

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

ARMY AND AIR FORCE SUBCULTURES: EFFECTS ON JOINT OPERATIONS

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ABSTRACT

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Joint effectiveness of U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army forces is critical to achieving national objectives in today's strategic environment. Constrained procurement budgets and unprecedented and diverse missions call for effective dialogue and synergy between land and air forces. Despite this requirement, joint operations and dialogue still indicate fundamental differences and misunderstandings over 60 years after the meeting at Casablanca to restructure air-ground strategy and tactics. This project begins with a historical perspective of the Air Force-Army relationship and contemporary examples of inter-service disconnects. Next, an analysis of prevalent service strategies and cultures is described as a possible origin of these disconnects. Finally, a strategy is provided for refining this critical joint relationship.

ARMY AND AIR FORCE SUBCULTURES: EFFECTS ON JOINT OPERATIONS

An organization's essence is its culture, an ethos that reflects a bond between its members and its mission. Some cultural elements are prominent, while others exist outside the conscious realm of its members. Perhaps no profession outwardly reflects its culture more than the military. A particular uniform, specialty badge or qualification normally reflects deeper beliefs and traits unique to an individual's service or experience. These beliefs separate military service from other professions and are fundamental to many deeply held traditions. Although positive and necessary to the profession of arms, service cultures can clash to inhibit a joint culture we aspire to perfect. In this sense, the strength of service culture can become a weakness. This project addresses one such collision between U.S. Air Force and Army subcultures.

Cultural differences between the Army and Air Force may seem natural given the characteristics and environments of their missions. Joint success, however, depends upon their cultural integration and combined capabilities. This essay will examine organizational culture as it applies to the military and provide a historical perspective of the relationship between these two services to include current operations in southwest Asia. It will also examine the cultural styles and doctrinal origin of each service and present methods of preserving and building on recent joint success.

Organizational Culture

Utilizing social psychologist Edgar Schein's model, we find that organizational culture consists of three distinct levels: artifacts, values and norms, and assumptions and beliefs.¹ *Artifacts* are the most visible sign of culture and are especially familiar within the military. Unique jargon, uniforms and ceremonies are all samples of artifacts in United States military culture. Each service outwardly preserves its own unique traditions through variations of these artifacts, but Schein's view is that they actually represent the most superficial aspect of organizational culture. The next layer of Schein's model begins to touch the roots of an organization. Not visible but easily observed through behavior, this layer of *values and norms* establishes what is important to a culture and how members treat others within an organization. In short, they describe and define accepted behavior. While values vary only slightly among services, service identities vary a lot, creating operational norms and methods that differ according to training priorities, doctrine, and the equipment and environment unique to that service. For instance, military aviation units may have similar mission tasks with identical end-state objectives, but the operating environments and aircraft typical of Army, Navy/Marine, and

Air Force flying organizations establish a variety of unique service norms that are not readily interchangeable.

Drilling still deeper into an organization, Schein labels *beliefs and assumptions* as the “core of an organization’s culture.”² According to Schein, these beliefs and assumptions literally form an organization’s perception of reality. This reality inspires unique organizational interaction and shapes predictable attitudes toward other organizations. Genuine beliefs and assumptions of individual U.S. military services are relatively transparent to others within that same service. Operations and discussion within the “vacuum” of segregated Army or Air Force environments, for instance, may progress unencumbered by miscommunication or debate due to the congruent attitudes and beliefs of its participants. Differences begin to surface in the joint environment where fundamental practices of planning, communication, and problem solving become complicated due to the unique assumptions and behaviors introduced by individual service environments. Schein ties the two inner layers of organizational culture together by explaining that “members of a culture hold values and conform to cultural norms because their underlying beliefs and assumptions nurture and support these norms and values.”³

Within an organizational culture, like the ideally singular joint forces of the U.S. Department of Defense, this relationship should strengthen and provide synergy for the organization. The services providing personnel to these joint forces, however, are in fact subcultures within the joint force domain. Organizational theorists John van Maanen and Stephen Barley define subculture as “a subset of an organization’s members who interact regularly with one another, identify themselves as a distinct group...and routinely take action on the basis of collective understandings unique to the group.”⁴ Each military service brings its own subculture to United States’ military culture. While cultural similarities exist, distinct service subcultures can both strengthen and inhibit joint military efficiency.

Subcultural Interaction in the Military

Subcultural interaction within a parent organization is measured by the cooperation and complimentary efforts of its subcultures. *Disorganized* subcultures with no interaction are least mature, and are alienated from the rest of the group. As subcultures synchronize within a culture, they morph from *diverse-fragmented*, to *diverse-differentiated*, to *diverse-integrated* subcultures.⁵ If subcultures combine to form a perfectly homogeneous culture, Schein refers to that domain as a *unitary* culture. An ideal end-state culture for joint military forces would be one in which diverse-integrated service subcultures form a force characterized by unique and highly

trained services melded efficiently into a single organization with no seams or gaps between services.

Prior to the Goldwater-Nichols Act in 1986, it is fair to say that U.S. service subcultures were often disorganized or, at best, diverse-fragmented in nature. Even with U.S. Army Air Forces and eventually the U.S. Air Force spawning from a single organization, the U.S. Army, seams of varying width have always existed between ground and air forces, often compromising both mission and lives because of a fragmented co-existence of asynchronous land and air subcultures.

Example from History: U.S. Army Air Force Development during World War II

In the late 1930's, U.S. air forces remained part of the Army. Ardent, aggressive supporters of air force autonomy were opposed by "short-sighted" Army general officers determined to keep air forces under the thumb of ground commanders. This historic context established an enduring environment of opposition rather than cooperation and created a number of pathologies as the U.S. entered the Second World War: aircraft and pilots were in short supply well after the U.S. entered WW II, combined air-ground training was nonexistent, and dialogue between air and ground officers was partially strained and burdened by a lack of understanding. At that juncture, U.S. aircraft design and production were relatively immature, as were Army doctrine and training concerned with meshing air and ground forces. This period between 1938 and 1942, critical to establishing grassroots understanding of air and ground forces' symbiotic relationship, was characterized by mistrust.

Compounding this mistrust in 1942, then Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall reluctantly disbanded newly formed air support commands in order to meet the personnel demands of U.S. coastal defense and British air defense units. Still hoping to improve dialogue, Marshall established co-equal ground and air force commands. Unfortunately, the move physically and doctrinally segregated ground and air forces previously subordinate to ground force commanders through the 1930s.⁶ Planning, training and interaction between war fighting commanders suffered as air forces concentrated on strategic and interdiction bombing rather than close air support. As air forces migrated toward the British model of centralized control of aircraft by Airmen, U.S. ground commanders envisioned a vital force multiplier slipping away while they prepared to face combat in North Africa and Europe. Many Soldiers surmised there would be no priority for close air support and in 1942, asked for a dedicated "ground support air force."⁷ In short, ground force commanders had little to no exposure to the employment of air power and the Army entered into combined operations in North Africa having never trained with

their air counterparts. Core beliefs and assumptions of this new air combat component were overwhelmingly negative from an Army perspective. The relationship between air and ground subcultures was diverse and fragmented.

During the same period, U.S. aircraft and pilots were stretched thin by homeland defense requirements. Pilot training pipelines were saturated and some U.S. air forces were diverted to the British Western Desert Air Force to quell General Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps. It was during this mid-1942 deployment that Americans first witnessed combined force success with British General Montgomery's British Army and Air Vice Marshal Arthur Coningham's Royal Air Forces. This combined air-ground planning was key in the eventual defeat of Rommel, but the accelerated pace of operations and embedded pre-war air and land cultures prevented American land forces in North Africa from initially adopting these proven techniques until General Dwight Eisenhower, influenced by the British, mandated their adoption after the Kasserine Pass debacle. An interesting reflection of the joint culture surrounding British air-ground operations was articulated in a pamphlet distributed by both Montgomery and Coningham in 1942:

Any officer who aspires to hold high command in war must understand clearly certain basic principles regarding the use of air power.....Two adjacent HQs will provide the associated military and air commanders with the best opportunity of working together successfully. Physical proximity by itself will not produce the answer, unless it carries with it close individual contacts, a constant exchange of information and a frank interchange of views.⁸

The British, whether by virtue of their smaller size, personalities of those involved, or operational genius, formed a favorable joint culture early in the war. For American forces, despite the steep learning curve in North Africa and subsequent emphasis of air-ground topics in new Army doctrine in 1942, changes did not universally affect Army leadership's integration of air power into the European theater of operations. As summarized by Daniel R. Mortensen in his analysis of close air support in North Africa, "American inexperience, individualized field generalship, differing opinions about command, and enduring prejudices prevented a smooth transfer of close air support lessons."⁹ In the southwest Pacific, General George Kenney's innovative skip bombing and intratheater airlift tactics provided tremendous support for both land and naval forces, but any opportunity for institutionalizing joint firepower and maneuver was lost in the midst of the rapid post-war drawdown.

The Birth of Air Force Culture: The Cold War, Korea and Vietnam

After the war, both Marshall and Eisenhower attempted to forge land and air forces into more of a team; as with the pre-war effort, however, events and cultural diversions sidetracked

the initiative. Their efforts coincided with the National Security Act of 26 July 1947, which established an independent U.S. Air Force on 17 September 1947 and seemed to solidify a rift between leaders committed to either emerging air power or land force dominance.

The new U.S. Air Force entered the Korean War unprepared for the Army's close air support expectations. Both its aircraft and the Army-Air Force air request and control system were initially inadequate. While interim upgrades improved close air support responsiveness, the Air Force continued to emphasize interdiction.¹⁰ In addition, it claimed it could never provide the expected number of dedicated forward air controllers requested by the Army. In response, the Eighth U.S. Army pointed to the efficient Navy-Marine Corps model for air-ground operations. The Air Force argued that its broader mission precluded it from delivering the massive numbers provided by the narrowly tasked Navy and Marine Corps. Air Force leadership concluded that the Navy-Marine Corps template was not realistic for an extensive land battle and that field artillery was a more efficient source for Army support.¹¹ After sporadic success in 1953, air-ground operations became irrelevant to an air force pre-occupied with the supersonic fighters that had dominated dogfights over the Yalu River, and the Cold War relevance of Strategic Air Command. Through the Air Force's birth and adolescence, its desire to prove its legitimacy and change to accommodate the strategic requirements of the nuclear age solidified its fighter-bomber culture and marginalized its cultural links to the Army. After the Korean War, nuclear forces reigned supreme and the Air Force's Strategic Air Command gained prominence. The wedge between a nuclear-wielding air force of missiles and bombers and an army grasping for relevance after the Korean War sliced deeper between the cultures of both services.

In Vietnam, Army and Air Force subcultures approached diverse-integration, but the nature of the conflict prohibits a fair comparison of service cooperation with that of earlier conflicts. Tremendous numbers of air resources and a maturing tactical air control system provided effective response to requests. Soldiers and Marines in general lauded close air support, depending on the timely arrival of aerial firepower for victories in many battles throughout the conflict. The advent of gunships and arming of forward air control aircraft further improved air-ground responsiveness. If there were sources of conflict, they revolved around the Army's continued demand for partitioning dedicated close air support sorties among divisions, future development of a ground attack aircraft, and the arming of Army helicopters.¹² Despite some lingering theoretical differences from both the Second World War and Korea and a still fragmented approach toward centralized command of air assets, clashes between Army and Air Force subcultures had minimal impact on U.S. operations in Vietnam. Army Lt Gen Bruce

Palmer summarized the situation by stating, "You don't see interservice problems at the fighting level." His opinion was seconded by the Seventh Air Force Commander, General William Momyer, when he said, "From 1965 throughout the remainder of the war there were no significant disagreements with the Army about close air support (in South Vietnam)."¹³ Although air-ground reviews in Southeast Asia were extremely positive, it would be unfair to compare air-ground cooperation in Vietnam with either the Second World War or the Korean War. The nature of combat in Vietnam, combined with the overwhelming number of air assets in theater, allowed Air Force and Army leaders to avoid typical squabbles over sortie allocation and mission priorities. The Air Force worried that the glut of aircraft and relatively guaranteed air superiority in Vietnam would foster false expectations for air power in future wars.

Legislating Joint Culture

Beginning in 1970, the U.S. Congress began looking at ways to improve the organization of and joint interaction within the Department of Defense. In 1970, Congress determined combatant commands were "loose confederations of powerful service components" and a Blue Ribbon Defense Board report that same year determined unification of "either command or the forces is more cosmetic than substantive."¹⁴ Following failed attempts to reform the American military into more of a joint force in the early 1980s, a 1985 Congressional Report entitled *Defense Organization* provided a foundation for legislation that in 1986 would, in the words of then chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Les Aspin, affect more change in the U.S. military establishment than any event "since the Continental Congress created the Continental Army in 1775."¹⁵ The *Defense Organization* study observed that "operational deficiencies evident during the Vietnam War, the seizure of the USS *Pueblo* by North Korea, the failed Iranian hostage rescue mission, and the U.S. incursion into Grenada were the result of the failure to adequately implement the concept of unified command."¹⁶

The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 restructured the defense organization to strengthen civilian authority and improve military advice provided to the President, National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense. It directly addressed joint culture and unity of command by ensuring combatant commanders had the responsibility and authority to accomplish assigned missions and by increasing attention at every level of joint and contingency planning.¹⁷ In 1986, one of the reorganization act's sponsors, Alabama Representative William Nichols, expressed his satisfaction with the legislation.

(This bill) fulfills the aims of President Eisenhower, who said almost three decades ago, "Separate ground, sea, and air warfare are gone forever....Strategic and tactical planning must be completely unified...."

Congress rejected President Eisenhower's appeals in the 1950s. Today, 36 years later, we can now report: mission accomplished.¹⁸

In James R. Locher's 1996 essay *Taking Stock of Goldwater-Nichols*, he cites the overwhelming success of both Operations JUST CAUSE in Panama in 1989 and DESERT SHIELD/STORM in 1990 and 1991 as testaments to the success of Goldwater-Nichols. Despite these combat success stories, however, service parochialism did not die with Goldwater-Nichols. Senior Army and Air Force leaders again resorted to posturing their respective combat mediums even after the seemingly joint removal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait during Operation DESERT STORM. In a televised speech on February 27, 1991, General Norman Schwarzkopf, then commander of U.S. Central Command as well as Operation DESERT STORM's land component commander, acknowledged the success of air power during the first 38 days of the campaign, but downplayed its overall strategic impact in front of a national audience toward the end of the war. The remarks struck a nerve and General Merrill McPeak, then U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff, countered on March 15, 1991 with his "private conviction that this is the first time in history that a field army has been defeated by airpower."¹⁹ As the relationship between air and ground force subcultures battled for post-Cold War relevance, joint operations were, in the words of recent Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers, "basically in a deconfliction mode."²⁰ Fifty years after Kasserine Pass, Army and Air Force subcultures had shifted only slightly from diverse-fragmented to, at best, differentiated in nature. With the overwhelming joint success of the initial air campaign and corresponding air support for the subsequent land offensive to liberate Kuwait, Army and Air Force leaders advocated for their services rather than joint culture. Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM surely paid joint dividends, but post-war posturing and military cut backs of the 1990's eroded some of the initial Goldwater-Nichols momentum.

Joint Cultural Lessons from Operation ANACONDA

Unfortunately, one need only look as far back as March 2002 when U.S. and coalition forces fought the Taliban and al-Qaeda foreign fighters in Operation ANACONDA to see that ingrained cultures, fueled by a lack of understanding among services, still inhibit joint operations. This non-linear battle in the 10,000-foot mountains of the Shahi Kot valley of eastern Afghanistan called for intense joint intelligence and detailed planning in order to effectively integrate joint firepower. Unfortunately, U.S. and newly-formed Afghan forces stepped into the fight with neither of these critical objectives met.

Operation ANACONDA's complexity started with pressure to root out and capture high value al-Qaeda targets who had possibly escaped from Coalition attacks on the Tora Bora cave complex on 9 Dec 2001 into the Khowst-Gardez region. As described by a USAF air support operations squadron (ASOS) commander attached to support special operations forces, the initial plan was a special operations mission which mirrored previous Operation ENDURING FREEDOM initiatives. "Like Tora Bora, bomb the living heck out of it for four or five days, as long as it took, and then slowly tighten the noose on it."²¹ The plan for Operation ANACONDA, however, expanded to incorporate "more boots on the ground" and was becoming a "complex conventional and special forces operation."²²

As conventional forces became more prevalent in theater, the Army established a Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) headquarters at Camp Doha, Kuwait in November 2001. The CFLCC assumed tactical control of all land forces in theater, to include special operations forces.²³ The theater's air component headquarters and Air Operation Center (AOC) had been at Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia since 1997, and executed both enforcement of Iraq's no-fly zone (Operation SOUTHERN WATCH) and now Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan from that location. Air Force tactical air control elements on the ground in Afghanistan remained embedded with special operations forces. As Army build-up in theater continued in January 2002, Operation ANACONDA was morphing into a plan to seize the mountainous Khowst-Gardez border region with emphasis on taking prisoners and performing detailed searches of caves and redoubts.²⁴ The CFLCC, Lieutenant General Paul Mikolashek, received the plan's briefing at Bagram Air Base on 17 February 2002 and directed "coordination with the Combined Forces Air Component Commander (CFACC) for the estimated number of sorties required for the operation and dedicated airlift support to build the logistics base for the operation." He designated Major General Franklin Hagenbeck, 10th Mountain Division Commander as CFLCC Forward and directed an execution target date of 28 February, giving him slightly more than a week of preparation after assuming command of the operation from special operations forces.²⁵ Operation ANACONDA ground forces were designated Combined Joint Task Force Mountain, but the "Joint" designation seems to have merely reflected the merging of special operations and conventional land forces. Cultural stovepipes and assumptions outweighed any joint planning efforts, as both Air Force and Naval air power remained absent from the planning process. The *USS Theodore Roosevelt* carrier battle group in the Arabian Sea would later provide most of the fighter sorties for the assault, but the battle group commander, then-Rear Admiral Mark Fitzgerald recalled in a later interview, "We didn't have a clue what they were going to do."²⁶

Five days after the CFLCC directed air coordination, the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) Director, Major General John D. Corley, first learned of Operation ANACONDA and began directing deliberate planning. The Army's 23 February 2002 Operations Order that initially notified the CFACC of the need for joint cooperation consisted of the following:

3.C.8. CFACC

3.C.8.A. Provide CAS for duration of operations

3.C.8.B. Provide dedicated intra-theater airlift commencing in the early stages to begin building FOB/MSS, through Phase V.

3.C.8.C. Conduct resupply missions to Coalition forces.²⁷

On 25 February, then Lieutenant General T. Michael Moseley, the CFACC who had been traveling back to Saudi Arabia, received the OPORD and directed coordination "through the CFLCC (to see) what it is they're thinking about an overall plan, a detailed plan, and orchestration of effort."²⁸ The planning delay crippled the Air Force's ability to prioritize intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets on the Operation ANACONDA objective area. The effort would have surely provided a more accurate estimate of an enemy thought by the Army to have been between "several hundred" but later turned out to be approximately 1,000 Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters.²⁹ Late notification also prevented air planners from gathering detailed targeting data needed for precision guided munitions, a shortfall that later required research. From a command and control perspective, air-ground coordination requirements needed to transition from the embedded special operations air control elements to a robust air support operations squadron capable of precise coordination of air strikes in an 8 nautical mile (nm) by 8nm area. Neither ground nor air commanders had directed such a transition, nor was it possible to execute in less than one week's time. Also shortchanged were airspace control and deconfliction planning, critical for any air employment but especially critical in such a constrained area in which fighter, bomber, rotary wing, unmanned surveillance and even civil aircraft occupied nearly every altitude. General Moseley reflected on the frustration of overcoming component stovepipes.

Had we known this was going to go on, we would have stood up a full ASOC (air support operations center) and moved (the people) to Bagram a week or two weeks ahead of this and then conducted a set of rehearsals with carriers, with the bombers, with the whole thing. And I would have forward-deployed the A-10s so you would have had indigenous quick-reactions.³⁰

General Hagenbeck began Operation ANACONDA with no organic artillery (only mortars,) no direct dialogue with his Air Force counterpart, and an immature air support and control system before running into an enemy well beyond Army expectations. General Hagenbeck later

argued that he “didn’t consider bringing in 105s (105mm howitzers) because I knew we could accomplish the mission without them,” adding “it was clear we could capitalize on our mortars as well as Army, Air Force, Marine and Navy aviation assets.”³¹ Air Force and Navy commanders, neither of whom had been successfully integrated into planning, did not share this clarity and confidence.

Despite the absence of any senior-level component discussion, General Hagenbeck had assumed timely air support and, in an interview with *Field Artillery* on 4 June 2002, he publicly expressed his displeasure when, in his opinion, the Air Force did not deliver on his timeline. His subordinates seconded him by declaring the foundation for both planned and flexible air employment, the air tasking order, as “inflexible and not well-suited to support a nonlinear, asymmetrical battlefield.”³² *Operation ANACONDA: An Air Power Perspective* reflects a steep early learning curve followed by a period in which Soldiers and Airmen provided both tactical and operational solutions to the challenging air support requirements ignored during planning. The Army provided a similar assessment, citing varied estimates of enemy resistance and the lack of a “fully coordinated joint plan.”³³

Most interesting from a joint cultural perspective in General Hagenbeck’s *Field Artillery* interview is the absence of any discussion pertaining to the lack of early CFACC coordination, detailed air-ground planning, or rehearsals. His comments on air power reflect little emphasis on how early air integration could have relieved intelligence gaps, provided desired mean point of impact data (DMPI) for later targeting, streamlined airspace control and deconfliction procedures, and tailored rules of engagement for maximum effects while striving to eliminate fratricide in an extremely congested area. Rather, he broke events down along service lines. For instance, despite the fact that only three of the eight Apache helicopters remained combat capable after their first action, he claimed their contributions were “extraordinary” and labeled them “the most effective close air support asset we had...hands down.”³⁴ As for Naval and Marine air contributions, he stressed their willingness to “fly as low to the ground as they could” and characterized their fighter pilots as “terrific.”³⁵ As for the Air Force, General Hagenbeck complained of the initial airspace management problem and said, “We have a huge procedural and training issue we’ve got to work through with our Air Force friends.”³⁶ As one F-15E crew member who flew in support of ANACONDA ground forces later stated, “All this planning for a 1,500- man operation and the Army couldn’t pick up the phone and make a call.”³⁷

Although records are small in number and sometimes incomplete, actual results reflect both timely responses to requests and increased pre-planned strikes after the first two days of the operation by all component assets. Coalition aircraft delivered an average of more than 250

bombs per day into an area one-sixteenth the size of an Operation DESERT STORM-era killbox (ground grid reference system used to coordinate air-ground operations.)³⁸ Eight Americans died during the operation and 80 more were wounded. There was one incident of friendly fire when an AC-130 mistakenly engaged a friendly convoy early in the operation. Overall, in that 8 by 8 square mile area, there were 42 enlisted terminal attack controllers guiding munitions onto 800 to 1,000 enemy while 1,500 American and Afghan forces fought on the ground.³⁹ As General Tommy R. Franks, then Commander, US Central Command (CENTCOM) stated, "Operation ANACONDA sought to clear the enemy in that valley area and in those hills and succeeded in doing so where many operations in history had not been able to get that done."⁴⁰ From a joint perspective, however, service-centric blinders certainly inhibited a more efficient operation and, quite possibly, more favorable results. A preliminary CENTCOM report provided an initial assessment:

Although the airpower resource always exceeded the claimant's requirement, the stovepipe nature of the command and control system put the claimants in competition for these available resources, sometimes during execution, and placed strains on the air control element's ability to distribute fires in accordance with the CJTF Mountain Commander's guidance. Despite the in-execution leap in requirements for air strikes, CAS was responsive and pivotal to the ultimate success.⁴¹

Service leaders, especially in the Air Force, responded quickly to quell the post-operation rift caused by General Hagenbeck's public comments, but the cultural damage was done. Despite past lessons and the legislated joint emersion of U.S. military officers, this experience in Afghanistan indicated that U.S. forces had neither mastered the fundamentals of air-ground coordination so eloquently emphasized by Coningham 60 years earlier nor had it achieved a critical objective of the Goldwater-Nichols Act to crush service firewalls.

In the aftermath of Operation ANACONDA, tactical and operational fallout had marked effects in improving joint combat planning and capabilities for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.⁴² General John Jumper, then Air Force Chief of Staff, publicized the Air Force's dedicated air-ground team, highlighted the unprecedented use of bomber platforms for close air support in Afghanistan and appointed U.S. Air Force Major General Daniel Leaf as air liaison to the land component commander poised in Kuwait to enter Iraq.⁴³ Joint rehearsals, to include participation by special operations forces, preceded Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and the Air Force culture shifted in 2003 with its evolving role of convoy/infrastructure support, extensive air base and prison security, and unprecedented ground support roles for aircraft and aircrew. Largely, service cultures have melded in Iraq to solve unforeseen tactical challenges with an insurgency. It is fair to say that a diverse-integrated Army-Air Force relationship is emerging in

many, if not all corners of the joint environment. Despite the slow albeit significant recent historical success, there are inherent Army and Air Force styles and strategies that constantly challenge and bedevil this improving relationship.

Cultural Styles

RAND senior staff member and author Carl H. Builder defined some of these elements in his book *The Masks of War*. He identified certain cultural styles in strategy particular to each of the U.S. services. The awareness of these elements is key to each service understanding itself, as well as its air or ground counterpart. Builder explained that Air Force strategists have always espoused that air power can be decisive, must be centrally controlled and that air superiority is a precursor to any military operation. These strategic tenets, at least initially, justified Air Force independence and “set the stage for interservice battles in various forms and across many issues, right down to the present.”⁴⁴ The Air Force aggressively linked its strategy, reinforced by Cold War reality, to national security strategy and under President Eisenhower quickly became first among equals within the Department of Defense. By defining its strategy, the Air Force had delineated a mission it could accomplish independent of the Army or other services. The Army, more than any service, is dependent upon its service counterparts but sees its role as the most basic and necessary. It has never been one for formulating a grand or overarching service strategy and, until recently, did not formally link it to national military strategy. U.S. Navy Admiral J.C. Wylie, referenced by Builder, points out that the Soldier is concerned with the Clausewitzian principle of destroying the enemy’s army at a time and place of someone else’s choosing. This fundamental belief is introduced in a quote from T.R. Fehrenback on the first page of the U.S. Army’s capstone doctrinal manual, *Field Manual 1: The Army*.

[Y]ou may fly over a land forever; you may bomb it, atomize it, pulverize it and wipe it clean of life—but if you desire to defend it, protect it, and keep it for civilization, you must do this on the ground, the way the Roman legions did, by putting your young men into the mud.⁴⁵

The Soldier sees the Air Force as a means of getting him there and assisting him in the goal of taking and holding ground. Service strategy takes a back seat to tactics and operations in the Army because it is simply not needed. As opposed to the Air Force approach of explaining the tenets of air power and their joint application in its basic doctrine, this quote from Army doctrine reflects the Army’s fundamental culture and delineates the “attitudes and values” of these two services:

The Army serves the Nation. We defend America’s Constitution and our way of life. We protect America’s security and our Nation’s interests. We answer the Nation’s call to serve whenever and wherever required.” We must prepare for

decisive action in all operations. But above all, we are ready to fight and win the Nation's wars—our nonnegotiable contract with the American people. The Army is, and will remain, the preeminent land warfighting force in the world. We serve as the ultimate guarantor of our way of life.⁴⁶

No doubt, Air Force objectives to serve the nation and fighting when and where called upon are congruent to those of the Army. But the Air Force has long been defined by a particular way of fighting wars. The doctrinal approach of each service provides insight into the unique culture of each service and begins to describe, beyond the historical context, how disconnects such as those prevalent in Operation ANACONDA occur in the joint environment. Fundamental attitudes and approaches toward jointness differ. Army and Air Force subcultures begin separating at their doctrinal origin points.

Battlespace Perception

Another aspect of this subcultural separation is the way in which Airmen and Soldiers perceive the battlespace. Although it was not always the case in the past, today's Airmen bring an inherent jointness to operations, prepared to plan across service lines to utilize attack from all dimensions. Previous differences with other services, to include the Air Force's perceived apathy toward close air support and air-ground weapons system development during the Korean War, seemed to reflect an Air Force attitude that the other services were nearly obsolete. Current functional organization through the JFACC, who in turn apportions and assigns missions throughout the theater is now both natural and essential to their mission. After joint coordination, Airmen publish air tasking orders to prioritize and integrate air activity, regardless of service, for the entire battlespace using a system inherent to the tenets of air and space power and responsive to both deliberate and reactive timelines. Airmen integrate their weapons systems with others to achieve tactical, operational and strategic objectives. While air power is apportioned throughout a theater to assure tenets are maintained, execution is planned, executed and assessed through a centralized joint element.

Integration of land elements has been slower in coming and is characterized more by synchronization than integration. The Army and Marine Corps focus more on tactical level organization with tactical objectives in areas of operation which form subsets of the broader joint operating area.⁴⁷ As surface forces achieve tactical objectives, results aggregate to produce operational and strategic-level effects.⁴⁸ Their approach toward planning and integration, however, is normally joint only if other services are needed to help achieve those tactical objectives. The Marines are more comfortable working within their own Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), leaving them sometimes segregated with their own system in a small region of

the theater. Their fighter aviation and associated MAGTF command and control culture, however, are similar enough to their Air Force counterparts to allow integration of their operations into the air tasking order process. Army aviation and fire support are only marginally coordinated along joint lines. Given the expanse of Army operations and multiple standing operations orders, Air Force integration and deconfliction is often an afterthought. Air Force integration forces a Soldier's preconceived combined arms mindset into one of joint integration. For the Army, when joint operations are appropriate, it is difficult to change a Soldier's battlespace perceptions and a concerted effort is required to change Army unity of command and combined arms paradigms.⁴⁹

Another basis for cultural separation is what Builder calls service "altars of worship." He observed that each military branch values certain principles or ideals more than others, again forming the core of a particular service subculture. With aviation and its related technology being the precursor to Air Force existence, it is not surprising he links the Air Force altar to technology. Its birth, current existence and future are linked to technology and with space arguably surpassing the traditional fighter/bomber mission, there is no end in sight to this relationship. The Army's altar, like its doctrine, is more basic. Whether attributed to its humble 18th century beginnings or comparatively basic "'take and hold terrain" mission explanation, the Army's altar revolves around "its long and intimate service to the nation."⁵⁰ Army subculture obviously also shares an interest in technological development and the Air Force's dedication to the country is unwavering, but fundamental beliefs, assumptions and reasons for joining and remaining in each service differ. Service views of leadership are intertwined with their respective altars. Given the Army's mission and subsequent small unit maneuvers, individual leadership is paramount. The Army places great focus on the individual and a Soldier's progression, whether officer or enlisted, is tied to his or her ability to lead other Soldiers.

Conversely, the Air Force's technological and task-skill culture often shelters young officers and non-commissioned officers from early leadership responsibilities. Due to unit composition and mission, Air Force officers in flying squadrons rarely have significant leadership duties until they are a senior captain or major, and then they command flights of usually less than 30 people. Their focus is on the technical skill and flight leadership required to progress within the rated ranks, that portion of the officer corps composed of other pilots, navigators and air battle managers, and in fulfilling the demands of their commander's and the Air Force's overarching drivers, the flying hour and flying training programs. Flying demands regimented training and progression within a specific weapons system and rated officers rarely gain much exposure to the broader mission and population of the Air Force until they move beyond that

track. Leadership development among the Air Force enlisted ranks is also slower than with their Army counterparts. Below the rank of Master Sergeant (equivalent to an Army Sergeant First Class,) enlisted personnel are often immersed in furthering technical skills necessary for advancement. Promotion is tied more to mastering these skills than demonstrated leadership. Air Force leadership culture is in stark contrast to that of the Army, where Lieutenants and junior non-commissioned officers often lead platoons of more than 30 Soldiers.

The Air Force mission demands a culture heavy on aircrew and flight leadership experience, training small numbers of people to apply both intuitive thinking and ingrained procedures or tactics in often time-critical, life or death scenarios. Even outside the flying environment, individual initiative often results in young Airmen taking action to accomplish a task or mission by utilizing published technical/operational guidance and training to accomplish a task or mission with minimal oversight. The Army does not lack this same initiative, but Army culture is one in which these intuitive demands are overshadowed by a more directive environment in which specific orders are given to perform critical tasks. There are certainly areas of overlap in which both Soldiers and Airman share equal amounts of technical expertise and leadership savvy, but the nature and tools of air and land warfare cultures breed different types of leaders.

Maintaining Service Identities in a Joint World

Historical context and unique component perspectives are critical to understanding the relationship between Army and Air Force subcultures. If these subcultures now co-exist in what Schein would describe as a diverse-integrated environment, measures to maintain that relationship are critical to future joint success. One method of maintaining cohesion is by dissolving component walls at joint combatant commands and creating functional joint forces. Proponents of functional forces argue that land, air and sea components remain distinct until tasked to perform jointly in rare exercises or combat itself. Stovepipes prohibit joint thought and communications remain restricted within service lines until they reach land, air, maritime or special operations component commanders. Functional force proponents advocate mission-based components rather than by the medium in which they operate. Instead of depending on land, sea and air component coordination to achieve, for instance, Operation ANACONDA objectives, a Joint Force Strike Component Commander would hold ownership over all assets needed to conduct offensive operations against enemy forces. Services would remain responsible for Title 10 requirements of equipping and providing trained forces, but once released to the Combatant Commander, they would fall under the control of a specific functional

joint force commander. Reorganization would focus unity of command within the context of a particular mission and drive home the supported/supporting commander relationship. In addition, proponents claim it would institute joint thinking to levels below those of the current component design⁵¹

Functional reorganization carries its own problems though. While it may temporarily eliminate gaps in the planning and execution processes, it assumes forces can be neatly categorized into specific mission types and lessens their flexibility to perform the multiple roles expected of both today's military personnel and equipment. The cultural stovepipes of today would evolve into functional firewalls in which, for instance, intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance assets critical to a joint strike force would be restricted by a Joint Force Security Component Commander who depends on uninterrupted as well as focused support to protect both forces and combat assets. The result would be merely elevating the question of prioritization to the Combatant Commander late in the planning process. The existing component structure provides both the architecture and expertise to allocate and dynamically shift resources based on Combatant Commander objectives and emerging tasks and threats. The supported versus supporting relationship is also clarified by the Combatant Commander and assuming existing dialogue between component commanders continues, the relationship is executed through organizations designed to incorporate each service component. Breakdowns occur when joint issues remain anchored at either senior component or tactical levels, despite an existing organizational structure for either elevating a concern or re-directing planning.

Functional reorganization could prove effective in a sterile task force environment, but it oversimplifies the demand of simultaneous joint operations and dynamic prioritization typical of the combatant command environment. While corralling functional forces under one command to improve inter-service communication and execution, it limits the inherent strengths of medium-based forces and incorrectly assumes current component command structures are inflexible and incapable of maintaining and improving joint integration. A joint approach toward planning and execution, especially in cases of Army-Air Force interdependency, is possible under current combatant command architecture. History proves the approach must include co-located, either physically or virtually, air and land component commands and candid inter-service dialogue addressing combatant command objectives. Just as important as this strategic-level exchange is the regular interface and forthright dialogue at operational planning echelons under these component commanders. These elements are critical to ensuring accurate and relevant discussion among component commanders as well as unambiguous taskings to tactical units implementing a joint plan. A frank exchange of ideas and priorities, for

instance, between the Army's battlefield coordination detachment and Air Force combat plans section at the Air Operations Center is the ideal melting pot for Army and Air Force subcultures. Effective interface here assures relevant component discussion up the chain while clarifying direction for the units implementing their objectives. The Army's reorganization from a division to brigade combat team structure will create a need for further integration with the Air Force at both the operational and tactical levels. Communication within the joint community is more a cultural than organizational issue and leaders have opportunities to overcome subcultural barriers using current joint architecture.

A contemporary example of such an effort is the recent transformation of the Air Force's Air Ground Operations School. The new Joint Air-Ground Operations Group (JAGOG) consists of six units at Air Force, Army and joint training facilities. Building on a proven, though underutilized, Air Warrior air-to-ground exercise program, JAGOG meshes Army and Air Force subcultures with classroom instruction and exercises at both the National Training Center and Joint Readiness Training Center. Previous Air Warrior exercises often isolated Army maneuver and contact with the enemy from air-ground training, simplifying close air support's demanding communication and coordination tasks. JAGOG has attempted to correct this shortfall by expanding Army involvement and through scenarios that demand joint solutions. Over 80% of the first 4,000 students were Soldiers and roughly 90,000 Soldiers and Airmen gained practical application of integrating close air support and air interdiction into ground maneuvers in joint training exercises during the first 12 months of the program.⁵² As air and ground cultures collide at every echelon, communication and execution shortfalls regularly surface. The JAGOG initiative facilitates a joint Army-Air Force approach to solving shortfalls while not compromising service-specific training objectives.

Recent interdependence and lessons learned from Afghanistan and Iraq present significant opportunities for lowering, if not removing, additional cultural barriers. While the technology "altar" will always be central to the Air Force perspective of combat dominance, the Army's Future Combat System parallels its air counterpart's technological reach and desire to decrease its deployed footprint. Compatible command, control and communications development, and a combined effort to predict future demand for Air Force airlift are topics ripe for inter-service discussion and procurement. In addition, the Army's shift from organic direct and indirect fire to a more air power dependent maneuver force should expand Army support for Air Force efforts to provide that support.

Operation Iraqi Freedom blurred the once prominent division between basic soldiering and airman skills. The inherent jointness of air power aside, the Air Force needs to simultaneously

pursue training in other joint-impact skills with just as much zeal. While the “Battlefield Airman” term readily designates specialties trained and poised to join Soldiers in ground combat, bare-base operations in hostile territory, associated security challenges and convoy, engineer and medical missions “outside the wire” of an air base require Air Force leaders to envelop traditionally Army skill sets into the institutional Air Force training environment. If done correctly, this shift will necessitate adjustments in wing training priorities and traditional flying hour paradigms tied to both aircrew proficiency and Air Force funding mechanisms. Like recent changes to the Air Force fitness program, this change must be cultural. It will alter the flying schedule and require new and different training venues, but it will also revitalize and correctly prioritize air, air-to-ground, and newly adopted ground training tasks. As stated in the new Air Force mission statement, an Airman’s “primary task is to dominate Air, Space, and Cyberspace” and to fly and fight must remain the core from which all other training branches.⁵³ But cultural meshing and new or renewed emphasis on tasks not typical of Airmen does not compromise qualities that have made the U.S. Air Force the world’s dominant aerospace force. Air Force Secretary Michael G. Wynne recently addressed an improved joint approach by challenging the Air Force to be “aggressively pursuing joint” and commented the Air Force “has been very patient...in (asking) should our lane be essentially the lane we have been in.”⁵⁴ Likewise, the Army’s organizational behavior has been more retroactively than inherently joint.⁵⁵ Gravitating to its doctrinal pole, the Army often approaches problems from a strictly land-based perspective, and then applies the Army solution to joint warfare.⁵⁶ More Soldiers and Airmen now have joint experience than ever before and their direct interaction in Iraq while securing joint operating locations, coordinating strike and reconnaissance for ground initiatives and executing convoy operations is unprecedented. Nevertheless, this momentum will dissipate unless there is a deliberate effort to improve joint procurement, institutionalize joint training and a renewed service chief approach to missions not along traditional service lines, but with a joint expeditionary mindset. This will establish Army-Air Force subcultures squarely in the diverse-integrated relationship desired for joint operations.

In February 2000, the Center for Strategic and International Studies surveyed over 12,000 uniformed personnel at over 32 worldwide locations. In assessing military culture, the study recognized steady progress in joint integration through the 1990s while providing suggestions for further improvement. Specifically, the study proposed introducing cadets and young officers to other service cultures early in their training trees, capitalizing on the fact that they are free of deep service-specific assumptions and that they possess inherent potential for building the mechanisms and mindsets for effective joint interaction. The study also recommends greater

emphasis on each service culture at senior service and staff colleges, to include historical reviews and analysis of how service cultures affect joint operations.⁵⁷ Conversely, survey results highlight the importance of service cultures “essential to cohesion and combat within their own domains.”⁵⁸ Service chiefs can drive cultural integration through institutional changes in both tactical and professional training. Furthermore, they can regularly nurture that integration by what U.S. Army Major General David A. Fastabend in his monograph on Army culture, would label a “born joint” approach to issues historically service-centered.⁵⁹ The approach yields long range benefits while preserving unique service-specific expertise and traditions. Finally, senior officers must refrain from parochial, sometimes misinformed public critiques of joint operations. Deficient joint performance reflects failure within service subcultures to prepare its leaders for the inevitable joint battlespace. Twenty years after Goldwater-Nichols, inter-service training prior to combat and genuinely joint perspectives to both planning and execution in war are well within reach of any general officer. Joint success depends on the effective, adaptive interaction of strong service subcultures. Exaggerating the value or impact of land or air forces at the expense of their combined effect is toxic to joint culture.

Distinct yet fully integrated service subcultures provide the joint military environment an ideal force for meeting future strategic objectives. If joint operations are to achieve their full synergistic potential, Soldiers and Airmen versed in their own cultures must understand and be prepared for the operating environment imposed by the cultures of their sister services.

Endnotes

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