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COOPERATIVE COMPETITION: POSSIBLY OXYMORONIC BUT DEFINITELY SMART

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The ability to negotiate well is has become critically important in todays Air Force. Collaborative approaches to negotiations generally produce results superior to competitive approaches, and are receiving emphasis in Air Force professional education and deployment training. This relatively new focus, however, brings up an important issue. Will the emphasis on collaboration undermine the essential competitive martial spirit of the Air Force, or is some type of balance between competition and collaboration needed? This paper uses a problem/solution approach to research to explore this question. A study of published works demonstrates the need for both competition and collaboration in a military context, and also provides relevant case studies from negotiations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This paper supports the idea that competition and collaboration are not mutually exclusive, but that cooperative competition (as opposed to conquest competition) can provide benefits as a guiding principle in the Air Force. Cooperative competition emphasizes the joint pursuit of a goal, while conquest competition describes a destructive, zero-sum approach to problem solving. This paper also discusses the importance of power in military negotiations, which frequently involve negotiating from a position of power, but without absolute power to impose ones will. This paper concludes by recommending the inclusion of cooperatively competitive ideas in all levels of Air Force professional military education. It states specific cultural and power aspects of negotiations should be addressed prior to deployments. It further suggests the Air Force should apply cooperative competition to the promotions and performance reporting processes (as examples) to motivate through competition without encouraging destructive behavior.

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CONTENTS

Disclaimer ii
PREFACE iv
ABSTRACT v
CHAPTER 1: COLLABORATION VERSUS COMPETITION 1
CHAPTER 2: THE TREND TOWARDS COLLABORATION 3
CHAPTER 3: THE CONTINUED NEED FOR COMPETITION 12
CHAPTER 4: COLLABORATIVE COMPETITION 17
CHAPTER 5: RECCOMENDATIONS 25

PREFACE

During my study of "Negotiations as an Applied Theory" I subscribed early to the benefits of collaborative vs. competitive approaches to conflict resolution. I remembered reading, however, about elementary schools that had banned competitive sports and youth programs that refused to let children win because you can't have winners without losers - and we can't let anyone lose. I began to wonder if competition was really all that bad. Was it universally counterproductive, or was there some balance with collaboration that could still produce optimal results? What was the basis behind the expression "healthy competition" and, especially in the military, was a focus purely on collaboration constructive or even possible?

My exploration of these questions and subsequent development of this paper was due in no small part to the insights and suggestions of Dr. Stefan Eisen and Dr. Kimberly Hudson of the Air Force Negotiations Center of Excellence. Both of these individuals provided significant guidance during the research process, asked provocative questions which led to critical conclusions, and provided constructive feedback during the editing process. This paper would have no doubt proven impossible without their guidance. I would also like to thank Mr. Phil Deavel, whose sponsorship of this topic provided me the motivation of personal interest during my exploration.

ABSTRACT

The ability to negotiate well is has become critically important in today's Air Force. Collaborative approaches to negotiations generally produce results superior to competitive approaches, and are receiving emphasis in Air Force professional education and deployment training. This relatively new focus, however, brings up an important issue. Will the emphasis on collaboration undermine the essential competitive martial spirit of the Air Force, or is some type of balance between competition and collaboration needed? This paper uses a problem/solution approach to research to explore this question.

A study of published works demonstrates the need for both competition and collaboration in a military context, and also provides relevant case studies from negotiations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This paper supports the idea that competition and collaboration are not mutually exclusive, but that cooperative competition (as opposed to conquest competition) can provide benefits as a guiding principle in the Air Force. Cooperative competition emphasizes the joint pursuit of a goal, while conquest competition describes a destructive, zero-sum approach to problem solving. This paper also discusses the importance of power in military negotiations, which frequently involve negotiating from a position of power, but without absolute power to impose one's will.

This paper concludes by recommending the inclusion of cooperatively competitive ideas in all levels of Air Force professional military education. It states specific cultural and power aspects of negotiations should be addressed prior to deployments. It further suggests the Air Force should apply cooperative competition to the promotions and performance reporting processes (as examples) to motivate through competition without encouraging destructive behavior.

CHAPTER 1: COLLABORATION VERSUS COMPETITION

"Joint" is the buzzword de jour for planners of military operations. Joint Publication 1-02 defines this term as pertaining to "activities, operations, organizations, etc., in which two or more military departments participate."[1] Senior leaders seek to further the perception that service branches working together or with other government agencies and multinational partners can achieve greater results than they previously could through solitary efforts. Joint planning regulations address these ideas, stating "[Joint Forces Commanders] and their staffs must consider how the capabilities of the agencies or other nongovernmental organizations can be leveraged to assist in accomplishing military missions and the broader national strategic objectives."[2] "Joint entails collaboration.

Collaboration has been defined as "using information, divergent insights, and spontaneity to solve problems and develop new understandings or new products."[3] Proponents have further suggested, "Collaboration harvests its benefits from differences in perspective, knowledge and approaches, solving problems while at the same time offering benefits to all those involved in the process."[4] From a military perspective, collaboration offers promise as a method of conflict resolution, and military leaders have mandated inclusion of collaborative lessons in various levels of Professional Military Education (PME) programs. These lessons, in the form of interest-based negotiations training, allow developing military officers to view conflicts as complex issues which, correctly understood and approached, can result in gains for all involved parties.

If collaborative negotiation potentially provides an optimal outcome for all participants, competitive negotiation does not. Competitive negotiators "see the negotiating process as a zero-sum game in which a limited number of bargaining chips are to be won – and they want to be the

winners."[5] A purely competitive approach to problem solving considers only self-interests and gives no consideration to the needs or wants of adversaries. Frank Fitch and Greg Loving refer to this as "conquest competition" which "does not presuppose any rules, standards of fair play, or prearranged agreements. It is essentially another name for unrestrained aggression or all out warfare."[6]

From a societal perspective, the maximum joint gains provided by collaboration seem obviously superior to the limited, one-sided benefits of competition. Contextually, however, specifically from a military point of view, does this observation hold true? Should the military promote collaboration over competition, or does the fundamental nature of the military require an adherence to a more competitive spirit? Can officers be taught the value of collaboration, and subsequently design and execute plans to dominate against an adversary? From the military standpoint, do competition and collaboration mutually exclude one another, or does some type of middle ground exist?

Using the United States military and the Air Force specifically as examples, this paper will analyze both the collaborative and competitive approaches. Exploration of additional anthropological theories will suggest ways to balance these two methods of resolution. Finally, suggested changes to current military doctrine, policies, and philosophies will be provided to obtain the maximum benefit from both competition and collaboration.

CHAPTER 2: THE TREND TOWARDS COLLABORATION

Generally, resolutions created through interaction of multiple parties tend to possess superior characteristics than those proposed by a sole entity.[7] Joint resolutions will typically create longer-lasting, more satisfactory end-states, but will require constructive negotiations between all involved parties to craft these results. For this reason, it is suggested that institutions and organizations show an increasing interest in bettering the negotiation skills of their members because of the increased efficiency and improved results they will experience in their problem solving processes.

Adherence to collaborative ideas, however, may require a departure from established behaviors. "The dominant socio-economic paradigm, based on neo-liberalism, has led to individualistic behaviors becoming increasingly pervasive in today's societies, particularly those of high-income countries. Individualistic behaviors are inherent to the *Homo oeconomicus,* the cognomen given to human beings that are greedy and self-interested, base their decisions purely on rationality, have an insatiable wish to accumulate material resources and attempt to maximize their utility while minimizing their costs."[8] Collaborative thinking involves defining self-interests as well as the interests of all other involved parties, so that each party involved can hypothetically reap a greater result than if each pursued a purely self-involved approach. This concept assumes the negotiated scenarios are not zero-sum games (where one party gains, and another loses an equal amount for a net sum of zero) but rather allow for gains of all parties minus losses of all parties to be greater than zero. This idea is exemplified through the prisoner's dilemma.[9]

Under this hypothesis, the police have arrested two individuals for the same crime. The suspects are held separately with no opportunity for communication and are each offered the

same deal. If both confess to the crime, they receive 5 years each of jail time. If one confesses and the other denies, the one who confesses goes free and the one who denies serves 10 years. If both deny, both receive 6 months. Obviously, denial by both prisoners yields the best collective result, but if each individual, motivated by personal greed or fear of the other's potential choice, chooses to confess, the result for both is far worse.

The Stag-Hunt game[10] further demonstrates the greater net benefit of collaborative approaches. In this scenario, members of a village or tribe must all work together to surround a stag. If all of the villagers maintain their positions, there exists a very high probability (but not a guarantee) of capture, which will provide sufficient food for everyone in the village. If, however, any individual abandons the effort to catch a rabbit, which will feed only their own family but is guaranteed, the collective effort will fail. Like the prisoner's dilemma, this scenario illustrates the need for trust among collaborators, or at least the belief that all involved parties will support the common good when the rewards of doing so outweigh the risks to individual self interests.

Leaders in the study of negotiation have published separate but similar ideas concerning styles of negotiation. Roger Fisher and William Ury define these styles as hard, soft, and principled. Hard negotiators view other participants as adversaries, demand concessions and one-sided gains, make threats, mislead, dig in to their positions, and strive for victory in a contest of wills. Soft negotiators see participants as friends, make concessions and accept one-sided losses to cultivate the relationship, make offers, demonstrate full disclosure, offer flexibility of position, and seek to avoid a contest of will to reach agreement. Principled negotiators see participants as problem solvers, separate the people from the problem, invent options for mutual

gain, explore interests, avoid bottom lines, focus on interests (rather than positions), and try to reach a wise, amicable outcome based on standards independent of will.[11]

J. William Breslin and Jeffrey Z. Rubin employ different terminology to describe similar relationships. Their description of competition correlates to the hard style of Fisher and Ury, while cooperation employs many of the aspects of soft negotiation. Breslin and Rubin suggest a third method, enlightened self-interest, which focuses on individual gain, but allows that the other party does the same. "I do not have to like you to negotiate wisely with you. Nor do I have to be driven by a passion of competitive desire to beat you. All that is necessary is for me to find some way of getting what I want – perhaps even *more* than I considered possible – by leaving the door open for you to do well. 'Trust' and 'trustworthiness,' concepts central to the development of cooperation, are no longer necessary – only the understanding of what the other person may want or need."[12] Collaboration can provide this understanding of the other party's needs.

The hypothetical example of two sisters fighting over an orange[13] illustrates the idea of enlightened self-interest. If the sisters split the orange in half, this decision is fair. If they explore the matter further, however, they determine that one will discard the peel and consume the fruit, while the other wishes to use only the peel to bake a cake. If the sisters understand each other's interest (why they want the orange) rather than their position (they each want the whole orange) they can both achieve maximum gains.

Stephen Cohen divides negotiation into the categories of competitive and cooperative. His defines cooperative as "interest-based negotiation"[14] with a definition sharing essential aspects of Breslin and Rubin's enlightened self-interest and Fisher and Ury's principled negotiation. The ideas that each of these experts present as the most effective way to conduct

negotiations involve collaboration to determine the interests of all involved parties. This avoids zero-sum situations and achieves gains for all participants. Because collaborative negotiations should result in more acceptable terms for all involved, the negotiated agreements have a better chance of lasting, and relationships between parties should promote further interaction.

Collaborative approaches to problem solving involve preparation to identify self-interests as well as those of other involved parties. This preparation also includes cultural considerations, which play an especially important role in military negotiations and conflict resolution. Different cultures solve problems through diverse methods, and place different values on the various aspects of the resolution process. While western culture may emphasize expedience and the end result, others might place a higher priority on the relationship established through the process, or the process itself. Cohen writes, "In many Middle Eastern countries, haggling is an art. If your negotiation style is cut to the chase, you may be depriving your counterpart of some of the joy he is looking for in the negotiations process. Both Japan and Finland, on the other hand, are generally characterized as places where the negotiation style includes a lot of silence and eyes that won't meet yours."[15]

The United States Air Force has recognized the advantages of collaborative negotiation as a problem solving/conflict resolution tool. Air Force officers are introduced to these ideas as second lieutenants during the Air and Space Basic course, the most elementary level of Air Force professional military education (PME) for commissioned personnel. Additionally the Air Force is currently considering adding curriculum covering collaborative negotiations to the next level of PME, the Squadron Officer College. Intermediate and senior-level PME both offer a course in negotiations as an elective course, and the Air Force has established the Negotiations Center of Excellence at Maxwell AFB, AL.

This emphasis provides Air Force officers with improved skills to mediate disputes, negotiate contracts, and resolve disagreements. Whether they deal with intra or inter-service issues, other agencies or organizations, or foreign government, military or civilian personnel, these officers can better define the interests of all involved, separate these interests from positions or emotions, and address potential cultural differences. Ideally, these interest-based negotiation and collaboration skills will result in better solutions both within the Air Force and with external partners, while helping leaders build better long-term collaborative relationships.

Increasing numbers of joint expeditionary (formerly in-lieu-of) taskings, which use Air Force personnel to fill US Army and Marine vacancies in Iraq and Afghanistan, provide Air Force officers expanding opportunities to employ their negotiation skills. Frequently assigned to positions outside their Air Force career fields, these personnel deploy to forward ground locations and interact on a daily basis with native Iraqis and Afghanis. According to Brigadier General Marke Gibson in his testimony before the House Armed Service Committee in July of 2007, 23 percent of deployed Air Force personnel were filling (at that time) in-lieu-of taskings, with the number expected to rise.[16] The terminology change to joint expeditionary tasking confirms the Air Force's continuing dedication to this mission, and emphasizes the importance of continuing training in negotiations for its members.

David Tressler, a US Army Reserve Officer, conducted a study on military negotiations for the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School in 2007. Tressler states, "As long as US troops operate under conditions like the ones they currently face while at the same time conducting a counterinsurgency and stability, security, transition, and reconstruction (SSTR) operation in Iraq, negotiation will be a common activity and an important part of achieving mission objectives."[17] Tressler strongly advocates improvements to the negotiations training

curriculum for deploying troops, suggesting that the successes or failures of the numerous negotiations conducted by these personnel cumulatively contribute to operational and even strategic success.[18]

Tressler argues that poor negotiations can detrimentally influence US efforts in Iraq by harming fragile relations with civilian leaders, causing formerly neutral civilians to become enemies. As a net effect, badly conducted negotiations not only do not resolve the original issues requiring negotiation, but they also lead to additional conflicts. Effective negotiations, in contrast, address Iraqi interests and result in completed US objectives. This in turn creates and strengthens ties between US forces and Iraqi representatives and promotes greater Iraqi public support for SSTR operations.[19]

Examining specific scenarios in Iraq, Tressler notes, "Negotiations are sometimes the last chance to prevent some situations from turning lethal and to solve problems in a way that poses less risk of losing American lives or creating more enemies than the tactical objective is worth."[20] He also adds that current conditions in Iraq and Afghanistan have created an environment where negotiations often may be the principal method employed in pursuit of tactical and operational goals.[21] Recognition of these benefits has resulted in inclusion of negotiations training to pre-deployment exercises at the Army's National Training center (NTC), where Army and Marine personnel can experience realistic scenarios prior to deploying to the Middle East. Tressler writes, "Due to the US military's increasing awareness of the importance of nonlethal operations, including negotiations, the Army's combat training centers (CTCs) have adapted their curriculum to include emphasis on such civil-military interactions."[22]

While this focus on non-kinetic operations represents a step in the right direction, Tressler argues that training at the NTC addresses the value of negotiation skills, but does not

emphasize enough an interest-based or collaborative approach. He proposes the addition of a three day course on negotiations to the NTC curriculum including case studies that focus on "the parties' interests, options for both parties, obstacles to negotiated agreement, the negotiator's desired end state and priorities, the relationships involved, the parties' alternatives, and other issues."[23] As an additional component of this course, instructors should emphasize "proven negotiation techniques such as listening, asking questions, redirecting discussions away from power-based or adversarial communications, and avoiding reciprocation of threats."[24] According to Tressler, military personnel need these skills, not only to operate more effectively in a medium of increasing importance, but also to prevent unintentional negative mission impact. As long as the military conducts SSTR operations, personnel will find themselves in positions requiring negotiations skills. Failure to adequately provide these skills can result in or contribute to mission collapse.[25]

Military awareness of the value of effective negotiations continues to grow, and even hard-line rhetoric has crumbled as leaders realize the effectiveness of collaborative negotiations as potentially more efficient means of resolving conflict. Statements issued by the White House in late September of 2001 defining a strict policy of non-negotiation with the Taliban[26] no longer represent the stance of coalition leadership in Afghanistan. US Army General David Petraeus suggested a new approach during an interview in October, 2008. According to General Petraeus, "negotiations with insurgents willing to consider reconciliation could reduce violence by isolating hard-core militants."[27]

Though the value of collaborative negotiations with foreign civilian and even potential enemies cannot be denied, the need for collaborative efforts with intra-governmental (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) further demonstrates the importance of solid

negotiating skills. US Department of Defense Joint Publication 5-0 states that military involvement in "complex security challenges" (like SSTR) will dictate integration of specific capabilities from NGOs, IGOs, and foreign government organizations.[28] This publication further provides, "Some of the organizations or agencies that become involved in contingency or stability operations will have different goals, capabilities, limitations (such as policy and resource restraints), standards, and operational philosophies. Despite these differences, the interagency process must bring together the capabilities of disparate organizations in the pursuit of National Security objectives; success can only be achieved through close interagency coordination and cooperation."[29] Undoubtedly, the use of interest-based collaborative negotiations would define both the needs and desires of each involved organization, and would balance the capabilities and limitations of each against the others while uniting all behind a universally supported goal.

Joint Publication 5-0 expands on the need for collaborative interagency coordination, and proposes establishing a joint interagency coordination group (JIACG) during joint operations. "The JIACG, an element of the [commander's] staff, is an interagency staff group that establishes regular, timely, and collaborative working relationships between civilian and military operational planners."[30] The JIACG is basically a mechanism to enable interest based negotiations between the military and other organizations involved in a security, contingency, or crisis-action operation. The members of the JIACG "provide a collaborative conduit back to their parent organizations to help synchronize joint operations with the efforts of non-military operations."[31]

Clearly, interest based, collaborative negotiations can provide efficient and effective results in military environments. Though this method of problem solving may require a shift

from the "rational actor" model of human behavior, the potential benefits provide strong support for this approach. Military personnel involved in SSTR operations in Iraq and Afghanistan need negotiation skills to accomplish non-kinetic mission objectives, which have cumulative operational and even strategic results. Additionally, personnel involved in joint environments need these same skills to facilitate and synchronize the efforts and skills of all involved agencies and organizations, despite the different priorities, capabilities, limitations, and perspective that characterize each.

CHAPTER 3: THE CONTINUED NEED FOR COMPETITION

> Give Americans good healthy competition and they can accomplish just about anything.
> -Lieutenant General William H. Tunner, "Over the Hump."

Competition plays an integral role in both the psychology and routine operations of the US military. Fundamentally, the purpose of the military is to compete with opposition forces, until one party's resources or capabilities are diminished to the point that they submit to the will of the other. A strong military can also serve to deter attack by convincing potential aggressors that they could not effectively compete on the field of battle, and would only exhaust their own resources in any attempts to do so. Wars are generally not referred to as "concluded" or "having reached agreement" but rather "won" or "lost." It is the job of the military to compete to win wars.

In his 2002 article "Power and Weakness" Robert Kagan suggests Americans view the context of foreign policy as a "Hobbesian world where power is the ultimate determinant of national security and success."[32] Based on this perception, the American approach to international politics favors coercion over persuasion, and prefers sanctions over inducements.[33] These ideas have contributed towards a unilateralist mindset, disdain of international laws, and minimal cooperation with other nations or international institutions.[34] If competition and collaboration mutually exclude one another, then the perspective described by Kagan certainly supports a more competitive approach as it seeks to avoid cooperation except when absolutely necessary.

According to the classical Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz, war is an extension of policy by other means.[35] If the policy is one of competition, then the military must embrace this or at least understand it in order to successfully achieve objectives aligned with the

continuation of policy. As long as civilian leaders require the military to dominate over adversaries to coerce them into submission, then strategic competition will remain of critical importance to the military mission.

Competition positively contributes to the military at multiple levels. The individual military member receives performance feedback in terms of a set of standards, but also often in terms of where she or he ranks among a peer group. Sanctioned competitions in the Air Force identify which individuals can best perform athletic tasks, who has the most knowledge of subject matter, or who can land an airplane or fire a weapon with the most accuracy. These competitions provide incentive for individuals to excel through recognition of those that do so. Ultimately, as the individuals improve and become more capable than before, their organization improves and becomes more capable. Competition at the individual level results in improvements at each higher level.

Lieutenant William H. Tunner advocated competition as a motivational tool during his command of airlift operations in the China India Burma theater of World War II, and later during the Berlin Airlift. Tunner discovered that his personnel took pride in their accomplishments when he recognized them as having surpassed all others, but that if he suggested someone else had provided better results, his men demonstrated even more resolve to compete for the lead.[36] He wrote “If only I could harness this sense of competition, I thought, make it work for the entire operation. I have found over the years that American soldiers and airmen thrive on competition.”[37] Tunner organized competitions between his bases to focus this motivational energy, and gradually but significantly increased the tonnage of cargo safely delivered by each. While the competition produced more effort from Tunner’s men, it ultimately resulted in greater

success by moving personnel and cargo more rapidly and in greater quantities to contribute to the war effort.

When assigned to command the Berlin Airlift in 1948, Tunner again instituted competition to achieve greater results. Facing morale problems and an almost intangible threat, Tunner needed a motivational force. "We had no enemy to keep us on our toes, and although the man knew the cargo we were flying into Berlin kept the city alive, it was hard to keep this fact constantly uppermost in everyone's mind, particularly if he never got within a hundred miles of Berlin. The answer was to set up competition between the units flying the lift."[38] Tunner knew that men would exhaust themselves during specific periods of competition, and could not maintain that pace indefinitely, but he also understood that production after a competition, while less than during competition, always increased from production before the competition.[39]

The success of Tunner's competitions during the Berlin Airlift culminated on Easter Sunday of 1949. The contest he organized on that day produced a record amount of cargo tonnage and demonstrated the American capability to overcome the Soviet blockade of Berlin through Airpower. "It was that day, that Easter Sunday, I'm sure, that broke the back of the Berlin Blockade. From then on we never fell below nine thousand tons a day; the land blockade was pointless."[40]

Everett C. Dolman provides a similar argument in his book "Astropolitik." While Tunner artificially introduced competition to his operations in order to improve them, Dolman emphasizes the value of natural competition inherent in the Cold War and especially the space race. Dolman states "Arguably, without the competition in space engendered by Cold War rivalry and geopolitical dictums, the world might still be in the space-flight development stage."[41] He further proposes that the establishment of current space policies came about not

through a harmonious accord of countries seeking to explore space cooperatively, but rather because the states sought to prevent domination of space by any rivals.[42]

Dolman states that the rapid development and technological breakthroughs of the space program during the Cold War lost momentum due to the barriers to competition from space laws, and the loss of the Soviet Union as a competitor. He expands on this idea, stating "Without the re-establishment of a competitive, widely-embraced, and recognizably astropolitical space regime (one that encourages space exploration on the basis of competition without confrontation), future growth in outer-space exploration is likely to be stunted."[43] Dolman would likely agree with the philosophy of the X Prize foundation, which creates competitions with monetary prizes to encourage technological development. In October 0f 2004, the X Prize foundation awarded the Ansari X Prize of 10 million dollars for the first successful private spaceflight, and the foundation is currently sponsoring competitions to develop vehicles with greater fuel efficiency and alternative energy sources.[44]

Competition often drives military innovation, and as technological advancements create new weapons and domains for combat, the military must adapt to efficiently employ these weapons and operate in these new environments. More importantly, US forces must provide defenses against these same new technologies, as many are universally available. Former Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig summarized these ideas, stating "The greatest temptations and opportunities to compete with [the US] will arise if another nation is more adept than we are at absorbing powerful and rapid technological innovations."[45] Though the purpose of the US armed forces is to achieve military victories, by achieving and maintaining dominant capabilities in the newest and most technologically advanced arenas, the military can avoid and deter confrontation by denying enemies any advantageous means with which to attack.

The military also employs competition as a motivator. Joseph Bainbridge, an instructor at the Army Logistics Management College, suggests group identity strongly impacts military effectiveness, and competition plays a major role in shaping this identity.[46] He suggests that military members do not serve for causes or incentives, but rather “They fight to survive, for a leader they know and are committed to, and for their fellow soldiers to whom they are bonded by common circumstance.[47] Military training emphasizes the shaping and development of this group identity through designed competition, and competition against an enemy of the field of battle further solidifies the relationship.

Bainbridge identifies a key point with the idea that competition drives group identity. Though competition in this case is critical to provide cohesion, it is not the zero-sum conquest competition considered to be the polar opposite of collaboration. Like the examples provided by Tunner and the X Prize foundation, the competition described by Bainbridge involves joint participation in pursuit of a greater goal. In essence, these examples demonstrate a collaborative approach to competition. For multiple reasons, competition is a critical aspect of military society, but emphasis of competition does not necessarily exclude collaborative efforts.

CHAPTER 4: COLLABORATIVE COMPETITION

In his book *In Search of the Warrior Spirit* Richard Heckler details a six month period during which he introduced Army Special Operations soldiers to the Japanese martial art of Aikido. Aikido focuses on blending with the energy and movement of the opponent to achieve desired effects, rather than a directly confrontational approach. The soldiers receiving the training represented the Army elite. These men had competed intensely to join the Green Berets, and were accustomed to direct approaches to combat and conflict resolution. In essence, Heckler attempted to teach collaborative concepts (working in harmony with the energy of the opponent) to individuals whose normal approach to problems included direct competition.

Heckler's instruction included not only the skills of the martial art, but also the accompanying philosophies, which, like Aikido, emphasized a collaborative approach over a competitive one when approaching problems or resolving conflicts. These philosophies encouraged indirect, non-violent methods of blending with the momentum of the situation rather than direct, head-on confrontation. The challenge for Heckler was to convince these successful and efficient soldiers to accept these new, radically different ideas. He experienced mixed results. Some soldiers embraced the philosophy and the art and incorporated them into all aspects of their lives. Others expressed frustration and confusion and asserted the time would have been better spent on traditional military training.[48]

Heckler's account of events by no means provides conclusive results, but does bring into question whether or not emphasis of collaboration in a military environment can potentially undermine the martial competitive spirit of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. Heckler observes as the soldiers attempt to deal with this conflict. He asks, "How can they identify with the retaliative mentality of the modern military if they begin to blend with conflictive situations

instead of fighting against them? Isn't aggression (firepower) the only sanctioned strategy for winning a fight? If we blend with an aggressor won't that make us subordinate to them?"[49] Though Heckler's Aikido training took place in 1985, his questions remain valid today.

Unlike Heckler, today's Air Force, and the military in general, is not asking officers to change their own personal philosophies. Instruction on the use of collaborative techniques emphasizes their utility in more efficiently accomplishing objectives. The logic of application of these techniques to military situations can easily be grasped. Specific and relevant examples of the successful use of collaboration in Iraq and Afghanistan provide further emphasis of its value. While competitive approaches can be applicable and provide positive results, collaborative approaches must be considered as well. The military must promote both approaches, but without having one contradict the other.

Avoidance of this contradiction is possible by discounting the assumption that collaboration and contradiction must mutually exclude one another. Frank Fitch and Greg Loving of the University of Cincinnati support this idea. They write "[competition and cooperation] are not a dichotomy, but mutually necessary in both society at large and in the practice of education."[50] They further argue that comprehension of this concept begins "with a critical rejection of both anthropological and economic theories which claim competition to be the main driving force in human development."[51]

Fitch and Loving propose a more dissected definition of competition, and suggest that two types exist; conquest competition and cooperative competition.[52] Conquest competition defines the previously described zero-sum concept. "It is essentially another name for unrestrained aggression or all out warfare."[53] In contrast, cooperative competition implies some sort of joint effort in pursuit of a goal, with established "rules, procedures, and standards of fair

play."[54] This cooperative competition definition provides a better description of the type of competition used by the military to shape group identities, motivate individuals and groups, and facilitate innovation and efficiency. While the military must maintain a capability for conquest competition, cooperative competition combines individual or group efforts to benefit a larger population.

Fitch and Loving refute the perspectives that support the fundamentally competitive characteristics of humans. They submit that accepted theories combine Darwinist and Hobbesian views to suggest that "competition and warfare serve the grand selective function which ensures that only the 'fittest' individuals and groups survive, evolve, and progress."[55] Fitch and Loving argue that recent anthropological studies have concluded cooperation and facilitation have contributed at least as much in evolutionary history as have competition and warfare.[56] Anthropologist Agustin Fuentes writes "There is no doubt that the potential for aggressive conflict in a variety of forms is present in humans, but such evidence also indicated that intergroup competition may not be a fundamental adaptive characteristic in human history."[57]

Fuentes does support the idea of cooperation as a fundamental characteristic, stating "cooperation within groups was, and is, an important aspect of human behavior in societies."[58] He also believes that the commonly accepted relationship between competition and cooperation must be redefined. He writes "We need to retheorize both competition and cooperation in ways that move beyond dichotomous thinking."[59] Fuentes, like Fitch and Loving, suggests that cooperation (or collaboration) and competition need not automatically mutually exclude one another, and that a hybrid of the two can more accurately demonstrate fundamental human nature.

Fitch and Loving propose that the use of power differentiates cooperative from conquest competition. Any relationship will include dominant and subordinate parties, and the dominant party's or parties' employment of power will determine whether the outcome is destructive (conquest competition) or transformative (cooperative competition).[60] "When power differentials are used to reinforce division and domination, they are destructive. When they seek mutual benefit even within a competitive environment, they are transformative."[61] The dichotomy exists not between competition and cooperation, but rather between conquest competition and cooperative competition.[62]

Tressler examines this power differential in negotiations between US soldiers and Iraqi civilians. He notes that the dominant role of the soldier, provided by the US occupation, plays a significant factor in interactions with Iraqis.[63] He counters this point, however, with the observation that "This power is far from absolute, a reality that complicates the relationships between US military and Iraqi military and civilian leaders. This is why so many military-civilian interactions in Iraq are negotiations, instead of one-way communications." The use of power in negotiations is not a yes/no decision between cooperation and conquest, but it is a factor that can influence, both positively and negatively, the outcome of the negotiations.[64] In Iraq, soldiers commonly found themselves negotiating from positions of power, but were unable to simply impose their wills. The situations they experienced could easily translate to negations between individuals of different rank or social position. The context of the negotiations may influence power, or the power of the involved parties may determine the context. Regardless, due to its potential influence, the role of power in negotiations must be considered.

As Tressler's examination focuses on Iraq and Afghanistan, he assumes the US military member will occupy the dominant role in interactions with foreign military and civilian

representatives. He suggests that the use of power can be effective in these negotiations, but that the dominant player should "exercise their negotiating power wisely" to achieve optimal results.[65] The US military member should approach the interaction with an interest-based strategy, and should maintain this interest-based approach in concert with any applications of power deemed necessary during the negotiations.[66]

An additional concept that relates directly to the application of power in negotiations is the best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA).[67] The BATNA defines a personally reflective best-case scenario should negotiations fail to produce a joint agreement. The strength of one party's BATNA compared to the strength of another's, or the party's ability to convince the adversary of the relative strength of their BATNA, can greatly influence the distribution of power during a negotiation.[68] Military negotiators must perform an analysis to determine the BATNA of all involved parties prior to any actual negotiations in order to attempt to estimate how the distribution of power might influence the interactions.

Numerous factors, such as wealth, social influence, governmental authority, and others can further influence the distribution of power, and an understanding of these factors is requisite for the US military member conducting negotiations. The member must remain aware, however, that comprehension of power and application of power mean different things. Application of power can shift the focus of negotiations from interests to power itself, and can result in a competition for domination rather than a collaboration.[69] "A negotiator who focuses on power in a negotiation is more likely to create new disputes and leave open opportunities (and motives) for revenge."[70] In contrast, comprehension of power can prepare the negotiator should an adversary become coercive. Comprehension is also essential because the existence of power in

military negotiations is almost unavoidable, so military members must be prepared to adjust accordingly.

Tressler proposes two generalizations regarding the use of power in negotiations between US military representatives and Iraqi civilians. Though he refers to a specific context, these generalizations would apply to a broad number of military negotiating scenarios. His first generalization is that US military forces "continue to have (though in changing forms) overwhelming coercive power of one kind – the application or threat of direct military force, including lethal force, arrest, detention, raids, and searches – by obvious virtue of the control that comes with its military control of Iraq and its superior military capability."[71] Whether the military makes any direct reference to this power or not, it is implied by their uniform, rank, weapons, vehicles, or other martial references. US personnel in negotiations are not individuals, they are the US military, and all that it represents.

Tressler's second generalization is that "the US military operates under a number of structural, political, and organizational constraints that necessarily restrain its use of military power."[72] While the coercive power of the military is more universal, the constraints placed upon it are significantly more context-dependent.[73] Nevertheless, some restrictions to the application of force will likely exist in any military negotiations scenario, so negotiators must determine these restrictions and their effects on the distribution of power.

Though Tressler's research addresses low-level, tactical negotiations, the idea of cooperative competition as opposed to conquest competition addresses military objectives at the highest levels as well. Conquest competition's domination of the adversary rarely relates to the desired end state of modern US military operations or the foreign policy of liberal democracies. This approach could potentially result in colonization, or even genocide or enslavement of an

enemy population. The transformation of an adversary provided through cooperative competition more accurately describes the goal of policies advocating military force. While the interests of the US receive the highest priority, addressing the interests of the adversary can result in a more acceptable and enduring resolution.

The benefits of cooperative competition are evident at other levels as well. Competition for individual promotion or recognition can facilitate direct and indirect organizational improvement, but the underlying idea that the competition's primary purpose is to strengthen the capabilities of the entire organization must be understood by all participating individuals. If a party chooses to compete by handicapping or disabling another party, rather than strengthening itself, this destructive behavior will detrimentally impact the organization, negating the intent that created the competition in the first place.

The competition for budgetary allotments can easily be interpreted by military members involved in the process as a zero-sum scenario.[74] This example, however, provides further support for the concept of cooperative competition. Because the military must continue to function within the constraints of finite (and often shrinking) resources, advocates for allocation of these resources must focus on sustainability rather than one-time interactions. Competitors for resources cannot simply focus on their own immediate objectives, but must also consider short, intermediate, and long-term requirements at all organizational levels. While competitors will still assign highest priority to their own needs, they must realize their competitors' goals support the overall organization as well. Any accommodation that can be made towards other parties' interests will provide benefits for all. Instead of a win/lose mentality, these military members should approach each competition with a win/maximize perspective.[75]

Collaborative competition provides a balance which can combine the symbiotic benefits of idealistic collaboration with the motivation and innovation of competition. Pure collaboration can result in efficient and lasting conflict resolution and problem solving, but requires that all parties involved align their efforts to result in the greatest good for all, regardless of individual interests, and is therefore seldom possible in a military environment driven by national interests. Pure competition, on the other hand, can serve as a motivational force and can fuel the evolution of ideas, but can promote destructive behaviors and ultimately undermine the progress of a group or organization. Collaborative competition employs aspects of both to maximize benefits and minimize losses, creating an approach to problem solving and conflict resolution which could be effectively applied to military operations.

CHAPTER 5: RECCOMENDATIONS

Because it provides a method of delivery for military force, the US Air Force must remain competitive. It must maintain the ability to dominate potential US adversaries, while encouraging motivation of and innovation by its personnel. At the same time, the Air Force should continue the promotion of collaboration. It can emphasize the advantages in an interest-based approach to problem solving and teach its officers to resolve conflict in ways that attempt to provide some gain to all involved parties. Collaboration will also be required in any future operations that mirror current SSTR operations. Though competition and collaboration may initially seem disparate, cooperative competition can provide the means for the Air Force to achieve its goals without contradicting itself.

Many aspects of the Air Force already fit the model of cooperative competition, but some philosophies will need to change. Processes encouraging competition between individuals, such as the feedback mechanism of individual performance reports, should be modified to reflect the measure of an individual's accomplishments against previous accomplishments, rather than against the accomplishments of peers. Joseph Bainbridge suggests "an evaluation system based on efficient and effective advancement of Department of Defense initiatives."[76] Such a change would retain the motivational aspects of competition, but would eliminate the potentially destructive aspects of individual competition within a group working towards a common goal.

Some processes do not encourage enough competition. The Air Force promotion system, as one example, should be made more competitive. Officers within the Air Force generally experience no real competition for promotion prior to their consideration for Lieutenant Colonel, which usually occurs after their twelfth year in service. In his article *The Motivation of Excellence*, Dr. David Korten notes, "In the Air Force it [advancement] appears to have little

potency [as a motivator] basically because at the lower ranks advancement is determined primarily by time in service and not how well an individual performs his job … If the Air Force is to reap the motivational benefits of this factor, it must permit the individual to perceive the relationship between advancement and his achievements and recognize advancement as a sign of growth on his job and within the organization."[77]

A cooperatively competitive approach to promotions would establish preset, standardized criteria to measure individuals against in the determination of whether or not to promote. Because federal laws dictate the number of personnel authorized at each rank, the selection criteria would be adjusted periodically in attempt to synchronize the number of qualified candidates with available numbers of positions. If more personnel meet the criteria than can legally be promoted, an additional standard of measurement (seniority, for example) would determine a promotion order, with those at the lower end receiving their promotion automatically as soon as a slot becomes available. If the number of positions available exceeds the number of personnel meeting the criteria, then some positions must go unfilled until the next promotion cycle. Though the demand for qualified personnel at higher levels may be great, military leaders should resist any urge to promote candidates who have not met the established criteria simply because an opening exists.

Though changes like the previous examples might be implemented by key Air Force leaders convinced of the benefits, cooperative competition needs more widespread approval to provide the maximum benefit. This can only be achieved through greater educational efforts. The Air Force should consider the inclusion of cooperative competition in the academic curricula of all PME programs. The general benefits of an interest-based approach should be introduced during enlisted basic training and through officer commissioning sources, and should be built

upon during subsequent in-residence or correspondence courses. Contextual considerations, such as culture and power, should be addressed during training for deployments to specific regions. By introducing and emphasizing the ideas of cooperative competition to every member of the Air Force, interactions both internal and external to the Air Force by these members will demonstrate superior results.

Cooperative competition may initially sound oxymoronic, but in reality it offers the Air Force a better way to operate. By introducing its personnel to this concept at the first opportunity, and re-visiting the benefits of this approach to conflict resolution during subsequent opportunities in their career development, the Air Force can disseminate cooperative competition among its junior leaders and eventually its senior decision makers. As its members become more effective communicators, negotiators, and problem solvers, the Air Force will become institutionally more efficient and effective whenever and wherever those skill sets are involved.

[1] Department of Defense, “Joint Publication 1-02”, 285
[2] Department of Defense, “Joint Operational Planning”, xii
[3] Denise, “Collaboration vs. C-Three”
[4] Lozano, “Collaboration as a Pathway for Sustainability”, 2
[5] Cohen, “Negotiating Skills for Managers”, 5
[6] Fitch and Loving, “Competition and Cooperation”, 84
[7] Chrislip and Larson, “Collaborative Leadership”, 14
[8] Lozano, “Collaboration as a Pathway for Sustainability”, 370
[9] Lozano, “Collaboration as a Pathway for Sustainability”, 374
[10] Sanchez, Cuesta and Roca, “Altruistic Behavior Pays”, 146
[11] Fisher and Ury, “Getting to Yes”, 13
[12] Breslin and Rubin, “Negotiation Theory and Practice”, 4
[13] Cohen, “Negotiating Skills for Managers”, 19
[14] Cohen, “Negotiating Skills for Managers”, 5
[15] Cohen, “Negotiating Skills for Managers”, 129-130
[16] House, “Presentation to the Subcommittee on Readiness”, 4
[17] Tressler, “Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment”, vii
[18] Tressler, “Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment”, vii
[19] Tressler, “Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment”, 9
[20] Tressler, “Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment”, 4
[21] Tressler, “Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment”, 4
[22] Tressler, “Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment”, 5
[23] Tressler, “Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment”, 65
[24] Tressler, “Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment”, 67
[25] Tressler, “Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment”, 74
[26] United Press International, “White House: 'No Negotiation' with Taliban”
[27] Reuters, “Petraeus Sees Value in Talking to Taliban”
[28] Department of Defense, “Joint Publication 5-0”, II-6
[29] Department of Defense, “Joint Publication 5-0”, II-6
[30] Department of Defense, “Joint Publication 5-0”, II-7
[31] Department of Defense, “Joint Publication 5-0”, II-7
[32] Kagan, “Power and Weakness”, 5
[33] Kagan, “Power and Weakness”, 1
[34] Kagan, “Power and Weakness”, 1
[35] Clausewitz, “On War”, 8
[36] Tunner, “Over the Hump”, 109
[37] Tunner, “Over the Hump”, 109
[38] Tunner, “Over the Hump”, 179
[39] Tunner, “Over the Hump”, 219
[40] Tunner, “Over the Hump”, 222
[41] Dolman, “Astropolitik”, 86
[42] Dolman, “Astropolitik”, 87
[43] Dolman, “Astropolitik”, 86
[44] X Prize Foundation, “Ansari X Prize”
[45] Danzig, “The Big Three”
[46] Bainbridge, “Motivation through Competition?”
[47] Bainbridge, “Motivation through Competition?”

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[48] Heckler, "In Search of the Warrior Spirit", 264
[49] Heckler, "In Search of the Warrior Spirit", 230
[50] Fitch and Loving, "Competition and Cooperation", 83
[51] Fitch and Loving, "Competition and Cooperation", 83
[52] Fitch and Loving, "Competition and Cooperation", 84
[53] Fitch and Loving, "Competition and Cooperation", 84
[54] Fitch and Loving, "Competition and Cooperation", 84
[55] Fitch and Loving, "Competition and Cooperation", 84
[56] Fitch and Loving, "Competition and Cooperation", 85
[57] Fuentes, "It's Not All Sex and Violence", 715
[58] Fuentes, "It's Not All Sex and Violence", 716
[59] Fuentes, "It's Not All Sex and Violence", 717
[60] Fitch and Loving, "Competition and Cooperation", 90
[61] Fitch and Loving, "Competition and Cooperation", 90
[62] Fitch and Loving, "Competition and Cooperation", 87
[63] Tressler, "Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment", 33
[64] Tressler, "Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment", 34
[65] Tressler, "Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment", 34
[66] Tressler, "Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment", 34
[67] Fisher and Ury, "Getting to Yes", 100
[68] Tressler, "Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment", 36
[69] Tressler, "Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment", 38
[70] Tressler, "Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment", 38
[71] Tressler, "Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment", 39
[72] Tressler, "Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment", 39
[73] Tressler, "Negotiating in the New Strategic Environment", 39
[74] Stricklin, "The Action Officer's Guide", 11
[75]Stricklin, "The Action Officer's Guide", vi
[76] Bainbridge, "Motivation through Competition?"
[77] Korten, "The Motivation of Excellence"

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