

CULTURE WARS:
AIR FORCE CULTURE AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies American civil-military relations at the level of an individual military service, and considers the impact of the Air Force's organizational culture on its civil-military relationship. Whereas most of the literature on civil-military relations treats the military as a unitary actor, this study considers the services as separate entities with unique self-interest. Furthermore, each of the four services is understood to have a unique organizational culture that guides and constrains its members' thinking. Using the structural framework of agency theory, this thesis explores the causal impact of the Air Force's organizational culture on its calculus of cooperating with or resisting a national policy. The thesis reviews the relevant literature on civil-military relations and organizational theory, and then builds a conceptual bridge between them. Next, the thesis considers the history of the Air Force to discern several basic assumptions that shape its unique culture. These cultural insights then inform two case studies—Operation DESERT STORM and Operations NORTHERN and SOUTHERN WATCH—that demonstrate the causal impact of the Air Force's culture on its civil-military relationship. The final section summarizes the key findings of the study and suggests logical trailheads for extending this line of research.

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Introduction

The civil-military challenge is to reconcile a military strong enough to do anything the civilians ask them to with a military subordinate enough to do only what civilians authorize them to do.

Peter Feaver

Refusing a popular mandate for leadership after the Revolutionary War, General George Washington chose instead to resign his military commission and return to his farm at Mount Vernon. In this iconic act, Washington firmly established the ethic of civilian control over the military in the infant United States.¹ Over two centuries later, the principle of civilian control still presides, and the reality of military subordination is an article of faith for the nation's uniformed servants. Despite the seeming absence of civil-military conflict, the issue of civilian control is rooted in the tenuous paradox of armed delegation. As Peter Feaver's opening quote suggests, the country seeks a military strong enough to fight foreign enemies without using its strength to become a domestic threat.² The institution endowed with exclusive and overwhelming power is trusted not to be corrupted by that power. Admittedly, civil-military relations in the United States have enjoyed good health, avoiding the obvious extreme of an armed coup. Nevertheless, the military services and the civilian policy-makers have not always agreed on the appropriate means to secure their common ends of national security. Consequently, even healthy civil-military relationships witness a continuum of cooperation and resistance between principal stakeholders. A military that willingly submits to civilian control is still a military that has its own interests.

Background

The theoretical literature on civil-military relations favors normative prescriptions for how actors *should* behave to preserve the ethic of civilian control. The undisputed titan of civil-military theory remains Samuel Huntington, whose seminal work *The Soldier and the State* advises civilian leaders to practice "objective control" by granting wide autonomy to the

¹ Joseph Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 146.

² Peter Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control," *Armed Forces and Society* 23 (1996): 149-78.

military.³ Such autonomy bolsters the ethic of professionalism within the military services, which serves to reinforce their willing subordination. Sociologist Morris Janowitz responded to Huntington with a constabulary military vision in which the military subordinates itself based on “self-imposed professional standards and meaningful integration with civilian values.”⁴ Both theories therefore offer normative visions of ideal-type behaviors without describing the subtleties of how civil-military relations actually unfold on a routine basis.

Peter Feaver fills this theoretical void with a deductive theory that accounts for the rational incentives that motivate both civilians and the military. Leveraging the vast economic literature on the principal-agent problem, Feaver’s agency theory models the civil-military dynamic as a civilian principal employing a military agent to provide security for the nation.⁵ Framing the relationship in principal-agent language exposes the inherent issues of moral hazard and adverse selection, in which information asymmetries allow agents to pursue their own interests rather than those of their principal.⁶ Feaver articulates a strategic interaction between civilian principals and military agents that incorporates the costs of civilian monitoring, the divergence of military and civilian interests, and the probability of costly punishment for military shirking.⁷ Consequently, agency theory exposes a continuum of working and shirking in light of the material incentives involved.

Feaver’s parsimonious theory makes simplifying assumptions to offer a structural baseline from which to assess the impact of other explanatory variables. First, agency theory treats the military as a monolithic actor, rather than an aggregation of powerful institutions with their own interests at stake.

³ Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).

⁴ Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*. (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960).

⁵ Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁶ John Brehm and Scott Gates, *Working, Shirking, and Sabotage: Bureaucratic Response to a Democratic Public* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

⁷ As Feaver explains in his own text, the terms “working” and “shirking” are borrowed from the economics literature on the principal-agent problem. These terms carry loaded connotations in a military context, but should be understood in a neutral context for the principal-agent discussion. Full definitions for these terms appear in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

As Carl Builder has suggested, however, the most powerful stakeholders in the national security apparatus are the military services themselves.⁸ If the Army, Navy, and Air Force are as influential as Builder implies, understanding civil-military relations at the individual-service level merits deeper analysis. Second, agency theory succeeds by modeling a rational framework that accounts for material interests; this structural approach creates a useful starting point. However, the theory intentionally neglects the cognitive-cultural origins of preference formation. Political scientists Adam Stulberg and Michael Salamone observe the tendency for most civil-military theories to “treat military institutions as static and monolithic organizations. Yet there is no uniform professional military ‘self-interest’ or creed to use as a benchmark.”⁹ Understanding the nuanced characteristics of an individual service would permit greater understanding of specific self-interest in shaping policy preferences.

Research Question

Using agency theory for the structural context, this thesis relaxes these two assumptions to examine cultural factors at the level of an individual military service. This research agenda examines the civil-military relationship in the United States at the component level of the military services. More specifically, this thesis asks: *what explanatory variables shape the preferences of a military service in its calculus of working and shirking with civilian principals?* Consequently, this paper attempts to account for a rich spectrum of causality by adding cognitive-cultural dynamics to the material-rational baseline of agency theory. In addition, by scoping the level of analysis to an individual military service with its own unique culture, these sociological variables can emerge with greater clarity.

This work examines the dynamics of civil-military relations for an individual service, and argues that organizational culture serves as the dominant variable in shaping service preferences. When a military service

⁸ Carl Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

⁹ Adam Stulberg and Michael Salomone, *Managing Defense Transformation: Agency, Culture and Service Change* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007).

evaluates national security policy, weighing its options for cooperation or resistance, its organizational culture acts as a heuristic for informing judgment. Organizational culture operates like a paradigm in scientific exploration, predisposing the attractiveness of certain conclusions while creating cognitive barriers to dismiss aberrant ones.¹⁰ Therefore, national security policies consonant with a service's long-standing organizational culture will generate enthusiastic working, while a policy inconsistent with that culture's basic assumptions will set the conditions for shirking. The rationalist framework of agency theory supplies the structural variables for consideration, while an organizational culture analysis considers the sociological ones. Together, this complementary approach yields greater explanatory power for understanding the dynamics of a military service as an agent to its civilian principal.

To substantiate the explanatory power of organizational culture, this thesis analyzes relevant bodies of literature and synthesizes their findings. The civil-military-relations literature establishes the context of relevant incentives, while the sociological literature highlights cognitive factors that shape an organization's interpretation of those incentives. More specifically, the sociology and psychology literature exposes the reverberating impact of organizational culture on its members.¹¹ Furthermore, the influence of culture appears uniquely powerful for military institutions;¹² military members all begin at a common reference point—the bottom of the hierarchy—and work their way upward. There are no lateral transfers into the upper ranks of the military service; senior officers all arrived at their position by 'growing up' in the patterns and norms of their service. These observations motivate a growing number of scholars to suggest the profound impact of military culture on security studies.¹³ For example, Jeffrey Legro describes the causal role of organizational culture in fashioning restraint and cooperation between the

¹⁰ Jeffrey W. Legro, "Military Culture and Inadvertent Escalation in World War II," *International Security* 18, no. 4 (1994): 108-42. Legro's analysis builds on the idea of scientific paradigms posited by Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996).

¹¹ Chapter 3 will cover the meaning and implications of organizational culture in greater depth, primarily using Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

¹² James Smith, "USAF Culture and Cohesion: Building an Air and Space Force for the 21st Century," (1998).

¹³ Chapter 3 reviews the cultural security studies literature in greater detail.

British and German militaries in World War II.¹⁴ This thesis appropriates these findings into the domain of civil-military relations.

As a useful exemplar of a military service with a strong organizational culture, this thesis studies the United States Air Force between 1990 and 2008. The Air Force during this period merits attention for several important reasons. First, with two separate incidents of the Secretary of Defense firing the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, this time period is bracketed by obvious breakdowns in healthy civil-military relations. In 1990, Secretary Dick Cheney fired General Michael Dugan in the prelude to Operation DESERT STORM.¹⁵ Eighteen years later, Secretary Robert Gates fired General T. Michael Moseley after a series of unfortunate events, most notably the mishandling of nuclear materials.¹⁶ Together, these glaring incidents suggest that the Air Force's relationship with its civilian leadership is worthy of greater study. The second reason this period is notable is that all seven Chiefs of Staff during this time were fighter pilots.¹⁷ As chapter three will describe in greater depth, one of the unique features of Air Force culture is the varying dominance of its subcultures. The common pedigree of these seven Chiefs—all having 'grown up' in the fighter culture—creates a measure of consistency for the system-dominant subculture of the period. Finally, this eighteen-year span is notable because the Air Force sustained perpetual combat operations for the entire period. In 1990, the service deployed troops and equipment for Operation DESERT SHIELD and has never left. Operations DESERT STORM, SOUTHERN WATCH, NORTHERN WATCH, ENDURING FREEDOM, and IRAQI FREEDOM have anchored the Air Force overseas for two decades. Consequently, this period affords a rich variety of policy decisions in which the Air Force figured prominently. Therefore, the period from 1990 to 2008 contains civil-military confrontations, relative cultural consistency, and a wide array of policy decisions suited to further analysis.

¹⁴ Jeffrey W. Legro, "Military Culture and Inadvertent Escalation in World War II."

¹⁵ Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 292.

¹⁶ Thom Shanker, "Two Leaders Ousted From Air Force in Atomic Errors," *New York Times*, 6 June 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/06/washington/06military.html?hp> (accessed 13 Feb 10).

¹⁷ <http://www.airforcehistory.hq.af.mil/PopTopics/csaf.htm> (accessed 13 Feb 10).

Limitations

This thesis ambitiously synthesizes the civil-military relations literature with the work of cultural security studies. There are, however, limits to the ambition and methodology of this thesis that should be confronted at the outset. First, this thesis does not claim *exclusive* causality for any one variable. Social science literature teems with competing theories of causality: structural versus cultural, functional versus constructivist, rational versus sociological, etc. This thesis will not end the debate, but attempts to incorporate cultural considerations into a structural framework; agency theory provides a compelling medium for fusing the two views. Second, some scholars critique cultural approaches to security studies for their use of “amorphous and unusable” definitions and tautological reasoning that cannot be disproven.¹⁸ This thesis cannot guarantee immunity from this self-serving logic but invokes as much definitional precision as it can. Chapter 3 explicates a specific definition of organizational culture, followed by unique facets of Air Force culture to evaluate in the case studies.

Finally, as a uniformed member of the Air Force for nearly 17 years, the author cannot claim an *objective* capacity to evaluate the Air Force’s organizational culture. One of the subtleties of organizational culture is its relative transparency to those who exist within it.¹⁹ To minimize the inherent subjectivity of such analysis, this thesis stipulates cultural observations made in published works by outside scholars. The author then compiles and categorizes these outside observations into a systematic view of Air Force culture. Although the observations come from published sources, the author’s work of categorization and compilation is itself subject to bias. This inherent subjectivity remains an irreducible limitation of studying one’s own institution. Nevertheless, every reasonable effort was made to minimize its impact on generating worthwhile results.

¹⁸ Michael C. Desch, *Culture and Security* (Cambridge, MA: Security Studies Program, Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996).

¹⁹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3.

Methodology

This thesis employs a case-study methodology to expose the explanatory power of organizational culture in Air Force civil-military relations. In broad terms, this work follows the customary arc of theory exposition and synthesis, case-study analysis, and formal conclusions. Chapter 2 discusses the essence of civil-military relations theory, with greater attention to the contributions of Huntington and Feaver. This chapter details Feaver's agency theory in both formal and informal terms, highlighting the cognitive-cultural potential within its rational framework. Chapter 3 offers a lengthy articulation of organizational culture theory, its unique application to security studies, and specific features of Air Force organizational culture. Together, chapters 2 and 3 identify the gaps in agency theory that cultural variables can fill, why organizational culture matters to security studies, and the unique dimensions of Air Force culture that inform its understanding of national security policy.

From that foundation, chapters 4 and 5 present two separate case studies of national security policies in which the Air Force figured prominently. In both cases, the analysis compares the relative consonance of the policy decision with the stipulated organizational culture of the Air Force. This cultural consideration provides a textured view of the service's self-interest in its calculus of working or shirking, complementing the material incentives already included in the model. Chapter 4 details the extensive planning effort leading to Operation DESERT STORM, while chapter 5 profiles the protracted season of Operations NORTHERN and SOUTHERN WATCH. Finally, chapter 6 summarizes the findings, offers concluding observations, and suggests areas for further research.

Throughout the Revolutionary War, General Washington nobly subordinated his decision-making and military policies to the civilian oversight of the fledgling Continental Congress. His conduct during the war, coupled with the willing surrender of his commission after it, established a noble trajectory for civil-military relations in the United States. The following analysis scrutinizes the continued arc of that trajectory, examining the Air Force's relationship with its civilian principals by testing the relative impact of its storied culture.

Chapter 1

Theories of Civil-Military Relations

War is at one and the same time an autonomous science with its own method and goals and yet a subordinate science in that its ultimate purposes come from outside itself.

Samuel Huntington

The best indicator of the state of civilian control is who prevails when civilian and military preferences diverge.

Michael Desch

The principle of civilian control stems from the essence of democratic theory and the nature of war as a political instrument. In a democracy, the military serves a circumscribed and delegated role to provide security for the nation. The military's interests are never autonomous, but must remain subordinate to the interests of the polity. The preeminent military theorist Carl von Clausewitz canonized this subordinate role in his enduring work *On War*.¹ Clausewitz explains, "The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose."² As an *executor* of policy, the military is inherently subordinate to the elected leaders responsible for creating that policy. Therefore, both democratic and military theories reinforce the primacy of civilian control, and the civil-military relations literature explores these dynamics with useful clarity.

This chapter offers an overview of civil-military relations theory, beginning at its source in democratic theory. Understanding the unique roles and accountability mechanisms for both civilians and the military frames the subsequent discussion. Next, the chapter highlights the contributions of seminal theorists like Huntington, Cohen, Janowitz, and Desch. These theorists provide the foundation on which Feaver builds the principal-agent framework of agency theory. Because this thesis uses agency theory as the chief prism for its analysis, this chapter includes a substantive discussion of

¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

² Clausewitz, *On War*, 87.

Feaver's informal and formal model. Finally, the chapter concludes by exposing the cultural gaps in agency theory's rational framework, thereby establishing the theoretical niche that this thesis purports to inhabit. The chapter prepares the reader to see how organizational culture can be grafted onto the vine of agency theory, preparing the way for chapter three to explain its causal significance in the Air Force's civil-military relations.

Civil-Military Relations in a Democracy

Democracies function through deliberate processes of delegation, representation, and accountability. The general public delegates a prescribed measure of decision-making authority to elected representatives, and then holds those representatives accountable in subsequent elections. The public therefore serves as the principal, electing representatives to serve as its agents to provide sound governance. These elected representatives, in turn, delegate a portion of their vested authority to other groups to accomplish specific sub-tasks—to wit, the military is the delegated authority to provide national security. In this second-order delegation, the elected government serves as the principal and the military acts as the agent.³

This two-tiered delegation between the public, the elected government, and the military creates boundaries of action and accountability for each group. The elected government, accountable to the public at the polls, bears responsibility for crafting policy and making judgments on the use of force in the national interest. The military, accountable to its civilian leaders, bears responsibility for offering sound military advice, assessing risks, and executing the policy—to include using force and risking lives when directed to do so. The distinctions between these roles and responsibilities carry moral significance. Feaver suggests, “The military can describe in some detail the nature of the threat posed by a particular enemy, but only the civilian can decide whether to feel threatened and, if so, how or even whether to respond. The military assesses the risk, the civilian judges it.”⁴ To be sure, the military may disagree

³ Deborah D. Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons From Peripheral Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 7.

⁴ Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 6.

strongly with a chosen course of action, even offering sound political wisdom for its contrary counsel. Nevertheless, democratic theory insists that the civilian decisions hold sway. Huntington concurs, “The superior political wisdom of the statesman must be accepted as a fact. If the statesman decides upon war which the soldier knows can only lead to national catastrophe, then the soldier, after presenting his opinion, must fall to and make the best of a bad situation.”⁵ For the health of the democracy, “civilians have the right to be wrong.”⁶ If the civilian leaders do indeed make a poor policy decision, their principal—the general public—must be trusted to hold them accountable in the next election.

By the same logic, the civilian principal must hold its military agent accountable for its conduct. Given the unique power delegated to the military, the domain of civilian oversight carries particular importance. As described in chapter one, the paradox of armed delegation creates an institution endowed with sufficient power to counter external threats, but sufficiently compliant so as not to *become* an internal threat. There is, however, some trade space in the exchange. Without resorting to a hostile coup, a military institution could still pursue its own interests at the expense of the civilian agenda. Therefore, the question of how best to ensure ongoing control of the military is supremely important to a democracy with a military as strong as the United States’. A wealth of scholarly literature explores these control mechanisms with greater fidelity, and the following section details the central themes.

Civil-Military Relations Theorists

For over half a century, Samuel Huntington’s *The Soldier and the State* has dominated the field of civil-military relations in the United States.⁷ Consequently, this section begins with Huntington as an ideological point of departure, and subsequently considers the contributions of Cohen, Janowitz, and Desch.⁸ These theorists prepare the foundation for Feaver’s agency theory in the section that follows.

⁵ Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 76.

⁶ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 6.

⁷ Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*.

⁸ The analysis of Huntington and Janowitz draws largely upon Feaver’s work in *Armed Servants* and “The Civil-Military Problematique.”

Huntington

Huntington embraces an ideal-type division of labor between political civilian leaders and a professionally apolitical military. Throughout his work, he attempts to develop “a system of civil-military relations which will maximize military security at the least sacrifice of other social values.”⁹ To reach this goal, Huntington delineates two methods of civilian control over the military: subjective and objective. Subjective control attempts to blur the lines between military and civilian roles, making the military a political extension of its civilian leadership. Conversely, objective control honors the distinctions between the two institutions, granting autonomy to the military in performance of its delegated mission. Huntington clearly favors the latter: “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.”¹⁰ To Huntington, objective control maximizes the professional ethic of the military and delimits the respective domains of action: the civilians make the policy, and the military carries it out.

Huntington’s advocacy for objective control counters the fusionist thinking of his day. Recognizing that military actions are an extension of political discourse, the fusionists sought to eliminate clear distinctions between military and political domains.¹¹ The fusionists extended this logic further, suggesting that the military should embrace political nuance and refrain from giving “purely military” advice.¹² Huntington rejects this view, believing that objective control, military autonomy, and clear divisions of labor enhance civilian control and national security. He concludes, “A political officer corps, rent with faction, subordinated to ulterior ends, lacking prestige but sensitive to the appeals of popularity, would endanger the security of the state. A strong, integrated, highly professional officer corps, on the other hand, immune to politics and respected for its military character, would be a steadying balancing

⁹ Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 2.

¹⁰ Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 83.

¹¹ Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 352.

¹² Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 352.

wheel in the conduct of policy.”¹³ Huntington therefore employs a values-based approach, offering a normative theory for how civilians and the military *should* behave to maximize effective civilian control. Feaver summarizes Huntington’s logic and causal chain: “Autonomy leads to professionalization, which leads to political neutrality and voluntary subordination, which lead to secure civilian control.”¹⁴

Huntington’s work remains a classic in the literature, particularly among military officers who embrace the autonomy he prescribes. Other scholars in the field, however, critique Huntington’s views, particularly in light of the fifty years thence that did not corroborate his theses.¹⁵ Defense scholar Eliot Cohen, for example, argues that Huntington’s theory bequeathed to the nation the fallacious ‘normal theory’ of civil-military relations: civilians set the policy and authorize the use of force, and should then step back and give the military free rein to accomplish that policy.¹⁶ Cohen adds that popular misconceptions regarding the conduct of the Vietnam War and Operation DESERT STORM serve to reinforce the ‘normal theory.’ The conventional wisdom suggests that the war in Vietnam failed because of presidential micromanagement, while the Gulf War was a stunning success because of its presidential restraint. Cohen’s analysis refutes these misconceptions, and he argues that history’s most successful campaigns witnessed active presidential involvement at a level of great detail. “Rather than a comfortable division of labor, we observe in history a far more tense and exhausting interaction over matters of detail and not simply the broad outlines of strategy.”¹⁷ Cohen therefore rejects Huntington’s

¹³ Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 464.

¹⁴ Peter D. Feaver, “The Civil-Military Problematic: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control,” *Armed Forces and Society* 23 (1996): 160.

¹⁵ In *Armed Servants*, Feaver presents a lengthy critique of Huntington’s prescription that the United States must “change or die.” Huntington believed that the United States must either embrace conservatism and reject liberalism, or suffer defeat at the hands of the communist threat. Feaver’s chapter 2 presents empirical evidence that the United States neither changed nor died, suggesting that Huntington’s thesis is therefore in need of revision.

¹⁶ Eliot Cohen, “The Unequal Dialogue: The Theory and Reality of Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force”, in Peter Feaver and Richard H. Kohn, *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 433.

¹⁷ Cohen, “The Unequal Dialogue”, 432. This argument is extended at length in Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003).

ideal-type division of labor as an abdication of responsibility on the part of the civilian leadership. The statesman, Cohen argues, cannot afford to consign himself to being Huntington's "patient under the care of a surgeon."¹⁸ Cohen, in fact, used this very line of reasoning to urge President Bush to hold his Army generals accountable for the failing strategy in Iraq in 2006. Cohen asserted that President Johnson's failure in Vietnam was not one of micromanagement, but rather a "failure to force strategic debate."¹⁹ According to Cohen, more active involvement by the civilians is essential for the civil-military relationship to benefit the state most profitably.²⁰

Janowitz and Desch

Sociologist Morris Janowitz extends the normative logic of civilian control employed by Huntington. Janowitz profiles an officer corps that remains subordinate to civilian control on the basis of self-conception and willingness. Speaking of top military leaders, he writes, "In their day-to-day activities they 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.'"²¹ Furthermore, Janowitz envisions a constabulary role for the US military in the Cold War, altering Huntington's ideal-type distinction between civilian leaders and an apolitical military. Acting more like an international police force than a military, Janowitz's constabulary force would patrol its global bailiwick, use minimal force, and seek "viable international relations, rather than victory" for its efforts.²² These changes to the military's proper role, however, do not change Janowitz's essential prescription for civilian control. He submits, "The constabulary officer performs his duties, which include fighting, because he is a professional with a sense of self-esteem and moral worth...He is amenable to civilian political control because he recognizes that civilians appreciate and understand the tasks and

¹⁸ Cohen, "The Unequal Dialogue", 434.

¹⁹ Thomas Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 99.

²⁰ This same conclusion is echoed in Jack Snyder, "Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984," *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 108-46.

²¹ Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*. (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960), 368.

²² Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 418.

responsibilities of the constabulary force.”²³ By emphasizing the roles of self-esteem and professionalism, Janowitz repackages Huntington’s values-based logic in a different context.²⁴ Feaver offers a valid critique of both: “In emphasizing the role of professionalism, however, both Huntington and Janowitz are vulnerable to charges of defining away the problem of civilian control.”²⁵

In contrast with these normative visions, Michael Desch offers a deductive model for understanding civil-military relations in light of varying security conditions.²⁶ Desch’s theory incorporates both international and domestic threats, and contends that civilian control of the military is easiest when international threats are high and domestic threats are low. Conversely, the military is most likely to outmuscle its civilian leadership when domestic threats are high and international ones are low. Similar to the logic of Barry Posen’s analysis of military doctrines, this theory invokes an internal-external dichotomy, and varyingly distracted civilians constraining an autonomy-seeking military.²⁷ Ultimately, Desch’s theory offers a deductive model with attractive parsimony, but it fails to render the civil-military relationship with any degree of useful fidelity.

Agency Theory

Peter Feaver’s agency theory absorbs the enduring contributions of the previous theorists by capturing them in a flexible model. Feaver appropriates the principal-agent literature from economics into the domain of civil-military relations, and accounts for the material incentives that inform the interaction. This section explains the core contributions of agency theory, and then identifies the elements in the model where cultural variables can provide added richness.

²³ Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 440.

²⁴ Feaver, “The Civil-Military Problematique”, 167.

²⁵ Feaver, “The Civil-Military Problematique”, 167.

²⁶ Michael Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

²⁷ Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984). Posen argues that civilians are more active in shaping transformational military doctrine in times of international crisis, while military organizational culture carries greater impact during times of relative calm.

The Principal-Agent Framework

In economic theory, the principal-agent problem is created in an environment of information asymmetry in which a principal does not have perfect knowledge of its agent (adverse selection) and cannot perfectly monitor its behavior (moral hazard). These two tenets of divergent interests and information asymmetry thus inform Feaver's principal-agent framework for civil-military relations. Given a military with its own self-interest and unique professional authority, how can the civilian leadership structure the relationship to ensure healthy subordination?

Before analyzing the model, the relevant terms must be defined and their implications understood. The principal-agent literature from economics uses the terms 'working' and 'shirking' to describe the two options available to the agent. These terms are consistent in the literature, and Feaver applies them to the civil-military domain despite the loaded connotations they have in a military setting.²⁸ Broadly speaking then, in the civil-military context, "working is doing things the way civilians want, and shirking is doing things the way those in the military want."²⁹ However, this simple categorization belies a continuum of cooperative or resistant behaviors lurking beneath appearances. As the discussion of democratic theory demonstrated, the military-as-agent has a constitutional duty to perform its mission *on behalf of* its principal. The principal delegates responsibility to execute a policy faithfully, but retains responsibility for the content and consequences of that policy—again, the civilian principal retains "the right to be wrong."³⁰ Therefore, 'working' should meet a higher standard of conduct that faithfully abides the civilians' intent. Feaver's more rigorous definition states: "Working is the ideal conduct that the

²⁸ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 3. Feaver explains that his use of the terms is in the technical sense of the literature. 'Shirking', for example, is not meant to imply "lazy or desultory behavior, or possibly treasonous treachery." He asks for "the benefit of the doubt that all plausible alternative terms were considered and rejected as presenting equally problematic connotational or definitional challenges."

²⁹ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 60.

³⁰ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 6.

agent would perform *if* the principal had full knowledge of what the agent could do and was in fact doing.”³¹

Similarly, the definition of shirking must incorporate this higher standard of intent. Shirking can still occur short of a coup or a glaring act of insubordination like General MacArthur’s snubbing of President Truman.³² In fact, “the military agent is said to shirk when, whether through laziness, insolence, or preventable incompetence, it deviates from its agreement with the civilians in order to pursue different preferences, for instance by not doing what the civilians have requested, or not in the way the civilians wanted, or in such a way as to undermine the ability of the civilians to make future decisions.”³³ These definitions imply a high standard of faithful conduct for the military agent, and permit a spectrum of cooperative behavior to emerge. Without resorting to an open coup, the military can still imperil a healthy civil-military relationship with obstructionist working and petty shirking. “The health of the democracy depends...as much on respect for the process of democratic politics as on the substance of the policies that process yields.”³⁴

The Model

Using these definitions, agency theory models a hierarchal strategic interaction between civilian principals and military agents.³⁵ The first decision belongs to the civilians, who decide whether or not to monitor the military intrusively.³⁶ The next decision is the military’s as it decides whether to work or shirk for a given policy. This decision considers several variables, including

³¹ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 61.

³² Allan Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 512.

³³ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 68.

³⁴ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 302.

³⁵ Robert Jervis offers a valid critique of such decision-theoretic models in light of systemic complexity. Decision-theoretic models such as agency theory incorporate stepwise decisions, in which one decision follows in light of the previous. Jervis argues that actual decisions are made contemporaneously in a complex atmosphere of overlapping expectations. Nevertheless, Feaver’s model does not purport to be an ironclad proxy for reality, and retains sufficient explanatory clarity to be useful. For more, see Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 85.

³⁶ This consideration incorporates the perceived cost of that monitoring, as well as its role as an incentive to the military, which is assumed to prefer autonomy (non-intrusive monitoring).

the divergence of interests involved and the military's perception of receiving costly punishment if its shirking is detected.³⁷ Finally, if the military decides to shirk and the civilians detect the shirking, the final decision belongs to the civilians: whether (and how) to punish the military for its transgression. In sum, the strategic interaction of the model incorporates a wide array of variables: external context factors embedded in the civilians' monitoring decision, the convergence and strength of interests informing the military's decision to work or shirk, and cost considerations captured in the perception and reality of punishment.

For the purposes of this study, the most illuminating element of the model is the military's decision to work or shirk. In formal terms, the decision *to work* is expressed by the following inequality:

$$agp > s - w$$

where a = the probability of detecting shirking
g = the probability of civilians choosing to punish shirking
p = the cost of the punishment to the military
s = the military's policy preference
w = the civilian's policy decision³⁸

In plain language, the inequality states that working will occur when the military's calculation of being caught and meaningfully punished is greater than the divergence of respective interests. Or, as Feaver suggests, the military "will work only if the punishment is great enough to reduce the net gain of shirking below that of working."³⁹ The movement of these variables therefore creates conditions in which working or shirking is more or less likely to occur. Decreasing any of the variables on the left side of the inequality will decrease the perception of costly punishment, thereby increasing the likelihood of shirking.⁴⁰ For example, if the civilians choose to monitor non-intrusively,

³⁷ If the military and the civilians want the same thing, there is no incentive to shirk. Conversely, if the military has a divergent interest and believes their shirking will not be detected, or not be punished, or that the punishment would not be costly, its incentive to shirk increases.

³⁸ This inequality and the associated variables are simplified from Feaver's more complex model.

³⁹ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 107.

⁴⁰ By obvious extension, *increasing* the left-side variables will *reduce* the probability of shirking. Increasing either 's' or 'w' on the right side only has relevance vis-à-vis the

decreasing the probability of detecting shirking ('a' is less), *ceteris paribus* one would expect shirking to be more likely. Similarly, if the military felt strongly about a particular policy on which it disagreed significantly with the civilians (increasing the magnitude of 's – w'), shirking is likewise more probable. Finally, if the military works for a politically powerful civilian with a track record for punishing military failures ('g' is greater), the likelihood of shirking is reduced.

By modeling this hierarchy of choices and incentives, Feaver incorporates much of the substantive findings of the previously described theories. "For instance," he argues, "the model shows how Huntington's arguments about the optimal form of delegation can be true under certain conditions, some of which Huntington recognized and some of which he did not explicitly identify."⁴¹ Similarly, the model captures Desch's conclusion that civil-military relations will be their worst with a high domestic threat and a low international one. During periods of domestic crisis, the civilians are more likely to be distracted by political concerns, thereby reducing the probability of detecting and punishing shirking, thus increasing the probability of the military choosing to shirk. This rational framework succeeds by remaining simple enough to be useable, while incorporating enough causal variables to be useful. In addition, it exposes gradations of working and shirking to assess the relative health of the civil-military relationship.⁴² While traditional models are silent short of the extremes, agency theory offers a relational continuum and suggests which external variables are likely to foster a relatively subordinate or stubborn military. Consequently, the model provides a useful understanding of what the civilians and military *actually* do, rather than simply prescribing what they *should* do.

other variable, since the *delta* between the two is the driving factor in the military's cost calculation.

⁴¹ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 113.

⁴² Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 285.

Preference Formation and the Role of Culture

In Feaver's model, the military is assumed to care about national security policy and to have its own idea of the right policies to pursue.⁴³ This thesis explores more deeply how a military service constructs its policy preferences on the basis of its organizational culture. For simplicity, agency theory assumes the military has its own policy preference; this thesis probes that assumption to ask *why* a particular service has its own preference and what variables shape that preference most profoundly.

Agency theory assumes the military has three categories of policy preferences: the content of the policy, the interpretation of its behavior, and a general preference for autonomy.⁴⁴ The model recognizes that military preferences for the content of a policy will vary based on the situation, but stipulates that militaries generally prefer offensive situations and will likely inflate threats and requirements to meet a potential foe from a position of advantage.⁴⁵ In addition, the theory assumes that the military is concerned with its honor and the outside perception of its behavior. Feaver suggests this normative preference may actually dampen the effect of divergent preferences over policy content: "Thus the preference for honor can work to mute the impulse to shirk for military agents, even when other factors...indicate they should."⁴⁶ Feaver extends this argument, suggesting that the military's organizational culture of subordination forms an essential component of civilian control. "In the civil-military context, an organizational norm that stresses obedience gives both civilians and the military a common expectation that the military will be subordinate."⁴⁷

This thesis explicitly addresses these assumptions. In its current form, agency theory stipulates that the military will have a preference, but does not presume to suggest the antecedents of that preference. Furthermore, the theory assumes a dampening effect from the general military culture of subordination. Greater fidelity can, however, be extracted from the model in

⁴³ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 63.

⁴⁴ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 63.

⁴⁵ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 63. This assumption is echoed in Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine*.

⁴⁶ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 64.

⁴⁷ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 80.

these two dimensions: first, by disaggregating the military writ large and analyzing a unique military service; and second, by studying a service's unique organizational culture that directly informs its policy formation. The respective military services have distinct personalities, and a service's unique culture may trigger impulses that echo more loudly than the assumed ethic of subordination.⁴⁸ For example, the Air Force may still be carrying strains of iconoclastic DNA injected by the fiery Billy Mitchell.⁴⁹ In that case, a cultural norm of 'independent thinking' may shape behaviors more strongly than the prevailing military norm of subordination. The next chapter explores these possibilities further, and articulates the rationale for understanding a service's organizational culture. After chapter three explains the power of organizational culture for the Air Force, the two case studies use agency theory to test the importance of culture in shaping Air Force preferences. The case studies will consider the contextual and material incentives modeled by agency theory (variables a, g, p, and w), while analyzing the influence of culture on the Air Force's preference formation (variable 's') and its decision to work or shirk.

Conclusion

Civilian control of the military is an article of faith in the United States. Anchored in the logic of democratic theory and echoed in Clausewitz, military subordination to civilian policy constitutes an essential requirement for healthy democracies. Prominent civil-military theorists like Huntington affirm its importance, offering normative prescriptions of objective control to sustain a willingly subordinate and professional military. Instead of a normative theory, Feaver's agency theory offers a deductive model that makes a causal connection between material incentives and the military's decision to work or shirk. As a rational baseline, agency theory provides a fitting backdrop to assess the impact of sociological variables. Feaver's analysis makes simplifying assumptions about military preferences and the dampening impact of a culture of subordination. This thesis complicates these assumptions by analyzing the

⁴⁸ Carl Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 3.

⁴⁹ Charles Dunlap, *Understanding Airmen: A Primer for Soldiers*, Military Review (2007), 128.

heuristic of organizational culture in forming policy preferences for the Air Force. Blending cultural considerations into a rational framework ultimately fosters a deeper understanding of the Air Force's civil-military relationship.

Chapter 2

The Power of Organizational Culture

The perceptions supplied by an organizational culture sometimes can lead an official to behave not as the situation requires but as the culture expects.

James Q. Wilson

The rational framework of agency theory aptly models the structural incentives that inform civilian and military behavior. This chapter complements that top-down approach with a bottom-up analysis of the cognitive dimensions of the military's behavior. Political scientist Elizabeth Kier suggests that "making sense of how structure matters or what incentives it provides often requires understanding the meanings that actors attach to their material world."¹ An organization's culture supplies that meaning to make sense of its external and internal environment. Furthermore, the potency of organizational culture is particularly strong for military organizations given their unique parameters of entry and advancement.² As the single port of entry into the military force, basic military training explicitly inculcates new beliefs, assumptions, and language into fresh recruits. Decades later, a portion of these recruits will have successfully navigated the complex shoals of training, operations, and bureaucracy to achieve positions of leadership. Their career success was in part a function of their ability to make the organization's culture their own, thereby shaping their outlook on future decisions.

This chapter contains three broad areas of emphasis: a brief review of the literature to define organizational culture, the use of organizational culture as a causal variable in security studies, and finally, an overview of the basic assumptions that undergird the Air Force's organizational culture. The first section weaves together various definitions from the literature in an effort to define terms for the rest of the paper. The second section demonstrates the causal role that organizational culture serves for military organizations, from shaping doctrine to systems acquisition and warfighting. The final section uses

¹ Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 3.

² James Smith, "USAF Culture and Cohesion: Building an Air and Space Force for the 21st Century," (1998).

this theoretical foundation to survey Air Force history in search of its unique organizational culture. As discussed in chapter one, this cultural analysis stipulates cultural observations from other published works, and then synthesizes them into five categories of assumptions. These five tenets will form the basis for assessing the consonance of national security policy with Air Force culture in the case studies to follow.

Defining Organizational Culture

As “an empirically based abstraction,” culture can be difficult to define even though its impact is intuitively clear.³ The idea of ‘culture’ has been used to describe a wide array of phenomena, and its profusion can dilute its legitimate impact. If *everything* can be attributed to culture, then it lacks utility as an analytical construct. This section presents a select group of definitions from the literature to define more precisely what culture *is* and what functions it serves for members of an organization.

Definitions

Social psychologist Edgar Schein profiles no less than fifteen different definitions for organizational culture in the scholarly literature.⁴ While each definition spins its own nuance, Schein highlights four elements of culture that persist across the literature: its structural stability, depth, breadth, and integration.⁵ Together, these elements suggest that culture is stable across organizational generations; it abides at a deep and generally unconscious level; it pervades widely across the organization; and “rituals, climate, values, and behaviors tie together into a coherent whole.”⁶

Reflecting all four elements, Schein’s formal definition of organizational culture describes “a pattern of *shared basic assumptions* that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to

³ Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 7.

⁴ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 12-13.

⁵ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 14.

⁶ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 15.

those problems.”⁷ (emphasis added) While Schein articulates a thorough sociological definition, other scholars vary the emphasis to provide heuristic conceptions of culture. James Wilson describes an organization’s culture as “a persistent, patterned way of thinking... Culture is to an organization what personality is to an individual.”⁸ Ann Swidler suggests a different metaphor, emphasizing the functional dimension of culture in supplying an action inventory: “A culture is not a unified system that pushes action in a consistent direction. Rather, it is more like a ‘tool kit’ or repertoire from which actors select differing pieces for constructing lines of action.”⁹ Finally, Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn invoke a colloquial understanding of culture, representing “how things are around here.”¹⁰

Several threads connect the core elements of each definition: a pattern of assumptions, an historical genesis, persistent durability, and a common basis for action. Therefore, this study will draw from these antecedents to stipulate a composite definition: *Culture is the prevailing personality of an organization, rooted in its collective history, enduring over time, and comprised of assumptions from which it forms a basis for future action.*

Manifestation

Schein explains that culture will pervade all levels of an organization, with each level of analysis amplifying a tenet of the root culture. The first level of cultural manifestation is an organization’s *artifacts*—the visible, sensory phenomena such as architecture, language, iconography, and ceremonies.¹¹ These first-level phenomena communicate the priorities and ethos of an organization, and create the first impression for an outside observer. The second level of cultural manifestation comprises the *espoused beliefs and*

⁷ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 17.

⁸ James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do it* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 91. The idea of organizational “personality” is also the dominant metaphor throughout Carl H. Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

⁹ Ann Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies,” *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 2 (1986): 277.

¹⁰ Kim S. Cameron and Robert E. Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture: Based on the Competing Values Framework* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1999), 14.

¹¹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 25.

values of the organization.¹² These espoused beliefs constitute what an organization says it believes, “[its] sense of what ought to be, as distinct from what is.”¹³ Espoused beliefs that consistently prove effective in solving problems for the organization ossify into the third level of culture: *basic assumptions*. These basic assumptions form the cultural cortex of the organization, establishing the “theories-in-use” that actually determine the organization’s behavior.¹⁴ These theories-in-use may or may not coincide precisely with the organization’s espoused beliefs. Nevertheless, this root layer of an organization’s culture—its basic assumptions—creates the cognitive “tool kit” for future action.

Schein invokes these three levels to describe what to look for in an organization to discern its unique culture. Additionally, he details *where to look* in an organization’s history for the crucibles of cultural formation. Schein identifies two forces that mold an organization’s basic assumptions: “(1) survival in and adaptation to its external environment and (2) integration of its internal processes to ensure the capacity to continue to survive and adapt.”¹⁵ Therefore, understanding an organization’s culture involves searching out its artifacts, espoused beliefs, and basic assumptions as formed during its adaptation to its external environment and reinforced through its internal processes. These categories will inform the final section of this chapter in search of the Air Force’s unique organizational culture.

Impact

The core assumptions of an organization’s culture shape its interaction with its environment. Schein explains, “Culture as a set of basic assumptions defines for us what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on, and what actions to take in various kinds of situations.”¹⁶ This process of mental filtration and sense-making resembles the

¹² Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 28.

¹³ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 28.

¹⁴ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 31. Schein attributes the expression “theories-in-use” to the work of Chris Argyris.

¹⁵ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 87.

¹⁶ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 32.

cognitive effect of a paradigm within theoretical science.¹⁷ Just as a paradigm exerts a causal role on the thinking of those doing “normal science,”¹⁸ an organization’s culture impacts what its members see, ignore, amplify, and discard. Therefore, an organization’s culture both “guides and constrains” its members, and biases the suitability of certain options while blockading the viability of others.¹⁹

Because of these powerful cognitive effects, an organization with an established culture seeks policies that reinforce its core ethos. Cultures provide stability to organizations such that new policies or foreign procedures can appear threatening. In their studies of bureaucracies and policy-making, Morton Halperin and James Wilson identify the routine behaviors that organizations employ to preserve their culture.²⁰ “Tasks that are not part of the culture,” Wilson notes, “will not be attended to with the same energy and resources as are devoted to tasks that are part of it.”²¹ Likewise, he observes that organizations will resist taking on new tasks that appear inconsistent with their cultural assumptions. Halperin concurs: “An organization is often indifferent to functions not seen as part of its essence or necessary to protect its essence.”²² These observations suggest that understanding the behavior of a military service requires a deep appreciation of the culture that shapes its thinking. Therefore, the next section documents the pervasive influence of culture on the military services and national security policy.

¹⁷ See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996). This connection between organizational culture and scientific paradigms is made explicitly in Jeffrey W. Legro, “Military Culture and Inadvertent Escalation in World War II,” *International Security* 18, no. 4 (1994):116.

¹⁸ Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 10.

¹⁹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 8.

²⁰ Morton H. Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1974), 39. Halperin speaks of organizational “essence” which is similar to this study’s definition of “culture.” See also Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, 101.

²¹ Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, 101.

²² Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 39.

The Cultural School of Security Studies

What if military forces were not what we pretend them to be—the military means to political ends—but were, instead, institutional ends in themselves that may or may not serve the larger interests of the nations that support them?

Carl Builder

Recognizing the impact of organizational culture on military services, scholars increasingly account for these cognitive variables in security studies. This section appropriates the academic discussion of organizational culture into the specific domain of the military services. The goal of this section is to demonstrate clearly that organizational culture comprises the dominant variable in shaping a military's policy preference. This discussion will inform the analysis of the later case studies, as the national security policies are compared against the cultural tenets of the Air Force. To substantiate the power of organizational culture for the Air Force, this section advances four interlocking precepts: first, there is no single monolithic military culture—each service has its own unique culture; second, military service cultures are uniquely powerful and pervasive; third, the individual military services exert considerable influence on national security policy; and fourth, the organizational culture of the military services shapes their conceptions of how to structure, equip, and fight the nation's wars.

Scholars have long considered organizational behaviors in their analysis of national security. For example, two foundational works in the field—Posen's *Sources of Military Doctrine*²³ and Allison's *Essence of Decision*²⁴—incorporate organizational theory as a primary lens of analysis. In general, these analyses of military behavior consider the military as a monolithic whole with generalized preferences.²⁵ Posen, for example, assumes a military preference for offensive doctrines as well as "predictability, stability, and certainty."²⁶ A closer view of the military, however, reveals four distinct services, informed by unique

²³ Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

²⁴ Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Longman, 1999).

²⁵ Jeffrey W. Legro, "Military Culture and Inadvertent Escalation in World War II," 110.

²⁶ Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine*, 46.

cultures and holding unique preferences. Williamson Murray notes, “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.”²⁷ Stephen P. Rosen’s analysis corroborates Murray’s assertion: “Each branch has its own culture and distinct way of thinking about the way war should be conducted.”²⁸ This awareness suggests the value of studying each military service separately to inform a better understanding of its contribution to security policy.²⁹ Analyzing a service with a unique organizational culture illuminates preferences with greater specificity and texture than an aggregate military view affords.

Understanding the culturally distinct military services is particularly important in light of the uncommon power of their respective cultures. While Schein et al describe the saturating impact of culture for organizations in general, military institutions constitute an extreme case. For example, the military services employ a “closed career principle” with only one way in and one way up.³⁰ Military members enter at the bottom of the hierarchy, reaching the top only with time and steady promotion within the organization. From day one of a military career, the force-feeding of service culture begins. Military trainers baptize new recruits into their service norms, stripping them of their individuality through regulation haircuts, teaching them new ways to walk, talk, eat, clean, and dress.³¹ That same culture continues to inform the rest of one’s military career, though the shock of the new is replaced with the transparency of the normal. Because there are no lateral transfers into the

²⁷ Williamson Murray, “Does Military Culture Matter?”, *Orbis* 43, no. 1 (1999): 34.

²⁸ Stephen P. Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 19.

²⁹ For further commentary on the need to disaggregate the military into its culturally significant components, see Theo Farrell, “Figuring Out Fighting Organisations: The New Organisational Analysis in Strategic Studies,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 19, no. 1 (1996): 122-35; Deborah D. Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons From Peripheral Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 14; Adam N. Stulberg and Michael D. Salomone, *Managing Defense Transformation: Agency, Culture and Service Change* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 20; and Jeffrey Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

³⁰ James Smith, “USAF Culture and Cohesion: Building an Air and Space Force for the 21st Century,” 7.

³¹ Larry R. Donnithorne, *The West Point Way of Leadership: From Learning Principled Leadership to Practicing it* (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1994), 20-22.

upper ranks, those who survive to lead have embraced the dominant cultural norms. For these reasons, Kier suggests that military organizations “may be the most ‘complete’ societies of any ‘total’ organization.”³² Culture informs the worldview of any organization, but appears to *dominate* the worldview of a military service.

In addition to boasting strong cultures, military organizations carry powerful influence in the creation of policy. In fact, Carl Builder asserts that the military services constitute the major players in the formation of national security policy.³³ Furthermore, Builder affirms the uniqueness of each service culture—what he calls ‘personality’—and the causal impact those personalities have on service behavior. He suggests that these service personalities “will persist through the trauma of war. They affect how the services, in peacetime, perceive war and then plan and buy and train forces. To understand the American military styles is to understand what is going on and much of what is likely to happen in the national security arena—from Star Wars to the Persian Gulf.”³⁴

Since the military services are power players with equally powerful cultures, a growing literature highlights the causal role of organizational culture in shaping service behavior. John Nagl’s influential work on counterinsurgency operations in Malaya and Vietnam highlights the different organizational cultures of the British and American armies.³⁵ These unique cultures, Nagl argues, explains the two armies’ varying capacity to become learning organizations capable of adapting to counterinsurgency operations. Similarly, Jeffrey Legro’s analysis of mutual restraint between Britain and Germany in World War II pits a realist view against an organizational culture view.³⁶ Legro’s organizational culture view “posits that the pattern of assumptions, ideas, and beliefs that prescribe how a military bureaucracy should conduct battle will influence state preferences and actions on the use of that means.”³⁷ To

³² Kier, *Imagining War*, 29.

³³ Builder, *The Masks of War*, 3.

³⁴ Builder, *The Masks of War*, 5.

³⁵ John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup With a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons From Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

³⁶ Legro, “Military Culture and Inadvertent Escalation in World War II.”

³⁷ Legro, “Military Culture and Inadvertent Escalation in World War II,” 117.

understand phenomena of restraint in submarine warfare, strategic bombing, and the non-use of chemical weapons, Legro argues that the organizational culture lens offers greater explanatory power. For example, after both Britain and Germany executed “accidental” bombing attacks on each other in the spring of 1940, Germany largely brushed off the offense while Britain eagerly launched retaliatory campaigns. Legro explains the contrasting responses by citing that strategic bombing was not a part of the Luftwaffe culture, though it pulsed at the heart of Royal Air Force (RAF) culture.³⁸

Elizabeth Kier’s study of French and British military doctrine in the interwar years sustains a similar line of argument. Kier does not reject the realist framework of self-interest, but suggests that cultural lenses *inform the content of that interest*.³⁹ Builder concurs, observing that a service’s force-planning and systems-acquisition are largely shaped by cultural preferences rather than objective threat analyses.⁴⁰ Adam Stulberg and Michael Salamone capably summarize the literature: “The common thread to these studies is that military culture represents the intellectual and inter-subjective capacity of the different armed services to come to grips with the tasks of preparing for and waging war in different strategic, political, and technological settings.”⁴¹ This paper advances the same conclusion.

This chapter defines and details the impact of organizational culture, and its uniquely powerful role in shaping the policy preferences of the military services. What impact then does organizational culture have on civil-military relations? The existing baseline of agency theory models an aggregate military with generic self-interest and a culture of subordination. This thesis relaxes these assumptions by: (1) disaggregating the military and studying one military service—the Air Force; and (2) analyzing the service’s unique organizational culture that informs its understanding of self-interest—a culture that may or may not prize subordination. Moving from the general to the specific, what

³⁸ Legro, “Military Culture and Inadvertent Escalation in World War II,” 126. This case is made at length in Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire*.

³⁹ Kier, *Imagining War*, 38. Zisk undertakes a similar cultural analysis of Soviet doctrinal development in Kimberly M. Zisk, *Engaging the Enemy: Organization Theory and Soviet Military Innovation, 1955-1991* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

⁴⁰ Builder, *The Masks of War*, 6.

⁴¹ Stulberg and Salomone, *Managing Defense Transformation*, 24.

cultural assumptions tacitly shape the *Air Force's* preferences? To answer this question, the remainder of this chapter undertakes a cultural analysis of the United States Air Force.

The Organizational Culture of the Air Force

Who is the Air Force? It is the keeper and wielder of the decisive instruments of war—the technological marvels of flight that have been adapted to war.

Carl Builder

This section canvasses Air Force history in search of its artifacts, espoused beliefs, and basic assumptions, forged in the fires of external adaptation and internal integration. Recalling the definition of culture stipulated earlier in this chapter, the goal is to uncover the prevailing personality of the Air Force, rooted in its collective history, enduring over time, and comprised of assumptions from which it forms a basis for future action. The methodology of this section searches out historical and cultural observations from published works, and categorizes the recurring themes into five discrete tenets of Air Force culture. This paper does not suggest that these five basic assumptions are the only ones informing Air Force action, nor do these assumptions saturate the thinking of *every* Air Force member. They serve as broad generalizations for the purpose of qualitative analysis in the case studies. These assumptions attempt to expose the “theories-in-use”⁴² that shape Air Force policies and preferences. In the interest of brevity, this section does not provide exacting historical detail, so interested readers seeking more background can follow the research trailheads suggested by the footnotes.

Technology-Centered

Without question, the most consistent and pervasive description of the Air Force is its core connection to technology. As Builder frankly suggests, “The Air Force could be said to worship at the altar of technology.”⁴³ The service’s love for technology, however, is not a disembodied one; rather, the Air Force

⁴² Argyris, quoted in Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 31.

⁴³ Builder, *The Masks of War*, 19.

prizes the human connection to technology as manifest in the *airplane*. An observer's first impression of the Air Force, rendered through its visible artifacts, illuminates an 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, 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 Lee. 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-105.⁴⁴ 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 fascination with the airplane stems from the earliest days of the Army Air Corps. Perry Smith notes the visceral connection these early flyers had with their machines: "To him the airplane was not just a new and exciting weapon; it was what carried him miles behind enemy lines and brought him back; it was a personal possession which was given a personal, usually feminine, name, kissed upon return from a mission, and painted with a symbol for each enemy plane shot down or bombing mission completed."⁴⁵

This love of technology—particularly as expressed in the airplane—illuminates much about past and present Air Force behavior. Richard Hallion notes, "Generally speaking, the technology tail has wagged the Air Force dog."⁴⁶ The history of the Air Force's acquisition of both the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) and Remotely-Piloted Aircraft (RPA) suggests an institutional resistance to these disembodied technologies.⁴⁷ Historian David MacIsaac avers, "However much the official spokesmen of the air services may deny it, [RPAs]

⁴⁴ Smith, "USAF Culture and Cohesion," 13.

⁴⁵ Perry M. Smith, *The Air Force Plans for Peace, 1943-1945*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 18.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Carl H. Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome: The Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 162.

⁴⁷ There were pockets of enthusiasm for both systems, but the institutional inertia weighed against them. The story of Air Force corporate resistance to the ICBM is detailed in Neil Sheehan, *A Fiery Peace in a Cold War: Bernard Schriever and the Ultimate Weapon* (New York: Random House, 2009). For a discussion of resistance to both systems based on organizational identity, see: Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

are not considered an appropriate topic for discussion by most pilots, among whom it is an article of faith that a manned aircraft can perform any mission better than an unmanned aircraft.”⁴⁸ Although the Air Force certainly adopted these unmanned technologies into the service, the bias for manned systems constitutes an abiding element of the service culture.

The Air Force’s institutional passion for technology and airplanes translates into a consistent prioritization of quality over quantity. For example, the Air Force historically laments the *age* of its aircraft fleet rather than the numbers within that fleet.⁴⁹ Builder aptly observes that to an airman, “To 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.*”⁵⁰ (emphasis added) This observation echoes convincingly with current Airmen whose service has labored mightily to procure the F-22 and F-35 to stay ahead of foreign competition. Smith agrees that aircraft superiority is the prism through which many Airmen view national security.⁵¹ Ultimately, this fascination with technology and airplanes bleeds into nearly every corner of Air Force culture; in fact, several of the forthcoming tenets of Air Force culture are derivatives from this technological core.⁵²

In light of these observations, the following basic assumption informs Air Force organizational culture: *The Air Force exists because of technology, and its ongoing superiority is sustained by the ascendance of its technology. As the first and most important machine, the manned airplane is the building block of the force. While unmanned technologies have their place, the complexities of combat require an actual—or virtual—human presence over the battlefield.*

⁴⁸ Quoted in Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome*, 163.

⁴⁹ Builder, *The Masks of War*, 22. For a current lament on the age of Air Force aircraft, see Thomas Ehrhard, “An Air Force Strategy for the Long Haul,” http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20090917.An_Air_Force_Strat/R.20090917.An_Air_Force_Strat.pdf. (accessed 18 Feb 10).

⁵⁰ Builder, *The Masks of War*, 22.

⁵¹ Smith, *The Air Force Plans for Peace*, 52.

⁵² For additional observations of the primacy of technology, see Charles Dunlap, *Understanding Airmen: A Primer for Soldiers*, Military Review (2007), and Michael Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals: The Problem of Air Force Leadership, 1945-1982* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1998), 36.

Autonomously Decisive

The technological DNA of the Air Force informs the next tenet of its culture: an abiding desire for politically unconstrained, uniquely decisive operations. Forged in the crucible of World War II, and spurred by a desire for service autonomy, an unflinching commitment to strategic bombing dominated the early decades of the Air Force.⁵³ Even before World War II concluded, the Army Air Corps commissioned a strategic bombing survey to generate empirical evidence for its decisive impact.⁵⁴ Neither tactical aviation nor theater airlift motivated a post-war survey as strategic bombing did.⁵⁵ Robert Jervis notes that an organization absorbs lessons most acutely when its structure is altered or formed to learn a particular lesson from an event.⁵⁶ The Air Force's history supports Jervis' assertion; after the publication of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, the doctrine of strategic bombing became the theology of Strategic Air Command, and by extension, the Air Force as a whole. Morton Halperin observes, for example, the curiosity of the Air Force's blithe treatment of the Berlin Airlift.⁵⁷ At a time when its public image was at its zenith—having shown the world that America was both mighty *and* good⁵⁸—the Air Force chose not to invest in or publicize its airlift capacity. Airlift seemed a distraction from its principal focus on strategic bombing.⁵⁹

The Airman's love of technology and aircraft, coupled with an organizational commitment to strategic bombing, forged a focus on *means* instead of ends. Historian Michael Sherry details this phenomenon in World War II: "The leaders and technicians of the American air force were driven by technological fanaticism—a pursuit of destructive ends expressed, sanctioned, and disguised by the organization and application of technological means...In practice, they often waged destruction as a functional end in itself, without a

⁵³ Smith, *The Air Force Plans for Peace*, 17.

⁵⁴ David MacIsaac, *Strategic Bombing in World War Two: The Story of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey* (New York: Garland, 1976).

⁵⁵ Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals*, 17.

⁵⁶ Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 239.

⁵⁷ Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 31.

⁵⁸ Andrei Cherny, *The Candy Bombers: The Untold Story of the Berlin Airlift and America's Finest Hour* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2008), 511.

⁵⁹ Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 31.

clear comprehension of its relationship to stated purposes.”⁶⁰ Muting the Clausewitzian ideal of subordinating the violence of war to its political purpose, Air Force leaders focused instead on the lethality of their means. Sherry suggests that among the Air Force leadership of World War II and the Cold War, “The task, not the purpose, of winning governed.”⁶¹ Mark Clodfelter extends this trajectory into the modern era of precision-guided weapons, noting the temptation such weapons might offer. He suggests that the precision revolution creates “a modern vision of air power that focuses on the lethality of its weaponry rather than on the weaponry’s effectiveness as a political instrument.”⁶²

One manifestation of this focus on means over ends is the Air Force’s discomfort with political constraints. Paradoxically, the centralized control and flexibility of air power make it particularly malleable to nuanced political pressure; however, the Air Force as an institution is acutely resistant to such ‘interference.’ The nearly unconstrained political environment of total war in Germany and Japan molded an expectation for the right way to use air power. For Air Force leaders like General Curtis LeMay, “Politics (except for the scramble for resources) ended when war began.”⁶³ In future conflicts, the precedent of a free political hand continued to inform Air Force expectations in the straitjacket of limited war.⁶⁴ During the Korean War, “Senior Air Force leaders ‘chafed under the prospect of political constraints’ that reduced the decisiveness of air power and surrendered initiative to the enemy.”⁶⁵ Similarly, after the frustrations of Vietnam, Air Force leaders insisted they could have been more effective if they had been “free from political restraints.”⁶⁶ More recently, this discomfort with political constraints climaxed during the coercive

⁶⁰ Michael S. Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 251-252.

⁶¹ Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power*, 180.

⁶² Mark Clodfelter, *The Limits of Air Power: The American Bombing of North Vietnam* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 203.

⁶³ Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power*, 180.

⁶⁴ The metaphor of the “straitjacket” in fighting limited wars comes from Dr. Tom Hughes, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Maxwell AFB, AL.

⁶⁵ Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals*, 43.

⁶⁶ Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas About Strategic Bombing, 1914-1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 299. Echoed in Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals*, 169.

air campaign of Operation ALLIED FORCE. Subjecting every target list to the political sensitivities of each country in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) spurred no shortage of frustration for senior Airmen.⁶⁷ After the war, General John Jumper commented on such politically constrained gradual campaigns, “We hope to be able to convince politicians that is not the best way to do it, but in some cases we are going to have to live with that situation.”⁶⁸ Reflecting the consensus view throughout Air Force history, Jumper’s remarks convey the idea of an air war as an autonomous military endeavor with a “best way to do it,” rather than an inherently subordinate extension of political activity.

In sum, the Air Force’s mastery of technology has motivated a desire to unleash the full potential of that technology. The *promise* of air power grips an Airman’s imagination, and motivates a passion to showcase that promise. Historically, therefore, Airmen have sought to master the *means* of war, unshackled from the tangled politics of its purpose. This is not to say that all Airmen are uninterested in the political purposes of war, but indicates a trend that shapes the prevailing personality of the service. A basic assumption informing Air Force organizational culture is this: *The Air Force has the power to change the face of the Earth. It can do what no other service can do. To realize its true potential, the Air Force should be employed kinetically, offensively, overwhelmingly, and with minimal political interference.*

Future-Oriented

The Air Force’s technological core predisposes a forward-looking orientation. As the youngest of the services, born from technological breakthrough, the Air Force “identifies the past with obsolescence, and for the air weapon, obsolescence equates to defeat.”⁶⁹ Historian Tami Davis Biddle also detects this tendency in Air Force thinking, noting “too great a readiness to focus on the future without rigorously considering the past. This is an endemic problem in air forces, which develop their institutional identity around claims to

⁶⁷ Dag Henriksen, *NATO's Gamble: Combining Diplomacy and Airpower in the Kosovo Crisis, 1998-1999* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2007).

⁶⁸ Quoted in Paul C. Strickland, “USAF Aerospace-Power Doctrine: Decisive Or Coercive?”, *Aerospace Power Journal* 14, no. 3 (2000): 13-25.

⁶⁹ Dunlap, “Understanding Airmen,” 127.

see and understand the future more clearly than other services do.”⁷⁰ An organizational commitment to looking ahead pervades the Air Force culture.

The technological orientation of the service, however, fosters unintended consequences. While the Air Force looks forward, its investment in high-priced systems with long development times creates a counter-intuitive conservatism. The service builds its doctrine and force structure around the machines and systems in its inventory; however, when emerging technologies enable new doctrines or strategies, they threaten the viability of the Air Force’s posture. Builder explains, “In fostering technology, even for its cherished instruments, the Air Force is necessarily instigating new concepts and capabilities that challenge the form and preferences of its institution.”⁷¹ Mike Worden notes a similar vulnerability for any service’s commitment to its doctrine. During the golden age of Strategic Air Command’s dominance, the Air Force’s commitment to strategic bombing blinkered consideration of alternatives. “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.”⁷²

Despite this discomfiting tendency for “adverse yaw,” the espoused belief of future-orientation informs Air Force culture across the service.⁷³ Consequently, the third basic assumption of the Air Force’s organizational culture is this: *Technology and potential adversaries change quickly, and the Air Force must orient forward to the unknown future instead of the forgotten past. The Air Force must pursue next-generation systems today to be ready for tomorrow.*

⁷⁰ Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 291.

⁷¹ Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome*, 161.

⁷² Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals*, 145.

⁷³ “Adverse yaw” refers to an aerodynamic property in which an aircraft’s rolling means in one direction creates a yawing motion in the opposite direction.

Occupationally Loyal

The Air Force's technology-focused DNA replicates itself in the hearts of its members.⁷⁴ Builder asserts that the history of the Air Force is steeped in an individual passion for flying more than an abiding loyalty to the institution. He contends, "The Air Force identifies itself with flying and things that fly; the institution is secondary, it is a means to those things. A brave band of intrepid aviators, bonded primarily in the love of flight and flying machines, may have a clear sense of themselves, but it is not so much an institutional as it is an individual sense of self. And it is not focused so much on who they are as it is on what they want to do."⁷⁵ Builder cites the volunteer aviators of the Lafayette Escadrille, the Flying Tigers, and the RAF Eagle squadrons as examples of noble men who served honorably, but were motivated by their love of flying. "The prospect of combat is not the essential draw; it is simply the justification for having and flying these splendid machines."⁷⁶

Within the Air Force, this phenomenon gives rise to a "fractionated confederation of subcultures rather than a cohesive military service."⁷⁷ In his study of Air Force cultural cohesion, James Smith notes the high level of occupational versus institutional loyalties, particularly among pilots.⁷⁸ As a service built around a visceral connection with unique machines, loyalties migrate to those machines—and one's experience of them—rather than to the larger institution.⁷⁹ Throughout 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."⁸⁰ A recent advertising campaign by the Air Force reinforced this idea by showing young people pursuing their passions—snowboarding, bicycle racing, flying remote-controlled airplanes—and then

⁷⁴ The discussion of this tenet does not impugn the patriotic motives of any Air Force member, but paints a broad outline of historic trends across the service.

⁷⁵ Builder, *The Masks of War*, 37.

⁷⁶ Builder, *The Masks of War*, 23.

⁷⁷ Smith, "USAF Culture and Cohesion," 22.

⁷⁸ "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.

⁷⁹ For greater historical background on the genesis of this subculture phenomenon, see Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome*.

⁸⁰ Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome*, 35.

announcing, “We’ve been waiting for you.”⁸¹ The Air Force markets itself as a venue for doing what you love—but higher, faster, and with a grander purpose.

This occupational orientation often inspires loyalties to subgroups within the larger Air Force. Because the Air Force maintains a diverse mission portfolio in several warfighting domains, unique subcultures have developed within insulated commands. Then-Chief of Staff of the Air Force Merrill McPeak lamented, “People built loyalties around their commands—intense loyalties in fact—rather than loyalties to air and space power as a whole, to a broader, more comprehensive mission.”⁸² Air Force officer and historian Edward Mann observes the same about the service in 1990, “We were a conglomerate of specialists with greater loyalty to machines and sleeve patches than to any single unifying theme or to the Air Force itself...Over the years, we in the Air Force had cloistered ourselves in occupational monasteries, efficiently performing the rites of our orders with no sense of the church’s mission.”⁸³ These dynamics suggest a hierarchy of overlapping motivations within the Air Force culture; desires to serve the country, lead Airmen, fly an airplane, build secure cybernetworks, and control satellites all collide in a mosaic of motivations. Consequently, a basic assumption persists: *The Air Force is an honorable and patriotic means to practice a desirable high-tech trade. Loyalties to the trade, machine, and subculture often outweigh loyalty to the institution.*

Self-Aware

As the youngest of the military services, and one that fought hard for its organizational autonomy, the Air Force is uniquely self-aware of its institutional legitimacy. During its infancy as an organization, the Air Force’s adaptation to its external environment required fierce defense of its turf. Assigning roles and missions among the services spawned fractious debate and bureaucratic

⁸¹ Melanie Streeter, “We’ve Been Waiting’ Campaign Returns to Television,” *Airman* (November 2004): 9.

⁸² Quoted in Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals*, 235.

⁸³ Edward C. Mann, *Thunder and Lightning: Desert Storm and the Airpower Debates* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 1995), 163.

wrangling.⁸⁴ These dynamics imbued the Air Force with a sensitivity to its rightful place in the pantheon of established military services. Builder claims, “The Air Force...has always been most sensitive to defending or guarding its legitimacy as an independent institution.”⁸⁵ In fact, as recently as December 2009, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force was seeking fresh articulations of “why we need an independent Air Force.”⁸⁶ Such a rhetorical exercise indicates the service still suffers an unsteady conviction of its own *raison d’être*.

This self-aware posture subjects the service to periodic bouts of identity crisis. In 1989, an unpublished white paper entitled “A View of the Air Force Today” circulated throughout the Air Force. Its authors articulated an array of concerns about the state of their service, and ultimately concluded: “the Air Force seems to have lost its sense of identity and unique contribution.”⁸⁷ Two years later, the stunning success of Operation DESERT STORM seemed to resolve the crisis for the Air Force as it proved its decisive worth in dramatic fashion.⁸⁸ The institutional self-confidence, however, was short-lived. In a study published by the Center for Strategic Budgetary Assessments in September 2009, Thomas Ehrhard concludes, “Today’s Air Force is experiencing an institutional identity crisis that places it at an historical nadir of confidence, reputation, and influence.”⁸⁹ Symptomatic of this crisis of confidence, Charles Dunlap likewise avers that many airmen feel unappreciated by the other services.⁹⁰

These phenomena underscore the final basic assumption of Air Force organizational culture: *Major combat operations are the best setting to showcase the full potential of the independent Air Force. In any other venue, the Air Force serves an essential supporting role in which it is largely taken for granted. During these times of transparent contribution, the Air Force must actively articulate its relevance to the nation and itself.*

⁸⁴ For a full discussion of this time period, see Jeffrey G. Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals: The Fight for Naval Aviation, 1945-1950* (Washington: Brassey's, 1998).

⁸⁵ Builder, *The Masks of War*, 27.

⁸⁶ Greg Jaffe, “Combat Generation: Drone Operators Climb on Winds of Change in the Air Force,” *Washington Post*, 28 February 2010. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/27/AR2010022703754.html> (Accessed 1 Mar 10).

⁸⁷ Quoted in Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome*, 5.

⁸⁸ Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome*, 10.

⁸⁹ Ehrhard, “An Air Force Strategy for the Long Haul,” 28.

⁹⁰ Dunlap, “Understanding Airmen,” 126.

In sum, these five attributes capture much of the prevailing personality of the Air Force, rooted in its collective history, enduring over time, from which it forms a basis for future action: technology-centered; autonomously decisive; future-oriented; occupationally loyal; and self-aware of its legitimacy. Given the power of organizational culture to shape and sustain preferences, these five tenets are hypothesized to inform past and future Air Force policies. It should be noted again, however, that a distinctive feature of Air Force history and culture is the prominence of its subcultures. As Mike Worden demonstrates, the first half of the Air Force's life witnessed a dominant bomber subculture, while the second half has been dominated by the fighter culture.⁹¹ These dominant tribes exerted powerful influence on the service's culture writ large, but the five features described above appear to be consistent across *both* eras of Air Force history. Despite the inherent subculture differences within the service, in matters of substantive policy the Air Force speaks—and has spoken—with one voice.⁹² Consequently, these five assumptions subsume the variations of the subcultures and are postulated as enduring elements of the Air Force's organizational culture.

In the following case studies, the analysis will test various policy decisions for their consonance with these five enduring assumptions. The working hypothesis of this paper suggests that policies consistent with the Air Force's basic assumptions will engender working, while policies counter to Air Force cultural assumptions will set the conditions for shirking.

Conclusion

This chapter established the theoretical basis for considering organizational culture as an explanatory variable in shaping a military service's decision to work or shirk. As organizations adapt to their external environment and manage their internal processes, a pervasive culture develops to make

⁹¹ Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals*.

⁹² This assertion is intended to clarify a useful level of analysis. While studying civil-military relations at the service level adds value to the literature, parsing the Air Force even further (to the subculture level) would unhelpfully complicate the analysis.

sense of “how things are around here.”⁹³ Like a paradigm in research science, organizational culture provides a mental model for viewing the world, largely determining what questions are asked, what answers are given, and what data are determined to be outliers. For insular military organizations, the impact of service culture is uniquely potent and pervasive. A service’s culture affects how it is structured, what it buys, and how it fights. In the context of civil-military relations, organizational culture shapes a military service’s calculation of self-interest, informing its decision to work or shirk. While agency theory provides the top-down rational framework, this chapter demonstrates the power of organizational culture to inform a service’s bottom-up conception of its own interest and policy preferences.

The foundation for case study analysis has therefore been laid. The theory of civil-military relations explored the dynamics of two-tiered delegation in a democracy and the imperatives of military subordination. Agency theory supplied a rational framework for considering the context of incentives, creating a useful continuum of working and shirking. The theory of organizational culture demonstrated the power of culture to shape a military service’s policy preference within that rational framework. Finally, this chapter concluded with five basic assumptions of Air Force culture, suggested by its artifacts and espoused beliefs, and forged in its adaptation to the external environment. With this unique culture in view, the following two chapters present case studies of the Air Force between 1990 and 2008, testing the explanatory power of Air Force culture to shape its decision to work or shirk the civilian’s national security policy.

⁹³ Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*, 14.

Chapter 3

Desert Storm: A Case of Curious Working

Never in the history of air power has so much been accomplished so quickly and at so small a cost.

Jeffrey Record

The way the war was planned, fought, and brought to a close often had more to do with the culture of the military services, their entrenched concept of warfare, and Powell's abiding philosophy of decisive force than it did with the Iraqis or the tangled politics of the Middle East.

Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor

Both politically and militarily, Operation DESERT STORM appears to be a triumphant declaration of the right way to fight a war. From Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 through the ceasefire on 28 February 1991, the American military machine proclaimed its coronation as the world's only military superpower. The US military titan marshaled massive and overwhelming force, leveraged superior technology, obliterated the enemy, and achieved the limited political objective of ejecting Iraqi forces from Kuwait. For the generation of officers whose careers began in the jungles of Vietnam, the Gulf War offered a striking rebuke of quagmire conflicts and seemed to validate their lessons learned. One such lesson concerned the proper roles of the civilian government and the military during war. As a stark contrast to Vietnam's muddled dysfunction, the cooperation between the National Command Authorities (NCA) and the military decision-makers during the Gulf War has been hailed as the model of healthy civil-military relations.¹ As discussed in Chapter 2, Eliot Cohen cites this common appraisal of the Gulf War as prime corroboration of the 'normal theory' of civil-military relations.² The truth, however, reveals a far more textured array of civil-military confrontation and policy-grappling.

¹ Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 235.

² Eliot Cohen, "The Unequal Dialogue: The Theory and Reality of Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force," in Peter Feaver and Richard H. Kohn, *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001); for further explication of this argument, see Mackubin T. Owens, "Civil-Military Relations and the U.S. Strategy Deficit," <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/201002.owens.civilmilitaryrelations.html> (accessed 11 March 2010).

One of the most prominent cases of civil-military disagreement in the Gulf War came at the dawn of the crisis—the decision whether to pursue an offensive or defensive strategy against Saddam Hussein and his Iraqi forces. Bob Woodward paints a narrative of offensively minded civilians prodding a reluctant military—primarily Gen Colin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS)—to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait.³ This narrative informs the civil-military relations literature, as Desch codes the Gulf War as a case of civil-military disagreement in which civilian preferences ultimately prevailed.⁴ Feaver, however, recognizes that the actual civil-military relationship was more complex than Desch’s typology implies. The United States eventually pursued an offensive strategy to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait, though the method of doing so largely conformed to Powell’s preferences. Throughout the creation of this national policy, a spectrum of cooperation emerges, and agency theory helps illuminate the variables that create it. According to Feaver, the Gulf War exemplified intrusive monitoring by a strong Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney, and witnessed a complex array of working and shirking behaviors. He observes, “Civil-military relations during the Gulf War thus were characterized by bargaining, tradeoffs, and strategic interaction, much as agency theory would expect. There was more shirking than the conventional wisdom remembers—perhaps even more than agency theory would expect, given the relative intrusiveness of the monitoring.”⁵

Therefore, the prevailing literature on Gulf War civil-military relations describes a generally healthy cooperation, the hawkish civilians pushing for an offensive strategy while military leaders urged caution, and a spectrum of bargaining that occurred along the way. However, this case crackles with further intrigue when one analyzes the cooperation or resistance of the individual services to the national policy. As noted earlier, existing analysis posits ‘the military’ resisting the offensive strategy proffered by the civilian NCA—a resistance that approaches Feaver’s stringent definition of shirking. *The Air Force, however, showed no such signs of resistance to an offensive strategy.* When the Commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), Gen H.

³ Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991).

⁴ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 200.

⁵ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 239.

Norman Schwarzkopf, called the Air Staff for planning assistance on 8 August 1990, he created a most unique opportunity.⁶ Schwarzkopf afforded the Air Force headquarters a rare chance to forge an operational war plan in its own image. Consequently, the Air Force's stand-alone offensive air campaign against Iraq comported favorably with the offensive posture of the Bush administration, but was never embraced by Powell. As the following analysis demonstrates, the Air Force formed a unique enclave of working amidst an otherwise-shirking military. In fact, Colin Powell actively tempered the attractiveness of the Air Force's air campaign, fearing that overeager civilian hawks might execute an air-only war plan he did not personally support.⁷

What explains this phenomenon of the Air Force uniquely working in the midst of shirking by 'the military'? The core thesis of this paper asserts that a service's organizational culture constitutes the explanatory variable in shaping its decision to work or shirk the civilian's national security policy. This chapter, therefore, argues that the Bush administration's offensively oriented policy comported soundly with the cultural tenets of the Air Force as reflected in its own policy preference. The Air Force had a unique opportunity to craft an offensive air campaign, one that reflected its distinct organizational culture. This campaign offended the ground-centric sensibilities of the CJCS, but provided a handsome offensive option to eager members of the National Security Council. The difference between the national policy and the Air Force's preference ($s - w$) was therefore minimized, giving rise to unique Air Force working in the midst of military shirking.

To substantiate these assertions, this chapter explores the relevant contextual variables, policy preferences, and the consonance of those policies with the Air Force's organizational culture. First, the chapter provides the civil-military context that informs the relative power of the key civilian and military players.⁸ Subsequently, the chapter highlights the ongoing interaction between

⁶ Diane T. Putney, *Airpower Advantage: Planning the Gulf War Air Campaign, 1989-1991* (Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2004), 33.

⁷ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 221.

⁸ Recall that the military's decision to work or shirk is influenced not only by the preference gap, but also by its perception of receiving costly punishment for shirking. These contextual factors indicate the relative strength or weakness of any potential punishment it might receive for shirking.

the civilians' desired policy, the military's desires as moderated by Powell, and the Air Force's unique policy preference. Having identified all of the key variables in the working-shirking inequality, the chapter concludes with an analysis of organizational culture as an explanatory variable in forming the Air Force's policy. This analysis addresses the extent to which Air Force cultural tenets are reflected in its chosen policy, and demonstrates that a resounding cultural fit explains the Air Force's unique cooperation with the Bush administration's offensive desires.

This thesis treats the consonance of the national policy with the Air Force culture as the independent variable, while the resultant working or shirking is the dependent variable. To present a coherent narrative, however, this chapter illuminates the Air Force's cooperation first (the dependent variable), followed by an analysis of the national policy's cultural fit with the Air Force (the independent variable). While this methodology differs from the conventional approach in the literature, it affords greater clarity in this particular case.

Finally, unlike most case studies of the Gulf War, this chapter does not discuss the actual fighting of the war. The conduct of this "short, victorious, and cheap"⁹ war is thoroughly addressed in other history volumes. Rather, this chapter shines a spotlight earlier in the narrative to illuminate the civil-military wrangling over what kind of war should eventually be fought. The focus, therefore, is on the policy, the planning, and ultimately the cultural variables that inform those policies. Finally, this analysis makes no prejudicial judgments on the *strategic wisdom* of the respective policies; it is beyond the scope of this work to judge which policy was the *right* one. Instead, this chapter explains the content of those policies, and in the case of the Air Force, demonstrates the causal impact of its organizational culture in creating it.

The Contextual Variables

The military's decision to work or shirk is informed by the divergence of the policy preferences, weighed against the military's risk calculation of being

⁹ Jeffrey Record, *Hollow Victory: A Contrary View of the Gulf War* (Washington: Brassey's, 1993), 1.

meaningfully punished for shirking. In Chapter 2, this calculation was expressed by the inequality:

$$agp > s - w$$

where a = the probability of detecting shirking
 g = the probability of civilians choosing to punish shirking
 p = the cost of the punishment to the military
 s = the military's policy preference
 w = the civilians' policy decision

Together, the variables agp constitute the military's risk calculation of receiving meaningful punishment for shirking—a calculation informed by the degree of civilian monitoring, and anchored in the perception of relative political power. This section explores the background context of the Gulf War period to gain a qualitative appreciation of the variables above. As mentioned earlier, Feaver notes the high degree of civilian monitoring by a strong Secretary of Defense throughout the Gulf War. All else equal, this suggests high values for both a and g , making shirking unlikely unless $s - w$ is particularly large. In Feaver's view, the military shirked more often than his agency model predicts. The following analysis, however, suggests that for the players involved, shirking was not entirely unexpected.

The Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986

Hailed as “the most important legislation since World War II” and “the watershed event for the military since [World War II],” the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act shook the sturdy foundations of the world's largest bureaucracy.¹⁰ The legislation “sought to decrease service bias in providing recommendations to the National Command Authorities” by strengthening the authority of the CJCS and streamlining the warfighting chain of command for the Combatant Commanders.¹¹ Previously, Congress viewed the four military services as wielding influence well out of proportion to their statutory responsibilities.¹² Furthermore, the counsel offered to the President by the

¹⁰ James R. Locher, “Taking Stock of Goldwater-Nichols,” *Joint Forces Quarterly* Autumn (1996): 9-16. The first quote belongs to former Secretary of Defense William Perry, and the second to former Vice CJCS William Owens.

¹¹ Brooks L. Bash, “Leadership and Parochialism: An Enduring Reality?,” *Joint Force Quarterly* Summer (1999): 65.

¹² Locher, “Taking Stock of Goldwater-Nichols,” 10.

Joint Chiefs of Staff suffered the parochial dilution of each Chief, lacked consensus, and forced the President to adjudicate disagreements. “In designating the Chairman as the principal military adviser,” James Locher observes, “Congress envisioned him becoming an ally of the Secretary with a common department-wide, non-parochial perspective.”¹³ In sum, Goldwater-Nichols significantly strengthened the position of the CJCS, offering unprecedented power to any Chairman prepared to seize it.

Three years after the passage of Goldwater-Nichols, Gen Colin Powell assumed the role of CJCS and “wielded power and influence beyond that exercised by previous chairmen.”¹⁴ Powell redefined the post, and clearly understood his new mandate as principal military adviser to the President. In his memoirs, Powell recalls, “I did not have to take a vote among the chiefs before I recommended anything. I did not even have to consult them, though it would be foolish not to do so.”¹⁵ Later, after changing his official letterhead to include the word “Chairman” in front of the “Joint Chiefs of Staff,” he explains, “I was not the pipeline for the composite opinions of the chiefs. I was speaking for myself to the Secretary and the President.”¹⁶ In addition to Powell’s acute understanding of his own role, others in the defense establishment clearly appreciated the unique influence he exerted. Schwarzkopf comments that not since Gen George Marshall during World War II had an officer enjoyed the access and leverage enjoyed by Powell.¹⁷

In addition to strengthening the position of CJCS, Goldwater-Nichols likewise bolstered the role of the Secretary of Defense. The legislation gave the Secretary an ‘elastic clause,’ conferring upon him the “sole and ultimate power within the Department of Defense on any matter on which the Secretary chooses to act.”¹⁸ Just as Powell embraced the enlarged duties of his role, so too did Secretary Richard Cheney. Even the indomitable Schwarzkopf gave

¹³ Locher, “Taking Stock of Goldwater-Nichols,” 11.

¹⁴ Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 471.

¹⁵ Colin Powell and Joseph Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 434.

¹⁶ Powell, *My American Journey*, 434.

¹⁷ H. Norman Schwarzkopf and Peter Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992).

¹⁸ Locher, “Taking Stock of Goldwater-Nichols,” 11.

Cheney a wide berth, noting that the Secretary had “unnerved a lot of generals by replacing one four-star and giving warnings to others he felt were acting with too much autonomy.”¹⁹ Then-Brig Gen Buster Glosson recalls Cheney as “tough and respected” and “in no mood to take any nonsense from generals.”²⁰ This portrait of Cheney accords with Feaver’s appraisal of a Secretary who monitored intrusively and was not afraid to punish military shirking. If these were the only variables in consideration, military shirking would indeed be unlikely. Cheney’s clout, however, appears to be matched by the strengthened role of the Chairman seized by Powell. As *the* military adviser to the President with unmatched power and access, combined with personal experience as a National Security Advisor, Powell no doubt appraised his own political power favorably. Powell’s popularity with both the President and the public likely influenced his cost-benefit calculation of being punished for shirking.

The military faced intrusive monitoring from a strong Secretary of Defense, but it wielded strong political power in the person of Colin Powell. Consequently, the left side of the inequality—*agp*—yields ambiguous qualitative results. The right side, however, incorporates historical factors that strongly influenced the military’s policy preferences.

Symptoms of the Vietnam Syndrome

Historian Barbara Tuchman once observed, “Dead battles, like dead generals, hold the military mind in their dead grip.”²¹ For the generation of military leaders in the Gulf War, searing memories of Vietnam seemingly informed every decision they made. Political scientist Robert Jervis observes that decision-makers learn the most acute lessons from history if they experience a particular event personally, if the event occurs early in a career, and if that event has a uniquely defining impact on the nation.²² Because of these criteria, Jervis notes a twenty-year time delay in national policy, as early-

¹⁹ Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn’t Take a Hero*, 303.

²⁰ Buster Glosson, *War With Iraq: Critical Lessons* (Charlotte, NC: Glosson Family Foundation, 2003), 1.

²¹ Quoted in Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 60.

²² Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 261.

career officers rise to leadership positions chanting the mantra: “never again.” Jervis’ insight clarifies the dynamics of 1990, as the captains and majors who plied the trails of Vietnam became the Gulf War generals. Their determination not to repeat the mistakes of Vietnam saturated their perceptions and preferences throughout the planning process.

The Army and the Air Force nursed unique wounds from Vietnam, and these varied scars informed different lessons. For Army leaders like Powell and Schwarzkopf, the lessons of Vietnam were these: avoid slow and noncommittal troop buildups, use overwhelming force to accomplish a clear objective, have an exit strategy, and be wary of air power advocates who over-promise and under-deliver.²³ In fact, Powell’s commitment to these lessons became enshrined as the Powell corollary to the Weinberger Doctrine, a set of principles to guide the use of military force.²⁴ These lessons shepherded Powell’s conduct throughout the Gulf War planning, as he “seemingly saw his task as ensuring that victory would be made inevitable by applying the Weinberger rules.”²⁵ For Air Force leaders like Gen Chuck Horner, a different suite of painful lessons guided his conduct: shun political interference from Washington in picking targets, avoid the route package system for separating the Air Force and Navy, and use alert-ready Close Air Support (CAS) assets more efficiently.²⁶ In fact, Horner viewed Washington-based target selection as the death knell of any war plan: “If you want to know whether a war is going to be successful or not, just ask where the targets are being picked. If they say, ‘We picked them in Washington,’ get out of the country. Go to Canada until the war is over because it is a loser.”²⁷ These lessons powerfully informed Horner’s own vision of how to fight in the Gulf War, as the following discussion will show.

For the key military leaders crafting a response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, “the experience of the Vietnam War hung...like a solar eclipse stopped

²³ Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, 18, 33, 83.

²⁴ Robert M. Cassidy, “Prophets Or Praetorians? The Uptonian Paradox and the Powell Corollary,” *Parameters* 33, no. 3 (2003): 139.

²⁵ Cassidy, “Prophets or Praetorians?”, 139.

²⁶ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 6, 127; Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, 91; Tom Clancy and Chuck Horner, *Every Man a Tiger* (New York: Putnam, 1999), 238.

²⁷ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 6.

in mid-movement.”²⁸ The power of the Vietnam experience suggests that the military harbored very strong preferences regarding the use of force. Returning to the working-shirking inequality, the variable s represents the military’s own policy preference, and captures not only the content of that policy but also *how strongly* that preference is held. Consequently, for the inequality $agp > s - w$, the previous discussion illustrates the following: (1) variables agp account for a strong Secretary of Defense meeting an empowered CJCS, and ultimately yields an inconclusive qualitative value; and (2) the military’s own policy preference s appears to be held very strongly, creating the potential for a large $s - w$ delta. In sum, despite the intrusive monitoring from a strong Secretary of Defense, the military wielded tremendous power in Chairman Colin Powell and held its preferences strongly in the wake of Vietnam. These qualitative variables paint a contextual background ripe for military shirking, as the following narrative illustrates.

Civilian Hawks and Military Doves

Despite the generally healthy civil-military relations during the Gulf War, civilian and military leaders found ample opportunity for impassioned debate. From the very first NSC meetings on 2 August 1990, a diversity of views emerged that would bracket the debate for the following months. This section highlights the principal views of the civilian policymakers and the military, as channeled through its powerful spokesman Colin Powell.

When President Bush convened his National Security Council on 2 August 1990, the principals confronted the essential question of an appropriate response: whether to draw a defensive line in the sand at the Saudi Arabian border, or whether to pursue an offensive strategy to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait.²⁹ As historians Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor observe, “The lineup ran counter to what most of the public would have expected. The civilians were looking for a way to roll back the Iraqi gains while the military

²⁸ Record, *Hollow Victory*, 4.

²⁹ Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, 18.

was urging caution.”³⁰ While the President polled his principals, the perspectives emerged clearly: Cheney was looking for options that could “hurt Iraq,”³¹ and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft and Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger counseled, “It is absolutely essential that the U.S....not only put a stop to this aggression but roll it back.”³² The dissenting view came from Powell, who resisted such enthusiasm for military action and questioned whether “it was worth going to war to liberate Kuwait.”³³ Powell’s interest in these political objectives—no doubt informed by his experience in Vietnam—inspired a swift rebuke from Cheney, who reminded Powell that he was not the National Security Advisor or Secretary of State. “You’re the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Give military advice.”³⁴

While the President did not tip his hand during the initial NSC meeting, he made his intentions clear two days later. After meeting with his NSC staff and top generals at Camp David on 4 August 1990, President Bush announced at a press conference that the Iraqi aggression “would not stand.”³⁵ Several days later, Bush outlined four key objectives to guide U.S. policy: secure the immediate, unconditional, and complete withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait; restore the legitimate government of Kuwait; assure the security and stability of the Persian Gulf region; and protect American lives.³⁶ After securing permission to base troops in Saudi Arabia, the massive logistical train of men and equipment steamed east and Operation DESERT SHIELD began.

The President clearly articulated his desire for an offensive strategy, but that did not prevent Powell from articulating a different vision. As the troop buildup continued throughout September 1990, the President and his fellow civilians in the NSC appeared enthusiastic about the nascent air campaign being developed by the Air Staff and U.S. Air Forces Central (CENTAF). Powell, however, retained grave skepticism about the efficacy of air strikes to

³⁰ Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, 31.

³¹ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 24.

³² Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, 37.

³³ Powell, *My American Journey*, 450.

³⁴ Powell, *My American Journey*, 452; Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 24.

³⁵ Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, 49.

³⁶ Thomas Keaney and Eliot Cohen, *Revolution in Warfare?: Air Power in the Persian Gulf* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 22.

accomplish the President's objectives.³⁷ In a meeting with President Bush and Secretary Cheney on 25 September 1990, Powell urged caution against the air-only option, and laid out the feasibility of economic sanctions as a defensive policy.³⁸ In conversations with former CJCS Admiral William Crowe, Powell likewise advocated a containment strategy, and complained that "he had been trying to keep the administration tamped down, attempting to dampen any enthusiasm for war."³⁹ On 9 October 1990, Powell met with the British Air Chief Marshal and "was making the case for relying on economic sanctions."⁴⁰

During the same period, the CENTCOM staff was preparing to brief the President and the NSC on their current war plans, comprised of a viable offensive air strategy and a largely defensive ground plan. Schwarzkopf confided in Powell his fears that the civilians might elect to prosecute the plan based on its enticingly offensive air component, to which Powell replied, "Do you think I'd ever let that happen? My problem is that I've got all these hawks in the NSC who keep saying we ought to kick Saddam out of Kuwait now. I've got to have something to keep them under control."⁴¹ On 30 October 1990, Powell met with the President again, assured him that air strikes alone could not do the job, and requested an additional 150,000-200,000 troops to ensure a viable capability to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait. While several NSC staffers interpreted this sizable request as a ploy to dissuade Presidential action, Bush agreed to the troop request and conformed the U.S. strategy to Powell's preferred vision.⁴²

Evolution of the Air Campaign

In the midst of this political wrangling, the Air Force was busily preparing an offensive strategic air campaign against the Iraqi regime. In fact, the availability of air forces in theater and the attractiveness of the air campaign tempted the civilian administration to pursue this air-only approach. Consequently, Powell's campaign to tamp down the enthusiastic administration was largely an effort to dull the shine on the attractive Air Force plan. The

³⁷ Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 83.

³⁸ Powell, *My American Journey*, 466-7.

³⁹ Woodward, *The Commanders*, 38.

⁴⁰ Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 130.

⁴¹ Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 326.

⁴² Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 154.

following section traces the development of that Air Force plan, its theoretical antecedents, its attractiveness to the offensively minded civilians, and Powell's dogged efforts to prevent its premature prosecution.

Internal Look and OPLAN 1002-90

One of the ideological sources of the Gulf War air campaign was CENTCOM's Internal Look exercise in the spring and summer of 1990. As the Soviet Union began to dissolve in 1989-1990, CJCS Powell directed CENTCOM to update its Operational Plan (OPLAN) 1002-88 to account for regional threats to stability in the Persian Gulf.⁴³ Prophetically, CENTCOM planners drafted a scenario in which Iraq pursued an aggressive land-grab from its southern neighbors. CENTCOM's response was codified in updated OPLAN 1002-90, which featured a largely defensive air plan to stop the Iraqi forces from invading Saudi Arabia.⁴⁴ The CENTAF air plan had six objectives: defend rear areas and maintain air superiority; conduct close air support for friendly troops; perform interdiction to delay advancing enemy elements; conduct offensive counter-air against southern airfields; and reconnoiter enemy rear areas, command and control, and lines of communication.⁴⁵

CENTAF Commander Gen Chuck Horner was personally involved in creating the Internal Look air campaign. Consequently, it formed the baseline of his thinking when the exercise scenario became geopolitical reality in August 1990.⁴⁶ Furthermore, one of the main lessons that CENTCOM learned from Internal Look was "no matter how much Air Force and attack helicopter reinforcements the allotted forces had, they would have a tough time confronting Iraqi armored formations."⁴⁷ Therefore, when Iraqi forces followed the Internal Look script and rolled south on 2 August 1990, Horner and his CENTAF staff began work on a defensive plan to protect US forces in Saudi Arabia from further Iraqi aggression. This armor-centric defensive mindset

⁴³ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 10-11.

⁴⁴ Clancy, *Every Man a Tiger*, 248.

⁴⁵ John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007), 142.

⁴⁶ Clancy, *Every Man a Tiger*, 238.

⁴⁷ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 19.

contrasted sharply with the other ideological source for the Gulf War air campaign—Col John Warden.

Instant Thunder

Within an occupationally loyal, stove-piped Air Force, John Warden defied easy categorization. Despite growing up professionally in the fighter community, Warden never embraced the fighter culture or a tribal loyalty to Tactical Air Command (TAC).⁴⁸ Instead, Warden's intellectual curiosity and appreciation of military history compelled him to look past the artificial divides of the Air Force in the 1980s. He recognized that Strategic Air Command (SAC) had co-opted the word "strategic" to mean "all things nuclear." Additionally, TAC had embraced the opposite end of the airpower spectrum and sought to lead the Air Force "back to [its] roots of supporting the Army."⁴⁹ In between these poles, a vast landscape of operational art lay fallow, underdeveloped and underappreciated. After his year at the National War College, Warden published *The Air Campaign* in 1988 as a manifesto on the operational level of war—specifically, planning an air campaign to accomplish national objectives.⁵⁰

By articulating a theory for a conventional campaign against enemy centers of gravity, Warden refreshes old but forgotten principles of the early airpower theorists.⁵¹ His book recognizes that airpower could rightfully take the lead in accomplishing national objectives under certain conditions. Warden's metaphor is that of a concerto, with one instrument in the lead and the other instruments orchestrated around it.⁵² "Orchestration," Warden suggests, "not subordination or integration, is the *sine qua non* of modern warfare."⁵³ Consequently, when ground forces can be isolated or delayed, the air instrument could lead the concerto in working directly against political or economic centers. In these favorable situations, Warden argues that "the air campaign...may be far more important than the ground campaign," and "the

⁴⁸ Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*.

⁴⁹ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 9.

⁵⁰ John Warden, *The Air Campaign: Planning for Combat* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1988).

⁵¹ Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 78.

⁵² Warden, *The Air Campaign*, 146.

⁵³ Warden, *The Air Campaign*, 146.

war can theoretically be won from the air.”⁵⁴ Once Warden was on the Air Staff, his strategic thinking continued and matured into a paper he entitled, “Centers of Gravity – The Key to Success in War.”⁵⁵ In that paper, Warden’s concentric-rings model illustrates a systematic approach for targeting enemy centers of gravity, with the enemy command at the center and his fielded forces on the periphery.⁵⁶ Warden asserts, “The essence of war is applying pressure against the enemy’s innermost strategic ring – its command structure.”⁵⁷

In his book’s preface, Warden offers his work to “the air force officer who wants to think about an air campaign before called on to command or staff one.”⁵⁸ Ironically, that air force officer was himself. When the Gulf War crisis began, Warden was Chief of the Checkmate planning staff in the Air Staff’s Directorate of Plans and Operations. After cutting short a family vacation, Warden hastily returned to the Pentagon on 5 August 1990 and began transforming his theories into war plans. On 6 August 1990, Warden marshaled his Checkmate staff to begin assessing Iraq’s strategic centers of gravity, identifying the unique components of its concentric rings. Warden was convinced that the existing planning architecture would not generate a truly strategic air campaign; he knew that CENTAF’s plan was inherently defensive, and CENTAF’s staff would be preoccupied with deploying forces to theater.⁵⁹ Warden intended to fill the breach. At a staff meeting that day, Warden told his boss Maj Gen Robert Alexander, “I do not have any idea how it is going to come out, but we are going to put something together anyway and see what happens.”⁶⁰

What happened next was a most fortuitous phone call. With Horner acting as CENTCOM Commander in theater, General Schwarzkopf knew that Horner would be too busy working deployment issues to spearhead a retaliatory air plan against Iraq. Meanwhile, Schwarzkopf and Powell were being pressured to give the NCA retaliatory “options” in the event of Iraqi misdeeds.

⁵⁴ Warden, *The Air Campaign*, 104, 39.

⁵⁵ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 39.

⁵⁶ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 39-40.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 39.

⁵⁸ Warden, *The Air Campaign*, xvii.

⁵⁹ Edward C. Mann, *Thunder and Lightning: Desert Storm and the Airpower Debates* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 1995), 27.

⁶⁰ Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 145.

Over Horner's vehement objections to Washington-based meddling, Schwarzkopf decided to call the Air Staff for planning assistance.⁶¹ At 0800 on 8 August 1990, Schwarzkopf called the office of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) and spoke with Vice CSAF Gen Mike Loh. Schwarzkopf asked if Loh "had a team that could provide him with strategic targets for retaliatory strikes in case Saddam Hussein did something 'heinous.'"⁶² Despite the operational chain of command specified by Goldwater-Nichols and the statutory limitations to organize, train, and equip, the Air Force headquarters had been invited to help plan a war.

Loh passed the momentous task down to Alexander, who knew that Warden was already hard at work on a strategic air campaign. Warden was handed his golden opportunity, and "the man and the moment met and jumped as one."⁶³ Warden and his Checkmate team furiously churned out a conceptual plan that faithfully followed Warden's own concentric-rings theory. The Checkmate plan bypassed the Iraqi forces massed in Kuwait, and targeted centers of gravity in downtown Baghdad instead. Furthermore, Warden believed that after six to nine days of the air campaign, Iraqi leaders would capitulate, thereby obviating the need for a ground invasion.⁶⁴ Despite objections from TAC planners who dismissed the nascent plan as "an academic bunch of crap,"⁶⁵ Warden carried the enthusiastic support of the top Air Force leaders.⁶⁶

Only two days after the phone call, Warden briefed Schwarzkopf on 10 August 1990 with the initial outlines of Instant Thunder—in name and content, an open rebuke of Vietnam-style gradualism. Still desperate for a viable retaliatory option against Iraqi misadventures, Schwarzkopf embraced Warden's briefing enthusiastically. However, as airpower historian John Olsen notes, the enthusiasm belied a disconnect: "It is obvious in retrospect that Schwarzkopf

⁶¹ Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 313.

⁶² Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 146.

⁶³ Richard Davis, quoted in Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 146.

⁶⁴ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 45.

⁶⁵ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 52.

⁶⁶ Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 151; General Loh exhorted Warden, "This is the No. 1 project in the Air Force. You can call on anybody anyplace that you need for anything."

considered Instant Thunder a retaliation option to be executed if Saddam Hussein continued his aggression in any way, while Warden saw it as a stand-alone, war-winning campaign that should be executed no matter what the Iraqis did. The point is critical: whereas Schwarzkopf wanted an *air option*, Warden offered him a *military solution* to the problem presented by the Iraqi regime and believed that Schwarzkopf shared that view.”⁶⁷

The following day, 11 August 1990, Warden briefed CJCS Colin Powell on the developing Instant Thunder air campaign. Although generally positive about Warden’s effort, Powell objected to the lack of concern for the Iraqi armor forces in Kuwait. Furthermore, he refused to believe that the strategic air campaign could single-handedly accomplish the President’s objectives: “OK, it is day six and the strategic campaign is finished. Now what?” With characteristic confidence, Warden replied, “This plan may win the war. You may not need a ground attack...I think the Iraqis will withdraw from Kuwait as a result of the strategic air campaign.”⁶⁸ Despite the corroboration offered by Loh and Alexander, Powell still insisted that Warden’s plan offered a useful retaliation option or prelude to a ground offensive—but it would not win the war on its own. Exhorting them to make the plan more joint, Powell thanked the Air Staff team for its helpful contribution. Warden and his team briefed Schwarzkopf again on 17 August 1990, and then flew to Riyadh to hand off the plan to CENTAF planners in theater.⁶⁹ In Riyadh, Instant Thunder collided violently with Chuck Horner, and Warden would not survive the impact.

The Ivory Tower Lands in a War Zone

As acting CENTCOM Commander in theater, Horner confronted an appalling mass of Iraqi tanks on the Saudi Arabian border. The vulnerability of US forces in theater, coupled with the defensive ethos of OPLAN 1002-90, informed Horner’s concern with defensive rather than offensive operations.⁷⁰ Additionally, one of Horner’s contacts at TAC had faxed him an advance copy of the Instant Thunder briefing. With an inherent disgust for Washington

⁶⁷ Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 159.

⁶⁸ Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 159.

⁶⁹ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 81.

⁷⁰ Clancy, *Every Man a Tiger*, 263.

interference, Horner reacted violently to the very existence of Instant Thunder without even seeing its contents.⁷¹ After a cursory review, Horner flung the brief to his deputy, Maj Gen Thomas Olsen, with the handwritten comments, “Do with this what you will. How can a person in an ivory tower far from the front, not knowing what needs to be done, write such a message? Wonders never cease.”⁷²

Upon arriving in theater on 19 August 1990, Warden and his Checkmate team initially briefed Olsen and other CENTAF planners. Knowing that the CENTAF staff was preoccupied with defensive and logistical concerns, Olsen received the briefing positively and appreciated its added value to their plan. The following day, however, was a different story. Horner’s receptivity to the Air Staff plan did not improve in person; Warden’s presentation started poorly and eroded quickly.⁷³ While Warden trumpeted the pure strategic merits of his six-day war-winning plan, Horner dismissed it as “an academic study” employing “Newtonian science.”⁷⁴ The two men took turns lecturing each other, with Horner showing concern for the massive Iraqi armor presence, while Warden fumed at Horner’s preoccupation with the outermost ring of his model. Finally, to the hushed horror of everyone in the room, Warden impertinently opined, “Ground forces aren’t important to the campaign...You’re being overly pessimistic about those tanks.”⁷⁵

When the briefing concluded shortly thereafter, Horner asked Warden’s three assistants to stay in theater to assist CENTAF planners. Warden was conspicuously *not* asked to remain, and subsequently returned to the United States that very night. The following day, Horner hired Brig Gen Buster Glosson to transform the CENTAF plans and Instant Thunder targeting scheme into an executable war plan. Glosson understood his mission as head of the CENTAF Special Planning Group: “My immediate task was to put together a team and get them out of the defensive-planning mindset (in the case of CENTAF) or the win-it-all naivete of Instant Thunder (in the case of the

⁷¹ Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, 91.

⁷² Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 175.

⁷³ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 125.

⁷⁴ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 127; Clancy, *Every Man a Tiger*, 264.

⁷⁵ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 130.

Washington crowd).⁷⁶ With Glosson at the helm and Lt Col Dave Deptula in the trenches, the Special Planning Group authored a viable air campaign. Their finished product ultimately retained strategic elements from Instant Thunder, while incorporating elements of AirLand Battle doctrine to address the Iraqi armor in Kuwait. After successfully briefing Schwarzkopf on 3 September 1990 and Powell on 13 September 1990, Glosson's air campaign gained maturity and viability—the *only* viable piece of CENTCOM's response plan at that point. In fact, even though he had dismissed the “win-it-all naivete” of the Washington crowd, Glosson confessed the stand-alone attractiveness of CENTAF's air plan. By early October, well before the full complement of ground forces was in theater, Glosson was eager to execute his air campaign: “The October weather was beautiful. As a commander, I was itching to take advantage of it. It would be less than truthful if I didn't say that in fact, I desperately wanted to start this war in late October, early November. I just thought it was the right time and that we didn't need the Powell build-up we were later forced to take.”⁷⁷

“Your air campaign is too good”

While Glosson showed no great affection for Powell's massive build-up, Powell worked hard to scuff the finish on Glosson's shiny air campaign. One of the most striking illustrations of the CJCS shaping the perceptions of the NCA came in early October 1990. The President wanted to hear the latest CENTCOM plans, so Powell asked Schwarzkopf to send a team of briefers. Schwarzkopf's chief of staff Marine Maj Gen Robert Johnston led the team, with Glosson briefing the air campaign, and Army Lt Col Joseph Purvis briefing the ground plan.⁷⁸

The team presented first to Cheney, Powell, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 10 October 1990, and Glosson's mature air campaign clearly impressed the assembled officers. In fact, Powell had grave concerns that the air plan looked *too good*; so good that the President and his advisors might unwisely attempt to follow it.⁷⁹ Glosson recalls being counseled three separate times after his

⁷⁶ Glosson, *War With Iraq*, 24.

⁷⁷ Glosson, *War With Iraq*, 55.

⁷⁸ Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 129-30.

⁷⁹ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 221.

briefing—by Powell, Director of the Joint Staff Lt Gen Mike Carns, and finally CENTCOM chief of staff Johnston. Powell pulled Glosson aside and exhorted, “You’ve got to make sure when we go to the White House tomorrow that we don’t oversell the air campaign because some of those idiots over there may convince the President to execute this before we’re ready.”⁸⁰ After Powell, Carns took a turn with Glosson: “Your air campaign is too good. The Chairman is afraid the President will tell us to execute. He wants you to go through the plan much faster and not be so convincing.”⁸¹ Finally, Johnston spoke with Glosson and channeled the same sentiment on behalf of the Chairman.

Powell’s resistance to an air-only war strategy persisted throughout the planning cycle. On 11 October 1990, the briefing team went to the White House and briefed the President and the NSC. Glosson’s brief was well received, and prompted Bush to ask whether they could simply execute the first three phases of the air campaign and stop short of a ground invasion. Powell—well-prepared for that very reaction—responded quickly, “You’ve got to be ready to do Phase IV because your objective won’t be accomplished.”⁸² Having tamped down any notion of air-only options, Powell’s next briefer was Lt Col Joe Purvis who presented the Army’s planned assault into the strength of the Iraqi defenses.⁸³ This “high diddle diddle up-the-middle plan”⁸⁴ struck the NSC as gravely unimaginative, and prompted National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft to pronounce, “I was not happy, and it sounded to me like a briefing by people who didn’t want to do it.”⁸⁵ Eventually, Powell channeled the civilians’ displeasure into his convincing case for deploying 150,000-200,000 more troops. If they wanted more imagination, then he wanted more troops. President Bush met with Powell on 30 October 1990 and asked once again, “You and Norm are really sure that air power alone can’t do it?”⁸⁶ Powell assured him that ground troops were essential to secure Iraqi withdrawal, and the President approved the request.

⁸⁰ Glosson, *War With Iraq*, 58.

⁸¹ Glosson, *War With Iraq*, 58.

⁸² Glosson, *War With Iraq*, 63; Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 223.

⁸³ Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, 138.

⁸⁴ Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, 141.

⁸⁵ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 224.

⁸⁶ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 263.

Working and Shirking

From these first two months of planning for Operation DESERT STORM, several salient points are worthy of review. Shortly after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, President Bush and his NSC agreed that Saddam's forces would not be permitted to stay in Kuwait—they would leave by will or by force. The civilians pressed for an offensive strategy, but found surprising caution from the President's principal military adviser Colin Powell. Clearly shaped by the national trauma in Vietnam, Powell urged a course consistent with the tenets of the Weinberger doctrine—state a clear political objective, use massive and overwhelming force, and exit promptly when the objectives are achieved. In the months that followed, Powell acted as a self-appointed damper of civilian enthusiasm, shaping perceptions and strategies to conform to his strongly held beliefs.

Meanwhile, seizing an opportunity and sanctioned by an unusual phone call from Schwarzkopf, the Air Force entered the planning arena with an offensive strategic air campaign against the Iraqi regime. Although asked for a retaliatory air *option*, Warden crafted a stand-alone war-winning strategy through the air. In the hands of Glosson and Deptula, Warden's Instant Thunder plan merged with CENTAF's defensive plan and became a robust air campaign against strategic and tactical targets in Iraq and Kuwait. The powerful, offensive air campaign proved enticing to the civilian NCA who believed it constituted an attractive and viable strategy. Powell, however, believed differently and seized every opportunity to dampen any enthusiasm for an air-only approach. Afraid that the civilians might enact a strategy he thought unwise, Powell urged Glosson to make his air campaign briefing less convincing and attractive. In the end, the President's offensive objectives were accomplished, while Powell ensured that the means for doing so conformed closely to his own clear vision for the use of overwhelming force.

In light of the summary above, does Powell's behavior constitute shirking in the strict sense of the principal-agent framework? The Chairman's statutory role as principal military adviser complicates a clear working-shirking

distinction. In fact, Powell's duty as CJCS was to provide clear—and, at times, contrarian—military counsel to the President. Feaver writes, "There is an exceedingly blurry line between advising against a course of action and resisting civilian efforts to pursue that course of action...Thus, evaluating whether shirking has occurred is not as simple as discovering whether military advice was followed. Rather, it involves judgments about the integrity of the military advice itself as well as judgments about the conditions under which civilians changed their minds. Were military advisors exaggerating (or minimizing) the costs of a course of action so as to tie the hands of the policymaker?"⁸⁷ Clearly, Powell was powerful and impassioned, and actively campaigned to ensure that the President followed the Chairman's own convictions for the use of military force. Furthermore, as explained earlier in the chapter, the contextual variables of relative political power and strongly held preferences suggest that shirking would not be unexpected. On the whole, while Powell packaged his military counsel in a way that borders on enlightened shirking, he also appears to be acting within the robust authority vested in his principal advisory role. Ultimately, the Chairman's conduct inhabits some middle ground in the working-shirking continuum—a position much closer to shirking than the 'normal theory' of civil-military relations would suggest.

What is clear, however, is that the Air Force enthusiastically 'worked' with the civilian NCA. The Bush administration wanted an offensive plan to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait, and the Air Force delivered an attractive option to do so. The historical record seems to convey that Bush and his team may have pursued the offensive air campaign were it not for the active opposition of Powell.⁸⁸ Thus, while the military—as channeled through the CJCS—resisted the administration's policy, the Air Force enthusiastically cooperated. What accounts for the Air Force's unique position?

⁸⁷ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 62.

⁸⁸ This deduction comes from the content of the recorded conversations in which Bush and the NSC appeared eager to execute an offensive air campaign. After the war, Bush averred, "I never considered seriously the possibility of an 'air-only' campaign. There was much discussion about what an air campaign might accomplish—and that it might be enough to convince Saddam to pull out. But from the outset, I thought we should plan on the assumption that Saddam would resist to the end and develop our force requirements on that basis." Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 140.

Organizational Culture at Work

As Chapter 2 explains, agency theory holds that the military will work when its risk calculation of being meaningfully punished exceeds the divergence of policy preferences: $agp > s - w$. Therefore, working could occur when the risk of punishment (agp) is particularly high, or when the divergence of interests ($s - w$) is particularly low. In the case of Gulf War policy, the left side of the inequality yields ambiguous qualitative values, thereby focusing attention on the right side: the degree of policy divergence. For Colin Powell, experience in Vietnam fostered an impassioned policy preference at odds with the administration, which inspired his shirking-like behaviors. For the Air Force, a clear policy convergence informed its enthusiastic posture vis-à-vis the civilian policy.

This paper argues that organizational culture comprises the predominant variable in shaping a service's preferences and therefore its decision to work or shirk the civilian policy. Therefore, this section tests the hypothesis by evaluating the extent to which the Air Force's cultural tenets comport with the civilian policy. As explained in the chapter introduction, the above analysis presented the Air Force's cooperative posture first, but the causal implication cuts in the other direction. The hypothesis argues that a tight correlation between the national policy and the Air Force's organizational culture will engender working. Having witnessed a unique degree of working in this case (the dependent variable), this section works backward to code the independent variable: the degree of correlation between the civilian's desired policy and the organizational culture of the Air Force.

Technology-Centered

The Air Force exists because of technology, and its ongoing superiority is sustained by the ascendance of its technology. As the first and most important machine, the manned airplane is the building block of the force. While unmanned technologies have their place, the complexities of combat require an actual—or virtual—human presence over the battlefield.

The Desert Storm air campaign showcased the superiority of American technology as no other war had done before. A consensus view of the conflict holds that during Desert Storm, technology finally caught up with doctrine—at

long last, airmen could deliver the precise effects that early airpower advocates espoused.⁸⁹ Prominent Gulf War historians Thomas Keaney and Eliot Cohen observe that five key technologies enabled the air campaign to succeed: stealth/low-observable aircraft design, laser-guided bombs, aerial refueling, the High-speed Anti-Radiation Missile (HARM), and the STU-III secure communication device.⁹⁰ In fact, Warden, Deptula, and Glosson constructed their plan at the intersection of stealth and precision technologies.⁹¹ The F-117 stealth fighters, carrying 2,000-pound laser-guided bombs, did all of the heavy lifting against defended targets in Baghdad. These F-117s flew 1% of the total sortie count, but struck 40% of the strategic targets in Iraq.⁹² For many in the American public, the enduring visual image from the air war was a laser-guided bomb penetrating a ventilator airshaft in downtown Baghdad. These missions constitute a near-perfect consummation of the Air Force's embodied technology-centered culture: brave pilots, sheltered in a technological cocoon of invisibility, penetrating hostile skies to drop bombs with pinpoint precision. For airmen steeped in the culture of the U.S. Air Force, it is difficult to imagine a more glorious scenario.

Autonomously Decisive

The Air Force has the power to change the face of the Earth. It can do what no other service can do. To realize its true potential, the Air Force should be employed kinetically, offensively, overwhelmingly, and with minimal political interference.

The air campaign was largely a politics-free, kinetic operation that most airmen viewed as the decisive lead instrument in a war-winning concerto. Even though Schwarzkopf had asked for a retaliatory option, Warden exploited the opportunity to choke Saddam Hussein with his five concentric rings to win the war from the air. "I have got to admit," Warden later confessed, "I had more than a little bit of a thought in the back of my mind that we might be able to do the whole thing from the Air Force standpoint and that would be a very

⁸⁹ Dennis M. Drew, "Desert Storm as a Symbol," *Airpower Journal* Fall (1992).

⁹⁰ Keaney and Cohen, *Revolution in Warfare?*, 189.

⁹¹ Keaney and Cohen, *Revolution in Warfare?*, 191.

⁹² Michael A. Palmer, *Guardians of the Gulf: A History of America's Expanding Role in the Persian Gulf, 1833-1992* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 219.

desirable thing to make happen.”⁹³ The Air Force’s desire to be decisive was not lost on the other players in the debate. Record notes, “Air Force planners, especially those back in Washington, where planning was dominated by a conviction that air power could win the war virtually single-handedly, clearly favored placing the main effort onto the strategic bombardment campaign.”⁹⁴

The Desert Storm air campaign also reinforced the Air Force’s cultural proclivity for independent, politically unconstrained operations. During the critical planning process, airmen were empowered to choose all of the targets, enjoying wide political latitude. During execution of the plan, the specter of Vietnam-style target selection loomed nearby, making President Bush and his security team careful to avoid excessive meddling. In fact, Horner later recounted, “We’ll probably never appreciate just how much freedom we had.”⁹⁵ On the occasions when Air Force leaders did experience political constraints, they chafed under the fetters.⁹⁶ After civilians were killed in the bombing of the Al Firdos bunker on 13 February 1991, Powell insisted on vetting all targets in Baghdad.⁹⁷ Glosson and his team complained to CSAF Gen Merrill McPeak who took it up with Powell, ultimately to be convinced of the Chairman’s logic. Likewise, when Cheney directed a large apportionment of air assets to the SCUD-hunting mission to keep Israel out of the war, air planners resisted such interference with their plan.⁹⁸

For a service that prizes autonomously decisive operations, Desert Storm constitutes an ideal-type case. The Air Force crafted—and largely executed—an explosive operation with airpower comprising the decisive element with minimal political interference.

Future-Oriented

Technology and potential adversaries change quickly, and the Air Force must orient forward to the unknown future instead of the forgotten past. The Air Force must pursue next-generation systems today to be ready for tomorrow.

⁹³ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 45.

⁹⁴ Record, *Hollow Victory*, 109.

⁹⁵ Atkinson, *Crusade*, 296.

⁹⁶ Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, 474.

⁹⁷ Atkinson, *Crusade*, 289.

⁹⁸ Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals’ War*, 234.

Operation DESERT STORM was at the leading edge of geopolitical realities and technological possibilities. As the Soviet Union crumbled, the United States emerged as the lone superpower and turned its attention to shoring up regional stability. The Gulf War inaugurated a new era, demonstrably proving the United States' capability and intention to police the globe for good. Furthermore, the campaign showcased cutting-edge technology and provided an opportunity to renounce the hobgoblins of Vietnam. In nearly every meaningful dimension, the war and the air campaign accorded with the Air Force's cultural predisposition towards the future.

Occupationally Loyal

The Air Force is an honorable and patriotic means to practice a desirable high-tech trade. Loyalties to the trade, machine, and subculture often outweigh loyalty to the institution.

The evolution of the air campaign illustrates the tribal affiliations endemic to the Air Force's organizational culture. As an exception to the rule, the tribally neutral Warden crafted an offensive air campaign that resembled neither SAC's Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) nor TAC's AirLand Battle.⁹⁹ After General Loh contacted both SAC's General Chain and TAC's General Russ, both major commands sent a team of planners to assist Warden and Checkmate. Because Instant Thunder was decidedly conventional, the SIOP-focused SAC planners had little to contribute and did not show up in the narrative again. The TAC planners, conversely, objected to Instant Thunder's strategic ethos and dismissal of the Iraqi fielded forces. In response, TAC generated its own air campaign that Warden summarily rejected for its Vietnam-style gradualism.¹⁰⁰ Ultimately, tribal affiliations molded the final air campaign plan, resulting in a strategy that allowed airmen from each domain to ply their chosen trade. While this aspect of Air Force organizational culture does not resound as clearly as the others, it nevertheless bears subtle reflection in the final Desert Storm policy.

⁹⁹ Edward C. Mann, *Thunder and Lightning: Desert Storm and the Airpower Debates.*, 28.

¹⁰⁰ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 61.

Self-Aware

Major combat operations are the best setting to showcase the full potential of the independent Air Force. In any other venue, the Air Force serves an essential supporting role in which it is largely taken for granted. During these times of transparent contribution, the Air Force must actively articulate its relevance to the nation and itself.

The overwhelming success of Operation DESERT STORM exorcised the demons of the Air Force identity crisis articulated the year prior. Stealth aircraft, laser-guided bombs, tank-plinking, and the visible carnage on the “highway of death” cured the plaguing notion that the Air Force had “lost its sense of identity and unique contribution.”¹⁰¹ During the planning of Instant Thunder, Warden articulated the mission “to bring the Air Force back into prominence.”¹⁰² In fact, the most publicly egregious example of civil-military confrontation during the Gulf War arose from the Air Force’s persistent self-awareness.

When the Gulf War crisis began, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen Michael Dugan had been in the job less than two months. During the early days of his tenure, Dugan intentionally courted the media, seeking to redress what he perceived to be a poor relationship with the press.¹⁰³ After making a trip to Saudi Arabia in early September 1990, Dugan spent the flight home speaking with reporters about the maturing air campaign plan. When Dugan’s air-centric comments littered the front page of the Washington Post, Cheney was furious and summarily fired Dugan after only 79 days as Chief.¹⁰⁴ In his subsequent press conference, Cheney cited eight grievances with Dugan’s behavior, notably his “egregious judgment” and “inappropriate” example.¹⁰⁵ Few in the defense community argued with Cheney’s decision, recognizing that Dugan had overreached in his efforts to spotlight the Air Force’s unique capability to win the war.

Dugan’s transgressions illustrate the extent to which the Air Force was aware of its image and relevance. Despite the setbacks imposed by Dugan’s

¹⁰¹ Carl H. Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome: The Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 5.

¹⁰² Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 39.

¹⁰³ Woodward, *The Commanders*, 292.

¹⁰⁴ Woodward, *The Commanders*, 294.

¹⁰⁵ Woodward, *The Commanders*, 296.

firing, the Air Force seized the opportunity afforded by the Gulf War to restore its image and rehabilitate its identity—a mission it confidently achieved when President Bush declared, “Gulf lesson number one is the value of air power.”¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

The preeminent features of Air Force organizational culture clearly saturate the offensive air campaign in the Gulf War. The Air Force’s proposed policy for winning the war was technology-centered; autonomously decisive; future-oriented; occupationally loyal; and self-aware. For several of these tenets, the Gulf War affords an ideal-type case study for which a clearer manifestation of Air Force culture can hardly be imagined. Through a fortuitous sequence of events, the Air Force as an institution had an opportunity to sculpt a campaign plan in its own image, soaked in its own cultural assumptions. The Air Force’s resulting policy preference accorded closely with the civilian’s desired offensive policy. This convergence of preferences minimized the value of $s - w$, and explains the Air Force’s unique posture of working amidst an otherwise-resistant military structure.

This case study illuminates the value of disaggregating the military actor in studying American civil-military relations. Whereas existing treatments of the Gulf War highlight the positions taken by ‘the military,’ this analysis confirms that the military services are unique actors who may work at cross-purposes with each other in the creation of policy. Rooted in their unique histories, the military services have distinct and powerful organizational cultures that inform their appraisal of the national interest. By comparing a proposed national policy with the cultural assumptions of an individual service, policymakers can predict pockets of unique cooperation or resistance from the military services. In the case of the Gulf War, the civilians’ preferred policy correlated squarely with the cultural assumptions of the Air Force, creating an island of cooperation in a sea of resistance.

¹⁰⁶ George Bush, “Remarks at the United States Air Force Academy Commencement Ceremony in Colorado Springs, Colorado,” http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=3035&year=1991&month=5; accessed 24 Mar 09.

Chapter 4

Keeping Watch: A Decade of Quasi-War

As 1998 winds to a close, few can claim to have predicted in 1991 that overwhelming victory would lead to such tattered laurels.

Rick Atkinson

I no longer have any sense of what the 'containment' of Iraq is all about. We just fly missions and drop bombs from time to time because we've been doing it for 10 years and no one can stop us from doing so.

Andrew Bacevich

For the United States Air Force, the satisfying triumph of Operation DESERT STORM slowly deteriorated into an interminable decade of frustration. The heady days of stealthy precision bombing against leadership targets in Baghdad devolved into a protracted cat-and-mouse battle of wills with Saddam Hussein. The forty days of well-planned bombing became a distant memory, replaced with the routine monotony of enforcing no-fly zones, punctuated by an occasional strike against a fleeting mobile radar. Having proved its effectiveness, the Air Force became the policy instrument of choice in the years that followed. The employment of airpower, however, often ran counter to the cultural assumptions of the service, creating more frustration than satisfaction among airmen.

Over the lifespan of Operations NORTHERN and SOUTHERN WATCH (ONW and OSW, respectively), the United States flew over 265,000 sorties in the south and more than 122,500 sorties in the northern tier of Iraq.¹ This containment of Saddam cost the Department of Defense nearly \$12 billion dollars, as well as untold degradations in readiness and morale.² The Air Force was particularly hard hit, as its constant shuttling of airmen and aircraft to the Gulf spurred widespread discontent and a hemorrhage of personnel out of the service. Despite these trends, however, the appraisal of this national policy remained mixed throughout the Air Force. While many lamented the apparent

¹ Michael Knights, *Cradle of Conflict: Iraq and the Birth of Modern U.S. Military Power* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 243.

² John A. Tirpak, "Legacy of the Air Blockades," *Air Force Magazine* 86, no. 2 (February 2003).

uselessness of “boring holes in the sky,”³ others touted the rare feat of securing national policy objectives through the air.⁴ Some commanders bewailed their plummeting pilot proficiency,⁵ while others appreciated the opportunity to drop bombs on enemy targets in a combat-like environment.⁶ Overall, the Air Force exhibited as much confusion as frustration, unsure whether to appreciate its leading role or decry the dulling of its blade.

While the Air Force kept Saddam bottled up in Iraq, the realm of civil-military relations exploded into prominence with the election of President Bill Clinton in 1992. With his draft-dodging background and his efforts to permit homosexuals to serve openly, Clinton’s military *bona fides* were questioned from the outset.⁷ Furthermore, the growing prominence and political power of Chairman Colin Powell conferred untold influence upon the subordinate military agent. In fact, respected military historians Russell Weigley and Richard Kohn published prominent articles expressing concern for the apparent power imbalance and an “out of control” military.⁸ The prevailing literature codes this period as a crisis in civil-military relations, with varying explanations given for its genesis and rationale. Through the lens of agency theory, Peter Feaver explains the turbulent dynamics this way: “The reason for these phenomena is that the underlying monitoring/working strategic calculation has changed, largely, I would argue, because of a continuing preference gap between civilians and the military and a dramatic lowering of military expectations of punishment. These factors, in turn, can be traced to many of the deeper changes of the past decade, including the end of the Cold War, changes in the relative power position of the military vis-à-vis civilians, and the

³ David Wood, “Workloads and Pay Woes Driving Veteran Pilots Out of Air Force,” *The Star-Ledger*, 29 May 1997, 12.

⁴ Paul K. White, *Crises After the Storm: An Appraisal of U.S. Air Operations in Iraq Since the Persian Gulf War* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1999), 84.

⁵ Wood, *Workloads and Pay Woes Driving Veteran Pilots Out of Air Force*.

⁶ White, *Crises After the Storm*, 80.

⁷ Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 183.

⁸ Russell F. Weigley, “The American Military and the Principle of Civilian Control From McClellan to Powell,” *The Journal of Military History* 57, no. 5 (1993); Richard H. Kohn, “Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations,” *The National Interest* 35 (1994): 10.

exacerbating factor of President Clinton's personal baggage, which he brought to the office of commander in chief."⁹

What does this appraisal look like in formal terms? As earlier chapters explained, the military's decision to work or shirk is informed by the divergence of the policy preferences, weighed against the military's risk calculation of being meaningfully punished for shirking. In Chapter 2, this calculation was expressed by the inequality:

$$agp > s - w$$

where a = the probability of detecting shirking
 g = the probability of civilians choosing to punish shirking
 p = the cost of the punishment to the military
 s = the military's policy preference
 w = the civilians' policy decision

According to Feaver's analysis of the civil-military crisis of the 1990s, the civilians continued to monitor intrusively, but the military's appraisal of receiving costly punishment diminished. Thus, while variable a remained high, variables g and p were low and reduced the overall value of the left side of the inequality. Consequently, the right side of the inequality—the preference gap—is primed to dominate the result, suggesting that a wide array of working and shirking is likely based on differing degrees of policy agreement. In fact, as the Air Force over Iraq will demonstrate, an array of working and shirking can exist within the context of a single ongoing policy.

While the Desert Storm case study shows the value of analyzing an individual service, this case study attempts to demonstrate that working and shirking represent a *continuum* of behaviors, not a stark Manichaeian typology. The central argument of this paper is that organizational culture uniquely shapes a service's calculation of working or shirking the civilian policy. Therefore, this chapter tests the hypothesis by first assessing the relative consonance of the Iraqi containment policy against the cultural assumptions of the Air Force. This analysis yields a variegated result—while the no-fly zone enforcement accorded with some tenets of the culture, it clashed with others. Consequently, in light of the variegated cultural overlap, the hypothesis expects a mixed result of working and shirking, which in fact occurs. Unlike the Desert

⁹ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 190.

Storm case in which clear cultural alignment spawned unique working, the following decade of armed overwatch reveals mixed cultural alignment and a concomitant blend of both working and shirking. These findings illuminate one of agency theory's useful contributions to civil-military relations literature: a capacity to highlight a spectrum of behavior between the poles of docile obedience and a rebellious coup.

The chapter begins with an historical overview of ONW and OSW, from their inception shortly after the Desert Storm ceasefire through the fall of 2001.¹⁰ This narrative highlights the United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) that putatively created the no-fly zones, as well as the major military interactions between the cagey Saddam and the allied air forces. Capping off the historical narrative is an overview of the critiques and support for the national policy of Iraqi containment. Having stipulated the national policy, the following section tests for the preference gap ($s - w$) by comparing that policy against the cultural tenets of the Air Force. The last major section of the chapter profiles the spectrum of working and shirking exhibited by airmen over the decade, with pockets of cooperation and resistance as predicted by their degree of cultural consonance. While this chapter does not offer a satisfyingly clear case of wholesale working or shirking, its value comes from demonstrating the vast trade space of American civil-military relations. This chapter concludes that across the continuum from working to shirking, organizational culture informs the decisions that populate the spectrum.

Cheat and Retreat

Within days of the Safwan ceasefire that ended Operation DESERT STORM, Saddam Hussein was grabbing headlines. His brutal repression of Kurdish and Shia minority populations galvanized a response by the United Nations Security Council, setting the stage for the decade of containment that followed. On the whole, Iraq's principal objectives throughout the 1990s

¹⁰ While one could argue that these operations continued until the start of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM in March 2003, this paper curtails the analysis in September 2001. After the terrorist attacks of September 11th, world events changed significantly enough so as to alter the policy calculations in place.

appeared to be maintaining the present regime, putting an end to the UN sanctions, establishing regional hegemony, and covertly pursuing—then discarding—a nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons capability.¹¹ Conversely, the United States pursued objectives to counter Saddam's intentions: prevent Iraqi aggression by keeping them weak, but not so weak as to embolden Iran; reverse any gains in the NBC weapons program; destabilize the Iraqi regime and invite its overthrow; and lastly, prevent instability among UN allies from any overt military action by the United States.¹² While these broad objectives trace the major contours of the decade, the specific instigations and responses paint a more detailed picture. This section highlights the major events, resolutions, and military actions that punctuate the low hum of Iraqi containment in the 1990s. In the end, the narrative demonstrates that despite its inherent frustrations, the policy succeeded in containing the Iraqi menace. As historian Dennis Showalter graphically opined, "The problem [with] American policy toward Iraq is that it's like a colostomy: It's pretty disgusting until you look at the alternatives."¹³

Commitment Begins

After the negotiated ceasefire at Safwan, Iraq, on 2 March 1991, the UN Security Council adopted the first of a long line of post-war resolutions. UNSCR 686 contained common ceasefire provisions, arranging for the return of prisoners and property and Iraqi acceptance of damage liability for its invasion of Kuwait.¹⁴ A month later, the Council passed UNSCR 687 on 3 April 1991, a resolution that contained robust provisions for corralling Saddam in a more confined diplomatic pasture. While UNSCR 686 simply ended the war, resolution 687 attempted to shape the diplomatic space for the future. For example, it specified a demilitarized zone between Iraq and Kuwait, and more

¹¹ Daniel Byman and Matthew C. Waxman, *Confronting Iraq: U.S. Policy and the Use of Force Since the Gulf War* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000), xiii.

¹² Byman and Waxman, *Confronting Iraq*, xiii.

¹³ Patrick Pexton, "Perry: 'We Are Not Playing Games'," *Air Force Times*, 23 September 1996, 4.

¹⁴ Henry E. Mattox, *A Chronology of United States-Iraqi Relations, 1920-2006* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co Publishers, 2008), 85.

significantly, called for the complete removal of Iraqi NBC weapons capability.¹⁵ Furthermore, UNSCR 687 created a United Nations Special Commission for Iraq (UNSCOM) to enforce these provisions by “carry[ing] out immediate on-site inspection of Iraq’s biological, chemical and missile capabilities, based on Iraq’s declarations and the designation of any additional locations by the special commission itself.”¹⁶ By adding the eradication of NBC capability to its post-war demands, the UN and the international community created the first of many commitments they would be challenged to keep.

A second major commitment incurred by the international community, and the United States in particular, was the protection of Iraqi minority populations from Saddam’s regime. Almost as soon as coalition tanks silenced their guns in the 100-hour ground war, anti-regime Shia populations in the southern city of Basra began to revolt.¹⁷ This *intifada* began on 1 March 1991, and eventually spread to 13 other cities in the Shia south and Kurdish north. Before the ink on the ceasefire had dried, Iraqi forces rolled into Basra and pursued a brutal counter-insurgency campaign against its Shia inhabitants. By mid-March, Iraqi troops pushed north into the Kurdish lands and similarly quelled a nascent rebellion. As a result, tens of thousands of Kurds were killed and over one million refugees spilled across the borders into Turkey and Iran.¹⁸ With a brewing humanitarian crisis on its hands, the UN Security Council passed resolution 688 on 5 April 1991 to condemn the Iraqi repression, demand its cessation, and insist upon the admittance of international humanitarian aid.¹⁹ Curiously, two key elements were conspicuously absent in the resolution: there was no mention of the Shia population in southern Iraq, nor were no-fly zones explicitly created. The international community was seemingly ambivalent about how to handle the Shia in the south, suspicious of

¹⁵ White, *Crises After the Storm*, 9.

¹⁶ *United Nations Security Council Resolution 687*, 13. <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/596/23/IMG/NR059623.pdf?OpenElement>; (accessed 29 Mar 10).

¹⁷ Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 119.

¹⁸ Byman and Waxman, *Confronting Iraq*, 43.

¹⁹ *United Nations Security Council Resolution 688*; <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/596/24/IMG/NR059624.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed 29 Mar 10).

Iranian influence and growing Islamic fundamentalism.²⁰ In addition, while the resolution requested the Secretary-General “to use all resources at his disposal...to address urgently the critical needs of the refugees,”²¹ it did not specifically mention no-fly zones or the use of force to ensure Iraqi compliance. The charter for unified international action suffered considerable ambiguity.²²

Nevertheless, United States European Command (EUCOM) established Operation PROVIDE COMFORT (OPC) on 16 April 1991, creating a safe haven for the Kurds and demarcating a no-fly zone over the northern tier of Iraq.²³ Motivated by humanitarian concerns but wary of its implications, President Bush declared, “We’re going to continue to help these refugees. But I do not want one single soldier or airman shoved into a civil war in Iraq that’s been going on for ages.” For the military members tasked to provide this protection, it was clear that Operation PROVIDE COMFORT “created stakes where none existed before.”²⁴ Then-Brig Gen Anthony Zinni, later the 4-star commander of Central Command (CENTCOM), understood the implications of creating and maintaining the Kurdish safe haven: “We were saddling ourselves with an open-ended commitment to protect them in that environment.”²⁵

Commitment Expands

After an additional year of Shia oppression, the international community resolved its ambiguous posture and pledged support to the southern Shia as well. In July 1992, the Iraqi Air Force started launching air strikes against Shia populations in the south, and the United States responded with the creation of a southern no-fly zone.²⁶ Using UNSCR 688 as its justification to protect the Iraqi population, the United States established Operation SOUTHERN WATCH

²⁰ Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 123. In addition, Turkey’s concern about the influx of Kurdish refugees compelled a UN response in the north, while no similar voice advocated for the Shia in the south.

²¹ *United Nations Security Council Resolution 688*, 32.

²² Michael Knights, “Rolling Escalation,” *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy* 30, no. 11 (2002): 15-17.

²³ Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 124. Operation PROVIDE COMFORT existed as such through 1996, after which the same line of effort was continued under the name Operation NORTHERN WATCH.

²⁴ Byman and Waxman, *Confronting Iraq*, 47.

²⁵ Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 9.

²⁶ Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 128.

on 26 August 1992. Enforcing a no-fly zone south of the 32nd parallel, OSW enjoyed widespread support from allies—British and French air forces flew sorties, while Kuwait and Saudi Arabia provided basing.²⁷ Although ostensibly similar to the northern no-fly zone, OSW reflected important differences as well. First, even though it operated in the same country, OSW was run by CENTCOM while OPC was run by EUCOM. Second, given the larger tract of enforceable territory as well as the basing possibilities with allied partners, the force structure in the south was significantly larger than in the north. OPC employed 48 aircraft to enforce the northern no-fly zone, while OSW employed nearly 160 US, British, and French aircraft.²⁸ Third, OSW was established to deny Iraqi use of southern airspace but made no guarantees of protection to the Shia populations from ground-based attacks.²⁹ Despite these significant differences, the strategic implications of expanded commitment remained the same. Historian Michael Knights observes, “[OSW] created open-ended military commitments that were simple to begin but politically impossible to end without appearing to reduce US commitment to regional partners and the Iraqi victims of Saddam’s regime.”³⁰

Saddam wasted little time in testing US and international resolve to enforce the southern no-fly zone. After pushing additional ground troops down to the south, Iraqi fighters began probing the no-fly zone to test the coalition response.³¹ A series of challenge-and-response encounters over the next few months prompted the first of many punitive airstrikes. In the waning days of his administration, President Bush authorized a coalition airstrike on 13 January 1993, using over 100 allied aircraft against command-and-control facilities, early-warning radars, and mobile surface-to-air missile batteries in southern Iraq.³² Days later, US naval forces followed up this attack with a salvo of 46 Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles (TLAM) directed at the Zaafaraniyah nuclear facility. Whatever message President Bush had hoped to

²⁷ Byman and Waxman, *Confronting Iraq*, 50.

²⁸ Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 129.

²⁹ Byman and Waxman, *Confronting Iraq*, 48.

³⁰ Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 130.

³¹ White, *Crises After the Storm*, 22.

³² Mattox, *A Chronology of United States-Iraqi Relations, 1920-2006*, 94; White, *Crises After the Storm*, 23.

deliver to Saddam appeared to be lost in translation—inaugurating a pattern for the years ahead, the Iraqi dictator continued to denounce and defy.³³

Reaction to the US airstrikes was mixed across the US defense community. Within the Air Force, the sporadic use of isolated attacks to send political messages reminded many of the “bad old days” of Vietnam.³⁴ Such limited use of force appeared to violate the recently validated Powell doctrine of overwhelming force. Others in the community, however, expressed greater optimism. In the weeks after these first limited strikes, Secretary of the Air Force Donald Rice suggested, “Air power offers the kind of flexibility and precision of application that you certainly saw on a much larger scale in Desert Storm, and there are going to be opportunities in the future to do more of these limited things.”³⁵ Similarly beguiled by the twin sirens of stealth and precision, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin opined that air attacks could now enunciate political *démarches* more clearly than was previously possible: “The limited objectives school has been strengthened as technological developments have improved our ability to achieve ‘compellence.’”³⁶ As President Clinton took office in January 1993, this optimism congealed into policy through Aspin’s “bottom-up review” of military commitments and requirements. Submitted in September 1993, the review identified the requirement to fight two major regional conflicts, while sustaining a constant air presence in the Persian Gulf.³⁷ Reinforcing the status quo, containment thus became official national policy.

Crisis Response through Vigilant Warrior

In October 1994, in a test of his own military readiness and the coalition response, Saddam Hussein dusted off his 1990 playbook.³⁸ On 5 October, Saddam dispatched two divisions of his elite Republican Guard to the Iraq-

³³ White, *Crises After the Storm*, 25.

³⁴ Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 137.

³⁵ John Morrocco, “Raids Highlight Pitfalls of Limited Use of Force,” *Aviation Week & Space Technology* 138, no. 4 (25 January 1993): 49.

³⁶ Morrocco, *Raids Highlight Pitfalls of Limited Use of Force*.

³⁷ White, *Crises After the Storm*, 11.

³⁸ Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 148.

Kuwaiti border in a menacing sign of repeat aggression.³⁹ Under the name Operation VIGILANT WARRIOR, the United States rapidly deployed additional aircraft to its regional bases, redirected the Navy aircraft carrier USS George Washington from the Adriatic to the Red Sea, and dispatched a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) and Army Mechanized Task Force into the region.⁴⁰ As an exemplar of deployable deterrence, the swift US reaction achieved its objective. Five days after initiating the deployment, Saddam announced that he would remove troops from the border, having been convinced that the United States wielded both the capacity and will to check his aggression.

Saddam's southern experiment yielded both diplomatic and military changes to the status quo. On 15 October 1994, the UN Security Council passed resolution 949, directing Saddam's attention to the diplomatic case file against him and denouncing his latest bout of wanton aggression. Acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter—which authorizes the use of force—the UNSCR condemned Iraqi aggression, demanded redeployment of its massed troops, demanded that Iraq never again use its military to threaten its neighbors, and demanded that Iraq never again mass its troops in the southern portion of the country.⁴¹ Militarily, this meant that the southern no-fly zone became a no-drive zone as well for the Iraqi army. To enforce these enhanced provisions, the Kuwaiti government agreed to base US F-16 and A-10 aircraft at Al Jaber Air Base in southern Kuwait.⁴²

Although Saddam was deterred from invading Kuwait yet again, the swift US response did not deter him from further instigation in other venues. Instead, Saddam emerged from the crisis largely intact, content to suffer the benign hardships of another UNSCR and plotting his next move to embarrass the West.

Kurdish Intervention and Operation DESERT STRIKE

³⁹ Byman and Waxman, *Confronting Iraq*, 55.

⁴⁰ Byman and Waxman, *Confronting Iraq*, 55.

⁴¹ *United Nations Security Council Resolution 949*; <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N94/401/71/PDF/N9440171.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed 30 Mar 10).

⁴² Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 150.

Saddam seized such an opportunity in August 1996 at the invitation of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). In the Kurdish region of northern Iraq, the KDP had locked horns with a rival Kurdish faction, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), with both sides appealing to outside patrons for assistance. Under suspicion that the PUK was receiving help from Iran, the KDP asked for Iraqi assistance, which Saddam was only too eager to provide.⁴³ On 29 August 1996, over 30,000 Iraqi troops rolled north to render aid to the KDP, entering the protected safe haven enforced by the northern no-fly zone.

The timing of Saddam's northern incursion capitalized on a number of distracting factors for the United States. With brewing tensions in China and Taiwan, the summer slowdown in Washington, and the pending Presidential election, the attention of the National Command Authorities was largely diverted elsewhere.⁴⁴ Having suffered the affront of Iraqi forces in UN-pledged territory, the principals and their deputies scrambled to mount a suitable response—the result was Operation DESERT STRIKE. Instead of tasking the military combatant command to initiate planning, however, the planning authority remained confined to Washington. The result of their planning was another round of political messaging rather than an attack on the incursion forces in the north. Deciding to extend the southern no-fly zone up to the 33rd parallel, Secretary of Defense William Perry handed CENTCOM leaders a list of air defense targets to be struck in southern Iraq.⁴⁵ CENTCOM was tasked to execute the plan, but the targeting and message-crafting originated in Washington.

Military reinforcements poured into theater as part of the US response, but diplomatic support for assisting the Kurds remained elusive.⁴⁶ Both Russia and China criticized any US action, and all of the Gulf state allies refused to support strike aircraft departing from their bases.⁴⁷ Ultimately, only Britain, Germany, and Japan supported the US action to punish Iraqi involvement in

⁴³ Byman and Waxman, *Confronting Iraq*, 58.

⁴⁴ Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 153.

⁴⁵ Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 162.

⁴⁶ Jon R. Anderson, "Troop Strength in Kuwait Will Reach 30,000," *Air Force Times*, 30 September 1996, 3.

⁴⁷ Byman and Waxman, *Confronting Iraq*, 58; Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 161.

the Kurdish north.⁴⁸ On 3 September 1996, using B-52s stationed in Guam as well as TLAMs launched from Navy ships, the United States lobbed 44 cruise missiles against air defense installations across southern Iraq.⁴⁹

Following the strikes, the French discontinued their support for the coalition air activity in the south, roundly condemning the unilateral extension of the southern no-fly zone to the 33rd parallel. Eventually, they rejoined the effort but refused to participate in actions north of the 32nd parallel. Criticism also came from within the US defense community, as retired General Chuck Horner decried the ineffectiveness of targeting southern air defense nodes in response to northern military aggression.⁵⁰ Instead, Horner argued, the United States should have targeted Saddam “where it hurts” and attacked his military forces. More than halfway through the decade, defense officials continued to wrestle with the frustrations of containing Saddam—but contain him they did.

Operation DESERT FOX and Escalation of the Quasi-War

In the summer of 1997, Saddam Hussein renewed his defiance of the UNSCOM and its inspections of Iraqi NBC weapons facilities. On 13 November 1997, an emboldened Saddam evicted the US members of UNSCOM and refused to readmit them to Iraq.⁵¹ Similarly, Saddam began threatening the safety of the U-2 reconnaissance flights employed by UNSCOM in its monitoring mission. Thus began a year of diplomatic and military wrangling which culminated in late December 1998 with the largest employment of airpower since Desert Storm: Operation DESERT FOX. After a maddening cycle of Iraqi non-compliance with UNSCOM, the United States initiated a four-day blitz against targets across the country. The operation began on 16 December 1998 with an armada of 250 TLAMs followed by naval strike assets from the USS Enterprise.⁵² The relentless bombing continued unabated until 20 December 1998 when it was concluded to avoid spilling into the month of Ramadan.⁵³

⁴⁸ Mattox, *A Chronology of United States-Iraqi Relations, 1920-2006.*, 105.

⁴⁹ White, *Crises After the Storm*, 41.

⁵⁰ Charles Horner, “What We Should Have Learned in Desert Storm, But Didn't,” *Air Force* 79, no. 12 (December 1996): 3-6.

⁵¹ White, *Crises After the Storm*, 50.

⁵² Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 200.

⁵³ Byman and Waxman, *Confronting Iraq*, 68.

Over the four-day effort, coalition forces launched over 600 sorties, fired more than 400 cruise missiles, and struck 211 of 275 planned targets.⁵⁴

Despite this impressive display of coalition airpower, few observers appeared to be impressed. Andrew Bacevich pilloried the attacks as a pathetic manifestation of the Clinton Doctrine, exemplified by “the extraordinary importance assigned to avoiding U.S. casualties, thereby advertising America’s own point of vulnerability; the hand-wringing preoccupation with collateral damage, signaling that the United States has no stomach for war as such and thereby encouraging adversaries to persevere; the reliance on high-technology weapons employed at long range, inviting confusion between the technical capability to hit targets and the achievement of operationally meaningful results; [and] vaguely formulated objectives often explained in terms of ‘sending messages.’”⁵⁵ Clinton himself appeared to be wholly disconnected from the low-grade war being fought under his authority. In a major foreign policy speech on 26 February 1999—only two months after DESERT FOX—he mentioned Iraq only once and the recent bombings not at all.⁵⁶ Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Saddam Hussein remained unimpressed by Clinton’s “tomahawk diplomacy.”⁵⁷ In the month that followed DESERT FOX, the Iraqi Air Force launched 70 penetrations of the no-fly zones, employing sophisticated “SAM-bush” tactics to lure coalition fighters into the snares of surface-to-air missile sites.⁵⁸ The Iraqi dictator refused to back down.

In light of Saddam’s continued intransigence, administration officials strengthened their endorsement of the entrenched containment policy. In March 1999, Secretary of Defense William Cohen assured, “We intend to continue the containment policy. We are going to maintain the no-fly zones, and if [Saddam] threatens our pilots, he will pay for it.”⁵⁹ Furthermore, the administration appeared to embrace a “bolder, tougher policy toward Iraq [that]

⁵⁴ Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 206.

⁵⁵ Andrew J. Bacevich, “Discord Still: Clinton and the Military,” *The Washington Post*, 3 January 1999, C01.

⁵⁶ Ed Blanche, “War of Attrition as Iraq Absorbs the Ongoing US Punishment,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review* (June 1999): 27-33.

⁵⁷ Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 139.

⁵⁸ Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 211-212.

⁵⁹ William Matthews, “Bombing of Iraq to Continue Indefinitely,” *Air Force Times*, 15 March 1999, 7.

included growing support for Iraqi opposition groups—a ‘containment-plus-regime-change’ policy.”⁶⁰ Over the objections of CENTCOM Commander Anthony Zinni, President Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act in October 1998, approving over \$97 million to support the democratic opposition in Iraq. These diplomatic and financial overtures were matched by a more aggressive posture in the air as well. The administration empowered the military to relax the rules of engagement (ROE) that guided coalition aircraft responses in the no-fly zones. Military leaders were given wider latitude to loosen the ROE, giving pilots more authority to respond to surface-to-air fire.⁶¹ The result was a “low-level war of attrition,” with a marked increase in coalition bombing against Iraqi air defense installations.⁶²

This pattern continued through the following election year and the inauguration of President George W. Bush in January 2001. With the new administration, military leaders hoped to put an end to the interminable status quo in Iraq. When Lt Gen Charles Wald assumed command of Central Air Forces (CENTAF) in early 2001, he noted, “We needed to get out of this middle road that was really dangerous...this cynical status quo approach to the no-fly zones and to Iraq. You can’t do this tit for tat thing. Our recommendation was that we do something more aggressive.”⁶³ In May 2001, journalist Thomas Ricks reported that “one top commander stressed to the administration that the risk of losing a U.S. pilot has grown so great in recent weeks that continuing the operation may no longer be justifiable.”⁶⁴ Other Air Force leaders joined in the perception-shaping, as one top official noted, “It’s one of those areas that the Administration is reviewing right now: ‘what is our policy with respect to Iraq and our partners in the Middle East? What are we really trying to accomplish? And how does Northern Watch and Southern Watch connect to what we were doing before?’ Right now I don’t know.”⁶⁵

⁶⁰ White, *Crises After the Storm*, 65.

⁶¹ Matthews, *Bombing of Iraq to Continue Indefinitely*.

⁶² White, *Crises After the Storm*, 63.

⁶³ Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 235.

⁶⁴ Thomas Ricks, “Cuts Urged in Patrols Over Iraq,” *The Washington Post*, 9 May 2001, A01.

⁶⁵ David Fulghum, “U.S. May Suspend Northern Watch Patrol,” *Aviation Week & Space Technology* 154, no. 20 (14 May 2001): 30.

Nevertheless, the new Bush administration appeared content to continue the general legacy of containment it inherited. In February and August of 2001, coalition aircraft launched extensive retaliatory attacks in response to Iraqi aggression, and the coalition lost its first aircraft on 27 August 2001 near Basra—an unmanned Predator drone.⁶⁶ It took the shattering events of 11 September 2001 to dislodge the administration's policy from the containment pattern of the previous decade.

Containment – What Is It Good For?

The national policy of containing the Iraqi regime through airpower spanned more than 10 years and three presidential administrations. The critics of the policy were legion, though Newt Gingrich's assessment is certainly representative: "The U.S. looks like an isolated bully using very sophisticated weapons to no purpose. So we look arrogant and impotent at the same time."⁶⁷ On balance, however, most critics saw the ongoing value of the policy or ceded its inevitability. "Our policy of containment," noted former Congressman Lee Hamilton, "with all its limitations and frustrations, has achieved the vital interests of the United States."⁶⁸ Former Secretaries of Defense William Perry and Harold Brown exhausted their strategic imagination to divine a better option than containment, but neither could do so; Brown lamented, "This is not a good strategy, but I haven't thought of a better one."⁶⁹ Political scientist Daniel Byman penned a prominent article for *Foreign Affairs* magazine expressing a similarly resigned fate: "Since the United States can neither engineer Saddam's fall nor accept him back into the international community, it really has only one option left—the much-maligned existing policy of containment."⁷⁰ Finally, General Anthony Zinni offered a useful perspective

⁶⁶ Alan Sipress and Dan Balz, "Bush Signals Escalation in Response to Hussein," *The Washington Post*, 17 February 2001, A01; Thomas Ricks, "U.S., British Jets Attack Three Iraqi Air Defense Sites," *The Washington Post*, 11 August 2001, A18; Thomas Ricks, "Unmanned U.S. Plane is Lost Over Iraq," *The Washington Post*, 28 August 2001, A09.

⁶⁷ Pexton, *Perry: 'We Are Not Playing Games'*.

⁶⁸ White, *Crises After the Storm*, 89.

⁶⁹ Bryan Bender, "Poisoned Cigars, Perhaps?," *Jane's Defence Weekly* 33 (12 April 2000): 21-25.

⁷⁰ Daniel Byman, et al., "The Rollback Fantasy," *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 1 (January/February 1999): 37.

that many in uniform overlooked: “Containment worked. Look at Saddam—what did he have? He didn’t threaten anyone in the region. He was contained. It was a pain in the ass, but he was contained. He had a deteriorated military. He wasn’t a threat to the region. We contained, day-to-day, with fewer troops than go to work every day at the Pentagon.”⁷¹

Testing for Cultural Consonance

While the sporadic flare-ups in the Gulf occasionally grabbed headlines, the Air Force endured the muted monotony of sustained enforcement operations for the whole decade. As a service, the Air Force paid a high price in morale, readiness, and retention to execute the national policy; but in exchange for that price, the Air Force provided security and stability for the nation, the Persian Gulf region, and the international community.⁷² This inherent tension suggests that the Air Force embraced certain aspects of its mission, while decrying others. Having outlined the national policy as it unfolded over the 1990s, the following section tests the preference gap ($s - w$) by searching out the degree to which Air Force cultural assumptions are reflected in this policy. The results of the preference gap will inform the section that follows, in which the Air Force’s response is more clearly explained.

Technology-Centered

The Air Force exists because of technology, and its ongoing superiority is sustained by the ascendance of its technology. As the first and most important machine, the manned airplane is the building block of the force. While unmanned technologies have their place, the complexities of combat require an actual—or virtual—human presence over the battlefield.

The long decade of flying constabulary missions over Iraq was not the technological showcase that Operation DESERT STORM had been. The relatively benign nature of no-fly zone enforcement did not require stealthy F-117s to penetrate heavily defended airspace to drop precision munitions down ventilator shafts. While the long years of enforcement did not task the Air Force’s most technologically sophisticated assets, neither was it an abject

⁷¹ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 22.

⁷² This insight comes from Dr. Jim Forsyth, who heard General Anthony Zinni assert similar claims.

technological backwater. The Air Force certainly had ample opportunity to fly hundreds of thousands of manned missions, and even introduced the B-1 bomber into combat for the first time during Operation DESERT FOX.⁷³ In the latter half of the decade, the Air Force also introduced unmanned Predator drones to the battlefield. These Predator drones represented a leading edge of aerospace technology, but given the primacy of *manned* platforms in Air Force culture, the Predator was only reluctantly accepted. Similarly, the extensive reliance on technologically advanced cruise missiles proved equally unsatisfying for intrepid Air Force aviators. While a true hallmark of technology, cruise missiles are launched well beyond any threats, are autonomously guided, and absorb all the risk. For a service whose culture prizes on-site aircrew taking measured risks to guide weapons precisely to target, out-sourcing this duty to an unmanned cruise missile did not provide much gratification.

The technological prize that Air Force leaders *did* want to introduce to the no-fly zones was the much-revered F-22 Raptor. The Raptor was—and still is—a technological marvel, a supersonic icon of advanced engineering that far out-paced any would-be rivals. In fact, the contrast between the F-22's vast superiority and the diffuse post-Soviet threat environment spurred accusations that the Raptor was a solution looking for a problem. For then-Brig Gen Dave Deptula, however, the no-fly zones represented a prime problem-set that the Raptor could solve: "With F-22s operating in a dual role, we could significantly reduce the total number of aircraft required to conduct no-fly zone operations, reduce the number of people deployed, and reduce the dollar cost of operations while increasing the effectiveness of the operation against a wider and more capable spectrum of threats."⁷⁴ F-16 pilot Paul White concurred, noting that the Raptor's technological sophistication empowered it to solve the Air Force's plaguing personnel and morale issues as well: "Although many have expressed concern over the proposed high cost of the F-22, a significantly reduced requirement for fighters, tankers, and support personnel deployed for Southern and Northern Watch would save the Air Force millions of dollars annually, while drastically reducing current operations tempo requirements. Perhaps just as

⁷³ White, *Crises After the Storm*, 59.

⁷⁴ John Correll, "Northern Watch," *Air Force* 83, no. 2 (February 2000): 4.

important, curtailing the demands of these constant deployments would pay huge dividends in improving morale and retention in the Air Force.”⁷⁵

On the whole, OSW and ONW gave the Air Force a protracted opportunity to fly its aircraft and improve its technological superiority at the margins—unmanned drones, datalink software integration, and GPS-guided munitions all made major strides in this era. The benign mission requirements, however, meant that the Air Force’s most sophisticated and prized technologies were not on display.

Autonomously Decisive

The Air Force has the power to change the face of the Earth. It can do what no other service can do. To realize its true potential, the Air Force should be employed kinetically, offensively, overwhelmingly, and with minimal political interference.

Contrary to a core assumption of Air Force culture, airpower in ONW and OSW was clearly *not* used offensively, overwhelmingly, and with minimal political interference. Instead, by the very nature of a protracted enforcement policy, the mission required inherently defensive operations, with sporadic kinetic engagements designed not to overwhelm but to punish, hemmed in by extensive political sensitivities. For an Air Force that wants to be *autonomously decisive*, the political environment hampered its autonomy and the nature of status quo enforcement meant that there was nothing to *decide*.

For commanders executing this policy, the defensive mindset of no-fly zone enforcement created a dangerous operational environment. Maj Gen Randall Schmidt, then-commander of OSW operations, explained his frustrations: “You don’t want to incur losses in an operation where you’re not out to win... This is a commander’s nightmare. If you don’t have the option of going offensive, as we didn’t, you have your hands tied. We had the mandate of defending ourselves and the perfect tour would be not to lose anyone and to maintain the status quo. That was a recipe for disaster, people got the mentality that I’m not going to war to win, I’m going there to just not lose.”⁷⁶ This trend so concerned Gen Richard Hawley, commander of Air Combat Command, that he expressed a desire to make the desert deployments “more

⁷⁵ White, *Crises After the Storm*, 86.

⁷⁶ Knights, *Cradle of Conflict*, 215.

like Red Flag.”⁷⁷ Red Flag exercises are massively offensive war simulations, fought in the vast training complex north of Nellis AFB, Nevada. Intended to simulate the first 10 days of a major war, Red Flag is an icon of the kinetically offensive battle the Air Force would *like* to fight. Hawley’s comment reflects a service sufficiently frustrated with its current mission that it needed to inject the large-force offensive ethos of Red Flag into the defensively oriented no-fly zones. If the policy could not change, then the service would tailor the execution of that policy to accord more closely with its cultural assumptions. One Air Force pilot expressed real frustration after a series of OSW deployments meant his squadron had to cancel its scheduled participation in Red Flag: “[Red Flag deployments] are the kind...that are actually fun, that make me like the job.”⁷⁸

Not all Air Force leaders, however, dismissed the significance of the containment mission. After completing a command tour of ONW, then-Brig Gen Deptula held a high view of the Air Force’s contribution to national security: “When we set up a no-fly zone, we are seizing an element of sovereign authority (the right to control airspace) on behalf of the world. We are declaring the subjected state to be less than a full member of the family of nations, unfit to govern in at least this one aspect, and under an interdict of sorts. This is a surrogate for war that clearly establishes the rogue status of the subject state...This highlights aerospace power as a robust instrument of power intertwined with policy and diplomacy.”⁷⁹ Deptula’s lofty assessment remained a minority view, however, within the Air Force writ large.

In sum, this defensively oriented policy saw targets selected by Washington principals, punitive response options governed by complex ROE, and missions constrained by the political sensitivities of host nations like Turkey, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. As a stark contrast to the autonomously decisive ethos of the Air Force, the policy grated the service’s core.

Future-Oriented

⁷⁷ Otto Kreisher, “In the Sandbox,” *Air Force Magazine* 81, no. 8 (August 1998).

⁷⁸ Kreisher, *In the Sandbox*.

⁷⁹ White, *Crises After the Storm*, 84.

Technology and potential adversaries change quickly, and the Air Force must orient forward to the unknown future instead of the forgotten past. The Air Force must pursue next-generation systems today to be ready for tomorrow.

In March 1999, Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) Gen Michael Ryan quoted Brig Gen Billy Mitchell in his testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee: “In the development of air power, one has to look ahead and not backward and figure out what is going to happen, not too much what has happened.”⁸⁰ The constabulary enforcement of Iraqi no-fly zones, however, kept the Air Force mired in a perpetual recycling of past grievances. The Air Force could hardly look ahead to what was *going* to happen, as it labored mightily to adapt to the current demands of what was happening. In fact, one could argue that the traditional garrison-style force structure of the Air Force reflected its forward-looking culture of anticipating the next big fight. Being prepared for the unknown future required keeping the bulk of one’s force at a high level of readiness, ready to deploy for decisive operations, followed by a redeployment to garrison to prepare for the *next* big fight. Instead, the constant demands of OSW and ONW required a wholesale change in the Air Force’s posturing of forces. In 1998, CSAF Ryan introduced the Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) “so that we can continue to do things like [OSW and ONW] on a consistent basis without driving the force into the ground.”⁸¹ Later, CSAF John Jumper concurred that the AEF was born from the demands of maintaining the status quo in the desert: “We reconfigured in order to deal with this commitment. There’s no doubt about that.”⁸²

The Air Force therefore had responsibility for maintaining the status quo policy of containing Saddam Hussein in Iraq. While this policy gave the Air Force the opportunity to provide security for the nation and the world, it blocked the service from its preferred posture of looking ahead to the unknown future.

Occupationally Loyal

⁸⁰ William Mitchell, *Winged Defense: The Development and Possibilities of Modern Air Power* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 20.

⁸¹ Bruce D. Callander, “The New Expeditionary Force,” *Air Force Magazine* 81, no. 9 (September 1998).

⁸² Tirpak, *Legacy of the Air Blockades*.

The Air Force is an honorable and patriotic means to practice a desirable high-tech trade. Loyalties to the trade, machine, and subculture often outweigh loyalty to the institution.

Searching out evidence of this cultural assumption requires probing the narrative for areas in which airmen's loyalties could be fractionated. In the case of ONW and OSW, the frustrations associated with the constant deployments and unsatisfying mission provided the pretext for airmen—namely pilots—to leave the service and ply their trade with the airlines. Recognizing that many pilots chose to leave the service for perfectly honorable reasons—in fact, morally upstanding ones such as family stability—the overall exodus of skilled pilots suggests that loyalty to the Air Force institution and its mission was a contingent one.

For airmen who love to fly, leaving the service to fly for an airline that provides more pay and stability was a completely rational and culturally accepted choice. In fact, CSAF Ryan suggested, “It’s not their fault they are leaving. Maybe it’s our fault”⁸³—as if the Air Force bore some responsibility for not providing a suitably gratifying means for national service. As one article reported in September 1998, “[Pilots] are leaving because they can’t justify to their families the need for being away from home half the year when US interests really aren’t at stake. And, just as importantly, they can’t justify to themselves not being the best.”⁸⁴ This comment, indicative of an occupationally loyal culture, suggests that somehow *being the best* was a higher—or at least equal—priority to fulfilling national policy. Furthermore, the comment intimates that military members retain some autonomous capability to judge when US interests are or are not at stake. Civil-military relations theory holds that *civilians* hold the authority to determine what is in the national interest, while the military holds responsibility for executing that policy faithfully. Dismissing a tasked mission as a peripheral US interest unworthy of one’s professional skill reflects a loyalty to a craft over an institution. Again, this commentary in no way denigrates the patriotism or loyalty of pilots who chose to leave the service; instead, this merely reflects a service culture that accepts

⁸³ Kreisher, *In the Sandbox*.

⁸⁴ Harley A. Hughes, “Bailing Out,” *Armed Forces Journal International* (September 1998): 42-46.

and *anticipates* that its most well-trained members will leave the service if a more attractive flying option is available elsewhere.

Self-Aware

Major combat operations are the best setting to showcase the full potential of the independent Air Force. In any other venue, the Air Force serves an essential supporting role in which it is largely taken for granted. During these times of transparent contribution, the Air Force must actively articulate its relevance to the nation and itself.

The decade of containment over the Iraqi desert did little to sustain the buoyed self-image restored by Operation DESERT STORM. Instead, the unending patrols and occasional bombings hardly merited any press coverage at all. In October 2000, Thomas Ricks reported, “Northern Watch is characteristic of U.S. military missions in the post-Cold War era: it is small-scale, open-ended and largely ignored by the American people. Even though U.S. warplanes are routinely dropping bombs on a foreign country, it has not been an issue in the presidential election and has hardly been mentioned by the candidates.”⁸⁵ For the Air Force, this meant that their heroic sacrifice of morale and readiness was not even appreciated by the politicians or the nation. The steady demands of no-fly zone enforcement seemingly imperiled the future health of the service in support of a cause that—like Showalter’s colostomy bag—no one wanted to embrace or abandon.

In the aggregate, this assessment suggests that the national policy of containment was largely—but not purely—at odds with the Air Force’s cultural assumptions. While new technologies were introduced into the fight, they were not the shimmering high-tech prizes most central to the Air Force’s identity. The no-fly-zone missions gave the Air Force the leading role in enforcing UN sanctions and providing security for the nation, the region, and the world; yet those same missions were largely defensive, politically constrained, and reliant on non-heroic cruise missiles. The Air Force had primacy in the current fight, but the exhaustive nature of the commitment kept it from posturing forward for the *next* fight. Pilots were given ample opportunity to fly, but dissatisfaction

⁸⁵ Thomas Ricks, “Containing Iraq: A Forgotten War,” *The Washington Post*, 25 October 2000, A01.

with the mission and the operations tempo compelled them to ply their trade elsewhere. Finally, despite the operational rigor of constant deployments and engagements with Iraqi air defenses, airmen's efforts were largely ignored by the press and the nation at large. Assessing the overall preference gap ($s - w$), therefore, suggests that it is not a fixed value, but varies along the lines of consonance suggested above.

Given such varied consistency between the national policy and the Air Force's cultural assumptions, this paper hypothesizes that the service would exhibit a range of cooperative and resistant behaviors. In the working-shirking continuum, the Air Force's reaction is likely to echo across the middle portion of that spectrum. Defense analysts Adam Stulberg and Michael Salamone invoke the terms *hedging* and *foot-dragging* for the middle regions of the continuum between working and shirking, respectively.⁸⁶ As the following section substantiates, the Air Force both hedged and dragged its feet in executing the national policy of containment, consistent with its varied degrees of cultural fit.

Hedging and Foot-Dragging

As the decade of enforcement began, the Air Force was still riding the proud wave of noble purpose created by Operation DESERT STORM. In the fall of 1992, the first units tasked with flying OSW missions arrived in theater, and commanders reported motivated troops who looked forward to their assigned duty.⁸⁷ One month after OSW was created, Air Force Times ran its first major article on the new mission, quoting then-Brig Gen Tad Oelstrom, commander of the 4404th Composite Wing: "I think most people come in here with a little extra adrenaline. We are on the sharp end of the stick, and we are asked to do things that are very important. The eyes of the entire world are upon us."⁸⁸ The sense of purpose was palpable, and the service savored the prominence of its role. This general aura of enthusiasm continued for several years, particularly in the shadow of Saddam's various excursions to test coalition resolve. After Operation VIGILANT WARRIOR in October 1994, an F-15C squadron

⁸⁶ Adam N. Stulberg and Michael D. Salomone, *Managing Defense Transformation: Agency, Culture and Service Change* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 42.

⁸⁷ White, *Crises After the Storm*, 15.

⁸⁸ Julie Bird, "Special Report: Southern Watch," *Air Force Times*, 28 September 1992, 16-18.

commander asserted, “We’ve been the primary deterrent to Saddam Hussein doing something stupid a second time.”⁸⁹ “It’s just the nature of the business,” offered a second squadron commander, “This is what we’re supposed to be doing.”⁹⁰

The enthusiastic comments from aircrew began to wane through the mid-1990s, though Air Force leaders continued to assert the value of the Air Force mission. “We are an expeditionary Air Force,” reminded CSAF Ryan, “That’s what the nation wants of us.”⁹¹ Retired CSAF Larry Welch, comfortably insulated from the grating personnel challenges, offered this macro view: “The job of the U.S. military is to protect U.S. national interests. As long as there is a national interest there, we’ll be there. It’s as simple as that.”⁹² Another retired CSAF, Merrill McPeak, likewise trumpeted the value of the Air Force’s contribution: “The bombing isn’t hurting us, and it is hurting Saddam.”⁹³ While these and other Air Force leaders maintained the “can do” attitude expected of the military, the rank and file began to raise a hue and cry. Two interrelated issues began to seize the service’s public discourse in the mid-to-late 1990s: the relentless operations tempo (OPTEMPO) and the growing disenchantment with the containment mission. Together, these issues fostered a force that was as busy as ever but lacked the sense of purpose to make its sacrifices seem worthwhile.

OPTEMPO

Beginning around 1997, the exhausting OPTEMPO finally caught up with a tired Air Force. Personnel began leaving the service in droves, citing the OPTEMPO and time away from their families as the primary factors driving their decision.⁹⁴ Deployed airmen even took up their case with visiting Senators, complaining that they “did not join the military to become part of the

⁸⁹ Steven Watkins, “No End in Sight,” *Air Force Times*, 19 December 1994, 12-15.

⁹⁰ Watkins, *No End in Sight*.

⁹¹ Kreisher, *In the Sandbox*.

⁹² Julie Bird, “The Mission,” *Air Force Times*, 30 June 1997, 16.

⁹³ Correll, *Northern Watch*.

⁹⁴ Bird, *The Mission*; Julie Bird, “Back to the Desert,” *Air Force Times*, 27 October 1997, 12.

Foreign Legion.”⁹⁵ Senator Daniel Inouye recalled, “The first and most persistent question was, ‘When do we get home? When do we get home?’”⁹⁶ Air Force leaders were well aware of the OPTEMPO challenges, and made sweeping overhauls to force posture through the new AEF construct. Citing eight years of scrutiny and hard work to make it happen, CSAF Ryan announced the AEF policy in 1998, noting that one of its goals was to “reduce deployment tempo by building more stability and predictability.”⁹⁷

Operation ALLIED FORCE taxed the Air Force even further in the spring of 1999, and the service teetered at a breaking point. In July 1999, CSAF Ryan petitioned both the Joint Chiefs of Staff as well as the Secretary of Defense for a reprieve from its operational pace.⁹⁸ Asking for a six-month reconstitution period to mend ailing jets and bolster plummeting morale, Ryan noted that the active Air Force was 40% smaller than the previous decade but sustained four times the number of commitments worldwide.⁹⁹ In July 1999, for example, the Air Force had 6,000 airmen and 75 aircraft deployed to OSW; 9,000 airmen and 35 aircraft covering ONW; and 12,000 airmen and 200 aircraft in Yugoslavia and Bosnia.¹⁰⁰

Pilots began voicing their displeasure by voting with their feet. Citing higher OPTEMPO and time away from family as the motivator for his departure, one F-16 pilot offered this caveat: “If that desert deployment wasn’t there, it wouldn’t be a problem.” His squadron commander endorsed a similar conclusion, “Southwest Asia is the number one irritant, the one thing pushing guys out of the Air Force.”¹⁰¹ With scores of pilots turning down the mid-career financial bonus and opting for the airlines instead, the Air Force was hemorrhaging its critical personnel capability. A 1999 CNN article reported,

⁹⁵ Tom Raum, “Airmen Tell Senators It’s Time to Pack Up and Go Home,” *Air Force Times*, 18 May 1998, 8.

⁹⁶ Raum, *Airmen Tell Senators It’s Time to Pack Up and Go Home*.

⁹⁷ Michael Ryan, “The Promise of the Expeditionary Force,” *Air Force Times*, 31 August 1998, 31.

⁹⁸ William Matthews and Bruce Rolfsen, “Ryan to JCS: Give Us a Break,” *Air Force Times*, 12 July 1999, 8-10; Pamela Hess, “Pentagon Slowed Iraq Mission for Kosovo,” *United Press International*, 14 July 1999.

⁹⁹ Joie Chen and Patty Davis, “Air Force Asks Pentagon for a Timeout,” *CNN The World Today*, 24 June 1999.

¹⁰⁰ Matthews and Rolfsen, *Ryan to JCS: Give Us a Break*.

¹⁰¹ Kreisher, *In the Sandbox*.

“The Air Force, now short more 1,400 pilots, says while it’s not yet a crisis, it’s headed there if something doesn’t give, and soon.”¹⁰²

What is Our Mission?

At the intersection of several Air Force cultural assumptions is an overriding desire for a mission that is globally relevant, politically clear, and tactically demanding. As the 1990s drew to a close, airmen consistently expressed frustration that their demanding deployment schedule was not rewarded with a satisfying mission to perform. Instead, they perceived that their constant rotations to the desert suffered from a lack of excitement, national prestige, or clear geopolitical importance. One pilot recalled, “The very first time I went to Dhahran, I thoroughly enjoyed it...There was a sense of purpose.” The intervening years, however, had disabused him of that enjoyment: “Each time I go back, I find it less and less stimulating. The flying is boring.”¹⁰³ In the fall of 2000, an Air National Guard pilot summed up his appraisal of the OSW mission, “I think almost everybody thinks it is a waste of time.”¹⁰⁴

The lack of excitement notwithstanding, other airmen scorned the degradation of mission capability. An F-15C squadron commander lamented that the no-fly zone mission blunted the tactical edge he trained so hard to sharpen: “All you’re doing is making left-hand turns all day. You take in a bunch of young pilots, train ‘em up, then we go to Saudi and you watch their proficiency plummet.”¹⁰⁵ Another Air Force pilot agreed that training for a hypothetical and more challenging mission should supersede the nettlesome national policy of containing Iraq in support of UN resolutions: “If we go for 90 days, we give up training opportunities. In places like Kuwait, by and large, you are just boring holes in the sky.”¹⁰⁶ Reflecting the autonomously decisive and future-oriented assumptions of Air Force culture, many airmen tacitly

¹⁰² Chen and Davis, *Air Force Asks Pentagon for a Timeout*.

¹⁰³ Kreisher, *In the Sandbox*.

¹⁰⁴ Ricks, *Containing Iraq: A Forgotten War*.

¹⁰⁵ Wood, *Workloads and Pay Woes Driving Veteran Pilots Out of Air Force*.

¹⁰⁶ Glen Warchol, “Retaining Air Force Top Guns,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 7 November 1999, A1.

assumed that any national mission that did not fully task their tactical skills was a distracting surrogate for one that would.

Finally, another strain of disgruntled airmen derided the national policy for its perceived lack of geopolitical clarity. An Air Force officer assigned to OSW observed, “It is kind of a surreal mission, because a lot of people back home don’t seem to be aware of what we’re doing. The concern you sometimes hear from aircrews is that they don’t understand, from a policy standpoint, where this mission is heading.”¹⁰⁷ Other airmen appeared to understand the policy, but took issue with its limited objectives. In a strikingly clear example of the assumption that the Air Force exists to be autonomously decisive, one Air Force pilot declared, “We are being used in a limited capacity, which is tearing the heart and soul out of the Air Force.”¹⁰⁸ Frustrated by the limited objectives of containing Iraq, another airmen longed wistfully for the strategic purity of the Cold War: “We don’t train like we used to. We used to be a cohesive fighting force, serving with unlimited liability, to protect and defend the United States. We were called to the profession of arms. The ‘Evil Empire’ was the focus of our training, and we had a clear understanding of what constituted the United States’ vital interest. Those times are gone, and we’re tired of droning holes in the sky; protecting allied airspace where we’re not welcome...We’ve become instruments of foreign policy before the fact, and we’re not doing a damn for the American way of life.”¹⁰⁹

Conclusions

How might one responsibly characterize the Air Force’s varied cooperation and resistance to the national policy of containment? In the grandest view, the Air Force certainly was, and is, a loyal band of patriots who faithfully abided the ethic of civilian control over the military. More to the point, in fact, many Air Force leaders discerned the strategic value of containing Iraqi aggression through vigilant air enforcement. Many of those same leaders massively restructured the Air Force to accommodate and work with the expeditionary demands of the national policy. The prominent symptoms of

¹⁰⁷ James Kitfield, “The Long Deployment,” *Air Force Magazine* 83, no. 7 (July 2000).

¹⁰⁸ Warchol, *Retaining Air Force Top Guns*.

¹⁰⁹ Hughes, *Bailing Out*.

hedging and foot-dragging, however, came in those areas in which the policy conflicted with the service's basic assumptions. Furthermore, Air Force resistance to the policy appeared to be a bottom-up phenomenon in which viral discontent swelled into a critical mass. When that critical mass exited the service in striking numbers, Air Force leaders and policymakers took notice.

Eventually, Air Force and civilian leaders realized that the policy—and its steady-state demands—had spurred a subterranean culture clash with a broad swath of airmen. For airmen from an autonomously decisive culture, the hallmarks of containment—defensive operations, politically complex ROE, limited use of force, and degrading tactical skill sets—were antithetical to that culture. Airmen raised in a future-oriented culture found the steady-state expeditionary force posture and degraded readiness of constabulary operations to be anathema. Occupationally loyal airmen found that the high costs of family separation and eroded skill sets violated their loyalty to their trade. Finally, airmen steeped in a culture of providing independent value to the nation found that the loss of mission prestige was too odious to abide. As individual airmen dragged their feet in resistance to the civilian policy, the aggregate effect compelled the service writ large to take action and hedge its ongoing cooperation.

Agency Theory and the Long Decade

The civil-military crisis of the 1990s pitted an empowered military against a politically encumbered civilian authority. Feaver cites the external factors—the end of the Cold War, a uniquely empowered JCS Chairman, Clinton's personal baggage—that changed the material incentives of the agency-theory model, making a decade of shirking more likely. This chapter has invoked the agency theory framework to explain the Air Force's varied cooperation and resistance to the national policy of containment in Iraq. The qualitative values of the working inequality ($agp > s-u$) suggested that any variation in the preference gap would likely dominate the resultant working-shirking dynamic. In light of this paper's hypothesis that organizational culture uniquely informs service preferences, this chapter compared the national policy of containment against the cultural assumptions of the Air Force. The weak

consistency between the two predicted the result that followed: a variegated response from a conflicted Air Force. While senior leaders worked hard to accommodate the demands of a constabulary mission, individual airmen deploying for the fifth or sixth time could no longer abide the policy's inconsistency with their service culture. Individual resistance combined into a collective one, as the all-volunteer force volunteered to leave and altered the mission capability of the service. While the Air Force provided security for the nation and the world by containing Iraq, individual airmen responded consistently with their cultural assumptions and resisted the policy's demands.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

The organizational culture of a service, in turn, exerts a strong influence on civil-military relations, frequently constraining what civilian leaders can do and often constituting an obstacle to change and innovation.

Mackubin Owens

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

George Washington's legacy of principled civil-military relations has endured for over 200 years, strengthened over time by the shared benefits of precedent, virtue, and accountability. In service to the American people, the government and its military have successfully negotiated the tenuous paradox of armed delegation. The ethic of civilian control over the military continues to undergird the civil-military relationship, with neither side having to remind or be reminded of its rightful place. This macroscopic bill of health, however, belies the spirited and subtle negotiations that comprise the civil-military dynamic in the grind of daily affairs. Civilian and military leaders share a common goal—the security of the nation—but often differ significantly in their appraisal of how to achieve it. Military leaders, acting in good faith in their subordinate role, attempt to shape policy debates to conform to their own particular theory of success. Civilian leaders, while craving sound military counsel, seek to retain the authority to make substantive decisions that are not pre-packaged by the military as the only suitable choice.

By framing this relationship as a principal-agent problem, Peter Feaver captures the inherent tension with useful explanatory power. As chapter two explains, agency theory models the relevant incentives that inform the decisions of key actors: the civilians' monitoring decision, the military's decision to work or shirk, and the civilians' decision whether and how to punish any shirking they detect. Feaver's work contributes meaningfully to the civil-military-relations literature in several ways. First, whereas other theorists stipulate normative solutions for how the civil-military relationship *should* work, agency

theory attempts to model how it *does* work. The theory acknowledges that both civilian and military players are self-interested actors that respond to meaningful incentives. A second major contribution of agency theory is its ability to highlight a continuum of cooperation, anchored by the poles of working and shirking. A theory without a useful construct for exploring the middle ground risks oversimplifying the civil-military dynamic. If the only threshold of interest is a violent coup, such blinkered vision overlooks the vast trade space that informs the dynamic on a daily basis.

In light of these strengths, this thesis invoked agency theory as its structural framework, but manipulated some of its governing assumptions. First, this project recognized that the military is not a unitary actor—instead, this thesis viewed the four military services as distinct players in the civil-military arena, each wielding a unique brand of power and influence. By parsing the military into separate service components, this thesis also made room to assess the influence of each service’s unique organizational culture. While agency theory presents a rational baseline, it can accommodate cultural factors by exploring their influence on the military’s policy preferences. Consequently, this thesis seeks to enrich the civil-military literature in two ways: first, by scoping the unit of analysis to an individual service; and second, by assessing the influence of organizational culture on that service’s decision to work or shirk the civilian policy.

This concluding chapter briefly summarizes the theoretical background of the project, followed by the summary findings from its two major case studies. Subsequently, this chapter highlights areas for future research and the relevant policy implications that follow from its conclusions.

Organizational Culture

With agency theory as a backdrop, this thesis hypothesized that organizational culture plays a dominant role in shaping the policy preferences of a military service. To ground this hypothesis in existing theory, chapter three surveyed the relevant organizational literature and its application to security studies. Using Edgar Schein’s work as a foundation, chapter three stipulated a composite definition of organizational culture: *Culture is the*

prevailing personality of an organization, rooted in its collective history, enduring over time, and comprised of assumptions from which it forms a basis for future action. The literature clearly conveys that organizational culture helps individuals to make sense of their environment, serving as a heuristic to guide and constrain their thinking.¹

After the academic literature review, the following section appropriated the power of organizational culture into the military domain. To substantiate the claim that culture plays a uniquely causal role in shaping the preferences of the military services, the second section of chapter three advanced four main ideas. First, there is no single monolithic military culture—each service has its own unique culture rooted in that service’s history and adaptation to its environment. Second, given the unique parameters that govern military service, the service cultures are particularly powerful and pervasive. Culture informs the worldview of any organization, but appears to *dominate* the worldview of a military service. Third, the separate military services are power players in the US defense community, wielding considerable influence that must be acknowledged. Fourth and finally, the organizational culture of a military service shapes its core conception of how to structure, equip, and fight the nation’s wars.

The final substantive section of chapter three exported these theoretical conclusions into the kingdom of a single service: the United States Air Force. Searching the history of the Air Force for evidence of its artifacts and espoused beliefs, the chapter concluded with five basic assumptions that shape the Air Force organizational culture.

Technology-Centered -- *The Air Force exists because of technology, and its ongoing superiority is sustained by the ascendance of its technology. As the first and most important machine, the manned airplane is the building block of the force. While unmanned technologies have their place, the complexities of combat require an actual—or virtual—human presence over the battlefield.*

¹ Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 8.

Autonomously Decisive -- *The Air Force has the power to change the face of the Earth. It can do what no other service can do. To realize its true potential, the Air Force should be employed kinetically, offensively, overwhelmingly, and with minimal political interference.*

Future-Oriented -- *Technology and potential adversaries change quickly, and the Air Force must orient forward to the unknown future instead of the forgotten past. The Air Force must pursue next-generation systems today to be ready for tomorrow.*

Occupationally Loyal -- *The Air Force is an honorable and patriotic means to practice a desirable high-tech trade. Loyalties to the trade, machine, and subculture often outweigh loyalty to the institution.*

Self-Aware -- *Major combat operations are the best setting to showcase the full potential of the independent Air Force. In any other venue, the Air Force serves an essential supporting role in which it is largely taken for granted. During these times of transparent contribution, the Air Force must actively articulate its relevance to the nation and itself.*

While these five assumptions do not comprise an exhaustive list, they appear to capture the most salient elements that emerge from Air Force history and culture. This thesis then carried these assumptions forward into the case studies to explore to what degree they comported with various civilian policies. Given the working hypothesis of this paper, the thesis predicted that policies that accorded squarely with Air Force cultural assumptions would engender working, while policies at odds with these assumptions were more likely to foster shirking.

Case Studies

Chapters four and five presented substantive case studies in which the cultural assumptions of the Air Force were tested against the national policy set by civilian authorities. The first case study examined the planning period in late 1990 leading up to Operation DESERT STORM. In the early months of this period, the civilian National Command Authorities (NCA) favored an offensive strategy to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait, while military leaders like Colin Powell and Norman Schwarzkopf urged a more cautionary defensive approach.

When the civilians kept prompting Schwarzkopf for retaliatory options in the event of Iraqi atrocities, the CENTCOM commander called the Air Staff for planning assistance. Consequently, Col John Warden and his Checkmate staff crafted an offensive air campaign that targeted leadership, communication, and infrastructure targets to compel Iraqi withdrawal. Eventually, Warden's Instant Thunder plan was leavened with elements of the AirLand Battle doctrine more familiar to Central Air Forces (CENTAF) planners. As a result, the Air Force had crafted an attractive offensive option that comported soundly with the NCA's desired policy.

The resistance to that offensive option came primarily from Powell, whose own cultural assumptions about land and air power informed his professional judgment on what should be done. In fact, Powell worked hard to make sure the Air Force's offensive option did not look *too* attractive to the President and his advisors. The picture that emerges from the narrative is an offensively oriented Air Force working with the civilian's desired policy, while Powell led the rest of the military in resisting it. Through a fortuitous sequence of events, the Air Force as an institution had an opportunity to craft a campaign plan in its own image, steeped in its own cultural assumptions. The Air Force's resulting policy preference accorded closely with the civilian's desired offensive policy. This convergence of preferences, made possible by its consistency with Air Force cultural assumptions, explains the Air Force's unique posture of working amidst an otherwise-resistant military structure.

The decade that followed Operation DESERT STORM, however, was a different story. For more than 10 years, Air Force crews enforced no-fly zones over Iraq in support of Operations NORTHERN and SOUTHERN WATCH. The decisive operations of DESERT STORM faded into the long frustrations of containing the Iraqi menace. The nature of this open-ended containment policy appeared to be largely—but not purely—at odds with the Air Force's cultural assumptions. While new technologies were introduced into the fight, they were not the shimmering high-tech prizes most central to the Air Force's identity. The no-fly zone missions gave the Air Force the leading role in enforcing UN sanctions and providing security for the nation, the region, and the world; yet

those same missions were largely defensive, politically constrained, and reliant on non-heroic cruise missiles. The Air Force had primacy in the current fight, but the exhaustive nature of the commitment kept it from posturing forward for the *next* fight. Pilots were given ample opportunity to fly, but dissatisfaction with the mission and the operations tempo compelled them to ply their trade elsewhere. Finally, despite the operational rigor of constant deployments and engagements with Iraqi air defenses, airmen's efforts were largely ignored by the press and the nation at large.

The weak consistency between the policy implications and the Air Force culture spurred a variegated response from a conflicted Air Force. While senior leaders worked hard to accommodate the demands of a constabulary mission, individual airmen deploying for the fifth or sixth time could no longer abide the policy's inconsistency with their service culture. Individual resistance combined into a collective one, as the all-volunteer force volunteered to leave and altered the mission capability of the service. While the Air Force provided security for the nation and the world by containing Iraq, individual airmen responded consistently with their cultural assumptions and resisted the policy's demands.

Areas for Future Research

While this study pries open the door to assessing the cultural dimensions of civil-military relations, vast acreage remains unexplored. Moving from the specific to the general, there appear to be three general categories to which this current project points for future research. First, expanding the case study analysis for the Air Force; second, expanding the research agenda to the other three services; and third, exploring the structural changes in the civil-military domain that may alter the incentive patterns for the military services.

The most immediate and natural path for extending this current research is to assess more cases of Air Force responses to national policy.

Due to limitations of time and space, this thesis confined its analysis to two major cases. For methodological completeness, however, this work craves a third case study—one that demonstrates the Air Force clearly shirking a policy counter to its cultural assumptions. One possible case worthy of future

research would be the aircraft acquisition battles of the past 10 years. During this period, the Air Force pursued acquisition of both the F-22 Raptor and a fleet of Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) like the MQ-1 Predator. While Secretary of Defense Robert Gates pushed the Air Force to acquire and deploy more surveillance assets in theater, the leaders of the Air Force appeared more interested in acquiring the F-22. An interesting study could examine the civilian policy vis-à-vis both systems, the Air Force's own preferences, and the cultural assumptions informing those preferences. For a second possible case of shirking, the Air Force's nuclear mishandlings of 2007-2008 appear to have a rich cultural component. Future research projects could assess the dilution of nuclear culture in the Air Force from the obsessively regimented days of Strategic Air Command through its nadir in 2008. Had the nuclear mission been orphaned by the mainstream Air Force? Were exacting nuclear protocols somehow at odds with a service culture that had migrated elsewhere?

A logical extension for additional research would be an analysis of the other service cultures and their civil-military dynamics. Carl Builder's *The Masks of War* provides a useful starting point for understanding the images and cultures that shape each service. As this thesis has done for the Air Force's civil-military relationship, future research could do for the other services. What impact do their unique service cultures have on their cooperation with or resistance to national policy? A particularly interesting study could be done of the US Navy given the distinct bifurcation of its surface warfare personnel from its flyers—a distinction so acute as to merit a different color of shoes. Studying the culture of naval aviation would be especially insightful given the contrast between its parentage and its operational dynamic: does its affiliation with and origins from the surface-fleet Navy govern its culture? Or do the elitism and thrills of military aviation create cultural dynamics endemic to a flying-based culture—giving it as much commonality with the Air Force as with its parent naval service?

Lastly, there are tectonic movements in place that could be changing American civil-military relations in slow but steady ways. For example, given the 25-year seasoning period of the Goldwater-Nichols legislation, a useful study could compare the service-level civil-military dynamics before and after

that legislation. By consolidating power in the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and strengthening the authorities of the Combatant Commanders, how did the legislation alter the incentive structures of the service Chiefs? Did confining the Chiefs' statutory power to organizing, training, and equipping have any unintended consequences? Furthermore, did this legislation unknowingly reinforce the specious divide between politics and warfighting? Discussing the civil-military arrangements during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, General Tommy Franks urged, "Keep Washington focused on policy and strategy. Leave me the hell alone to run the war."² Mackubin Owens observes the dangerous legacy that Goldwater-Nichols may have left to sanction such a divide: "Of course, such an attitude is a dysfunctional consequence of the well-intentioned institutional arrangement created by Goldwater-Nichols reinforcing the idea that there is an autonomous realm of military action within which civilians have no role."³ Greater research into the civil-military implications of this foundational legislation is certainly needed.

Another tectonic plate moving slowly beneath our feet is the effect of protracted counter-insurgency operations on the respective service cultures. While organizational culture is an enduring phenomenon, it can change in discernible ways if the external environment requires different adaptive mechanisms. Have service cultures migrated at all in the past several years, and if so, what are the implications for civil-military relations? Have the government and the American people—as well as the military itself—come to believe that the US military is the only national institution that can actually accomplish something worthwhile? Does the military's effectiveness across such a wide mission set mean that it will be handed ever-greater problems outside its traditional domain?⁴

² Tommy Franks, *American Soldier* (New York: Regan Books, 2004), 688.

³ Mackubin T. Owens, "Civil-Military Relations and the U.S. Strategy Deficit," <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/201002.owens.civilmilitaryrelations.html> (accessed 11 March 2010).

⁴ These issues and questions are reminiscent of those raised in Charles Dunlap, "The Origins of the American Military Coup of 2012," *PARAMETERS, US Army War College Quarterly* Winter (1992): 2-20. Given the nature of US military operations since 2001, Dunlap's concerns appear to be increasingly relevant.

Implications

Civilian principals and military agents share a common interest in pursuing healthy civil-military relations. Grounded in democratic theory, each party benefits from knowing both what its role *should* be as well as the meaningful incentives that motivate the other. For civilian principals, this study has attempted to expose the illusion of the military as a unitary actor by highlighting the formative role of organizational culture. In the aggregate, military service members certainly share key characteristics that differentiate them from the civilian public. In the gritty sphere of policy, however, military leaders from different services are not fungible assets. Admirals have reached their position by thriving within the naval culture, while Air Force generals have grown up thinking like Airmen. The services have markedly distinct cultures that shape their perception of the national security environment.

Consequently, understanding the unique service cultures can improve the creation of viable policy, clarify communication, and help civilians anticipate where pockets of resistance or cooperation are likely to arise. Civilian authorities need not fear an imminent coup, but should recognize that policies inconsistent with the cultural assumptions of a particular service will likely engender hedging or foot-dragging from that service. As this study has shown, the organizational culture of a military service plays a dominant role in shaping its preferences, which in turn informs its calculation of working or shirking the civilian policy. In turn, these insights can foster the continued good health of American civil-military relations bequeathed by a retiring General Washington.

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