 2005, 75).

This assumption leads to what numerous observers call a “muddy boots bias” within the Army (Scroggs 2000, Matthews 2005, Linn 2007). The Army’s culture, career pathways, and promotion criteria all appear “rigged to favor those who have served the most time with troops” (Matthews 2005, 73). Within a fighting organization committed to winning the nation’s wars, acclaim accrues to those who have spent the most time personally and directly involved in fighting and winning those wars. While understandable, this bias has consequences and creates what historian Brian Linn calls “muddy-boots fundamentalism, the anti-intellectual reductionism manifested in slogans such as ‘War means fighting and fighting means killing,’ or ‘The Army’s job is to kill people and break things’” (2007, 7). As discussed in section 6.3, the life-and-death horrors of combat compel soldiers to reduce complex equations into simpler terms. Soldiers know that their presence on the battlefield is the ultima ratio of war and politics—in extremis, there is nothing “limited” or “low-intensity” about a soldier’s plight when bullets are flying. So this anti-intellectual reductionism is not difficult to understand,
particularly for enlisted soldiers on the front lines; but to the extent that it permeates all levels of the Army, it can impoverish the capacity of senior leaders to appreciate the political and strategic nuances required of them. If senior Army leaders are promoted on the basis of their muddy-boot field credentials, such leaders may be tempted to apply the same muddy-boot habits of thought to strategic political-military jobs required at the higher ranks. “Winning the nation’s wars is most important for the Army,” summarized one Army general. “That produces the division commander mentality that is so prevalent in the Army and is so out of place in Washington” (Scroggs 2000, 137). Army generals with muddy boots may excel in the field, but a different skill set may be needed to tackle the unique bureaucratic challenges of the Pentagon and Congress.

Summary of the Belief

The Army understands that its indispensable resource is its people. Consequently, the Army focuses on the individual soldier, organizes those soldiers into historic and celebrated units, and lionizes the great generals and warrior-leaders who command these units in battle. These emphases coalesce into the following belief:

The Army is purposefully organized humanity. The individual soldier is the building block and the indispensable ingredient in making an Army. But individuals must be subsumed by units. Fighting units serve both functional and heraldic purposes, to organize and inspire, as part of a hierarchy and as part of an ancient and honorable tradition. Leading these troops in the field is the highest calling and most sacred job in the Army.
Conclusion

Yes Fellow Citizens I admit it – it is a Standing Army, but composed of your brothers and your sons. Can you require or conceive a better security. Are they not your natural guardians?

– Baron Friedrich Von Steuben

The US Army is a vast and complex institution, a colossus that cannot be tied down in a single chapter. Furthermore, the Army’s history and scope surpass any one person’s experience of it. In this chapter, I do not claim an exhaustive description of the Army’s belief structure– readers stationed in their own outpost on the Army frontier may find other beliefs to be more salient. Nevertheless, I do specify trend lines that emerge from an intellectually honest immersion in Army history and organization. Focusing on enduring ends, ways, and means, I identify six cultural beliefs that are likely to inform the Army’s policy preferences and political behavior in its civil-military interactions.

As with the previous chapters on the Navy and Marine Corps, I have attempted an empathetic rendering of Army service culture, confident that the Army believes what it does for logically understandable reasons. In fact, I find that the Army comes by both its strengths and weaknesses quite honestly. Of the four military services, the Army is most thoroughly embedded in the national history and most closely identified with the national narrative. Many of the paradoxes and contradictions of the US Army are merely birth defects inherited from a deliberately cumbersome political system, structured to preserve liberty at the cost of efficiency. The Army’s operational imperative is at odds with its political genetics; while operationally required to act efficiently and unambiguously, the Army is the offspring of perpetually compromised political acts that saddle it with inefficiency and half-measures. Consequently, the strengths, weaknesses, and beliefs of the US Army are vivid and faithful reflections of our complex political history as a nation. The Army has continually been the nation’s steam, a

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29 In Kohn 1975, 283.
searing byproduct of the American melting pot taken to its boiling point, scalding enemies abroad while turning engines of growth at home.

Finally, the next chapter completes the analysis of the four military services by examining the high-flying airmen who seceded from the Army – the United States Air Force.

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Figure 6.1: Summary of Army Cultural Beliefs
CHAPTER 7
THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS:
THE SERVICE CULTURE OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Air Force doctrines...must be flexible at all times and entirely uninhibited by tradition.
- General Henry "Hap" Arnold

The Air Force unapologetically revels in its status as the youngest service, uninhibited by thinking derived from the days before man conquered the air.
- Major General Charles Dunlap

The United States Air Force is the upstart new arrival in the American military, more than 150 years younger than its three older siblings. The Air Force obviously had no role in founding the nation during the Revolutionary War, was not mentioned in the Constitutional debates, and had no role in establishing the early nation’s infrastructure or commercial prosperity. Instead, the Air Force clawed its way into existence in 1947 through persistent political advocacy, the offspring of an invention mated to an idea—the technology of the airplane coupled with the belief that strategic bombing could win wars. The primary justification to create a separate Air Force was the conviction that air power in the hands of the other three services would be suffocated, used only to support existing tactics. The service was born largely from the belief that air power must be centrally controlled by airmen who could appreciate its flexibility to perform both supporting and independent missions.

The Air Force’s fight for organizational autonomy gives the service a sense of institutional insecurity, much like the Marine Corps. As chapter five described, the original mission of the Marine Corps was largely irrelevant after its first 100 years, so its existence had to be perpetually justified on alternative grounds. The Air Force, like the Marine Corps, has a

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1 In Futrell 1989, 180.
2 Dunlap 2007, 127.
3 In this chapter, I use the expression “air power” as an aggregate term capturing the full scope of a nation or organization’s capacity to exploit the air domain for its national political purposes. I use the term in its two-word formulation, except when quoting specific authors who refer to this same idea as “airpower.”
reason-for-being that is contingent and not imperative. That is, there is no *a priori* reason why air forces *must* be separate from land and ground forces—such separateness has to be articulated, justified with logic and evidence, and sustained through empirical evidence of its value. Consequently, these conditions imbue the Air Force with a sensitivity about the validity of its separate status, the logical soundness of its beliefs, and its empirical contribution to winning our nation’s wars. Furthermore, the Air Force’s separateness creates inherent tensions with the other three services whose professional jurisdictions had to be reconfigured and renegotiated with the arrival of blue-suited airmen. The issue of controlling air power featured prominently in the bitter post-World War II debate over roles and missions, as the four services drew contested boundary lines around their respective domains of professional expertise (Barlow 1998, Abbott 1988). The Air Force not only burst onto the scene as the new kid on the block, but it immediately commanded the largest share of the defense budget and did so with the swagger of the *nouveau riche*. Unsurprisingly, the Air Force’s relationship with its fellow military services has often been anything but congenial.

While the case study analyses in this dissertation focus primarily on the other three services, I include this chapter on the Air Force for methodological completeness and for use in future research. Therefore, using the same methodology as the previous three chapters, this chapter presents six beliefs that shape Air Force service culture. To research the service, I inductively surveyed Air Force history, particularly as presented within the Air Force’s own sanctioned works, and then gathered common threads into relevant beliefs about ends, ways, and means.\(^4\) The presentation in this chapter clusters around these six beliefs, with analysis that

\(^4\) As with previous chapters, I survey Air Force history up through the Vietnam War. To minimize the logical circularity that a cultural variable can create, I temporally separate my cultural research from the case study analysis. My historical research goes up through the “lessons learned” period of Vietnam, and my case population begins after that time. This approach helps separate the data used to substantiate my independent variable (service culture) from the data I analyze in my case studies. I do incorporate analyses of the Air Force that were written after 1975, but the “fact pattern” used to inform these analyses ends with the Vietnam war.
indicates the relative weight of the service’s operational environment, founding context, and key events in forming and sustaining these beliefs. In researching and presenting beliefs of Air Force culture, two notable challenges arise. First, the Air Force is the youngest service with the least amount of organizational history and professes an ideological commitment to be forward-thinking and constantly innovative. Consequently, the Air Force struggles to identify a coherent and consistent cultural narrative. The second challenge reinforces the first: airmen tend to cluster their organizational identity around their particular airplane or piece of the Air Force mission. The wide diversity of Air Force missions and technological platforms creates a fragmented culture, though the subculture of combat aviation has been the dominant one across the life of the service. In my analysis, I find that these challenges are actually just part of the Air Force culture, not obstacles to identifying it. By focusing on enduring ends, ways, and means, I identify core beliefs that inhere across much of the service, allowing it to speak largely with one voice in its civil-military activities.

In this chapter, six beliefs of Air Force service culture are presented in isolation for the purpose of analytical clarity. In reality, these beliefs lean quite heavily upon each other as part of an integrated array—more like a house of cards than freestanding pillars. Because these ideas rely upon each other so significantly, I preview them here at the outset before focusing on each one individually. The first is a belief about ends, the next three are about ways, and the last two focus on means. First, the Air Force holds firmly to the conviction that the air domain is sufficiently different than the land or sea that it demands a separate intellectual and organizational commitment. The drive for organizational independence is the Air Force’s true founding context and thus shapes the trajectory of the service in enduring ways. The second

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5 See, for example, Thornhill 2012, a recent work published by a retired Air Force brigadier general.
6 Thomas Ehrhard (2000) codes the Air Force culture as monarchical in his typology, with the combat flying culture the dominant subgroup. The two primary sub-divisions within this combat aviation group are the bomber and fighter cultures; for excellent analysis of the relative dominance of these two groups, see Worden 1998.
core belief is an essential complement to the first: the Air Force must be a separate organization in order to maximize the *strategic* potential of air power. When used properly, air power can bypass land and naval engagements, striking at the heart of the enemy to secure victory. Third, the Air Force believes that commanding the air domain is the *sine qua non* of victory in war. The air battle for control of the skies must be the first, essential, and pervasive commitment of the US military in any conflict. Land and sea forces stand little chance of success unless air superiority is assured.

The fourth belief is also about ways, completing the trinity of doctrinal commitments that are central to the Air Force way. The service holds that air power not only needs to be controlled by airmen, but should be *centrally* controlled to maximize the flexible potential of aircraft, not parceled out to individual ground units for their own organic support. The fifth belief focuses on means and unsurprisingly identifies the central role of technology and aircraft in Air Force culture. Finally, the sixth belief identifies the unique dynamics of leadership and officer-enlisted relations in the service. With officers doing nearly all of the fighting, at great distance from the support base, and in great reliance upon their enlisted technicians who equip the aircraft to fly, a collegial and informal culture persists, and the service must work hard to validate the efforts of the large majority of airmen who are *not* engaged in the sound and fury of active combat. Together, these six beliefs comprise the cultural cortex of the Air Force and work together to shape the service’s policy preferences, its political behaviors, and the tenor of its civil-military interactions.
Was the Wright brothers’ new invention merely a novel weapon to improve existing tactics, or did it fundamentally alter the landscape of war? In the early decades of the twentieth century, no one was quite sure what the advent of heavier-than-air flight portended for human conflict. The Army, Navy, and Marine Corps clearly saw immense potential for manned aircraft to serve useful auxiliary roles in support of their core missions. Within the services’ existing paradigms of war, aircraft could be used for seeing enemy troop dispositions, spotting artillery, supporting ground battles, and locating enemy fleets. Given the unknown potential of this new sky vehicle, air power naturally developed within the existing organizational structures of the War and Navy Departments.

A rising chorus of zealous air power advocates, however, had other ideas. According to the zealots, the airplane changed everything, rendering old ways of war obsolete, as air power could now decide the fate of nations. Consequently, these advocates argued, a nation must organize accordingly and cultivate a new breed of warriors for the exclusive task of controlling and exploiting the third dimension. As one of these early zealots quipped, “[t]o entrust the development of aviation to either the Army or the Navy is just as sensible as entrusting the development of the electric light to a candle factory” (Miller 2000, 39). Through a persistent mixture of prophecy, logic, advocacy, and trial, these fledgling airmen eventually carved out a separate United States Air Force in 1947. This section details this national decision to create a

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7 DeSeversky 1942, 7.  
8 1955, 10.
separate service and demonstrates the fundamental importance of this separateness as a perpetual belief of the Air Force. As with previous chapters, I focus in turn on the relative contributions of the operational environment, the founding context, and key events and exemplars.

Operational Environment

The unique operating environment of air forces creates both new possibilities and pitfalls. As aircraft crack open the third dimension, they rise above a world of linear boundaries, borders, and terrestrial obstacles. The air environment thus opens new possibilities as humans can go faster, farther, and higher. Furthermore, new targets in the enemy’s interior can be held at risk, as a fielded army can no longer hold an aggressor at arm’s length. With new targets in play, new strategies and tactics must be developed to exploit them. Furthermore, the air environment does not just provide vertical access to land and sea battles but constitutes a warfighting environment all its own. When facing an enemy equipped with aircraft, opposing aircraft have their own aerial battles to fight, completely separate from the land and sea battles below. In short, the air medium provides new access to existing battles, new access to new targets, and a new battleground of its own. In his 1942 work *Victory Through Air Power*, Major Alexander DeSeversky summarizes the unique air environment this way: “The air, it cannot be too often repeated, is a separate element, distinct from land and sea—an element with its own space relations, its own laws and problems. It is a continuous and uninterrupted element enveloping the entire globe; strategically speaking every political division and every differentiation between air-over-land and air-over-water is artificial and meaningless” (1942, 263). The operational environment of an air force is thus one of flexible potential: it can be used by existing forces to augment and support existing strategies, while it can also be exploited as a
warfighting domain of its own to do what existing armies and navies are not technically nor ideologically constituted to do.

*Founding Context and Key Events*

The creation of a separate Air Force came through the interaction of political choice and early experimentation, after a 40-year gestation period in which the Army’s aviation component steadily grew in size, importance, and power.\(^9\) In 1907, less than four years after the Wright brothers’ first flight, the Army made its first organizational commitment to aviation by creating the Aeronautical division within its Signal Corps. With two enlisted men assigned to his support, the Chief Signal Officer was “to take charge of all matters pertaining to military ballooning, air machines and all kindred subjects” (Wolk 1997, 3). This small organizational act, uncertain as it was, created the first lineal ancestor of today’s modern Air Force.

In July 1914, Congress upgraded the small Aeronautical division and established the Aviation Section within the Signal Corps, equipping it with 60 officers and 260 enlisted personnel. During the course of World War I, the Army’s ambivalence toward aviation is largely reflected in the wide assortment of names used to describe this aviation component: Aviation Section, Aeronautical Division, Airplane Division, Air Division, and Air Service Division were all in use at one point or another (Hudson 1968, 8). Eventually, in May 1918, the Aviation Section became the Air Service, which would ultimately swell to over 19,000 officers and 178,000 enlisted by the end of the war in November 1918.\(^10\) The Air Service tried its hand at both support and independent actions during the war, though the majority of its efforts were focused on supporting the ground army through observation.\(^11\) General John Pershing reflected

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\(^9\) While the Navy and Marine Corps did indeed develop their own aviation components, this section focuses on Army aviation as it represents the lineal ancestor to the U.S. Air Force.


\(^11\) Over the short span of the Air Service’s action, American flyers shot down 776 enemy planes and 72 enemy balloons; they conducted 150 separate air raids, dropping over 275,000 pounds of bombs and went 160 miles behind enemy lines. While accomplishing this, the Air Service lost 290 planes and 37 balloons (Hudson 1968, 299).
on the contribution of his Air Service during the war and reached the unsurprising conclusion that military aircraft were best suited to “drive off hostile airplanes and procure for the infantry and artillery information concerning the enemy’s movements” (Hudson 1968, 302).

After the war, air power advocates continued their push for a separate organization and experienced halting success. In 1920, Congress reaffirmed the Air Service as a separate combatant branch within the Army and then upgraded it to the Army Air Corps in 1926. Nine years later, on 1 March 1935, the Army activated the General Headquarters (GHQ) Air Force, which gave airmen centralized tactical control over aviation assets in the United States rather than having them parceled out among Army units in the field (Shiner 1997b) — a key development on the path to independence.

Finally, in June 1941, the Army Air Forces (AAF) were established under the command of General Henry “Hap” Arnold (Wolk 1997). Throughout World War II, the AAF enjoyed a large measure of autonomy, due in large part to the personal rapport between General Arnold and Chief of Staff of the Army General George Marshall (Miller 2000, 50). Marshall appreciated the strategic potential of air forces, and while Arnold was technically his subordinate, their conduct during the war was largely that of colleagues. During the war, the stature of the AAF improved significantly at two key junctures. First, in March 1942, the War Department published Circular 59, which made the Army Air Forces one of three autonomous commands within the department, alongside the Army Ground Forces and the Services of Supply (Boyne 1997, 22). The second key event was the War Department’s publication of Field Manual (FM) 100-20 on 21 July 1943. The Field Manual was entitled “Command and Employment of Air Power,” a far-sighted doctrinal publication that captured the airmen’s views on air power with stark clarity. The very first point in Section 1 of the manual makes this essential claim: “Land power and air power are co-equal and interdependent forces; neither is an auxiliary of the
other” (War Department 1943, 1). Like an emancipation proclamation, this field manual finally liberated the Army Air Forces from any notion of doctrinal subservience to ground forces.

Once the war finally concluded, a separate Air Force was nearly a bygone conclusion, though the actual legislation did not come easily. The autonomy of the Air Force became part of the very contentious debates over the unification of the armed services (Caraley 1966), finally resulting in the National Security Act of 1947 (Wolk 1997). With the passage of the Act on September 18, 1947, the Air Force was born as a separate military service to provide “prompt and sustained offensive and defensive air operations” (National Security Act of 1947, Sec. 208f).

Ultimately, the march to independence left a trail of discarded organizational names, documenting the steady movement from obscurity to preeminence: from the three-person Aeronautical division (1907), to the Aviation Section (1914), the Air Service (1918), the Army Air Corps (1926), the Army Air Forces (1941), and finally the United States Air Force (1947). At last the nation’s airmen had their chance to fulfill DeSeversky’s claim: “The simple truth is that a separate Air Force is not a wonder-working device to guarantee automatic military ascendancy, but merely the minimal precondition for successful modern warfare” (1942, 255).

The Outspoken Exemplar

As the Army’s air component gradually grew and made its case for independence, impassioned airmen provided the intellectual and emotional fuel to push the movement forward. Among the many outspoken advocates for a separate Air Force, Brigadier General William “Billy” Mitchell appears to have outspoken them all. A brash officer with a penchant for publicity, Mitchell helped forge an independent Air Force as both its prophet and martyr (Clodfelter 1997). Unlike Hap Arnold, Mitchell was not one of the Army’s very first airmen but sensed that the airplane would revolutionize warfare and thus paid for his own flight

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12 For more on the life and career of Mitchell, see Hurley 1975 and Miller 2004.
lessons in 1916 (Clodfelter 1997, 83). During World War I, Mitchell became the Air Service First Brigade commander working for General John Pershing, and ultimately commanded over 1,500 allied aircraft in the St. Mihiel offensive in 1918 (Hudson 1968, 303; Biddle 2002, 52). Although aircraft were used primarily in support of ground operations during the war, Mitchell nonetheless returned to the United States with twin convictions: first, air power was now the decisive element of warfare; and second, air power must be controlled by an independent air arm.

During the interwar years, Mitchell led an incendiary campaign against the Army and Navy by proclaiming their obsolescence and impotence. Two key events served as capstones for Mitchell’s tireless crusade: the sinking of captured Germans ships in 1921 and his own court-martial in 1925. First, after a series of claims and counter-claims about the vulnerability of Navy ships, Mitchell and the Navy agreed to a clinical trial in which airmen would attempt to sink two captured German warships. On 18 July 1921, Mitchell’s airmen took aim at the cruiser Frankfurt and when playing by the established rules, they inflicted moderate damage on the ship (Futrell 1989, 37). Three days later, however, with movie cameras rolling amid much public attention, Mitchell ensured that the results would confirm his bold claims. On 21 July 1921, the Martin MB-2 bombers relentlessly attacked the 24,000-ton battleship Ostfriesland, without the agreed-upon pauses and in full defiance of the Navy’s calls to wave off the attacks (Shiner 1997a, 94). The Ostfriesland sank in 21 minutes, giving Mitchell all the evidence he needed that naval forces had been rendered obsolete by air power. Despite the benign employment conditions and rule violations, Mitchell informed his boss after the tests that “the problem of the destruction of sea craft by Air Forces had been solved and is finished” (Futrell 1989, 37). The sunken hull of the Ostfriesland became an icon of Mitchell’s campaign for a preeminent air force.

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13 According to the terms of the agreement, the aircraft had to pause after each bomb was dropped to allow Navy battle-damage crews to assess the extent of the damage (Budiansky 2004, 148).
Mitchell’s fervent advocacy proved unquenchable, despite attempts by War Department leaders to temper his inflammatory rhetoric. In 1925, Mitchell published a hasty collection of his writings in a work entitled *Winged Defense*, in which he called for a complete re-organization of national defense, a separate Department of Aeronautics (co-equal with the Army and Navy), and a total national commitment to civil and military aviation. Additionally, Mitchell repeated his anti-navy proclamations, citing that it had been “proved for all time that aircraft dominated seacraft,” that battleships were disruptive to international peace, and that the country should trade in its warships for thousands of planes instead ([1925] 2009, 64, 133, 110). After being banished from Washington, DC, to a post in Texas, Mitchell climaxed his disruptive advocacy in September 1925 after the crash of a Navy dirigible. He summoned the press and issued a nine-page statement that blamed the fatal crash on “the incompetency, criminal negligence, and almost treasonable administration of the National Defense by the Navy and War Departments” (Hurley 1975, 101). Unable to tolerate this final stroke of insubordination, President Calvin Coolidge personally levied charges against Mitchell and summoned him to Washington for a court-martial. Mitchell was ultimately found guilty of insubordination, while his court-martial became a much-publicized affair and served as a national referendum on the role of aviation in civil and military affairs. Mitchell was reduced in grade to colonel and subsequently retired from the service.

On balance, the Air Force’s institutional attitude toward Billy Mitchell is one of conflicted appreciation. Mitchell’s vision, voice, and public advocacy no doubt helped establish an independent Air Force and his understanding of air power provided the nascent force with its seminal doctrines. “More than any other individual,” writes Air Force officer and historian Mark Clodfelter, “[Mitchell] was responsible for molding the airpower convictions that would

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serve as the doctrinal cornerstones of the United States Air Force” (1997, 79). To what extent, however, is Mitchell’s legacy tainted by his tactics? Hugh Trenchard, an early air power advocate in Great Britain’s Royal Air Force, wryly noted that Mitchell “tried to convert his enemies by killing them first” (Budiansky 2004, 150). In an edited volume published by the Air Force History and Museums program, historian Roger Miller suggests that Mitchell’s contribution was ultimately harmful to the cause:

To understand the Air Corps during the 1930s one must begin by recognizing that, despite his great ability as a combat commander and his effectiveness as an oracle of air power, and for whatever good his flamboyant actions accomplished, Billy Mitchell thoroughly poisoned the well. Assuming the aspect of a messianic prophet, Mitchell came to believe that those who opposed him and his ideas were either stupid, immoral, or criminally negligent. (2000, 40)

Given Mitchell’s glaring flaws and insubordinate conduct, the Air Force does not fully embrace Mitchell like the Army does George Washington, but the service does value the importance of his contribution. Furthermore, Mitchell’s tactics, while excessive, are not wholly rebuked by a service that prides itself on seeing new possibilities and challenging convention. Major General Charles Dunlap notes strains of “assertive individualism” in Air Force culture, and suggests that Mitchell’s example of questioning authority in defiance of the status quo “set[s] a tone for the Airman’s attitude that still resounds today” (2007, 128). Mitchell’s beliefs therefore contribute powerfully and explicitly to Air Force culture, while his methods exert a more subtle influence; airmen still appreciate that Mitchell spoke out to challenge the status quo but do not condone his insubordinate excesses.

Summary of the Belief

This section of the chapter has focused explicitly on the creation of a separate Air Force and thus recounts a story of organizational creation that is fundamental to Air Force service culture. The decision to create a separate Air Force was by no means predestined but came as the result of argumentation, logical persuasion, and political choice. Ultimately, the
independence of the Air Force sprung from a *belief* that air power needed to be controlled by airmen. The fundamental logic and enduring value of its organizational autonomy remains a firm institutional belief of the Air Force. As summarized by Colonel Charles Westenhoff, “creating the Department of the Air Force and a service within it ensured that there would be a military arm responsible for nurturing the potential of aviation, developing air capabilities to serve national needs, formulating and executing air policy and strategy, and fostering special competence and expertise unique to conducting military operations in the air environment” (1994, 65).

Finally, the Air Force believes that its creation story is emblematic of the service’s larger commitment to finding creative solutions to status quo problems. The Air Force continues to assert its unique capacity to think creatively and non-linearly, going “over not through” tactical and strategic problems alike (Thornhill 2012). In sum, a core belief of Air Force service culture is this:

*The aerospace domain comprises a distinct arena of warfare, and controlling the air requires separately focused organizational and intellectual capacities decoupled from the land and sea. The Air Force exists to maximize our military capacity to exploit air and space in support of national objectives. Furthermore, the Air Force maintains a commitment to finding creative bypasses around conventional conflict and conventional thinking.*

### 7.2: Decisive Strategic Potential

*Nothing man can do on the surface of the earth can interfere with a plane in flight, moving freely in the third dimension.*

– Giulio Douhet, 1921\(^{15}\)

The first belief profiled in this chapter identified the need for air power to be controlled by a separate organization of dedicated airmen. The belief described in this section represents

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\(^{15}\) Douhet 2009 [1921], 9.
the essential and logical complement to the first. To make their case that air power must be controlled separately from the Army and Navy, airmen held fast to a doctrine that neither the Army nor Navy would think to employ: strategic bombing. While the Army would otherwise fixate on supporting ground troops and the Navy on supporting the fleet, airmen insisted that air power had an independent war-winning contribution to make. Employed independently, bombers could bypass fielded forces and static trench lines, striking directly at the heart of the enemy homeland to cripple its war-making capacity and enervate its national will to resist. Convinced of air power’s potential to achieve decisive results, combined with the aforementioned belief in the need for a separate air force, air power advocates viewed the doctrine of strategic bombing as the pathway to independence.

With little supporting evidence from the first World War to recommend it, however, this doctrine of strategic bombing was more theological than empirical. Furthermore, with strategic bombing and organizational autonomy tightly coupled, airmen were hardly in a position to admit any defects or limitations in their doctrine. These political realities, however, do not suggest malfeasance on the part of airmen; as Major General Perry Smith writes, “[t]his is not to imply that the AF planners were cynics who were searching for ways to justify their existence. These men believed that airpower was the most effective way to maintain national security, but they came to this belief not by a scholarly weighing of a number of alternatives” (1970, 35).

Since achieving independence in 1947, the Air Force’s experiences in war have slowly contributed various scope conditions to this once absolute theory of strategic bombing. From Korea to Vietnam and beyond, the Air Force’s practical experiences reveal conditions under which particular kinds of bombing can be varyingly effective under particular kinds of

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16 As historian Tami Davis Biddle suggests, “Decision makers with powerful organizational goals or self-interests may discount or minimize incoming information that conflicts with those interests” (2002, 5).
environmental and political conditions.\textsuperscript{17} Despite the addition of these scope conditions, the Air Force continues to assert a core belief in the decisive strategic potential of air power to bypass conventional fielded forces, strike the enemy’s center of gravity, and achieve decisive impact in war.

This section of the chapter profiles the sources, evolution, and implications of this important belief of Air Force service culture. I begin by identifying the influence of the operational environment and the founding context. Next, I explore the implications of this belief in strategic bombing as it echoes throughout the Air Force, spawning corollary beliefs that derive logically from this parent belief. Finally, I consider the influence of Vietnam on reinforcing this belief and its corollaries, as a stark example of \textit{what not to do}. The section concludes with a summary of the belief.

\textit{Operational Environment}

The medium of warfare in which each service fights imbues a particular logic of employment, with inherent possibilities and limitations. In what ways does the air medium influence the Air Force’s belief in the decisive potential of strategic bombing?

As aircraft were introduced in World War I, their remarkable mobility and speed offered a striking contrast to the horrifically static warfare of the trenches below. While opposing armies conjured new ways to trade large formations of men for small tracts of ground, aircraft could bypass the Sisyphean tragedy below and strike deep in the enemy terrain. New targets were in reach, with new ways to affect the enemy’s decision calculus and will to resist. Leapfrogging the impotent rows of fielded forces, armed aircraft could now reach once-elusive factories, cities, refineries, and political capitals. Aircraft democratized warfighting once again, involving the civilian masses and political leadership in deadly risks that had previously been

\textsuperscript{17} The most useful and insightful book in establishing these varying conditions, cited throughout this section, is Clodfelter 1989. Clodfelter’s work figures prominently in Pape 1996, which employs a more conventional political science approach.
delegated to professional armies. These opportunities to strike the enemy’s heart and soul carried revolutionary potential, which visionary airmen quickly understood. While reality consistently proved more problematic than the theory, the strategic potential afforded by the aerial environment could not be ignored and was thus doggedly pursued.

*Founding Context – Ideological Inputs*

While the operational environment contributed to the formation of this core belief, the political and ideological environments shaped it even more profoundly. The experience of the Royal Air Force in Great Britain, the strategic theories of men like Giulio Douhet and B.H. Liddell Hart, and the Army Air Corps’ own experience in World War II all contributed significantly to the fact and form of the Air Force’s belief in strategic bombing. Each is considered in turn.

For the island empire of Great Britain, the introduction of aircraft into armed conflict exposed the nation to new vulnerabilities and new threats that the dominant Royal Navy was powerless to stop. Fearing an aerial invasion by the Germans in World War I, the British thus took their air war quite seriously, creating a separate Royal Air Force (RAF) on 1 April 1918 (Biddle 2002, 34). While most of the RAF’s efforts were tactical (in support of ground armies), its officers recognized that strategic bombing represented an ongoing justification for a separate force (Murray 1996). After the war, the British commenced a bombing survey to judge the effectiveness of strategic bombing and toured Germany interviewing factory workers and key segments of the population (Budiansky 2004, 130). While the empirical evidence showed that the bombings were more of a nuisance than a serious threat, the optimistic report concluded otherwise: “The accumulation of evidence from all quarters of Germany provide indisputable proof of the efficacy of air raids during the period under review” (Budiansky 2004, 131). A key tenet in the British theory of strategic bombing was its powerful effect on enemy morale—both
military and civilian. Sir Hugh Trenchard, the leading advocate for British air power, famously asserted various pseudo-statistics about air power’s effectiveness, insisting that the psychological effects of bombing outweighed their material effects by 20 to one, and that the RAF’s Independent Force “immobilizes at least 50 times its fighting value from the ranks of the enemy” (Meilinger 1997b, 46; Biddle 2002, 46). These early British experiences, highlighted by a commitment to strategic bombing and a belief in the vulnerability of enemy morale, contributed to similar tenets of belief in its ally, the United States.

Ideological contributions also came from prominent strategic thinkers of the interwar period. First, the Italian air power advocate Giulio Douhet published his visionary Command of the Air in 1921, in which he asserted that “war is a conflict between two wills basically opposed to the other” ([1921] 2009, 8). With the will being the paramount consideration, Douhet argued, civilian morale became a key target (22). Douhet also identified industrial buildings, transportation networks, and the enemy air force as viable targets, but his enduring emphasis was on “smashing the material and moral resources of a people caught up in a frightful cataclysm which haunts them everywhere without cease until the final collapse of all social organization” (61). While Douhet’s air theory contained many elements, he has essentially become synonymous with the “destruction of cities and their populations” (Meilinger 1997a, 34). As the forthcoming discussion will illustrate, American airmen did not adopt Douhet’s theory in full, but his theory offered a seminal statement about the decisive potential of offensive air power.

Lastly, the British strategic theorist Basil Henry (B.H.) Liddell Hart exerted notable influences on American air power theory during the interwar years (Futrell 1989, 53). In a work initially published in 1929, Liddell Hart offered an historical survey of 280 military campaigns, and concluded that all but six of them were decided by an indirect approach that “ensure[d] the
opponent’s unreadiness to meet it” ([1929] 1991, 5). Consequently, he focused on the psychological element of strategy and war, noting that “the true aim in war is the mind of the hostile rulers, not the bodies of their troops” (204). As evidence, Liddell Hart pointed his readers to the recent conclusion of the first World War, which was decided, he argued, in the minds of the German leaders and not on the battlefield (203). Ultimately, Liddell Hart insisted that “[h]elplessness induces hopelessness, and history attests that loss of hope, not loss of lives, is what decides the issue of war” (187). Although Liddell Hart’s work was focused on strategy writ large and not on air power specifically, his ideas clearly fueled the nascent theories of the Army Air Corps (Futrell 1989, 53). By direct extension, air power advocates held that strategic bombing of the enemy’s vital centers was the ultimate indirect approach, creating hopelessness in the minds of the enemy.

**Founding Context – The Army Air Corps and Army Air Forces**

Informed by the various influences discussed above, the Army Air Corps developed its own theory of strategic bombing during the interwar years. With the goal of organizational autonomy always in view, sincere air power advocates nevertheless believed that strategic bombing would prove effective both in winning wars and in gaining organizational independence. The cerebral cortex of the Air Corps during this period was the Air Corps Tactical School (ACTS) at Maxwell Field, Alabama, where airmen began developing their theory of industrial web targeting. This theory envisioned the enemy as a vulnerable network of factories, supply centers, distribution hubs, and raw materials. By striking key nodes in this industrial web, air power could cripple the enemy’s war-making capacity, ultimately starving and choking the enemy into capitulation. While the airmen at ACTS recognized the flexible potential to employ air power in diverse missions, their emphasis was clearly on its strategic promise. Teaching materials at ACTS in 1938 affirmed that “[a]ir warfare may be waged
against hostile land forces, sea forces, and air forces, or it may be waged directly against the enemy nation. The possibility for the application of military force against the vital structure of a nation directly and immediately upon the outbreak of hostilities is the most important and far reaching development of modern times” (Futrell 1989, 82).

After the United States entered World War II, the renamed Army Air Forces (AAF) began to employ its preferred doctrine of high-altitude daylight precision bombing (Miller 2000, 45). Launching from airfields scattered across Great Britain, American and British bombers targeted German cities and industry, providing the only means of Allied attack against Hitler’s forces in Europe until D-Day in June 1944 (Overy 2005, 82). The American component of this European bombing effort, the Eighth Air Force, pursued its strategy at great cost. Ultimately, 77 percent of American crewmen who flew against Germany before D-Day became casualties, and by the end of the war, the Eighth Air Force alone suffered more fatalities (26,000) than did the entire U.S. Marine Corps (Miller 2006, 7).

The heroic efforts of the Eighth Air Force represented only a fraction of the total campaign wrought by the AAF (Overy 2005). All over the globe, airmen contributed comprehensively to the Allied war effort through close air support, troop transport, air defense, cargo and materiel transport, reconnaissance, and convoy support. Despite the diversity of its numerous contributions, AAF leaders understood which mission was most important to its future and which were not: “the American Air Corps leaders in their fight for autonomy and for a strategic mission had found it advantageous to play down the role of pursuit, attack, liaison, and reconnaissance aviation” (Smith 1970, 33). Indeed, even before the war was over, AAF leaders commissioned the United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS) to assess and validate the overall impact of strategic bombing, much like the British had done after World
War I (MacIsaac 1976). Authorized in September 1944, the USBSS involved more than 1,200 officers, civilians, and enlisted personnel, led by Franklin D’Olier, the president of Prudential insurance (Huston ed. 2002, 210). By drafting the research questions and setting up the USBSS personnel structure, AAF leaders organized the study favorably to their interests, explaining that “you have got to know what you are looking for, then seek to confirm it” (Gentile 2001, 54). After exhaustive study of General Hap Arnold’s wartime diaries, editor John Huston summarized the AAF’s view of the USBSS: “At long last, Arnold and other Army aviators hoped the realities to be found among the ruins of German industries and cities by this group would validate the theories and unfulfilled promises of air advocates over the past two decades” (2002, 224).

When the atomic bombs of August 1945 precipitated the surrender of Japan, airmen had their final and ultimate proof of the decisive potential of strategic air power. The theory developed at ACTS before the war, combined with the experiences of the AAF during the war, conferred on the Army Air Corps a seemingly unassailable belief in the value of strategic bombing. As the forthcoming discussion will illustrate, however, this belief was more fragile and problematic than its advocates admitted, and future air campaigns struggled to match the apparently decisive standard set by the AAF over Germany and Japan.

Echoes and Corollaries

Before considering the influence of subsequent events on this belief, more needs to be said about the ideological baggage it carries. The doctrine of strategic bombing brings with it an array of ideological components, some of which actually constitute the larger belief, while others are merely implied by it. I consider three of the more salient corollaries in the following discussion.

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18 The British conducted another strategic bombing survey after World War II as well. The British proposed an allied survey, but the USAAF insisted on conducting its own (MacIsaac 1976).
First, any strategic theory is essentially a conceptual bridge linking ways and means with proposed ends (Gray 1999, 17): using *this* equipment in *these* specific ways should yield *that* desired outcome. Some strategic theories are more robust than others and are differentiated by the plausibility of the assumptions that the theory invokes. The World War II doctrine of strategic bombing actually required quite a complex array of heroic assumptions to keep the conceptual bridge intact. Therefore, the airmen’s firm belief in the viability of strategic bombing also required them to accede to its animating assumptions.

To connect the means (bombers) and ways (high-altitude daylight precision bombing) with the proposed ends (enemy capitulation), the following assumptions and conditions all had to hold: (1) sufficient intelligence had to identify the existence and location of industrial and political targets; (2) sufficient numbers of bomber aircraft had to successfully navigate to and identify those targets from high-altitude amidst enemy fire; (3) the aerial attacks had to have sufficient accuracy to strike and destroy those targets; (4) the enemy’s industrial web had to be brittle and vulnerable to collapse rather than flexible and adaptive; and (5) the destruction of both industrial and political targets had to be performed on an adequate scale and for an adequate duration to have an appreciable effect on the national will to resist.\(^{19}\) With World War II era technology, each of these assumptions was debatable in isolation; to require all of them to hold simultaneously defied reason. Consequently, these assumptions put early airmen on increasingly uncomfortable ground as they made their case for organizational autonomy. Strategic bombing seemed reasonable enough in theory, but in practice its efficacy suffered from the elusive requirements of its animating assumptions.

The second corollary belief flows logically from the first. The logical chain of assumptions highlighted above puts tremendous emphasis on ways and means, trusting that

\(^{19}\) Several of these assumptions are directly informed by Murray 1996 and Biddle 2002.
the desired ends will eventually result. Consequently, the doctrine of strategic bombing establishes key requirements for better intelligence, smarter target selection, improved bombing accuracy, higher bomb yields, larger and more robust bombers, and a prodigious industrial capability to produce a sufficient number of aircraft to see the job through to completion. During World War II, these requirements naturally devolved into a focus on refining means rather than ends, reflecting the American strategic culture identified by Weigley (1977) and Gray (2006). The quest to drop increasingly accurate and lethal bombs on war-winning targets became a consuming passion for the Army Air Corps—a discrete physics puzzle within the confusion of total war. As historian Michael Sherry suggests, “The task, not the purpose, of winning governed” (1987, 180). These dynamics represent an ongoing temptation for airmen, whose focus on improving the viability of the assumption chain can lead to a fixation on the lethality and accuracy of means—and an institutional blind spot toward political ends (Clodfelter 1989).

The third corollary belief is logically implied by a combination of the parent doctrine and the first corollary discussed above. The conceptual bridge of strategic bombing, held together by its various assumptions, required a total commitment to the cause. As a cumulative strategy that relied upon aggregate effects (Wylie 1967), strategic bombing required a critical mass of targets to be struck for an adequate duration—both scope and scale. Strategic bombing would not work with half-measures or incremental approaches; to achieve systemic effects, one had to commit to an exhaustive process. Because the logic of strategic bombing required an aggregate systemic approach, the effectiveness of which hinged on total commitment, airmen developed a largely binary view of air power—it was either on or off. The total plan was taken off the shelf and set in motion, or it stayed on the shelf entirely. The most striking example of this view came during the Cold War with the development of the Single Integrated Operations
Plan (SIOP). As a nuclear targeting plan, the SIOP represented a single comprehensive targeting solution for nuclear war with the Soviet Union (Rosenberg 1983), and was largely an all-or-nothing option for maintaining the status quo or unleashing the fury of nuclear holocaust (Craig 1998, 111). As the centerpiece of the massive retaliation doctrine, SIOP was the apotheosis of strategic bombing, carried to its logical extreme.20

A Disconfirming Event

The Air Force’s belief in the effectiveness of all-out strategic bombing, forged in the permissive fires of World War II, yielded great frustration in the limited wars of Korea and Vietnam.21 Most notably, the early air campaign against North Vietnam proved antithetical to airmen’s belief in the right way to employ air power. During the Rolling Thunder campaign from March 1965 through October 1968, President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara sought to convince North Vietnam to stop supporting the Viet Cong (Clodfelter 1989, 52). Consequently, they did not want a full-scale air campaign to cripple North Vietnam but rather sought to apply pressure through graduated attacks that would not provoke Chinese intervention (Khong 1992). McNamara thus directed an air strategy that appeared to invoke the work of Thomas Schelling (1966) quite explicitly; in a memo captured in The Pentagon Papers, McNamara directed that the air campaign “should be structured to capitalize on fear of future attacks. At any time, ‘pressure’ on the DRV depends not upon the current level of bombing but rather upon the credible threat of future destruction which can be avoided by agreeing to negotiate or agreeing to some settlement in negotiations” (Gravel ed. 1972, 388).22 Informed by these gradualist sensibilities, the resulting air campaign suffered

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20 For a superior history of Cold War nuclear doctrine, see Freedman 2003.
21 This section focuses on Vietnam as the most salient example. For more on the Air Force experience in Korea, see Crane 2000 and Zhang 2002.
22 Note the striking resemblance of McNamara’s directive with the language used by Schelling: “Brute force succeeds when it is used, whereas the power to hurt is most successful when held in reserve. It is the threat of damage, or of more damage to come, that can make someone yield or comply. It is latent violence that can influence someone’s choice” (1966, 3).
from restrictive rules of engagement, targets hand-picked by political leaders in Washington, and disunity of command (Lambeth 2000, 32)—to the profound frustration of the Air Force.

The air war in Vietnam ended, however, with a more promising effort by American airmen. In response to the North Vietnamese Easter Offensive in 1972, President Richard Nixon ordered robust bombing of North Vietnamese industrial and military targets. With more precise technology, against a conventional army, and with fewer political constraints, the Air Force conducted the Linebacker I and II campaigns with much better results than it achieved during Rolling Thunder. The Linebacker campaigns conformed more closely to the Air Force’s vision for strategic bombing and ultimately succeeded in bringing the North Vietnamese to the negotiating table.

The most balanced and insightful historical analyses demonstrate that Linebacker succeeded where Rolling Thunder failed because conventional bombing was able to threaten valuable targets in 1972 that did not exist in 1965-1968 (Clodfelter 1989, Pape 1996). Linebacker was more effective because it could successfully threaten North Vietnam’s vital concerns and target its conventional forces. Rolling Thunder, however, represented a strategy misaligned with the type of war being waged by the enemy. Bombing North Vietnam had little effect on the guerrilla campaign waged by the Viet Cong in the South (Clodfelter 1989, 205).

The conventional wisdom learned by the Air Force in Vietnam looks somewhat different than this balanced analysis. The relative success of Linebacker at the end of the war “allowed airmen to believe they might have won the war had they been allowed to run it” (Werrell 1992, 45). General Curtis LeMay, the very icon of Air Force strategic bombing, suggested in 1986 that the Air Force could have won the Vietnam War in “any two week period you want to mention” (Clodfelter 1989, 206). Airmen were convinced that had they been allowed to bomb freely and massively much earlier in the campaign—as they could during Linebacker in 1972—the whole
tragic mess could have been avoided. In his history of the US Air Force, Colonel Walter Boyne captures the Air Force conventional wisdom about Vietnam in a particularly ambitious counterfactual:

The result of Linebacker II was exactly what had been predicted for the total application of air power in North Vietnam: quick military victory. Had it been applied in the first years of the war, the lives of millions of people would have been spared, hundreds of billions of dollars would have been saved, South Vietnam would not have been ravaged, Cambodia would have not had to endure the Khmer Rouge, and the United States would have not had the ugly experience of the disaffected 1960s and 1970s with the continuing cynicism of the media and the general disaffection of the populace with its government. (1997, 176)

In short, Boyne suggests, if the Air Force had been given the chance to invoke its strategic bombing doctrine seven years earlier, it would have won the war and fundamentally altered the degraded path of international history.

Summary of the Belief

In sum, Air Force service culture holds the following belief:

When used appropriately, air power has the potential to decide the outcome of a war. By targeting the enemy’s war-making capacity and key means of national resistance, a fully committed and complete air campaign can bypass fielded forces and crush the heart of the enemy. Superior intelligence, information, targeting, and precision maximize this war-winning potential.

7.3: Command the Air

The first lesson is that you can’t lose a war if you have command of the air, and you can’t win a war if you haven’t.
— General Jimmy Doolittle

The first two beliefs discussed in this chapter represent core existential beliefs about ends and ways of the Air Force. In this section of the chapter, I identify a third belief of Air Force service culture, highlighting the service’s abiding commitment to air superiority. Airmen tend to believe that the battle for the air generally decides the battle on the ground. To

23 In Futrell 1989, 171.
command the air domain—that is, to operate in the skies without prohibitive interference from ground or air attack—is the first and enduring step toward ultimate victory. Air superiority thus comprises the essential precondition for victory on land or sea. While airmen recognize that land and sea forces still play an important role in armed conflict, they fundamentally believe that the other services’ contribution could not happen unless airmen actively seize and maintain control of the skies overhead. In the first of his ten propositions on air power, Colonel Phillip Meilinger asserts that “whoever controls the air generally controls the surface” (1995, 3). This belief gives airmen a sense of their essential importance, while also creating a sense of being taken for granted by the other services that profit from the Air Force’s non-trivial efforts. As with other sections, the discussion below identifies the logical antecedents of this belief, beginning with the operational environment and then the key events that reinforced it.

Operational Environment

The relationship of the air, sea, and land environments gives inherent advantages to the air. By commanding the high ground with great reach and velocity, aircraft can exert a disproportionate effect on the land and sea domains. The air environment thus becomes an essential contested domain, as whoever controls it stands a much higher chance of controlling that which is below. Consequently, air forces prioritize the gaining and maintaining of air superiority by defeating enemy air forces and air defense systems that could disrupt friendly air and surface activity.24

As early air power theorists considered how best to fight in the third dimension, “command of the air” became a central tenet. Douhet, in fact, entitled his book The Command of the Air, which he defined as “the ability to fly against an enemy so as to injure him, while he has been deprived of the power to do likewise” ([1921] 2009, 97). Billy Mitchell prioritized air

24 For example, the 1997 edition of the Air Force Basic Doctrine (AFDD - 1) cites “air and space superiority” as the first of the service’s core competencies (USAF 1997, 29).
superiority similarly, and argued that complete control of the air ultimately translated into mastery of the earth ([1925] 2009, 26). His confidence in this translation was so strong, in fact, that he suggested that the loss of air superiority was itself sufficient cause for a warring nation to capitulate (122). That is, once the aerial war is decided, the ultimate outcome is determined and the surface action is just a bloody inheritance bequeathed by the air force. Mitchell was not alone in this opinion. Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Arthur Tedder opined similarly, asserting that “when [the air battle] is won, the war is all but won” (1948, 51). Tedder thus confidently concluded that “air superiority is the prerequisite to all war-winning operations” (32).

The beliefs of these air power theorists informed the language of the previously discussed Field Manual 100-20, published by the War Department in July 1943. After the memorable preamble that declared air and ground forces as co-equals, the next section detailed the proper employment of air forces. The first doctrinal statement read:

The gaining of air superiority is the first requirement for the success of any major land operation. Air forces may be properly and profitably employed against enemy sea power, land power, and air power. However, land forces operating without air superiority must take such extensive security measures against hostile air attack that their mobility and ability to defeat the enemy land forces are greatly reduced. Therefore, air forces must be employed primarily against the enemy’s air forces until air superiority is obtained. (War Department 1943, 2)

Note the far-reaching implications of these doctrinal commitments, particularly as they relate to inter-service relations. This statement establishes both phasing and targeting priorities that put airmen at the top of the heap. According to this published doctrine, the battle for air superiority is the first priority for any campaign, the essential enabler for land and sea action, and enemy air forces must be the top targeting priority. Consider the tensions and paradoxes inherent in this belief. Gaining and maintaining air superiority is ultimately a means to an end, and not an end in itself; air superiority is a service provided by the air force so that land and sea (or strategic bombing) operations can occur without interference by enemy air forces. Yet by
establishing the air superiority mission as the top targeting priority, airmen can justify having their own self-contained air war while downgrading or delaying other support requests from the surface forces. A comedic tragedy of mutual misunderstanding can occur: the surface forces decry the Air Force for fighting its own air war, away from the meaningful action on the surface, instead of providing real help like close air support or reconnaissance. The Air Force, meanwhile, feels justified since it is actually providing the most essential service possible, all the while unappreciated by the ingrates below. With an institutional commitment to commanding the air, inter-service tension is baked into the cake.25

*Founding Context and Key Events*

During the interwar years and throughout World War II, the importance of commanding the air was largely beyond dispute. Initially, airmen pointed once again to Mitchell’s famous sinking of the battleship *Ostfriesland* in 1921 as stark evidence of the ability of air forces to disrupt and dominate surface activity. DeSeversky, one of Mitchell’s fervent disciples, echoed his patron in 1942, writing matter-of-factly: “True, our two-ocean navy is almost completed; by general acclaim it adds up to the finest and strongest naval force the world has ever seen. Yet it can now do nothing, literally nothing, against the locust swarms of giant airplanes” (1942, 10).

The relationship between air and surface campaigns seems best illustrated in Germany’s planned invasion of Great Britain in 1940 and the Allied amphibious landing in Normandy, France, in June 1944. After ravaging western Europe more quickly than expected in 1939-1940, Hitler turned his attention to Great Britain. Before initiating Operation Sealion, the amphibious invasion of England, Hitler recognized that air superiority was the “essential precondition for

25 As a much more recent example, consider the Air Force’s push to acquire the F-22 air superiority fighter in the first decade of this century. While the other services (and most external audiences) saw this as an irrelevant high-technology obsession, the Air Force argued that air superiority is and remains an essential precondition for any US military activity. The F-22 symbolized the very tension highlighted in this discussion.
invasion” (Overy 2001, 29). The resulting air war became known as the Battle of Britain, a short but furious contest for air superiority, which both sides understood as an existential fight for British survival. The British hail the Battle of Britain as the Trafalgar of the air, as it prevented invasion by a conquering tyrant (Overy 2001, 135). The logic of these sentiments reflects the core connection between commanding the air and commanding the surface; it was simply understood that should the RAF lose the battle for the air, Hitler’s invasion of England was nearly a foregone conclusion.

The Allied preparations for D-Day in June 1944 reveal a similar connection between air battles and surface outcomes. In March 1944, General Dwight Eisenhower and his deputy Air Chief Marshal Arthur Tedder met with the British and American air chiefs to discuss aerial preparations for Operation Overlord. They decided on the “transportation plan” of interdicting railways, marshaling yards, and other sources of German army mobility (Biddle 2002, 234). Simultaneously, however, the RAF and Army Air Corps maintained steady pressure on the Luftwaffe itself, destroying the enemy air force wherever it could be found. The effects of the sustained battle for air superiority were apparent; the Luftwaffe launched a meager 100 sorties on D-Day, and the Allied invasion proceeded without meaningful interference (Biddle 2002, 236). Eisenhower clearly appreciated the connection; in testimony to the Senate on 16 November 1945, he said, “Unless we had that faith in the air power to intervene and to make safe that landing, it would have been more than fantastic, it would have been criminal” (U.S. Senate 1945, 360).

After World War II, the Air Force’s last meaningful battle for air superiority came in Korea between 1950-1953. In fact, airmen are fond of citing the historical fact that the last American ground soldier killed by air attack was in 1953 (e.g., Meilinger 1995, 4). Since then,

26 The Battle of Trafalgar was a naval clash in October 1805, in which the Royal Navy, led by Admiral Lord Nelson, repelled an invasion by the combined French and Spanish fleets.
American ground forces have enjoyed a complete aerial sanctuary, free from any attacks by enemy air forces. By gaining and maintaining air superiority with relative ease for the past 50 years, the Air Force feels like the victim of its own success; outside observers are prone to consider such a feat to be easy or trivial (Dunlap 2007), further exacerbating the mutual lack of appreciation identified earlier. Airmen, however, believe firmly that air superiority is not automatic or the manifest destiny of the United States, but rather the combined result of skilled pilots, quality training, and leading-edge technology.

Summary of the Belief

In sum, a central belief of Air Force service culture is this:

Controlling the skies is the essential precondition for successful land and sea operations. Air superiority is the sine qua non of battlefield success: you cannot win a war without it, and you should not lose if you have it. Establishing air superiority is therefore the first requirement and ongoing imperative for any US military mission.

7.4: Centrally Controlled Flexibility

“Air warfare cannot be separated into little packets.”
— Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Arthur Tedder

The first belief discussed in this chapter focused on the conviction that air power should be controlled by a separate organization of dedicated airmen. This fourth belief amplifies the first, noting the enduring conviction that air power should not only be controlled by airmen, but it should be centrally controlled as a unified fighting element. One of the most common refrains within the US Air Force is that “flexibility is the key to air power.” The speed, range, and mobility of aircraft allow for the flexibility to mass one’s force for concentrated effect, both geographically and temporally. Consequently, airmen believe that air forces should be centrally controlled by the senior airman in the theater of operations, who can then decide

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27 Tedder 1948, 91.
28 Almost as common is the wry rejoinder that “indecision is the key to flexibility.”

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where best to concentrate the force in pursuit of larger objectives. Parceling out dedicated air assets to dispersed ground units is anathema to airmen, as such a policy works to nullify the inherent flexibility of air forces. As the following discussion illustrates, this belief pits airmen once again against their land-based counterparts, who understandably prefer to have dedicated air assets that work for them. In this section of the chapter, I consider the development of this cultural belief, noting the respective influence of the operational environment and key events.

*Operational Environment*

The inherent speed, range, and mobility of aircraft confer both possibilities and limitations on the air forces that employ them. One of the advantages of the air domain is that strategists are not committed to any one line of action (Slessor [1936] 2009, 9). Air power can be directed and re-directed as the situation develops, which “enables the commander to correct many errors in foresight” (Sherman 1926, 157). This flexibility permits new applications of the principles of war, such as “mass” and “economy of force.” Air power theorist William Sherman noted in 1926 how the flexibility of aircraft permitted novel application of timeless principles. “The art of war,” argued Sherman, “consists in bringing to the decisive time and place an adequate superiority of force” (1926, 18). By controlling aircraft with central direction and common vision, a decisive application of force could be achieved with greater speed and surprise than ground forces could accomplish.

A different philosophy of air power might choose to take advantage of its versatility—the ability for air forces to accomplish many diverse missions—by assigning discrete air assets to various ground commanders for dedicated support of their operations. With dedicated air support, ground commanders can incorporate these assets into their plans and execution, with the confidence that an airman will not divert such assets to what he perceives to be a higher priority mission. While airmen can appreciate this perspective, they consistently aver that
decentralized control of air power is an inefficient and unwise strategy that fails to capitalize on air power’s greatest strength. The eighth proposition in Meilinger’s ten propositions on air power is this: “Air Power’s unique characteristics necessitate that it be centrally controlled by airmen” (1995, 49).

Key Events

During the early phases of World War I, air power was separately controlled by tactical ground commanders, used in support of conventional ground maneuvers (Hudson 1968). By the later stages of the war, however, senior air leaders such as Billy Mitchell, Benjamin Foulois, and Lewis Brereton were already convinced that centralized control of air power was fundamental to its sound employment (Hudson 1968, 303). Mitchell, as the Air Service First Brigade commander, battled with various ground commanders over air power control during the Chateau-Thierry campaign in July 1918. During the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne offensives in September 1918, he managed to secure greater control, effectively commanding over 1,500 aircraft in a coordinated campaign (Biddle 2002, 52).

These early experiences influenced the writings of the interwar theorists like Sherman, Mitchell, and Slessor. These air power advocates consistently preached the value of centralized control of air assets, but their insights were poorly applied during the initial North Africa campaign of World War II. As Operation Torch got underway in November 1942, the RAF and AAF maintained separate command and employment structures, with their respective commanders housed in separate headquarters (Nalty 1997, 270-273). Already suffering from aircraft shortages, the divided control further weakened the air forces’ effect, as existing aircraft were not concentrated for maximum effect on key targets. By February 1943, the system proved thoroughly ineffectual, and the British and American leaders instituted reforms that centralized control over the tactical aviation assets (Nalty 1997, 276). The new system succeeded in great
measure and once again vindicated the early doctrine that Mitchell and others had preached after World War I.

Two months after the end of the campaign in North Africa, the War Department published the previously discussed Field Manual 100-20. The lessons of North Africa clearly informed this seminal doctrinal statement:

The inherent flexibility of air power is its greatest asset. This flexibility makes it possible to employ the whole weight of the available air power against selected areas in turn; such concentrated use of the air striking force is a battle winning factor of the first importance. Control of available air power must be centralized and command must be exercised through the air force commander if this inherent flexibility and ability to deliver a decisive blow are to be fully exploited. (War Department 1943, 2)

This doctrine remained intact throughout World War II, and played a central role in one of the Air Force’s first official codifications of doctrine, Air Force Manual 1-2, published 1 April 1955. That early publication noted that

the medium in which air forces operate—space—is an indivisible field of activity. This medium, in combination with the characteristics of air vehicles, invests air forces with the great flexibility that is the basis of their strength. For this flexibility to be exploited fully, the air forces must be responsive at all levels of operation to employment as a single, aggregate instrument. All command arrangements must be in accord with the precept that neither air forces nor their field of activity can be segmented and partitioned among different interests. (Department of the Air Force 1955, 4)

Ten years later, however, in the skies over Vietnam, the Air Force once again employed its forces contrary to its doctrinal precepts. The Air Force and Navy, for example, carved up the Vietnamese airspace into “route packages” and coordinated their efforts only by staying out of each other’s way (Lambeth 2000, 32). The Air Force even violated this principle inside its own house, as one part of the service had responsibility for flying in Vietnam, another part handled the air war in Thailand, and still a third piece of the service directed the nuclear-capable B-52 bombers (Meilinger 1995, 54). As earlier sections of this chapter described, airmen consider the air war in Vietnam to be deeply flawed on several fronts, and this violation of centralized control clearly represents one of them.
Echoes in the Service

The flexibility of air power is often trumpeted as its greatest asset, but a related concept is worth considering in this section of the chapter: air power’s _versatility_. While flexibility refers to the ability to direct and re-direct the same assets as mission needs dictate, versatility refers to air power’s utility in a wide variety of missions and purposes. Air power can be profitably used, for example, to provide close air support to ground forces, bomb strategic targets, interdict enemy supplies, provide nuclear deterrence, haul men and equipment, engage enemy air forces in aerial combat, exploit the electromagnetic spectrum, conduct special operations, provide aerial refueling, conduct psychological operations, and perform aerial reconnaissance. Moreover, the Air Force also controls the space domain, further extending the reach and scope of airmen’s core duties. Some of these varied missions work together, while others labor in isolation, thereby creating a service with distinct sub-communities within it.\(^{29}\)

This versatility of air power, and the diversity of specialized communities within the service, make it difficult for airmen to identify a single cohesive narrative in the Air Force story (Thornhill 2012). Ironically, however, _the most unifying thing about the Air Force is its inherent versatility_. If the Air Force lacks one unifying story it may be because the service has dozens of them. The remarkable feature of air power is its capacity to do so many things at any given time, to open up new options, and to provide political leaders with creative solutions to difficult problems. At times this might be a punitive air strike (e.g., Libya 1986), while at other times it may be a heroic airlift or disaster relief effort (e.g., Berlin 1948-1949). As Brigadier General Paula Thornhill insightfully observes, “The Air Force’s core _why_, then, is to help identify large national security problems, then to find and deliver better ways of addressing them to bolster the common defense” (2012, 9). Rather than weakening the service’s core narrative, it appears

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\(^{29}\) This dynamic is accentuated by each community’s core connection with a particular technology, as the next section will discuss.
that air power’s versatility actually anchors that narrative instead. This versatility is a distinctive feature of the service that airmen struggle to appreciate because their own individual experience has been isolated to one particular mission, without personal exposure to the full portfolio that the entire service brings to bear.

**Summary of the Belief**

In sum, an enduring belief of Air Force service culture is this:

*The unique flexibility of air power requires that it be centrally controlled by the senior airman in theater, who can direct it to the location or task that most requires it. Furthermore, the inherent versatility of air power allows it to be used creatively for a wide variety of missions and purposes.*

### 7.5: Technology, Airplanes, and Beyond

*He was more than just himself, he was symbolic, as when the sleekness of his ship and the completeness of his equipment so enveloped him that, to a person as near as a wingman or as far as a mechanic watching him climb out of sight, he inherited the beauty of his machine.*

— James Salter

*The men in charge of future Air Forces should always remember that problems never have final or universal solutions and only a constant inquisitive attitude toward science and a ceaseless and swift adaptation to new developments can maintain the security of this nation through world air supremacy.*

— Dr. Theodore von Karman

Having discussed the ends and ways associated with Air Force culture, we now consider the *means* that are central to airmen and their service. Unsurprisingly, new technology in general—and airplanes more specifically—are prominent features of Air Force identity and culture. As covered in the first section of this chapter, the Air Force’s very existence is a deliberate response to a disruptive new technology. Like the Navy, which cannot exist without ships, the Air Force is no force at all without aircraft. Consequently, the service exists and thrives in concert with the sophistication of its technology, which makes the Air Force keenly interested in the quantity and quality of its aerial fleet—particularly its *quality*. Defense analyst

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30 Salter 1999, 49.
31 Sheehan 2009, 121.
Carl Builder suggests that “[t]o be outnumbered may be tolerable, but to be outflown is not. The way to get the American flier’s attention is to confront him with a superior machine” (1989, 22). Regarding its means, the Air Force thus focuses both on the general and the specific: the service demonstrates both an ongoing commitment to new technology in general and an abiding institutional commitment to the aircraft as a specific embodiment of that technological progress. These commitments do not imply that airmen themselves are devalued by the Air Force; to the contrary, highly skilled airmen are recruited, trained, and cultivated to operate the technology that comprise the Air Force. But as a matter of relative emphasis within the service, and particularly in contrast with the other three military services, the Air Force enshrines its technology and airplanes as the central icons of the institution.

An observer’s first impression of the Air Force, rendered through its visible artifacts, illuminates this organizational passion for the airplane. Nearly every Air Force base showcases airplane monuments, often right at the entrance to the base. As a point of comparison, recall from chapter six that the parade ground at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point is flanked by monuments to the Army’s great generals: Washington, Patton, MacArthur, and Thayer. The Terrazzo at the U.S. Air Force Academy is cornered by the Air Force’s sleekest airplanes: the F-15, F-16, F-4, and F-105. Walking through the halls of the Pentagon yields similar conclusions, as dramatic paintings and pictures of aircraft dominate the Air Force’s corporate territory.

This belief in the importance of technology and aircraft is fairly intuitive and thus does not require extensive historical review or substantiation. What may be less intuitive, however, are the various implications and echoes of this technological fascination within the service. In

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32 While the Air Force has historically tended to favor manned aircraft over any unmanned systems, this preference is not absolute. In his extensive comparison of the four military services’ adoption of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), Ehrhard (2000) finds that the common myth citing anti-UAV bias among pilots is overdrawn. Instead, Ehrhard suggests that the Air Force’s slow adoption of UAVs is more of an internal political story rather than a cultural one. This project is sympathetic to Ehrhard’s claim, and suggests that the enduring belief in the Air Force is a commitment to technology in general, and aircraft more specifically (whether manned or unmanned).

33 The Air Force Academy does have busts of key air leaders surrounding this central area, but their prominence is clearly dwarfed by the fighter aircraft on display (Smith 1998, 49).
the following discussion, I briefly highlight the influence of the operational environment and then focus more deliberately on the corollary echoes and implications that this belief generates.

**Operational Environment**

The only reason the Air Force *has* an operational environment is because technology rebelled against the tyranny of gravity, allowing aircraft to “slip the surly bonds of earth.”³⁴ More than sailors or soldiers, airmen in their operating environment rely profoundly on a sustained technological miracle. An airman in flight occupies a precarious space, vulnerable to threats seen and unseen, natural and man-made, and his occupation thereof is inherently temporary. Every airman in flight knows that her flight will soon end, whether by a planned landing or by a less generous edict of gravity. These dynamics give airmen both a great appreciation for and a profound dependence on their machines. In fact, the flight equipment and breathing apparatus that aircrew wear in a cockpit are termed “life support equipment,” like dependent patients in a medical facility. Additionally, airmen develop a particular mindset for emergency preparedness, shaped by the vulnerability of being five miles above the earth, going 500 miles per hour, and seated at the leading edge of 10,000 gallons of jet fuel steadily exploding in the engine bays behind them. The technological dependence of airmen, therefore, confers an institutional commitment to detailed planning, fallback options, contingency plans, and scripted emergency procedures to execute when red lights start flashing. Technology, aircraft, and the air environment thus bring both opportunity and vulnerability—realities that shape Air Force service culture.

Another feature of the Air Force technological environment is the heavy reliance that the service has on both the civilian scientific community and its defense contractors. Since World War II in particular, the relationship between the service and the scientific community has been

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³⁴ This phrase is part of the first line of the popular poem “High Flight,” by John G. Magee, Jr.
explicit and intentional. As head of the Army Air Forces during the war, General Hap Arnold understood that the technological requirements of the service exceeded its in-house capacity. Arnold thus approached the country’s leading research aerodynamicist Dr. Theodore von Karman and made him the head of the AAF’s Scientific Advisory Group in December 1944. The resulting relationship bore tremendous fruit for the Air Force, prompting historian Walter Boyne to argue that “[o]f all Arnold’s many contributions to the well-being of the future United States Air Force, this was at once the most important—and the most unlikely” (1997, 17). Arnold thus proved to be a remarkable visionary and even predicted a future for the service in which scientists competed with pilots for preeminence and prestige (Sheehan 2009, xvii). As historian Neil Sheehan recounts, “[Arnold] intended to leave to his beloved air arm a heritage of science and technology so deeply imbued in the institution that the weapons it would fight with would always be the best the state of the art could provide and those on its drawing boards would be prodigies of futuristic thought” (2009, xvi). While the full measure of Arnold’s vision has not been realized in the Air Force, his emphasis on cutting-edge technology and his concomitant reliance on civilian science and industry has endured.35

A final aspect of the Air Force technological environment that impacts its culture is the relatively long timelines involved in research, development, and fielding of major weapon systems. Like the Navy and its ships, the Air Force must fight with what it has on hand and must prepare today to field the Air Force that will be airborne decades from now. This reality orients the Air Force far into the future, and saddles the service with the difficulty of developing robust technological marvels that will most likely be obsolete by the time they reach the operational force.

35 Sheehan’s work (2009) documents a particularly good example of this, capturing the key relationships between Air Force General Bernard Schriever, scientist John Von Neumann, and various defense contractors in the development of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).
Echoes and Implications

The Air Force’s commitment to new technology and aircraft may seem relatively straightforward, but it actually spawns a series of more subtle echoes and implications within the service. First, since technological machines figure so prominently within the life of the service, airmen’s loyalties and identities naturally migrate toward these machines. In light of the unique experiences and vulnerabilities afforded by the man-machine union, airmen easily identify themselves with their primary aircraft or weapons system (e.g., F-15 pilot, C-17 crew chief, etc). This dynamic creates two subsidiary effects of identity and loyalty: first, it serves to dilute common bonds across the service, giving rise instead to a “fractionated confederation of subcultures rather than a cohesive military service” (Smith 1998, 46). The second effect is one of motivation and loyalty, as many airmen find their particular technological experience to be the sustaining factor in their service — more so than a commitment to the Air Force as an institution or to national service in general. In his study of Air Force cultural cohesion, James Smith notes the high level of occupational versus institutional loyalties, particularly among pilots (1998, 48). Carl Builder advances a similar theme, noting that across the Air Force’s history, “People found themselves in an institution because that was the place to do what they wanted to do — to fly airplanes, to work on rockets, to develop missiles, to learn an interesting or promising trade, etc.” (1994, 35).

Note how this level of identity contrasts with the analysis of the Army and Marine Corps in the previous two chapters. Marines identify most strongly with their service and are all about the Marine Corps. Army soldiers tend to identify above the service level, as a servant of the nation and as a member of the historic profession of arms. Finally, Air Force airmen tend

36 “Occupational” orientation refers to a primary loyalty to the task or occupation, whereas an “institutional” orientation gives chief loyalty to the institution itself over the task performed within that institution.
to identify below the service level, with loyalties that gravitate toward their machine-centric experiences and sub-communities.\(^{37}\)

A second major echo of this belief within the service is the Air Force’s ironic susceptibility to the disruptive effects of its own founding logic. The Air Force seceded from the Army to provide an organizational commitment to maximizing the national employment of a new technological sphere—the aircraft and the air domain. What happens then when another breakthrough technology is developed? What is the appropriate technological threshold for organizational secession?\(^{38}\) Does the exploitation of space, for example, merit a new military service, the US Space Force? Similarly, does the digital world of cyberspace constitute a domain of warfare that likewise deserves its own service? Should the arsenal of nuclear ballistic missiles—and the airmen who operate them—constitute a separate force? These represent real questions for which the Air Force does not always have a coherent response. Ironically, the system that birthed the Air Force is not “incentive compatible” in this regard—a system that grants organizational autonomy on the basis of a new technology has no logical limit to the number of potential secessionist claims (Fearon 2004). Finally, even when a new technology does not merit secessionist talk, its incorporation into existing Air Force structures can still incur disruption. “In fostering technology,” notes Carl Builder, “even for its cherished instruments, the Air Force is necessarily instigating new concepts and capabilities that challenge the form and preferences of its institution” (1994, 161).

A third and final echo of this belief is that the service’s focus on technological means exacerbates its institutional blindspot toward political ends. As section 7.2 highlighted, the Air

\(^{37}\) This identification with machines and experiences only reinforces another unique aspect of Air Force culture. Of the four services, airmen are most likely to engage in military duties for which there are substantive equivalents in the civilian job market. One’s loyalty to the Air Force as an institution can be further diluted when one can just as easily fly an airplane or program a computer in the civilian world.

\(^{38}\) These questions are actually an organizational application of the core logic in Fearon 2004. Fearon notes that the nation-state system is not ultimately “incentive compatible;” the working of the system actually creates the conditions that undermine it, as any given people-group can call themselves a nation and demand separate statehood.
Force’s preferred commitment to a systemic cumulative bombing strategy gives rise to a preoccupation with ways over ends; the integrity of the strategic logic can eclipse the political purpose for which that strategy was developed. The Air Force’s focus on technology can likewise devolve into a preoccupation with means, in which the service’s expensive and sophisticated technologies become ends in themselves rather than mere instruments to effect some larger national end. While this is not a blanket indictment across the service’s history, it does represent a perennial temptation against which the service must guard. In his insightful history into Air Force leadership, Major General Mike Worden notes this dynamic in play among Air Force leaders of the Cold War: “The intense single-minded focus on their mission and their enemy advanced a monistic perspective in an increasingly pluralistic world. Ironically, the senior leaders had become steadfast conservatives in a service that professed to be always forward looking” (1998, 145).

Summary of the Belief

The Air Force’s commitment to technology, aircraft, and perpetual innovation creates the following cultural belief: The Air Force was created to exploit a disruptive new technology and has an abiding faith in the potential for new technologies to change the face of warfare. While airplanes are the preeminent assets of the service, other core technologies certainly have their place. Due to long and complex research and development processes, the nation must invest today to have a world-class Air Force tomorrow.

7.6: Flyers and Technicians

Among the enlisted personnel of the air force, the discipline needed is that of the shop rather than of the battlefield.

– Major William C. Sherman, 1926

In this sixth and final section of the chapter, I briefly highlight the Air Force’s unique perspective on officer-enlisted relations and the asymmetry of combat exposure in the service.

39 Sherman 1926, 12.
Unlike the other three services, officers do the vast majority of the actual combat fighting in the Air Force, while the enlisted troops anchor the essential support and maintenance infrastructure. Furthermore, this disparity between officer and enlisted experiences is emblematic of a larger phenomenon in the Air Force: across the service, relatively few airmen of any rank are actually in harm’s way. And those flyers who sortie forth into combat do so in short bursts, on discrete missions, and then return to the base. These dynamics confer unique requirements on senior Air Force leaders, who must motivate and remind all ranks and specialties of their martial worth. The following discussion highlights the airman’s unique operational environment and the effects this has on the mindset of the service.

Operational Environment

Three aspects of the Air Force’s operational environment inform this unique aspect of Air Force culture: the asymmetry of combat exposure, the geographic distance from “the front,” and the dislocating psychological impact of experiencing combat in short and furious bursts, only to return to the relative safety of a base.

Soldiers, sailors, and Marines typically experience combat in a communal way, aboard their ships or as part of a combined arms team in a battle zone. Airmen experience war quite differently and segregate the experience of combat in two ways. First, only a minority of airmen participate in flying jobs, of which only a portion actually fly forward into a combat zone. Across the Air Force, then, the service experiences large asymmetries of exposure to the bombs and bullets we associate with combat. The second dimension along which airmen segregate combat duties is between the rank structures (Sherman 1926, 11). Due to the training and education required to operate advanced equipment, the vast majority of flyers are officers.

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40 This statement focuses on the predominant Air Force contribution to warfighting: flying aircraft. The Air Force does indeed have many airmen in career specialties that expose them to greater risk in a ground combat zone (e.g., combat controllers, air liaison officers, civil engineers, terminal attack controllers, parachute rescue jumpers, security forces, and transportation specialists, to name a few).
This means that officers do most of the fighting in the Air Force while the enlisted force comprises an essential support structure of maintenance, supply, and logistics.

A second element of the unique operating environment is the distance from which most airmen experience war. Even in combat, much of Air Force life takes place on secure bases, which are typically—though certainly not always—at a safe distance from enemy threats. Airmen whose jobs are confined to the base thus find that their war duties look eerily similar to their peacetime routines back home. Consequently, the Air Force’s experience of war can become an exercise in process management, staged at a psychological and geographic distance from the sound and fury of battle. Airmen can thus find themselves living and working in a dissonant no-man’s-land between war and peace, where day-to-day routines feel neither like home nor like one’s expectations of combat.

The third unique element of the Air Force operational environment is the flyer’s short-duration exposure to the extremes of the human condition. A combat flyer’s experience of trading bombs and bullets is inherently limited in time and is typically sandwiched between periods of relative safety and comfort on a base. Historian Donald Miller captures this experience well in his description of the bomber crews in World War II: “Bomber warfare was intermittent warfare. Bouts of inactivity and boredom were followed by short bursts of fury and fear; and men returned from sky fights to clean sheets, hot food, and adoring English girls” (2006, 2). These psychological extremes no doubt confer a unique outlook on those subjected to them.

**Effects**

In light of this unique operating environment, two principal effects appear most worthy of further discussion: the resulting nature of officer-enlisted relationships, and the Air Force’s internal and external sensitivity to its combat credentials.
Since most enlisted personnel perform technical jobs away from the combat zone, expectations of them differ from those of the other services. And this has long been the case—in 1926, Major William Sherman commented on the unique enlisted environment of the Air Service. He wrote, “[The enlisted man] is not called upon, as the infantryman may be, to follow his officer forward in the charge, through the heated atmosphere of danger and death. The duties of the air service enlisted man are complex, but are performed under conditions of comparative security…Among the enlisted personnel of the air force, the discipline needed is that of the shop rather than of the battlefield” (11-12). Furthermore, officers rely on their enlisted troops in a very dependent way, entrusting them with their lives as these enlisted airmen fix, fuel, and arm their aircraft. The accepted tenor of officer-enlisted relationship in the Air Force is thus quite collegial, informal, and egalitarian (Dunlap 2007). While standard customs and courtesies are generally observed, fraternal practices like using aviator nicknames (“call signs”) or first names are common.

The second notable effect of this operational environment comes from the nature of airmen’s combat exposure. Since very few airmen actually participate in the throes of combat, and since that participation comes in isolated bursts, the Air Force harbors both internal and external sensitivities about its role. Externally, senior airmen can appear sensitive about the sacrifices and importance of the Air Force’s contribution to the overall fight. The simplistic perception of airmen flying from relatively secure bases for short periods of time in supersonic cocoons erodes the Air Force’s warrior bona fides and must be counteracted with deliberate messaging from on high. Internally, senior Air Force leaders must reinforce and remind each service member about the enduring value of his or her contribution to the team. Since many airmen perform missions at great remove from the business-end of combat, they need reminders of their added value in the Air Force battle chain. Similarly, the service appears
unsure whether flyers should be celebrated as elite contributors, or if the service should preach egalitarian messages of universal worth. Within its own ranks, the Air Force thus attempts to offset its experiential elitism with rhetorical universalism, reminding each airmen of his or her critical importance.

Summary of the Belief

The sixth and final belief of Air Force service culture is this:

In the Air Force way of war, officers fly and fight while enlisted airmen operate as talented technicians. Since most officer-enlisted relations occur away from the battle zone, the dynamic can and should be collegial, respectful, and informal. Whatever the job specialty, all airmen contribute importantly to the Air Force and joint team, and should be reminded of such at every opportunity.

Conclusion

Air Power is an unusually seductive form of military strength, in part because, like modern courtship, it appears to offer gratification without commitment.
— Eliot Cohen41

Understanding our doctrine and concepts is basic and important to our very existence.
— General Curtis LeMay42

The short and selective history of the Air Force presented in this chapter yields several summary observations. First, the Air Force appears particularly susceptible to being misunderstood by outsiders, in part because esoteric claims are an essential part of the service’s creation narrative. The service’s founding ethos was rooted in its gnostic proclamations about air power—more specifically, that the other three military services, left to their own devices, would have mishandled and under-utilized the air weapon. Consequently, the very existence of the Air Force is an organizational rebuke of the other services’ inadequate appreciation of air power’s full potential. While many of the other services’ beliefs are informed by enduring realities of human conflict, the Air Force’s beliefs are deliberately novel and contrarian.

42 In Futrell 1989, 1.
Moreover, the Air Force’s beliefs, particularly those trumpeted early in its organizational life, were not only contrarian but triumphalist and elitist. In one of its first doctrine publications, the service asserted that its dominance knew no limits: “Of the various types of military forces, those which conduct air operations are most capable of decisive results...They provide the dominant military means of exercising the initiative and gaining decisions in all forms of international relations, including full peace, cold war, limited wars of all types, and total war” (Dept of the Air Force 1955, 10). Unsurprisingly then, many elements of the Air Force’s history and culture put the service strikingly at odds with the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. Note how each belief discussed in this chapter contains an element of contestation or misunderstanding vis-a-vis the other military services.

7.1: Air Controlled by Airmen. The Air Force’s core belief in its legitimate autonomy is a story of calculated secession from the Army and bitter contestation and name-calling with the Navy.

7.2: Decisive Strategic Potential. To an outsider, the doctrine of strategic bombing can appear to be an Air Force attempt to fight its own war, away from the real blood-and-guts action on the front lines. The fact that air power’s actual impact has often fallen short of airmen’s grand prophecies calls this belief into further doubt for skeptics.

7.3: Command the Air. Like strategic bombing, the pursuit of air superiority can appear to an outsider like a romantic barnstorming dogfight, quite separated from the sound and fury of surface combat. Additionally, the Air Force’s mastery of this mission makes it a victim of its own success, as air superiority appears to be ours by divine right, not hard work.

7.4: Centrally Controlled Flexibility. The airman’s insistence on centrally controlling air assets pits him squarely against a ground commander who clearly prefers to have decentralized and dedicated support. Furthermore, this belief pits the airman against the full weight of the
Marine Corps, which reserves all of its air assets for the sole obsession of the Corps: supporting the infantry.

7.5: Technology, Airplanes, and Beyond. The Air Force’s commitment to technology and aircraft can appear to be an oversized obsession with expensive toys, fueled by a self-sustaining and impractical pursuit of fanciful gadgetry.

7.6: Flyers and Technicians. The Air Force’s contribution to national warfighting can easily be parodied as the work of punch-card, part-time, hired professionals rather than that of a sacrificial warrior tribe.

These characterizations are overdrawn for emphasis, but speak to the reality that the Air Force belief structure is easily misunderstood from the outside and often at odds with its sister services. As this chapter has demonstrated, however, the Air Force believes what it does for logically understandable reasons. Furthermore, the competitive nature of the Air Force’s existence is unsurprising in light of the disruptive force exerted by the technological marvel of the airplane. The advent of human flight disturbed existing service arrangements and demanded a fundamental renegotiation of all of the services’ tasks and jurisdictions (Abbott 1988, 33). The Air Force, born amidst competition and strife, inherits misunderstanding and rivalry as part of its birthright. To its credit, and to the good of the nation, it has added excellence, professionalism, and faithful service to that pedigree as well.
### SUMMARY OF AIR FORCE CULTURAL BELIEFS

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<tr>
<th>ENDS</th>
<th>SHORTHAND</th>
<th>FULL BELIEF</th>
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<tr>
<td>Air Controlled by Airmen</td>
<td>The aerospace domain comprises a distinct arena of warfare, and controlling the air requires separately focused organizational and intellectual capacities decoupled from the land and sea. The Air Force exists to maximize our military capacity to exploit air and space in support of national objectives. Furthermore, the Air Force maintains a commitment to finding creative bypasses around conventional conflict and conventional thinking.</td>
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<th>WAYS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Command the Air</td>
<td>When used appropriately, air power has the potential to decide the outcome of a war. By targeting the enemy’s war-making capacity and key means of national resistance, a fully committed and complete air campaign can bypass fielded forces and crush the heart of the enemy. Superior intelligence, information, targeting, and precision maximize this war-winning potential.</td>
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| Centrally Controlled Flexibility | Controlling the skies is the essential precondition for successful land and sea operations. Air superiority is the sine qua non of battlefield success: you cannot win a war without it, and you should not lose if you have it. Establishing air superiority is therefore the first requirement and ongoing imperative for any US military mission. |

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<tr>
<td>Technology, Airplanes, and Beyond</td>
<td>The Air Force was created to exploit a disruptive new technology, and has an abiding faith in the potential for new technologies to change the face of warfare. While airplanes are the preeminent assets of the service, other core technologies certainly have their place. Due to long and complex research and development processes, the nation must invest today to have a world-class Air Force tomorrow.</td>
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| Flyers and Technicians | In the Air Force way of war, officers fly and fight while enlisted airmen operate as talented technicians. Since most officer-enlisted relations occur away from the battle zone, the dynamic can and should be collegial, respectful, and informal. Whatever the job specialty, all airmen contribute importantly to the Air Force and joint team, and should be reminded of such at every opportunity. |

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**Figure 7.1: Summary of Air Force Cultural Beliefs**
Next Steps

This chapter completes the first two major phases of the dissertation. The first phase, comprised of chapters one through three, laid the ideological foundation for the entire project. The second phase, comprised of chapters four through seven, robustly substantiated my principal explanatory variable by identifying the enduring beliefs of each service’s culture. With chapters four through seven in place, we now have a flexible empirical referent for the respective service cultures of the Navy, Marine Corps, Army, and Air Force.

The scholarly contribution of these four chapters is their methodological consistency and the creative synthesis of existing histories. By conducting a structured focused comparison oriented around the concepts of ends, ways, and means, I am able to specify a novel slate of beliefs for each service that clearly differentiates them from each other. The beliefs identified in Figure 7.2 provide enough specificity to differentiate each service as a unique political actor, but they retain sufficient flexibility and generality to apply to a wide variety of issues and cases. As an empirical referent, this composite array of beliefs will be used in the forthcoming case studies and may be used in future research, across disparate issue-areas and historical periods, to inform the policy preferences and civil-military behavior of each military service. Like a Swiss-army knife, this array of beliefs has flexible utility across a large number of potential issues.

To put this multi-purpose tool to work, I will employ the operational code methodology outlined in chapter three (George 1979, George and Bennett 2005, Malici 2006). The beliefs identified in Figure 7.2 comprise a sort of operational code for each service and are thus theorized to create “diagnostic and choice propensities” for political action (George and Bennett 2005). For each salient issue-area in a given policy proposal, I will assess the extent to which the beliefs in this operational code are likely to create specific policy preferences on that issue.
Consequently, by knowing the general outline of a particular issue, I can predict variation in the preferences of the four military services as a function of the unique operational codes identified here. These policy preferences in turn become significant variables in the principal-agent decision structure, and thus operate in conjunction with the other variables specified in my theory (see chapter three) to create variation in civil-military outcomes.

The next chapter begins the third and final phase of the dissertation, and offers an empirical test of the theory identified in phase one, while making use of the cultural analyses in phase two. In the chapter ahead, I critically analyze the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols legislation of 1986 and ask why the Army and Navy responded so differently to the same civilian policy proposals.

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<th>SUMMARY OF US MILITARY SERVICE CULTURAL BELIEFS</th>
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<td>4.1: An Armed American Embassy: Anywhere, Anytime</td>
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<td>MARINE CORPS</td>
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<td>5.1: Warriors from the Sea, Anywhere, for Anything</td>
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<td>6.1: Apolitical Servants of the Nation</td>
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<td>7.1: Air Controlled by Airmen</td>
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<td>4.2: America and Her Navy Prosper Together</td>
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<td>5.2: Survive to Serve</td>
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<td>6.2: A Land Force of Last Resort</td>
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<td>AIR FORCE</td>
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<td>7.2: Decisive Strategic Potential</td>
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<td>4.3: Enlisted Order and Commissioned Judgment</td>
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<td>MARINE CORPS</td>
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<td>5.3: Elite Warrior Identity</td>
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<td>ARMY</td>
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<td>6.3: The Army Way of Battle</td>
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<td>7.3: Command the Air, First and Always</td>
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<td>4.5: A Professional and Permanent Navy</td>
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<td>MARINE CORPS</td>
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<td>5.5: Every Marine a Rifleman</td>
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<td>ARMY</td>
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<td>6.5: Fielding an Army: Regulars and the Militia</td>
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<td>AIR FORCE</td>
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<td>7.5: Technology, Airplanes, and Beyond</td>
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<td>4.6: Size Matters: Bigger-as-Better</td>
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<td>MARINE CORPS</td>
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<td>6.6: Soldiers, Units, and Leaders</td>
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<td>ARMY</td>
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<td>7.6: Flyers and Technicians</td>
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Figure 7.2: Composite Summary of Service Beliefs
CHAPTER 8
GETTING TO YES:
PASSING THE GOLDWATER-NICHOLS ACT OF 1986

The question of which civilians ought to control the military, when Congressmen might do so at the expense of executive officials, or vice-versa, not only remains unanswered, but is usually left unclarified. What, indeed, constitutes control? And when is a Congressman, or a civilian executive in the military establishment, or the constitutional Commander in Chief himself, ‘in control’ of the armed forces?

- Paul Hammond

Civilian control of the US military is a revered principle in theory, but how does it work in practice? This research project has motivated and developed a theory of civilian control by focusing on the specific organizations being controlled—the four US military services. Why do the military services respond as they do to both proposed and ratified policies, and why do these responses sometimes vary across the services? Having developed a provisional theory, followed by a structured comparative analysis of the four service cultures, this chapter marks the transition from theory to practice. How well does my theory explain both the policy preferences of the services as well as their political behavior in the policymaking domain?

As a case study of civil-military interaction, this chapter examines the four-year period from 1982 to 1986 that led to the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 (hereafter Goldwater-Nichols). During this period, a complex array of political actors grappled with a fundamental question of national security: how should power and influence be distributed among the various institutions of the defense establishment? Ultimately, Congress acted within its constitutional charter to raise armies and provide a navy, specifying a particular power arrangement for the national defense and codifying it accordingly in Goldwater-Nichols. The act made the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) the principal military advisor to the president, created the position of the Vice

1 Hammond 1961, 3
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, took steps to enhance the quality of officers assigned to the Joint Staff, specified that the Joint Staff works for the Chairman and not the corporate Joint Chiefs, and strengthened the authority of the unified and specified commanders over their service components. When the Senate and House of Representatives finally approved a common bill in their conference committee, the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) Les Aspin declared, “[t]his is one of the landmark laws of American history. It is probably the greatest sea change in the history of the American military since the Continental Congress created the Continental Army in 1775.”

This chapter provides an empirical test of my theory and assesses its explanatory value over alternative explanations for military behavior. Consequently, the chapter presents a focused case study of civil-military behavior rather than a complete legislative history. Other works capably recount the overall history and explain the unique constellation of events and actors that aligned to pass such a comprehensive reform of the defense establishment. Instead, this chapter shines the analytic spotlight on specific actors and variables within the story, while remaining faithful to the larger context of the narrative. I focus specifically on the civil-military behavior of the Army and Navy and seek to explain why these two services responded as they did to various reorganization proposals.

While my overall theory informs both policy creation and implementation, most of the notable civil-military interaction with Goldwater-Nichols occurred in the policy creation phase. The four-year creation phase involved fractious debate and political intrigue, while the implementation of the act has generally been less controversial (Locher 2012; Lovelace 1996; 2 HASC News Release, 11 September 1986. In “020 DA Reorganization Misc Documents” folder, HRC-2, Army Center for Military History (CMH), Ft McNair, DC. 3 The most thorough history is found in Locher 2002. Locher was a staff member on the Senate Armed Services Committee, and instrumental in shepherding reform ideas through the bureaucratic maze. His account is the most complete, and while he attempts admirable objectivity, his deep personal investment in passing the act must be considered in reading this work. For the best short summary of the Act’s passage and its political context, see McNaugher and Sperry 1994. See also Lederman 1999 and Zegart 1999.
Yuknis 1992; Crowe 1993, 158; Veneri 2004). Consequently, the four-year policy creation phase represents the most tractable and useful period to analyze for the purposes of my research agenda. Furthermore, it provides a valuable opportunity to evaluate robustly one of the innovations of my theory. As noted in chapter three, I expect that much of the policy creation phase is less about monitoring and enforcement and more about negotiating the terms of a future agency contract. My analysis in this chapter therefore focuses on two dependent variables embedded in my theory. First, I explain the policy preferences of the military services as a function of their unique service cultures, and assess this explanatory value relative to other theories. Second, I explain the services’ political behavior—that is, their responses to proposed policies—as a function of those policy preferences interacting with expectations of the future implementation environment. This focus permits me to build more constructively on Peter Feaver’s (2003) baseline agency model, which focuses on a unitary military agent responding to monitoring, enforcement, and expectations of punishment. By disaggregating the military agent into separate services and focusing on the unique interactions that precede the enforcement environment, I attempt to complement and build profitably on existing work.

For numerous reasons, the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act represents an important and valuable case for closer inspection. First, the case has “intrinsic importance” for US national security, as it represents the current law of the land for the US military and was the first major restructuring of the defense establishment in 28 years when it passed (Van Evera 1997, 86). The debate generated spirited testimony and prompted discussion of democratic first principles, to include separation of powers and civilian control of the military. In the same

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4 James Locher. 2012. Interview by author. January 4. The implementation environment is also less notable because many of the act’s features constituted redistributions of power that were largely self-executing. The relatively benign implementation does not suggest, however, that the act has been universally welcomed. Debates continue about whether or not Goldwater-Nichols was a net positive for national security. For a skeptic, see Bourne 1998.

5 These criteria for case selection come largely from Van Evera 1997.

6 As the following discussion will illustrate, the Congress did pass reform legislation in 1984, but the changes were modest and not nearly as far-reaching as Goldwater-Nichols two years later.
way that a theory of war termination, for example, should explain World Wars I and II and not put them in the error term, a theory of civil-military policymaking should make a credible attempt to explain a major civil-military policy change.

Second, the case offers a rich but finite period for analysis between 1982 and 1986. During this period, many different proposals were introduced, discarded, and ultimately approved, and the Army and Navy responses varied within this span. Consequently, the case offers longitudinal variation, with several key junctures in which the configuration of key variables translated into different civil-military outcomes. Similarly, the case exhibits issue diversity, as the reorganization debate covered several related but distinct issue-areas. Looking at several issue-areas allows me to hold constant the environmental factors and ask why some issues prompted conflict while others did not. This diversity of issues also permits greater analytical leverage to compare the explanatory capacity of the various theories in play. On some points, the contending explanations all predict the same outcome; but on other points, the theories make different predictions, allowing us to assess their relative merits. Finally, the case of Goldwater-Nichols shows meaningful variation on the dependent variables, as the Army and Navy at times held very different views and responded quite differently to the same policy proposals. This variation in service responses is all the more compelling because the case did not involve issue-areas in which we traditionally expect to see variation and disagreement among the services. In this case, the Army and Navy were not fighting about sharing defense dollars, acquiring major weapon systems, or assigning roles and missions. Without these conventional bureaucratic issues in play, the diversity of service responses is more puzzling and in need of explanation.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The first major section (8.1) situates the Goldwater-Nichols debate in its historical context, as the lineal descendant of the reorganization battles of
1947 through 1958. The fundamental questions and political choices remained largely intact from the end of World War II through the mid-1980s: who holds the power within the defense establishment, and how should the United States balance the centralizing imperative of operational efficiency with the decentralizing imperative of providing balanced and diverse military advice? With the main issues introduced, the second section of the chapter (8.2) discusses the various theories that might explain the civil-military dynamics—my own theory as well as the most viable alternatives. I briefly summarize the import of each theory and then suggest the observable implications of each theory given the issues at stake. The reader can thus bear the comparative explanations in mind as the narrative unfolds in the subsequent sections.

The narrative sections of the chapter are organized around major Congressional hearings, as these provide a unique venue for assessing and comparing the publicly stated preferences of the Army and Navy at different points throughout the four-year period. The first narrative section (8.3) covers the first key juncture of the period, from February 1982, when the issue came to the fore, through the major round of hearings by the HASC Investigations Subcommittee in the spring and summer of 1982. The following section of the chapter (8.4) covers the next juncture, in the summer and fall of 1983 when two more rounds of hearings were held by the House and Senate. The fifth section (8.5) covers the third and final phase of the legislative drama, from the publication of the Senate Armed Service Committee (SASC) Staff Study in October 1985 through the final stroke of President Ronald Reagan’s pen in October 1986. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the major findings and an assessment of the various theories’ explanatory purchase over the empirical data of the case.
The substantive issues that dominated the defense reform agenda between 1982 and 1986 did not emerge ex nihilo, but descended from equally spirited contests in the post-World War II era. Before exploring the specifics of the Goldwater-Nichols debate, this section of the chapter situates the case study in its ancestral context, focusing on the creation of key defense institutions during World War II through the post-war unification debates and the subsequent reorganizations of the Eisenhower administration. During these earlier periods, the principal actors struggled with the appropriate way to structure the national defense, distribute power among institutions, and temper the dictates of military efficiency with the political insurance of dividing power. For brevity and clarity, the following discussion focuses on the evolution of the issues themselves, with secondary attention to the positions and preferences of the key actors relative to those issues. The section begins with a discussion of World War II institutions, followed by the post-war debate that culminated in the landmark National Security Act of 1947. The final subsections highlight the notable changes to the 1947 legislation, as amended in 1949, 1953, and 1958, and ends with a summary graphic.

*World War II and the National Security Act of 1947*

When the United States formally entered World War II in December 1941, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) did not yet exist. Instead, the main institutional vehicle for coordinating the activities of the military services was the Joint Board, created in 1903 under Secretary of the Army Elihu Root and Secretary of the Navy John D. Long (Caraley 1966, 6). The Joint Board,

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7 Huntington 1961, 2.
comprised of four senior officers each from the Army and Navy, operated intermittently between 1903 and 1941, and was the only coordinating body between the services when Pearl Harbor was attacked (Joint History Office 2011, 1). The impetus for creating the actual Joint Chiefs of Staff came from mirroring the British, whose Chiefs of Staff Committee accompanied Winston Churchill to the Arcadia conference in December 1941 through January 1942 (Joint History Office 2011, 1). Since 1923, the British Chiefs of Staff Committee, comprised of the senior officer in each military service, had served as Britain’s principal military voice in strategy and planning to the British government. During the Arcadia Conference, the US military merely adopted the British model and created the “Joint US Chiefs of Staff,” later shortened to the now familiar Joint Chiefs of Staff (Joint History Office 2011, 2). As the war lengthened, the JCS continued to operate with de facto authority conferred by President Roosevelt, who never formally established the JCS with a specific charter or mandate (Caraley 1966, 17). Responding to the exigencies of war, one of the most critical institutions of the US military was thus created through impromptu organizational mimicry and sustained at the pleasure of the president.

During the war, important organizational practices developed within the JCS that forged lasting expectations among its participants. First, the JCS operated as a type of super-cabinet for Roosevelt, conferring with him directly and frequently on matters of grand strategy and effectively bypassing the civilian secretaries who were structurally positioned between the military chiefs and the president (Korb 1976, 14). This arrangement reflected Roosevelt’s personal modus operandi more than a deliberate organizational choice (Larrabee 2004), and resulted in tremendous political power and influence accorded to the service chiefs. A second

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8 When the Joint Chiefs of Staff originally formed, the Navy had two representatives: the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Harold Stark and the Commander in Chief of the US Fleet (COMINCH) Admiral Ernest King. In March 1942, Stark left for a position in Europe, and King took over both roles. In July 1942, President Roosevelt’s military Chief of Staff Admiral William Leahy joined the JCS as its fourth member. Even though the Air Force was still the Army Air Forces and not a separate service, the Chief of the Army Air Forces then-Lieutenant General Henry “Hap” Arnold served as a full member of the JCS throughout the war (Joint History Office 2011, 2). The Commandant of the Marine Corps joined the JCS initially in 1952 but only on matters directly related to the Marine Corps. The Commandant became a full non-contingent member in 1978 (Public Law 95-485, sec. 807).
key operating principle of the war-time JCS was its core function as a diverse advisory body, not as an executive board of directors that decided matters by majority vote. If the chiefs could not reach a unanimous view on a given issue, those differences were brought to the president for resolution instead of being voted upon and decided through majority rules. In his study of defense organization, Demetrios Caraley recounts an episode that notably fixed this expectation in the minds of the JCS. On a specific issue that would have reduced naval ship construction, Admiral Ernest King was the only one of the four JCS members to object. “When [Admiral William] Leahy remarked that it looked to him as though ‘the vote is three to one,’ King replied coldly that so far as he was concerned, the Joint Chiefs were not a voting organization on any matter in which the interests of the Navy were involved” (1966, 19). From that point forward, Caraley notes, the chiefs either found a compromise or elevated their differences to Roosevelt.

Even while the war raged across the globe, the Joint Chiefs began to look ahead to the postwar world, which would no doubt require a different peacetime military organization than the one in place before the war. At a JCS meeting in November 1943, Chief of Staff of the Army General George Marshall initially proposed unifying the War and Navy departments into a single department of national defense (Caraley 1966, ix). Up to that point, the War and Navy departments had operated as autonomous cabinet-level departments for over 150 years, with no common superior below the president himself (Caraley 1966, 4). Marshall’s suggestion thus launched decades of bitter debate about the wisdom of unifying the military departments into a single organization.9 The services exchanged volleys of various reorganization proposals, with the Army presenting the McNarney plan in 1944, which called for a single military department under a civilian secretary of the armed forces (Joint History Office 2011, 11). The Navy responded with the Eberstadt plan in October 1945, advocating for the retention of separate

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service departments, which then prompted the Army’s next rebuttal codified in the Collins plan. Back and forth, the Army pushed for an organizational structure equipped for unified action while the Navy insisted on the need for a separate organizational commitment to naval affairs. Admiral Chester Nimitz captured the prevailing Navy view in his 1945 Senate testimony: “I have come to the conclusion that the yardstick by which we should measure any proposal to change our military organization should be, how does it affect our sea power (US Senate 1945, 386)?”

The core issues of the debate revolved around the distribution of power among the various participants in the national defense structure: the JCS, the military departments, the Commanders-in-Chief (CINCs) of the unified and specified commands, the civilian secretaries, the president, and Congress. In a message to Congress in December 1945, President Harry Truman weighed in forcefully on the debate, calling for a unified defense establishment, a single civilian defense secretary, and a single military chief of staff. “The President, as Commander-in-Chief, should not personally have to coordinate the Army and Navy and Air Force,” wrote Truman. “He should be able to rely for that coordination upon civilian hands at the Cabinet level (Truman 1945, 556).” With Truman’s proposal as a baseline, the services, the Congress, and the president hammered out their differences for two more years. Eventually, the Senate approved a compromise bill on 24 July 1947, the House on 25 July 1947, and Truman signed it into law on 26 July 1947 (OSD Historical Office 1978).

10 Unified commands, created during World War II, were “warfighting” commands, organized geographically or functionally and consisted of forces from multiple military services. Specified commands operated similarly with forces from only one service. The military commanders of these specified and unified commands were known as Commanders in Chief (or CINCs) of their respective commands. Today, these commands are called “combatant commands,” and as of October 2002 the commanders are called “combatant commanders” instead of CINCs. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld made this change, citing that the US only has one Commander in Chief, the President. See <http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=42568>. Because the title “CINC” was current and frequently used during the period of this case study, I refer to these commanders as CINCs, even though that term is no longer in use.

11 The law was signed on 26 July 1947, but most of the provisions did not take effect on 18 September 1947. Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Historical Office. 1978. The Department of Defense: Documents on Establishment and
The National Security Act of 1947, like many major pieces of legislation, was the deformed offspring of political compromise, not a coherent articulation of rational discourse. With so much at stake, and with impassioned views on all sides of the issue, some of the compromises required to pass the bill attenuated its legislative intent. Reflecting on the JCS specifically, Amy Zegart notes that “[i]ronically, the very importance of the Joint Chiefs of Staff guaranteed it would be poorly designed to serve the national interest” (1999, 110). The National Security Act of 1947 performed a massive act of institutional creation, formally establishing the National Security Council (NSC), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and the National Security Resources Board (Pub.L. 80-253, 61 Stat. 495). More specific to the defense establishment, the act created the National Military Establishment, headed by the secretary of defense who received authority to “exercise general direction, authority, and control over such departments and agencies” (sec. 202). Additionally, the act created the United States Air Force as a separate military service, changed the War Department into the Department of the Army, and stipulated three cabinet-level service secretaries over the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, respectively. Finally, the 1947 act formally created the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and designated the corporate body as the “principal military advisers to the President and the Secretary of Defense” (sec. 211). To support the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the legislation provided a Joint Staff with no more than 100 officers (sec. 212). Overall, despite creating a new National Military Establishment, the Act essentially codified existing World War II arrangements: the JCS lived on, the military services survived as separate entities, and there was no armed forces general staff with a single military chief (Lynn 1985, 173).


12 Curiously, these three secretaries reported to the Secretary of Defense, but maintained their cabinet status as the Secretary of Defense’s positional equal.
Amendments and Changes: 1949, 1953, and 1958

From the outset, the National Military Establishment suffered from the weaknesses inherent in its creation. In December 1948, Secretary of Defense James Forrestal provided his first report to the Congress and lamented the structural weakness of his position, despite his putative authority (OSD Historical Office 1978, 63). In his report, Forrestal recommended the creation of an Under Secretary of Defense as an “alter ego” for the secretary, the elimination of the word “general” in front of the Secretary’s duties and authorities (which the services interpreted as a limitation of his authority over specific areas), the designation of a “responsible head for the Joint Chiefs of Staff,” and the removal of the size limitation of the Joint Staff (in OSD Historical Office 1978, 64). Two months later, Forrestal’s recommendations received support from the Committee on the National Security Organization—also known as the Eberstadt Task Force, part of the Hoover Commission—which likewise endorsed a stronger secretary of defense with control over the military budget, full (not general) authority for the secretary, the creation of the position of under secretary of defense, and the appointment of a Chairman for the JCS.13 In response to this report, President Truman submitted another message to Congress on 5 March 1949, emphasizing the defense secretary’s compromised position: “In short, the [National Security] Act [of 1947] fails to provide for a fully responsible official with authority adequate to meet his responsibility, whom the President and the Congress can hold accountable” (Truman 1949, 165). Consequently, Truman exhorted Congress to amend the legislation, to create the Department of Defense (DoD) in place of the National Military Establishment, to reduce the military services from cabinet-level executive departments to military departments within DoD, and to give the secretary of defense sufficient power and authority to do his job.

13 The Eberstadt Task Force studied defense organization from 21 May to 15 November 1948, and submitted its report to Congress on 15 February 1949 (OSD Historical Office 1978, 65-75).
After several months of political maneuvering, Truman eventually forced the Congress’
hand by submitting his own reorganization proposal on 18 July 1949. At that point, Congress
took action and passed a bill that Truman signed into law on 10 August 1949 (Pub.L. 81-216, 63
Stat. 578). The law amended the National Security Act in numerous ways, most of which had
been recommended by Truman: the amendment (1) removed the service secretaries from the
NSC (sec. 101); (2) created the Department of Defense (DoD) in place of the National Military
Establishment and subordinated the service departments as military departments within DoD
(sec. 201); (3) removed the word “general” in front of the secretary of defense’s “direction,
authority, and control” over the department (sec. 202); (4) created the position of Chairman of
the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) to serve as a non-voting presiding officer, without military
command authority, and to serve as a liaison between the president and the JCS (sec. 211); and
(5) increased the size of the Joint Staff from 100 to 210 officers (sec. 212).

Despite Truman’s best efforts, the defense establishment still suffered from fundamental
deficiencies immune to legislative tinkering. When Dwight Eisenhower became Commander in
Chief in 1953, he spent his political capital trying to improve four prevailing weaknesses of the
defense structure (Lynn 1985, 175). First, the CJCS lacked independent authority over the other
members of the JCS. Second, the JCS members had a built-in conflict of interest since they were
“dual-hatted” as both chief of their service and as a member of the joint JCS body—an
arrangement ripe for role conflict, as the chiefs had to look after their service while
subordinating service concerns to the larger national interest. Third, the service staffs
dominated the operation of the Joint Staff, preventing the formulation of a cross-cutting joint

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14 The President could force the agenda on Congress as a result of the recently passed Reorganization Act of 1949. That Act gave the President power to submit executive branch reorganization proposals to Congress, which would automatically take effect 60 days later unless vetoed by either chamber of Congress. For further background on this act, see Heady 1949.

15 Even though the JCS did not operate as a “voting organization”, this stipulation was inserted to constrain (in spirit) the Chairman’s power over the corporate JCS.
service perspective. Fourth, the CINCs of the unified and specified commands had limited power and authority over the service components under their command.\(^\text{16}\)

To remedy these persistent shortcomings, Eisenhower launched a sustained bureaucratic offensive. First, in February 1953, his Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson commissioned yet another study—the Rockefeller Committee—to examine the national defense structure. The committee submitted its report on 11 April 1953, calling for a strengthened secretary of defense and more centralized organizational structure (OSD Historical Office 1978, 126). After reviewing the report, President Eisenhower submitted his Reorganization Plan No. 6 to Congress on 30 April 1953 (Eisenhower 1953, 225). Pursuant to the terms of the Reorganization Act of 1949, the president could submit a plan to reorganize the executive department, subject to veto by either chamber of Congress. If neither chamber took action, the proposal became law 60 days later, which Eisenhower’s plan did on 30 June 1953 (67 Stat. 638). Eisenhower’s proposal thus became law, further amending the National Security Act by: (1) giving the Chairman of the JCS approval authority over the selection of officers to the Joint Staff; (2) transferring managerial functions of the Joint Staff from the corporate JCS to the CJCS; (3) authorizing six additional Assistant Secretaries of Defense; and (4) authorizing a general counsel for the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Eisenhower 1953, 225-238).

Building on these modest changes, Eisenhower succeeded in his push for more extensive reforms in 1958. In his State of the Union Address on 9 January 1958, Eisenhower specified defense organization as the first of eight priority tasks for the year ahead (Eisenhower 1958, 7). Then he followed up with a lengthy message to Congress on 3 April 1958, in which he laid down this first principle for defense organization: “First, separate ground, sea, and air warfare is gone forever. If ever again we should be involved in war, we will fight it in all elements, with

\(^\text{16}\) All four of these issues will be discussed in further detail at the end of this section, as they comprise four of the major points of debate between 1982-1986.
all services, as one single concentrated effort. Peacetime preparatory and organizational activity
must conform to this fact” (Eisenhower 1958, 274). With that comprehensive view in mind,
Eisenhower noted that the actual reach of the National Security Act of 1947 fell far short of what
was required for unified national action. “Reorganization in 1947 was marked by lengthy
debate and eventual compromise,” Eisenhower wrote. “In that battle the lessons were lost,
tradition won” (Eisenhower 1958, 277).

In response, Congress held a series of hearings in April - July 1958. On 24 July 1958,
both houses approved the conference report, which the president signed into law on 6 August
1958 (Pub.L. 85-599, 72 Stat. 514). The major provisions of this reorganization included the
following. First, the secretary of defense was given power to change the services’ roles and
missions, subject to a congressional veto. Additionally, the power to create unified and
specified commands moved from the JCS to the president, through the secretary of defense
“with advice and assistance of the JCS” (sec. 5). Next, unified commanders received “full
operational command” of assigned forces, and the act specified that the chain of command ran
from the president to the secretary of defense to the CINCs (sec. 5).17 Meanwhile, the military
services’ responsibilities included “organizing, training, and equipping” forces for the unified
and specified commands. To lessen the counter-pressures created by “dual-hatted” service
chiefs, the amended legislation specified that service chiefs could delegate management of their
services to their vice chiefs, freeing up the chiefs to focus on joint JCS duties. Further, the 1958
reforms repealed the CJCS’s lack of vote in JCS deliberations, and clarified that the Chairman
outranks all other military officers but still did not have command authority over military
forces. The law also specified that the Chairman had to inform the secretary of defense and the
president when the JCS were not in agreement, a stipulation that created further incentives for

17 The link from the Secretary of Defense to the CINCs, however, was clarified by a DoD Directive that specified that
the operational command line from the Secretary of Defense went through the JCS to the unified commands (Lynn
1985, 179).
unanimity and compromise (Jones 1982). Finally, the law increased the size of the Joint Staff from 210 to 400 officers, and gave the CJCS authority to select the three-star Director of the Joint Staff (DJS) “in consultation with the Joint Chiefs of Staff” and with the approval of the secretary of defense (sec. 5).

In sum, the series of legislative changes between 1947 and 1958 sought to allocate power and structure a defense system that was suited to the US national character and strategic requirements. The debates and decrees attempted to reconcile fundamental political questions. Should power and influence be centralized for efficient conduct of military operations, or should it be spread widely to create diverse counsel and prevent a dangerously undemocratic consolidation of power? Such questions rooted in normative first principles rarely have definitive answers, only contingent ones that achieve temporary political compromises. Consequently, these issues resurfaced periodically in the years that followed, though without major legislative update. In concert with several executive orders and Department of Defense directives, the aggregate policies in place after the 1958 amendments to the National Security Act survived largely intact up to the case study period of 1982-1986. Figure 8.1 below summarizes the discussion thus far, and captures the evolution of these issue areas across the four notable legislative updates. In the next section of this chapter, I expound further on the major problem areas that persisted despite all of these reform attempts, and then consider the observable implications of my theory and the alternative explanations relative to these issue-areas.
### SUMMARY OF POLICY CHANGES: 1947 - 1958

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1947 National Security Act</th>
<th>1949 Amendments to the NSA</th>
<th>1953 Reorganization Plan No. 6</th>
<th>1958 DoD Reorganization Act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unified Department</td>
<td>• Created National Military Establishment (NME)</td>
<td>• Changed NME to Department of Defense (DoD)</td>
<td>• Gave SecDef authority to change service combatant functions, subject to Congressional veto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary of Defense</td>
<td>• Created position of Secretary of Defense (SecDef)</td>
<td>• Created position of Deputy Secretary of Defense (re-classifying Under Secretary of Defense created by 2 April 1949 legislation)</td>
<td>• Authorized an additional 6 Assistant Secretaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• SecDef to exercise “general” direction, authority, and control, and establish “general” policies and programs</td>
<td>• Eliminated the word “general” from SecDef authority and control</td>
<td>• Created position of Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD) General Counsel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Authorized 3 special assistants to the SecDef</td>
<td>• Withheld power from SecDef to adjust the services’ combatant functions</td>
<td>• Gave SecDef authority to change service combatant functions, subject to Congressional veto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS)</td>
<td>• Created JCS, comprised of service chiefs from Army, Navy, and Air Force</td>
<td>• Created position of Chairman of the JCS (CJCS), to serve as non-voting agenda-setter and liaison</td>
<td>• Created JCS, comprised of service chiefs from Army, Navy, and Air Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Created Joint Staff, limited to 100 officers</td>
<td>• JCS members given right to appeal to Congress on any issue</td>
<td>• Repealed CJCS’ lack of vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Services</td>
<td>• Created US Air Force</td>
<td>• Increased size of JS to 210 officers</td>
<td>• Specified CJCS as highest-ranking military officer, but not military commander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Made Army, Navy, and Air Force all executive departments, headed by civilian secretary</td>
<td>• Created military departments instead of executive departments</td>
<td>• Specified that CJCS must inform SecDef or President when JCS not unanimous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gave service secretaries direct access to present reports or recommendations to President or Budget Director</td>
<td>• Service secretaries no longer in Cabinet or on National Security Council</td>
<td>• Increased JS to 400 officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unified Commands</td>
<td>• Unified commands created by JCS</td>
<td>• Key West Agreement modified by DoD Directive 5100.1</td>
<td>• Unified commands created by President or SecDef (with advice and assistance of JCS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain of Command</td>
<td>• Based on Key West Agreement (21 April 1948), a member of the JCS served as executive agent to the unified commands</td>
<td>• Formally runs from President to SecDef to Unified Cmnds</td>
<td>• Unified commanders given “full operational authority” over assigned forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Key West Agreement modified by DoD Directive 5100.1</td>
<td>• DoD Directive 5100.1 specifies that link from SecDef to Unified Command runs through JCS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 8.1: Summary of Policy Changes: 1947-1958**

### 8.2: Enduring Issues and Theoretical Predictions

*Each service holds certain parochial beliefs dearly. These ideas may not be rational by some criteria, but that is irrelevant.*

– Admiral William J. Crowe

The core issues addressed by Goldwater-Nichols descended quite directly from their political ancestors of the 1940s and 1950s. After the four legislative efforts discussed in the previous section, the underlying issues changed very little. This section of the chapter serves as a pivot point between the historical background and the central narrative of this case study.

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18 Crowe 1993, 156.
The previous section highlighted the historical context of defense organization, and the next section of the chapter dives into the events of 1982 when these issues moved back into the spotlight. In this section, I pause the historical narrative to introduce the theoretical approach that will be used to study these events as a civil-military case study. The purpose of this chapter is not to present history per se, but to bring together theory and evidence to explain why and how the military services support or resist given policies. Therefore, this section offers ex ante theoretical predictions of what we expect to see in the course of the narrative, based on the juxtaposition of the services’ cultural beliefs and the issues in play. To begin, I briefly highlight the major studies that occurred between 1958 and 1982, and use the key findings of the 1978 Steadman Report as the basis for specifying the persistent issues of defense organization that emerged anew in 1982. After highlighting the principal issues, I discuss the potential application of four theories to this issue space: a baseline agency model, bureaucratic politics, committee compromise, and my own cultural-temporal agency theory. By discussing the various theoretical predictions at this point in the chapter, the reader can keep the different theories in view during the substantive discussion of the case study narrative.

Follow-On Studies and Persistent Issues

After President Eisenhower successfully passed his reform proposals in 1953 and 1958, the core issues of defense organization did not recede into total obscurity. Instead, with each passing decade and change of political party in the White House, yet another weighty commission studied the issue and emerged with similar conclusions. At the beginning of his administration, President John F. Kennedy established the Committee on Defense

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19 As will be discussed later in this section, the 1978 Steadman Report was formally called the Report on the National Military Command Structure and was conducted as part of the Carter Administration’s Defense Organization Study of 1977-1980 (DOS 77-80).
20 These theories—my own, along with three alternative explanations—are covered in greater detail in chapters two and three. A structural theory incorporating the external security environment, as seen in Desch (1999) and Zisk (1993), is not discussed since it does not apply well to the case at hand.
Establishment, chaired by Senator Stuart Symington. The 1960 Symington report found that remarkably little had changed in the defense community, despite the persistent efforts of the Eisenhower administration (Lynn 1985, 181). Ten years later, President Richard Nixon and his Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird commissioned the Blue Ribbon Defense Panel, chaired by Gilbert W. Fitzhugh (OSD Historical Office 1978, 249). The Fitzhugh panel published its report on 1 July 1970, and reinforced the steady drumbeat of criticism of the dysfunctional structure and operation of DoD. Finally, the Carter administration launched a comprehensive review of national defense in its Defense Organization Study of 1977-1980 (Barrett 1983). One component of the study focused on the national military command structure and was chaired by Richard C. Steadman. Published in July 1978, the Steadman report offered lengthy analysis of the persistent organizational issues in DoD, which essentially translate into the state of play for the commencement of this case study in 1982. In the following discussion, I consider five of the most prominent (and interrelated) issues raised by the Steadman report, which in turn serve as the focus issues for this case study.

First, the Steadman report found that the committee structure of the JCS, headed by a weakly empowered Chairman, was largely incapable of offering sharp, incisive, and nationally oriented advice to civilian decision-makers. The report asserted that most civilians found individual advice from the members of the JCS to be valuable, but their corporate advice, forged in the fires of committee compromise, amounted to little more than “nonaggression treaties among the various services” (Kissinger 1979, 398). The Steadman report found that “the formal position papers of the JCS, the institutional product, are almost uniformly given low marks by their consumers—the policy-makers in OSD, State, and the NSC staff—and by many senior military officers as well” (1978, 52). Moreover, such products were “ponderous in presentation and predictably wedded to the status quo” (1978, 52). With the corporate JCS designated by
law as the principal military advisors to the president and the secretary of defense, the Chairman did not have the institutional power to transcend the service-oriented views of the JCS.

The JCS and the Chairman generally felt obligated to come to their own compromised agreements, given the statutory requirement to report any disagreements to the secretary of defense and the president (Jones 1982). Samuel Huntington noted that the incentive structure of the JCS translated into these weak and ambiguous compromises; from their vantage point, any compromise at the JCS level was generally preferred to having a compromise imposed on them from above (1961, 157). For example, a November 1981 memorandum from the Navy staff to the Chief of Naval Operations described such a compromise in the effort to produce a joint publication. In drafting the publication, the Air Force and Marine Corps reached an irreconcilable disagreement over the procedures and authority for employing the two services’ tactical aircraft. To break the impasse, the two services could only agree on the “adoption of an ambiguous omnibus statement” which allowed both services to interpret it in their own way and maintain the status quo. As Hanson Baldwin noted in 1951, the Joint Chiefs “often argue over phraseology, instead of substance, and try to reach agreement by compromises in semantics.”

Second, and relatedly, the Steadman report recognized that the service chiefs filled an institutional position with nearly insurmountable conflict of interest. The core problem, the study noted, was that “[a] Chief cannot, for example, be expected to argue for additional

22 Readers familiar with chapters five and seven will appreciate the nature of the disagreement. Recall that the Marine Corps views aviation assets strictly as support for Marine infantry units. The Air Force, meanwhile, believes that all aviation assets should be centrally controlled and allocated according to the judgment of the senior airman working for the joint force commander. The control of Marine aviation assets, therefore, has been an historically contentious issue, as each service’s cultural beliefs pull these assets in fundamentally different directions (centralized control vs fully dedicated support to Marine ground units).
carriers, divisions, or air wings when constructing a Service budget and then agree in a joint forum that they should be deleted in favor of programs of other Services. In doing so he would not only be unreasonably inconsistent, but would risk losing leadership of his Service as well” (52). One way to resolve this role conflict, the study noted, would be to create a group of “National Military Advisers” who did not wear a separate hat as service chiefs (70). In such an arrangement, the dual roles would be decoupled: service chiefs would manage their services, while the national military advisers would advise senior civilians. The report recognized that making this change would be both “drastic and controversial” (70).

Third, the study found that the quality of the Joint Staff could be improved—both the institutional products of the staff, as well as the officers serving thereon. Regarding the workflow process, the Joint Staff moved position papers through a tortuous color-coded staffing maze known as the “flimsy/buff/green/red stripe” process, denoting a different color or pattern for each level of the four-layered process (Brehm 1982, 46). One former Pentagon staff officer recalled his first exposure to the status quo: “I was at the Pentagon probably all of four months and some action officer came sprinting into my office from the Army staff, saying he had a flimsy that was going to go instant green at 1400 unless we can purple it, and my task was to help him figure out how to purple it. Of course, I hadn’t the foggiest idea what he was talking about, but was convinced right then that it was a hell of a way to run a railroad.”

Not only was the process cumbersome, but the extensive involvement of each service staff gave the military services a de facto veto over any joint policy. As summarized in the Steadman report, “[i]n sum, the present system makes it difficult for the Joint Staff to produce persuasively

25 Marine Corps General Bernard “Mick” Trainor commented favorably upon this cumbersome process, which was intentionally designed not to make any “fatal mistakes.” Bernard Trainor. 1994. Interview by James Locher. November 14. Transcript in Box 63, Locher papers.
argued joint papers which transcend Service positions and difficult for the JCS to arrive at joint
decisions in many important areas” (57).

A related critique held that the services did not send their best officers to duty on the
Joint Staff. This observation also had a long historical precedent, and various attempts to
increase the officer quality on the joint staff had generally failed. The clearest attempt to
incentivize high-quality officers on the Joint Staff was a directive issued in 1959 by Secretary of
specified a requirement that “all officers, excepting those noted below, will serve a normal tour
of duty with a Joint, Combined, Allied or OSD Staff before being considered qualified for
promotion to general or flag officer rank.”26 This internal DoD policy, however, went largely
unheeded as the services obtained exceptions to the policy and eventually ignored it
altogether.27 In 1982, for example, of the officers selected for one-star general or admiral, the
great minority had served on a joint staff; for the Army, 5 out of 53 selected for brigadier
general had been in a joint assignment; of the Naval officers selected for flag rank, only 3 of 45
had been on a joint staff (Kyle 1982b, 13). Overall, the study found, the highest-quality officers
did not work on the Joint Staff, further affecting the quality and prestige of the organization.

Fourth, the Steadman report echoed earlier studies that found the warfighting
commanders—the CINCs of the unified and specified commands—had insufficient power and
authority over the service components assigned to them. In the division of labor specified by
Eisenhower’s 1958 reform, the military services organize, train, and equip forces, which the
CINCs in turn employ in actual military operations. While the 1958 amendments gave the

26 Department of Defense Directive 1320.5, “Assignment to Duty with Joint, Combined, Allied and Office of the
Secretary of Defense Staffs,” 2 December 1959. Copy obtained by author from OSD Historical Office.
27 The Steadman report found that “the positions defined as joint duty were defined too broadly and because
frequent exceptions were allowed by the Services” (1978, 63). In an interview with former Deputy Undersecretary of
the Navy Seth Cropsey, he offered that the services could essentially promote whomever they chose without any
restrictions. The policy had lost all applicability. Interview conducted by the author, 31 January 2013.
CINC “full operational authority” over assigned forces, the services retained powerful influence over readiness, training, weapons acquisition, and budget. “Most CINCs,” noted the report, “have limited power to influence the capability of the forces assigned them” (33). The service component commanders assigned to the unified commands worked for two (or more) bosses; in actual operations, they reported to the CINC, while administratively they reported to their service chief. The service departments thus exerted considerable influence and direction over the unified commands, despite the intention of the law which was to empower the CINCs over the service chiefs.

A fifth issue raised by the Steadman report concerned the chain of command from civilian decision-makers to military forces in the field. As explained above, the 1958 amendments specified that the chain of command ran from the president to the secretary of defense to the CINCs. By DoD Directive, however, the transmission from the secretary of defense to the CINCs went through the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Consequently, the corporate JCS did not create orders, but they were in the key position of communicating them—an ambiguity that could be capitalized upon. “Members of the JCS,” notes Zegart, “took full advantage of the blurry line between transmitting and issuing orders” (1999, 137). The Steadman report commented favorably on using a committee to generate a range of military options, but thought differently about the execution of operational plans: “a committee structure is not effective for the exercise of military command or management authority” (35). Similarly, the CINCs in the field had no military boss or supervisor in Washington—they reported directly to the Secretary of Defense. Consequently, the report recommended more formal authority for the Chairman of the JCS to act as the secretary of defense’s agent to the CINCs and as their military spokesman in the capital (1978, 34).
In sum, these five issue-areas discussed by the Steadman report had proven to be long-standing issues in the US defense establishment. Moreover, these issues carried forward into the reform debates of the 1980s, and stake out the perimeter of the issue-space that dominates the case study analysis to follow.

Principal Issue-Areas in Play

1. **A Stronger Chairman of the JCS.** How much power and authority should be centralized in the position of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff? Should the CJCS be designated the sole principal military advisor to the president and secretary of defense in order to foster joint, national advice uncompromised by service positions? Should the CJCS have a deputy or Vice Chairman to assist him?

2. **Dual-Hatting of the Service Chiefs.** Should the members of the JCS retain their dual-hatted positions as service chiefs and JCS members? Or should the president and secretary of defense have a consultative body that does not have an inherent conflict of interest?

3. **Quality of the Joint Staff work and its assigned officers.** To improve the staffing process and to prevent service vetoes, should the Joint Staff work directly for the CJCS instead of for the corporate JCS? How can the quality of officers assigned to the Joint Staff be improved?

4. **Stronger CINCs of the Unified/Specified Commands.** How much power and authority should the CINCs have relative to the military services? Should they be given greater operational, administrative, or budgetary authority?
5. **Chain of Command.** How can the chain of command be improved and streamlined to avoid having a committee structure in the transmission chain? Should the CJCS serve as a military supervisor for the CINCs?

*Predictions of the Alternative Explanations*

With these issues in view, what are the observable implications of the relevant theories of civil-military behavior? Chapter two of this dissertation provided a review of the major ideas and theories of American civil-military relations, and focused its attention on several theories that serve as viable alternatives to my own. Chapter three subsequently offered my theory of civil-military behavior, in which service culture powerfully informs policy preferences, while the anticipation of the future implementation environment affects the tenor and substance of a service’s advocacy. Here, I apply these theoretical frameworks to the issues at hand, offering good-faith predictions for what we should see as this case unfolds. At the end of this section, Figure 8.5 presents these observable implications in a consolidated tabular form.

*Bureaucratic Politics and Interservice rivalry.* The first viable alternative comes from the school of bureaucratic politics. This approach holds that the military services are savvy bureaucratic actors who leverage the machinery of government in pursuit of material interests or political power. More specifically, this approach suggests that the services will prefer—and thus pursue—greater organizational autonomy, enhanced prestige, larger budget share, and expanded professional turf. In the case at hand, defense reorganization is essentially a debate about the distribution of power and influence within the defense establishment. According to the logic of bureaucratic politics, therefore, we expect the services to oppose any move that weakens the power or influence of the military services relative to the Chairman of the JCS, the Joint Staff, or the CINCs. More specifically, we should see resistance to (1) a stronger Chairman
(at the expense of the service chiefs in the JCS); (2) resistance to removing the service chiefs from the JCS; (3) resistance to intrusions into service personnel decisions of who gets promoted or gets assigned to the Joint Staff; (4) resistance to strengthening the CINCs and/or giving them any budgetary influence; and (5) resistance to being removed in any way from the transmission linkage of the chain of command.28

As discussed in chapter two, a more nuanced but related argument incorporates the work of Andrew Abbott (1988). By Abbott’s logic, much of what is traditionally labeled interservice rivalry is actually a contest among the military services for secure jurisdictions of expert labor. The military domain is a professional sphere that the four military services inhabit together, separated by contingent borders of specific expertise. Moreover, the security of the services’ jurisdictions hinges on the satisfaction of their client—the elected government and the American people. Consequently, in a debate about defense reorganization, if areas of contested jurisdiction arise, we can expect the services to appeal to their client, highlight their unique expertise, and pursue the most favorable jurisdictional “settlement” possible (Abbott 1988, 69-77).

Committee Compromise. This argument comes from Huntington (1961b), who notes that the JCS operates more like a collegial legislative body than a hierarchically ordered executive committee (1961b, 146). Consequently, the JCS must resolve its differences according to the logic and procedures of legislative compromise: (1) avoiding or delaying difficult issues; (2) “compromise and logrolling,” in which smaller interests are sacrificed to secure larger ones; (3) creating vague, ambiguous, or weak compromises that minimally satisfy all parties; and (4) building policy prescriptions on unrealistic premises (1961b, 162-165). In general terms, therefore, in this case study we should expect to see the military services—as represented

28 The opposite expectation is also implied here. We should expect support for any policy that strengthens the services relative to these other actors.
specifically by the service chiefs in the JCS—responding to the civilian principals with a united front, responding to civilian initiatives with delay tactics, weak compromises, vague proposals, and unrealistic assumptions.

The Baseline Agency Model. The third theoretical approach that offers a general alternative to my own is Feaver’s baseline agency theory of civil-military relations (2003). As discussed throughout the first three chapters, my research builds most explicitly on Feaver’s by modifying the key actors and time horizon of his agency model. In his decision-theoretic model, a unitary civilian principal first decides how closely to monitor the unitary military agent. Next, the military decides whether to work or shirk, on the basis of the monitoring arrangement, its preference gap with the civilian, and its estimate of being meaningfully punished by the civilian for any detected shirking. Finally, the civilian decides whether or not to punish any shirking it detects.

Based on the substance of the issues themselves, the baseline agency does not necessarily make specific predictions about the military’s response. As discussed in chapters one through three, the baseline model does not supply a “theory of preferences” to predict ex ante which issues the various services will support or resist. Nevertheless, the baseline model holds that the military has a uniform preference for greater autonomy and will resist meddlesome intrusions into its internal affairs. For the issues at hand in this case, we can expect a united military to resist structural reform efforts initiated by an outside civilian principal. Additionally, we expect that if different civilian principals give the military varying degrees of latitude, the military will work more cooperatively with the principal that gives it a longer leash. Once the historical details are in place, the value of this approach can be evaluated in light of the political context in each phase of the case.
Predictions of My Own Theory: Cultural-Temporal Agency

My own theory makes two principal moves that are relevant to this case. First, I argue that the enduring beliefs of service culture, acting like an operational code, provide the best explanation of a service’s policy preferences in a given area. Second, I argue that while policies are being debated and are not yet ratified, the military agent bargains and negotiates with the future implementation environment in mind. That is, we expect more spirited input for policies with a long shadow of the future, and we expect that the services will attempt to negotiate not only the substance of the policy but also the parameters of the future implementation environment. Using the empirical referents for Navy and Army service culture developed in chapters four and six, respectively, my theory is able to make much more fine-grained predictions than the alternative explanations. In the following discussion, I map the six beliefs of each service’s culture onto the issue-space identified above, essentially creating a 30-cell typology of hypotheses in which the implications of each belief are assessed for each issue. Additionally, I add a general category to the matrix to assess what each cultural belief might predict about the aggregate pattern of the service’s response, creating a total of 36 possible cells.

I begin with the Navy, and ask what implications its six cultural beliefs have for the five main issues in play for defense reorganization. Rather than discussing all 36 cells individually, I simplify the presentation by offering a diagram that captures the relevant hypotheses. As discussed in chapter four, this project’s use of service culture is intended to be issue-neutral, with wide applicability across disparate cases and issues—a Swiss-army knife with multiple ideational tools to meet a wide variety of needs. Consequently, not every cultural belief bears on the issues at hand in a meaningful way, resulting in many null cells in which service culture does not make a viable prediction of policy preferences. Still, this approach does offer more textured predictions than the alternatives, providing ample hypotheses for assessing the value
of the theory. Figure 8.2 presents the hypotheses for the Navy, followed by Figure 8.3 for the Army. Below these figures, I offer commentary on these hypotheses and connect these beliefs and expected preferences more explicitly.

**Figure 8.2: Navy Policy Preference Hypotheses**

The Navy’s hypothesis matrix suggests that the service will broadly resist efforts to reorganize the defense establishment. The first belief of Navy service culture (4.1) holds that naval forces offer a unique and essential instrument of national power, specially equipped to project force, show the flag, and navigate a delicate course between diplomacy and war. The uniqueness of naval power therefore requires specialized knowledge to provide informed
counsel—in the Navy’s view, naval power is not necessarily a subset of military power, but comprises a different category altogether. In light of this belief, we expect the service to oppose moves that diminish the access of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) to the president and secretary of defense, as an officer from any other service lacks the fluency to speak capably of the maritime domain. The third belief of Navy culture (4.3) reinforces this predilection, as the service believes the operational environment at sea is a world apart, unknowable to land-dwellers, requiring seasoned judgment earned through years of breathing salty air. Therefore, like the first belief which views naval power as a unique instrument of national influence, so too the maritime operational environment is unique and requires patterns of strategic thought quite inaccessible to outsiders. Finally, the Navy’s fifth belief (4.5) also anticipates resistance to diminished access to civilian leaders. The Navy’s professional and permanent fleet requires significant capital investments during times of peace, when major defense spending is often most difficult to justify. Consequently, Navy leaders need steady, undiminished access to civilian leaders in times of war and peace, justifying the need for sustained capital investments. Along these three dimensions, therefore, we expect quite strong resistance to reducing the CNO’s access to the president and secretary of defense.

The Navy’s fourth belief (4.4)—its accepted model of command leadership—predicts support for some reform provisions and resistance to others. Navy command is built on decentralized trust, and the Navy emphasizes the critical linkages between responsibility, authority, and accountability. These three concepts must be coterminous, as a commander must be entrusted with authority commensurate with his responsibility, all subject to full accountability. We therefore expect support for any provisions that would maximize

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29 The Air Force shares this requirement, while the Army generally does not. The Army has been described as a “mobilization organization” (Raines 2013) that is accustomed to swelling in size when war comes, and thus the Army gets what it needs when it needs it. The Army has comparatively fewer large capital investments to make in times of peace.
decentralized operations and empower subordinate commanders. Conversely, we expect resistance toward policies that fail to show trust in the Navy as its own executive agent, such as any moves to direct internal personnel policies like promotions and assignments to the Joint Staff. On the basis of this philosophy, we can expect the Navy to support giving the CINC increased authority (and accountability) to match their statutory responsibility. Additionally, this belief in decentralization suggests some support for streamlining the operational chain of command, reducing any unnecessary steps between the president and operational forces.

Finally, the Navy’s fifth belief (4.5) holds that the naval fleet must be permanent, professional and always deployed at sea—the Navy is not a garrison force that deploys when needed, it is instead a deployed force that returns to port when needed. Consequently, the force of gravity within the Navy runs in the direction of the sea, where the mission is always being performed. This orientation disposes the service to regard sea duty much more highly than shore duty, and predicts resistance to any attempts to redirect the Navy’s finest officers from its deployed ships to its shore-based staff.

While the Navy appears primed to resist most reform provisions, the Army’s array of cultural beliefs indicates the possibility of a very different institutional reaction. First, the Army’s first cultural belief (6.1) professes a self-conception of the Army as a faithful and apolitical servant of the nation, with deep loyalty to the American people that can supersede loyalty to the Army itself. Further, this belief suggests a rather pliable Army posture in its civil-military relations, with a deep suspicion of any service activity that might appear to be lobbying. Consequently, this belief predicts an overall level of supportiveness from the Army, or at least a very quiet and passive resistance to any unwelcome provisions. More specifically, the Army’s institutional commitment to national interests indicates that it may even support a
reduction in influence for the Chief of Staff of the Army or the Army as a service if it improves the national interest or warfighting capability.

The Army also sees itself as an indispensable land force of last resort (6.2), with an irreducible and non-transferable job of finishing wars and tackling unwelcome assignments. With this secure view of its operating domain, the Army is thus less likely to feel threatened overall by reform legislation that might revisit the roles and missions of the services. Further, this belief suggests the possibility of some support for strengthening the CINCs who are tasked to perform and finish operational missions, as well as the possibility of grumbling but compliant support for being tasked to perform inglorious duty on a joint staff. This possible

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### ARMY POLICY PREFERENCE HYPOTHESES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall / General Issues</th>
<th>Strengthen CJCS as principal mil advisor</th>
<th>Remove service chiefs from JCS</th>
<th>Strengthen CINCs power</th>
<th>Improve JS quality and incentivize JS duty</th>
<th>Streamline chain of command</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6.1: Apolitical Servants of the Nation. Faithful extension of American people. Members of profession of arms.</strong></td>
<td>Expect cooperative posture. Willing to pursue national interest. Expect minimal engagement w/ Congress.</td>
<td>Expect some support based on need to generate national advice above service-level interests.</td>
<td>Mild support possible; not as threatened by diminished voice for CSA.</td>
<td>Expect some support. Emphasis on national warfighting capability, less on service interests.</td>
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<td><strong>6.2: Land Force of Last Resort. Indispensable last line of defense. Prepared to take more blame than credit.</strong></td>
<td>Since Army understands its essential role, unlikely to feel threatened by legislative activity.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expect support for strengthening warfighters who must perform and finish the job.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6.3: The Army Way of Battle. Use technology and firepower to win total victories. Minimize political interference.</strong></td>
<td>Expect resistance to political interference in warfighting.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expect mild (or grumbling) support as Army accustomed to serving inglorious roles.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6.4: Synchronizing the Fragments. Waging modern warfare is an exercise in coordination, control, and synchronization.</strong></td>
<td>Expect support for centralizing policies that enhance coordination and control.</td>
<td>Expect support on basis of unity of command.</td>
<td>Expect support for increasing capacity to execute combined-arms multi-service warfare.</td>
<td>Expect support based on need to strengthen capacity for coordinating service activities.</td>
<td>Expect support for clarified chain of command.</td>
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<td><strong>6.5: Fielding an Army: Regulars and the Militia. Army must be ready to expand.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6.6: Soldiers, Units, and Leaders. Soldiers are building block. Leading troops in the field is most important job in Army.</strong></td>
<td>Expect some resistance as best Army officers should be leading troops in the mud.</td>
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**Figure 8.3: Army Policy Preference Hypotheses**

The Army also sees itself as an indispensable land force of last resort (6.2), with an irreducible and non-transferable job of finishing wars and tackling unwelcome assignments. With this secure view of its operating domain, the Army is thus less likely to feel threatened overall by reform legislation that might revisit the roles and missions of the services. Further, this belief suggests the possibility of some support for strengthening the CINCs who are tasked to perform and finish operational missions, as well as the possibility of grumbling but compliant support for being tasked to perform inglorious duty on a joint staff. This possible
support may be counteracted, however, by the Army’s sixth belief (6.6) about the most important job in the Army: leading troops in the field, or the so-called “muddy boots bias.” The Army holds this belief strongly, which is likely to prompt resistance (much like the Navy) to any outside attempts to put the Army’s best officers on a joint staff rather than in the field. While it is certainly true that a typical career progression could involve both field leadership and staff duty—these are not mutually exclusive assignments—the cultural belief predicts a resistance to a career path or duty that might sap prestige from the dominant bias of muddy boots.

Finally, the best predictor of Army support for various reform initiatives is the Army’s belief in the need to synchronize, coordinate, and centrally control operations. As a service that prizes combined-arms warfare, supported critically by the other services, the Army inherently sees the wisdom in centralizing policies that enhance coordination and control of warfighting elements. Consequently, we can expect some support for making the CJCS the principal military advisor to the president to strengthen the unity of command. Simultaneously, this belief predicts support for strengthening the CINC’s whose job entails coordinating joint warfare, as well as support for streamlining and clarifying the chain of command from the field to civilian decision-makers. Finally, the Army’s belief in the wisdom of synchronization and coordination suggests some support for putting high-quality Army officers on the Joint Staff as a vehicle for improving joint integration.

In sum, the Navy’s array of cultural belief predicts general resistance across the issue-space, with some support possible for strengthening the authority of the CINC to match their responsibility, as well as support for simplifying the chain of command from the president to operational forces. Conversely, the Army’s cultural typology predicts general support for many

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30 Even though the Chairman did not—and does not—formally command US forces, the principle applies to the nature of the Chairman’s duties.
reforms, undergirded by an inherently cooperative civil-military posture, though efforts to specify Joint Staff duty requirement may be resisted on the basis of a muddy boots bias.

The second relevant aspect of my theory, which analytically follows the previous discussion, focuses on the anticipated relationship between policy-making and policy-implementing. As this case study exclusively examines the extensive policy-creation phase, the relevant hypotheses are as follows. First, as captured in the 2x2 matrix below (Figure 8.4, as seen previously in Figure 3.3), I predict that preference gaps and the anticipated implementation slack interact to generate various levels of military resistance or cooperation.

![Expected Outcomes for Policy Creation Phase](image)

**Figure 8.4: Expected Outcomes for Policy Creation Phase**

In this case, most of the reform proposals involve self-executing redistributions of power, codified in durable legislation, and thus portend comparatively little implementation slack. Consequently, in view of the predictions in the previous discussion, we expect the Navy to have large preference gaps and little anticipated implementation slack, thus predicting major conflict. For the Army, we expect fairly small preference gaps with little anticipated slack, and thus I hypothesize that the Army will generally work to negotiate the details. Finally, my
theory also suggests that when the services have significant preference gaps with their civilian principals, they will work to negotiate the parameters of the implementation environment. That is, they will attempt to influence the specificity, durability, enforceability, and imminence of the policy, effectively moving the discussion from the left side of the 2x2 (“major conflict”) to the right side (“negotiate to avoid the details”). Therefore, I expect the Navy to attempt such a strategy, working to shift their major conflict to a negotiation for more implementation slack. The Army, however, is less likely to pursue a strategy of shaping the implementation parameters, as their predicted support for many of the policies suggests that the reduced implementation slack is less odious. I expect only weak efforts to gain more slack, and likely only on issues of predicted resistance.

Summary of Predictions

The overall predictions of my theory and the alternative explanations are captured below in Figure 8.5. Through this comparative view, several observations emerge. First, all three alternative explanations predict a united military response: united as bureaucratic actors losing power and influence, united as legislative committee members in support of a weak compromise, or united—as a methodological move, not as a hypothesis—as a single military agent. My theory predicts substantive variation between the services, both in their preferences and responses. Second, only my theory predicts support for any of the reform provisions, and indicates by whom and in what areas.31 At the end of the chapter, I conclude by discussing how the facts of the case ultimately measured up against this template of predictions, and I evaluate which theories best explain which aspects of the case.

With the historical context, discussion of the issue-areas, and comparative hypotheses now in place, the next section of the chapter re-engages the historical narrative. We turn our

31 The baseline model keeps the possibility open for support of some policies, based on the degree of monitoring employed by the civilian principal. This is not known ex ante without specific historical details of the period.
attention to 1982, as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General David Jones takes center
stage.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL PREDICTIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Overall / General Issues</strong></td>
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<td>Committee Compromise</td>
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<td><strong>Navy preferences</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Navy response</strong></td>
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**Figure 8.5: Summary of Theoretical Predictions**

8.3: First Key Juncture — 1982

*Any institution that imbues its members with traditions, doctrines and discipline is likely to find it quite difficult to assess changes in its environment with a high degree of objectivity.*

— General David C. Jones

On 3 February 1982, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General David Jones, USAF, testified before the House Armed Service Committee (HASC) about the upcoming

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32 Jones 1982, 145. This article was actually published in several different venues in 1982. First, in the winter issue of *Directors and Boards*, then in the March issue of *Armed Forces Journal International*. Page numbers for any quotes of this article come from the version published in *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. 

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defense budget. At that point, no one could have expected—not even Jones himself—that a brief series of comments in his testimony would launch a four and a half year legislative brawl, ultimately resulting in the Goldwater-Nichols legislation of 1986. This section of the chapter covers the first of three key junctures in this four-year odyssey, describing the events of February 1982 through the extensive round of hearings held by the HASC Investigations Subcommittee later that year. In this section, I focus initially on General Jones, noting his background as CJCS and the unique factors that prompted him to launch a critical campaign against his own institution. Next, I discuss the Congressional hearings and highlight the key perspectives and positions held by various members of the defense community. Finally, I conclude by analyzing this first juncture in light of the theoretical predictions detailed in the previous section of the chapter.

General Jones and the Shot Heard Round the Pentagon

When General David Jones retired from the Air Force, he had served as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff longer than anyone else ever had—four years as Chief of Staff of the Air Force and four more as Chairman of the JCS (Jones 1984, 273). During those eight years, Jones personally experienced all of the major issues identified in the previous section: his weak institutional position as Chairman, the need for a Vice Chairman, the conflict of interest and overload on the JCS members, the ineffectiveness of the Joint Staff, the dominance of service interests over joint interests, and the lack of quality advice to senior civilian decision-makers (Jones 1982). Consequently, at the start of his second two-year term as Chairman in 1980, Jones made reorganization a major personal priority (Jones 1999, 5). He discussed his views with Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, mentioned them briefly to Congress during his second confirmation hearing, and then brought them up with President Reagan’s new Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger during the administration transition period in early 1981 (Jones
Weinberger listened courteously but had other priorities—namely, shepherding a massively increased defense budget through the maze of Congress. As Jones recalls, Weinberger “did not want to address reorganization, for many would conclude the joint system was all screwed up and that would impact negatively on the budget” (1999, 5). Weinberger later confirmed this assessment, noting that some in Congress viewed reorganization as a substitute remedy for larger defense spending. Weinberger thought differently and insisted that “you can’t buy airplanes and bullets and rifles and submarines and things like that with reorganization plans.”

Despite Weinberger’s cool reception, Jones continued to study, discuss, and write about defense organization. He even consulted his counterparts in the British and Soviet militaries, who experienced similar kinds of frustration with their own systems. By February 1981, Jones was ready to take action and met with William K. Brehm to discuss his leading yet another study on defense organization. Jones assembled a group of retired officers to work with Brehm, and named the group the Chairman’s Special Studies Group (CSSG). The Brehm group met for the first time on 28 May 1981 and received their charter from Jones: review previous studies; analyze the effectiveness of the current joint system; consult service chiefs, CINCs, and senior military leaders; and make suitable recommendations in light of any clear needs for change (Brehm 1982, 3). As the CSSG began its work, Jones drafted a journal article entitled “Why the Joint Chiefs of Staff Must Change,” which first appeared in Directors and Boards in February 1982, followed by the widely read Armed Forces Journal International in March 1982. In his article, Jones chronicled the well-established deficiencies in the joint system and made several specific recommendation for change: strengthening the role of the Chairman, creating a deputy

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34 On the Soviet comparison, see Jones 1991, 3. For more on the British experience, see: Jones 1991, 4; Schemmer 1982, 86; and Trotter 1982, 70-76.
Chairman, limiting the involvement of the service staffs in the Joint Staff workflow, and increasing the preparation and incentives for joint duty (1982, 147).

While Jones pushed ahead with his reorganization agenda, many within the defense community disputed his credibility to call for such sweeping changes. First, Jones had been appointed by President Jimmy Carter, and while Reagan intentionally chose to keep Jones as Chairman rather than replacing him, the impression persisted that Jones was a holdover “Carter man.” Moreover, Jones was already a controversial figure in Congress after he had refused to petition Carter to reverse a controversial decision to cancel the acquisition of the B-1 bomber. Angry members of Congress attempted to get Jones fired by Reagan, but Jones remained in office and the incident actually helped propel his reform crusade. He later recalled, “It was clear that during the next 18 months I would be controversial, so I might as well contribute a little controversy of my own” (Jones 1999, 6).

The credibility of Jones’ call for reform also suffered from the impression others had of his management style. Marine Lieutenant General (Ret.) Bernard “Mick” Trainor commented that Jones was not held in high regard by the service chiefs, who regarded his style as overly exclusive and ad hoc. Chief of Staff of the Army General Edward “Shy” Meyer also noted that the service chiefs were frustrated with Jones for doing things behind their backs and not keeping them informed. Jones, in fact, readily acknowledged his tendency to operate offline, insisting that such approaches were necessary to escape grooved thinking: “During much of my career, especially when I got in responsible positions, I used ad hoc routes a great deal, and the

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35 As above, the page number cited is from the edition that appeared in Presidential Studies Quarterly.
36 This impression was stated clearly by both Caspar Weinberger and Edward Meyer in interviews with James Locher. Transcripts in Locher papers.
37 After members of Congress asked Reagan to fire Jones, former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger published an op-ed in the Washington Post defending Jones. He noted wryly that the only cause for firing Jones was that he had been “insufficiently insubordinate” (Jones 1991, 6).
39 1998. Interview by James Locher. June 25. Transcript in Box 61, Locher papers. Jones, for his part, recognized that any effort to reform the JCS had to be done offline because otherwise the JCS would block the attempt (McNaugher and Sperry 1994).
system never liked it. They were always uncomfortable with me, but I always knew if I threw the problem to the norm, I would get the predictable answer.” Finally, Trainor observed that Jones had a track record of reforming major organizations as he left them, perhaps in an effort to “cover his tracks” by blaming poor performance on suboptimal organizational structure (1994). Admiral William Crowe captured a similar sentiment, noting that most of the defense leadership, both civilian and military, dismissed Jones’ criticisms: “To them it was the classic case of sour grapes—a disgruntled Chairman venting his spleen” (1993, 146).

Jones’ sentiments may have been known within DoD, but the full weight of his views did not go public until his surprising testimony before the HASC on 3 February 1982. He appeared with Secretary of Defense Weinberger to discuss the upcoming budget; Jones, however, took advantage of the platform to air his views on defense reorganization. After brief opening comments, Jones remarked almost as an aside:

I look forward to testifying on the budget issues; however, there is one subject I would like to mention briefly here. It is not sufficient to have just resources, dollars and weapon systems; we must also have an organization which will allow us to develop the proper strategy, necessary planning, and the full war-fighting capability. We do not have an adequate organizational structure today, at least in my judgment, and I have a much different perspective now, having served 4 years as Chairman, than during my time as a service chief when I was in a scramble for my service’s share of the available resources. (U.S. House of Representatives 1982, 338)

Jones went on to describe the weaknesses of the JCS “committee system,” and emphasized that “the problem is not with people. It is with the system” (339). Echoing the recommendations in his journal article (which was about to be published), Jones called for a strengthened Chairman, limited involvement of service staffs on joint papers, strengthened CINCs, and greater training and incentives for joint duty.

Years later, key actors clearly recognized the importance of Jones’ testimony in sparking a renewed debate about defense organization.\textsuperscript{41} Never had public criticism of the JCS system emerged from within the system itself, much less from the Chairman. While the importance of Jones’ testimony was most apparent in hindsight, one key staff member of the HASC appreciated it in real time.\textsuperscript{42} Retired Air Force Colonel Arch Barrett had just recently become a professional staff member on the HASC, and had spent years of his professional and academic life studying defense reform.\textsuperscript{43} Consequently, Barrett understood immediately how truly remarkable it was for a sitting Chairman to voice such criticism. Within days of Jones’ testimony, Barrett and his staff director John Lally approached the chairman of the HASC Investigations Subcommittee, Representative Richard White, and suggested that the subcommittee hold hearings on the subject of defense reorganization (Barrett 2013). White agreed, and over the span of three months and 38 witnesses, these hearings offered the most thorough analysis of defense organization since the Eisenhower administration.

\textit{HASC Investigations Subcommittee Hearings}

The subcommittee hearings began on 21 April 1982, with General Jones repeating his familiar critiques of the joint system and attempting to situate his criticism as the latest in a long series of critical studies.\textsuperscript{44} “What I would like to do,” Jones testified, “is not have this be a Dave Jones crusade” (47). He noted the numerous studies over the years that had arrived at common conclusions, and then repeated the recommendations for change that he had made in his

\textsuperscript{41} In his autobiography, Barry Goldwater—one of the champions and eponymous sponsors of the legislation—referred frequently to the importance of Jones’ surprising testimony (Goldwater 1988).

\textsuperscript{42} Archie D. Barrett. 2013. Interview by author. February 23.

\textsuperscript{43} Barrett had actually just completed a book on defense reform, evaluating the Carter-era DOS 77-80 (Barrett 1983). When Jones testified in February 1982, the book was in galleys with NDU Press so Barrett was already very familiar with the key issues, and recognized how remarkable it was for a sitting Chairman to critique the institution. Barrett had been hired by the HASC in the fall of 1981, but not on the basis of his credentials on defense organization. The fact that Barrett was there to seize on Jones’ statements was actually quite remarkable and unforeseen (Barrett 2013).

\textsuperscript{44} The full transcript of these hearings is compiled in \textit{Reorganization Proposals for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Hearings Before the Investigations Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, Ninety-Seventh Congress, Second Session.} 1982. U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, DC. All citations in the following paragraphs are page numbers from this work, unless otherwise noted.
February HASC testimony. Joining Jones on the first day of testimony was the Chief of Staff of the Army General Edward Meyer. By the time Meyer appeared before Congress, his views on defense reform had already become known through a bold article published in the April 1982 edition of *Armed Forces Journal International* (Meyer 1982). Responding to Jones’ article published the month before, Meyer pushed the reform agenda even further, judging that “the changes urged by General Jones, while headed in the right direction, do not go far enough to correct what ails the JCS” (Meyer 1982, 82). To help correct the deep deficiencies in the JCS system, Meyer suggested that the service chiefs wear only one hat— that of running their services. In turn, he proposed replacing the JCS with a body of full-time military officers with advisory duties only—a group of 4-star generals and admirals, with no service responsibilities and on their final tour of active duty. Meyer doubled down on these recommendations in his Congressional testimony on 21 April 1982, agreeing with the general direction of Jones’ proposals, while pushing ahead with his recommendation to create a national military council of senior officers. “I don’t believe you can tinker with the issues any longer; tinkering will not suffice,” Meyer argued. “Only by taking on some of the issues which in the past have been put in the box which says, ‘Too tough to handle,’ are we going to be able to have the kind of operational advice and military advisers that the next two decades out to the 21st century are going to demand” (U.S. House 1982, 5).

Jones and Meyer thus opened the hearings with strong statements in support of reform. Their view, however, was not the only one heard on that first day. Joining them was the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, who testified strongly against any reforms. In Hayward’s view, the structure was essentially sound, and whatever deficiencies may have existed were the result of personalities, not the system. On the issue of the poor advice offered by the JCS to civilian decision-makers, Hayward suggested the problem was not
the quality of the advice but the limited access of the advisors: “The chiefs can and should more aggressively press their views on the Secretary, the National Security Assistant and the President at key decision points” (99). Later, in a second day of testimony, Hayward reinforced this theme, noting that the real problem was that civilians did not recognize their need for nor solicit military advice from the Chiefs (246).

Furthermore, Hayward took serious exception to the suggestion that the dual-hatting of the service chiefs somehow compromised the integrity of their views or their capacity to render truly national advice. “I am deeply offended,” Hayward testified, “by the slanderous criticisms which one frequently and commonly hears about the Joint Chiefs of Staff being an ineffective group of parochial service chiefs who spend most of their time bickering among themselves, or trading to preserve turf and what is best for their service” (101). He went on, “[w]hile I am a naval officer first, I am also well aware of my obligations and responsibilities as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff” (101). When asked if he would support any of the reform proposals put forward by Jones and Meyer, Hayward commented that there were various fixes that could be made within the JCS as an internal matter (104); and when asked if he thought Jones and Meyer had spoken “out of turn,” he curtly replied, “I sure do” (252). Finally, Hayward concluded his comments with what he regarded as “the principal issue” at hand: “When the Chief of Naval Operations is no longer the principal naval adviser to the Commander in Chief, which is the recommendation, but that one individual is the principal military adviser to the Commander in Chief, I say that is a dangerous way to go” (253).

Hayward’s defense of the status quo and resistance to reform received strong corroboration from two other prominent Naval officers: former Chairman of the JCS Admiral Thomas H. Moorer and former CNO Admiral James L. Holloway III. Moorer testified on the second day of the hearings, 22 April 1982, and offered a spirited defense of the current
structure. Like Hayward, Moorer emphasized that the arrangement of the boxes on the organizational chart mattered much less than the personalities and quality of the officers who filled those boxes. The Chairman, first of all, “has all of the authority within the uniformed organizations he is willing to take” (159), Moorer argued. Any deficiencies, therefore, in the Chairman’s ability to do his job were the fault of the Chairman, not the structure. Second, Moorer dismissed the conflict of interest involved in dual-hatting: “If an officer cannot find time to handle both his service duties as well as his joint duties, then he is not qualified for either job” (159). A second key aspect of Moorer’s testimony concerned the nature of the advice proffered by the JCS to civilian authorities. Any move to make the CJCS the principal military advisor—rather than the corporate JCS serving in that role—created a dangerous reduction of opinions offered to the president. “Military strategy and plans,” he observed, “must be based upon inputs of experienced officers with specialized knowledge, not the doctrine of one individual” (157). Finally, Moorer turned the tables on the critiques of the JCS and pointed out the shortcomings of the civilian decision-makers. Recounting a long string of national failures and embarrassments, Moorer noted in each case how the fault lay not with the JCS but with the civilians who decided or acted in a certain way (160-161). He concluded with a final plea, “[m]y recommendation is a very simple one: Leave the organization alone” (161). Any necessary changes were internal staff issues, not matters for legislation, he asserted.

Admiral Holloway testified the following week and echoed similar themes. In fact, Holloway revisited many of the arguments he had made two years earlier in a journal article in *AEI Foreign Policy and Defense Review* (Holloway 1980). In both venues, Holloway defended the advice rendered by the JCS, noting that it was not poor but unwanted. In his Congressional testimony, he argued, “Now, the fact that the chiefs are accused of giving bad advice is, in my view, largely a euphemism which says that the chiefs have given us advice which was not the
answer that we wanted to hear” (U.S. House 1982, 211). He then criticized the proposal to make the CJCS the principal military advisor, commenting as Moorer did that such a move inhibits the breadth and expertise of counsel offered to the president. For example, Holloway asked, “If you didn’t have a naval officer as chairman, or as vice chairman, who is going to talk about aircraft carrier operations in the Indian Ocean?” (213).

The troika of Hayward, Moorer, and Holloway thus anchored the Navy’s opposition to the reforms. Senior Marine Corps generals likewise resisted calls for change, and the division along service lines stood out to informed observers. The headline of a June 1982 article in *Armed Forces Journal International*, for example, announced, “Navy, Marines Adamantly Oppose JCS Reforms Most Others Tell Congress Are Long Overdue” (Kyle and Schemmer 1982). Later that summer, two admirals who had formerly served as Directors of the Joint Staff (DJS) actually endorsed some proposals for change, much to the surprise of many (Kyle 1982a). Another witness from the civilian side of the Navy offered commentary on why his service stood out in its opposition to reform. On 6 May 1982, former Under Secretary of the Navy R. James Woolsey suggested that the Navy’s esoteric self-conception informed its opposition to many proposed reforms:

There is a certain mystique and notion in the career naval forces about the difficulty of operating in that very unfriendly environment at sea… And a certain view […] that it is more difficult for military officers who have spent their entire lives flying over and serving on land to understand the complex problems involved in operating at that interface between land and ocean, and beneath the ocean and above the ocean as well as on it, that I believe guides the thinking and the attitudes of a number of people who have served, and who continue to serve, in the Navy. (U.S. House 1982, 572)

Furthermore, Woolsey relayed a comment by a retired naval officer about the Navy’s relationship with the other services: “I think we understand them far better than they understand us” (572).
While the great majority of civilian witnesses—both academics and former defense officials—testified in support of reform, the uniformed Army witnesses were actually more divided than the headline above suggests. Meyer, clearly, stood out as the vanguard of Army support, and was joined by Generals Andrew Goodpaster, Donn Starry, and Maxwell Taylor.\footnote{Maxwell Taylor, in fact, was as far-reaching in his views as Meyer. After serving as Chief of Staff of the Army from 1955-1959, Taylor immediately published a book detailing his concerns with the defense strategy and defense establishment. See Taylor 1959.} Two other retired Army officers, however, registered opposition to legislative intrusion into internal military affairs. General Lyman Lemnitzer, former Chairman of the JCS, and General Harold Johnson, former Chief of Staff of the Army, both urged caution in considering any major reform of our national defense. Johnson’s testimony, however, is noteworthy not for his views on the specific proposals but for his comments on the Army’s view of national defense in general. Speaking of the conflict of interest in dual-hatted service chiefs, Johnson argued that it was a problem, but one that could be overcome with the right attitude. In fact, Johnson noted that while he was Chief of Staff, he told his Army staff that “we don’t take Army positions in the Joint Chiefs of Staff meetings. We first look at what is good for the country, and what is good for the country is going to be good for the Army” (260).\footnote{Note how this formulation is quite opposite to that expressed by Admiral Ernest King in 1945 (as quoted in chapter four): “It follows that if the Navy’s welfare is one of the prerequisites to the Nation’s welfare—and I sincerely believe that to be the case—any step that is not good for the Navy is not good for the Nation” (U.S. Senate 1945, 124).} He continued, “I believed then, and I believe now that if you look at the interests of the country as paramount that the service interest will be taken care of in due course” (260).

The closing act of the hearings belonged largely to the new members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. On 18 June 1982, General John W. Vessey, US Army, took over for General Jones as Chairman of the JCS. Less than two weeks later, two other posts also changed hands as General Charles Gabriel took over as Chief of Staff of the Air Force and Admiral James Watkins became Chief of Naval Operations. Together, these three officers appeared before the HASC
subcommittee on 28 July 1982, barely a month into the job. Vessey opened the day’s testimony, admitting his lack of time on the job but not his lack of joint experience overall. Further, Vessey acknowledged that the calls for some degree of change were not baseless: “I am sure, as is true with any organization designed by human beings, the Joint Chiefs of Staff can do their business better than they are doing it and the organization can probably be improved” (955). Consequently, the new Chairman noted that the chiefs had already taken action and were looking at ways to improve their operations without having to make changes to existing law. He specified, in fact, that the Chiefs themselves would perform the review, not their massive staffs—“we are not going to involve a great platoon of staff officers to do this thing” (957). In addition to their in-house review, Vessey directed several other internal reform measures as well: members of the JCS were to visit joint commands during their travels outside Washington; the chiefs would rotate the role of acting Chairman for three-month periods to provide continuity when the Chairman traveled; and the services were to develop plans to put well qualified and better trained officers on the Joint Staff (957). For their part, Gabriel and Watkins endorsed the views of their new Chairman, with Watkins providing this summary: “I feel confident...that we will be able to take the leadership reins and, within the considerable authority now allowed by the law and by Secretary of Defense regulations, we will move aggressively forward into a range of areas that will, in large measure, diffuse the criticisms levied at the Joint Chiefs of Staff” (958).

Additional Evidence from the Navy and Army

When the HASC Investigations Subcommittee hearings ended in July 1982, 38 witnesses had testified and a wide range of views had been heard. These hearings offer the most thorough and focused venue for evaluating the early views on defense reform. Other evidence from the period reinforces those general trends, and the following discussion highlights the
views and actions of the Army and Navy in particular. The discussion is organized around various types of evidence and does not follow a strict chronological progression.

First, anecdotal evidence suggests that the general feelings among military personnel around the world echoed the trends on display before Congress in 1982. After the hearings concluded, one author was on a tour of various military bases and spoke with troops about defense reform. Even outside of Washington, the author discovered greater resistance from the Navy: “We talked about these and other proposals with a variety of officers and found, naturally, a variety of opinions. Some, especially high up in the Navy, defend the present system as working quite well indeed. Most of those we spoke with, I believe, felt that changes of some kind would be beneficial” (Perry 1982, 114).

The Navy. Detailed archival evidence also points to sustained opposition—first in thought, then in deed— from the Navy during this period. On 18 April 1982, as the HASC hearings were about to begin, CNO Admiral Thomas Hayward forwarded a secret concept paper to Secretary Weinberger. Accompanying the paper, which he had written a year earlier, was a note to the secretary explaining its newfound relevance “now that we are embroiled in the debate over what to do about improving the effectiveness of the Chiefs (not through reorganization, I hope).”47 The forwarded paper had originally been sent to the other members of the JCS in January 1981, as the Reagan administration took office, in an effort to reassert the Chiefs’ prominent role in the councils of power. “My experience of the past two and a half years,” the memo to the JCS began, “leaves me with the frustration that the Joint Chiefs, as a corporate body, still do not have the requisite influence on major security issues as intended by the National Security Act of 1947, or to the degree that is in the best interest of our country.”48 Hayward’s concept paper detailed a variety of shortcomings in the joint process, but concluded

47 Copy of the Memorandum and Concept Paper in “Weinberger - 1982” folder, Box 36, Locher papers.
that the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of the Chiefs hinged first on their “access to the President and the Congress;” next, on their “assertiveness in presenting their views;” and finally on “the quality and timeliness of those views.”

Within the Department of the Navy, Secretary of the Navy John F. Lehman took a lead role in opposing any reorganization of the Defense Department. In fact, Lehman had tasked retired Marine Corps Brigadier General J. D. Hittle to monitor closely the maneuvers and issues related to defense organization. Over several years, from 1981 to 1983, Hittle sent Secretary Lehman a series of memos, updating him on the state of play. In a memo dated 22 October 1981 and labeled “Very Personal,” Hittle noted ominously the work of the Brehm committee established by General Jones, which was “examining possible ways to increase the chairman’s authority.” Suggesting that “this whole operation is loaded with potential trouble for the Navy and Marine Corps,” Hittle advised Lehman to direct the CNO and Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) to make sure their co-equal Chairman of the JCS did not get away with anything. A follow-up memo, dated 4 November 1981, indicates that the message went through, as Hittle told Lehman that CMC General Robert Barrow had raised the issue with the Chairman and received his assurance that no report would be forwarded beyond the JCS without their review.

Once the proposals by Jones and Meyer became public in the spring of 1982, Hittle increased the fervency of his opposition. In a memo apparently drafted by Hittle for Lehman to send to the secretary of defense, he responded to the various points in the Jones and Meyer

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50 Hittle had been involved in the Marine Corps’ position on the 1947 unification, and had published works on military staff organization (e.g., J. D. Hittle. 1944. The Military Staff: Its History and Development. Harrisburg, PA: The Military Service Publishing Company).
52 Memorandum for the Secretary of the Navy, 4 November 1981. Personnel Issues-Hittle Memos, Box 7A, Lehman papers. Copy in Box 33, Locher papers.
proposals, then gave additional background. Among his various critiques, Hittle wrote, “The proposals would destroy the JCS system that combines authority with responsibility,” and “are a raid on the constitutional principle of civilian control of the military.” Similarly, “the Jones proposals would be needlessly disruptive, and would weaken support for the President’s budget.” And in a particularly colorful tone, Hittle ended his ghost-written memo with this as one of his recommendations: “Reject summarily the proffered Jones lame-duck legacy of needless turmoil, antagonism, and disruption of military planning at our seat of government.”

In his paper accompanying the memorandum, Hittle’s background as a Marine Corps officer emerges rather clearly. Recall from chapter five that one of the core aspects of Marine Corps service culture is its institutional paranoia, rooted in its precarious bureaucratic position and search for a sustained professional jurisdiction. The Corps, created and sustained by the Congress, thus viewed any new major legislative proposals with an exceptionally wary eye. Fearing the worst from Jones’ proposals to strengthen the CJCS, Hittle wrote the following in his background paper: “Balanced seapower, in which naval air and Marines are indispensable ingredients, is not—and understandably so—fully understood by non-naval services… Preservation of Naval aviation and the Marine Corps is based on two fundamentals of defense organization and legislation: statutory roles and missions, and the chiefs of the Navy and Marine Corps being members of the corporate JCS.” In other words, Hittle viewed warily any legislative activity that might threaten the Corps’ legal jurisdiction, and considered representation on the JCS an essential requirement for the very existence of Naval aviation and the Marine Corps. Hittle also remained active on Capitol Hill, and arranged a private lunch meeting in the late spring of 1982 with Arch Barrett and HASC staff director John Ford (Barrett

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53 The memorandum is undated and unsigned, but has Lehman’s handwriting across the top saying “Excellent!” The work, content, and tone are all consistent with the other Hittle memos. In OI - JCS Reorg 1982 (Folder 2 of 3), Box 4, Lehman papers. Copy in Box 33, Locher papers.
Barrett recalls that Hittle spoke quite sternly about the hearings and urged Barrett to drop his interest in reform, warning that any move to reform defense would inevitably result in a Prussian-style general staff.

With Hittle’s encouragement, Secretary Lehman also got involved in engaging pro-Navy advocates on the Hill. Most importantly, Lehman worked with the Chairman of the Senate Armed Service Committee (SASC) John Tower, who happened to be a senior enlisted sailor in the Naval reserves. Lehman’s engagement with Tower ensured that the Senate did not follow the HASC’s lead in passing any reform bills, which effectively kept the issue sidelined. In its lame duck session in December 1982, the SASC held one day of hearings with four witnesses, which was attended by only four Senators, three of whom had a direct personal tie to the Navy (U.S. Senate 1982). Finally, perceptions on Capitol Hill suggested that the Navy was involved in trying to influence the HASC as well. In an interview with Armed Forces Journal International, Representative Richard White, the Chairman of the HASC Investigations Subcommittee, noted his belief that the Navy was actively attempting to thwart their fledgling reform bill. He remarked, “I wouldn’t be surprised if the Navy had not talked to some of the Members and…maybe some Members didn’t come [to the Subcommittee hearings] because the Navy cooled them” (AFJI 1982, 18).

The Army. While evidence of the Army’s wider position and response is not abundant, there are several indications of Army views outside the scope of Congressional testimony. First, the US Military Academy at West Point sponsored a conference in June 1982 on the topic of defense reform. Each year, the Social Sciences department at the academy sponsored a senior

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55 The engagement strategy with Senator Tower is discussed in memoranda from Hittle to Lehman, dated 1 March 1982 and 1 September 1982. Copies in Box 33, Locher papers.
56 Under Representative Richard White’s leadership, the House passed a modest reform bill by voice vote on 16 August 1982 (Cong. Rec. 16 August 1982, H5947-H5953).
57 Senators Tower, Denton, Warner, and Nunn attended. Tower was in the Navy reserves, Denton was a retired admiral, and Warner had been Secretary of the Navy. Nunn, however, was pro-reform.
leader conference to stimulate discussion on important topics.\textsuperscript{58} In 1982, amid the larger interest in reform spurred by Generals Jones and Meyer, the department chose defense reform as its plenary topic, marshaling a wide array of views, most of them supportive of reform.\textsuperscript{59}

Additional evidence exists from a briefing book prepared by the Army staff in July 1982.\textsuperscript{60} One of the documents in the binder focused on the substantive criteria that should govern any debate about defense reorganization. The first criterion was to “improve ability to wage war / meet requirements of CINCs,” and specified various sub-bullets that emphasized giving operational commanders the necessary support to accomplish the mission, enhancing unity of command, and crafting doctrine “attuned to joint operational requirements.” The second and third criteria focused on “better, more timely military advice” and “allocat[ing] resources more wisely; us[ing] resources more efficiently.” Overall, these criteria emphasized a focus on warfighting results and military effectiveness, and were broadly supportive of the intent of the reforms.

Despite this quietly supportive posture from the Army, as 1982 came to a close the prospects for reform looked bleak. As HASC staff member Arch Barrett wrote at the time, “Despite the outpouring of criticism, if the past is any guide, it is doubtful much will come of the current movement for reform” (1982, 250).

\textit{Theory Evaluation}

Having laid out key portions of the evidence from 1982, I conclude the discussion of this first juncture by offering an interim assessment of the various theories thus far. Here, I consider how well my theory and its alternatives explain what is going on in this civil-military

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{58} Brigadier General (Ret) Daniel Kaufman. 2013. Interview by author. February 14.
\item \textsuperscript{59} The conference focused not only on the matter of defense reorganization, but included discussion of the broader military reform debates that were occurring during that time period, such as doctrinal, budgetary, and acquisitions reform. An edited compilation of the conference presentations was published in Clark et al 1984.
\item \textsuperscript{60} 020 Reform of the Joint Chief of Staff (JCS), Binder 1 of 2, HRC-2, Army Center for Military History. All remaining quotes in this paragraph are from this source.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
interaction. I begin with my theory, evaluating the Navy’s preferences and response first, followed by the Army. I then consider the alternative explanations, and look ahead to the next juncture to be analyzed.

As stated earlier in the chapter, since this case focuses exclusively on the protracted policy creation phase, two dependent variables within my theory are relevant. First, I evaluate the apparent policy preferences of the services, as explained by their service cultures. Second, I evaluate the type of policy advocacy that they provided to civilian decision-makers. Beginning with the Navy, how well does my theory explain their policy preferences, as seen in Congressional testimony and archival staff documents? As seen in the Navy hypothesis matrix earlier in the chapter (Figure 8.2), various elements of Navy service culture predict not only the fact but the form of the Navy’s response. At this point, the evidence in the narrative accords fairly well with these predictions. Overall, the aggregate assessment of service culture predicted resistance to these proposals, which indeed was the case as seen in both Congressional testimony and internal staff documents. More specifically, resistance came along expected rhetorical pathways, as the Navy stressed its unique skill set, its maritime expertise, and the concomitant need for access to the president. Senior Navy officers invoked the CNO’s unique statutory privilege as the principal naval advisor to the president, stressing that while the JCS may be military advisors, the role of naval advisor was a separate, not subordinate, position.

The Navy’s policy preferences thus accord fairly well with my predictions, as does their political advocacy to civilian decision-makers. My model argues that a service’s response is informed by three variables: the preference gap, policy attributes related to future implementation slack, and the unity or division of the civilian principal.61

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61 The main work in my theory is being done by these first two variables, while the third incorporates Avant’s argument (1994, 2007) and indicates a likely avenue of resistance—appealing to the alternate principal.
Preference gaps. Based on the preceding discussion, the Navy clearly had a fairly large preference gap with these reform proposals.62

Policy attributes. The self-executing nature of power redistribution and the fact that the proposed changes were quite durable (i.e., legislation) suggest a strong response.

United or divided principal. At this point, Secretary of Defense Weinberger was largely silent on the subject, but it was fairly clear he was opposed to reforms as a distraction from budget issues. President Reagan had not registered a view. Consequently, the senior military officers had divided principals in as much as Congress appeared interested in reform, while their secretary of defense did not. This division suggests a higher likelihood of resistance by appealing to the more supportive principal.

These variables do not sum together through additive logic, but the aggregate view is that all of the variables point to a rather strident response from the Navy. The preference gap predicts resistance, the policy attributes predict fervor, and the divided principal suggests a likely pathway. The available data certainly substantiates this strong response, which at this point was limited to trying to keep the legislation from happening at all—that is, maintaining the current agency contract instead of negotiating a different one. We expect that as momentum builds and the inevitability of legislation mounts, the service will work harder to influence the implementation slack within the negotiated policy. Finally, as a brief aside, the Marine Corps’ cultural beliefs—particularly its perpetually insecure institutional position—help explain the strident opposition from the Corps, which viewed these legislative deliberations as opening a Pandora’s box that could undo the hard work of securing the Corps’ perpetual existence.

My theory also helps explain the Army’s response to this point. As discussed earlier, of the alternatives discussed, only my theory makes a reasonable prediction of support from the

62 During the policy creation period, the preference gap is essentially the qualitative difference between the service’s preference and the proposed reforms (rather than the views of a specific civilian principal).
Army, which in fact we see in limited form. Through the testimony of the active Chief of Staff of the Army General Meyer, the Army was clearly out in front in supporting reform. In a later interview, General Meyer recalled that his voice was not alone in the Army but had broader support: “The services, except me and the Army, were so dug in against change in favor of the service predominance.” Additionally, General Johnson’s testimony offered a unique view of the Army’s self-conception as an apolitical servant of the nation, willing to acknowledge the preeminence of national interests above service interests. These preferences also were supported by West Point’s willingness to sponsor an open-minded pro-reform conference in 1982, as well as briefing materials focused on military effectiveness rather than service-specific interests. In light of this smaller preference gap, the Army’s overall response is not surprising. At this early stage of the legislative process, we see both small measures of cooperation as well as an overall supportive posture suggested by Army service culture.

The alternative theories also have some explanatory value in this case. The Navy and Marine Corps’ response is also consistent with the theory of bureaucratic politics, as the CNO did not want to lose his privileged position of power and the Marine Corps did not want to lose its Congressional protection of roles and missions—an existential threat. The elements within the Army that opposed change also appeared to be concerned with a lack of power and influence for the service chief, a view consistent with bureaucratic politics. Similarly, the resistance to Congressional intrusion is consistent with a preference for organizational autonomy, also predicted by the bureaucratic politics approach.

Additionally, the contrasting behavior of the Army and Marine Corps offers some support for Abbott’s argument. For the Marines, any new legislative policy could potentially jeopardize their hard-fought jurisdiction, prompting a different reaction than the Army which felt fairly

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secure in its jurisdiction. Similarly, the Navy’s resistance to an empowered CJCS and a diminished CNO supports Abbott’s thesis. Based on the uniqueness of naval power and the specialized jurisdiction it represents, the Navy wanted to ensure direct access to its executive client—the president. No other spokesman could capably communicate to the client or fulfill the client’s needs other than the CNO himself.

Finally, the baseline agency model helps to explain why some of the services resisted intrusion from the Congress while working more cooperatively with the secretary of defense and president. From the beginning of their administration, Reagan and Weinberger had increased defense spending and monitored the defense department quite loosely, which explains why the services had a more comfortable working relationship with the executive than the legislative branch at this point. The baseline model does not, however, explain the variation in the services’ support as it predicts a unified military response.

In sum, at the close of this first juncture in the narrative, my theory provides the most textured predictions and explanations for the data, and helps to illuminate both the fact and form of the Army and Navy’s responses. My approach helps explain not only which services resist or support a given policy, but why and in what ways. I do not, however, offer an ironclad explanation for all the facts or claim an explanatory monopoly of the data and acknowledge that classic bureaucratic politics appears to be in play as well. Ultimately, these explanations can live alongside one another—my theory can offer enhanced explanatory value over civil-military policymaking without purporting to unseat all rivals. As the following sections of the chapter explain, the second and third key junctures of this Goldwater-Nichols narrative only reinforce these tentative conclusions.

64 This idea, however, overlaps with my own explanation of culturally informed preferences, as I argue that a service’s institutional position—precarious for the Marines (5.2), secure for the Army (6.2)—is indeed part of its cultural belief system and thus affects its policy preferences accordingly.
8.4: Second Key Juncture — 1983

I applaud the committee’s courage in taking on this particular issue. It is hoary, moss colored, and thorny. Your task is a formidable one.

— Former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, in testimony to Senate Armed Services Committee, November 1983

A second key juncture in this civil-military case study came in the summer and fall of 1983, when new rounds of hearings by both the House and Senate revealed a new dynamic in play. As shown in the previous section, by the fall of 1982, the major political actors had offered a wide array of policy preferences in response to General David Jones’ call for reorganizing the Defense Department. By 1983, however, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had conducted their internal review, and the testimony offered in Congressional testimony looked somewhat different than it had the previous year. In this section, I briefly review the important events that occurred between these two junctures, noting in particular the new cast of characters in the drama. Next, I highlight the key testimonies before the HASC Investigations Subcommittee in June 1983, followed by SASC testimony in November 1983. Finally, I consider additional evidence of the civil-military interactions that took place, and then assess once again the various explanatory advantages of my theory and its alternatives.

Pre-Hearing Event Review

One of the important developments in the narrative—briefly mentioned in the previous section—was the turnover in personnel on the JCS in the summer of 1982. As the HASC Investigations Subcommittee hearings concluded, three members of the gang of five were replaced. Most importantly, General John Vessey took over the post of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Vessey, hailed by President Reagan as “a soldier’s soldier,” had deep credibility across the enlisted and officer ranks as well as across service lines (AFJI 1983, 45). Having risen

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65 U.S. Senate 1983, 182.
from the Army’s lowest enlisted rank of private (E-1) to its highest officer rank of four-star general (O-10), with a battlefield commission on the Anzio beachhead in 1944 and numerous decorations for valor in World War II and Vietnam, Vessey commanded respect from nearly all corners.66 Joining Vessey as new members of the JCS were Admiral James Watkins as CNO and General Charles Gabriel as Chief of Staff of the Air Force. Finally, Vessey had had positive prior working relationships with all of the service chiefs, to include having most recently served as Vice Chief of Staff of the Army under General Meyer.67

With a new group of faces around the table, the JCS took their own internal look at defense reform in the summer and fall of 1982. While most JCS discussion topics filtered up through an extensive staff review process, the issue of defense reform was different. Vessey emphasized repeatedly that the chiefs considered this issue themselves, without the dogmatic input of the “staff theologians” (AFJI 1983, 49). This emphasis reflected one of Vessey’s broader initiatives as Chairman “to engage the Chiefs in their duties as Chiefs.”68 Vessey did not just want the chiefs to bless the staff work coming up from below, but he wanted them to set strategic direction and drive the issues from above. Such top-down strategic initiative ultimately resulted in better products, Vessey argued: “If you could get the Chiefs to examine the issue before their staffs got them into concrete, where they had to posture in front of their own people, we usually came up with pretty good answers.”69

Without an extensive staffing process informing these critical JCS deliberations, little evidence exists to document the substance of their review. Given the other dynamics in play, however, it seems likely that the JCS review was not an exhaustive one. With limited time for

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66 In fact, one of the common refrains from numerous witnesses—even senior Navy officers—in the 1982 HASC hearings was a plea to wait and let General Vessey have a turn as CJCS.
meetings, and even more limited time for independent, personal, non-staff-supported research, the service chiefs were unlikely to engage in novel ground-breaking analyses of the issues. Instead, General Meyer recalled the review as “superficial,” largely driven by the delicate balance of personalities in the group. Meyer had been on record just months earlier as very supportive of radical far-reaching reform. With a new Chairman in General Vessey, a fellow Army officer who had just worked for him as Vice Chief of Staff, Meyer felt his platform for advocating reform had changed. Recalling the dynamics of their reform discussions, Meyer noted that his fellow chiefs “didn’t want to confront me, [and] I didn’t want to confront them. So, it was a very superficial look at it.” Finally, Meyer had less than a year left in his tenure as Chief of Staff of the Army, and he recognized the positive atmosphere Vessey had fostered among the chiefs. Later, Meyer freely admitted that these realities contributed to dampening his input to the JCS internal review: “I was leaving, and I didn’t want to make Jack [Vessey]’s job any harder. I knew I was going to fight this problem outside so I decided that I just wasn’t going to sit in the Tank and fight forever.”

After conducting their internal analysis, the chiefs arrived at a set of very modest recommendations for change. In a 22 November 1982 memorandum to Secretary Weinberger, the Chairman presented the group’s findings and recommendations. Noting that each member of the JCS “personally participated” in the discussion, Vessey specified that the chiefs “reached agreement that while there were flaws in JCS organization, other problems proceeded from relationships between OJCS and OSD which over the years have obscured and diluted the military advice you and the President are by law entitled to receive.” With problems rooted

73 “Memorandum for Secretary of Defense,” 22 November 1982. Accession Number 330 84 0002, Folder 020 JCS (Oct-Dec), Box 20, Weinberger personal papers. Copy in Box 36, Locher papers. Subsequent quotes in this paragraph come from this memo, unless otherwise noted.
more in staff overlap than JCS deficiency, the chiefs “concluded that sweeping changes to Title 10 USC are unnecessary.”

Instead, they called for three minor changes to the law: (1) increasing or eliminating the statutory limit on the size of the Joint Staff (then 400 officers); (2) increasing the length of a tour of duty for JS officers; and (3) inserting the CJCS into the chain of command between the secretary of defense and the CINCs to “organize the Department in peace as it will function in war.” In addition to specifying these three changes, the chiefs explicitly rejected any calls to make the Chairman alone the principal military advisor, to create a four-star Vice Chairman, to subordinate the Joint Staff to the Chairman alone, or to replace the JCS with some other council of single-hatted advisors.

On 26 November 1982, just four days later, Secretary Weinberger forwarded the chiefs’ recommendations to the president. Weinberger, focused on budget issues above all else, fully endorsed the JCS conclusions. In a later interview, Weinberger acknowledged that Vessey and the JCS study had a “substantial impact on my thinking, because I had enormous respect—for General Vessey…He knows the whole situation. He was a battlefield commission at [Anzio]. He was an enlisted man, as I was.”

While Weinberger informed Reagan of his department’s position in November 1982, he did not appear to notify Congress until a 25 February 1983 letter to the new chairman of the HASC Investigations Subcommittee William Nichols of Alabama (Locher 2002, 97). Less than two months later, on 18 April 1983, DoD submitted draft legislation to the Congress, codifying the minor changes that the JCS had proposed the previous November. In a cover letter from DoD General Counsel William H. Taft, IV, to the Speaker of the House Thomas P. O’Neill, Jr., the department offered its proposal to “place the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the national military chain of

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74 Laws pertaining to the US military and its structure are codified in Title 10 of the US Code.
command, and [to] promote the efficiency of the Joint Staff by eliminating statutory restrictions that are disadvantageous to the effectiveness of that organization.”76

A month later, on 18 May 1983, Secretary Weinberger and General Vessey met personally with Chairman Nichols and other key members of the HASC Investigations Subcommittee. In a memo to the rest of the subcommittee, HASC staff member Arch Barrett summarized the highlights of the discussion.77 Of note to Barrett, Weinberger led off the meeting by noting that a new sheriff was in town, emphasizing that Jones was gone and Vessey was now the Chairman. Subsequently, Weinberger made the related point that “[w]e don’t need formal organizational change…Good people are what it takes to make the JCS system work.” Following Weinberger, Vessey emphasized that the new chiefs had personally reviewed the various reform proposals and concluded that previous chiefs had tied their hands unnecessarily with cumbersome processes not required by law. Consequently, Vessey assured them, appropriate changes could be made within the scope of existing legislation. The following day, 19 May 1983, Weinberger sent a summary letter to Chairman Nichols, and emphasized that “it is the position of the Department of Defense, supported by the current Joint Chiefs of Staff, that improvements in the operation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to the extent they are necessary, can and should come primarily from management initiatives undertaken within the current statutory framework.”78 Clearly, the JCS and the DoD had established a firm position in support of minor legislative alterations, and sought to enact any other changes internally, within the scope of existing law.

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77 A copy of this memo is found in Barrett 2001, 3-89 through 3-98.
When the Investigations Subcommittee started its next round of hearings on 14 June 1983, three bills circulated for consideration. First, the “White bill,” passed the previous fall under the sponsorship of Representative Richard White, still served as a baseline for the subcommittee’s review. Second, the bill proposed by DoD became H.R. 3145 dated 25 May 1983, and captured the three minor changes described above (U.S. House 1983, iii). Finally, Representative Ike Skelton had introduced H.R. 2560, dated 14 April 1983, in which he espoused a radical reform position. Capturing many of the proposals put forward by General Meyer and General Maxwell Taylor the previous year, Skelton proposed to abolish the JCS and replace it with a national military council of five military leaders either called from retirement or on their last active duty tour (Kyle 1983a, 14). Similarly, he proposed to abolish the Chairman of the JCS and to replace that position with a Chief of Staff to the National Command Authorities, supported by two deputies, one for operations and the other for resources. The JCS bill was clearly the most conservative of the three, the Skelton bill was clearly the most radical, and the legacy White bill struck a middle position. All three were in view when the subcommittee initiated hearings in June 1983.

The four service chiefs and the Chairman appeared together on the first day of the hearings, 14 June 1983. Representative Skelton testified first that day and discussed his rationale for proposing radical reform. Following Skelton, the service chiefs testified, but did not offer individual testimonies as they had in previous hearings. Instead, the five members of the JCS submitted a common written statement, which General Vessey delivered on behalf of the group. In his testimony, Vessey reviewed the criteria by which the chiefs had evaluated the various reform proposals, and reaffirmed that they had ample room within existing law to enact necessary change. Vessey then recounted a laundry list of reforms already underway, noting
the JCS’s improved communication with the president and secretary of defense, the improved
timeliness of their advice to the president, the increased participation of the CINCs in budget
preparations, the better strategic guidance provided to the CINCs, the improved JCS continuity
by rotating the Alternate Chairman, a new training program for Joint Staff officers, and a
tasking to the service professional schools to emphasize joint planning and operations (U.S.
House 1983, 61). In short, Vessey affirmed that change was in fact needed and, more
importantly, was already happening; the only areas needing legislative improvement were the
three minor ones in the DoD-sponsored reform bill. In the question-and-answer period
following Vessey’s testimony, the four service chiefs all concurred and hewed to the party line
they had established in the Tank, emphasizing repeatedly how well the current group made the
system work. In fact, the JCS were so “chummy” during the hearing that at one point General
Barrow, Commandant of the Marine Corps, put his arms around General Vessey’s shoulders,
side-hugging his admiration for the fine work Vessey had done in leading the chiefs (Barrett
2013).

The lockstep unanimity of the service chiefs, while intended to strengthen the credibility
of their views, actually cut the other way. Most glaringly, General Meyer revealed striking
inconsistency in his views from one year to the next.79 His outspoken criticism of the JCS
system in 1982 retreated into a position of entrenched solidarity with his fellow chiefs in 1983.
Representative Skelton, in fact, anticipated Meyer’s acceptance of the procrustean DoD solution,
and structured his own testimony to heighten the inconsistency of Meyer’s position. In his
testimony at the beginning of the day’s hearings, Skelton read lengthy sections of Meyer’s
journal article from the previous April, particularly the passages that called for major action, not

79 Meyer, in fact, had been on record in support of JCS reform as recently as the previous February (1983), just four
months before this collective JCS testimony. In his testimony to the House budget committee on 17 February 1983,
Meyer quipped, "I am to the right of Genghis Khan on everything as far as issues like [defense organization] are
cconcerned and very positive in my views. I wrote in the Armed Forces Journal a year ago exactly how I believed the
JCS should be reorganized and the kinds of changes that should be made" (Meyer 1983, 362).
idle tinkering. He concluded his recitation with far-reaching praise, likely intended for strategic effect rather than empirical accuracy, “Mr. Chairman, that quote is from one of the greatest military leaders of our century, and one of the truly outstanding thinkers that has worn the American uniform, the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Edward C. Meyer” (U.S. House 1983, 49). Furthermore, Skelton recognized that the united testimony of the chiefs provided strikingly clear evidence of the very phenomenon that reformers decried: the JCS system created tepid, least-common-denominator solutions rather than genuine alternative views. When asked about the DoD-sponsored reform bill, Skelton observed that “[i]t is the result of obvious compromise within the committee, within the joint system. I am disappointed, Mr. Chairman, that we do not have five testimonies before us today. I think the very fact that we have one testimony today, a compromise testimony, which will be presented by General Vessey, points up the very same thing that I am saying” (U.S. House 1983, 54-55).

When confronted during the question-and-answer period on his apparent inconsistency, Meyer acknowledged that his support for the common DoD position was one of political feasibility. After pointing out that he had learned something about accommodation from watching Congress in action for the past eight years, he expressed his belief that he had “a requirement to work within the art of the possible for what can and cannot be done” (U.S. House 1983, 78). Arch Barrett, the subcommittee’s professional staff member spearheading the legislative agenda for reform, felt personally angered by Meyer’s dramatic reversal and would not let such inconsistencies pass without further comment (Barrett 2013). After being pressed by Barrett on numerous issues where his current testimony differed from his position the previous year, Meyer (referring to himself in the third person) admitted the inconsistency: “Is Meyer inconsistent with what he said last year? The answer is yes. I have tried to explain

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80 In an interview with the author, Barrett commented that he felt so angry about Meyer’s testimony that he refused to work with Meyer on a review panel a full year later.
why…I believe that this group of Chiefs…has been able to come to grips with some of these problems” (U.S. House 1983, 78). As he would later indicate in interviews – and as discussed above – Meyer was choosing his battles, in recognition that his time as Chief of Staff of the Army was short and he did not want to create unnecessary friction for General Vessey. In fact, he retired from the Army two weeks after this hearing, but not before some on the Hill told reporters that Meyer “hurt his credibility up here today” (Kyle 1983b, 6). The solidarity of the chiefs, particularly in contrast to the diversity of views proffered the previous year, struck some as an indication that defense reform had lost its momentum. The leading defense trade journal reported, “[a] recent Congressional appearance by all of the Joint Chiefs of Staff may well defuse the sensitive issue of JCS reorganization, some 15 months after two prominent JCS members ignited it” (Kyle 1983b, 6).

SASC Hearings, Fall 1983

As it happened, the issue was not in fact defused, and the service chiefs returned to Capitol Hill to testify before the SASC in November 1983. Before they did, several important events transpired. First, in July 1983, two members of the JCS were replaced, with General John Wickham replacing Meyer as Chief of Staff of the Army, and General P.X. Kelley taking over as Commandant of the Marine Corps for General Barrow. Moving into the fall of 1983, therefore, the five members of the JCS were Vessey (Chairman), Wickham (CSA), Watkins (CNO), Kelley (CMC), and Gabriel (CSAF). The second crucial event during this period occurred on 23 October 1983, when terrorists attacked the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 241 American servicemen, 220 of which were Marines (Frank 1987, 3). Congressman Bill Nichols, chairman of the HASC Investigations Subcommittee, had just been to Beirut a month earlier as part of a 10-member Congressional delegation and was personally quite affected by the tragedy (Barrett 2013). The loss of these servicemen, coming on the heels of a Congressional visit and in
the context of a larger debate about military effectiveness, added fuel to the fire of those calling for reform (Zegart 1999, 144). Two days after the bombing in Beirut, a third key event transpired—the US military launched Operation Urgent Fury, the invasion of the Caribbean island-nation of Grenada, conducted to protect American medical students and stabilize the political situation after a coup (Cole 1997). On very short notice, the US military planned and executed a joint military operation that was generally hailed as a success; a few operational hangups along the way, however, likewise added fodder to reformers’ dataset of joint military shortcomings.

Meanwhile, the SASC finally began to hold substantive hearings of its own, with Secretary Weinberger appearing on the first day, 28 July 1983.81 Throughout his testimony, Weinberger steadfastly insisted that he had excellent relationships with the current chiefs, DoD was instituting its own reforms, and the only legislative changes needed were the minor tweaks proposed in the DoD reform bill (U.S. Senate 1983, 11-34).82 Weinberger conceded no ground, and added little to the constellation of opinions already in orbit. Another round of significant testimony came on 2 November 1983, with appearances by former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, Secretary of the Army John Marsh, and Secretary of the Navy John Lehman. Schlesinger focused his testimony on the shortcomings of the JCS structure and the lack of cross-cutting supra-service advice that it generated. Instead, he noted, “the recommendations and the plans of the Chiefs must pass through a screen designed to protect the institutional interests of each of the separate services. The general rule is that no service ox may be gored” (U.S. Senate 1983, 187). As a result of these institutional rules within the JCS, Schlesinger

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81 Senator Tower, a steadfast supporter of the Navy and its interests, had thus far stonewalled on the idea of reform. Jim Locher, who was a professional staff member on the SASC, appraised that Tower was convinced to hold hearings after a meeting with retired Marine Corps Lt Gen Victor Krulak. Krulak had just published a work (1983) calling for a different kind of reform: restoring the structure of World War II in which the Secretary of Defense is eliminated and the JCS work directly for the President. According to Locher (2002), Tower thought that these hearings might generate support for Navy-friendly reforms along the lines proposed by Krulak.

82 All parenthetical page numbers in the following paragraphs are from this U.S. Senate 1983 transcript, unless otherwise noted.
advised, “[t]he proffered advice is generally irrelevant, normally unread, and almost always disregarded” (187).

Schlesinger’s support for reform was clearly not shared by Lehman. In his first Congressional testimony on the subject of the reform, the outspoken Navy secretary levied his pointed opposition to defense reorganization. At the outset, Lehman acknowledged his “strong personal bias toward judging individual performance rather than organizational structure and I think that it has been a fault of government over the last 30 years to concentrate too much on organization, charts, and structure rather than improving accountability and responsibility” (217). Emphasizing that civilian control of the military is best preserved by having a variety of views—to wit, maintaining the statutory role of the CNO as the principal naval advisor to the president—Lehman dismissed any efforts that would shuffle organizational charts but “add nothing to the simplicity of authority” (223).

One week later on 9 November 1983, the four service chiefs testified before the SASC, and each departed little from the institutional script they had recited the previous June. General Wickham (CSA) testified that he fully supported the earlier testimony of General Vessey, and highlighted the number of reforms already underway. Admiral Watkins (CNO) likewise endorsed the Department’s position, focusing his critiques on Congressional over-management and the importance of decentralized relationships built on trust. “Good people overcome the shortfalls of most any organization,” Watkins testified. “The basic organization is not the problem…If the division of labor between staff and line functions and between policy makers and policy executors is maintained by strong leadership and a proper level of trust and accountability established, then the need for organizational changes is minimal” (318). General Gabriel (CSAF) concurred, noting that the chiefs have “made good progress in the last year and a half, at least since General Vessey became Chairman” (322). Finally, General Kelley (CMC)
professed that “the existing JCS structure is basically sound,” and that personalities matter more than organization. “In the final analysis,” Kelley offered, “it is the quality of and the chemistry between the individual members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—not necessarily the organizational mechanics—that will finally determine the effectiveness of the corporate body” (326-327).

In sum, the weight of Congressional testimony offered by the service chiefs in 1983—first to the HASC Investigations Subcommittee, then to the SASC—strayed very little from their crafted orthodoxy. The variation of opinion that headlined the hearings in 1982 receded into a drab uniformity of view—at least as expressed in formal testimony by the chiefs. What further evidence exists of the service preferences and responses? Did the service chiefs abide different views in private, and how closely did their public testimony accord with the views of their service staffs?

Additional Evidence of Service Preferences and Behavior

The consistent testimony of the service chiefs in 1983 assured Congress that needed reforms could happen internally, without additional legislation. Internal Joint Staff documents substantiate this and reveal that the JCS directed several process improvements during this period. A 21 February 1984 memorandum from the Director of the Joint Staff Lieutenant General Jack Merritt to various staff directors within the Joint Staff specified that “[i]mproving the quality and timeliness of JCS advice and responsiveness to NCA are important goals which the Chiefs have given us and which require aggressive attention on our part.”83 The memo proceeded to detail various procedural changes, designed to give more top-down direction to action officers and to preserve a joint viewpoint over the tyranny of service-led compromises. Rather than accommodating every concession to the services, the action officers were charged “to preserve the clarity and crispness” of their best military advice. Such efforts appear to be

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83 Joint Chiefs of Staff Memorandum, 21 February 1984, “Subject: Improving the Quality and Timeliness of JCS Advice/Responses.” In OP-60 files, Box 10, NHHC. Copy in Box 34, Locher papers.
honest measures to effect change from within, rather than yielding to more comprehensive measures from the outside.

Similarly, the Army and Air Force began work on a series of collective agreements and joint initiatives to improve their capacity to equip, train, and employ together in combat. In 1982, the Army had published its new operational field manual, codifying a new employment doctrine called AirLand Battle. The Air Force had helped shape the doctrinal development of AirLand Battle, and the two services moved forward to solidify that cooperation in 1983. On 21 April 1983, General Meyer and General Gabriel signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the two services, affirming that “[t]he Departments of the Army and the Air Force concur that the opportunities are right, the level of joint interest is high and that valid military requirements exist to initiate an agreement of inter-service cooperation in joint tactical training and field exercises based on the AirLand Battle doctrine.” Subsequent memoranda between General Wickham and General Gabriel maintained the momentum of cooperation between the services. They agreed on a common joint force development process on 2 November 1983 and then distributed a detailed list of 31 initiatives on 22 May 1984 designed to enhance the services’ capability to field a suitable joint force (Davis 1987, Alcala 2013).

While it is possible that this Army-Air Force cooperation could have happened anyway, evidence suggests that these joint efforts were in part motivated by the Congressional attention and broader debate about defense reform. The opening line of the first MOU—drafted just days after DoD had sent Congress a draft reform bill in April 1983 and weeks before their next testimony—explicitly noted that “opportunities are right” and “the level of joint interest is

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85 Colonel (Ret) Raoul Alcala. 2013. Interview by author. February 13. Colonel Alcala was the lead Army action officer involved in this joint effort with the Air Force.
86 Copy of Memorandum found on pp. 91-92 of Davis 1987.
87 Generals Wickham and Gabriel were classmates at West Point and good friends. According to the Army action officer closest to the process—COL Raoul Alcala—their personal friendship unquestionably helped the process of interservice cooperation move forward (Alcala 2013).
Additionally, the personal recollections of those on the ground affirm the connection between this interservice cooperation and the Congressional debate. From 1983 to 1986, Colonel Raoul Alcala served as Chief of the Doctrine, Concepts, and Systems Integration division for the Army’s Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans (DCSOPS). Colonel Alcala led the Army’s effort to craft the so-called “31 initiatives,” and recalls that the impetus was certainly linked with the momentum on Capitol Hill pushing for reform. In his estimation, both Wickham and Gabriel saw good potential for change, and wanted to get ahead of the Congressional effort so that change could come on their terms, not by writ of a Congressional staff member (Alcala 2013).

Beyond the development of the 31 Initiatives, the Army’s response to defense reform was a close-hold effort, staffed by very few action officers who did not leave much of a paper trail. The best source of evidence therefore comes from the recollections of these Army staff members, who generally confirm a view of the Army’s supportive posture in 1983. Colonel James Stefan served as the Army action officer coordinating the service’s response to defense reorganization from 1983 to 1985, and briefed General Wickham and Secretary of the Army Marsh on the current status of defense reorganization every 1-2 weeks (Stefan 2013). From these interactions, Stefan appraised that Wickham was privately more supportive of reform than he could acknowledge in public. Moreover, Stefan noted that Secretary Marsh was largely opposed to the legislation, fearing that his secretarial authority would be diminished. Consequently, in his frequent briefings to Wickham and Marsh, Stefan observed that Wickham walked a political tightrope; his personal support for reform was at odds with both his immediate boss (Secretary Marsh) and the position crafted by the JCS. In a later interview, Wickham acknowledged that his colleagues generally viewed him as “most supportive of

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88 Colonel (Ret) James Stefan. 2013. Interview by author. February 6. Evidence cited in remainder of paragraph obtained from this interview, unless otherwise noted.
where we were headed” with respect to joint operations.89 Similarly, in the course of his research for General Jones’ special study, William Brehm found Wickham to have “positive and insightful views,” making him a likely ally for defense reform.90 Finally, these impressions are confirmed by another Army staff officer, Colonel Jack Wood. Colonel Wood worked for the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army General Maxwell Thurman during this period, and like Stefan, recalls that Wickham was more supportive privately than he could be publicly.91 Wood noted that Wickham was very loyal to his JCS relationships, and did not want to take a position that would jeopardize the effectiveness of the JCS team. Importantly, both Stefan and Wood assessed that the Army staff, in general, supported the idea of reform even as it recognized that their Chief of Staff was constrained in his freedom to adopt their position fully.

The Navy’s overall posture, however, remained steadfastly opposed to reform. On 1 February 1983, retired Brigadier General Hittle sent Secretary Lehman another update memo, notifying him that Congressman Nichols had taken over as chairman of the HASC Investigations Subcommittee.92 Hittle’s memo advised Lehman to instruct the CNO and CMC to meet with Nichols “the sooner the better” for the purpose of “urg[ing] him not to resurrect the ‘White Bill’ or any version of it this session.” He concluded his memo with a cautionary tone: “We missed a Senate fight last session over the White Bill by too thin a margin for comfort. Jones has not folded his tent show. Now is the time to stop another JCS reorganization fight, before any hearings are scheduled” (emphasis in original).

Lehman clearly concurred with Hittle’s approach and maintained his own assault on pro-reform positions. Throughout 1983, for example, Lehman worked to shut down a project

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90 Brehm shared these impressions with Barry Goldwater, Sam Nunn, and James Locher in conversation. Locher notes this impression in his interview with Wickham, 9 May 1995. Page 23 of transcript, in Box 63, Locher papers.
sponsored by the Heritage Foundation in which several pro-reform pieces were being published. By embedding a Navy “spy” as a research fellow at Heritage and pressing his long-time friends and associates at the foundation, Lehman effectively blocked the publication of papers that supported reform positions (Locher 2002, 172-176). During this same period, Lehman continued his own personal assault on what he perceived to be the real culprit: bureaucracy. A 5 March 1983 Washington Post article relayed an interview with Lehman in which he launched a “scathing attack on bureaucrats.” Pushing against the trend to “centralize everything,” Lehman called for getting rid of “6,000 bureaucrats in OSD who are accountable, essentially, to nobody.”

Assessing the Theories

In view of the marshaled evidence in this second key juncture of 1983, how well do the various theories explain the preferences and behavior of the Army and Navy? I begin by considering my own theory, followed by bureaucratic politics and then committee compromise.

My two-part theory appears to do a reasonable job explaining the data in this second juncture. While the variation in service views, at least as presented in Congressional testimony, appeared to diminish in this period, this unified position masked deeper divisions between the two services. Navy preferences and political behavior changed relatively little since the previous period. Its preferences remained opposed, and the specific objections remained linked to cultural predispositions toward privileged access to civilian principals, decentralized operations, the importance of individual performance over organizational structure, and the unity of responsibility, authority, and accountability.

94 In his personal papers, Lehman also had a September 1985 memorandum from a rear admiral on his staff, forwarding an article from the Washington Post. The memo to Lehman noted that the article “reaffirms that de-centralization and de-bureaucratization are now the name of the game in private industry. It reinforces what we’ve said about what needs to happen in the Navy, so you may find it useful.” In John F. Lehman papers, Box 5, OI-JCS Reorg - 1985, folder 5 of 8.
The Army’s preferences and behavior during this period were slightly more complicated. As represented by its Chief of Staff, the Army appeared to retreat from its robust support for reform. Indeed, the internal JCS dynamics drove both General Meyer and General Wickham to support publicly the consensus view of the JCS and DoD. While the Chief’s words and actions comprised the “official” Army position, the deeper attitudes and actions of the broader Army staff indicated steady—albeit quiet—support for reform. According to the Army staff officers with privileged access to private beliefs, the Army staff and senior leaders generally held a supportive view of reform, and actions like the 31 Initiatives represented a good-faith effort to change DoD from within.

Lastly, the aspect of my theory dealing with the anticipated agency environment finds some support during this time period as well. The JCS and the military services made a concerted effort to enact meaningful reforms within the existing legislative environment, eager to avoid widespread legislative changes. These efforts were motivated in part by a desire to be left alone by Congress and to make sure that any changes to the military institution came from the inside, not the outside. Viewed through the lens of anticipated agency, however, a complementary perspective can be seen as well. By enacting meaningful and seemingly good-faith reform efforts internally, the JCS did not object to the substance of certain reforms; instead, the chiefs objected to the prospect of specific and durable legislation that would create a new agency contract. Consequently, the unified opposition from the JCS focused less on substance and more on form. The principal objections centered on the durable and binding nature of the contract—new legislation—rather than the policy changes that could be accommodated within the existing agency contract. Civil-military policymaking, as an instance of principal-agent contract negotiation, appears to involve the form of that contract as much as its substance.
The alternative explanations also have important insights about this second juncture of the Goldwater-Nichols narrative. As described earlier in the chapter, the bureaucratic politics approach predicts that all of the services would oppose the reform proposals and would fight instead to preserve autonomy and political power. At one level, the services did indeed appear to be unified in fighting for autonomy during this period, and most histories of this period tend to characterize the services’ response as one of entrenched unified opposition. This explanation is not wrong, but it is incomplete and unsatisfying.

Instead, Huntington’s committee compromise argument provides a more robust explanation of this period. This theory predicts that topics referred to the JCS for counsel will generate weak compromised positions, giving the appearance of a unified military actor. As the narrative above illustrates, this theory explains the fact pattern of 1983 quite well. When the five members of the JCS claimed defense reorganization as a subject of personal study and interest, the result was a series of in-house reforms and three minor legislative suggestions. The powerful interpersonal dynamics that govern JCS deliberations tempered the pre-existing variation in personal opinion. Meyer’s strong pro-reform position collided with the equally fervent anti-reform views of Watkins and Barrow, ultimately yielding an array of small compromises.

Furthermore, the leadership effort of General Vessey appeared to be one of soldiering forth in good faith, seeking to make the current system work rather than subjecting the defense ecosystem to the massive disruption of reorganization. While this JCS-sculpted unanimity served to frustrate those in Congress pushing for reform, it did not appear in any way to involve malfeasance or agency “shirking” on the part of the chiefs. Instead, the corporate JCS position favored a conservative and pragmatic approach. As discussed above, the chiefs acknowledged the need for certain changes, and worked to enact them internally. While most
headlines focused on the resistance of the chiefs, at a deeper level, this second juncture looks as much like cooperation (with substance) as it does resistance (to form).

This united front within the JCS can also be interpreted in support of the baseline agency model. The Chiefs enjoyed a positive working relationship with President Reagan and Secretary Weinberger, enjoying much more frequent access to their principals than they had during the Carter administration.\textsuperscript{95} The autonomy they enjoyed, coupled with the overall alignment of pro-defense preferences between the administration and the military, helps to explain the Chiefs’ good-faith efforts to work with their executive principals and reform from within.

Overall, this second juncture reveals support for both my theory and the committee compromise argument not as alternatives but as complements. Each approach helps explain part of the multi-level game played by the service chiefs, who navigated complex political relationships with their own service constituencies, fellow JCS members, executive department bosses, and Congress. My theory of service culture and agency anticipation informs the differences in the Army and Navy preferences and behavior—particularly at the staff level—as well as the role that the anticipated agency contract played in the policymaking debate. Huntington’s argument highlights the pressures inherent in a legislative-style committee like the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and explains the fact and form of the unified public front put forward by the chiefs in 1983. The next section of the chapter moves ahead two years to examine a third and final juncture in the narrative, sparked by the publication of a Senate staff study in October 1985.

8.5: Third Key Juncture: 1985-1986

_The National Security Act of 1947 was purposely ambiguous, we didn’t want it to be rigid._
- Admiral Thomas Moorer

The third and last key juncture analyzed in this case study captures the final year of action, from October 1985 through October 1986. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, this analysis strives to maintain its form and function as a civil-military case study, not a detailed legislative history. Consequently, it does not chronicle the twists, turns, amendments, voice votes, and political legerdemain that ultimately coalesced to pass this major piece of legislation. Instead, this chapter hews closely to the overall research question and asks why the Army and Navy responded as they did throughout this tumultuous four-year period. Nevertheless, the broader context is important for situating the services’ behavior in its political environment, so the section begins with a dash through the important events that transpired between the previous juncture (1983) and this one (1985). Next, I discuss the Senate staff study written largely by professional staff member James Locher—a controversial report that sparked new rounds of Congressional testimony in November 1985 and February 1986. I then discuss the relevant testimonies before the Congressional committees, and examine other evidence of Army and Navy preferences and behavior during this period. Finally, I conclude the section by once again assessing the comparative explanatory value of my theory and its alternatives.

A Wide and Growing Interest in Reform

As 1983 came to a close, Congress as a whole had still not passed any reform legislation. The House of Representatives had successfully passed a reform bill, H.R. 3718, on 17 October 1983, a moderate position that effectively combined the DoD proposals with the legacy “White

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96 Self-attributed quote was in Admiral Moorer’s notes from a two-day retreat held at Fort A.P. Hill in October 1985. Notes dated 7 Oct 1985. In “OI-JCS Reorg- 1985,” Folder 5 of 8, Box 5, Lehman papers. Copy in Box 33 of Locher papers.
Bill” (Barrett 2001, 3-133). The SASC, however, despite its lengthy hearings to consider reform, did not take any legislative action and the House bill died without Senate support.

While the Senate showed little interest in reform, the academic community certainly did. Throughout 1984 and 1985, the study of defense organization became something of a cottage industry among DC think tanks and academics. A team of West Point professors, all active duty Army officers, published an edited version of the defense reform conference they hosted in 1982 (Clark et al 1984). Similarly, a cohort of prominent academics from Harvard and Kentucky, to include Robert Art and Samuel Huntington, worked together to publish an edited volume on defense organization in 1985 (Art, Davis, and Huntington 1985). The Heritage Foundation eventually overcame Lehman’s opposition and published its critique of the defense establishment as part of an edited study in 1984 (Crackel 1984, in Butler, Sanera, and Weinrod 1984).

While all three of these works generally supported the idea of reform, the Navy ensured that dissenting views were also heard.97 In September 1984, the Hudson Institute, with sponsorship from the Navy, published its own study of defense reform and found that the current arrangement worked suitably.98 The study found that proposed moves to strengthen the Chairman and the Joint Staff would “leave the United States exposed to provincial Prussian-style military leadership” (Halloran 1984, 38). Shortly after the Hudson study was released, the Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Watkins convened his own “select panel to undertake a thorough review of the several proposals for reorganization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and to make such recommendations as panel members might deem appropriate.”99 The panel,

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97 In addition to the studies noted here, John Lehman published a provocative op-ed in the Washington Post on 10 June 1984 entitled, “Let’s Stop Trying to be Prussians.”
98 Internal Navy documents demonstrate very close attention to the members of the Hudson study. One memo, apparently prepared for Secretary Lehman, details the names and background of the prospective members of the study, with a note at the top that “all are qualified for the purpose you mentioned.” In “Organizational Issues - Defense Reorganization 1984”, Folder 2 of 5, Box 3, Lehman papers. Copy in Box 33, Locher papers.
99 Quoted from draft letter from CNO to various members of Congress. In Navy staff files, Box 34, Locher papers.
comprised of retired Navy and Marine Corps officers — to include Brigadier General Hittle — reached unremarkable conclusions. They released their report in March 1985 and recommended that “the Chief of Naval Operations place himself squarely in support of civilian direction and control of the national security organization.”\textsuperscript{100} In the panel’s view, supporting civilian control required the CNO to oppose proposals that would make the Chairman the principal military advisor or that would subordinate the Joint Staff to the sole control of the Chairman. Additionally, the panel recommended that neither the corporate JCS nor the Chairman be in the chain of command between the CINCs and the national command authorities, and also recommended strengthening the role of the CINCs in resource allocation and readiness matters.

While all of these studies and reports had their place in shaping the ideological context, the “most influential” report in this period came from the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), then affiliated with Georgetown University (McNaugher and Sperry 1994, 232). The CSIS project began in mid-1983 and concluded with the publication of their study in February 1985 (Odeen, Goodpaster, and Laird 1985)—a study endorsed by six former Secretaries of Defense. One of the three principal areas of the CSIS study focused on “Defense Planning and Military Advice,” and its authors provided several specific recommendations.\textsuperscript{101} The CSIS study recommended that the Chairman be designated the principal military advisor to the president, but noted that he should consult all the service chiefs and present dissenting views to civilian leaders. The study also recommended that the Joint Staff report directly to the Chairman, and that Congress create a new position of Deputy Chairman to provide greater continuity and to free up the CJCS to engage with the CINCs. Finally, the study recommended

\textsuperscript{100} Report of the Chief of Naval Operations Select Panel, Reorganization of the National Security Organization, March 1985, p I-5. In OP-60 folder, Box 34, Locher papers.

\textsuperscript{101} The other focus areas of the study included “resource allocation and Congressional oversight” as well as “program execution,” focused on acquisition reform.
greater power and authority for the CINCs, with more say in budgetary matters and greater operational control over their service components.

The president of CSIS, Amos Jordan, drafted a short note at the end of the CSIS study, summarizing the reactions of a small group of advisers he had asked to review the report. Former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger and former National Security Advisor Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft (USAF) both supported the report. Admiral Thomas Moorer, however, had a “reaction to the report [that] was very different than the reactions of General Scowcroft and Dr. Schlesinger” (Odeen, Goodpaster, and Laird 1985, 57). Based on his past experience as both CNO and CJCS, Moorer believed that “assignment of good people, both civilian and military, and a clear-cut designation of authority, responsibility, and accountability will ensure the best performance,” not periodic changes to wiring diagrams (Odeen, Goodpaster, and Laird 1985, 57).

Amidst this flurry of academic and scholarly interest, both houses of Congress actually took action and passed minor reform legislation in 1984. Such action came about largely because Representative Bill Nichols, chairman of the HASC Investigations Subcommittee, finally forced Senator John Tower to take action. In May 1984, Nichols attached H.R. 3718—the reform bill passed by the House the previous October—as an amendment to the DoD Authorization Bill (Schemmer 1984). Since Tower had to pass the authorization bill for the military to have an operating budget, the SASC and HASC had to address reform in their conference committee. In the final hours of the conference meeting on 24 September 1984, late at night before a Congressional recess and after much delay, Tower finally conceded a few reform issues in the House bill (Barrett 2013). Although HASC staff member Arch Barrett recalls being bitterly disappointed at the meager provisions in the bill, Representative Ike Skelton assured him that their efforts were “a real victory”—it was the first defense
organization legislation in 26 years (Barrett 2013). The new law, signed by President Reagan on 19 October 1984 as Public Law 98-525, enacted several small reforms: it specified that the CJCS “acts as spokesman” for the CINCs on operational matters; gave CJCS authority to set timelines for making decisions on the JCS agenda; retained the 400-person limit on the Joint Staff; authorized the CJCS to select officers for Joint Staff duty from lists submitted by the services; extended the maximum Joint Staff tour length to four years; and gave the secretary of defense responsibility for ensuring that service promotion and assignment systems gave proper credit for joint duty performance.102

A final important update to the narrative involved two pivotal changes in Congressional leadership. At the end of 1984, Senator Tower retired from the Senate and Senator Barry Goldwater took over chairmanship of the SASC in January 1985. Goldwater was in his final term in the Senate, and decided to join forces with ranking member Senator Sam Nunn to make defense reform his top legislative priority (Locher 2002). Goldwater’s interest in reform stretched back many years, and was even the topic of his 1958 academic thesis written for the Air War College as part of his Air Force reserve duty (Goldwater 1958). In his thesis, Goldwater concluded that defense organization was “one of the most important problems facing our armed services,” and observed (ironically, given the legislation that would bear his name 28 years later) that “[i]f the military will keep abreast of these changes by constantly studying and augmenting plans for reorganization, they will at the same time give our country a more efficient military service and the taxpayer more for his dollar. If the military fails to do this inevitably the politician gets into it and with his inexperience the cure is usually worse than the illness” (1958, 1-2).

102 HASC Staff document, “Side by Side Comparison: current Title 10 Language / JCS Reorganization Provision Enacted in 1984.” In Barrett 2001, 4-81 through 4-86.
The second important change in Congressional leadership involved Representative Les Aspin taking over as chairman of the HASC. Aspin had served on the HASC Investigations Subcommittee throughout the numerous rounds of hearings over the previous several years, and was very familiar with the core issues of defense reform. Aspin’s leadership in the HASC proved pivotal in 1985 in gathering an extensive bipartisan consensus for a more robust JCS reorganization bill in the year ahead (Barrett 2013).

*Senate Staff Study and Service Responses*

Shortly after Goldwater became chairman of the SASC, he and Senator Sam Nunn formed a two-man task force on defense reorganization. Together, they tasked staff member James Locher to devote his full time and attention to a comprehensive study of the subject—a study Locher had actually started in 1983 under Senator Tower (Locher 2002). Working with fellow SASC staff members Jeff Smith and Rick Finn, Locher ultimately compiled an exhaustive 645-page report detailing the history and various shortcomings of the US military organizational structure (Senate Staff Report 1985). The study made 91 specific recommendations, and designated “mission integration,” not unification or centralization as its fundamental object: “mission integration describes the real goal of the search for a more effective and, perhaps, a more efficient US military establishment” (1985, 2). Furthermore, the study charged that “[u]nder current arrangements, the Military Departments and Services exercise power and influence which are completely out of proportion to their statutorily assigned duties” (1985, 3). After thoroughly describing the various maladies of the joint structure, the study listed its twelve most important recommendations. Later, Locher revealed that some of the recommendations were intentionally radical to draw fire from the anti-reformers, thus giving Goldwater and Nunn bargaining space to retreat to their preferred position (Locher 2002, 329). Among these twelve were recommendations to abolish the JCS and
create a Joint Military Advisory Council in its place as principal military advisors to the president, secretary of defense and National Security Council; to make the CJCS the principal military advisor to the secretary of defense on operational matters; to integrate the secretariat and service staffs; to establish in each service a joint duty career specialty; and to authorize the CJCS to run a personnel management system for joint duty (1985, 11).

Locher’s staff study was released publicly on 16 October 1985 and ignited a firestorm of attention, with Locher personally at the center of it. A “lynch Locher” frenzy seized many, as the study’s intentionally radical recommendations were difficult for even moderate pro-reform advocates to endorse (McNaugher and Sperry 1994, 235). The SASC scheduled a series of hearings to discuss the report’s findings, with Weinberger scheduled to testify in mid-November 1985 and the service chiefs in early December. The study’s release and the pending SASC hearings prompted very different reactions from the Army and Navy, which I describe below. After describing each service’s approach to preparing for the SASC testimony, I describe the hearing testimonies themselves, followed by the subsequent activity of the services in the months that followed.

The Army’s response to the Senate staff study appears to be a uniquely honest appraisal of the issue on its merits. Moreover, the most extensive evidence we have of the broader Army’s position on reform is captured during this period, when the previously close-hold staff effort moved into the open (Stefan 2013). On 24 October 1985, a week after the staff study was published, Colonel J.C. Conrad of the Army Studies Group sent a memo to the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army General Maxwell Thurman.103 In the memo, Colonel Conrad expressed concern that the existing staff system for evaluating the study would likely produce bland status quo recommendations “in spite of the significant support for change on the [Army

Staff].” Instead, he recommended that “the Army make a concerted effort to review major findings of the study with an open mind and the best talent available.” He then suggested forming an ad hoc review committee of four to eight officers to take another look at the issues with fresh eyes. Conrad closed the memo by noting that “[t]here are clearly opportunities in all of this to improve our joint/combined war fighting capability.”

After receiving Conrad’s memo, General Thurman approached General Wickham and “convinced him to establish the committee.” The Army’s Special Review Committee (SRC), comprised of six active duty officers and one Army historian, was thus formed “to make an unbiased and open minded review of the validity of the major conclusions” of the Senate staff study. Furthermore, the group’s charter included special instructions directing them to “look for positive directions in which Army can support constructive change,” and clarified that the committee’s review and conclusions “will not be constrained by preestablished Army/OSD positions.” The SRC met together for the first time on 4 November 1985, and received a series of briefings from senior Army officers on their specific tasking. As detailed in the after-action report drafted by the group’s historian, the briefings reinforced the open-minded and good-faith parameters outlined in the group’s charter. Brigadier General Howard Graves instructed the SRC to “look at what the country needs. Let’s get out of the green suit.” Toward that end, Graves noted that “[t]he Army might have to sacrifice some of its special interests for the greater good.”

104 Edgar Raines, “Memorandum for Record,” 11 December 1985, p 3. Dr. Raines served as part of the Special Review Committee and his memo of 11 Dec 85 serves as the best after-action report of the committee’s proceedings. In “HRC 321 Special Review Committee, Goldwater-Nunn” folder, Army Center for Military History.


The SRC then proceeded to work for three weeks, researching the issues, conducting interviews, and ultimately drafting a report in the form of a briefing for General Wickham.\textsuperscript{108} In subsequent interviews, all of the SRC members affirmed that the group responded to its work in the spirit of its charter and examined the issues open-mindedly, unconstrained by previous Army positions.\textsuperscript{109} The SRC’s final briefing slides captured the group’s findings and recommendations, and indicated that its “guiding philosophy” was a belief that “[j]ointness is essential for national security. Although personalities are critical, jointness should be promoted thru structure.”\textsuperscript{110} In all, the SRC made six key recommendations: “support a comprehensive review of service roles and missions; strengthen the role of CJCS; improve quality and operation of joint staffs; strengthen capability to establish joint doctrine; increase the authority of and support to the unified and specified commanders; and enhance role of CJCS/JS in programmatic issues” (slide 9). The slides then provided details on the various recommendations, balanced by the associated political risks.\textsuperscript{111} For example, the SRC recommended strengthening the role of Chairman of the JCS, making him the principal military advisor to the president and enhancing his role in budgetary issues. The group justified its recommendation with the insight that “JCS advice tends to be crafted to be least hurtful to those giving it rather than most helpful to those receiving it” (slide 23). The group acknowledged, however, the corresponding risks of strengthening the chairman: it could actually reduce the incentives for the service chiefs to think and act jointly, and it could simply move the pre-

\textsuperscript{108} The SRC briefed the VCSA General Thurman on 20 November 1985. Due to various pressing concerns, the group did not present its full briefing to General Wickham. Colonel Powell Hutton, the SRC’s chairman, briefed General Wickham individually for about 20 minutes (Hutton 2013). The SRC also prepared General Wickham’s SASC testimony statement, which was delivered “pretty close” to as written (Kaufman 2013).

\textsuperscript{109} The author interviewed 5 of the 7 members of the SRC, all of whom emphasized the unbiased and even-handed approach employed by the committee: COL Powell Hutton (chairman), then-LTC Dan Kaufman, then-LTC Jim Stefan, then-LTC Jack Wood, and Dr. Edgar Raines.

\textsuperscript{110} Special Review Committee (SRC). 1985. SRC Briefing slides in “HRC 321 Special Review Committee, Goldwater-Nunn” folder, Army Center for Military History.

\textsuperscript{111} After much research, the SRC’s final briefing stands out as one of the very few balanced treatments of the core issues to emerge from this period.
fabricated log-rolled compromises down one level—the chiefs could agree on a position before presenting their advice to the Chairman (slide 27). Later in this section, the discussion focuses on the impact that the SRC’s work had on the views and testimony of the Chief of Staff of the Army General Wickham.

The Navy’s response to the Senate staff study looked rather different. Having already convened a select panel to study the issues, the CNO did not follow General Wickham’s lead in creating a special ad hoc review committee. Instead, the existing Navy staff infrastructure reviewed the study and found little to its liking. Deputy Undersecretary of the Navy Seth Cropsey had worked for Secretary Lehman since May 1984, and spent most of his working hours focused on JCS reform issues. Cropsey noted that—in his view—the Navy’s primary objection to the staff study (and reform in general) was the reduction in the breadth and variety of advice the president would receive from a strengthened and isolated Chairman. If the president did not hear from the CNO regularly, naval affairs and strategy ran the risk of being overlooked or misunderstood, according to Cropsey (2013). Ultimately, he noted, such a reduction in the scope of advice results in a loss of civilian control over the military—the president would receive less varied advice and may indeed feel more compelled to accept it.

Cropsey’s regular update memos to Lehman during this period substantiate these concerns. After reading an advanced copy of the Senate staff study in mid-September 1985, Cropsey sent Lehman a memo on 20 September 1985 appraising the report. The memo began: “The draft SASC report, while unfinished, is likely to form the core of the staff information available to the Senate. Due to its rank amateurism and self-defeating management jargon, that is a wonderful prospect. The report is its own worst enemy.” After three pages of scattered and dismissive critique, the memo concluded as it started: “I recommend that when the final version

comes out, you address the same issues: the report is amateurish, relies on out-dated management ideas, is internally self-contradictory, and lacks evidence and expertise.” An additional “memorandum for reader” in the same archival folder in Lehman’s personal papers—undated and unsigned—levied similar attacks on both the substance of the report and its primary author. The two-page memo concluded that “major reorganization is not the answer. Strong, smart leadership is the answer...We tried paralysis by analysis. Let’s stick with leadership by example.”114

The CNO’s uniformed Navy staff provided strong critiques of the staff report as well. In a series of documents dated 28 October 1985, compiled to prepare the CNO for his SASC testimony, the action officer noted (in a rather convoluted stew of pronouns) that the staff report “reflects a gross misunderstanding of what the JCS system is and what and who does what and why.”115 The following page detailed a list of guiding principles, to include the belief that “authority cannot be separated from accountability and responsibility,” as well as the assertion that “civilian control [is] an essential requirement and means in reality access to divergent opinions and views.” Finally, the last page in the compilation offered a sample of favorable newspaper headlines that they wanted to see the day after the CNO’s testimony. These Navy-sought headlines included: “Navy criticizes SASC report on reorganization as a disservice to Senate and nation,” “Navy sees proposed reorganization as threat to Constitution and civilian control of military,” and “Navy to SASC: forget the Spanish American war and address current JCS.” In short, both civilian and uniformed military personnel in the Department of the Navy notably opposed the Senate staff study, in stark contrast to the Army. How then would these differences impact the testimony of their respective service chiefs before the SASC?

115 Copy in “OP-60” folder, Box 34, Locher papers.
The first outside witness to testify before the SASC was Secretary Weinberger on 14 November 1985. As he had before, Weinberger largely defended the status quo and the current service chiefs, insisting that the advice he received was good and not “a watered-down consensus” (U.S. Senate 1987, 112). The Secretary did not back down from these convictions, but this approach did not appear to accrue to his advantage. One observer likened Weinberger’s overall testimony to “taking spears in the chest” (Kaufman 2013).

Five days later, retired General Edward Meyer, former Chief of Staff of the Army, testified and once again offered strong support for reform. Clearly indicating that his tepid testimony in June 1983 was a product of JCS compromise and not weakened conviction, Meyer summarized his views with words that echoed his original 1982 testimony: “In summary, reform of the mechanism which provides military advice and counsel to our civilian leadership is long overdue. Tinkering with the mechanisms will not suffice” (155). Admiral Thomas Moorer also remained true to earlier testimony, opposing reform, taking great personal offense to the staff study’s critiques, and offering pointed *ad hominem* barbs back at Locher. Moorer ended his testimony by saying that “it is people who make things happen, who make decisions and fight wars. It is not organizations” (283).

The service chiefs testified on 5 December 1985, each providing separate testimony rather than one corporate statement. Chief of Staff of the Army General Wickham testified first, and staked out the most pro-reform position of any service chief since General Meyer’s...
testimony in 1982. While noting that the report did not give proper credit to the many in-house reforms enacted by the recent chiefs, Wickham offered support for a number of proposals. First, in line with a letter sent by Secretary of Defense Weinberger to Congress three days earlier, Wickham supported making the Chairman the principal military advisor to the president and secretary of defense, as long as legislation ensured the full representation of views from the other service chiefs (496). In addition, Wickham endorsed the recommendation of the SRC and supported giving the Chairman responsibility for joint training, doctrine, and professional military education (496). Finally, Wickham supported strengthening the Joint Staff, giving the Chairman authority to specify officer qualifications, and creating a “joint skill identifier” to recognize officers who served in joint duty (500). Wickham’s testimony laid down a surprisingly pro-reform marker for the day’s hearings, notable to the Senators on the committee who later referred back to Wickham’s proposals several times. Members of the SRC found Wickham’s public endorsement of their recommendations “gratifying,” and commented that Wickham was open-minded and a “good consumer” of their work (Kaufman 2013).

The Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Watkins testified next, and offered qualified support for the same reform proposals endorsed by Weinberger’s 2 December 1985 letter. Further, Watkins emphasized two essential attributes of the current system that should be retained: diversity of views reaching decision makers, and civilian control of the military. Finally, Watkins joined Wickham in expressing frustration at the lack of credit given to the recent chiefs for implementing meaningful reforms on their own. He concluded that “it is those of us who serve today in the national security organization who should be and are the real reformers” (507). The following day, Secretary of the Navy John Lehman testified before the

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120 On 2 December 1985, Weinberger sent a letter to Goldwater noting that DoD had completed its review of the staff study. It now could support making the CJCS the principal military advisor, making the Joint Staff work for the chairman, and creating a Vice Chairman, as long as he did not outrank the service chiefs. See p 336 of the SASC hearing transcript for a copy of the letter.
SASC, and urged two fundamental principles, much like Watkins: civilian control and maintaining balance between the branches, as intended by the nation’s founding fathers (594). “The reforms,” Lehman insisted, “should be built around a principle of accountability” (595). The principle of accountability coursed throughout Lehman’s testimony; later, he suggested that the guiding philosophy of reform should be “that human beings should be held accountable for their decisions.” He proceeded to cite an example from the Navy, noting that over the past year he had relieved over 100 commanding officers for cause, and promoted “several times that number for superb performance. That is what we mean by accountability” (610). Lastly, in a written response provided for the record on how he would reduce bureaucracy, Lehman offered this view—a rather apt distillation of the Navy command philosophy: “Decentralize management: delegate responsibility, authority, and resources to small, highly skilled units of program management whose people as individuals are accountable for efficient, effective program execution” (637).

The tone and scope of the testimonies given to the SASC in November and December 1985 were largely repeated in yet another round of testimony before the HASC Investigations Subcommittee in February and March 1986 (U.S. House 1987). Rather than detailing these views once again, I look next at the political activity of the Army and Navy in the months that followed the SASC testimony all the way through the bill’s passage and Reagan’s signature in October 1986. Unsurprisingly at this point in the narrative, the Army’s political activity on reform largely receded while the Navy’s increased to new levels of advocacy and opposition.

Service Activity

By the fall of 1985, momentum for reform was building considerably. In addition to the hearings in the SASC, the House of Representatives also took significant action in November

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121 Like the Senate hearings noted above, the publication of the composite testimonies was in 1987, while the hearings were in 1986.
1985. Under Representative Les Aspin’s leadership, the House passed H.R. 3622, a major JCS reform bill, on 20 November 1985 with over 115 sponsors and significant bipartisan support (Barrett 2001, 5-57). The House bill represented a strong legislative achievement, and included nearly all of the major JCS-related provisions that ultimately ended up in Goldwater-Nichols (Barrett 2013).

Joining the House and Senate, the White House finally took action by the fall of 1985. On 15 July 1985, President Reagan created a Blue Ribbon commission on defense management, led by David Packard. Reagan charged the Packard Commission to study a wide array of issues related to defense management, to include the budget process, acquisition, legislative oversight, and the organizational and operational arrangements of the joint military structure. Commissioned by the president, Packard’s recommendations were expected to influence strongly the administration’s official position on the building Congressional consensus (Ganley 1985).

With increased attention on reform from both chambers of Congress and the White House, the Navy stepped up its level of activity to defeat or diminish the proposed reforms. The archival record offers considerable evidence of the Navy’s efforts to oppose the reform proposals, the highlights of which I present below. First, on 21 August 1985, Seth Cropsey sent John Lehman a memo outlining a proposed strategy for influencing the newly constituted Packard commission. He recommended that Lehman ask Secretary Weinberger to call a sympathetic commission member, asking him to “hit the ground running on the issue — establishing a strong, early presumption in favor of decentralization and civilian authority.” He then encouraged Lehman to contact “those on the Commission who agree with us” to take the lead in building momentum in the right direction. Finally, the third aspect of the strategy

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involved reaching out to the five “swing-voters” on the Commission, and included a brief biographical sketch on each of them “along with some suggestions for reaching them.”

By December 1985, the momentum for reform generated real concern for Lehman and others in the Department of the Navy. A memorandum for record drafted by Headquarters Marine Corps and forwarded to Lehman expressed genuine concern with Weinberger’s 2 December 1985 letter, and suggested pursuing a “strategy of laying the foundations for a Presidential veto of unacceptable legislation.”

Lehman then engaged key principals, dashing off short letters of concern prompted by the SASC’s initial reform bill in January 1986. In a letter to Secretary Weinberger, Lehman dismissed the “Goldwater-Locker [sic]-Dave Jones Bill” as a “blatant indictment on all that we have done the last five years” and “simply an updated return to McNamara.” In a similar note to Vice President George H.W. Bush, Lehman likewise criticized the bill as “largely written by Dave Jones” and “heavily directed against the Navy CNO and Sec Nav.” He closed by noting the “sad irony that Goldwater has become the unwitting tool of the liberal ‘whiz-fogies’” and let the vice president know that the Navy was “going to battle stations.”

By early February 1986, the Navy had indeed gone to battle stations, several of which were apparently situated on Capitol Hill. One source in Congress told a journalist from the Armed Forces Journal International that “[t]he Navy has been dead set against this legislation. Lehman has been up here doing everything he can to undo it” (Ganley 1986a, 18). When the SASC started its committee markup of the draft reform bill on 4 February 1986, the Navy’s opposition strategy soon became clear: “It was to be death by amendment, and Sen John Warner

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126 Letter from John Lehman to Vice President George Bush. 31 January 1986. In “OI-JCS Reorg-1986,” folder 1 of 8, Box 6, Lehman papers. Copy in Box 33, Locher papers.
had clearly been designated as executioner” (Kitfield 1995, 293). Senator Warner had served as Secretary of the Navy in the Nixon administration and was a steady supporter of the Navy. The Warner-Navy team proceeded to introduce one amendment after the next in an effort to bog down the committee proceedings and remake the bill into something more favorable. Over the course of 14 markup sessions, the SASC considered 87 amendments, 50 of which came from Warner (Ganley 1986b).

Archival and interview evidence corroborate this teamwork between the Navy, Warner, and another pro-Navy Senator, retired Rear Admiral Jeremiah Denton. For example, Lehman’s personal papers include documents drafted within the Department of the Navy for use by Senator Denton, expressing concern with the Senate bill and introducing several amendments, to include language reinstating the CNO as the “principal advisor to the President.” Navy Captain William Cohen, the Director of Legislation in the Navy’s Office of Legislative Affairs, acknowledged that he and others in his office had been very active on Capitol Hill, particularly in feeding important information to Senator Warner. Cohen’s backchannel communications to Warner’s office apparently exceeded the threshold of proper conduct, prompting a letter from Senator Goldwater to Secretary of Defense Weinberger specifically rebuking Cohen’s “dirty tricks” (Cohen 2013). Finally, Lehman himself clearly admitted using Warner to advance his goals. In discussing various ways in which the legislation actually strengthened the

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127 “Effect of Amendments.” April 1986. In “OI-JCS Reorg-1986,” folder 4 of 8, Box 6, Lehman papers. Copy in Box 33, Locher papers. Presumably, this language would have been to make the CNO the “principal naval advisor” to the President, not the principal advisor.
129 The existence and contents of this letter were relayed to the author by Captain Cohen in an interview. Specific date is unknown, but generally in the spring of 1986. The phrase “dirty tricks” is Cohen’s recollection of the letter’s rebuke, and not a verified quote from the letter itself—a copy of the letter was not found. Cohen said that Weinberger forwarded the letter to Lehman for the Secretary of the Navy to take appropriate action. Lehman did not take any action against Cohen.
service secretaries, Lehman admitted that he had Warner “slip in” language giving the secretary of the Navy direct access to the president.\footnote{John F. Lehman. 2013. Interview by author. February 21. A review of the actual legislation, however, does not support Lehman’s comment. The law as passed gave all the service secretaries access to Congress (after advising the Secretary of Defense), but no language could be found in the bill giving the Secretary of the Navy or anyone else direct access to the President.}

On 28 February 1986, the Packard Commission published its interim report and recommended several key reforms to the JCS structure, to include making the CJCS the principal military advisor to the president and strengthening the CINCs.\footnote{“An Interim Report to the President by the President’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management.” 28 February 1986.} President Reagan, in turn, acted quickly to endorse the commission’s interim recommendations, publishing National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 219 on 1 April 1986 directing the DoD to implement whatever reforms could be accomplished under existing law.\footnote{“Summary of a Directive Implementing the Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management.” Unclassified White House Summary. In the \textit{Appendix to A Quest for Excellence}. June 1986, p 34-37.} The president then sent a message to Congress on 24 April 1986, noting that the swelling momentum for defense reform compelled him to express his views to Congress.\footnote{“Message to Congress Outlining Proposals for Improvement to the Defense Establishment.” 24 April 1986. In the \textit{Appendix to A Quest for Excellence}. June 1986, p 43-50.} Reagan supported the Packard commission’s recommendations, and suggested legislation to make the CJCS the principal military advisor, to create a Vice Chairman, and to make the Joint Staff responsible only to the Chairman. Reagan further recommended strengthening the CINCs, but preferred to do so through executive policy and not legislative action. The president’s NSDD and message to Congress were quite noteworthy, as he had generally been quiet on the subject of reform.

By the beginning of May 1986, the military’s twin principals — both executive and legislative — thus largely supported several important reform proposals. This development, however, did little to temper the Navy’s vocal opposition. On 5 May 1986, Senators Goldwater and Nunn sent a letter to Secretary Weinberger rebuking Seth Cropsey for “unprincipled efforts to misrepresent this bill,” which comprised “an affront to the integrity of the national political
process.” According to several Senators who notified Goldwater and Nunn, Cropsey had been “lobbying in opposition to S. 2295,” the Senate’s reform bill, and doing so by “seriously misrepresenting the bill.” Moreover, the Senators noted that Cropsey’s opposition now placed him against the president’s own stated position: “We find it intolerable that an official of the Department of Defense would misinform Members of the Senate in addition to working actively in opposition to the stated position of the Administration.” Bloodied but unbowed, the Navy remained at battle stations. Two days after this letter, the Senate convened to vote on S. 2295 and Lehman attempted one last flanking maneuver. In an early morning meeting with Senator Warner, Lehman asked him to introduce an amendment exempting the Department of the Navy from the provisions in the bill. Warner’s support for the Navy had its limits, and the Senator declined. The Senate passed S. 2295 on 7 May 1986 by a vote of 95-0.

For the next several months, the Navy continued its efforts to defeat or diminish the bill through a variety of tactics. Lehman’s strong opposition to reform became so well known, in fact, that his own mother weighed in. After reading about the persistent clash between Lehman and Goldwater, Lehman’s mother—a strong Goldwater supporter—sent him a straightforward note: “John: I don’t know what the dispute is, but you’re wrong” (Ganley 1986c, 18). Seth Cropsey disagreed with Lehman’s mother. In a paper written by Cropsey and forwarded to Lehman on 21 May 1986, Cropsey packaged the defense reform movement as a partisan ploy of the Democratic party. Cropsey insisted that Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA) was leading the way for Democrats in the Senate who needed to bolster their defense credentials before the 1988 election: “Nunn knows how critical it is to salvage his party’s weak position on military affairs.” Nunn was joined by Representative Les Aspin, Cropsey noted, who reportedly had claimed the

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134 Letter from Goldwater and Nunn to Weinberger. 5 May 1986. In Box 33, Locher papers.
135 This last-minute request for an amendment is described in Locher 2002, 419. The story was related to Locher by Les Brownlee who worked in Warner’s office.
previous summer that “the prize for reforming defense ‘is the Presidency.’” Seeing the inevitability of bicameral action on reform, Cropsey’s paper alerted Republicans of the possible electoral implications of defense reform.137

After the House and Senate agreed on a final version of a reform bill in their conference committee (13 August - 11 September 1986), Lehman apparently considered one final attempt at defeating the legislation. In an unsigned letter from Lehman to Reagan’s special assistant Patrick J. Buchanan, the Secretary noted that the bill that was approved in conference deviated in key ways from the president’s recommendations to Congress.138 In the letter, Lehman reiterated the partisan concerns raised in Cropsey’s paper, noting that “while it is claimed, and certainly widely believed, that the bill serves many worthy goals desired by conservatives, its greatest champions are across the aisle.” Further, the letter insisted that “it is essential that we do not allow the sponsors of this agenda to strip the President of his rightful laurels for restoring America’s defenses.” The letter therefore recommended that the president pocket-veto the bill and implement reforms through executive order instead.

Finally, illustrating his opposition to the end, Lehman’s files include a draft letter to President Reagan, apparently unsent.139 The four-page letter — with no letterhead, date, or signature — expressed numerous concerns with the conferees’ approved bill and noted its departure from the president’s message to Congress. The letter’s strong position ended with the following recommendation to the president: “While a number of provisions of H.R. 3622 are good ones, others are so flawed as to erode our national security. They not only restrict the authority of the President and Secretary of Defense, they also bottle-neck our combat forces in

137 Arch Barrett, who worked closely with Representative Aspin during this period, recalled one phone call from Aspin in which the Congressman expressed a partisan element in his thinking. Otherwise, Barrett noted that Representative Nichols ensured that the effort remained very bipartisan on the House side (Barrett 2013).
138 Letter to the Honorable Patrick J. Buchanan, drafted on Department of the Navy letterhead. Undated, unsigned. In “OI-JCS Reorg -1986,” folder 8 of 8, Box 6, Lehman papers. Copy in Box 33, Locher papers.
unneeded new bureaucracy — a prescription for future military failure. In the absence of a line-item veto, we must urge you to reject H.R. 3622, and implement its positive recommendations by executive means.” Ultimately, President Reagan did not veto the bill, and signed the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 into law on 1 October 1986 (Pub.L. 99-433, 100 Stat. 992).

Assessing the Theories

This final juncture of the case study offers a third opportunity to analyze important civil-military interactions and ask why the Army and Navy responded as they did. I close this section of the chapter by assessing the explanatory value of my theory and its alternatives for the data pattern in this third juncture. I begin by considering how well the preferences and political behavior of the Army and Navy comported with the predictions and explanations offered by my theory.

My theory finds its strongest support during this third juncture, and anticipates well the unique support for reform exhibited by the Army. Regarding its policy preferences, the Army was clearly the most supportive of several key reform provisions, and General Wickham’s SASC testimony in December 1985 went further in support than any service chief had gone since General Meyer in 1982. Moreover, the work of the Army’s Special Review Committee (SRC) in November 1985 provides a particularly unique venue for assessing an Army perspective unconstrained by the political sensitivities that must be negotiated by its Chief of Staff. The SRC specifically endorsed many of core reforms eventually codified in Goldwater-Nichols, and provided the rationale for their recommendations as well. In recommending a strengthened Joint Staff, for example, the SRC explained that “the critical nature of joint responsibilities demands that joint staffs be of top quality” (SRC slide 28). Similarly, in arguing for strengthened CINCs, the SRC’s report noted that existing joint publications “inhibit unity of
command and thus unity of effort at the warfighting level” (SRC slide 34). In both areas, the SRC’s support and underlying rationale are predicted by the various elements of the Army’s service culture.

The very existence and conduct of the SRC further validates the predictions made by its cultural beliefs. The service’s self-conception as an apolitical servant of the nation suggests an institutional inclination to look beyond the perimeter of Army-centric interests and consider the national good. This willingness was reflected in General Wickham’s creation of the SRC, as well as the direction given to the committee. The SRC’s charge was to “get out of the green suit” and look at what the nation needed, and this broad-minded mindset clearly guided the conduct of the group. Colonel Powell Hutton, the SRC’s chairman, commented that he was “really pleased that we were given carte blanche.” The committee was not expected to (nor did it) merely validate existing Army positions or known biases of senior leaders. Dr. Edgar Raines, the military historian on the SRC, was impressed by the extent to which the committee’s discussions were “broad gauged,” “not parochial,” and open-minded toward the good of the nation (Raines 2013). The willingness to consider the national interest was furthered no doubt by the fact that many of the proposals to improve joint warfighting effectiveness were likewise good for the Army as an institution. The Army’s operational need for centralized coordination and its role as a finishing land force both imbue a disposition toward joint coordination and a focus on military effectiveness. Consequently, members of the SRC found that in considering JCS reform in 1985, the good of the nation and the good of the Army were very compatible goals—an overlap congruent with the beliefs of Army service culture described in chapter six.

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141 Dr. Edgar Raines commented that the only issue on which the SRC appeared to steer its recommendation toward General Wickham’s known preference was on the subject of the Vice Chairman. The group was divided over the wisdom of creating the position (and what duties to give the Vice Chairman), as there were strong arguments on both sides of the issue. Dr. Raines perceived that the group ultimately recommended against a Vice Chairman, in part because they knew General Wickham strongly supported the existing arrangement of rotating an Alternate Chairman for 3-month periods (Raines 2013).
The Navy’s preferences and behavior are also explained quite well by the theory. Clearly, the Navy’s preferences were generally quite opposed to reform, particularly those aspects of centralizing the JCS structure, diminishing the president’s access to naval expertise, adding layers of bureaucracy, or adding career requirements that would keep sailors from being at sea—all of which were generally predicted at the outset by the Navy’s cultural beliefs. The Navy’s resistance was not an unthinking reflex to reduced autonomy, but a principled position rooted in long-standing Navy beliefs. Reasonable people can disagree about the merits or proper applicability of these beliefs, but it is difficult to dispute the sincerity with which they were held. John Lehman, in fact, emphasized that one of the fundamental problems with Goldwater-Nichols was its failure to recognize that the Army and Navy are “very very different professions” (Lehman 2013). The independence of the War and Navy Departments from 1798 until 1949 was not an accident of history in Lehman’s view, but a distinction rooted in the Constitution and reflective of their ontological differences (Lehman 2013). As discussed in chapter four, the Constitution gave Congress power to “raise and support armies” for two-year periods, as well as the power to “provide and maintain a navy” (Article 1, sec. 8, emphasis added). References to the Navy’s constitutional uniqueness surfaced quite regularly during these debates, in fact. A letter from a retired rear admiral to Secretary Lehman in May 1986, for example, exhorted Navy officials to “zero in on the unconstitutionality of so-called unification with standing land forces.”

The Navy did support isolated parts of the proposed reforms, which were likewise anticipated by the service’s command philosophy. Based on the Navy’s model of decentralized command, anchored in trust and not organizational structure, the hypothesis matrix predicted support for both a streamlined chain of command and strengthening of the CINCs—both of

142 Letter from Rear Admiral George Miller to Secretary of the Navy John Lehman. 9 May 1986. In “OI-JCS Reorg-1986,” folder 3 of 8, Box 6, Lehman papers. Copy in Box 33, Locher papers.
which occurred. In his Congressional testimony and later reflection, John Lehman assessed that the “only good thing” in the reform legislation was strengthening the CINCs by giving them stronger operational control of their component forces, realigning their authority with their responsibility (Lehman 2013).

In addition to explaining preferences, my theory of agency anticipation finds intriguing support in this third juncture as well, given the increased inevitability of legislation. The Navy’s large preference gap with the proposed policies was exacerbated by the various policy attributes that portended greatly reduced implementation slack for the service. Consequently, the durability, specificity, and enforceability of the policy proposals became negotiating points for the Navy as the service sought to shape the future implementation environment of its pending agency contract. The durability of enacting change through legislation was odious throughout the process, as the Navy continually pushed to create change through executive rather than legislative means. In his autobiography, Lehman referred to Goldwater-Nichols as a “permanent solution to a temporary problem,” suggesting that much of the trouble was not just the content but the law’s durability (1988, 112). The specificity and enforceability of the new statutes likewise troubled the Navy, as suggested by Admiral Moorer’s objection in October 1985 that the proposed reforms were counter to the National Security Act of 1947 which was “purposely ambiguous.” Additionally, the new legislation established specific reporting requirements and enforceable provisions on establishing joint duty as a prerequisite for obtaining flag rank. Even though existing DoD policy—as set in a 1959 policy directive by Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates—established the same requirement, the new provision was particularly objectionable for the lack of implementation slack it afforded.

143 Self-attributed quote was in Admiral Moorer’s notes from a two-day retreat held at Fort A.P. Hill in October 1985. Notes dated 7 Oct 1985. In “OI-JCS Reorg-1985,” Folder 5 of 8, Box 5, Lehman papers. Copy in Box 33 of Locher papers.
In sum, my composite hypotheses predicted the Army would have a fairly small preference gap and would negotiate the details, while the Navy would have a large preference gap and enter into major conflict. This is in fact what we see in this third juncture—once legislation appeared inevitable, the Army shaped it and Navy fought it even harder.

The theory of bureaucratic politics does not do as well in explaining the full range of data in this third juncture of the narrative. While it thinly explains some of the Navy’s opposition, it does not explain the isolated areas of support. Furthermore, while a bureaucratic explanation may be correct in explaining the fact of resistance in certain areas, it gets the rationale wrong and thus proves less effective in helping broker compromise solutions. For example, the Navy’s resistance to the joint duty requirement for flag officer promotion was not just about losing control of its own promotion process (though certainly this was a factor); instead, the Navy’s seagoing culture insisted that the only valid preparation for sea duty is sea duty. To be a competent commanding officer of a naval vessel required a deep well of judgment that could only be filled at sea. Consequently, adding shore requirements like four years of joint staff duty affected the Navy’s appraisal of its combat worthiness to provide seapower for the nation (Cropsey 2013, Barrett 2013).

Bureaucratic politics also fails to explain the Army’s behavior in this period. The why can be as important as the what, which a bureaucratic explanation often oversimplifies. Bureaucratic politics also fails to explain the Army’s behavior in this period. The creation, conduct, and conclusions of the SRC reflect as much a national interest as an Army one. It is certainly possible to make an argument that the Army stood to prosper relative to the other services through these reforms, and that the Army’s supportive posture can be explained

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144 As in the first juncture of the narrative, the Navy’s resistance to a diminished role for the CNO can be seen as supporting Abbott’s hypothesis. The uniqueness of the naval jurisdiction required direct access to the client, as no other spokesman could be qualified to represent naval interests capably.
145 Seth Cropsey articulated this view directly in an interview, and Arch Barrett corroborated that many of his discussions with the Navy’s legislative liaison division focused on the Navy’s difficulty in meeting a requirement that would curtail the full scope of sea duty needed to prepare for naval command.
merely by its pursuit of self-interest. While the data thinly support this argument in part, that insight can only come from meaningful knowledge about the ends, ways, and means of the respective services. At face value, the array of JCS reform proposals did not spell out increased budget share, size, prestige, or turf for the Army. Instead, only by knowing something about how the four services are constituted and how they operate can we know that a focus on battlefield effectiveness and joint warfighting may prove to enhance Army interests above the other services. Consequently, the array of cultural beliefs offered in this research project actually provide the logical prior for a bureaucratic explanation, such that my theory ends up doing the most valuable explanatory work.

Lastly, the committee compromise argument explains some of the data in this third juncture, as we see the internal dynamics of the JCS affecting the behavior of the service chiefs. At numerous points in the final year of debate, the service chiefs presented a unified front in meetings or letters to SASC and HASC leaders (Locher 2002)—a unified front that belied the actual variation that existed among the services. The Chairman of the JCS during this final year, Admiral William Crowe, later recalled that while he tried to keep the group unified, Wickham was most supportive of reform, then Gabriel, while Watkins and Kelley were clearly most opposed. As further archival evidence, a hand-written note on the Army memo proposing the SRC, for example, indicated that General Wickham was concerned that the SRC might “undercut” his positions vis-a-vis the JCS and service secretary. Further, while Wickham’s testimony was indeed more supportive of reform than any other, he remained a “team player” with the other JCS members throughout this period and did not want to do anything to jeopardize the effectiveness of that group (Wickham 1995, 22). Finally, during this third

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juncture we see further evidence that General Meyer’s mild support for reform in 1983 was indeed the product of JCS compromise dynamics, not individual opinion. Once he retired, Meyer again expressed strong support for reform in his 1985 SASC testimony and chaired one of the main panels in the CSIS study that recommended reform (Odeen, Goodpaster, and Laird 1985).

Overall, this third juncture of the Goldwater-Nichols narrative offers strong support for my theory of service culture and agency anticipation. The variation in policy preferences and political behavior of the Army and Navy finds its most satisfying explanation by looking at the cultural beliefs of the services in concert with the anticipated implementation slack associated with the proposed policy. The next section of this chapter offers a conclusion to this case study and looks once again at the big picture. What are the issues in play, what did the theories predict, what happened in the narrative, and which theories did best at explaining the aggregate pattern? And finally, what questions are left unanswered, to be explored in the next case study or in future research?

8.6: Conclusion

*My opinion is that these proposals are alien to good logic and common sense, and the only ‘consensus’ is among the drafters themselves!*  
- General P. X. Kelley, Commandant of the Marine Corps\textsuperscript{148}

On 1 October 1986, President Reagan closed the curtain on a stirring four-and-a-half year legislative drama. A truly remarkable confluence of events enabled the passage of such landmark reform, only the highlights of which could be covered in this chapter. In this conclusion, I briefly highlight the key provisions enacted by Goldwater-Nichols along the five issues central to this analysis. Next, I consider how well my theory fared in explaining the fact

pattern of the case, across the three junctures and between both the Army and the Navy. I then consider the explanatory value of the alternative explanations, and then conclude with synthetic findings and lingering questions.

*Provisions in the Act*

When Reagan signed it into law, Goldwater-Nichols specified the following provisions for the five issue-areas examined in this chapter (Pub.L. 99-433, 100 Stat. 992). First, the act strengthened the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in several ways, to include designating him “the principal military adviser to the President, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense” (sec. 151). Additionally, the act gave the Chairman new responsibilities related to fiscally constrained strategic planning, logistics, joint doctrine, joint education, and budgets (sec. 153). Finally, the act created the position of Vice Chairman as the second-ranking US military officer, to assist the Chairman as needed and to function as acting Chairman in his absence (sec. 154).

Second, the act retained the service chiefs as military advisors to the president, as they maintained their dual-hatted status as service chiefs and JCS members (sec. 151). The Chairman was charged to consider the views of the other JCS members “as he considers appropriate” when presenting his counsel to civilian leaders (sec. 151). Third, the act took steps to strengthen the Joint Staff, by designating that it works directly for the Chairman and by creating a new “joint officer personnel policy” (sec. 401-406). The far-reaching provisions in Title IV of the act created a new category of “joint specialty officers,” and mandated particular education, duty, and promotion requirements— to include the notable provision that no officer could be promoted to one-star general or admiral “unless the officer has served in a joint duty assignment” (sec. 404).

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149 Public Law 99-433, 1 October 1986, Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. All parenthetical citations in the following paragraphs indicate the section in this Act, unless otherwise noted.
Fourth, the act significantly empowered the CINCs of the unified and specified commands, giving a CINC full authority to (among other things) “employ forces within that command as he considers necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command” (sec. 164). Additionally, the new law specified that subordinate commanders—such as service component commanders—were “under the authority, direction, and control of, and are responsible to, the commander of the combatant command” (sec. 164). Fifth and finally, Goldwater-Nichols directed that the chain of command ran (unless otherwise directed by the president) from the president to the secretary of defense to the CINCs. It also specified, however, that the president could direct that communications between civilian authorities (the president and/or the secretary of defense) and the CINCs could be “transmitted through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff” (sec. 163). Similarly, the act allowed the Chairman to “oversee the activities” of the CINCs, but such oversight was not to be confused with command authority, which the Chairman did not have (sec. 163). In sum, Goldwater-Nichols answered fundamental political questions of who holds power and authority in the national defense structure. The Chairman of the JCS and the CINCs in particular accrued significant new power and authority, while the service chiefs and the military departments saw their status and influence reduced.

Assessing the Theory

This dissertation focuses on explaining why the military services respond as they do during the creation and implementation of civilian policies. To explain the responses of the military services, my theory invoked a step-wise analysis first of policy preferences, then of political behavior. First, I argued that a focus on service culture as I have defined it—a prevailing belief system about ends, ways, and means—provides the best predictor and explanation for a service’s policy preferences in a given context. Second, I argued that in the policy creation phase, the standard agency variables of monitoring, enforcement, and
punishment are not yet activated — there is nothing to monitor or enforce. Instead, these variables are only potentialities on the event horizon, hinted at by attributes of a proposed policy that convey the likely degree of future implementation slack. While a policy is being crafted, agents are attuned to the extent to which a proposed policy affords maneuver room during implementation, and the agent negotiates accordingly to expand that maneuver room. This appraisal of future implementation slack interacts with the military service’s preference gap to determine the character of the military service’s overall response.

In the case study at hand, how well does my theory explain the preferences and behavior of the Navy between 1982 and 1986? Revisiting the table of preference hypotheses made earlier in the chapter, Figure 8.6 below assesses the extent to which the data marshaled in this chapter supports these hypotheses. In the table, hypotheses that are strongly supported by the data are in bold, those with some or weak support are in standard roman type, and those with little or no support are in italics.

Overall, the “theory of preferences” supplied by service culture does an admirable job predicting and explaining the array of preferences exhibited by the Navy. The six-part cultural typology for the Navy that was built in chapter four gets most of the predictions correct, not only in direction but also in substance. That is, the nuances of cultural beliefs can predict and explain not only the fact of resistance on a particular issue, but also the form — the rationale, logic, and rhetorical strategy.
Figure 8.6: Navy Policy Preference Conclusions

The theory also helps to explain the Navy’s overall posture of active resistance across the four-year case period. The large preference gap interacted with a policy climate that portended very little implementation slack. First, the proposed policies were in the form of binding and durable legislation, which is very difficult to overturn and carries the normative weight of being the law. Second, many of the policy proposals were transfers of power and thus largely self-executing, as a newly empowered constituency had a substantive interest in its enforcement. For example, not long after Goldwater-Nichols became law, Arch Barrett traveled to visit the commander of Central Command (CENTCOM), Marine Corps General George Crist. The general’s copy of Goldwater-Nichols was “dog-eared,” given his keen interest as a CINC in

<table>
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<tr>
<th>NAVY POLICY PREFERENCE HYPOTHESES REVISITED</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Attitude/General Issues</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strengthen CJCS as principal mil advisor</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Remove service chiefs from JCS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strengthen CINCs power</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Improve JS quality and incentivize JS duty</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Streamline chain of command</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Since Navy power is unique, expect resistance to any diminished access to decision-makers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expect resistance to any move that reduces access of CNO to the President and SecDef.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2: America and Her Navy Prosper Together. What’s good for the Navy is good for America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expect resistance to any military officer between Navy and Pres/SecDef.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expect resistance to a non-Navy CINC having increased authority over navy assets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.3: Victory through Enlisted Order and Commissioned Judgment. Leaders must exercise judgment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expect resistance to increased intrusions into Navy affairs or micromanagement. Expect support for maximally decentralized execution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expect support for giving CINCs authority and accountability to match their responsibility.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expect resistance to outside interference in internal Navy promotions and assignments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expect support for shortest chain of command from President to operational forces.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.4: The Independent Glory of Command at Sea. Trust ship captains to execute mission. Don’t interfere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy requires large capital investments in peacetime, which require constant advocacy and explanation. Expect resistance to reduced access to decision-makers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expect resistance to putting best officers in any shore or staff position. Best officers should be at sea commanding ships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6: Size Matters: Bigger is Better. Fleet built around capital ships.</td>
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**Bold** = strong support  
**Plain** = some or mild support  
**Italic** = no support found in the evidence
understanding all the new power and authority given to him (Barrett 2013). Third, the policies were being crafted with great specificity that largely precluded self-interested interpretations. Fourth and last, the policies were to take effect immediately, not in some future context.

Consequently, the anticipation of little implementation slack with a large preference gap suggested that the Navy would engage in major conflict. Indeed, as described at length throughout the chapter, the Navy engaged in several of the resisting behaviors described in chapter three, to include “end-running,” “leaking,” and “speaking.” Additionally, as hypothesized earlier, the service attempted to negotiate not only the substance of the policy but also the parameters of its future implementation. As much as possible, the Navy sought to enact change through less durable executive means; it pushed for transitional terms to push back its enactment; and it sought exceptions to specific and enforceable terms that could then be exploited for maneuver room. The service negotiated, for example, an exception to the four-year period of joint education and duty required for promotion to flag rank, based on the sea-duty demands specifically of its submarine force (Barrett 2013). In response, the law made an exception for “critical occupational specialties” (sec. 661). The services, in turn, designated nearly all of their career fields as critical specialties to secure a service-wide exception to the law (Barrett 2013). Overall, therefore, the theory does quite well in explaining both the preferences and behavior of the Navy.150

The Army’s response to the proposed array of policies is also explained uniquely well by this theory. A revisited hypothesis matrix is below (Figure 8.7), and indicates the extent to which the Army’s actual policy preferences were correctly anticipated by the theory.

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150 The specific hypotheses of the temporal agency framework laid out in chapter three will be evaluated synthetically in the concluding chapter (10) of the dissertation.
As with the Navy, the theory gets most of these predictions correct, though certainly not all. Unlike the Navy, the Army appeared to have more preference variation within the service, particularly between the public posture of the Chief of Staff of the Army and the less public views of the Army staff. While most historical treatments of Goldwater-Nichols focus on the united opposition from the Pentagon, my research offers a more complex and nuanced story. The Chief of Staff of the Army did indeed stand fast with his fellow service chiefs on a number of issues, but his personal views and those of his staff were actually quite supportive of many key reform provisions. As discussed throughout the chapter, this supportive posture is explained well by the Army’s service culture, both in its self-conception as an apolitical servant...
of the nation as well as on the merits of the issues. In fact, the Association of the US Army published a primer on Goldwater-Nichols in 1987 and came to this ultimate conclusion: “the emphasis on greater jointness is totally compatible with the primacy of land power concepts and the new changes merit full and vigorous support.”

While the Army’s preferences are explained by its cultural beliefs, the service’s overall response is explained by the interaction of a small preference gap with the anticipation of little implementation slack. In this configuration, the theory predicts a negotiation of the details during the policy creation phase, which in fact we see from the Army. Once it became apparent that reform was going to happen, the Army sought to participate constructively to ensure that the right provisions were enacted. This observation should not be taken too far; by no means was the Army enthusiastically working hard to make the legislation happen. Rather, the aggregate pattern of advocacy provided by the Army during this policy creation phase was one of honest input and quiet support. To what extent was the Army’s support driven by its apolitical servant nature or by its substantive interest in the issue-areas? The next case study in this dissertation will help answer that question, as the analysis focuses again on the Army as a key participant, grappling with a high-stakes creation of a new combatant command—a scenario ripe for interservice rivalry. Will the Army’s apolitical culture vis-a-vis civilian leadership temper its interservice dispute with the Marine Corps?

Findings and Questions

In this final section of the chapter, I offer salient findings and further questions that are suggested by this case. First, I revisit the comparative theory matrix introduced earlier in the chapter to assess the relative explanatory value of the theories. As seen below in Figure 8.8, my theory offers the most comprehensive and thorough explanation of the data. While my theory

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offers the best fit for the data, it does not purport to be a monocausal or exhaustive explanation. In fact, the other theories do have some merit and explain meaningful elements of the case, as discussed in the three interim assessments throughout the chapter. I argue, however, that the three alternative explanations are all improved by incorporating insights from this project. The theory of bureaucratic politics suggests (in part) that the services work to advance their own interests, but the theory cannot supply a differentiable empirical referent for what those interests might be for each of the services. Similarly, Abbott’s thesis explains service behavior in terms of competing jurisdictions, but cannot predict where those jurisdictional competitions are likely to occur or which service(s) will feel most threatened by them. Likewise, the committee compromise argument explains the creation of vague and weak compromises within the JCS, but does not predict what the constituent service preferences are that undergird those compromises. Finally, the rationalist baseline agency theory helps to explain why the military worked more cooperatively with its executive than its legislative boss, particularly in its united efforts to reform internally during the second juncture. The baseline model is ill-suited, however, to consider all four services as unique agents, make ex ante predictions of support or resistance, or explain which variables matter while a policy is still being crafted. In each case, my two-part theory provides what is missing in these alternative explanations.
Second, I consider the extent to which historical institutionalism provides a helpful explanation of this case. At one level, the service positions in the 1980s hewed fairly closely to their positions in the 1940s and 1950s (McNaugher and Sperry 1994). Is service behavior in this case merely a reflexive return to “what we have always done”? Historical institutionalism views institutions—as in this case, the military services—as “enduring legacies of political struggles,” marked by sets of beliefs and practices that are ingrained over time (Thelen 1999, 388). This view certainly has much to commend it, and has a good deal in common with my methodological approach to service culture. My theory and use of service culture presupposes a durability in service beliefs over time, a conviction shared by historical institutionalism. The
validity of my approach is therefore strengthened by the similarities of 1947 and 1986—it is the
very durability of preferences across geopolitical contexts that motivates my major theoretical
move of disaggregating the military into the four services. Preferences do not translate directly
into political action, however, since they get mediated by their strategic environment (Frieden
1999). Therefore, my theory takes culturally informed preferences as an input into a principal-
agent interaction, the result of which is informed in part by other variables. In this respect, my
theory and methodology has a good deal in common with the work of Bates et al (2000) in their
use of analytical narratives, which seek to blend the context of historical institutionalism with
the structural impartiality of rational choice institutionalism (Thelen 1999). My work can be
seen as a theoretical application of these sensibilities to the domain of American civil-military
relations.

A third important finding identifies an optimal scope condition for my theory. As
anticipated in the case selection criteria identified in chapter one, the impact of service culture
on policy preferences holds best at the aggregate level. That is, the preferences of the
organization are most likely to conform to the beliefs of service culture, but the preferences of
individuals are clearly much harder to predict. Individual preferences are even harder to
predict when those individuals are subject to unique counter-pressure, such as a service chief
serving on the JCS. The variation in Army preferences seen in this case provides the best
example of this. The Army staff generally held views that were congruent with the service’s
cultural beliefs, while the specific preferences shown by General Wickham were moderated by
the pressures for uniformity exerted by JCS dynamics.

While my theory does admirable work in explaining the aggregate patterns of this case,
many of the historical details clearly stand for the atheoretical proposition that personalities
matter. Indeed, the motive force of the story comes from fortuitous alignments of people,
places, and dispositions. The controversial General Jones decided to air his grievances before the HASC. Arch Barrett had just finished writing a book about defense organization, had just been hired by the HASC, and happened to be in the room when Jones went public. Representatives Nichols and Aspin, along with Senators Goldwater and Nunn, were all in committee leadership positions at the same time, all with a keen interest in defense reform—a topic without a voting constituency and thus of rare Congressional interest. While no one can predict or theorize about such details, my theory works in an aggregate, probabilistic way to explain service propensities and patterns of behavior.

This insight suggests a fourth finding, which represents a counterintuitive shortcoming of my overall research design. One criterion of my case selection strategy was to find cases that applied to all four services—or at least multiple services—to allow for variation among the service responses while holding constant other variables. Cases that apply to all the services, however, are likely to be referred to the JCS for consideration. And as Huntington’s theory suggests, and as plenty of empirical evidence confirms, JCS deliberations tend to create weak and unified compromises that lack variation. In short, my criterion designed to permit variation in service responses may actually create a population of cases subject to unique pressures that dampen whatever variation might otherwise have occurred. Consequently, the cultural explanations for service preferences and behavior may prove to be most accurate for policies that apply to just one service, when JCS dynamics are not as much in play.

These four findings lead to some questions that are still unanswered by my analysis. First, to what extent were the preference hypotheses that I specified for the Army and Navy influenced by my knowledge of how the case unfolded? Perhaps an ideal research strategy would have involved gathering multiple research assistants to conduct their own congruence analyses, mapping the implications of the cultural beliefs onto the issue space, without prior
knowledge of what the services actually did. A reader without detailed knowledge of the case can approximate this ideal by considering whether the initial preference hypotheses appear logical and responsible, in light of the cultural analyses in chapters four and six. Without the benefit of research assistants to code my hypotheses in the blind, I crafted the preference hypotheses in good faith, seeking to remain within the legitimate ideational scope of each belief, while ignoring—as much as cognition allowed—the researched results of the case. The fact that several of the hypotheses were not supported by the case indicates at least a measure of success in this regard.

Finally, a unique element of studying Goldwater-Nichols as a civil-military case study is that the policy itself attempted to overcome the applicability of one of the alternative explanations. That is, Huntington’s explanation of interservice logrolling and compromise is one of the dysfunctional symptoms of the defense system that the legislation attempted to fix. The provisions to strengthen the Chairman of the JCS were designed to create independent, cross-cutting advice that was not subject to the pressures of legislative compromise. Consequently, further research is required to assess whether Goldwater-Nichols succeeded in this regard. By studying another case that occurred several years after 1986, we could assess the extent to which the dynamics of JCS deliberations still resulted in similar outcomes, or whether more variation now emerges from the service chiefs. That analysis will have to come through future research, as this dissertation now examines a case that pre-dates Goldwater-Nichols. In the next chapter, we move back to the Carter administration and examine the creation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, the organizational precursor to today’s United States Central Command (USCENTCOM).
CHAPTER 9
THE SHORT, UNHAPPY LIFE OF THE RAPID DEPLOYMENT JOINT TASK FORCE

Soldiers and sailors, like civil servants, follow their own interests and habits unless they are told what to do.
— Kenneth Waltz

Since the massive campaign to liberate Kuwait in 1990-1991, the US military has marched to the steady drumbeat of war in the Persian Gulf region. From the lightning war of Desert Storm, through the monotony of Operations Southern and Northern Watch, to the decades-long counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, the American military arrived in Southwest Asia in 1990 and has never left. Throughout these two decades of constant battle, the military organization directing the daily grind of war has been United States Central Command (USCENTCOM), headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. The preeminence of USCENTCOM in recent military memory, however, tends to mask the very uncertain political and military decisions that informed its initial creation.

When Iraqi tanks rumbled south into Kuwait in August 1990, USCENTCOM was an unproven adolescent in the US military command structure. Just a decade earlier, no such entity existed. For much of the Cold War, in fact, the Middle East languished as the neglected hinterlands of European Command (EUCOM) and Pacific Command (PACOM), two US military titans primarily focused on defending Western Europe, and South Korea and Japan, respectively. But in 1977, new strategic realities prompted the Carter administration to create a US military organization focused on the Middle East. Toward that end, President Carter signed a Presidential Directive in August 1977 directing that such a force be established. Not until two and a half years later, however, did the Joint Chiefs of Staff create the Rapid Deployment Joint

1 Waltz 1981, 72.
Task Force (RDJTF) to combine forces from all four services to deploy on short notice to the Persian Gulf region. Three years later, after great controversy and political fracas, the RDJTF was deactivated and USCENTCOM established in its place. If Carter directed the creation of this military force in 1977, why did it take nearly six years to create USCENTCOM? Is this a case of “military shirking” *par excellence*, or are there other dynamics in play?

This dissertation asks why the US military services respond as they do to both proposed and ratified policies, and why these responses sometimes vary among the services. As a second empirical test of my theory, this chapter presents a focused case study on the creation and development of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF). The chapter highlights the period from 1977 through 1983, from the Carter administration’s specification of the Persian Gulf as a region of likely military conflict through President Ronald Reagan’s decision to establish USCENTCOM on 1 January 1983. The RDJTF thus served as the organizational bridge between a time when the United States had no military command focused on the Middle East to a period in which that military command — USCENTCOM — monopolized US military activity for over 20 years.

*Challenging the Soviets, Challenging Convention*

The RDJTF joined the American military structure in 1980 to counter a specific and menacing threat. During the late 1970s, when US, European, and Japanese dependence on Middle Eastern oil was particularly acute, the Soviet Union began projecting power abroad and appeared capable of seizing Iranian oil fields with little resistance (McNaugher 1983, McNaugher 1985). These realities prompted a troubling strategic question. How could the US military deter or repel a Soviet invasion of Persian Gulf oil facilities? And how could it do so without regional bases or new military forces, while still meeting alliance commitments in Europe and East Asia? Without any good answers, the American defense community clamored
for the least bad one it could find. The result was the RDJTF, a military organization steeped in controversy from cradle to grave.

The conventional wisdom and prevailing histories of the RDJTF paint the US military in rather unflattering shades of recalcitrance (e.g., Bliddal 2011, Odom 2006, Njolstad 2004). The common view tends to indict the military on two notable charges. First, the military services appear to ignore quite deliberately the August 1977 presidential directive to create a Rapid Deployment Force (Odom 2006, 58). The services evidently had no interest or motivation to create the force, so they simply did nothing. Second, once the civilians put enough pressure on the military to generate action, the Army and Marine Corps appear to lock horns in extreme interservice rivalry, wrestling for control of the fledgling RDJTF. From ignoring the president to strangling a baby in a custodial fight, this appears to be a case of strikingly poor civil-military relations.

The evidence and analysis marshaled in this chapter challenge the conventional wisdom. Drawing on previously classified data obtained from eight archival sites, amplified by interviews with several key figures, I argue that the military services’ behavior during this period was actually more complex and principled than existing analyses suggest. The case of the RDJTF is one in which political ambiguity, competing demands, limited resources, genuine differences of strategic thought, and clashing first principles all collided to create suboptimal

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2 The names Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) and Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) were often used interchangeably, but were not the same thing. The RDF was the general name for the military’s response capability, most often used by civilians in the NSC and outside the Pentagon. The actual RDJTF was the specific Joint Task Force that fulfilled the general concept of the RDF.


4 Primary source material was obtained from the Jimmy Carter presidential library (Atlanta, GA), the Library of Congress (Washington, DC), the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center (Carlisle, PA), the Air Force Historical Research Agency (Montgomery, AL), the Marine Corps Historical Division and the Marine Corps Archives (Quantico, VA), the Pentagon Library, and the Joint Staff History Office in the Pentagon. Interview participants included the Honorable Robert Murray, General (Ret.) P.X. Kelley, General (Ret.) Volney Warner, General (Ret.) Carl Stiner, and Lieutenant General (Ret.) Dale Vesser.
political compromises. In this very difficult case of crafting politico-military strategy, the road of faithful military compliance (or “working”) was not a well-marked path from which the services deliberately veered to go their own way. Instead, the pathway of compliance was highly uncertain, wrapped up in a “wicked problem” that defied easy answers or straightforward solutions (Rittel and Webber 1973).

Consequently, the military agent’s behavior cannot easily be categorized as “shirking” when a reasonable concept of “working” is difficult to imagine. Similarly, I argue that casting all military disagreements as reflexive interservice rivalry is a rhetorical and analytical shortcut that obscures the substance of meaningful strategic debate. Throughout the narrative and analysis of this chapter, I demonstrate that the actual warp and woof of American civil-military relations is far more textured and intriguing than existing histories have captured.

Why This Case?

This chapter focuses on the responses of the Army and the Marine Corps to the evolving civilian policy to create a rapid deployment force for the Middle East. Instead of analyzing all four services, I concentrate the story on the two services that provide the greatest return on my research investment. Since most of the indictments of interservice rivalry are against the Army and Marine Corps, and since the policy was largely focused on land-based military operations, the Army and Marine Corps are the natural choices for critical study. Further, despite the apparent similarities between these two fighting services, the analyses in chapters five and six posit them as subtle opposites along the ends-ways-means axes of service culture. As discussed in the introduction to chapter six, several cultural contrasts emerge between the Army and Marine Corps. First, the Army has historically been needed but not wanted; the Marines have been wanted, but not always needed—a difference that confers a unique civil-military mindset.

5 In Rittel and Webber’s (1973) formulation, “wicked” does not imply “evil,” but rather thorny, difficult, and intractable social problems. Such problems do not have answers that can be “found,” but instead rely on “elusive political judgments” and have to be “re-solved over and over again” (1973, 160).
on each service. The Army is the largest service with the least coherent culture; the Marines, the smallest service with the most coherent culture. The Army is an egalitarian reflection of America; the Marines, an elite showcase of America. Finally, the Army is a massive heavyweight force, slow to deploy and slow to leave. The Marine Corps is a middle-weight expeditionary quick reaction force, ready to serve as first responders to any crisis, anywhere in the world. These contrasts indicate that these two services may respond quite differently to certain policies, and this case offers a unique opportunity to evaluate these possibilities in depth.

As the second and final case study in this dissertation, the case of the Army and Marine Corps’ response to the RDJTF comprises an essential complement to the previous chapter on Goldwater-Nichols. Within the larger framework of this dissertation, this case study serves several key purposes. First, unlike the previous chapter, this case involves a robust external security threat shaping the policy environment. The presence of this security threat thus activates important alternative explanations (Desch 1999, Zisk 1993) that were dormant in the last chapter. Similarly, this case deals with the critical work of crafting national military strategy: defining political ends and then selecting military ways and means. The creation and execution of military strategy represents a substantively important class of civil-military cases, worthy of critical analysis.

Third, this case offers three evolutionary time periods in which the civilian policy advanced and the military response varied. Consequently, this comparatively short span of six years (1977-1983) generates three sub-cases in which both policy creation and implementation can be studied. Since the previous chapter focused exclusively on the policy creation phase, this aspect of the present case is particularly useful, offering analytical opportunities in both phases and in the interactions between them.
Finally, this case confronts the charge of “interservice rivalry” on its own turf. I argue that disagreements between the military services are too often and too casually given this label, when in fact intra-military disagreements are actually quite varied. The so-called bickering between the Army and Marine Corps over the RDJTF is a prime example, described by nearly every history of the period as bitter interservice rivalry. My theory, however, shows that for certain types of cases, such descriptions are too blunt and analytically unsatisfying. The motivating logic of this dissertation holds that each of the four military services has a unique and pervasive culture that shapes a distinctive worldview for its members about how to defend the United States. Consequently, for important cases like this one where the path of compliance is unclear, military behavior (both interservice and civil-military) may not be a calculated decision to work, shirk, or compete. Instead, each service may well be responding to its service-specific understanding of what compliance means in a given policy context.

An old Pentagon joke highlights this possibility surprisingly well. One day, the story goes, the secretary of defense tasked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to “secure” a particular building. The secretary no doubt considered this a straightforward policy directive and he expected the military service chiefs to salute smartly and carry out his orders of securing the building. The four services, however, had their own interpretations of what this order obligated them to do. The Army moved out, established a defensive perimeter around the building, rolled out concertina wire, established checkpoints, and controlled all access into and out of the building. The Navy had a different interpretation; its sailors turned off the coffee pots and the lights, made an entry in the logbook, vacated the premises and locked the doors behind them. Building secured. The Marines, of course, acted like Marines. They executed an amphibious assault with a complete air-ground task force, flushed out all inhabitants, took the building by
force, and planted an American flag on the roof. Finally, the Air Force secured the building by negotiating a five-year lease with an option to buy.

With each of the services having a different definition of the verb “secure,” the responses varied wildly. Which of the services was right? Which one faithfully carried out the policy? By moving in four different directions to secure the building, the services no doubt frustrated the intent of the secretary of defense—whatever it may have been. Was this disobedience then, or a compromise of civilian control? Or, does military compliance take varied forms at times, with the services interpreting the proper dictates of a policy in ways unique to their organizations? As the following discussion illustrates, I argue that the RDJTF is a case in point. The Army and Marine Corps did indeed clash over how to craft a military option for rapid deployment to the Middle East, but their conflict was rooted in culturally different patterns of strategic thought, not reflexive rivalry.

Chapter Preview

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, it sets the geopolitical and military context by briefly narrating the US security strategy toward the Middle East since World War II. This section includes a discussion of the US military’s Unified Command Plan (UCP), and then notes the existing command arrangements when President Jimmy Carter took office. The next section of the chapter considers the essence of the strategic problem facing the US in 1977, and then invokes the various theories of military behavior to hypothesize how the Army and Marine Corps might respond. For my own theory, as done in the previous chapter, this section operationalizes each of the service’s cultural beliefs for the specific policy context, hypothesizing the likely responses of the services. In addition to my own theory, I evaluate the observable implications of several key alternatives, anticipating what we should see in the narrative according to each approach.
The third section of the chapter details the first phase of the case study narrative, from the signing of Presidential Directive 18 (PD-18) in August 1977 through August 1979, when Secretary of Defense Harold Brown provided a progress report on what the Department of Defense had thus far accomplished. The fourth section highlights the next phase of the narrative, from Secretary Brown’s decision to create a joint task force in October 1979 through the end of the Carter administration in January 1981. Finally, the fifth section of the chapter describes the final phase of the story, from the beginning of the Reagan administration in 1981 through the formal establishment of USCENTCOM in January 1983. The chapter ends by recounting its salient findings and synthetic conclusions.

9.1: Geopolitical Background and Military Command Structure

*The regular pumping of the oil wells of the Persian Gulf is the heartbeat of western civilization, and the globe-girdling line of oil-laden tankers an exposed artery.*


Before opening the curtain on the drama of the RDJTF, this section builds the set and assembles the props. How did the United States find itself in the late 1970s with a crumbling security structure in the Middle East, with seemingly no conventional military capability to shore up the situation? To address this question, the following section describes the historical role of Great Britain in stabilizing the Middle East and the increasing involvement of the US as the British slowly backpedaled home. Next, the discussion moves to the US military command arrangements covering the Middle East, noting the evolution of various attempts to maintain flexibly responsive forces to supplement the US forces committed to Europe and the Far East. Finally, this section concludes by noting the increased importance of the region in the 1970s as foreign dependence on oil increased and the Soviets appeared increasingly keen to project power beyond their borders. Together, these developments shaped the outlines of the vexing strategic problem that consumes the remainder of this chapter: how could the US craft a fast-
acting, mobile, and robust counter-Soviet military response force for a region 10,000 miles away?

_A Security Strategy for the Middle East_

The focus of American global strategy in the Cold War largely followed the operational division of labor established during World War II. During the Second World War, the United States concentrated its efforts on Europe and the Pacific, leaving the vast middle to its British allies (Gold 1988, 9). In keeping with its historical imperial commitments, the British assumed responsibility for the Middle East, Indian Ocean, and key parts of the Mediterranean region. After the war, the same arrangement persisted as the US assumed primary responsibility for Western Europe and the Far East, and the British remained committed to the strategic center. In the ensuing decades, however, the British slowly started to retreat from their imperial outposts. Shortly after World War II, they left India, Greece, and Turkey. In 1954, the British withdrew 80,000 troops from Egypt, followed by departures from Kuwait in 1961 and Yemen in 1967. Finally, British Prime Minister Harold Wilson announced in January 1968 that all British troops would withdraw from east of the Suez by the end of 1971 (Kuniholm 1984, 15-16; Gold 1988, 10). The inexorable British retreat from the Middle East thus left a security vacuum in an increasingly unstable region.

Increased American involvement in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region corresponded quite linearly with the British retreat. After World War II, President Truman pledged support for Greece and Turkey, and then established a formal relationship with Saudi Arabia in view of the Soviet army’s refusal to withdraw from Azerbaijan (Yetiv 2008, 28). Following the British departure from Egypt and the 1956 Suez crisis, President Dwight Eisenhower likewise pledged support for the region, deploying Marines to Lebanon in 1958 under the aegis of the Eisenhower Doctrine’s commitment to the Middle East (Gold 1988, 27).
After the British announced their final withdrawal from the region in 1968, President Richard Nixon adopted what became known as the “twin pillar” strategy of relying on Iran and Saudi Arabia as staunch regional allies. In keeping with the non-interventionist national mood spurred by Vietnam, Nixon determined that the US could not and would not fight other nation’s wars. While in Guam in July 1969, Nixon announced that Asian nations would need to accept greater responsibility for their own defense; the United States would support and help, but would not take full responsibility for their defense (Palmer 1992, 87). Consequently, and in light of a Soviet-Iraqi friendship agreement in April 1972, the US leaned heavily upon the shah of Iran as a major regional ally (Yetiv 2008). In exchange for promoting regional stability, the US opened the spigot of foreign military sales to the shah, allowing him to buy as much military equipment as he wanted, which ultimately amounted to one-third of all US sales between 1973-1978 (Yetiv 2008, 31).

In short, with standing post-war commitments in Europe and the Far East, the United States devoted only as much attention and resources to the Middle East as it had to. By relying on the British and on regional allies, the US maintained a modicum of stability at a discounted rate. But as the British slowly left, the US had to shoulder more of the burden. One commentator notes that “the entire postwar history of American strategic interaction with the region can be seen as an attempt—under circumstances of limited military resources—to cope with successive British retreats from Greece and Turkey (1947), Egypt and the Arab East (1957), and the Persian Gulf (1971)” (Gold 1988, 10).

*Military Command and Control in the Middle East*

In concert with shifting national security policy, the US military’s global command arrangements likewise evolved. During World War II, the American and British forces divided up the world into geographic regions of responsibility to unify command arrangements in each
theater of operations (Cole et al 2003). After the war, the US military crystallized this arrangement in the first Unified Command Plan (UCP) approved by President Truman on 14 December 1946 (Cole et al 2003, 12). Only a global superpower could be ambitious enough to create a document like the UCP, which effectively declared the entire world as the operating domain of the US military. To this day, the UCP divides the world geographically into major unified commands comprised of forces from two or more of the military services. Since the Eisenhower reforms of 1958, the four military services have been tasked to organize, train, and equip the requisite forces that are in turn employed operationally by the unified commands. In essence, the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines — led by the chiefs of the military services — are the force-providers. The unified commands — led by their respective Commanders-in-Chief (CINCs) — are the operational war-fighters.

Throughout most of the Cold War, the four major geographic commands specified in the UCP were European Command (EUCOM), Pacific Command (PACOM), Atlantic Command (LANTCOM), and Southern Command (SOUTHCOM). EUCOM and PACOM, with their preponderance of forces and important security commitments, clearly dominated the US military landscape. Moreover, EUCOM and PACOM shared responsibility for the Middle East, even though they were headquartered in Germany and Hawaii, respectively. EUCOM’s area of

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6 Cole et al 2003 is the authoritative document on the US military’s Unified Command Plan (UCP). The following discussion leans very heavily on this invaluable historical source, which uses all primary source data from DoD. In fact, many of the sources used in the work are still classified, but the authors have constructed an authoritative narrative which has been reviewed for classification and subsequently declassified by the Department of Defense. Unless otherwise noted, the details in the following paragraphs come from Cole et al 2003.

7 These reforms are discussed in section 8.1 of chapter 8.

8 This chapter uses the same convention as chapter 8 when referring to the commanders of the unified commands as CINCs. As noted in the previous chapter, unified commands were organized geographically or functionally and consisted of forces from multiple military services. Specified commands operated similarly with forces from only one service. The military commanders of these specified and unified commands were known as Commanders in Chief (or CINCs) of their respective commands. Today, these commands are called “combatant commands,” and as of October 2002 the commanders are called “combatant commanders” instead of CINCs. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld made this change, citing that the US only has one Commander in Chief, the President. See <http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=42568>. Because the title “CINC” was current and frequently in use during the period of this case study, I refer to these commanders as CINCs, even though that term is no longer in use.
responsibility included most of the Middle Eastern landmass over to Afghanistan; PACOM “owned” all the water in the region, as well as the Asian landmass from Pakistan to the east (Cole et al 2003). This contingent arrangement reflected the aforementioned national security posture, with a focus on Europe and the Far East and isolated attention in between. EUCOM and PACOM did indeed share responsibility for the region, but it was clearly not the priority theater for either command. The only US military forces active in the region were a largely symbolic naval presence comprised of a flagship and two destroyers operating out of Bahrain, called the Middle East Force, or MIDEASTFOR (Kuniholm 1984, 21).

The geographic focus and forward-basing of troops in EUCOM and PACOM gave the US military a fairly robust military capability in these two regions. The rest of the world, however, was not so capably covered. A thorny question thus arose and persisted, aptly described as a “hardy perennial” in US defense thinking (McNaugher 1985, 13): how should the US military organize in peacetime and deploy in wartime for contingency operations outside of Europe and Korea? Indeed, “[n]o issue connected with the UCP provoked more debate than unified command of deployable general-purpose forces based in the continental United States” (Cole et al 2003, 3).

Throughout the 1950s, the readiness and deployment of US-based forces was a service responsibility, as spelled out in the Key West Agreement of 1948 (Bowden 1992, 52). Consequently, the services pursued their own initiatives, with the Army creating the Strategic Army Corps (STRAC) in 1958 alongside the Air Force’s Tactical Air Command (TAC). In 1961, as the new Kennedy administration sought more flexible response options, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara wanted a pool of general purpose forces in the continental US “for fast overseas deployment” (in Cole et al 2003, 30). In March 1961, McNamara tasked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to integrate the Army’s STRAC and the Air Force’s TAC into a unified command (Haffa
The Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps objected to the plan, and resisted sacrificing the “inherent flexibility of naval forces” by confining them to a US-based pool of general purpose forces (in Cole et al 2003, 30). Nevertheless, Strike Command (STRICOM) was established on 1 January 1962, under the command of a four-star Army general, comprised mainly of Army and Air Force units and headquartered at MacDill AFB in Tampa, Florida.

STRICOM did not have a geographic area of responsibility but existed “to provide a general reserve for reinforcement of other unified commands, train assigned forces, develop joint doctrine, and plan for and execute contingency operations if ordered by the JCS” (in Cole et al 2003, 30). The following year, however, STRICOM was given area responsibilities for the Middle East, Africa south of the Sahara, and South Asia—a region rendered in Pentagon parlance as “MEAFSA” (Cole et al 2003, 118). No forces were fully dedicated or assigned to STRICOM; however, in the event of a contingency, forces would be made available from other commands or from the services. The command soon found it difficult to execute operations halfway around the world, without assigned forces, and while headquartered in Florida. When actual contingencies arose in the MEAFSA region, such as a 1964 rescue mission in the Congo and the evacuation of American citizens from Libya and Jordan in 1967, EUCOM actually stepped in with its more robust capability and performed these missions (Hines 2000, 42). With debilitating complications embedded in its DNA, STRICOM did not survive for long. When the Blue Ribbon Panel on defense management published its report in 1970, it “did not see the value of assigning the limited war mission to a unified command that lacked authority and control over its assigned forces and was continually overtaken by external events” (Haffa 1984, 95).

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9 In a rather tortuous naming convention, the Commander-in-Chief of STRICOM was thus given two command titles: CINCSTRIKE and CINCMEAFSA.
As recommended by the 1970 Blue Ribbon Panel, STRICOM disbanded on 1 January 1972 and US Readiness Command (USREDCOM) was established in its place, still headquartered at MacDill AFB, Florida. Readiness Command had the same general mission that STRICOM once did, but did not have any geographic responsibilities for the Middle East or Africa. Much like its predecessor, the mission of REDCOM was “providing a general reserve of combat-ready forces to reinforce other unified commands, conducting joint training and exercises with assigned forces, and developing recommendations to the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding doctrine and ‘techniques for the joint employment of forces assigned’” (Cole et al 2003, 37). The region south of the Sahara was unassigned in the UCP, and the Middle East was once again divided between EUCOM and PACOM.

With a focus only on training and not on employing, REDCOM was a rather weak unified command. The Navy and Marine Corps did not have forces in REDCOM, so the command was limited to the joint readiness of only Army and Air Force units. Furthermore, the military services had statutory responsibility for training their forces, which further diminished the role and prestige of REDCOM (Haffa 1984, 108). By the mid-1970s, therefore, REDCOM occupied a tenuous place in the pantheon of military unified commands, serving as “a unified command without assigned forces, a joint command limited in its doctrinal formulation to the operation of two services, a limited contingency force without a specific region of responsibility, an organization of loosely-connected forces plagued with erroneous notions of force flexibility to match a vague, yet global mission” (Haffa 1984, 113).

In sum, at the start of the Carter administration, the US military’s organizational capability to respond to military crises in the Middle East was clearly suboptimal. EUCOM and PACOM shared formal responsibility for the region, but were focused on Europe, Korea, and the Pacific. REDCOM had a mission to train and deploy US-based general purpose forces to
support other geographic commands, but was quite limited in its scope and effectiveness. Furthermore, all three command headquarters (Germany, Hawaii, and Florida) were many thousands of miles from the Persian Gulf region and ill-equipped to provide on-site command presence. Up until that point, the awkward command arrangement had sufficed, as the British and regional allies provided the necessary stabilization in the region. That would soon change. Why the Middle East? Why Now?

Throughout the 1970s, several developments in the Middle East served to increase the geopolitical importance of the region. First, the utter dependence of the Western world on the flow of Persian Gulf oil became an acknowledged fact. During a key National Security Council meeting in June 1979, for example, Secretary of Energy (and former Secretary of Defense) James Schlesinger “declared flatly that if the oil of the Persian Gulf were interrupted, the West was finished” (Oberdorfer 1980). The oil embargo of 1973 highlighted the acute sensitivity of Western economies to the price of oil, when countries in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) refused to sell oil to the West in response to its support for Israel during the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict. This crippling dependence on Persian Gulf oil was exacerbated by the geopolitics of the region: the Soviet Union crouched menacingly not far to the north. As summarized by Thomas McNaugher, “The presence of so much of the world’s oil in a politically volatile region just off the Soviet Union’s southern border gave rise over the 1970s to visions of truly worrisome threats to U.S. interests in the Gulf” (1985, 9). Moreover, CIA assessments in 1979 indicated that the Soviets would likewise become net importers of oil by 1985 (U.S. Senate 1980, 231). Not only was the West dependent on Middle Eastern oil, it appeared that the Soviets would soon be dependent as well.

Two other trends in Soviet military capability contributed to these unsettling developments. First, Soviet and US nuclear forces had reached a level of essential parity, which
then inspired an emphasis on achieving *conventional* parity as well. In a September 1977 speech, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown expressed that “[i]t should be evident that, in an era of strategic nuclear parity, we must become more concerned than ever about a number of tactical balances, and about the adequacy of U.S. and allied conventional capabilities. Strategic parity has not banished the use of all force; it has simply made the possible use of the more traditional types of force by our adversaries more tempting” (Brown 1977, Vol. VII, 2490). For regions like the Middle East, the umbrella of nuclear deterrence would not extend credibly; instead, the US needed to be prepared for a conventional conflict in a region where it had neither bases nor troops. Second, the Soviets had improved their military capacity to project power beyond their own borders, with improved airlift, sealift, and amphibious assault capability (Kelley 1980, 3). Disturbingly, the Soviets not only had a motive to seize Persian Gulf oil fields, they appeared increasingly capable of doing so.

The combined weight of these geopolitical and military developments spelled trouble in 1977. The Middle East had clearly become a region of critical strategic significance for the US and its allies. Western civilization drank deeply and dependently from fountains of Persian Gulf oil and could not afford to find an alternative. Historically, the US and the West had relied on Great Britain to underwrite security in the Middle East. But with the British presence in the Middle East in steady abeyance since World War II, the US had to fill the vacuum as events warranted. American military command arrangements, however, treated the Middle East as a peripheral theater, with no formal alliance networks, basing, or logistical infrastructure to enable a meaningful military response. Meanwhile, the Soviets appeared both motivated and capable of rolling south into Iranian oilfields, seizing the black gold, and holding the West hostage to its demands. Together, these trend lines created a very problematic state of play for the Carter administration. As the following sections will illuminate, crafting a sound military
strategy to counter these negative trends would prove just as difficult in practice as it appeared in principle.

9.2: Theoretical Predictions

*It appears likely that for the next decade or so, the American military will be preoccupied with the [Persian Gulf] region.*


With the stage set and the props assembled, how then do we expect the actors to play their parts? This section serves as a theoretical interlude between the geopolitical background and the substantive facts of the case itself. With enough background in place to appreciate the context, I temporarily suspend the historical account to consider the hypotheses and predictions made by my theory and the alternatives. Unlike the case of Goldwater-Nichols (chapter eight) in which several key issue-areas were already quite distinct and well-formed by the beginning of the case, the policy of creating a military force for the Middle East was more evolutionary and inchoate. Consequently, I apply the various theories to the general contours of the policy requirement, suggesting the likely directions in which the services will nudge the form and function of this nascent military force.

The section begins by clarifying the main contours of the policy requirement, and then discusses the ways in which such a policy spanned the equities of several military services and unified commands. Next, the section discusses which areas of the policy the case will focus on and which aspects of the case will not be evaluated. In light of these focus areas, the next section maps the Army and Marine Corps’ cultural beliefs—as developed in chapters five and six—onto these general issues. This important theoretical step operationalizes each belief into this specific policy context. Finally, I highlight the various alternative explanations that bear on the case, and specify the observable implications of what we should see in the narrative according to each theory.
General Contours of the Policy Requirement

The civilian policy to create a rapid deployment force evolved considerably over the six-year span of interest. Each section of the chapter will therefore clarify the specifics of the policy in each phase. In order to apply the theoretical frameworks preemptively, however, this section stipulates the general contours of the strategic puzzle informing the evolution of that policy. Generally speaking, the following parameters shaped the strategic requirement:

*Mission*: Provide a conventional military force to deal with non-NATO contingencies worldwide, but with a focus on the Middle East.

*Types of forces*: Use general purpose, non-nuclear forces that are not already committed to Europe or East Asia.

*Strategic velocity*: Create a rapidly deployable force, available on short-notice to meet sudden crises.

*Threat*: Prepare for conflicts ranging from small brushfires up through and including a full Soviet invasion of Persian Gulf oil fields (e.g., Iran).

*Regional presence*: Prepare to accomplish the mission without any military bases in the Persian Gulf region and without regional allies who appear inclined to provide them.

From that list, two important dynamics stand out. First, these mission parameters, taken together, represented an almost impossible military problem to solve—at least in the short run. Defending Iran from an all-out Soviet invasion would require both speed and mass, but these two requirements worked at cross-purposes. Rapid reaction forces (e.g., paratroopers) could get there quickly, but in limited numbers and with limited equipment. Heavy armored forces could provide mass, but would take a long time to deploy, particularly without bases in the region, without sufficient airlift and sealift, and without affecting force levels in Europe.
Clearly, there would be no good or easy answers to this strategic puzzle—only a variety of bad ones. The difficulty of this strategic problem captured the attention of military and academic audiences alike, even prompting academic heavyweights like structural realist Kenneth Waltz to weigh in on what a rapid deployment force should do and how (Waltz 1981).

The second notable aspect of these mission parameters is the extent to which they animated the institutional equities of numerous military stakeholders. Both geographically and functionally, the expansive and demanding mission overlapped the domains of multiple unified commands and military services. First, the Marine Corps clearly had a dog in this fight. The task of providing non-nuclear military force for global contingencies was part of the Marine Corps raison d’être. Furthermore, the requirement for rapid deployment, coupled with the lack of regional bases, clearly animated the Corps, which prized itself as the nation’s forward-deployed force-in-readiness. But since the potential threat was not just brushfires but a full Soviet invasion, the mission required more armor and firepower than the Marines alone could muster—fighting a sustained land battle against the Soviets was clearly a task for the US Army. Additionally, several unified commands had equities in this mission. Readiness Command (REDCOM) had a mission of training and deploying joint forces for worldwide contingencies, in support of other geographic commands. In fact, the requirement to use non-NATO forces put the mission further into REDCOM’s wheelhouse, as REDCOM “owned” the reservoir of forces for contingency support. Finally, the geographic focus on the Middle East brought both EUCOM and PACOM into the conversation, as both commands had a portion of the Middle East in its area of responsibility. Consequently, the Marine Corps, the Army, REDCOM, EUCOM, and PACOM all had important roles to play in sorting out a solution to a most difficult problem.
The case study analysis in this chapter focuses on several key facets of the policy environment, particularly those that were most controversial among the military services themselves. The discussion focuses on three questions that civilian and military leaders faced in creating and executing this policy. First, which components of the US military should comprise this response force? That is, should the mission be given to a single service or to multiple services in a joint framework? The second and most controversial question was this: what type of command entity should be established? Should this mission be given to an existing unified command? Should a new geographic command be created to focus on Southwest Asia? Should a temporary joint task force be created under the authority of an existing unified command? Third, how should the military services make forces available to whatever command entity is established? Should they be assigned to the command or just available when needed? Should specific units be identified, or just notional capabilities? The case study focuses its attention on these three general questions.

In turn, this chapter does not focus on the normative questions that dominated the press coverage and editorials of this period. Since the focus of this dissertation is on civil-military relations—specifically, the response of the military services to civilian policies—the chapter does not assess the wisdom or feasibility of those policies. As the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force was created and developed, myriad critics questioned the extent to which the fledgling force could actually accomplish its putative mission.\textsuperscript{10} Former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger penned a particularly memorable \textit{Washington Post} editorial entitled “Rapid(?) Deployment(?) Force(?)”, in which he argued that the nascent force was neither rapid nor deployable nor much of a force.\textsuperscript{11} Rather than engaging these debates, this chapter focuses

\textsuperscript{10} Led by defense critic Jeffrey Record, such criticisms were legion, to include \textit{inter alia}: Binkin and Record 1980, Record 1980, Toch 1980, Record 1981, Record 1983, and Lawrence 1984.

instead on the military services’ efforts to help create and then implement those policies, however unwise or infeasible they may have been.

*Policy Preference Hypotheses*

In light of their enduring cultural beliefs, how then do we expect the Army and Marine Corps to respond in shaping and implementing this evolving policy? The hypothesis matrix below (Figure 9.1) juxtaposes the Army’s six cultural beliefs against the three focus areas described above as well as a “general/overall” category.

### ARMY POLICY PREFERENCE HYPOTHESES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall / General Issues</th>
<th>Which components of the US military should comprise the response force?</th>
<th>What type of command entity should be established?</th>
<th>How should the military services make forces available to this new entity?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6.1: Apolitical Servants of the Nation. Faithful extension of American people. Members of profession of arms. | • Cooperative civil-military posture  
• Little if any engagement/lobbying with Congress | | |
| 6.2: Land Force of Last Resort. Indispensable last line of defense. Prepared to take more blame than credit. | • Expect the Army not to be concerned with its institutional position or security  
• Focus on finishing, rather than starting a war. | Focus on bringing forces with sufficient mass and logistical sustainment to finish a war. | |
| 6.3: The Army Way of Battle. Use technology and firepower to win total victories. Minimize political interference. | Bring enough mass and firepower to win the war, not just send a political signal. | Create entity for battlefield effectiveness, not for political signaling. | |
| 6.4: Synchronizing the Fragments. Waging modern warfare is an exercise in coordination, control, and synchronization. | Support full joint effort with all services participating. | For unity of command and coherence of effort, establish separate unified command for Persian Gulf region. | |
| 6.5: Fielding an Army: Regulars and the Militia. Army must be ready to expand. | Both active duty and guard/reserve forces may be required. | For major conflict with Soviet Union, manpower will be critical factor. Be prepared to call up reserves. | |
| 6.6: Soldiers, Units, and Leaders. Soldiers are building block. Designated units serve essential organizational and heraldic function. Leaders should have muddy boots. | Create fixed organizational entity with dedicated and established units. | Focus on specific, designated units, not ad hoc structures. | |

**Figure 9.1: Army Policy Preference Hypotheses**

Several highlights deserve comment. First, the Army’s self-conception as an apolitical servant of the nation (6.1) suggests that the Army will exhibit a cooperative civil-military posture, will engage in little if any advocacy with Congress, and will work hard to carry out
whatever is decided. Second, the Army’s self-appraisal as the nation’s indispensable last line of defense (6.2) indicates that the service will not be particularly concerned with the security of its institutional position, and that it will focus on concentrating sufficient mass and logistical sustainment to finish rather than just begin a war. The third Army belief in the matrix (6.3) concerns its preferred way of battle: using technology and firepower to win full and complete victories. This belief points to a likely preference for creating a military organization with sufficient mass, firepower, and command structure needed to win, not just to send a political signal as a token tripwire force.

Fourth, the Army’s dependent posture and abiding concern with synchronizing and coordinating combat units (6.4) suggests that the service will favor (1) a full four-service approach to the problem, and (2) a command arrangement that clarifies the chain of command and enhances unity of command — likely a full geographic unified command. The Army’s fifth belief concerns the manpower requirement of expanding rapidly in wartime (6.5), and thus implies that the service will show a keen interest in manning the new force and the reserve call-up requirements that might accompany it. Sixth and last, the Army’s belief in organizing its forces in fixed enduring units (6.6) predicts a unit-centric approach to fielding the new force, with a preference for keeping designated units intact and assigned to the force (as opposed to creating ad hoc task forces on a case-by-case basis).

The Marine Corps hypothesis matrix (Figure 9.2) predicts a different institutional response than the Army’s. First, the Marines’ historical role as the president’s fast-acting warriors from the sea (5.1), forward-deployed with the Navy, has several implications across this policy space. We can expect the Marines to emphasize their capacity to send calibrated political signals, to respond quickly to global crises, and to seize bases where none otherwise exist. Similarly, this self-conception will likely inspire the Marines to emphasize the degree to
which this supposedly new mission requirement has been the Corps’ specialty since the Revolutionary War. This belief also indicates that the Marines’ employment preference will be according to its Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) concept, in which the closest Marine forces get task-organized into tailored packages to meet a particular threat (rather than identifying specific units ahead of time).

### MARINE CORPS POLICY PREFERENCE HYPOTHESES

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Overall / General Issues</th>
<th>Which components of the US military should comprise the response force?</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1: Warriors from the Sea, Anywhere, for Anything. An amphibious maritime force, deployed on naval ships, prepared to secure an American beachhead wherever the President directs.</td>
<td>Focus on the Marines’ constant global presence as part of the fleet. Emphasize ability to respond flexibly to crisis, big or small.</td>
<td>Marines have been a rapidly deployable force since their inception in 1775. This has been, and remains, the Marines’ stock in trade. Mission should be— or at least can be—Marines only.</td>
<td>A minimalist and flexible command entity should be created that can draw swiftly from the Fleet Marine Forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2: Survive to Serve. As the smallest of the services, the Marine Corps must vigilantly defend and promote its role in America’s defense.</td>
<td>Expect the Marines to be very concerned about defending their institutional position and mission. Expect willingness to engage Congress and the American public as needed to defend its place.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Forces should be task-organized for particular missions, in keeping with the Marine Air-Ground Task Force concept (MAGTF).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3: Elite Warrior Identity. Being a Marine is an identity, not a profession. Marines run to the sound of the guns and take care of their own.</td>
<td>Marines can and will handle anything you throw at them.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nothing should be created that remotely duplicates the statutorily protected roles and mission of the Marine Corps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4: Faithful Stewards of the National Trust. Marines are frugal warriors, making do with less, improvising, and taking care of their equipment.</td>
<td>Expect willingness to make the best of any situation Expect readiness to improvise as needed to get job done</td>
<td></td>
<td>The type of command entity is less important than getting Marine infantry into battle swiftly and aggressively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5: Every Marine a Rifleman. Nothing can replace the man on the scene with a gun. All Marine Corps efforts coalesce in support of the Marine infantryman.</td>
<td>Focus on getting battle-ready Marines into the fight. Heavy equipment and fancy toys are luxuries. Marines are essential.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Figure 9.2: Marine Corps Policy Preference Hypotheses**

The Marine Corps’ precarious institutional position (5.2) suggests that the Corps will be very alive to any potential threats to its domain or any duplication of its mission. Consequently, given that elements of the proposed rapid deployment mission overlap with the
Marine Corps’ jealously guarded domain, we can expect a determined effort to eliminate the threat. This belief predicts that the Marines will either try to make this issue go away entirely or take it over completely. Finally, while these two beliefs will likely dominate the Marines’ response, their other three beliefs may affect the margins. We can expect the warrior-minded Corps (5.3) to handle whatever is thrown at it, the frugal Corps’ (5.4) to make it work on a shoestring, and the infantry-minded Corps (5.5) to emphasize getting rifle-toting Marines into battle over any other tactical concern.

As discussed in chapter three, my theory advances two main ideas, with (1) a focus on policy preferences informed by service culture, and (2) a focus on political behavior informed by the interaction of preference gaps and the anticipated (or actual) climate of implementation. Because the actual policy content and implementation environment vary across the six-year span of this case, it is impractical at this point in the case to generate specific hypotheses about the military services’ political behavior. Instead, at the close of each major narrative section and then in the chapter conclusion, I evaluate the specifics of each particular policy, any preference gaps that exist, the degree of anticipated or actual implementation slack, and how well the facts of the case reflect the core logic of the overall theory.

Alternative Explanations

My theory attempts to add important explanatory power to the field of American civil-military relations, but does not claim a monopoly over the facts and features of every case. Consequently, alternative explanations from the literature must be considered for a robust understanding of why the military services do what they do. Toward that end, I attempt to specify in good faith the observable implications of each alternative theory.

Bureaucratic Politics and Interservice Rivalry. As discussed in chapter two and briefly in chapter eight, the bureaucratic politics approach argues that the military services act like any
other bureaucratic agency, pursuing material interests and political power. This approach suggests that each military service will prefer and pursue ever-greater organizational autonomy, enhanced prestige, larger budget shares, and expanded professional turf. This approach is substantively equivalent to an interservice rivalry explanation. Descriptions of interservice rivalry essentially depict the military services competing against each another for the material interests just cited: budget, turf, and prestige. As stated in the chapter introduction, this bureaucratic explanation of interservice rivalry has been the dominant theme of nearly every history of the RDJTF and appears to have the right of first refusal to any explanation of the case. If this is correct, we should see each of the military services shaping the evolving military policy toward ends, ways, and means that accrue greater budget share, expanded turf, and enhanced prestige for that service. In essence, we should see a competitive clamoring for the material interests of money and power.

As a corollary argument on the competition for professional turf, this theoretical category includes Abbott’s (1988) thesis on dividing expert labor. The military domain is a professional sphere that the four military services inhabit together, separated by shifting borders of specific expertise. Each service therefore maintains an existential interest in establishing a secure professional jurisdiction. The actual processes by which these contingent borders are negotiated may look like petty rivalry, but in actuality are higher-order claims for organizational security. Consequently, by Abbott’s logic, we can expect the military services to pursue secure jurisdictions by appealing to their clients — the elected government and the American people — and marketing their superior fitness to address the issue in question. Such appeals could take varied forms, from media engagement through invoking legislative precedent to direct claims straight to the client.
Committee Compromise. Even though an important element of Huntington’s (1961b) work focuses on interservice rivalry, a complementary argument highlights the *conforming* dynamics of collegial bodies like the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Particularly before the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols reforms that made the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff the principal military advisor to the President, the JCS functioned essentially as a non-hierarchal legislative committee. Consequently, the JCS had to resolve its differences according to the logic and procedures of legislative compromise: (1) avoiding or delaying difficult issues; (2) “compromise and logrolling,” in which smaller interests are sacrificed to secure larger ones; (3) creating vague, ambiguous, or weak compromises that minimally satisfy all parties; and (4) building policy prescriptions on unrealistic premises (1961, 162-165). These insights suggest that while there may be rivalry going on within the Chiefs’ internal deliberations, the external result at the civil-military level may well be one of weak compromise. In general terms, therefore, we expect to see the military services—as represented specifically by the service chiefs in the JCS—responding to the civilian principals with a united front, responding to civilian initiatives with delay tactics, weak compromises, vague proposals, and unrealistic assumptions.

Security Environment. The third alternative explanation considered in this case study incorporates the nature of the external security environment in domestic civil-military relations. Michael Desch advances a parsimonious theory rooted in structural realism, arguing that civil-military relations are healthiest when external security threats are high and domestic political threats are low (1999, 6). In his theory, Desch aims to explain the broad trends of national civil-military relations across many decades, not the micro-trends of why specific military services respond as they do to specific policies. Thus, while Desch’s work remains an important argument in the literature, its macroscopic sensibilities are too broad to inform the very specific military behaviors of interest in this case.
A more tractable theory that incorporates the external security environment comes from Kimberly Marten Zisk’s (1993) work on military doctrinal innovation. While Zisk’s dependent variable is doctrinal change, not civil-military behavior *per se*, her insights can be imported usefully into this case. Zisk argues that senior military leaders maintain dual responsibilities of securing the state and securing their service as an essential means toward that end. In Zisk’s words, “the officer as servant to the state and the officer as bureaucrat tend to coexist inside a single mindset” (1993, 13). Military leaders therefore face threats both foreign and domestic—foreign threats to the state and domestic threats to the well-being of their organizations. When faced with both simultaneously, Zisk argues, military leaders will handle the domestic threat first, as long as the external threat is not acutely imminent (i.e., the nation is not at war). Doing so preserves the essential organizational means by which the state can then defend against the external threat. In this case study, therefore, we expect the military services to be attuned to the legitimate threat of Soviet aggression, but we do not expect that threat to override all domestic concerns. Zisk’s theory suggests that the military services will defend their domestic flanks first, since doing so preserves an essential warfighting means to handle the Soviets in turn.

In sum, a very demanding set of mission parameters staked out a difficult military problem to solve. Figures 9.1 and 9.2 summarize the specific vectors the Army and Marine Corps are likely to pursue in this policy space, according to my theory’s logic of service culture. The bureaucratic rivalry explanation argues that the services will compete against one another for more money, power, and preeminence, and Abbott’s corollary suggests that the services will market their prowess in pursuit of secure jurisdictions. The committee compromise argument holds that the JCS will generate only weak compromises and vague lowest-common-denominator solutions. Finally, Zisk’s theory argues that military leaders will be attuned to the external security threat, but will work to shore up any domestic threats to their services first.
The following three narrative sections of the chapter provide a wealth of recently declassified evidence by which to judge these theories and their relative explanatory value.


The possible use of the Mideast as a control level on Europe is indeed of concern… I would expect [the Soviets] to keep trying to achieve that leverage, and indeed that is one of the reasons why the energy problem is a difficult one, an important one, and a potentially dangerous one.

- Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, testimony to the House Ad Hoc Committee on Energy, May 4, 1977

This first section of the case study narrative covers the initial two and a half years of the Carter administration. The focus of this section is on the creation and implementation of Presidential Directive (PD) 18, signed by President Carter on 24 August 1977. That directive established the first written requirement for what would ultimately become the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force almost three years later. As this directive was signed near the beginning of the administration, without the explicit input of the military services, the analytical focus of this phase is on the implementation of the policy, not its creation. Why was the military so slow in enacting the President’s policy? Was this bureaucratic resistance at its best?

The following discussion begins with the process of creating and signing PD-18, and then mentions other key elements of the Carter administration’s policy environment. Next, the narrative highlights the mounting political crises in the Middle East in 1978-1979 and the increasing attention on the need for some kind of rapid military response capability. Finally, this phase of the narrative ends by examining just what the Department of Defense and the military services did to implement PD-18 between 1977-1979, and then assesses the civil-military implications of this period. The end of this section evaluates the various theories and their explanatory value for this phase of the case.

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Presidential Directive 18 and the Broader Policy Environment

Within weeks of his inauguration, President Jimmy Carter directed his National Security Council (NSC) staff to begin a wide range of studies to inform the policy vectors of the new administration (Brzezinski 1983). A series of Presidential Review Memoranda (PRMs) directed the studies, which then informed a series of Presidential Directives later signed by Carter (Dumbrell 1993, 194). On 18 February 1977, Carter signed PRM-10 to commission a “Comprehensive Net Assessment and Military Force Posture Review.”13 The memorandum directed that “a comprehensive examination be made of overall U.S. national strategy and capabilities,” and was to be conducted in two parts. The NSC portion, overseen by Zbigniew Brzezinski but actively led by Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington, focused on the Comprehensive Net Assessment of the US security situation.14 In this net assessment, Huntington identified numerous potential hotspots around the globe; his most salient conclusion was that “[f]rom their viewpoint the Soviets would be hard-pressed to find a better spot than Iran for a crisis-confrontation with the U.S.”15 Alongside this net assessment, the Defense Department conducted a Military Force Posture Review, and both reports were submitted for review in the summer of 1977. At a meeting of the NSC’s Policy Review Committee on 8 July 1977, Brzezinski assessed the reports together and noted the lack of US military capability to respond to Huntington’s concerns about a possible confrontation with the Soviets over Iran. Consequently, he recommended creating “a highly responsive, global strike force” to be prepared for short-notice deployments to non-NATO contingencies (Njolstad 2004, 27).

14 Huntington took leave from Harvard to serve as the NSC’s Coordinator of Security Planning in 1977-1978.
Brzezinski’s suggestion had strong support from both Huntington and Brzezinski’s military assistant, Army Brigadier General William Odom (Odom 2006, Bliddal 2011). The recommendation therefore found its way into the resulting directive. On 24 August 1977, President Carter signed PD-18 on the “U.S. National Strategy,” in which he laid out the overall national security strategy for his administration.16 The directive clearly focused on the US-Soviet relationship, which appeared likely “to be characterized by both competition and cooperation,” and thus pledged a US commitment to raise NATO-related defense spending by three percent per year. The directive also included a section on global contingencies that focused attention outside of NATO commitments. It specified that “the United States will maintain a deployment force of light divisions with strategic mobility independent of overseas bases and logistical support, which includes moderate naval and tactical air forces, and limited land combat forces.” Moreover, PD-18 directed that this deployment force be prepared to engage both “local forces” as well as “forces projected by the USSR.” Signed by the president, this directive thus comprised official national policy.

Although PD-18 was a top secret document, key elements in the directive managed to leak into the public eye. Two days after PD-18 was signed, the New York Times ran a lead article detailing Carter’s “secret directive on national strategy” (Mohr 1977). The directive, the article noted, “call[ed] for light, mobile and flexible forces to meet threats in such areas as the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and East Asia.” Weeks later, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown confirmed this element of national policy in a 15 September 1977 speech to the National Security Industrial Association. Brown remarked that the US needed to complement its NATO-focused troops in Europe with a flexible and responsive force for other contingencies, to include “a limited number of relatively light land combat forces (such as the three Marine divisions and

some light Army divisions); moderate naval and tactical air forces; and strategic mobility forces with the range and payload to minimize our dependence on overseas staging and logistical support bases” (Brown 1977, Vol. VII, 2491). In March of the following year, President Carter affirmed this requirement in a speech at Wake Forest University. Carter emphasized that “[t]he economic health and well-being of the United States, Western Europe, Japan, depend upon continued access to the oil from the Persian Gulf area” (Carter 1978, 534). Toward that end, the president affirmed, the US would support regional allies, while also maintaining forces of its own to handle crises. Carter acknowledged that the “Secretary of Defense, at my direction, is improving and will maintain quick deployable forces—air, land, and sea—to defend our interests throughout the world” (534).

Clearly, the requirement for “a deployment force of light divisions” was thus established in national policy, acknowledged in the press, and confirmed publicly by the president and the secretary of defense. Any shortcomings in military compliance can hardly be attributed to a lack of knowledge about the policy. But neither was this the only policy on the books. Before Carter signed PD-18 in August 1977, he had signed several other directives on the United States’ role in global security affairs. On 24 March 1977, Carter signed Presidential Directive 8 on nuclear non-proliferation policy, in which the United States sought “a pause among all nations in sensitive nuclear developments” and a strengthening of the current non-proliferation regime.17 Six weeks later, Carter bolstered his determination not to spread nuclear weapons with a policy that limited the spread of conventional ones as well. On 13 May 1977, the President signed PD-13 in which he “concluded that [the US] must restrain the transfer of conventional arms by recognizing that arms transfers are an exceptional foreign policy implement, to be used only in instances where it can be clearly demonstrated that the transfers

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contribute to our national security interests." In fact, Carter pledged the US to unilateral arms control without demanding similar steps by the Soviet Union. In addition to these non-hawkish presidential directives, the new administration’s first year focused on a second round of talks on the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II), arms control in the Indian Ocean region, a treaty to return control of the Panama Canal to Panama, and the historic Camp David peace agreement between Egypt and Israel (Korb 1980, Brzezinski 1983, Rearden 2012).

To the extent that the administration focused on strengthening defense, the attention clearly went to European and NATO commitments. Forces in Europe were in very poor condition (Murray 2013), and NATO’s ability to mass forces swiftly to repel a Soviet invasion of central Europe had been called into question by the Army’s Hollingsworth report in 1976 (Hutton 2013). Consequently, the main focus of the Defense Department’s efforts, as specified in PD-18, was on rebuilding and strengthening its NATO forces. But it was not long before conditions in the Middle East began to deteriorate markedly, prompting National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski to focus sharply on the crumbling “arc of instability” from Bangladesh to Yemen.19

The Arc of Instability

While the administration tried to focus on Europe and a peaceful accommodation with the Soviet Union, disturbing developments in the Middle East called for renewed attention. First, a border clash in east Africa prompted the Soviets to display a striking new level of power projection and military assertiveness beyond their immediate borders (Rearden 2012, 403). In late 1977, Somalia and Ethiopia clashed over the disputed Ogaden region, and the Soviets

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19 Memorandum from Brzezinski to Carter, 28 December 1978, “Subj: NSC Weekly Report #83.” In “Weekly Reports, 82-90” Folder, Box 42, Zbigniew Brzezinski collection, Jimmy Carter Library. Brzezinski’s actual title was Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, or APNSA. For simplicity and clarity, I use the more common title of National Security Advisor in this chapter.
suddenly cut off their historic support of Somalia and backed its rival Ethiopia instead (Jones 2012, 115). The Soviets poured over $1B in arms and supplies along with 17,000 Cuban troops into Ethiopia in the largest Soviet airlift seen up to that point (Rearden 2012, 403). Soviet mischief in the region then spilled into Afghanistan in April 1978 with a Soviet-sponsored Marxist coup, followed by Soviet support for South Yemen’s invasion of North Yemen in February and March 1979 (Kuniholm 1984, 28; Jones 2012, 115). The Yemeni violence deeply unsettled the political regime in Saudi Arabia, prompting their appeal for US security assistance, which the Americans provided in the form of $400 million in emergency assistance, an Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft, and a Navy aircraft carrier positioned offshore (Jones 2012, 116).

The most troubling development for US interests in the region was the increasing fragility of the shah’s regime in Iran. Despite optimistic and benign assessments from the CIA and State Department, observers on the ground recognized that the situation was becoming increasingly dire in late 1978 (Murray 2013). In late November and early December 1978, Deputy Secretary of Defense Charles Duncan and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Robert Murray traveled to Iran and discovered an atmosphere thick with such tension and anti-shah sentiment that “you could almost cut it with a knife” (Murray 2013). The situation escalated on 27 December 1978, a day described as one of “wild lawlessness and shooting in the capital,” prompting the shah to flee the country in mid-January 1979 (Rearden 2012, 406). The Persian pillar in the American Twin Pillar strategy had crumbled.

As the Middle East convulsed with seismic instability, Brzezinski’s weekly updates to the President reflected his mounting unease. His weekly report on 13 October 1978 warned Carter that the region was beginning to simmer, specifying that “the areas of likely instability

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20 In his 28 December 1978 memo to the President (cited above), Brzezinski warned that “the disintegration of Iran...would be the most massive American defeat since the beginning of the Cold War, overshadowing in its real consequences the setback in Vietnam.”
and potential conflict will be Indian Ocean littoral states.” Brzezinski’s warnings became more specific in December 1978, as he outlined an “arc of crisis...stretching from Chittagong (Bangladesh) through Islamabad to Aden,” which represented the United States’ “greatest vulnerability.” The following March (1979), one of Brzezinski’s weekly reports to the President included a 13-page report entitled “Comprehensive Net Assessment 1978” (CNA 78), detailing the NSC’s latest appraisal of the strategic balance with the Soviet Union. The assessment noted that within the previous two years, the Soviets had gained important footholds in Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and South Yemen, while the US had been focusing its attention on Europe. Further, the assessment warned that “despite the emphasis in PD-18 on the need to enhance U.S. strategic mobility and to develop a quick reaction force, the unfavorable trend in power projection continues” (10). Overall, CNA 78 called for heightened US attention on the Middle East as the location of most likely conflict with the Soviet Union.

Two key NSC meetings in May and June 1979 reinforced this renewed focus on the US military’s capability to respond quickly to Mideast crises. First, on 11 May 1979, the principals agreed that “the Saudis have lost confidence in the US ability to help them manage their security problems, and that an important objective in our future plans is to reverse that perception.” Consequently, they discussed various strategies for strengthening US capability in the region, to include increasing American naval presence, pre-positioning equipment at regional bases, and generating “the rapid capability to respond to requests for military assistance” (2). A second round of important NSC meetings, held on 21-22 June 1979,

concluded that “the Persian Gulf region has become a region ranking barely behind Northeast Asia and Europe in strategic importance.” The background papers prepared by the Defense Department for these NSC meetings conveyed an “acute anxiety based on the perception of vulnerability: US interests in the area are extremely vital; the potential threats to them are immediate and powerful; US capabilities in the area, under stress, are very weak.”

What steps had the Department of Defense taken to address this acute anxiety? That very question preoccupied Brzezinski and Carter in July 1979. On 9 July 1979, Brzezinski sent a memo to Secretary of Defense Harold Brown asking for an update on the “Persian Gulf Contingency Forces.” Brzezinski reminded Brown of Carter’s clear directive in PD-18 to maintain a light deployment force, and then asked for an update on what the Department of Defense had specifically accomplished since PD-18 had been signed two years prior. Brzezinski followed up with yet another memo to Brown on 3 August 1979, reiterating his request for an update. President Carter also wondered about the Defense Department’s progress and was apparently underwhelmed by what he had seen. His hand-written notes in the margin of one of Brzezinski’s update memos read, “I don’t see that any progress has actually been made.”

What Was the Department of Defense Doing for Two Years?

The discussion thus far substantiates that President Carter clearly established a requirement for a light deployable military force; the Middle East was increasingly vital and unstable; the Soviets were encroaching farther into the region; and the NSC and the president

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25 Memorandum from Ermarth and Sick to Brzezinski, 19 June 1979, “Subj: PRCs on Middle East / Persian Gulf.” In “Southwest Asia/ Persian Gulf – [2/79 - 12/79]” Folder, Box 15, Zbigniew Brzezinski collection, Jimmy Carter library. This memo was drafted for Brzezinski before the meetings, stating the conclusion that Brzezinski needed to emphasize in the Policy Review Committee the next day.
were thus far unsatisfied with the military’s response. The rest of the discussion on this phase of the narrative focuses first on what the military had been doing, followed by a concluding analysis of why.

While the data is indeed limited, some evidence exists of attempts by DoD to take action on the PD-18 requirement. One of the first public descriptions of the military’s response was an article in *US News and World Report* on 27 February 1978, which discussed the development of an “elite military strike force to rush to any trouble spot in the world.”30 The article noted that two Army divisions and one Marine division had been earmarked for the force, but serious planning was “still at an early stage in the Pentagon.” Finally, the article rightly noted that the military faced its “most formidable problem” in strategic lift—how to get forces to the Persian Gulf by air and by sea quickly enough to repel the Soviets.

These early efforts at planning were followed by a more deliberate strategy review in the summer of 1978 (Haffa 1984, Palmer 1992). The Joint Chiefs of Staff sent their summary report to the Secretary of Defense on 7 September 1978, in a message entitled “Review of US Strategy Related to the Middle East and the Persian Gulf.”31 In their report, the JCS affirmed that the US had three major national interests in the region: assuring access to oil; preventing “an inimical power or combination of powers from establishing hegemony;” and defending the continued existence of the state of Israel (Palmer 1992, 102). To secure those interests, the Chiefs made a series of recommendations for an expanded military presence in the region by increasing deployments of US naval and marine forces, improving facilities on the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean and securing base access agreements with Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Djibouti (Palmer 1992, 103).

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31 This JCS memorandum to the Secretary of Defense is annotated as a source document for the 10 May 1979 Memorandum from the JCS to the Secretary of Defense, “Subj: US Strategy and Defense Policy for the Middle East and Persian Gulf.” Jimmy Carter Library, RAC Project Number NLC-20-24-2-1-0.
The Department of Defense’s attention on the Persian Gulf increased significantly with the rising turmoil in Iran. After the shah was deposed, Secretary of Defense Brown met with the JCS on 9 January 1979 to hear their current plan for protecting Persian Gulf oil fields (Crist 2012, 38). The plan was put together by EUCOM, the unified command responsible for the Arabian Peninsula. The hastily drafted plan was “rudimentary at best,” and Robert Murray remembered that it called for “all of the Army, all of the Air Force, most of the Navy and all of the Marines Corps, and they still couldn’t tell you what the outcome would be” (Murray 2013). Needless to say, Murray noted, “the Secretary was underwhelmed.” Secretary Brown then personally visited regional allies in the Persian Gulf from 9-19 February 1979 (Oberdorfer 1980), and upon his return he tasked the JCS to draft a plan to improve US military presence in that critical region. Without access to local bases, the Chiefs could do little more than recommend an extensive series of war-game exercises with regional allies, which in the aggregate would maintain a thin but continuous US military presence in the region (Crist 2012, 39).

The Chiefs’ concern with regional access headlined their May 1979 paper for Secretary Brown as well. In preparation for Brown’s NSC meetings, the JCS sent the secretary a memo on 10 May 1979, with an attached paper that discussed “a proposed US national strategy and outline[d] a defense policy that would enhance US capabilities to protect US, NATO allies’, and Japanese interests in the region.” In addition to proposals to augment indigenous forces for their territorial defense, the Joint Chiefs’ paper offered a summary conclusion that “the United States must develop the capability to project a multi division force from CONUS, supported by air and naval forces” (15). The concern of the chiefs was not in maintaining light divisions as called for in PD-18, but in getting them to the fight swiftly enough and in sufficient numbers.

While the JCS reviewed national strategy and responded to Brown’s requests, the services themselves made various efforts to implement the PD-18 guidance. The Army in particular had revitalized its old Strategic Army Corps (STRAC) idea and was developing a “unilateral corps” for rapid response to non-NATO emergencies. On 20 April 1979, the New York Times reported that the collapse of Iranian military power had propelled the Army to “establish a force of 100,000 troops, including 40,000 combat soldiers” that were not pledged to the defense of Europe.\footnote{Drew Middleton. 1979. “U.S. Planning to Establish Force for Quick Mideast Intervention.” New York Times. April 20.} On 21 June 1979, the outgoing Chief of Staff of the Army confirmed the service’s plan for the unilateral corps. In his final press conference with the Pentagon media, General Bernard Rogers noted that “the Army has always had…what we call the heavy/light corps, which was a spectrum of forces from a platoon of rangers all the way up to a three-division corps, with supporting forces, of about 100,000. We are designing what will be known as the unilateral corps, and it will be a spin-off from that heavy/light corps.”\footnote{Transcript of Rogers’ press conference is found in the first appendix to the 1980 Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) Command History.} When asked if the unilateral corps was just an idea or if it had been decided upon, Rogers replied, “It is decided to do this. Now the Army intends to do this, and the Defense Department, or Office of the Secretary of Defense also will ensure that the other Services have a capability along the same lines.” In a television interview three days later, Secretary Brown confirmed the four-service nature of the developing forces, which “include some Army forces which General Rogers…spoke about, but they also include Marine forces; they include Naval forces; and they include rapidly deployable tactical air squadrons” (Brown 1979, Vol. V, 1931).

By the following month, the nascent military force had been given its first name—the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). In a speech to the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco on 30 July 1979, Secretary Brown declared that “[m]obile and capable conventional forces are essential
not only to support our allies in Europe, but also to execute contingency plans to assist friends outside of the NATO area, should conditions so dictate and should those friends or allies request it. For this latter purpose, we continue to maintain ready general purpose forces—we have called these ‘Rapid Deployment Forces’—distinct from those forces earmarked for or assigned to NATO” (Brown 1979, Vol. VII, 2378).

Finally, in response to Brzezinski’s 9 July and 3 August 1979 requests for an update, Brown sent his response on 16 August 1979.35 He summarized the DoD effort by noting that “we have made some progress in the last two years; but the programs we have instituted since August 1977 are just now beginning to take effect, and most of our work is before us. Major changes in defense posture take five or more years — all the more reason for us to get on with it.” Brown then attached several amplifying documents with details of the Defense Department’s work. The first, “Attachment A,” detailed the various forces that had been programmed for the RDF. The Army’s forces included the XVIII Airborne Corps headquarters, the 82nd Airborne Division, the 4th Mechanized Division, and the 194th Armored Brigade. The other three services only listed notional capabilities to include an undesignated Marine Amphibious Force, three carrier battle groups, and six Air Force flying wings.

Attachment C to Brown’s memo included details on the various infrastructure support improvements at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. These efforts included improved fuel storage, a deeper anchorage for more ships, an expanded pier, and improved airfield facilities to include more ramp space and better maintenance structures. The last component of Brown’s submission to Brzezinski included a background paper entitled “US Capability to Respond to

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35 Memorandum from Brown to Brzezinski, 16 August 1979, “Subj: US Capability to Respond to Limited Contingencies.” In “Southwest Asia/ Persian Gulf — [2/79 - 12/79]” Folder, Box 15, Zbigniew Brzezinski collection, Jimmy Carter library. The rest of the discussion in this paragraph comes from this source as well, unless otherwise noted.
Limited Contingencies.” The paper noted the PD-18 requirement for a non-NATO contingency force, but identified a central problem in meeting that requirement: “very little of our earmarked contingency force can be quickly brought to bear in a Mideast crisis.” The paper then detailed the lack of sufficient airlift to get to a distant theater of operations, the bottleneck of getting adequate logistics support to the Persian Gulf, and the fact that most of the Army’s fast-response equipment was already prepositioned in Europe. To address these challenges, the background paper noted several DoD initiatives to improve airlift capability and to rely on allies for increased sealift, but the net result was the same. The US could not get far enough fast enough with sufficient force to stop a Soviet invasion of the Persian Gulf.

Assessing the Military Response

In light of the discussion above and in keeping with the parameters of my theory, how should we evaluate the military services’ response during these first two years of the story? Since the policy was enacted quite early in the administration, without the formal input of the military services, the focus of the case study thus far is on implementation. Why did the military act as it did, and should this response be interpreted as shirking and non-compliance? In the realm of policy implementation, my theory focuses on three variables: the implementation slack afforded by the policy, the extent to which the civilian principal is united or divided, and the preference gaps between civilians and the military. The following discussion deals with each of these variables in turn.

Implementation Slack. My theory conceives of implementation slack as the aggregate “maneuver room” afforded by four key elements of the ratified policy: its specificity,

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36 This paper was attached to the 16 August 1979 memo cited above, Zbigniew Brzezinski collection, Jimmy Carter Library.
37 This prepositioning effort was known as Prepositioning of Material Configured in Unit Sets (POMCUS), which staged most of the Army’s heavy equipment across outposts in Germany in order to expedite the equipping of Army heavy divisions against a Soviet invasion. For further background, see CBO Background Paper “Strengthening NATO: POMCUS and Other Approaches” (79-CIS-J932-7).
enforceability, durability, and imminence. As implementation slack increases, we expect that the services’ behavior is more likely to deviate from the civilians’ ideal point. First, how specific was the policy requirement in Carter’s August 1977 presidential directive? Unsurprisingly, those members of the National Security Council involved in creating the policy viewed the requirement as being quite clear (Brzezinski 1983, Odom 2006). In his 2006 history of the period, for example, Odom remarks straightforwardly that “PD-18 ordered the Pentagon to create a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) for the Gulf region” (58). On the basis of that clear appraisal, Odom thus contends in multiple places that the “the Pentagon essentially ignored the directive to set up an RDF” (2006, 58-59).38

Given his position, Odom’s perspective is understandable, but the actual policy requirement was not so clear. The language of PD-18 specified that “the United States will maintain a deployment force of light divisions” – the specific policy directed a force to be maintained, not created.39 Furthermore, a formal entity known as the “Rapid Deployment Force” was not part of the conversation until 1979 (Brzezinski 1983). Robert Komer, the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy during this period, later noted that the requirement for an RDF was “far too general and had failed to set in motion specific planning guidance” (Johnson 1983, 61).

None of the other three dimensions of the policy’s implementation slack tightened the reins on the military’s compliance either. Regarding its enforceability, the policy did not empower a unique constituency of stakeholders who would help make it self-executing. Neither was the policy a durable one like a piece of major legislation; it was a presidential directive that could be overturned any given day by another presidential directive. Finally, the

38 Other histories make similar claims, such as Jones 2012: “The Defense Department paid scant attention to the president’s direction for the formation of a deployment force” (114).
policy did not appear imminent, with no deadlines for implementation or accountability structures to force a compliance review. Overall, these variables suggest that the level of implementation slack was quite high.

Unity or Division of the Civilian Principal. The next variable in my theory of implementation is the degree to which the civilian principal is united or divided on the policy in question. The “divided principal” problem is a very important element in American civil-military relations (Avant 1994, 2007), and typically refers to the common disunity between the executive and legislative branches—the military’s twin masters. Theoretically, the more unified the civilian principal, the more likely the military will comply faithfully with the policy the civilians direct. By extension, the relative unity within each of the branches can have an effect on the implementation environment as well. In this initial phase of the case study, Congress did not figure prominently, but significant divisions within the executive branch echoed throughout this period. Three dynamics in particular served to attenuate the policy focus of the executive branch: a lack of personal attention by the President, a major philosophical divide between the State Department and the NSC, and a cluttered policy arena full of competing and incompatible demands.

First, President Carter himself did not give much personal attention to a rapid deployment force until the latter half of 1979. The PD-18 requirement to maintain light divisions for rapid mobility sprung from the collective wisdom of Huntington, Odom, and Brzezinski (Bliddal 2011, 13) — it was not a major policy initiative for Carter. Historians Frank Jones and Steven Rearden both correlate the tepid response to PD-18 with Carter’s lack of attention. “Brzezinski and his staff could do little to advance [the RDF] beyond the conceptual stage,” writes Jones, “because the president had no interest in it and did not view it as a priority” (2012, 126). Rearden arrives at a similar conclusion, noting that President Carter was
“a reluctant supporter to begin with,” who “gradually lost interest in the idea and seems to have forgotten it altogether once the Ogaden crisis eased early in 1978” (2012, 404).

A second dynamic that divided the unity of the executive branch was the major philosophical divide between the State Department and the National Security Council. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski headlined this divide, as Vance consistently sought to advance US interests through soft power diplomacy, while Brzezinski clearly favored stronger and more militarily robust policies (Brzezinski 1983, Dumbrell 1993, Hargrove 1988, Shoemaker 1991). Carter alone had the role of adjudicating between these often-dissonant sources of counsel, which he generally did on a pragmatic, case-by-case basis (Dumbrell 1993, 195). The differences between Brzezinski and Vance rippled across their respective staffs, generating a policy divide at the staff level as well. For example, after the NSC sent out its Comprehensive Net Assessment in 1978 (CNA-78) which pushed for greater emphasis on the Middle East, the State Department submitted its reaction. In a 1 May 79 memorandum to Brzezinski, the State department summarized its appraisal of CNA-78 this way: “the document appears to downplay an emphasis on NATO vis-à-vis strategic and power projection forces. We do not find the arguments persuasive and strongly favor continuation of DOD’s current European emphases as stated in PD-18.”

The divide between the State Department and the NSC, combined with Carter’s pragmatic selections between their counsel, contributed to a third attenuating element: a cluttered policy environment. The PD-18 specification to maintain light divisions for rapid mobility was of course not the only policy requirement levied upon a thinly stretched military force. The overall focus of the administration’s defense efforts—both in policy and in budget—was on Europe (Korb 1980). Rebuilding and strengthening NATO forces comprised the top

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policy guidance for the DoD. Moreover, PD-18 shared a crowded policy space with other Carter administration efforts on SALT II, nuclear non-proliferation, and arms control efforts around the world but particularly in the Indian Ocean region. An NSC staff member at the time noted that “the new policies discouraging arms transfers and nuclear non-proliferation were applied indiscriminately in ways that weakened the emphasis upon enhanced strategic capabilities called for in [PD-18]” (Hargrove 1988, 148). The resulting policy confusion motivated an apt cartoon which hung on the walls of the Joint Staff’s policy and plans directorate (J-5) in the summer of 1979. The cartoon depicted two military generals arguing on the battlefield, one with a set of plans to defend Persian Gulf oil fields, the other with plans to seize them (Starobin and Leavitt 1985, 18).

**Overall Assessment.** From the standpoint of civil-military relations, how should we evaluate the military response during this period? Clearly, the military response did not meet the full satisfaction of various elements within the executive branch. It is certainly true that the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not create a new Rapid Deployment Force with alacrity when PD-18 was promulgated. But is that a responsible standard by which to evaluate the response? While the services did not act quickly to implement this aspect of PD-18, they prioritized their efforts in Europe in accordance with established guidance from the secretary of defense. Moreover, as the discussion above demonstrates, the JCS and the services did take various actions to strengthen US military capability in the Persian Gulf region. In the course of their strategic reviews, the JCS identified a critical factor that made full and complete implementation of the RDF impossible—a lack of strategic airlift and sealift. Moreover, the PD-18 guidance did not have any budgetary initiatives or increases associated with it, making robust implementation essentially impossible without affecting force structures for NATO commitments.
Finally, as the military prioritized its attention and funding on Europe, it did maintain an existing capability to rapidly deploy forces for short-notice contingencies. The Army’s 82nd Airborne Division airlifted by the Air Force, together with the Marine Corps deployed with the Navy, constituted an existing capability to meet the intent of the presidential directive. In his testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in March 1980, senior defense official Walter Slocombe emphasized this very fact: “First of all, while the terms ‘rapid deployment forces’ and ‘power projection’ are relatively new additions to the jargon, the military missions they signify are not new at all. The United States has been in the rapid deployment and power projection business for a long time. If you doubt that, I would suggest you ask the U.S. Marine Corps, which 5 years ago celebrated its 200th anniversary” (U.S. Senate 1980, 306).

At this point in the case, the two variables of implementation slack and the divided principal appear to be doing most of the work. The third variable—the magnitude of civil-military preference gaps—is difficult to evaluate thus far. The civilians’ preference is rather broad-gauged and ambiguous, and the evidence at this point does not reveal many service-specific views within the military. My theory hypothesizes that high implementation slack with high preference gaps will lead to resistance and shirking, while high implementation slack with low preference gaps leads to a harmonious civil-military relationship. In this phase of the case, when civil-military preference gaps are difficult to determine, we do indeed find a mixture of resistance and harmony. The civilians with the clearest ownership of the policy interpreted the military’s behavior as bureaucratic resistance, while the services’ efforts to prioritize Europe resulted in a lack of friction (i.e., harmony) over the RDF issue.

In sum, these first two years of the case study, evaluated closely through the lens of theory, do not appear to constitute an unhealthy period of civil-military relations. In light of the

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41 Two days later, on 6 March 1980, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown used the exact same line in a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York (Brown 1980).
other defense commitments in Europe, the cluttered policy environment, and the lack of
adequate regional basing or strategic lift assets, it is hard to imagine what military compliance
should have looked like at this point. Indeed, the massive amount of implementation slack and
significant disunity within the executive branch suggest that the military could easily have
resisted and shirked if it had wanted to. It is not apparent, however, that the military attempted
to resist in a deliberate way. These observations indicate that one cannot, or should not,
abstractly evaluate compliance with a policy that is very difficult to implement quickly and that
detracts from higher-priority policy initiatives. In a complex international environment, with
numerous national policies and limited military resources, compliance in one area may well
result in non-compliance in another.

Assessing the Alternatives

Finally, I conclude this section with a brief appraisal of the alternative explanations.
How does the marshaled evidence comport with the general predictions offered by the other
theories? First, there is limited evidence commending the bureaucratic politics explanation or
Abbott’s corollary at this point. One could interpret the military’s slow implementation of PD-
18 as an entrenched bureaucratic response, focusing on the money and mission in Europe at the
expense of the Middle East. But while it is true that the services and the budget focused on
Europe, the analysis above attempts to correct the idea that this slowness to implement PD-18
was deliberately recalcitrant. Additionally, no evidence yet exists of interservice rivalry, but
those charges became more prominent in the next two phases of the story. Finally, we also have
little evidence in this period of Huntingtonian compromises or Zisk’s theory of internal threat
prioritization, largely because internal domestic threats to the services have not yet
materialized. At this point in the case, the JCS and the services appear focused on the external
security threats in Europe and the Persian Gulf, not on internal threats to their organizations.
The next two sections of the case study will provide reams of new data that animate these alternatives—as well as the service culture components of my own theory—in new ways.


*Leaving aside the question of whether the Congress and the nation would be willing to shed American blood on behalf of a rabidly anti-American government whose most significant foreign policy act to date has been the taking and torturing of US diplomatic personnel, it is not at all obvious that Iran is militarily defensible against a Soviet attack, at least by the United States.*

- Jeffrey Record\(^{42}\)

*The only alternative I see to a positive, yet realistic approach is for me to hunker down and say that the job is impossible. Well, the job isn’t impossible—not when you’ve got well over 200,000 people behind you who are willing, eager, and capable.*

- General P.X. Kelley, Commander of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force\(^{43}\)

This second section of the case study narrates the period from August 1979 through the end of the Carter administration in January 1981. During this period, several geopolitical events heightened American concerns in the Middle East, and the president and NSC magnified their interest in a military capability for the region. Meanwhile, the secretary of defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff labored to craft sound policies to enact the president’s intent. Within this crucible of mounting crisis, the military services clashed over the proper ways and means to implement the policies they received. Newspaper headlines captured public attention with stories like “Army and Marines in Battle Over Command of Rapid Deployment Force,” “Persian Gulf Command: ‘Shambles,’” and “Military Bureaucracy Curbs Emergency Unit.”\(^{44}\) In keeping with the overall question of this dissertation, this section focuses on substantiating first *what* the military services did, and then *why* they did it. As such, the narrative cannot possibly cover all, or even most, of the intriguing details of the case, but it disciplines the story to hew only to those facts relevant for evaluating my theory and its alternatives.

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\(^{42}\) Record 1981, 42.


Toward that end, the section begins by focusing on one aspect of civilian policy during this period: the initiative to create and launch “prepositioning ships” full of military supplies and forward-deployed in the Indian Ocean. Next, the discussion focuses on the most visible and fractious element of the policy: the military command structure for the Middle East. The narrative then flows through the secretary of defense’s decision to create a Joint Task Force (JTF) for rapid deployment, the JCS’ decision to situate the new JTF within Readiness Command, and the problematic efforts to implement these decisions. Before concluding, the section considers the evidence for interservice rivalry and assesses whether that label captures the prevailing dynamics. The section ends with an assessment of my theory and the alternatives.

Floating Warehouses — The Decision to Preposition Equipment at Sea

By July and August of 1979, President Carter and his National Security Advisor were increasing the pressure on Secretary of Defense Harold Brown to implement the guidance found in PD-18. A major aspect of the Defense Department’s difficulty in fashioning a capable and rapid military response in the Middle East, however, was a lack of strategic mobility. The US military lacked the ships and aircraft to get the Army and Marine divisions to the Persian Gulf swiftly enough to meet a Soviet threat with sufficient force. Moreover, unlike in Europe and East Asia where major regional allies permitted troops and equipment to be based there, the US had no such terrestrial footholds in the Middle East.

Consequently, one of Brown’s attempts to resolve this dilemma was to preposition large stores of equipment and supplies in the Indian Ocean on floating warehouses called Maritime Prepositioning Ships. The Commandant of the Marine Corps at the time, General Robert Barrow, recalled that Brown approached him one day and floated the idea of putting Marine gear on large ships that could be off-loaded in non-threatening environments.45

confirmed that the Marines could indeed execute such a concept but did not know what the Secretary had in mind. Brown then put money behind his idea, and in August 1979 the Defense Department launched the maritime prepositioning initiative (Sulik 1980). According to this new proposal, a small flotilla of large warehouse ships would get stocked with warfighting equipment and would remain at sea or in port at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. When needed in a crisis, the ships would be offloaded in a permissive, non-combat environment and reconnected with Marine forces arriving by airlift or aboard Navy ships.

Once Brown tasked the Joint Chiefs to pursue this option, Barrow passed the idea to the lead budget and programming officer on his staff, Major General P.X. Kelley. Kelley moved out to investigate the idea, but found very little support among his fellow Marines or the Navy Department in general. “On some days back in 1979,” writes James Kitfield, “Kelley could be heard shouting through the Navy Annex that for once the Defense Department wanted to lavish them with new equipment, and he couldn’t get anyone in the Navy or Marine Corps to show any interest” (1995, 238). Barrow found an equally chilly reception to the idea from senior Marine officers, both active and retired. The concerns appeared to be twofold. First, Kelley recounts that the Marine Corps was in a very poor budgetary position at the time, desperately needing more funds to pay for personnel and major equipment purchases like the AV-8 Harrier jet (Kelley 2013). Money for prepositioning would do little to pay for the Harrier or more Marines. Second, and more broadly across the Corps, many Marines believed that the prepositioning concept represented an ill-advised departure from the Marines’ signature mission of amphibious assault.

Consequently, both Kelley and Barrow found themselves “do[ing] a lot of persuading.” On 5 December 1979, for example, Kelley held a press conference at the Pentagon to assure “some of our friends” that the Marine Corps mission was not being changed (Wilson 1979). Instead, the Marines were merely improving their strategic lift in order to perform their historic short-notice tasking even better. Barrow likewise took up the campaign, focusing on prepositioning and amphibious assault in a Marine Corps senior leader symposium, pitching to his fellow Marines that the prepositioning mission was a natural fit for the Corps and not a replacement for amphibious assault. The Commandant even devoted one of his periodic letters to the entire Marine Corps to the subject of prepositioning versus amphibious assault. The two missions complemented each other, Barrow argued, in that prepositioning could facilitate rapid movement when secure port facilities were available, while amphibious assault remained an irreducible requirement when secure ports needed to be taken by force.

While Barrow and Kelley proselytized the Corps, Brown and the Defense Department started putting more money behind their ideas. The department’s five-year budget plan of 1980 included $3 billion for 15 new maritime prepositioning ships, the first of which was to be ready by 1983. The budget also included $150 million to charter a smaller fleet of seven ships for an interim capability (Korb 1980, 54). This interim solution of “Near Term Prepositioning Ships” had been proposed to the NSC by General David Jones, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, as a way to meet the strategic need while the full-scale ships were in production. Brigadier General William Odom, Brzezinski’s military assistant at the NSC, recalled that Jones talked with him about the

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51 Commandant of the Marine Corps White Paper 2-81, Box 19 of 23, Robert Barrow papers, Marine Corps Archives.
idea on 13 January 1980, and then briefed the NSC meeting on 14 January. In a memo to Brzezinski, Odom enthusiastically endorsed the interim concept, and noted that it comprised a substantive action that the president could point to in his upcoming State of the Union address. As predicted, Carter did indeed reference these prepositioning ships in his address the following week. In his written State of the Union message to Congress on 21 January 1980, President Carter commented on several new defense initiatives, to include “the design and procurement of a force of Maritime Prepositioning Ships that will carry heavy equipment and supplies for three Marine Corps brigades” (Carter 1980, 166). In the end, the Marine Corps embraced the concept, loaded the ships, and prepositioned a floating arsenal of equipment in the Indian Ocean.

Creating a Military Organization for Rapid Deployment

The far more contentious component of the evolving security policy for the Middle East focused on which military organization should be given command of the mission. Given that EUCOM, PACOM, and REDCOM all had organizational interests in the Middle East, and given that the worst-case mission would require the responsiveness of the Marine Corps and the staying power of the Army, who should own this mission? Should it be given to an existing unified command or to a task force within a unified command? Should a new unified command be created, or perhaps should the mission be given wholesale to the Marine Corps, which historically had served as the nation’s quick-response force? These difficult questions defied easy answers, consuming time and attention from civilian and military leaders alike.

54 In an interview, General Kelley noted that these supplies ended up playing a vital role in the US military’s success in the first Persian Gulf War of 1990-1991.
The rest of this section, indeed the rest of this chapter, is largely consumed by these questions as well.

After an important round of NSC meetings on 21-22 June 1979, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown sent the JCS a memo directing them to evaluate the command arrangements for the Middle East and Persian Gulf region (Cole et al 2003, 56). Before looking at the Joint Chiefs’ response in August 1979, some evidence exists of the Army and Marine Corps policy preferences at this point. As discussed earlier, the Army had already identified its non-NATO units as a “unilateral corps,” serving as the Army’s contribution to a larger four-service response. Additionally, in June 1979, the Army’s Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, then-Lieutenant General Edward Meyer, sent a memo to Robert Murray in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Aware that Murray had been reviewing the UCP and command arrangements in the Persian Gulf, Meyer recommended establishing a new unified command. EUCOM should not be distracted from its mission, Meyer argued, and “[t]he time is ripe to be bold and undertake those actions which most effectively advance our interests.” The memo never mentioned the Army and focused its full attention on national-level strategy and the national interest.

As the Army leaned forward with its unilateral corps, the Commandant of the Marine Corps apparently had little concern that the Army was encroaching on its prized terrain. General Barrow later recalled that he did not feel threatened by the Army’s enthusiasm “because it couldn’t happen...There was no way that they could acquire the wherewithal

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55 The author has seen this memo and verified the context and content of the primary source. While awaiting declassification of the memo, only information found in Cole et al 2003 is cited. Cole et al 2003 is a publication of the Joint Staff history office that uses all primary source documents from the Joint Staff. It has been reviewed and approved by DOD as an unclassified source.
56 Within a week of Meyer’s memo to Murray, he was promoted to four-star General and made Chief of Staff of the Army.
strategically to get anywhere rapidly in any size.” Instead, Barrow recognized that the Marine Corps had the only existing or foreseeable capability to “go first to make the initial contact and get the thing sorted out.” Moreover, the Commandant argued that the Corps could easily serve as the whole rapid deployment force or at least the lead precursor element, “as opposed to this crazy jointness that...still hangs over our heads in which it seems everyone must go together at the same time.”

To answer Secretary Brown’s June 1979 memo, the Joint Staff’s plans and policy directorate (J-5) collected all of the various inputs from the services and the unified commands (Starobin and Leavitt 1985, 22). Staff officers in the J-5 found that the right solution on command arrangements depended on how one framed the problem. If the issue were primarily one of defending sea lanes for safe passage of oil tankers, then it should be a PACOM mission. If the core problem was terrestrial defense and logistical sustainment, then EUCOM should have had the lead. Finally, if the crux of the problem was conducting phased, orderly, and joint deployments, then perhaps Readiness Command (REDCOM) should own the new mission.

Taking these views into account, the Joint Chiefs sent a 3-2 split-opinion memo to the Secretary of Defense on 29 August 1979 (Cole et al 2003, 56-7). The Chairman, the Chief of Staff of the Army, and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force favored assigning the Middle East mission to REDCOM, with support from EUCOM for security assistance and contingencies. The Chief of Naval Operations and Commandant of the Marine Corps held a different view; they favored

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60 General David C. Jones, Oral History Interview by Lt Col Maurice Maryanow and Dr. Richard Kohn, various dates in 1985-1986, typed transcript p. 241, Call #K239.0512-1664, IRIS #01105219, in USAF Collection, Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell AFB, AL.
61 The author has seen this memo and verified the context and content of the primary source. While awaiting declassification of the memo, only information found in Cole et al 2003 is cited.
creating a Joint Task Force (JTF), administratively under REDCOM, but with autonomy to “plan, exercise, and deploy forces to the Persian Gulf region” (Cole et al 2003, 56).

In addition to this input from the JCS, Secretary Brown gathered counsel from his key staff. The new Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Robert Komer, strongly supported the idea of a separate JTF focused on the Middle East. “When you have a new job to do,” Komer argued, “you set up a new organization to do it—that’s a fundamental principle of bureaucratic success” (in Starobin and Leavitt 1985, 23). Like Komer, Robert Murray believed that the Middle East required a separate military command, but that creating a JTF was the right intermediate step (Murray 2013). The situation required immediate action, and there was not time “to take apart the UCP” — so creating a joint task force was “a reasonable starting point” (Murray 2013). Taking these views into account, Secretary Brown issued his guidance to the JCS in a memo dated 22 October 1979 (Cole et al 2003).

Heeding the views of the Navy/Marine Corps team and his top civilian advisors, Brown directed the JCS to establish a Joint Task Force by 1 March 1980, with global responsibilities, but with an initial focus of “planning for rapid deployment force operations in the Middle East and Africa” (Cole et al 2003, 57). The president’s general guidance in PD-18 thus took discrete form in the defense secretary’s October 1979 memo—the official policy directive was to create a Joint Task Force with a global view but a Persian focus. How then would the services go about implementing this new guidance?

Initial Implementation of the JTF Guidance

With an established directive to create a new Joint Task Force, the Joint Chiefs started to figure out the details—for whom should the JTF work, where should it be based, and what forces should be part of it? When General Volney Warner, Commander in Chief of Readiness

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62 The author has seen this memo and verified the context and content of the primary source. While awaiting declassification of the memo, only information found in Cole et al 2003 is cited.
Command (CINCREDC), heard about Secretary Brown’s guidance, he immediately thought that REDCOM was the natural choice to command and lead the new JTF.\textsuperscript{63} “That sounds as if Readiness Command should be in charge of this,” Warner recalled thinking, “because that is what our mission is, to ensure the readiness of joint forces, maintain a headquarters to command them, and be prepared to deploy forces, headquarters, or both, to reinforce other unified commands at their request.”\textsuperscript{64} Furthermore, Warner notes that he spoke with Chief of Staff of the Army General Edward Meyer about REDCOM taking the lead role (Warner 2013), and Meyer agreed that it was an obvious fit for REDCOM (Starobin and Leavitt 1985, 20).

Warner and Meyer, however, did not represent the full spectrum of opinions on the issue. A staff memo prepared for the Chairman of the JCS in early November 1979 outlined the various views of the services on how to implement the Secretary’s guidance. By that point, the proposed JTF had a name, the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, or RDJTF.\textsuperscript{65} The Navy and Marine Corps, however, opposed creating a new formal organization and also “objected to the implicit requirement that all Services assign forces to the JTF.”\textsuperscript{66} Furthermore, the Marine Corps proposed that the RDJTF be specifically linked to a particular geographic region or contingency, rather than giving it a global charter for any crisis that arose. Finally, the Army took issue with the force structure construct proposed by the Navy and Marine Corps, who wanted to tailor specific task forces in real-time for crises as need. Instead, in view of the demanding mission

\textsuperscript{63} General (Ret.) Volney F. Warner. 2013. Interview by author. March 27. McLean, VA.
\textsuperscript{65} As was footnoted earlier, the names Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) and Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) were often used interchangeably, but were not the same thing. The RDF was the general name for the military’s response capability, most often used by civilians in the NSC and outside the Pentagon. The actual RDJTF was the specific Joint Task Force that fulfilled the general concept of the RDF.
\textsuperscript{66} Revised Briefing Sheet for the CJCS, 6 November 1979, “Subj: JCS 2147/627 - Identification of Forces for the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force.” In “Presidential Directives re defense policy development, JCS papers, 1980” Folder (1 of 3), Box 36, William Odom papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division. The Navy and Marine Corps had favored creating a JTF in the August 1979 memo; apparently, this concern in November 1979 was over giving the JTF too much formal recognition and status as opposed to creating an \textit{ad hoc} JTF as needed for specific crises.
proposed, the Army wanted each service to identify units to form the pool from which the RDJTF would draw.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff issued their decision memorandum on 29 November 1979, in which they “approved the establishment of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) Headquarters to be located at MacDill AFB, Florida, as a separate subordinate element of Headquarters, USREDCOM.” During peacetime activities such as planning, training, exercising, and preparing to deploy, this new RDJTF was to be “under the operational command” of General Warner at REDCOM. When the RDJTF deployed for an actual contingency, the Commander of the RDJTF would then report to whichever unified commander had responsibility for the crisis location. Finally, the RDJTF received the “initial task” of planning for operations in the Middle East and Africa, but was on the hook for other regions as well, when so directed by the JCS.

Overall, this collection of parameters did not constitute clean and coherent policy. Reflecting the disparate views of the JCS members, the RDJTF entered the world as a stepchild of compromise. This new military organization, for example, was to be both subordinate to and separate from Readiness Command—two concepts that make strange military bedfellows. Additionally, the RDJTF was under the operational command of one boss in peacetime and another boss when it deployed. Lastly, the RDJTF had a geographic charter for the Middle East and Africa that overlapped the jurisdictions of EUCOM and PACOM, and exceeded the charter of its parent command REDCOM, which had no geographic responsibilities at all.

The Chiefs’ 29 November 1979 decision memo also made one other notable stipulation. Near the end of the memo, the JCS directed that “the RDJTF headquarters will include a small liaison staff established in the Washington, D.C., area.” This liaison element, which came to be

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called the Washington Liaison Office (WLO), emerged not from military minds, but civilian ones. Senior defense officials like Bob Komer, Robert Murray, and Secretary Brown recognized that the policy action was in Washington, the best intelligence information was in Washington, and the Middle East represented a very dynamic and politically sensitive region (Murray 2013). Readiness Command, on the other hand, occupied a remote outpost down in Tampa, Florida, away from the action and lacking expertise in delicate Middle Eastern affairs. By creating a WLO in the Pentagon, the civilian leaders and JCS could keep a close eye on the RDJTF, ensuring that it remained responsive to emerging political and military requirements.68 In a follow-up memo in January 1980, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown made clear that the policy for the WLO originated with him, and was intended to improve the RDJTF’s capacity for contingency planning informed by real-world events.69 Like other features of the RDJTF, the WLO had roots in political compromise, directed by civilian authorities. In practice, the WLO gave the RDJTF a direct link and foothold into the policy community that its parent command (REDCOM) did not enjoy. As later discussion will illustrate, the existence of the WLO thus proved quite contentious and problematic.

In response to the Chiefs’ memo to create the RDJTF under REDCOM, the Marines worked to ensure a prominent place at the table. First, in conjunction with their implementation of the maritime prepositioning concept, the Marines received the charge of trailblazing the RDJTF with one of their 50,000-man Marine Amphibious Forces. The press conference given by Major General P.X. Kelley on 5 December 1979 (referenced earlier) not only assured the Marines’ friends about the concept of maritime prepositioning, but also announced that the Marines “had been ordered to organize a 50,000-man spearhead for President Carter’s

68 According to Lieutenant General (Ret.) Dale Vesser, the first Chief of the WLO, another rationale for the WLO was the need for secure communications between the JCS and RDJTF. Lieutenant General (Ret.) Dale Vesser. 2013. Interview by author. March 27. McLean, VA.
69 In 1980 RDJTF Command History, p. IV-23. Author has seen original memo and verified its content and context. Awaiting declassification of source document.
Rapid Deployment Force” (Wilson 1979). During the press conference, Kelley acknowledged that while the RDJTF was not a Marine-only outfit, Marines were uniquely equipped to lead the way. “If you want to place a well-balanced unit” in a remote area, Kelley said, “we offer this better than most” (Hoffman 1979). General Barrow advocated similarly for the Corps, sending a letter on 14 December 1979 to the Chairman of the JCS, General Jones (Crist 2012, 34). In his letter, Barrow reminded the Chairman that the Corps’ “role as this nation’s force in readiness is as important today as it was twenty-seven years ago,” apparently referring to the 1952 Douglas-Mansfield Act that etched the Marine Corps force structure into law. Furthermore, Barrow emphasized that the Marine Corps offered a “small, highly mobile, efficient, combat-ready striking force, which could be deployed rapidly as this nation’s ‘first strike’ capability…I want to ensure that these forces are properly utilized” (Starobin and Leavitt 1985, 26).

Barrow also took up his case with Deputy Secretary of Defense Graham Claytor, petitioning for a Marine officer to be placed in charge of the RDJTF to ensure the Corps would not be cut out of the loop. “You know how many people on Capitol Hill and so forth think that this should be a Marine show,” Barrow told Claytor. “If you really want to put the final polish on it, and make it look like it’s going to amount to something, send a signal that a Marine is in charge.”

Barrow’s sense of the Congress’ support for the Corps was apparently well founded. On 7 December 1979, a group of 104 Representatives signed a letter to President Carter urging him to create a worldwide Marine military rescue force. In the coming months, key Senators endorsed the Corps not just as the lead element of the RDF, but as the entire RDF. On 6 March

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70 Original memo from Barrow to Chairman, JCS, “Rapid Deployment Forces,” 14 December 1979. Personal Papers of General Robert H. Barrow, Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA. Memo not available during author’s research visit.
72 Capitol Hill Press release, 7 December 1979. In “Rapid Deployment Force (RDF): Inception” Folder, Marine Corps Historical Division, Quantico, VA. The letter appears to merge political discussions about both the RDF and a potential rescue of the recently taken American hostages at the embassy in Tehran.
1980, Senator Gary Hart gave a floor speech endorsing a recent *Washington Post* editorial by Martin Binkin and Jeffrey Record.73 Hart “strongly endorse[d]” the article’s conclusions, and agreed that “the entire Rapid Deployment Force mission should be assigned to the Marine Corps, rather than being split between the Army and the Marines as presently planned” (*Cong. Rec.* 1980, 126, pt. 4: 4942-4943). During hearings conducted by the Senate Foreign Relations committee on 4 March 1980, Senator John Glenn showed similar concern that the Marine Corps serve as the heart of the RDF effort and that its historic missions not be reduced in any way (U.S. Senate 1980, 311-312).74

Barrow’s logic, combined with advice from Robert Murray, apparently convinced Brown and Claytor to put a Marine in charge of the RDJTF (Murray 2013).75 Brown selected Marine Major General P.X. Kelley to be promoted to Lieutenant General and to serve as the first Commander of the RDJTF.76 Brown announced his decision on 27 December 1979 in a speech at MacDill AFB in Tampa, at the very location where the RDJTF would soon be established. There at the home of Readiness Command, Secretary Brown affirmed that the new RDJTF “will be part of the Readiness Command, it will be subordinate to the Readiness Command. It clearly is in line with the kinds of things that the Readiness Command now does.”77 Brown’s confidence that the working relationship was natural and straightforward would not be confirmed in practice, as Kelley would soon find out.

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73 Binkin and Record 1980.
74 Glenn of course had served prominently as a Marine Corps pilot and astronaut before becoming a Senator.
75 Deputy Secretary of Defense Claytor had worked with Kelley as the lead budget officer for the Marine Corps and liked him very much. The two became very close friends (Kelley 2013).
76 Kelley noted that the Army, supported by most of the JCS, already had an officer picked for the job. Brown’s decision to make Kelley the commander upset the Army significantly (Kelley 2013). The drama behind Kelley’s selection as the first Commander of the RDJTF is fascinating indeed, but will have to be told in a different setting.
Reducing the Clutter

While the Joint Chiefs and the military services took these initial steps to implement the policy, external events heaped added attention and focus on the Middle East. First, the confusion and chaos of post-shah Iran took a deeply troubling turn in early November 1979 with the storming of the American embassy in Tehran and the detention of 52 American hostages. Less than two months later, yet another crisis rocked the geopolitical map when the Soviet Union rolled into Afghanistan on Christmas day 1979. These two events affected President Carter deeply, and catalyzed a pivotal turning point in his administration (Dumbrell 1993, 200). "The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979 had a more profound effect on Carter than any other unanticipated event in his administration," historian Edwin Hargrove observed. "He felt personally betrayed in his efforts to win ratification of SALT II. The invasion changed Carter as a person, one of his closest aides thought; it steeled and toughened him and made him more forceful" (1988, 155).

The strongest evidence for Carter’s new forcefulness came a month later in his January 1980 State of the Union address. After opening his speech with the somber observation that the “last few months has not been an easy time for any of us,” the President’s speech soon shifted course. In what became known as the Carter Doctrine, the President declared that the Soviet Union’s recent moves to “consolidate a strategic position” in the Middle East were unacceptable. “Let our position be absolutely clear,” Carter declared. “An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force” (Carter 1980, 197).

Carter’s bold declaration of national intent had a clarifying effect on the policy environment. First, in light of Soviet adventurism and Carter’s speech, “the State Department
was no longer preoccupied with salvaging detente” (Kupchan 1987, 93). Instead, a new policy of containment had been revitalized (Dumbrell 1993, 200). Additionally, both civilian and military leaders interpreted the president’s comments as clear guidance in what had previously been a cluttered policy environment. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Robert Komer, for example, characterized Carter’s speech as new “marching orders” (U.S. Senate 1980, 298). General Warner testified similarly the following year; when asked why the RDJTF was focusing on the Middle East, Warner replied, “It was identified by President Carter as a new vital interest. Once so identified, the military must provide the forces, should they be required, to protect that interest” (U.S. House 1981, 260). Lastly, General Barrow later recalled that Carter’s speech was not dismissed by the JCS as bluster or bluff. The president’s address, Barrow noted, “may seem to be just words to some people, but the JCS…not only took it seriously. It alarmed the hell out of us.”

The clarifying effect of Carter’s speech found consistent reinforcement from Odom and Brzezinski at the NSC. Odom in particular felt very strongly about the need to create a new unified command for the Middle East, as captured in his many update memos to Brzezinski. On 7 January 1980, Odom noted that changing the Unified Command Plan (UCP) represented a massive and contentious task within DoD—consequently, neither Brown nor Jones would want to take it on. Therefore, Odom recommended that the NSC “take the ‘heat’ for them by getting the President to send a directive that it be done.” Two weeks later, Brzezinski took steps to follow Odom’s advice. On the day after the State of the Union address, Brzezinski sent Carter a memo indicating that the UCP should reflect “the increased strategic importance we place on

the Persian Gulf.” Toward that end, Brzezinski recommended that Carter prod Secretary Brown to change the UCP and create a new command for the Middle East. The following day, Brzezinski sent Brown a memo on behalf of the president, asking him to revisit the command arrangements for the Persian Gulf.

These memos were followed by many others like them in the ensuing months. In one of Brzezinski’s memos, for example, he referred to a new unified command as the “sine qua non for a Persian Gulf security framework,” while Odom kept pressing Carter simply to order DoD to make the change. Nevertheless, the enhanced focus on the Middle East, the clarified national policy, and the steady drumbeat of interest in command arrangements did not make the actual implementation much easier. The Department of Defense and military services struggled to find an optimal living arrangement for the new RDJTF. By February 1980, the RDJTF was just beginning to set up its headquarters at MacDill AFB in Tampa, at the opposite end of the runway from Readiness Command headquarters (Warner 2013). The two organizations would soon prove to be on the opposite ends of many other issues as well.

**Congenital Birth Defects: the Early Days of the RDJTF**

On a Thursday afternoon in late February 1980, Chief of Staff of the Army General Edward Meyer called Army Colonel Carl Stiner to his office. Meyer asked Stiner to report to his office the following day in his dress uniform and accompanied by his wife. When Stiner and his wife arrived the next day, Meyer promoted Stiner to Brigadier General and told him he had a job for him to do—he was going to work for P.X. Kelley to help establish a new joint task force. Stiner reported to Kelley the next day, a Saturday morning, and was on a plane to Tampa.
two days later. Stiner arrived in Tampa, checked in with General Warner at Readiness Command, and sent an official message to the Pentagon activating the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force as of 1 March 1980. For its headquarters facility, the RDJTF had been given an old alert facility at the far end of the base runway, a dank structure commonly known as the “molehole” (Stiner 2013). When Stiner opened the doors to inspect the RDJTF’s new home, he found that the facility had recently been flooded and was infested with coral snakes. Welcome to Tampa.

Not long after Stiner got the lights on and the snakes out, Kelley arrived from Washington and started to assemble personnel from all four services to comprise the RJDTF headquarters. The RDJTF was not new a new military force per se, but a headquarters element to provide command and control of forces from all four services when called to a crisis. As Kelley explained during one of his first Congressional hearings as its commander, the RDJTF was “neither a separate nor discrete category of forces…Th[e] concept calls for a ‘reservoir’ of capabilities and units within the country and from this reservoir, primarily from CONUS bases, we would then tailor our forces for a specific contingency” (U.S. House 1980, 3).

From the start, however, the policy parameters established by the JCS and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) made the RDJTF’s early life quite difficult. In their 29 November 1979 memo, the JCS had created the RDJTF as both separate from and subordinate to Readiness Command (REDCOM). This ambiguous policy compromise spurred friction between the RDJTF’s attempts to be separate and REDCOM’s attempts to keep it subordinate. General Warner at REDCOM believed that since a new task force had been created within his unified command, he therefore had responsibility for its direction and execution. Furthermore, Warner had strong feelings that REDCOM’s charter was weak at the time and that the RDJTF

84 Stiner relates that the RDJTF literally lived in “rattlesnake country.” Evidently, the land for that portion of the base had been acquired from a man who raised rattlesnakes to sell the venom to pharmaceutical companies. Poisonous snakes abounded.
offered a vehicle for revitalizing REDCOM as a meaningful command in both peacetime training and operational execution. “I felt strongly about Readiness Command and its mission,” Warner noted, “and the fact that it should have the worldwide mission and the RDJTF in a STRIKE command role.”85 Warner’s convictions about REDCOM’s proper role developed over many years. He had most recently served as the commander of the Army’s XVIII Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, North Carolina—the Army’s premier rapid-response force that included the 82nd Airborne Division. Through his time at Fort Bragg and after careful study of the history of Strike Command and Readiness Command (Warner 2013), Warner believed he “knew how to do [this mission] as well as anybody and better than most, including the senior people. So, [he] became committed to try and drive that system through.”86 Warner’s vision was to sever the historical arrangement whereby the Army-Air Force deployment capability and the Navy-Marine Corps capability never worked together—he thought that the RDJTF and REDCOM could fuse these capabilities into a meaningful four-service contingency response force (Warner 2013).

Warner’s strong feelings prompted a flurry of communication to the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. From the outset, Warner wanted to make sure that reporting relationships were clear and unambiguous. According to Kelley, after Brown and Kelley made their initial trip to Tampa in late December 1979, Warner’s follow-up note to the Secretary of Defense emphasized that everything would work more smoothly if all involved knew that Kelley worked for Warner and Warner worked for Brown (Kelley 2013). Similarly, within weeks of the RDJTF’s formal activation, Warner sent additional communiques to the Secretary of Defense, to include a memo on 21 April 1980 recommending that Brown “reaffirm

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your memorandum of 26 Jan 80 (paragraph 4) by directing that, by virtue of the Commander RDJTF being subordinate to USCINCRED prior to deployment, all pre-deployment missions (planning and exercises) and allocations (personnel and dollars) assigned to [Commander] RDJTF are through and subject to USCINCRED.”

Warner also pressed his case with the Joint Chiefs, frequently flying to the Pentagon to meet with them to petition for clearer working relationships. In a June 1980 memo to the Chiefs following up on one such visit, Warner emphasized that command relationships between the RDJTF, REDCOM, and the other unified commands “must be clarified to permit the RDTJF to smoothly function within and through the unified command structure rather than establish a duplicative and competitive structure.”

Particularly odious to Warner was the existence of the RDJTF’s Washington Liaison Office (WLO). “This sort of a liaison office,” Warner discovered, “began to circumvent Readiness Command, and dealt direct with the RDJTF, giving orders, guidance, and direction.” Of course, the WLO’s direct connection to the RDJTF was indeed part of its charter and purpose, as established by civilian authority. From Warner’s point of view, however, the WLO filled the critical communications role that Readiness Command, by law, was supposed to fill. Warner argued to the Chiefs that the WLO “establishes a special planning relationship with HQ RDJTF which bypasses the chain of command in which planning guidance from the JCS should pass through me to HQ RDJTF.”

The WLO, in his mind, worked for Readiness Command and not for the RDJTF; Warner’s 30 July 1980 memo sternly reminded the WLO that

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“liaison officers exist to advise on the status of actions and provide information, not to replace existing staffs.” In short, Warner viewed the WLO as an affront to the unified command structure, a violation of the chain of command, and a duplicative staff structure that prevented REDCOM from exercising its proper command over the RDJTF, as directed by the JCS.

While Warner pushed to subordinate the RDJTF more fully under REDCOM, Kelley moved out smartly to make the RDJTF concept work despite its tangled nature. Kelley believed that the RDJTF’s separate status communicated an important political signal of US commitment to the Persian Gulf region, and that the WLO served an essential role in allowing the RDJTF to respond to the fluid direction of the National Command Authority (NCA). In response to Warner’s proposed revisions to the RDJTF-REDCOM relationship — i.e., to subordinate the RDJTF more clearly under REDCOM — Kelley sent a memo to Warner explaining his position. First, Kelley addressed the role and function of the WLO:

> It is my professional view that the Washington Liaison Office is essential to the future success of the RDJTF...Moreover, while I admit that such an element may not be in keeping with more conventional traditions, I believe it responds to the desires of the NCA. If we are to provide timely and effective responses to the direction of the NCA and/or JCS, the Washington Liaison Office is essential to the process.

The second major concern in Kelley’s memo focused on the political signal sent by reducing the RDJTF’s stature so early in its troubled life. Quoted at length for its importance and clarity, Kelley argued that changing the RDJTF’s status could create a perception that we are taking an irreversible first step toward the degradation of the ‘signal’ which the NCA and JCS have transmitted to friend and foe, alike, in the creation of the RDJTF. It is obvious that the NCA has publicly linked the RDJTF with the Middle East /

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92 In an interview, Army General (Ret) Carl Stiner, a distinguished warrior and highly respected officer, said that Kelley was absolutely the right man for the job of leading the RDJTF in its infancy. According to Stiner, Kelley was “outstanding in every respect” as an officer, as a person, and was one of the best men that Stiner ever worked for.
93 Within the US military, the National Command Authority refers to the source of lawful authority for military action and refers specifically to the President and the Secretary of Defense (or their duly authorized deputies).
Persian Gulf to highlight the importance we place on that region. It is my understanding that the
NCA desired to send an extraordinary signal of U.S. resolve by taking extraordinary actions. Key
to these, of course, was the creation of the RDJTF, with the attendant publicity, together with the
fact that the NCA and JCS have given the RDJTF a ‘quasi-autonomous’ status…Simply stated, if
we desire to transmit a strong and positive signal of our intentions and resolve in the Middle East
/ Persian Gulf, it should not be obfuscated in a conventional bureaucratic hierarchy — it must be
highly visible, with sufficient clarity for all to see!

Overriding Kelley’s concerns, the Joint Chiefs attempted to clarify the command
relationships in a memo to the Secretary of Defense on 25 July 1980.95 The Chiefs made two key
recommendations to Brown. First, they expressed the “need to focus the mission of the RDJTF
exclusively on [Southwest Asia] contingencies.” The RJDTF would thus no longer have a global
charter, but would be a command entity focused on the Middle East. Second, all of the Chiefs
except the Commandant of the Marine Corps wanted to place the RDJTF under Readiness
Command for all aspects of pre-deployment activities, a point on which there had been some
ambiguity and confusion earlier. Additionally, the memo called for the continued existence of
the WLO to support contingency planning and “to provide adequate politico-military interface
with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and OSD.” In an appendix to the memo, General Barrow
elucidated the rationale for his dissent. Barrow believed that the proposed relationship “cannot
be supported” and results in “either usurpation of USCINCREDS command prerogatives, or the
unnecessary layering of command and control, depending on the point of view applied.”

Instead, the Commandant recommended that the RDJTF be pulled out from REDCOM and
placed directly under the JCS. In his response of 4 August 1980, Brown acceded to the majority
view and approved the JCS revisions to the REDCOM - RDJTF relationship (Starobin and
Leavitt 1985, 37).96

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95 Memo from JCS to Secretary of Defense, 25 July 1980, “Subj: Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force: Clarification of
Mission and Command Relationships.” In “Presidential Directives re defense policy development, JCS papers, 1980”
Folder (1 of 3), Box 36, William Odom papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division.
96 The author has seen this memo and verified the context and content of the primary source. While awaiting
declassification of the memo, only information found in existing sources is cited.
These decisions did little, however, to shore up the fault lines of conflict. In fact, in some ways this revision only reinforced the fundamental contradictions of the policy. The revised relationship attempted to subordinate the RDJTF more fully and clearly to REDCOM in all of its peacetime activity, but then gave the RDJTF a specific geographic charter that exceeded the scope and authority of REDCOM. For specific tasks like contingency planning for Persian Gulf crises, for example, REDCOM ostensibly owned the process of planning but had no responsibility or authority for the Middle East. Furthermore, the revised policy attempted to assuage Warner’s concerns about clear lines of command, but retained the WLO, the embodiment of Warner’s chief complaint. For the next several months, Brown did not issue further guidance on the command relationship and Carter chose not to force the issue by directing that a new unified command be established for the Middle East. Not surprisingly, the conflict and tension persisted throughout the remainder of the Carter administration.

Coding the Conflict

The discussion above merely skimmed the surface of the spirited disagreements within the US military during this period, but it does comprise a representative sample of what occurred. Before concluding this section with a theoretical analysis of why the military services responded as they did, I briefly evaluate the ontology of the conflict in this period. Is this raw interservice rivalry between the Army and the Marine Corps, as nearly every history of this episode describes it?

The preponderance of primary source evidence in this period indicates otherwise. Instead, it appears that the primary axis of conflict was the incompatible relationship between the RDJTF and Readiness Command. As the commander of the RDJTF, Kelley recognized that he had the difficult task of creating a military command ex nihilo, in areas that trespassed other organizations’ geographic and professional domains. He worked hard to make it happen, and
took advantage of the RDTJF’s unique “quasi-autonomous” status to get results and transmit the political signal he believed the NCA intended. Similarly, Warner believed that he had been given a job to do within the unified command system, to command and direct all pre-deployment activity for the RDJTF. Moreover, Warner had strong beliefs about the proper role and unmet potential of Readiness Command to serve as a four-service unified command that trained and employed forces in global contingencies. In his view, the RDJTF constituted an initial step toward fulfilling that vision. As discussed above, however, a contradiction was inbred in the policy. The RDJTF was technically subordinate to REDCOM for all pre-deployment activity, but its geographic charter and the presence of the WLO in the Pentagon gave the RDJTF operational responsibilities that REDCOM did not have. In the view of Brigadier General Dale Vesser, the head of the RDJTF’s WLO, this contradiction created the main source of conflict, as Warner attempted to get involved in operational matters for which he had no responsibility (Vesser 2013).

In late 1980 and early 1981, the inherent positional conflict between Kelley and Warner spilled into the press, which resulted in the various characterizations of fractious interservice rivalry between the Army and the Marine Corps (e.g., Toth 1980, Burt 1980c, Goodwin 1981). While Warner was in fact an Army officer and Kelley a Marine, the Army-Marine Corps axis of conflict appears to be overdrawn. Compared to the RDJTF-REDCOM tension, far less evidence exists of any heated service-level rivalry or feud between the Army and Marine Corps. For example, none of the lead players in the RDJTF-REDCOM tension (Warner, Kelley, Stiner, and Vesser) recalled that they received any input or guidance from their respective service chiefs, Generals Barrow and Meyer. In fact, Warner suggested that it was not the Army but Readiness Command that threatened the Marines’ mission (Warner 2013)—Warner’s preferred vision for a revitalized REDCOM was as a four-service command with the readiness and global
responsiveness that are the hallmarks of the Corps. Consequently, we do see evidence of the Marine Corps fighting to either own or dominate the RDF mission, but it was not the Army that was competing to be the alternative.

The views of General Meyer (Chief of Staff of the Army) during this period focused on optimizing the capabilities of each of the services and retaining flexibility in strategic mobility. When asked if the Army and Marines were arguing over control of the RDJTF, Meyer replied, “If there’s going to be an argument, it’s going to be a one-sided argument, because the Army is not going to argue with the Marines over this issue.” Meyer insisted that with 16 Army divisions, 3 Marine divisions, and an operational need for airborne, air assault, and light infantry forces, the mission required all the services and that each would have plenty to do. In a separate interview, Meyer argued further that the “Army’s principal concern in the RDF is that…we, the United States, don’t waste resources, designing into any one service resources or capabilities that already exist in a service today” (in Meyer 1983, 156).

Several years later, Meyer recalled that the principal source of argument with the Marine Corps was not control of the RDJTF but was “a power projection issue.” Since the primary obstacle to employing the RDJTF was getting troops and equipment far enough and fast enough, the military and DoD pursued an entire suite of mobility initiatives: a new aircraft for strategic airlift, the maritime prepositioning ships, and a new fleet of fast sealift ships. Meyer believed that the prepositioning strategy lacked flexibility since all the gear was preloaded and thus not subject to adjustment. “We were much better off,” Meyer reflected, “with all the divisions we have, with all things we have to do throughout the spectrum of warfare, to have a

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In sum, Meyer insisted that the debate hinged on identifying optimal means for strategic mobility, and “the arguments were not so much between the Army and Marines.”

Assessing the Theories

In light of the data and evidence marshaled above, how then should we interpret the military services’ behavior during this period? The first principal element of my theory focuses on explaining the military services’ policy preferences in light of their prevailing belief structures about ends, ways, and means. With the evidence cited above from Army background papers, the Army position within the JCS, and Meyer’s expressed views, the hypotheses thus far find a solid measure of support. The Army appeared cooperative in its civil-military posture, lobbied its position little if any, and did not appear to be institutionally threatened by the policy. It focused on flexible mobility initiatives to bring sufficient mass and firepower to any potential conflict, supported a full joint effort, favored (initially) a full unified command for the Middle East (per the 14 June 1979 memo), and designated specific units for inclusion in the RDJTF reservoir of forces.

The Marine Corps’ preference hypotheses likewise find support during this period. As predicted, the Marines were quite spirited in their vigilant defense of their statutorily protected roles and missions, even receiving the aid of Congress to support them in that role. A large constituency within the Marine Corps even appeared willing to turn down funding and equipment for maritime prepositioning, fearing that such a mission would detract from core tasks. Additionally, the Corps appeared ready and eager to own the RDF mission in its

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99 General Edward C. Meyer. 1988. Page 283 of Oral History compiled transcript. General Edward C. Meyer papers, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, PA. Meyer substantiated these comments further during testimony to the SASC on 29 January 1981, affirming his belief that “our Nation needs rapid sealift and airlift to be sure we get where we need to go. When you have a limited amount of force, it is even more important that you get there quickly. Rapid airlift and rapid sealift are essential to doing what we have to do in the decade ahead” (U.S. Senate 1981, 649).

entirety; and then, when a fully joint effort was mandated, Marines secured a prominent place at the table. Next, the Marines were more attuned to the nuances of political signaling than their Army counterparts, as suggested by their maritime disposition. Finally, the Commandant of the Marine Corps continually advocated for a command entity that was flexible, minimalist, reported directly to the JCS / NCA, and that did not duplicate the roles and function of the Marine Corps.

The second main element of my theory concerns the actual behavior of the military services, as informed by the interaction of preference gaps, implementation slack, and the unity of the civilian principal. During this period, as the geopolitical climate worsened, the implementation slack lessened and the unity of the civilian principals increased. Further, there were indeed preference gaps, but they do not appear to be primarily civil-military in orientation; the bulk of the spirited disagreement was intra-military. The primary axis of conflict was between the RDJTF and REDCOM, with a secondary axis between the Army and Marine Corps. As predicted by my theory, the services (here, the Army and Marine Corps) did indeed respond differently to the civilian guidance, but those disagreements were adjudicated primarily within military structures, not civil-military ones. Informed by unique belief structures, the services held differing conceptions of what compliance and sound strategy looked like. In fact, the aggregate impression of this period is one of intra-military disagreement over the optimal strategy for complying with an ever-clearer civilian policy. The weight of military effort is toward compliance; the by-product of that compliance was acute intra-military disagreement, which served to delay implementation and frustrate the civilian principals. But frustrating the civilians’ intent appears to be the byproduct, not the purpose.

101 When General Kelley was the Commander of the RDJTF, he clearly departed from this prevailing Marine view. In nearly every speech and Congressional testimony, Kelley insisted that the contribution of all four services was critical to the success of the RDJTF.
Interestingly, the most compelling meta-evidence for compliance during this period is the military’s acceptance of an impossible mission. When the basic concept of a rapid deployment force was outlined, and more importantly, when Carter threw down the gauntlet in his State of the Union address, the United States did not have the conventional (i.e., non-nuclear) capability to back up his bold pronouncement. Carter was acutely and uncomfortably aware of this fact. In a 17 December 1980 meeting of the NSC, a full 11 months after the State of the Union, the president underscored this “major point”: “It is obvious that we do not have adequate forces to respond and defeat a Soviet attack in the Persian Gulf.”\(^\text{102}\) Later in the meeting, Carter commented again “entirely for the privacy of this meeting. It is hopeless to believe that we can match the Soviets with conventional forces in Iran. We simply cannot do it.”\(^\text{103}\) This fact clearly was not lost on the military forces tasked to execute the impossible policy, who nonetheless tried to make it happen. Kelley, for example, understood that the RDJTF was a commitment device, a political signal, and a tripwire deterrent much like the American force in Berlin—yet he still worked hard to forge a credible capability (Kelley 1981). The political purpose of such forces was not to win, but to stake a claim. For the forces underwriting that stake, living as a tripwire appears to be an unusually committed form of military compliance.

Alternative Explanations

This period of the narrative offers evidence for several of the alternative explanations as well. First, there is some evidence of bureaucratic politics in play, particularly for the conflict between the RDJTF and REDCOM. At a basic level of analysis, both organizations did indeed


\(^{103}\) In his memoirs, Brzezinski makes the same point: “It is true that when the commitment to the security of the Persian Gulf was made the United States was not in a position to meet the Soviet Union on the ground, so to speak, matching man for man or tank for tank. Geography and logistical complexities made that impossible…The point of…the Carter Doctrine was to make the Soviet Union aware of the fact that the intrusion of Soviet armed forces into an area of vital importance to the United States would precipitate an engagement with the United States, and that the United States would then be free to choose the manner in which it would respond” (1983, 445).
compete for control over the turf, budget, and resources of this new mission. Moreover, the
data suggest that a central dictum of bureaucratic politics—“where you stand depends on
where you sit” (Allison 1971, 176)—informed the disagreements between Kelley and Warner.
The conflict between these two officers appeared to be less shaped by their Army and Marine
background than by the inherent positional conflicts that the OSD / JCS guidance created
between REDCOM and the RDJTF. Otherwise, this portion of the narrative does not present
strong evidence for simple bureaucratic politics at the service level. In fact, as discussed at the
beginning of the section, the Marine Corps initially turned down more budgetary resources for
prepositioning equipment because of its potentially distracting effect on the Marines’ raison
d’être. Furthermore, we do not see evidence of the services piling on and riding the RDJTF
budget train to their favorite destinations. Instead, the major funding initiatives for the RDJTF
were strategic mobility assets such as cargo aircraft, prepositioning ships, and fast sealift
container ships—hardly the prized assets of any of the services. Lastly, this period also presents
evidence of Abbott’s corollary hypothesis, particularly as the Marine Corps appealed to the JCS,
the Congress and the public to market their unique capability for rapid deployment and their
historical preparedness for any and all tasks.

Huntington’s committee compromise argument also finds some support in this period.
Interestingly, we see evidence of weak and ambiguous JCS compromise in their decision
memoranda to subordinate military units, but not as much in their advice to civilian principals.
In their August 1979 and July 1980 memos to the Secretary of Defense, the five members of the
JCS disagreed and forwarded their divergent views intact. When tasked to implement policy,
however, the JCS had to reach some kind of agreement to promulgate for execution. The
November 1979 memo creating the RDJTF, as discussed earlier, contained ambiguous guidance
that made straightforward execution quite difficult—and their July 1980 recommendation to Brown only made it worse.

Finally, Zisk’s hypothesis explains part of the Marine Corps response quite well. Facing a vast and difficult Soviet threat to Persian Gulf oil fields, the Marines did not respond by throwing the full weight of the four-service military against it. Instead, the Corps displayed a keen interest in shoring up its domestic security first, especially since the Soviet threat, while real, was not imminent.

With these interim assessments in place, the next section of the chapter moves on to the third and final stage of the narrative. With a new administration coming into office, a new president and secretary of defense would have an opportunity to evaluate the RDJTF for themselves and decide its future.

9.5: Transition from RDTJF to USCENTCOM: Jan 1981 - Jan 1983

*I think that the RDJTF…reflects that the chance of failure to make programs work outside of the existing unified command plan is 100 percent. There are five reasons for their failure, and collectively, they’re referred to as the Joint Chiefs of Staff.*

– General Volney F. Warner

This section of the chapter documents the third and final phase of the central narrative, from the arrival of the new presidential administration in January 1981 through the creation of US Central Command (USCENTCOM) in January 1983. The focus of this section is front-loaded toward the first several months of the administration when the new president and secretary of defense faced an urgent question: what should be done with the RDJTF? The turbulent climate at MacDill AFB, where the RDJTF and Readiness Command both resided in uncomfortable proximity, clearly required some form of resolution. In the early months of 1981, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the military services offered their views through an array of Congressional

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hearings, memos, and other statements. The Joint Chiefs disagreed on what to do with the RDJTF and forwarded their disagreements to the new Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger—who then decided on a different policy altogether, which none of the Chiefs had recommended. The following section covers the highlights of this interesting closing period of the RDJTF, dealing first with the policy transition from Carter to the Reagan administration. Next, the discussion focuses at length on the disparate views of the key military actors—the service chiefs on the JCS, General Warner at REDCOM, and General Kelley at the RDJTF. Finally, this section covers Weinberger’s policy decision and briefly recounts the efforts made to implement it. The section concludes with an interim assessment of the various theoretical explanations.

Policy Inheritance

When Ronald Reagan entered the White House in January 1981, his national security team received a download of intelligence and policy information from Carter’s outgoing staff. Within the National Security Council, Brigadier General William Odom ensured that the new NSC staff clearly appreciated the wisdom of creating a new unified command for the Middle East.105 In the previous months, Odom had pressed Carter to order a change to the Unified Command Plan, even drafting a memo to Brzezinski on election day—4 November 1980—pitching one last attempt. Since the election was over, Odom wrote, “[a] Unified Command should simply be ordered by the President...No study is needed.”106

Carter chose not to do so, and the action passed to the Reagan team. On 11 February 1981, several weeks into the new administration, Odom sent the new National Security Advisor Richard Allen a memo with clear words on what needed to happen. “Our own military

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105 Odom’s consistent advocacy for a new unified command for the Middle East evidently was a source of some amusement within the NSC. Odom’s parting gift from Brzezinski was a signed photo with a handwritten comment saying, “No, we cannot yet set up the Indian Ocean command. As ever, Zbig” (Starobin and Leavitt 1985, 38).
command and control for the [Persian Gulf] region is in a shambles,” Odom observed, “and the JCS is institutionally incapable of improving it. The inter-service quarrels, particularly on the ‘Unified Command Plan,’ are paralyzing. The big ones will not be settled without direct orders from the President which are delivered in unambiguous words.” 

Allen’s military assistant, Major General Robert Schweitzer, followed through with this advice and took the issue straight to President Reagan, ensuring that the RDJTF, the Middle East, and the UCP were on the new president’s radar. Reagan therefore had visibility on the issues, but gave his Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger the lead role in deciding what to do with the RDJTF and the US military posture in the Middle East.

Military Advice on the Evolving Policy

During the first several months of the Reagan administration, the service chiefs, General Warner, and General Kelley all had ample opportunity to express their views on the proper future of the RDTJF. The tense and fractious working environment at MacDill, which reflected the inherent contradictions of the policy itself, clearly merited a change of some kind. Should the RDJTF stay within REDCOM, but with some improved working parameters? Should the RDJTF be moved under EUCOM or PACOM, which already had some geographic responsibility for the Middle East? Or should the RDJTF be an autonomous entity—even its own unified command possibly—working directly for the JCS? These questions dominated the public and private debates and even became the subject of Congressional inquiry.

Army. The Army’s Chief of Staff, General Edward Meyer, expressed the Army position repeatedly in Congressional testimony, in various staff documents, and later in his oral history interviews. Broadly, Meyer favored a robust four-service approach, with flexible options for strategic mobility, moving eventually toward a full unified command for the Middle East, but

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with an interim step of putting the RDJTF under EUCOM’s authority. Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) in late January 1981, for example, Meyer emphasized that “the Army can’t go to war alone. I am not sure that any of the services can go to war alone...I believe that we must look across all of the services to insure a composite ability to carry out whatever contingencies this Nation expects us to meet” (U.S. Senate 1981b, 623). At the close of the hearing, in response to a question about the Army’s proper role in the RDF, Meyer’s written answer (for the record) was equally ecumenical: “Each Service has unique force capabilities that are essential to the Rapid Deployment Force concept...In short, it is the combination of unique Service capabilities tailored for the specific situation at hand that is the strength of the RDF concept” (649).

Later in the SASC hearings, Meyer outlined his view on the proper future of the RDJTF as a unified command. First, when asked about the wisdom of creating a new unified command for the Middle East, Meyer replied, “A unified command would have significant military advantages: establish unity of command, enable optimum command and control...From a military standpoint, there would be few, if any, disadvantages” (733). This view, however, did not necessarily mean that Meyer thought the RDJTF should immediately turn into a unified command. Instead, the Army chief believed that a transitional step was needed. “My own feeling,” Meyer testified, “is that [the RDJTF] needs to be assigned for the present time, as an interim step, to an existing unified commander” (787). In his oral history, Meyer explained his thinking further, noting that EUCOM had an ample staff, experience, and background in the Persian Gulf region. Furthermore, Meyer argued, EUCOM was much closer geographically to the region, providing the closest possibility for an in-theater presence, led by the Commander-in-Chief of EUCOM who was a known military actor in the region. “To have the headquarters of the theater command back in the United States is wrong to me,” he
concluded. For these reasons, he supported placing the RDJTF under EUCOM until a command headquarters could be established in the region, thus prompting a transition to a full unified command.

*Marine Corps.* General Robert Barrow’s public testimony to Congress consistently pressed for sequential military operations led by the Navy-Marine Corps maritime team. Instead of insisting that all four services play in every operation, Barrow argued, why not give the lead to the capable and forward-deployed force that has always performed that role: Navy ships carrying warrior Marines. If a given task exceeded the throw-weight of the Marines, they could call in reinforcements from the other services. Joint operations should be sequential rather than simultaneous, Barrow suggested.

During the January 1981 SASC hearing described above, for example, General Barrow was asked (for the record) the same question that Meyer had been asked about the Army: what should the Marine Corps’ proper role be in the RDF? Barrow’s written reply speaks volumes:

> First, we are convinced that there is considerable commonality between what it termed ‘RDF’ and the congressionally mandated roles and functions of the Marine Corps. Indeed, when PD-18 and the initial Secretary of Defense guidance on the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) were published, we took the position that today’s Marine Corps precisely fits that definition. We have never altered that position. We also happen to believe that the Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf region is ideally suited for employing Naval power. If a land campaign ensues, Naval forces are especially suited to either provide the total response in the case of minor contingencies, or to serve as the spearhead for a larger force in the event of Soviet involvement. (U.S. Senate 1981b, 731)

Frequent comments throughout the same hearing reinforced these ideas from the Commandant. Given the preponderance of fragile littoral states in the Middle East, Barrow “visualize[d] that the initial action in that part of the world, particularly in the absence of the


109 An Army staff paper dated 15 December 1980 maps out how such a transition to EUCOM and then to a full unified command might occur. In “Presidential Directives re defense policy development, JCS papers, 1980” Folder (3 of 3), Box 36, William Odom papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division.

110 As noted earlier in the chapter, the terms RDF and RDJTF were often used interchangeably, particularly by non-military figures.
bases and other facilities that we also say we want, would be a naval action, which includes a naval campaign on the land, if you will...It is quite conceivable that the task might be well within the capability of only naval forces” (908). For these reasons, Barrow favored getting rid of the RDJTF altogether and transferring responsibility for Middle East contingencies entirely to Pacific Command “who already has the major in-being presence there in the form of naval forces” (908).

Several months later, Barrow revisited these themes in his testimony to the Senate Appropriations Committee. “We do not have bases all over the world,” he noted. “We only have bases in Europe and Korea that really count...We have problems all over the world” (U.S. Senate 1981a, 452). Consequently, Barrow argued that leaning heavily on naval forces as first responders made the best strategic sense. “We should think about doing things more in a sequential fashion as we have historically done,” argued Barrow, “which is to say, when you start from zero, the one who does a thing best earliest would be the first committed. That is naval forces” (452). In many crises, he continued, such forces would be sufficient: “There are many issues in this world and many problems in this world that I believe are well within the capability of the Navy and Marine Corps to deal with *en toto*, up to a certain size” (452). In the end, Barrow summarized his critique of the entire RDF (or RDJTF) concept by saying that “[i]t is regrettable that we have something called the Rapid Deployment Force. There is no such animal; it is a label without a product. There is no way you can get there rapidly” (454).

Barrow’s private views within the JCS corroborate his public statements to Congress. A memo from the WLO to the RDJTF on 5 February 1981 summarized a recent message from Barrow to the JCS in which he called for a naval-first approach in light of the likely conflict
areas and lack of regional bases.\textsuperscript{111} Barrow remained committed to these ideas throughout many months of testimony and debate, as well as ten years later in his oral history interviews.\textsuperscript{112} A Reuters News Service article aptly summarized the prevailing views of the Corps in the early months of 1981. After commenting that most members of the JCS favored placing the RDJTF under EUCOM, the article noted that Barrow had been an outspoken dissenter, “fighting just as strongly for Navy control or a new independent command under the Marines. Marine Corps leaders, with backing from influential members of Congress, have proposed that the RDF become an all-Marine or a joint Marine-Navy force, with the Army and Air Force limited to providing assistance when requested.”\textsuperscript{113}

\textit{Warner and Kelley}. The views of Generals Warner and Kelley differed both from one another as well as from the service chiefs. Warner persistently advocated for strengthening the unified command system rather than creating \textit{ad hoc} joint task forces to deal with various crises as they arose. Consequently, he favored a long-term transition to a new unified command for the Middle East, once a regional command headquarters could be found (i.e., once the US was invited in by a regional ally).\textsuperscript{114} In the interim, Warner argued for a revitalized status quo, with Readiness Command operating as a four-service global response force. Toward that end, Warner made sure that Weinberger was aware of his perspective.

On inauguration day 1981, Weinberger’s first day at the helm of the Pentagon, Warner delivered a three-page letter to the secretary’s office, along with a list of six suggested actions.

\textsuperscript{111} Memo from Vesser to Kelley, 5 February 1981, “Subj: Comments on CMCM 1-81.” In “Presidential Directives re defense policy development, JCS papers, 1981” Folder, Box 36, William Odom papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division.
\textsuperscript{112} See Barrow Oral History, 27 January 1992, Session 16, p. 15-20. In Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, VA.
\textsuperscript{113} Jeffrey Antevil, 10 February 1981, Reuters News Service. In “RDF - Command structure” folder, Marine Corps Historical Division, Quantico, VA.
\textsuperscript{114} In testimony to the HASC in March 1981, Warner offered: “My vote could be for the status quo…To me, it is more important that commanders who might have to execute Southwest Asia, sit face to face in peacetime and work out the details of that execution. This is more important that either the location of the headquarters or the question of subordinating it to someone else. For the time being, the status quo gives us the best capability. Now, if one of the countries in the region would welcome us with open arms and say, ‘I want the headquarters in my country,’ then it should be moved. But short of that, it should be left where it is” (U.S. House 1981, 267).
for his new boss. His recommended actions included revitalizing the unified command plan, consolidating various *ad hoc* task forces under REDCOM, abolishing the Washington Liaison Office of the RDJTF, and giving CINCs input into the budget process. Warner followed up with another letter in early March 1981, as the Secretary of Defense was soliciting inputs on the future of the RDJTF. In his letter, Warner once again emphasized the importance of working through the unified command system and not around it. He concluded by arguing for a strengthened version of the status quo: “The RDJTF headquarters, subordinate to USCINCRE, assigned the responsibility for execution of global contingencies, is the US’ best headquarters for control of four-Service contingency forces.”

Finally, the Commander of the RDTJF, Lieutenant General Kelley, offered still another view—though he did so circumspectly. Aware that all of his bosses held different opinions, Kelley stepped lightly; when asked for his views during a SASC hearing on 9 March 1981, he replied, “My established position is, I don’t have a position” (U.S. Senate 1981c, 1729). When pressed further, Kelley responded, “I would rather not, sir, get into any specifics.” Ultimately, when pressed for general principles rather than specifics, Kelley argued for (1) strengthened unity of command, (2) giving a commander “direct access to the forces he would command in combat;” and (3) a strengthened role for the part the RDJTF plays in national security (1729-30).

The aggregate impression of Kelley’s testimony was one of firm support for a unified command; three days later, Senator William Cohen opened a new day of hearings by referring to Kelley, who had just “testified strongly in favor of a new unified command for the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf” (U.S. Senate 1981c, 1954). Three months later, after Weinberger had

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116 Later, Warner regretted delivering the letter so early in Weinberger’s tenure, before the new boss had a chance to familiarize himself with the issues. See Warner oral history transcript, p. 176-7.
made his decision, Kelley made a more direct reference to his consistent view: “I believe that if you are to optimize command relationships, you must have a single commander in the region who has total responsibility, to include operational control of appropriate air, ground, and naval forces” (U.S. House 1981, 243). In a 2013 interview, Kelley confirmed that he alone of the key military actors favored transitioning the RDJTF directly into a unified command.

The Secretary’s Decision

Weinberger had thus collected the views of the five members of the JCS, all of the CINCs of the unified commands, and the Commander of the RDJTF. The chiefs were split 4-1, with all but Barrow favoring the subordination of the RDJTF to EUCOM. As discussed above, Barrow favored abolishing the RDJTF and giving the mission wholesale to PACOM. Warner favored a strengthened status quo under REDCOM, and Kelley pushed for a swift transition to a unified command. Taking all these views into account, Weinberger selected none of them, though he was closest to Kelley’s recommendation. After meeting with the Chiefs to announce his decision, Weinberger issued a press release on 24 April 1981: “The Secretary of Defense announced today that over a period of three to five years the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) should evolve into a separate unified command — with its own geographic responsibilities, Service components, forces, intelligence, communications, logistics facilities and other support elements” (Weinberger 1981, Vol. III, 2051). Thus, Weinberger decided to transition the RDJTF slowly into a unified command, while keeping the status quo in the meantime. The press release concluded by noting that “[f]or the time being, relationships among the present unified commands will not change, and the RDJTF headquarters will continue to be located at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida. Nor will its mission change. The

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118 These views are specified in a 26 February 1981 memo from the JCS to Weinberger (Starobin and Leavitt 1985).
RDJTF will continue to have a potential for world-wide deployment, but its major focus will remain on Southwest Asia” (2051).

While none of the service chiefs appeared to like the Secretary’s decision (Starobin and Leavitt 1985, 41), the president certainly did. After learning of Weinberger’s decision, Reagan sent him a memo endorsing it “with enthusiasm” (in Crist 2012, 55). Further, the president expressed that he had “long felt that the importance of this region is such that we need the optimal command arrangements possible, and this means a separate command.”

General Warner at Readiness Command clearly did not agree and summarily retired from the Army in frustration. Warner’s parting criticisms, however, were directed at his fellow four-star generals on the JCS, not at the defense secretary. In Congressional testimony in June 1981, after his decision to retire, Warner said that he

felt sufficiently strong on this issue of the role of U.S. Readiness Command with respect to contingency planning that I have already said it is time for me to leave the service, and have requested to retire on 31 July. I feel very strongly that mine is the better solution and differ very greatly with the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the way they are creating a separate unified command in the U.S., responsive directly to the JCS, at the expense of USREDCOM’s current mission. That is the issue over which I am retiring. (U.S. House 1981b, 244)

Before leaving his post, Warner sent the President a five-page letter that began, “When a military commander cannot, in good conscience, support the decisions of his superiors, he should step aside.” Even though the decision to transition the RDJTF had been a civilian one, Warner focused his criticism—both to Congress and in his letter to Reagan—on the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the source of the problem.

Despite their lack of enthusiasm for Weinberger’s decision, the JCS had the task of executing it. They submitted their initial transition plan to Weinberger on 18 May 1981, which included a three-stage evolution over an 18-month period (Cole et al 2003, 63). The first stage

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lasted through the fall of 1981 and preserved the status quo—the RDJTF remained under the operational command of REDCOM. The second stage began on 1 October 1981, when the RDJTF moved out from under the authority of REDCOM and became a fully independent joint task force, reporting directly to the Secretary of Defense through the JCS. The third phase involved the final transition into a full unified command, with a target date of 1 January 1983.

While many thorny issues surfaced in the transition, most notably where to draw the lines around the new unified command’s geographic area of responsibility, the transition proceeded apace (Crist 2012). On 8 December 1982, the Pentagon issued a press release announcing that “Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger announced today that the President has decided to activate a new unified command for Southwest Asia on January 1, 1983…The new unified command, which will be named the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM), will better serve U.S. interests and the security concerns of friendly regional states and demonstrate U.S. resolve to come to the defense of our friends in the region.” As scheduled, the RDJTF was inactivated on 31 December 1982, and US Central Command was established in its place the following day. After 1,036 days of contentious existence, the RDJTF was history.

Assessing the Theories

This third and final phase of the case study focused on the advice given to the Secretary of Defense by the constellation of military leaders around him in early 1981. To close this section of the chapter, I briefly consider the extent to which the policy preferences exhibited by

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120 A major issue was whether or not to include Israel, Syria, and Lebanon in the new command, or whether to leave them in EUCOM. Another thorny issue arose over what to name the new command. See Crist 2012, 54-57.
122 The RDJTF’s sparring partner met the same fate not long thereafter—Readiness Command was disestablished in 1987 (Cole et al 2003, 118).
the Army and Marine Corps comport with the hypotheses outlined at the beginning of the chapter.

The Army’s position remained largely consistent with the previous phase, and thus accorded quite well with the theoretical hypotheses. The Army did not appear to engage in external advocacy, while Meyer continued to push for a full four-service organization and an eventual unified command. Further, the Army’s support for a transitional phase for the RDJTF under EUCOM was consistent with a focus on long-term sustainment and logistical flow. As explained by a Joint Staff paper in 1981, the Army favored putting the RDJTF under EUCOM “recognizing that the major flow of men and equipment from CONUS to the region would be through EUCOM’s area of responsibility and into the major states traditionally within EUCOM’s purview (e.g., Egypt, Saudi Arabia).”¹²³

The Marine Corps position likewise strengthened in this third phase, with General Barrow stating ever more clearly the Marine Corps view. The Marines clearly favored a Marine-first, and possibly Marine-only, approach to contingency operations—a view consistent with the Marines’ maritime orientation to national security as well as their institutional proclivity for guarding their flanks. The Marines’ focus was getting to the fight first, establishing a beachhead of American presence, and then assessing the situation from there. Further, Barrow remained attuned to the calibrated political signals afforded by Marine amphibious forces deployed globally on Navy ships. Finally, as predicted both by the cultural typology and by Abbott’s theory, the Marine Corps displayed a keen sensitivity to the needs of its “client,” the Congress and the American people—and it marketed itself accordingly. Emblematic of the Corps’ approach during this period, Barrow offered this assurance to the SASC in January 1981: “Most importantly we continue to be deeply conscious of the

expectations you and the public at large have in terms of being ready to go on short notice. That is deeply embedded in the Marine consciousness; it always has been and always will be.” (U.S. Senate 1981b, 625).

As with the previous phase, the evidence for Zisk’s and Abbott’s hypotheses remain solid, particularly for the Marine Corps, which was predisposed to defend its position and market its capacity to provide expert labor. As far as standard bureaucratic politics, I continue to find the evidence for the services as rivalrous bureaucratic actors to be thin and unsatisfying. The Marine Corps did indeed push hard for a Marine-centric approach to Middle East contingencies as a bureaucratic explanation would predict. But the Marine view had both logic and evidence on its side, with a legitimate strategic rationale for why such an approach was the best way to link the desired ends of national policy with the limited means of American military resources. Furthermore, the Army was not pushing for an Army-centric or Army-only approach and was not interested in defending its flanks or protecting its mission—a difference in attitude explained by my cultural typology and not by bureaucratic politics.

Finally, if these disagreements were about mere bureaucratic land-grabbing rather than strategic debate, we would expect EUCOM and PACOM to clamor for control of the RDJTF. But this was not the case. In February 1981, the Commander in Chief of EUCOM sent a message to the JCS indicating that he was prepared to support the RDJTF should it fall under his command, but he likewise stipulated the various pros and cons of other possible solutions as well.124 The message does not convey an eager thirst for more resources. Likewise, the views of the Navy and the Navy-centric PACOM do not bolster a bureaucratic story, as both the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commander in Chief of PACOM (CINCPAC) supported placing the

RDJTF under EUCOM, not PACOM. The Navy had enough on its plate in the Pacific and did not seem keen on accepting primary responsibility for the Persian Gulf. In February 1981, the CNO told the SASC that “we are a one-and-a-half-ocean navy trying to fulfill a three-ocean commitment. We are really trying to cover six or seven major bodies of water today and we are simply stretching ourselves to the elastic limit” (U.S. Senate 1981b, 843).

In sum, the evidence in this period suggests that the primary fault lines of military disagreement fell along different approaches to a complex strategic problem. Bureaucratic interests may indeed have been present, but they do not tell the whole—or even most—of the story. As suggested in the introduction to the chapter, the crafting and execution of politico-military strategy was not a straightforward matter of compliance or disobedience. These issues teemed with ambiguity, uncertainty, and political judgments. The evidence in this third phase of the narrative stands for the proposition that military disagreements do not necessarily constitute reflexive interservice rivalry, but can be seen as legitimate strategic debates informed by competing first principles.

9.6: Conclusion

Our political system is in many ways poorly designed for the conduct of the foreign policies of a great power aspiring to world leadership.

– George Kennan

125 The CNO joined the CJCS, the CSA, and the CSAF in the 4-1 position against Barrow in their 26 Feb 1981 memo to the Secretary of Defense. PACOM’s views are highlighted in Cole et al 2003, 59.
126 Kennan 1984, 177.
In the executive as in Congress, the major problem is not to discover rationally what is required to bring forth 'the desired result' but rather to reconcile conflicting views of what results are desirable.

– Samuel Huntington

This case study has traced the arc of American military strategy in the Middle East from Jimmy Carter’s directive in August 1977 through Ronald Reagan’s establishment of US Central Command in January 1983. For the first two years, Carter’s directive saw little concrete implementation, as higher priority events and limited resources diverted attention elsewhere. For the next two years, the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force secured a tentative and contentious foothold in the Middle East, at least in organization if not capability. Finally, the last two years witnessed the transition of the RDJTF from the subjugated stepchild of Readiness Command into an independent entity and then a full unified command. As a case study of civil-military relations, this chapter has attempted to understand why the military agents responded as they did to the initiatives and policies of their civilian principals. The evidence and logic marshaled in this chapter challenge the conventional wisdom about this period—a wisdom that indicts the military on two counts of desultory and disorderly conduct. The first indictment holds that the military apparently dragged its feet for two years and ignored a presidential directive to create a rapid deployment force. The second suggests that once an RDF appeared unavoidable, the Army and Marine Corps went to the mat in a battle royale, nearly ruining the president’s plan in their petty contest for control. Like most stories of political intrigue, a deeper look reveals that the story is not nearly so simple.

As an analytical case study, this chapter has differed in its approach from the previous chapter on Goldwater-Nichols. In the previous case, the issues entered the story with gray hair, having been long-standing problems in the defense establishment. Consequently, the issues were fairly well defined, discrete, and the civilian preferences were generally known. These

127 Huntington 1961a, 169
well-marked edges made for slightly cleaner analysis of the kind my theory attempts. In this chapter, the evolving civilian policy reached into the uncertain domain of military strategy—a process of applying prudential judgments to match ways and means with political ends. Consequently, preference gaps between civilian principals and military agents do not emerge as major levers of action in this story. Instead, it appears that by and large, the military was not attempting to go its own way so much as it was trying to figure out which was the right way to go. Within this ambiguous policy environment, however, the services did indeed have different preferences for how the policy should unfold—how closely did their preferences accord with the hypotheses offered at the beginning of the chapter?

Figure 9.3 revisits the Army’s policy preference hypotheses outlined earlier in the chapter. Hypotheses in bold had strong support in the data, those in plain text had some support, while those in italics had little to no support in the available data. Overall, most of the hypotheses had strong or some support, particularly the Army’s overall posture of non-threatened engagement, its support for a full unified command, its designation of specific units for the RDJTF, and its advocacy for a full four-service solution. The Army did of course engage in some intra-military disagreements, but its civil-military posture remained cooperative and pliant.128

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128 Interestingly, in General Warner’s explanations for his retirement, he essentially shifts blame for Weinberger’s decision to the JCS. His parting shot was intra-military, not civil-military in orientation.
Figure 9.3: Army Policy Preference Conclusions

Figure 9.4 considers the Marine Corps hypotheses, and likewise finds generally good support for most of the predictions. As discussed throughout the chapter, the data strongly support the Marine Corps’ focus on its maritime presence, its capacity to go first and go solo, its engagement with Congress and the American people, and its efforts to guard its domain by preventing any duplication of the Marine Corps mission by an external actor. While the constitutive differences between the Army and the Marine Corps may not be obvious to an outside observer, the cultural typologies developed earlier in this dissertation exposed the
many ways in which these two organizations differ significantly. Those differences, in turn, translated into different responses to the evolving civilian policies seen in this case.129

Figure 9.4: Marine Corps Policy Preference Conclusions

As discussed throughout the three phases of the chapter, the alternative theories offered useful explanatory insights as well. We do see evidence of bureaucratic behavior, particularly from military agents in joint positions whose stands derive powerfully from their seats.

Additionally, the theories of Huntington (1961), Abbott (1988), and Zisk (1993) all explain

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129 As with the previous chapter, the specific hypotheses of the temporal agency framework laid out in chapter three will be evaluated synthetically in the concluding chapter (10) of the dissertation.
discrete elements of military behavior. We see log-rolling and ambiguous compromises within the JCS (Huntington); we see marketing appeals to first- and second-order clients to secure a jurisdiction of expert labor, particularly from the Marine Corps (Abbott); and finally, we see attempts to fight off domestic threats to organizational survival overriding non-imminent external security threats, once again most strongly from the Marines (Zisk).

But this evidence for the alternative theories actually serves to reinforce one of the findings in the last chapter. I argue that the empirical differentiation between the services offered in chapters four through seven adds value to these alternatives. My theory works in two parts: a cultural element focused on policy preferences, and a temporal agency element focused on political behavior. While I develop and employ these two parts as a coherent whole in my theory, the cultural element can be employed separately as a supplemental empirical insight for the alternative theories, adding a rich texture that they otherwise lack. Bureaucratic politics can tell us that the services will act in pursuit of their interests, while my cultural typology helps to anticipate *ex ante* what those interests are likely to be. Huntington tells us that legislative-style committees logroll and compromise, and my typology anticipates the starting points from which those compromises emerge. Finally, Zisk and Abbott speak to the need to carve out secure jurisdictions and handle internal threats before external ones — my typology clearly predicts which services these insights are likely to apply to and when. In sum, while I argue that my theory as a whole offers a compelling alternative to existing theories of civil-military behavior, the empirical referents for service culture can be imported profitably into other theories as an enriching supplement as well.

*Synthetic Conclusions*

The theory and evidence amassed in this case study yield several salient conclusions. First, the initial two-year phase of the case study is not a simple story of the military ignoring
the President. Instead, the analysis in the chapter stands for the proposition that any new civil-
military policy enters a cluttered and chaotic policy environment. In the same way that
international regime complexity challenges states with conflicting standards of compliance
(Alter and Meunier 2009), a cluttered domestic policy environment challenges the military agent
to comply faithfully with competing requirements. In this case, the PD-18 requirement to
“maintain a deployment force of light divisions” interacted and competed with other initiatives
such as SALT II, nuclear non-proliferation, arms control, and rebuilding NATO forces.
Furthermore, the explicit military priorities established by the president and secretary of
defense were on Europe, not the Middle East. The military appeared to do what it could with
respect to PD-18, but its weight of concerted effort indeed went elsewhere. With limited
capacity, an overtasked agent must prioritize its efforts to comply with manifold requirements.
Any evaluation of military shirking or non-compliance, therefore, should be alive to the
possibility that such shirking is merely the byproduct of complying with a higher priority.

A second important conclusion also emerges from this initial two-year phase of the case
study. The PD-18 requirement sprung from the analysis and conclusions of civilian staffers on
the NSC, without formal military input. As a result, the policy-drafters had little appreciation
for the magnitude of the task imposed on the policy-implementers. In Odom’s (2006) history of
the period, he notes that in the summer of 1979, staff members on the NSC finally started to
meet with military officers on the Joint Staff and in the Office of the Secretary of Defense to
discuss the RDF policy. Through these meetings, Odom observes, “a few NSC staff members
learned about the political and military realities in the region and the plethora of obstacles to
the creation of an RDF” (64). In other words, only two years later did the NSC appreciate the
complex demands implied by its 1977 policy. As the beginning of the chapter discussed, the
strategic parameters of this policy amounted to a particularly complex problem: the potential
threat was the full Soviet military; the US had no local bases, and would have to project suitable combat power nearly 10,000 miles; in the post-Vietnam years no one in uniform or out had been keen on buying strategic mobility assets; no new funds were allocated to the new requirement, and no existing tasks were removed from the plate.\footnote{Several of these difficulties are cited in a Joint Staff background paper, 19 January 1981, “Rapid Deployment Force: Subject of Pentagon Battle.” In “Presidential Directives re defense policy development, JCS papers, 1981” Folder, Box 36, William Odom papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division.} Eventually, of course, the US defense establishment found ways to overcome these obstacles, but fast solutions in that policy space simply were not possible. Lawful civilian authorities have the right to create whatever policies they choose, but this case highlights the fact that full compliance with some policies may be structurally unattainable in the short run.

A third conclusion from this case study also links the quality of military compliance with the quality of the policy itself. The second phase of the case, in which the JCS created the RDJTF in response to Secretary Brown’s policy decision, highlights the fact that defense policies are often flawed instruments. Due to political expediency and the nature of political compromise, certain policies issued to the military may well have contradictions woven into their original fabric. The RDJTF’s early years epitomize this phenomenon. As Robert Murray observed, Brown made a logical decision to create a joint task force rather a unified command because something needed to happen and a JTF could be formed faster than a change to the Unified Command Plan.\footnote{Murray was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, covering the Near East, South Asia, and Africa.} Furthermore, the JCS had logical reasons for situating the RDJTF under the peacetime authority of Readiness Command, and Brown had logical reasons for creating a Washington Liaison Office in the Pentagon for the RDJTF. These policy components, logical in isolation, joined hands to create an illogical product. One senior Pentagon official observed that “[t]he conflict is built in, almost as if somebody set out to say, ‘let’s see if we can make this thing awkward or maybe even unworkable’” (in Fialka 1981).
In fact, to resolve the impracticalities of the policy, some officials in OSD wanted certain elements in the military not to carry out their assigned responsibilities. Consider Robert Murray’s observation that “[t]he working arrangement was that on paper Readiness Command had some responsibility; in practice, it wasn’t supposed to exercise those responsibilities” (in Starobin and Leavitt 1985, 33). In other words, for General Warner at Readiness Command, working was shirking and vice versa. With policies and expectations like that, it is little wonder that certain military agents struggled to meet the full satisfaction of their civilian principals.

Fourth, the final two phases of this case reveal that not all disagreements within the US military should be catalogued as interservice rivalry. Huntington’s (1961) theoretical development of the interservice rivalry concept remains very worthwhile, but that label is too commonly applied to almost any intra-military disagreement. Further, the term carries a pejorative connotation of sibling rivalry, as if the services engaged in petty bickering motivated only by the self-interested pursuit of more guns and glory. Instead, this case demonstrates that intra-military disputes are multi-faceted phenomena. In some cases, intra-military conflict may be created by the structural conditions of the policy itself, as just described in the third conclusion above. Additionally, in this case the primary axis of bureaucratic conflict was between the RDJTF and Readiness Command, not the Army and Marine Corps. Thus the motivation for conflict derived from positional interests within the joint military structure, not from service interests. No doubt the disagreements were legion and bitter, but this was not interservice rivalry per se.

Finally, this case exposes the truth behind the fictitious account of the four services “securing the building” in four different ways. Crafting and executing difficult military strategy is an exercise in uncertainty. Framing the problem, gathering the resources, and deciding on operational tactics all require prudential judgments—there are no right answers.
Consequently, a policy directive to create and execute military strategy naturally animates the different belief patterns of the four services. In light of their unique histories and operational requirements, the four services take unique approaches to framing, resourcing, and tackling the problem. While these disagreements constitute legitimate strategic debate, they often result in inefficiencies and delays that frustrate the civilian principal’s intent. But even though the military’s behavior departs from the civilian’s ideal point, that departure is not motivated by a preference gap or loose monitoring. In these cases, the divergent behavior of the four military services is not a calculated decision to work or shirk, but a culturally informed judgment of what compliance requires in a given context.

This important conclusion ultimately exposes the theoretical limitations of an agency framework for American civil-military relations. The pistons of a principal-agent model are preference gaps, monitoring arrangements, and rewards and punishments. In many cases, this agency framework applies very well to American civil-military relations and comprises a major component of my theory. But this case study reveals that for an important subset of civil-military policies, particularly those steeped in strategic ambiguity where the path of compliance is unclear, military responses to civilian policies may spring from culturally informed interpretations of compliance, not from material cost-benefit calculations. This insight actually reveals an added benefit of my two-part theory. Throughout this dissertation, I have analytically separated my theory into two components: using service culture to explain policy preferences, then using a temporal agency model to explain political behavior. In cases like this, however, when the agency framework encounters its logical limit, my cultural component works overtime. In addition to explaining policy preferences, the empirical typologies of service culture actually help to explain the services’ behavior as well. The policy preferences
informed by culture push through the decision environment, largely unaffected by muted agency variables, to inform the services’ behavior as well.

To close this chapter, I consider whether the balance of my conclusions belies a subjective bias. Has my long research association with the four military services given me a case of academic Stockholm syndrome, in which I can justify any and all military behavior? Perhaps. But in my mind, the opposite error is far more common and requires a robust counterweight. It is far easier to assume that massive bureaucracies like the military services behave as crass bureaucratic actors, crushing the national interest under the weight of their parochial self-interest. By no means do I claim that the military services are patriotically pure altruists with no thoughts for their organizational interest. But like Zisk (1993), I claim that military leaders are apt to view the national interest through the prism afforded by their long-standing service culture. Consequently, whereas simple bureaucratic politics holds that the services are black-box actors clamoring for fixed pots of turf, power, and money, I argue that the services have unique, service-specific preferences for both the national interest and the security of their service—two categories that often overlap very closely in the minds of senior military leaders of the services. Each service tends to appraise the “good of the nation” and the “good of the service” in a way that conflates the two concepts, and these appraisals look quite different from one service to the next. Understanding the full texture of American civil-military relations therefore requires an empathic appreciation of each service’s pervasive beliefs about its ends, ways, and means.
CHAPTER 10
CONCLUSION

The test [of civilian control] is whether civilians can exercise supremacy in military policy and decision-making – that is, frame the alternatives and define the discussion, as well as make the final choice.
- Richard H. Kohn

In the United States, civilian control of the military is a robust and unquestioned norm. Civilian and military leaders alike have enduring confidence that the proverbial “man on horseback” will remain only a legend, never to trot down Pennsylvania Avenue. But the absence of the ambitious horseman does not signify the absence of meaningful civil-military conflict. Throughout American history, the four military services have varied in the extent to which their behavior has accorded with the expectations of their civilian superiors. This dissertation has focused on explaining why. Why do the four US military services comply with some policies but not others, and why do these responses vary at times across the four services?

In this final chapter of the dissertation, I briefly recount my approach to answering this question and then discuss the aggregate results and implications. I begin with a review of the two-part theory developed in chapter three, followed by a discussion of my methodology. Next, I summarize the major empirical findings from the historical reviews of the four military services, highlighting their pervasive belief structures about ends, ways, and means. This chapter then discusses the results from the case study chapters and synthesizes these results into aggregate conclusions and findings. The chapter ends by highlighting areas for future research, and then considers the implications of this project for both theory and policy.

10.1: Review of Theory and Methodology

A study of civilian control ultimately turns on this question: why do the military services do what they do? In the United States, the strong ethic of civilian control generally provides a normative backstop against blatant military involvement in the political domain.

1 Kohn 1997, 141
But that norm does not ensure that the American military always meets the standard set by Kohn’s epigraph above. So what explains the varying degrees of friction in the American civil-military experience?

To answer this question, I started with Peter Feaver’s (2003) agency theory of civil-military relations. From Feaver’s baseline model, I made two major moves. First, I made a temporal distinction between *making* policy and subsequently *enforcing* it. I argued that the prevailing civil-military dynamics on either side of the policy ratification line have key differences that the baseline model subsumed. Further, I suggested that during the policy creation phase, the agency framework applied only by anticipation. That is, civil-military debate about a given policy included discussion not only about the policy substance, but also about the contractual parameters of its future implementation. Pending policies that appear to have little maneuver room for compliance may in fact yield more strident civil-military bargaining up front.

My second major move disaggregated “the military” into the four services and studied them as unique actors in the civil-military domain. I argued that each of the four American military services has deep and distinctive patterns of belief about why it exists, how it should operate, and by what means—a belief pattern I referred to as service culture. My theoretical intuition was that these deep and abiding differences in service culture would echo throughout any civil-military discourse, potentially giving rise to different responses by the four services to the same civilian policies.

To test the plausibility of my theory, my empirical methodology involved two principal components. The first focused on rigorously substantiating the four service cultures, while the second focused on examining those cultures and the temporal agency dynamics in two major cases of civil-military policymaking. Later in this chapter I review the hypotheses generated by
my temporal agency theory and indicate the extent to which they were supported by the data in the empirical case studies. Before that, however, I review my findings on the cultures of the four military services.

10.2: Findings on the Four Service Cultures

Chapters four through seven offered a detailed discussion about each service’s salient cultural beliefs, and this section briefly summarizes the major findings. As noted at the beginning of chapter four, these service cultures are ultimately nested inside the United States’ strategic culture, which has its own national characteristics and trends (Weigley 1977, Gray 2006). Consequently, not all of the beliefs discussed below are utterly unique to each service, but represent national ideas appropriated into service-specific operational contexts. Some of these beliefs differ by degree, while others differ in kind and are cut from separate fabric altogether. As these chapters comprised a major empirical contribution of this project, I summarize in turn the Navy, Marine Corps, Army, and then the Air Force, concluding the section with a composite diagram capturing the short abstracts of each belief.

The United States Navy

The US Navy boasts a long history and proud tradition of national service at sea. Drawing much of its lingua nautica from the Royal Navy, the US Navy holds firmly to its ancient and honorable traditions and reflects the regal sensibilities of its British forebears. The first Navy belief (4.1) captures the service’s unique capacity to serve as its own instrument of national power, navigating the border waters between diplomacy and war. This conviction carries with it esoteric sensibilities, as the service believes it operates according to a logic that is alien to those who fight only on land or in the sky. The Navy also notes proudly its unique role in underwriting American commercial development since the founding days of the republic (4.2). More than any other service, the Navy enabled a seafaring nation to expand its markets
abroad by protecting shipping, policing international waters, and punishing those who would interfere with prosperous commerce—roles it continues to the present day.

A third belief of Navy culture concerns life at sea and an institutionalized double-standard of expectations (4.3). To survive and win in a harsh maritime environment, the entire ship’s crew must work together, remain vigilant, perform its drills, and obey orders. Enlisted sailors must perform their jobs with dispatch and total obedience, while officers—particularly the ship’s captain—are expected to operate from a deep reservoir of judgment filled through many years at sea. The fourth belief builds on this idea further (4.4). Ship captains occupy a prominent and revered place in Naval society, which makes them central figures in executing the national security strategy of the state. Commanding Officers must be trusted from above and respected and obeyed from below.

Fifth, Naval operations require a permanent fleet of ships and a professional complement of capable crew (4.5). Unlike the Army that relies on swelling to full strength in wartime, the Navy operates by deploying forward and projecting power—and requires the peacetime infrastructure and resources to have a ready fleet at all times. Sixth and last, this ready fleet should be built around powerful capital ships—once battleships, now aircraft carriers (4.6). The biggest ships concentrate maximum firepower and uniquely enable a strategy of destroying enemy fleets away from American shores.

*The United States Marine Corps*

The Marine Corps provides a fascinating cultural profile of a service that takes its culture very seriously, guarding it closely and reproducing it religiously. The first belief identified in chapter five (5.1) focused on the Marines’ essential maritime nature as soldiers of the sea, with one foot on shore and the other onboard a ship. Ever deployed with the Navy’s fleet, the Marines provide the nation a quick-reaction force for seemingly any crisis in nearly
any location. The second belief (5.2) captured the Marine Corps’ precarious institutional position as the smallest of the services whose tasks span the domains of warfare dominated by the other three larger services. This uncertain position confers a constructive paranoia on the Corps, which remains ever mindful that the Marine Corps exists only because the American people, acting through their elected representatives, want them to exist.

The third belief (5.3) discussed in chapter five focused on the identity transformation that occurs upon entrance into the Marine Corps. Being a Marine is fundamentally an identity, not a profession. Together, Marines constitute an elite warrior fraternity that runs to the sound of the guns, wins battles, never retreats, and takes care of its own. Fourth, the Marines foster a proud culture of frugal ingenuity (5.4), emphasizing the importance of stewarding the national trust and taxpayer dollar with care. Throughout their famous history, Marines have made do with what they were given, cared for it faithfully, and transformed meager means into battlefield victories. The fifth and final belief of Marine culture discussed in chapter five focused on the ultimate Marine Corps weapon: the enlisted Marine with his rifle (5.5). Every Marine is a rifleman, and nearly all efforts in Marine Corps life coalesce around the purpose of supporting the rifle-shooting Marine engaged with the enemy.

The United States Army

The US Army serves as a microcosm of the nation itself, charting its history in nearly direct correlation to the highs and lows of America’s history as a nation. The Army’s first belief (6.1) focused on the service’s self-conception as an apolitical and obedient junior partner to the nation’s civilian leadership. The Army sees itself as a faithful extension of the American people and as a steward of the historic profession of arms. The second belief (6.2) highlighted the Army’s role as an indispensable last line of defense. Furthermore, the Army offers the nation an organized and skilled body of servants that must accept glorious and menial tasks alike, serving
as a labor force of last resort to do the nation’s messiest jobs, prepared to take more blame than credit.

The third belief in Army culture (6.3) appropriates Weigley’s “American way of war” into the Army’s specific organizational context. The Army tends to believe that it should be used to win complete victories with overwhelming firepower and technological superiority, free from political restrictions or nuance. Fourth, the Army’s massive size and diversity of functional units creates a belief (6.4) in the imperative need to coordinate, centralize, and synchronize operations. While tactical flexibility is important, the driving motivation for Army operations is to synchronize and remain in step with the massive Army machine.

The Army’s fifth belief (6.5) centered on the question of manpower. Functioning essentially as a “mobilization organization” (Raines 2013), the Army must be prepared for war during times of peace, and must be in a position to expand rapidly and capably to whatever degree a crisis requires. Providing suitable manpower for the Army is the first and most critical aspect of providing for the national defense. The sixth and final belief (6.6) discussed in chapter six focused on the individual soldiers, units, and leaders that make up the US Army. The individual soldier is the building block and the indispensable ingredient in making an Army. But individuals must be subsumed by units, which serve both functional and heraldic purposes. Finally, the Army enshrines leaders with muddy boots, and leading soldiers in the field is the most revered job in the Army.

The United States Air Force

Chapter seven introduced the youngest—and perhaps the least well understood—service in the US military: the US Air Force. The first belief of Air Force culture captured the enduring conviction of the need for a separately organized air service (7.1). Airmen hold unswervingly to the belief that the aerospace domain comprises a distinct arena of warfare, and
controlling the air requires separately focused organizational and intellectual capacities decoupled from the land and sea. The second element of Air Force culture (7.2) focused on the belief that when used appropriately, air power has the potential to decide the outcome of a war. The Air Force holds that by targeting the enemy’s war-making capacity and key means of national resistance, a fully committed and complete air campaign can bypass fielded forces and crush the heart of the enemy.

Third, America’s airmen believe that controlling the skies is the essential precondition for successful land and sea operations (7.3). For the Air Force, establishing air superiority is therefore the first requirement and ongoing imperative for any US military mission. The fourth belief discussed in chapter seven highlighted the Air Force’s conviction that airpower must be centrally controlled by the senior airmen in theater, who can flexibly direct air assets in accordance with the joint commander’s objectives (7.4).[^2] Air power should not be distributed and assigned to independent field commanders, lest its inherent flexibility be compromised.

The fifth belief focuses on the important role of machines and technology in the Air Force (7.5). The Air Force was created to exploit a disruptive new technology and has an abiding faith in the potential for new technologies to change the face of warfare. While airplanes are the preeminent assets of the service, other core technologies certainly have their place. The sixth and final belief of the Air Force identifies the unique relational culture of the service (7.6). In the Air Force way of war, officers tend to fly and fight while enlisted airmen operate as skilled technicians. Since most officer-enlisted relations occur away from the battle zone, the resulting dynamic in the Air Force is generally collegial, respectful, and informal.

[^2]: Looking across all of the beliefs of all four services, perhaps the most intractable and persistent disagreement comes from this Air Force belief (7.4) clashing with the Marine Corps’ belief that all efforts should coalesce around the Marine infantryman (5.5). Historically, airmen have insisted that Marine air assets be centrally controlled by the senior air commander, while Marines have insisted that Marine air constitutes an integral support asset to Marine ground operations. The tug-of-war has been fierce but not petty, as each belief is deeply held for reasons important to each service.
Figure 10.1 below summarizes the short abstracts of these beliefs across the four services. I argue that these beliefs constitute an effective empirical referent for each service’s core distinctives, providing differentiable patterns of thought that give rise to different policy preferences and political behavior. The next section of the chapter assesses how effective these beliefs were in accomplishing that goal.

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Figure 10.1: Summary of the US Military Services’ Cultural Beliefs
10.3: Findings and Conclusions from the Case Studies

Following these histories of the four military services, chapters eight and nine presented detailed historical case studies of major civil-military policymaking and execution. The first case profiled the Army and Navy’s conduct during the long four-year period leading up to the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act in 1986. The second case highlighted the Army and Marine Corps during the complex six-year development (1977-1983) of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) and the establishment of United States Central Command (USCENTCOM). These two meta-cases offered a rich array of sub-cases within them, spanning multiple issues and phases. By defining a sub-case as one service responding to one issue in one phase of the larger story, the Goldwater-Nichols narrative actually contained 36 sub-cases and the RDJTF story encompassed 30 sub-cases.3 Overall, these 66 sub-cases provided an ample storehouse of intriguing data by which to evaluate my theory and the alternatives. Given the length and detail included in those chapters, this section of the conclusion does not revisit the major details of each case but focuses instead on synthesizing the major conclusions that emerge from the two narrative chapters.

Evaluating the Use of Service Culture

The first important conclusion from these cases is that the services’ policy preferences accorded quite well with the observable implications of their cultural beliefs. The empirical referents for service culture capably informed a wide variety of issues and policies. Further, these baseline beliefs predicted not only the fact but also the form of the services’ support for or resistance to certain policies. In comparative perspective, using service culture not only provided a superior explanation for service preferences but also supplemented the insights of the alternative theories. Bureaucratic politics could tell us that the services will act in pursuit of

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3 For Goldwater-Nichols, the chapter focused on six issues, across three phases, for two services (6 x 3 x 2 = 36). Similarly, the RDJTF case focused on five issues, across three phases, for two services (5 x 3 x 2 = 30).
their interests, while my cultural typology helped to anticipate ex ante what those interests were likely to be. Huntington (1961b) argued that legislative-style committees logroll and compromise, and my typology anticipated the starting points from which those compromises emerged. Finally, Zisk (1993) and Abbott (1988) spoke to the need to carve out secure jurisdictions and handle internal threats before external ones, while my typology clearly predicted to which services these insights were likely to apply and when. In sum, I argue that my composite theory offers a compelling alternative to existing theories of civil-military behavior, and that the empirical referents for service culture can be imported profitably into other theories as an enriching supplement as well.

A second conclusion serves as a corollary to the first. This connection between service culture and policy preferences operates most predictably at the aggregate service-wide level and less predictably for individual actors. Service culture does not mechanistically determine the behavior of the service or of any of the individuals within it. Instead, it conditions a response from the service, particularly in an aggregate way. The Army’s response to the Goldwater-Nichols legislation provided a keen example of this. While individual Chiefs of Staff varied in their opinions and views, the Army staff and the Special Review Committee responded corporately in ways that aligned quite well with the observable implications of Army culture.

Similarly, the culture-preference connection operates less predictably for senior military officers serving in joint positions. As shown in the case of the RDJTF, key military actors responded to the policy environment based on the institutional position of their joint command. In that case, policy preferences accorded less with the culture of the parent service and more with the positional requirements of the joint command. Marine General P.X. Kelley, the first commander of the RDJTF, illustrated this particularly well. His consistent policy preferences as
a joint commander moved in the direction of four-service capabilities, departing from the conventional Marine position espoused by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Robert Barrow. Likewise, General Volney Warner at Readiness Command did reflect some Army sensibilities in his conduct vis-a-vis the RDJTF, but the prime motivation in his response appeared to be the incompatible positional arrangement of the RDJTF-Readiness Command relationship. Overall, the extensive analysis in this dissertation supports an important conviction of the culture literature: service culture appeared to condition, but not mechanistically determine, the policy preferences of the services (Stanley forthcoming). The conditioning was stronger at the service level and progressively less reliable for individuals, particularly for those who were not currently embedded in the service hierarchy.

Evaluating the Temporal Agency Framework

The use of service culture comprised the first major move of my theory. The second innovation was to distinguish policy creation from implementation. I thus modified a traditional principal-agent framework to evaluate creation and implementation separately but interactively. To evaluate this framework, I developed a series of hypotheses in chapter three, which I now evaluate on the basis of the evidence in the two case study chapters.

Hypothesis 1: Vocal military resistance will be more prevalent during policy creation than during policy implementation. In the two cases presented here, this hypothesis found strong but qualified support. Chapter eight focused exclusively on the policy creation phase of Goldwater-Nichols and did consider any evidence of policy implementation. Consequently, chapter eight provided an admittedly incomplete test of this hypothesis but did offer qualified support. The protracted four-year creation period saw sustained and vocal resistance from the Navy, while the implementation of the policy has generally been much less strident. When asked if the Navy continued to press its case after Goldwater-Nichols had been signed into law, Seth
Cropsey remarked, “No—we moved on.” Similarly, James Locher conveyed that once the legislation was signed, the Navy gathered its senior leaders together, acknowledged the fight was over, and expressed that it was time to carry out the new policy (Locher 2012).

In the case of the RDJTF, categorizing the military’s behavior as “resistance” during creation or implementation was more problematic. Certainly the most vocal periods of military advocacy were indeed during the periods in which Secretary Brown and Secretary Weinberger prepared to make major policy decisions. But the case of the RDJTF revealed a more complex dynamic than suggested by my original hypothesis. While vocal, the advocacy did not appear to be “resistance” but culturally conditioned strategies for a complex military problem. Similarly, while the implementation periods were indeed fractious, the primary axis of conflict was not civil-military but intra-military as Readiness Command and the RDJTF struggled to find an acceptable working relationship.

Overall, it appears that this hypothesis finds the greatest support when policies are increasingly clear and unambiguous in their implications (e.g., Goldwater-Nichols more than the RDJTF). Under conditions of increased ambiguity, the behavioral category of resistance bleeds into a different category of culturally conditioned problem-solving.

Hypothesis 2: Variation in the responses of the services will be more prevalent during policy creation than during policy implementation. On the basis of these two cases, this hypothesis has only mild support due both to a lack of evidence and to a scope condition identified during the research process. First, as noted above, the implementation period of Goldwater-Nichols was not analyzed explicitly, so it is difficult to assess variation in service responses during that phase. The limited evidence cited above does offer tentative support for this hypothesis,

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4 Seth Cropsey. 2013. Interview by author. January 31. Washington, DC. Cropsey was the Deputy Undersecretary of the Navy during the period leading up to Goldwater-Nichols and led the Navy’s anti-reform effort for Secretary of the Navy John Lehman.
5 Locher noted that this meeting was mentioned to him by Vice Admiral Mike McConnell.
however, as the Navy’s resistance to the policy slowly died off once the legislation was signed. In turn, the Navy’s efforts to implement the policy generally matched those of the other services.

The case of the RDJTF does not strongly support this hypothesis largely because of the important dynamic identified in Hypothesis 1. The pathway of compliance for creating and implementing the RDJTF was unclear, thus spurring variation in responses as each service applied its own strategic sensibilities to an ambiguous case of complex military strategy. Throughout the six-year case, the services varied in their behavior along culturally conditioned pathways of strategic thought. Furthermore, we did not see a qualitative difference in behavior before and after policy ratification because the various updates to the policy only minimally improved the ambiguity of the political environment. Rather than revealing a stark divide between creation and implementation, the case of the RDJTF exhibited an evolutionary process in which variation in service behavior persisted throughout the ambiguous period.

Hypothesis 3: The more specific the language of a civilian policy, the harder the military will bargain for its preferred outcome. This hypothesis found strong support in the data, particularly in chapter eight. In the case of Goldwater-Nichols, the specificity of the various legislative proposals spurred a considerable degree of resistance from the Navy. As seen in Admiral Moorer’s personal notes from the retreat at Fort A.P. Hill in October 1985, the specificity of the pending legislation comprised a major point of contention, particularly in contrast to the National Security Act of 1947. As Admiral Moorer commented, “The National Security Act of 1947 was purposely ambiguous, we didn’t want it to be rigid.”6 Instead, the pending reform legislation that became Goldwater-Nichols had years of background research and subject-matter expertise informing every line (Locher 2002), and was drafted with enough specificity to

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preclude self-serving interpretations by the services. As a particularly clear example, the new legislation established specific reporting requirements and enforceable provisions that made joint duty a binding prerequisite for obtaining flag rank (Barrett 2013). Even though existing DoD policy—as set in a 1959 policy directive by Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates—established the same requirement, the new provision prompted considerable angst for the lack of implementation slack it afforded.

Once again, the complicated case of the RDJTF challenges the categories and definitions in this hypothesis. The specificity—or lack thereof—in the various civilian policies did play a role in the military’s behavior but not by increasing or decreasing the fervor of bargaining. Instead, the RDJTF case appears to support a corollary hypothesis: the less specific the language in a civilian policy, the more the services’ culturally conditioned interpretations of a policy will emerge in civil-military interactions.

Hypothesis 4: If a civilian policy contains self-enforcing features such as empowered stakeholders, the military will bargain harder for its preferred outcome. This hypothesis found support in the data, once again more prominently in the Goldwater-Nichols legislation. In that case, the proposed empowerment of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) provided the clearest example of a self-executing policy through an empowered stakeholder. Furthermore, the proposal to empower the Chairman appeared doubly effective: the Chairman would not only be the most powerful but also the highest-ranking military officer in the nation—a detail that made its self-executing nature even more certain. An empowered Chairman would have both the statutory and the normative authority to carry out the full measure of his strengthened mandate. Consequently, the Navy consistently opposed centralizing such power and authority in a single individual throughout the four-year debate.
For the RDJTF case, the evidence for this hypothesis is muddier but still suggestive of support. Perhaps the best example was the Marine Corps’ efforts to own the rapid deployment mission or to control it as closely as possible. The alternative to Marine Corps ownership or domination was some other empowered stakeholder: a unique and separate organization for rapid deployment that would be difficult to dismiss or dominate—a potential threat to the closely guarded roles and missions of the Corps. The fact that another stakeholder might acquire self-executing power in a contested domain helped spur the Marines’ strong reaction.

Hypothesis 5: *The more comprehensive and durable a civilian policy is, the harder the military will bargain for its preferred outcome.* In both cases, this hypothesis found strong support in the available evidence. In the case of Goldwater-Nichols, the fact that the policy proposals took the form of comprehensive legislation—of the sort that gets passed once a generation—proved particularly odious to its opponents. The Navy led the way in trying to keep all reform efforts within the executive branch, not only to shape their content but also to ensure they remained penned on paper, not etched in legislative stone. Even at the proverbial eleventh hour as the Congressionally approved bill sat on President Reagan’s desk, the Navy drafted (but apparently did not send) a letter to Reagan arguing for reforms to come via executive rather than legislative means.7

In the case of the RDJTF, the services provided advocacy to their civilian leaders, but did not bargain stridently since the nature of the policy environment was one of shaping evolutionary executive branch decisions, not erecting enduring legislative monuments. Furthermore, the ambiguity of the RDJTF case reinforces a core idea of this hypothesis. As the services grappled to find a suitable strategy for rapid deployment to the Persian Gulf, they pursued flexible solutions to avoid making long-term changes to potentially short-term issues.

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For example, the services’ efforts to find a solution within the existing Unified Command Plan—a major peace treaty of sorts between the services—constituted an effort to minimize the stakes of the negotiation by keeping long-range durable constructs off the table.

Hypotheses 6a and 6b: (a) The sooner a civilian policy takes effect, the harder the military will bargain for its preferred outcome. (b) The more a civilian policy affects current military stakeholders, the harder the military will bargain for its preferred outcome. These hypotheses found limited support in the available evidence, due mainly to a lack of applicability. The clearest example of this temporal sensibility came in the Goldwater-Nichols specification of the joint duty requirement for promotion to flag rank. Rather than making the provision universally and immediately applicable to all officers below the rank of general or admiral, the drafters of the legislation specified transitional provisions to phase in the new policy over time—a measure that both increased the capacity for compliance and reduced the opposition during debate (Barrett 2013).

As discussed in chapter three, the focus of these hypotheses was on the imminence of a given policy’s applicability—that is, how soon do these measures go into effect? While the case studies found limited evidence for this aspect of imminence, the Goldwater-Nichols case did support a different facet of the idea. As the four-year debate progressed and the proposed policies gathered momentum, the Navy’s response became increasingly energetic as the policy’s ratification (rather than its applicability) became increasingly imminent. As Congressional support increased for defense reform, so too did the fervor of the Navy’s opposition.

Hypothesis 7: If the military opposes the substance of a given policy, it will attempt to negotiate the policy’s specificity, enforceability, durability, and imminence—in addition to the substantive issues of the policy itself. This hypothesis amplifies the findings from hypotheses 3-6 and finds strong support in the data, as just discussed for the previous four hypotheses. In each case, the specificity, enforceability, durability, and imminence became bargaining points, as the services
recognized that if they could not win on the substance, then the next best strategy was to negotiate an agency contract with sufficient latitude as to make its compliance more favorably flexible.

Overall, the hypotheses associated with my temporal agency framework found solid support in the available evidence, a result that appears to be a promising finding for the civil-military and principal-agent literatures. Later in this chapter I consider how future research might profitably build on these admittedly tentative findings to confirm, strengthen, or revise their implications.

Other Important Conclusions from the Case Studies

In addition to testing the explicit hypotheses identified above, the case studies yielded a number of other important findings relevant to our understanding of American civil-military relations. Again, the focal questions of this project are why the military services comply with some policies and not others, and why those responses sometimes vary among the services. The intriguing case of the RDJTF in particular generated several salient sub-answers to that question, which together form an integral part of a composite answer.

First, the initial two-year period of the RDJTF case is commonly heralded as a period of bureaucratic stalling and resistance in which the services effectively stiff-armed a presidential directive. The evidence marshaled in chapter nine challenged that view. Instead, the data and analysis clearly demonstrated that new civil-military policies often enter a cluttered policy environment that makes conflicting demands on the military agent. In the same way that international regime complexity challenges states with conflicting standards of compliance (Alter and Meunier 2009), a cluttered domestic policy environment challenges the military agent to comply faithfully with competing requirements. In the case of the RDJTF, the presidential directive to “maintain a deployment force of light divisions” interacted and competed with
other initiatives such as nuclear non-proliferation, arms control, and rebuilding NATO forces. Furthermore, the explicit military priorities established by the president and secretary of defense were on Europe, not the Middle East. With limited capacity, an overburdened agent must prioritize its efforts to comply with competing requirements. Any evaluation of military shirking or non-compliance, therefore, should be alive to the possibility that apparent shirking is in reality the byproduct of compliance with a higher priority.

Second, that same initial period of the RDJTF case highlights another important conclusion regarding military compliance. The civilian policy levied in August 1977 was fashioned without formal military input and without an appreciation for the military, political, and logistical complexities involved in carrying it out. Eventually, of course, the US military establishment found ways to overcome the difficult obstacles, but fast solutions in that policy space were simply not possible. Lawful civilian authorities have the right to create whatever policies they choose, but this case highlights the fact that full compliance with some policies may be structurally unattainable in the short run.

A third conclusion from the RDJTF case also links the quality of military compliance with the quality of the policy itself. The second phase of the case, in which the JCS created the RDJTF in response to Secretary Brown’s policy decision, highlighted the fact that defense policies are often flawed instruments. Due to the nature of the American political system, certain policies issued to the military may well be born with congenital defects. The RDJTF’s early years epitomized this phenomenon. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown made a logical decision to create a joint task force rather a unified command because something needed to happen and he could create a JTF faster than he could change the Unified Command Plan. Likewise, the JCS had logical reasons for situating the RDJTF under the peacetime authority of Readiness Command, and Brown had logical reasons for creating a Washington Liaison Office
in the Pentagon for the RDJTF. While logical in isolation, the combination of these various prescriptions created the unintended consequence of an illogical composite policy that was nearly impossible to fulfill to anyone’s satisfaction. This insight does not attempt to shift blame from the military agent to the civilian principal, but argues that any responsible assessment of military compliance should include an appraisal of the policy itself.

Fourth, an important finding from this research is that not all disagreements within the US military should be catalogued as interservice rivalry. Huntington’s (1961b) theoretical development of interservice rivalry remains a valuable contribution, but that label is too commonly applied to almost any intra-military disagreement. Further, the term comes loaded with pejorative baggage that indicts the military services on charges of petty parochialism. Instead, the case of the RDJTF in particular demonstrates that intra-military disputes are multifaceted phenomena. In some cases, intra-military conflict may be created by the structural conditions of the policy itself, as just described in the third conclusion above. Additionally, the primary axis of bureaucratic conflict may be between two or more joint organizations such as the RDJTF and Readiness Command, and not between two services like the Army and Marine Corps. In that case, the motivation for conflict derived from positional interests within the joint military structure, not from service interests. No doubt the disagreements were legion and bitter, but to label it “interservice rivalry” miscategorizes both the actors and the motivations that led to the actual disagreement.

The Limits of Agency

To conclude the discussion of this project’s major findings, I discuss perhaps my most important conclusion. By applying a dual culture-and-agency framework to a case of shaping and executing military strategy (i.e., the RDJTF), my work ultimately takes the agency framework to its logical limit. As discussed in the conclusion to chapter nine, crafting and
executing complex military strategy is an exercise in uncertainty. To cope with the uncertainty, the four services take unique approaches to framing, resourcing, and tackling the problem, as informed by their unique histories and operational requirements. These disagreements generally constitute legitimate strategic debate, but can result in inefficiencies and delays that frustrate the civilian principal’s intent. But even though the military’s behavior departs from the civilian’s ideal point, *that departure is not motivated by a preference gap or loose monitoring.* In these cases, the divergent behavior of the four military services is not a calculated decision to work or shirk, but a culturally informed judgment of what compliance requires in a given context. The case of the RDJTF revealed that for an important subset of civil-military policies, particularly those steeped in strategic ambiguity where the path of compliance is unclear, military responses to civilian policies may spring from culturally informed interpretations of compliance, not from material cost-benefit calculations.

This important conclusion ultimately exposes the scope conditions for an agency framework for American civil-military relations. Together, the two major cases in this project outline three separate arenas in which the agency dynamics operate differently. First, during a period of policy creation, the principal-agent framework does not work *actively,* but *anticipatively.* As the civilian principal gathers expert counsel from its military agent, the variables of monitoring, enforcement, and punishment are only future conditions that inform the tenor of present bargaining. In this sense, civil-military policy creation is a form of contract negotiation in which the two parties work to agree on the substance of the policy and the agential terms of its future implementation. The military therefore works to shape the policy substance toward favorable terms and then configures the agency parameters either to afford greater maneuver room for unfavorable policies or to lock-in the gains from favored ones.
The other two arenas of agency dynamics come during the implementation phase and are distinguished by whether the pathway of compliance is clear or ambiguous. To the extent that the path of compliance is fairly straightforward and unambiguous, we can expect conventional agency variables to obtain. Preference gaps, the unity of the civilian principal, and rewards and punishments are likely to inform the military services’ calculus of whether to comply fully and faithfully. When the pathway of compliance is highly uncertain, however, the agency framework may reach its theoretical limit. In cases like the RDJTF that involve crafting and executing complex military strategy, the military services may not be calculating whether to comply but how. When this occurs and the military services no longer respond to the interaction of preference gaps and monitoring regimes, the agency framework fades from explanatory relevance. Instead, what we see during these ambiguous phases is variation in military behavior derived from varying conceptions of what compliance requires in a particular strategic context. During these critical periods, we see that culture matters and that variation in service culture can indeed affect civil-military outcomes.

This insight actually reveals an added benefit of my two-part theory. Throughout this dissertation, I have analytically separated my theory into two components: I used service culture to explain policy preferences, and then used a temporal agency model to explain political behavior. In this third arena, however, when the agency framework encounters its logical limit, my cultural component steps in and works overtime. In addition to explaining policy preferences, the empirical typologies of service culture actually help to explain the services’ behavior. The policy preferences informed by culture push through the decision environment, largely unaffected by muted agency variables, to inform the services’ political behavior as well.
In sum, the agency framework applies well to American civil-military relations, but it applies differently across various policy contexts. During policy creation, the agency framework applies anticipatively. During implementation of clear policies, it applies actively. Finally, during the implementation of ambiguous or intractable policies, the agency framework applies passively. In this third category, conventional agency variables recede into the background while the civil-military actors—who share a normative interest in securing the state—resolve what compliance actually requires in that particular scenario, as perceived through culturally conditioned habits for their ends, ways, and means.

*The Methodological Payoff — Are the Details Worth the Mess?*

Finally, I revisit the methodological question posed at the start of this dissertation. Do my complications and additions to Feaver’s parsimonious model provide a compelling return on their investment? The synthetic findings discussed above suggest that the answer to that question is the political scientist’s favorite: *it depends.* The tradeoff between parsimony and empirical accuracy is a methodological choice, not an absolute judgment of better or worse. Depending on the type of knowledge and explanatory detail sought, my work can ably supply a richness that is missing in decidedly spare models like Feaver’s agency theory or Desch’s structural theory. My empirical constructs for the four service cultures, mated to an agency framework that varies across the policymaking timeline, create a compelling explanatory model for why the services respond as they do to civilian policies and why those responses vary among the services.

Conversely, parsimonious theories provide a more flexible alternative with wider external validity and simpler plug-and-play applicability. Consequently, my work stands not as an alternative to Feaver’s baseline agency theory but as a unique extension of it. Depending on the scope or area of one’s interest in civil-military relations, traditional agency theory may
provide all the detail one requires. If one’s interests, however, are more textured and if a highly ambiguous policy arena renders traditional agency variables silent, my work offers valuable empirical and theoretical insights.

10.4: Areas for Future Research

In light of these findings and conclusions, what further work remains to be done? I see three broad areas to which this research agenda could be profitably carried forward: (1) to other areas within the primary domain of American civil-military relations; (2) within the field of civil-military relations, but applied to other states and contexts; and (3) outside the field of civil-military relations to other venues where principal-agent dynamics are at work. I consider each in turn.

Further Reach into the American Civil-Military Domain

My work can be strengthened by testing its external validity in areas of American civil-military relations that my research design fenced off for methodological reasons. In order to structure a viable research project that could test the plausibility of my intuitions, I limited the temporal scope of my research and significantly limited the relevant case population. These limitations could—and should—be relaxed to assess the broader validity of my approach. Toward that end, several extensions are immediately apparent. First, in order to create a temporal buffer against circular reasoning, my research of the four services ended with their experiences in the Vietnam War nearly 40 years ago. Since then, of course, each of the services has experienced major changes within and without. Thus, one clear direction for future research involves assessing the cultural conclusions of chapters four through seven in light of each service’s post-Vietnam experiences. Do the experiences of the past 10-15 years in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, weaken or strengthen the cultural beliefs identified for each service?
A second clear avenue for extending my research is to examine a case within my identified case population that occurs after Goldwater-Nichols (1986). In both of the major case studies in this dissertation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff figured prominently as a major player in the civil-military interaction. Furthermore, both cases offered evidence in support of Huntington’s “committee compromise” thesis, as the JCS did indeed generate several weak, vague, and conflicted compromise solutions. As noted at the end of chapter eight, however, the Goldwater-Nichols reforms made the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff the principal military advisor to the President in an effort to overcome these very dynamics. To test whether or not this statutory provision was successful, a post-1986 case from my identified case population could be selected for further study, particularly since it would match many other important characteristics of the two cases studied in this project. This additional case analysis should focus on the changed role of the CJCS specifically and the JCS in general. Does a uniquely empowered Chairman substantively change the prevailing pattern of JCS output? If the “committee compromise” thesis no longer obtains, is there a different dynamic instead that civil-military theory needs to incorporate into its ongoing analysis?

A third direction for future research involves expanding the relevant case population. One interesting approach would be to study cases that only (or principally) involve one service, not all four of them. As seen in this project, a good deal of military behavior appears motivated by intra-military dynamics among the key players: the Chairman, the JCS, the services, and the joint/unified commands. When a civilian policy applies only to one service, does this sharpen the civil-military interaction in ways that my analysis overlooked? Do the intra-military and inter-service dynamics fade out, leaving a more coherent policy environment for studying a true civil-military interaction? As discussed at the end of chapter eight, this insight emerges as a counterintuitive shortcoming of my overall research design. One criterion of my case selection
strategy was to find cases that applied to all four services—or at least multiple services—to allow for variation among the service responses while holding constant other variables. By doing so, however, I may have animated intra-military relations that attenuated the analytical focus on civil-military relations.

Fourth, my research should be extended to the types of civil-military cases that my research design excluded or that were not selected for in-depth analysis. For example, studying cases of social or personnel issues may illuminate surprising differences in the responses of the services. Profitable research could include studying the ongoing integration of women in combat roles, the repeal of “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” legislation, issues of pay and benefits, and the services’ mix of active, guard, and reserve forces. Similarly, my research should be extended to study significant cases of using military force. Such use-of-force cases would challenge my framework in important ways. Without clear distinctions between policy creation and implementation in fast-moving decisions to employ military force, do the interactions between the two phases still shape the dynamics? Additionally, do the empirical referents for service culture help explain the types of tactics and strategies employed (or proposed) by the services, especially in ways that challenge mere bureaucratic stories of clamoring for prestige?

Together, these four steps appear to be the most natural extensions for applying my research. Each move remains within the intended scope of the theory, helping to expose the boundaries where the theory applies more or less effectively.

Outside the Domain of American Civil-Military Relations

If additional research within the field of American civil-military relations continues to strengthen my conclusions, then my theory could profitably be extended to other domains as well. For example, my overall project could easily be replicated for other states’ civil-military dynamics. A natural extension might be to the United Kingdom, which also possesses military
services with vibrant and storied traditions leading to strong service cultures. Applying these insights to the UK could thus build on Avant’s (2007) comparative analysis of the US and UK that focused on the differences between presidential and parliamentary systems. How does my cultural-temporal agency framework apply differently to parliamentary systems, where the principal is unified and the services are inherently more responsive to civilian direction (Avant 2007)?

Finally, my research has implications for the principal-agent literature in general and could be carried forward accordingly. Moving beyond civil-military relations to the broader agency domains of bureaucratic delegation and economics, does the interaction between creating and implementing policy—or negotiating versus executing a contract—obtain for other fields? In addition to the military services, are there other government departments or agencies that interact similarly with their executive or legislative principals? How does our understanding of non-hierarchal bargaining change when a given negotiation may be less about substance and more about the parameters for future implementation? The theoretical insights and empirical findings in this dissertation could certainly inform other arenas where principal-agent and bargaining dynamics figure prominently.

10.5: Implications for Theory and Practice

In view of the theory, evidence, and conclusions assembled in this dissertation, I close by considering the implications of this research for both the theory and practice of American civil-military relations. This final section of the dissertation pulls together the major findings of this work, specifying its contribution to the literature and our understanding of civil-military practice.

First, this research clearly supports the conviction that “civil-military relations” refers to a category of diverse political relationships. There is not a single “civil” entity relating
straightforwardly with a single “military” entity. In the American experience, the “civil” side of the relationship principally includes two key players: the hydra-headed Congress teeming with diverse interests, and the executive branch led by the president but often represented by his surrogates like the National Security Council or the secretary of defense. The uniformed military side of the relationship is equally diverse, comprised mainly of the four services, the joint combatant commands, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a wide array of guard and reserve components. Consequently, American civil-military relations are not a clear linear hierarchy but a complex web of relationships between diverse civilian principals and unique military agents.

Our understanding of this complex web can be improved by appreciating the enduring preference vectors of the major players. Taking a small step in that direction, this project pulled apart the military and zeroed in on four of the most important actors on the civil-military stage: the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. As seen in the 66 sub-cases of chapters eight and nine, the empirical constructs developed for the four service cultures performed admirably in predicting and explaining their preferences and behavior in the civil-military domain. These portraits of the four services constitute an important contribution of this work that can contribute to both theory and policy moving forward. Civilian and military personnel alike who are involved in the study or practice of American civil-military relations can profit by understanding the constitutive differences in how the services think and operate.

A second major implication of this research is the need to render nuanced judgments of compliance or “shirking.” In its ideal-typical sense, full civilian control obtains when civilian preferences prevail over military preferences, when the military does what the civilians want them to, and when civilians are able to set the terms of the debate and make the final policy decision (Desch 1999, Feaver 2003, Kohn 1997). In light of the theory and evidence marshaled in
this dissertation, I argue that appraisals of non-compliance or attenuated civilian control must be contextualized and case-specific. As previous sections of this conclusion have discussed, the expectation of full compliance varies by political context. Consequently, a strong implication of this project is an exhortation to scholars and practitioners to examine the broader policy context before rendering judgment on a specific civil-military case. Useful questions could include: Is this a case of policy creation where contrarian military advice, offered in good faith, is indeed expected and important for optimal outcomes? If this is a case of policy execution, is the pathway of compliance relatively clear or ambiguous? In what ways is the policy itself a creature of compromise that might make full-bodied compliance inherently problematic? Finally, what other policies are populating the civil-military ecosystem that may be competing for the military’s limited compliance capacity? Is non-compliance with policy C merely the byproduct of complying instead with higher priority policies A and B? This dissertation by no means exonerates the military nor does it explain away all perception of military non-compliance—indeed, civil-military shirking quite certainly occurs, as seen in various phases of chapters eight and nine. Instead, I find and argue that non-compliance is not always willful disobedience but can include meaningful good-faith efforts that are overtaken by other events.

A third major implication for both theory and practice is the recognition that civil-military debate can be about both the job and the contract—the substance of the policy and the parameters of its future implementation. An exclusive focus on understanding the substance of a civil-military discussion can therefore overlook what may be an equally important dimension of debate: the overall climate within which the policy will get executed. One of the salient findings from chapter eight, for example, highlighted this phenomenon. A major component of the Navy’s resistance to the proposed reforms focused on the specificity, lack of flexibility, and long-term durability of carving its stipulations on massive legislative tablets of stone. Many of
the same proposals were suggested and enacted within the JCS or the Defense Department, which the Navy did not protest and even supported. In that case, the substance mattered less than the confining straitjacket portended by the future climate of implementation.

The dynamic can operate in the reverse direction as well. In cases where the military favors a policy, it may clamor to lock in certain policies by eliminating maneuver room for future actors who might wish to alter the arrangement. The legislative efforts of the Marine Corps after World War II exemplify this particularly well. In its fight to stay alive and not be subsumed into the Army after World War II, the Marine Corps pushed hard for legislative protection of its roles, missions, and eventually its force structure as well (Krulak 1984, 29-63). The Marines gained support throughout Congress, but proposals varied in the extent to which the services’ roles and functions would be specified in law or left to the discretion of the new secretary of defense. The Marines, of course, consistently argued for full legislative protection and resisted all efforts to leave their fate up to the vagaries of an unknown future defense secretary. In that case, even though the substance of the proposals generally went in their favor, the Marines did not become silent—instead, they doggedly pressed their case to lock in this favored arrangement in the most durable and specific format possible. For a policy it favored so strongly, the Marine Corps wanted to ensure that neither it nor any other actor would have the maneuver room to misinterpret or overturn the policy. Clearly, in the world of American civil-military debate, both the job and the contract matter.

Policy Recommendations

In closing, several policy recommendations follow from these implications. This research demonstrates that the quality of military compliance often flows from the quality of the policies themselves. Consequently, these four dimensions of policy improvement increase the likelihood of full and faithful compliance from the military agent.
First, military compliance improves as the *internal* consistency of a given policy improves. Executive and legislative principals should pay close attention to the separately logical addenda that can aggregate into a flawed and illogical final product. Some of this incompatible grafting is inevitable in the American political system, but its inevitability does not preclude improvement. Policymakers have more options available to them than just substantive policy concessions to improve military compliance. Policy *coherence* may be just as effective as a reduced preference gap in fostering improved compliance.

The second recommendation is essentially a corollary of the first. Military compliance also improves as the *external* consistency of the policy improves. Any given policy enters a crowded policy space in which conflicting demands compete for limited compliance capacity. Policymakers can improve the quality of the military response by ensuring consistency of message in a given issue-area and by establishing clear priorities for an overtasked military agent. Without priorities to adjudicate between conflicting policy demands, the military agent is left to interpret the cluttered policy requirement according to its own culturally conditioned logic.

Third, civilian policymakers can and should calibrate their use of policy ambiguity to secure optimal counsel and implementation from the four military services. During policy creation, civilian principals should provide only broad guidance as they solicit counsel from the military services. Increased ambiguity will likely foster the diverse and culturally conditioned views of the different services, whose diversity of viewpoint represents a strategic asset to policymakers. Moving from creation to implementation, however, policymakers should attempt to clear away as much ambiguity as possible. As the first two recommendations suggest, improved compliance starts with the drafters’ pen. Cleaner policies elicit more robust compliance.
Fourth and finally, civilian policymakers do well to appreciate the substantive differences in viewpoint among the four military services. For reasons of operational nature and political nurture, the four services sustain deep and distinct beliefs that matter for civil-military outcomes. Policies intended for all four services should be alive to the possibility that when told to “secure the building,” the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force may well move in four different directions. Consequently, when appropriate, executive and legislative principals should consider whether an omnibus four-service policy or four service-specific policies represents the better approach. In many cases, policymakers may find improved compliance and healthier civil-military relations when policies are crafted for the unique operational and cultural parameters of the four services.

Ultimately, while this dissertation has focused on the unique differences between the services, such differences fade when the bugle sounds and the flag is raised. For all their many differences in belief, the four US military services overwhelmingly agree that they exist to serve the American people by winning the nation’s wars and remaining responsive to the control of their civilian leaders.
Appendix 1: Disclaimer

The views expressed in this dissertation are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the United States Air Force, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.
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