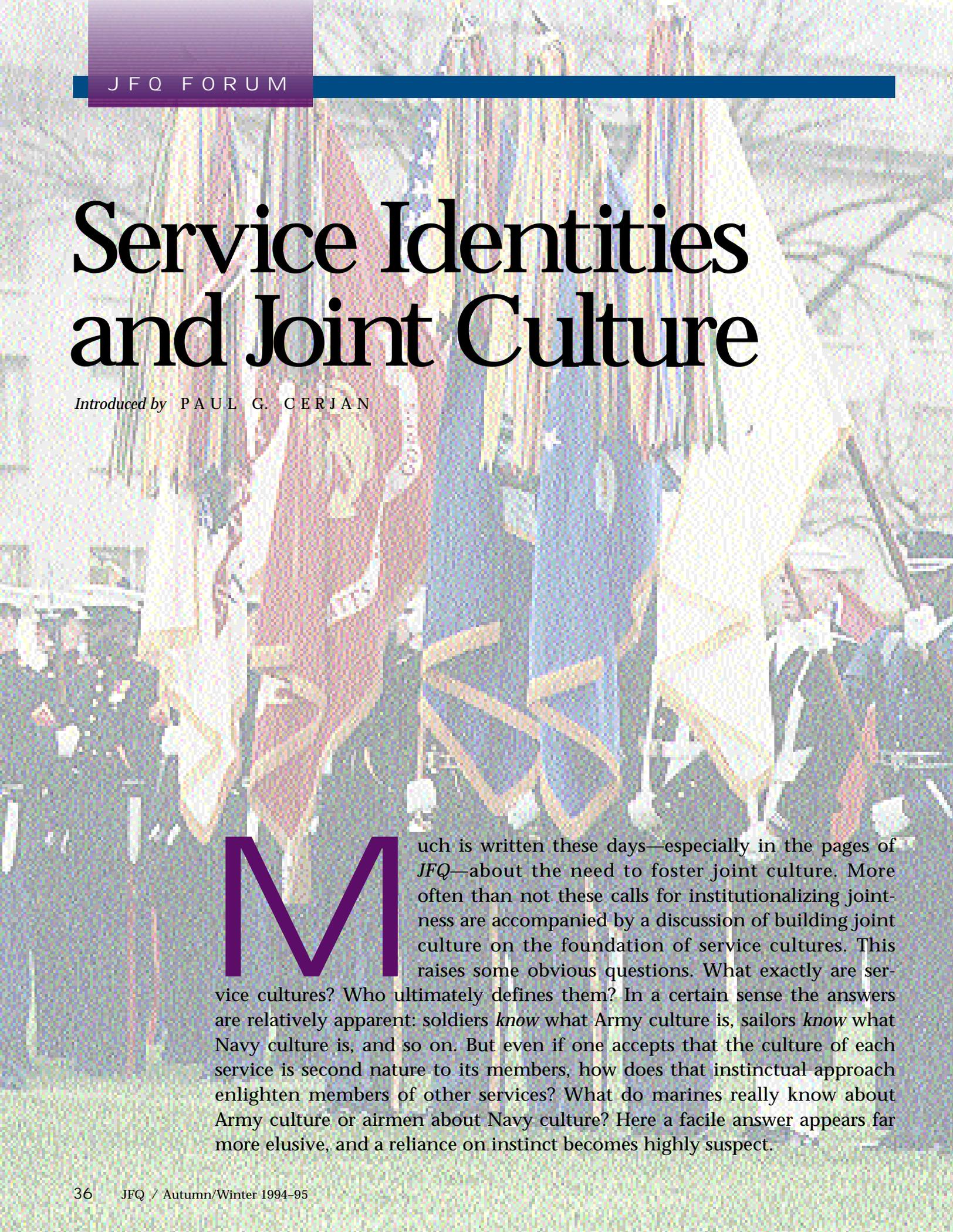


Service Identities and Joint Culture

Introduced by PAUL G. CERJAN



Much is written these days—especially in the pages of *JFQ*—about the need to foster joint culture. More often than not these calls for institutionalizing jointness are accompanied by a discussion of building joint culture on the foundation of service cultures. This raises some obvious questions. What exactly are service cultures? Who ultimately defines them? In a certain sense the answers are relatively apparent: soldiers *know* what Army culture is, sailors *know* what Navy culture is, and so on. But even if one accepts that the culture of each service is second nature to its members, how does that instinctual approach enlighten members of other services? What do marines really know about Army culture or airmen about Navy culture? Here a facile answer appears far more elusive, and a reliance on instinct becomes highly suspect.

how a service sees itself can vary dramatically from how other services perceive it

How a service sees itself—from customs to warfighting spirit—can vary dramatically from how other services perceive it. Thus, if service culture is really the stuff of which joint culture is made, what do the services know about each other? As a response to that unabashedly rhetorical question, *JFQ* Forum presents a series of perceptions that address service identities in parochial as well as comparative terms. The articles focus not only on the expertise of the U.S. Armed Forces, but also on lessons drawn from the relationships among the services of other nations.

In “America’s Two Armies” the author states that sustained combat ashore is the norm for the Marines, not the exception. As a result the United States has the benefit of having two services concerned with conducting operations on land. But while the Marine Corps has unique capabilities that must be preserved, that alone cannot justify a second army in times of diminishing resources. *How does that “sync” with joint doctrine?*

“Once and Future Marines” reminds us that the premier practitioners of amphibious warfare have traditionally been called on to perform *un*-amphibious missions despite the fact that critics see the Marine Corps as wed to the amphibious assault. Geography, politics, and national interests underscore the need for an expeditionary force—a niche filled over the years by the Marines. *But should that assumption go unchallenged?*

Next, in “The Limits of Seapower: Joint Warfare and the Unity of Conflict,” the question is whether British defense policy should have a naval tilt. Without making a leap of faith that same question can be raised about

the U.S. Navy. Forces with a geographic focus

have limitations that lead them to joint and combined operations to offset limitations. For Britain the limits of seapower are more palatable than the limits of landpower or airpower as the leading edge of military prowess. *Will the expanding body of naval doctrine in the United States reflect the same realities?*

The thrust of “Why America Needs an Air Force” is that the rationale used in World War I to found the world’s first independent air arm—the Royal Air Force—is still relevant in the case of the U.S. Air Force. In the Persian Gulf War a separate service ensured doctrine was in place which focused on airpower and thereby maximized mission reliability while minimizing casualties. Moreover, air forces also make an excellent instrument for creating ad hoc coalitions. *Is this overall hypothesis as relevant today as it was in the heady days of 1917?*

“Roles, Missions, and JTFs: Unintended Consequences” stresses that suppressing service culture—the unique way each service operates—inadvertently promotes homogeneity among the Armed Forces by depending on generalized all-purpose assets suitable for all occasions. One of the unintended consequences of this trend may be a military that is less effective, more costly, and not as capable of genuinely joint operations. *To what extent should we accept these inherent risks suggested by the author?*

These articles are not encyclopedic in their treatment of service culture. After reading them, however, if one is aroused to ask where the stand-alone article on the Army’s culture is or why the elimination of redundant combat support capabilities has not been raised, then the varied perspectives have indeed accomplished their aim. Your thoughts on those subjects should find their way into the pages of *JFQ* and other professional journals. Mull them and publish them—encourage debate! Let’s get it right before the “wet run.”

JFQ

Lieutenant General Paul G. Cerjan, USA (Ret.), was the seventh President of the National Defense University. Previously he served as the Deputy Commander in Chief, U.S. Army Europe, and Seventh Army, and as the Commandant, U.S. Army War College.