

*God has given you one face,  
and you make yourselves another.*

—Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

**The Masks of War**  
*American Military Styles  
in Strategy and Analysis*

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*Foreword by Sam Nunn*

*A RAND Corporation Research Study*

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## FOREWORD

Today America faces significant technological, economic, political, and social challenges in the national security environment. Our twin trade and budget deficits, unless addressed quickly, will jeopardize our ability to fund national security needs. Dramatic events in the Soviet Union—with their implications for arms control, the character of the Soviet military threat, and the unleashing of centrifugal forces in the Soviet empire—indicate that we are moving to new, uncharted, and, possibly, unstable ground in superpower relations.

Adapting our military planning to this new environment will place great demands upon all of our national security institutions, including the Congress, the Defense Department and the military services, and the intelligence community. Changes in our nation's military needs and the allocation of resources will require careful thought, negotiations, and, most of all, understanding by the participants—not just of national security issues, but also of the institutions and people involved.

Carl Builder provides us with a better understanding of some of these key national security institutions—the American military services. This book is devoted to analyzing and explaining why the United States Army, Navy, and Air Force behave the way they do. The author believes that an understanding of this behavior can be gained by observing the unique styles of the military services in their approaches to strategy and analysis. Rather than trying to expose what the military services have done wrong or failed to do, this book attempts, by stripping away their “masks of war,” to understand how they think and what they are likely to do in the future.

# 1

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## THE MASKS OF WAR

This book advances three simple arguments:

1. Institutions, while composed of many, ever-changing individuals, have distinct and enduring personalities of their own that govern much of their behavior.
2. The most powerful institutions in the American national security arena are the military services—the Army, Navy, and Air Force—not the Department of Defense or Congress or even their commander in chief, the president.
3. To understand the distinct and enduring personalities of the Army, Navy, and Air Force is to understand much that has happened and much that will happen in the American military and national security arenas.

To grasp these three arguments is to master the book's message. While advancing these arguments is no great leap, making them credible and vivid, so they result in empathetic understanding and a reliable basis for action, is a much more extensive undertaking. And it is that larger undertaking, rather than the arguments themselves, that justifies the many words and pages that follow.

An empathetic understanding of the American military institutions, as personalities, requires spending time with them, wrestling with their problems, interests, and aspirations—or at least trying to stand in their shoes as they deal with these things. Perhaps nothing is more self-revealing about the problems, interests, and aspirations of the American military institutions than their approaches to military strategy, planning, and analysis. It is here, on these matters, that they write and, therefore, leave some durable, analyzable

record of their thinking. And it is here that we can look for evidence of their personalities.

## The Roots of American Military Strategies

Most contemporary texts on military strategy treat the subject as an artful exercise in logic, one that can be mastered by careful study of its immutable principles. Yet anyone who tries to follow the current debates over the maritime or NATO strategies, or the concepts of assured destruction or "Star Wars," must be struck by the great diversity of answers that seem to flow from, or are often justified by, those immutable principles of strategy.

The explanation, of course, is that strategies, and the concepts or conclusions that are drawn from them, come from much more than science or analysis or axioms. Their sources are deeply embedded in the interests of the people or institutions that advocate them. Though the words and arguments used to support or attack strategies and concepts may be referenced to classic strategic principles, the motivations toward or away from a strategic theory often lie hidden even from its proponent.

The roots of modern American military strategies lie buried in the country's three most powerful institutions: the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Though many people outside the military institutions, including academics and presidents, may propose military strategies and concepts, these can be implemented only if and when military institutions accept and pursue them. To understand the American military institutions, then—who they are and what they are about—is to understand almost everything of enduring significance in the national debates over military issues.

The roots of modern American military strategies can be unearthed by digging down into the institutional personalities of American military services, by looking at their history and behavior instead of the words they may use to mask or explain themselves. When those institutional personalities are compared, much of the unique behavior attributed to each of the services suddenly pops into focus. The evidence is not new, only newly perceived as a part of a larger and consistent pattern that fits the recognizable personality of a particular service. Everything observed here about the service personalities has been seen before—somewhere, by someone, perhaps by many, so often as to become an invisible part of the background to the national security arena. When the fragments are

assembled into the patterns of a recognizable personality, then the behavior suddenly becomes coherent rather than chaotic or quixotic. Historical behavior can be explained; and future behavior can be predicted with greater confidence. The personality differences of the three American military services are profound, pervasive, and persistent.

Since these personalities are deeply embedded inside large military institutions, they will persist despite changes in administrations, the Department of Defense, the Joint Chiefs, and the joint or specified commands. They will even persist through the trauma of war. They affect how the services, in peacetime, perceive war and then plan and buy and train forces. To understand the American military styles is to understand what is going on and much of what is likely to happen in the national security arena—from Star Wars to the Persian Gulf.

## The Traditional View of Military Planning

The traditional view of military planning presumes that military forces are acquired and deployed as the military means, alongside economic and diplomatic means, for the pursuit of political ends. For the United States, in peacetime, those political ends are generally assumed to be the promotion of international stability, prosperity, and security. Thus, it follows that peacetime military forces can and should be derived as appropriate military means to ensure international political objectives in the face of perceived threats.

Of course, such logic is not so neatly applied. Military forces are the products of much more complex processes. Powerful people and institutions, and their combining or conflicting interests, intrude. Nevertheless, in any formal discussion of military planning, the semblance of the logic is assiduously maintained. The military planning catechism goes something like this:

- These are the agreed-upon national objectives;
- Those are threats to these objectives;
- To secure these objectives in the face of those threats, that is the adopted strategy;
- This is the set of military capabilities needed to underwrite that strategy;
- And, thus, the following military forces are required to provide this set of capabilities.

The elements are laid out in this way because it is a rational, logical approach to security problems, not because it is really how we arrive at military forces; it is how we explain them.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the logical wrappings of defense planning, there is considerable evidence that the qualities of the U.S. military forces are determined more by cultural and institutional preferences for certain kinds of military forces than by the "threat." There are many ways to interpret a threat; there are many ways to deal with any particular interpretation of a threat. There is, after all, an American style about military forces, just as there is about business and life. It is people, not threats, who argue for and against the acquisition and maintenance of specific military forces. The advocates for a particular kind of military instrument can hardly be faulted (at least in peacetime) if their interpretations of the threat—and the effectiveness of a particular military system to counter it—reflects the interests of their institutions and the importance of their chosen careers. And, since these incentives derive more from human nature than ideology, we may reasonably assume that much the same is true for other military institutions, including those of the Soviet Union.

Is the arcane logic of military planning then only a sham, a deliberately contrived cover to mask the parochial ambitions of the military services? It is no more a sham than the logic that most of us use to explain to friends the purchase of our new automobile. Or the logic that both sides to an *offensive* arms race may use to explain their *defensive* motives: "So central is the concept of defense to the security debate that it would now be surprising for an accretion of military power to be justified by anything other than defensive motives—a response to the apparently more offensive orientation of the potential adversary. As a result it is quite normal for two opponents each to claim defensiveness and to charge the other with offensiveness."<sup>2</sup>

Even if military forces are only partly driven by institutional and cultural preferences, it may still be useful to explore the implications of those preferential engines at the extreme: What if military forces were not what we pretend them to be—the military means to political ends—but were, instead, institutional ends in themselves that may or may not serve the larger interests of the nations that support them? If that hyperbole is entertained as an intellectual device for thinking about military forces, then the qualities of those forces are likely to be more important (and revealing) than their quantities. The size of forces may be determined by national

allocations of resources—by the Congress or Politburo or Parliament—but the character of those forces—the types of weapons chosen—are typically decided or promoted by the military institutions.

If we understand the American military institutions and their interests not simply as faceless, mindless bureaucracies doing their "thing" but as unique characters or personalities, like ourselves, we can begin to see a rationality in what they are doing, and have been doing for so long. It is asserted here that such an understanding explains their behavior much better than all the elaborate logic and language that have been developed around the traditional descriptions of military planning.

### Analysis as Language

Over the past forty years, certain kinds of military analysis have become an integral part of the vocabulary for debating strategy, military planning, forces, and weapons. Though arcane concepts such as "counterforce" and "flexible response" and "assured destruction" have meanings apart from analysis, many of them had their origin in, and are most vividly defined by, analyses. Thus, to understand the military services and their different attitudes toward strategies and forces, it may be helpful, here, to provide some understanding of the language of analysis used to debate these subjects. Though our treatment of analysis need not be exhaustive, a few contrasting examples of military analysis are provided later to illustrate the art form and its application.

Moreover, the services' attitudes toward analysis are quite different and reflect important aspects of their institutional personalities. Therefore, the American military styles of analysis serve as a two-way mirror: They certainly reflect the character or personality of the services; but they also allow us to look into and understand the nature and the issues of the debates among them.

### Institutions as Personalities

Like all individuals and durable groups, the military services have acquired personalities of their own that are shaped by their experiences and that, in turn, shape their behavior. And like individuals,

the service personalities are likely to be significantly marked by the circumstances attending their early formation and their most recent traumas.

But treating institutions as if they were individuals with a personality raises several troublesome issues. Even for individuals, personality sketches can be misdrawn; the discernment of personality remains an art, not a science. Institutions, made up of large numbers of individuals, are more than the sum of those complex human individuals;<sup>3</sup> and complexity alone would seem to increase the risks of misdrawing their personalities. On the other hand, one's access to information on an institution, its behavior and words, is likely to be much greater than that for any individual.

Nevertheless, the complexity of institutions when examined closely—approaching the resolution of its individual members—requires that sketches of their personalities be made from a distance and with a very broad brush. To emphasize the differences among the services, their positions or attitudes on some aspects take the form of caricatures, with all that the word implies about exaggeration and loss of detail. The complex has been made simple; the great diversity of views within each of the services has been transformed into a monolithic voice speaking for the service.<sup>4</sup> The purpose in these obvious distortions is not ridicule, but discernment—to bring that which has become so familiar as to be hidden from view back into focus in order to understand the past, present, and future behavior of the services.

Despite that purpose, many will still object: Individual members of an institution that has been turned into a caricature will deny that the caricature speaks for their views or values or that it exhibits their own behavior or motivations. That is, they do not recognize themselves in the caricature of their institution; and they are, after all, loyal, mainstream members of that institution and ought to be able to find themselves in the caricature. The problem, of course, is attributing a “personality” to any body made up of individuals. The variance among individuals may be enormous, yet the institution may take on a distinctive personality. Few, perhaps none, of the individuals will have the same personality as the institution; but, collectively, they take on a recognizable personality. Thus, to attribute a personality to a military service is not to say that any individual member—regardless of loyalty, longevity, or position—could be found with the views, values, behavior, or motivations attributed to that service. Arthur Hadley wrestled with the same difficulties in *The Straw Giant*: “Such broad generaliza-

tions are always open to challenge. . . . How can a service that includes carrier pilots and submariners have an integrated personality? How can one that includes missile engineers and fighter jocks? Yet they most certainly do, though there are important subsets of attitudes within each service.”<sup>5</sup>

Personality characterizations are like analytical models: They cannot be perfect precisely because they are models. If they were perfect, they would not be models; they would be the modeled object itself. The utility of the model is not its perfection of the object but the capturing of essential or important features in something simpler than the object. The utility of personality characterizations of the services is not their accuracy or completeness but the capture of some important aspects of the service behavior in something far less complex than the service itself, something we can hold in our minds and easily manipulate to project future behavior.

Institutional personalities do not account for everything; they are not the only aspect that needs to be considered in understanding the debates of military issues. But they may be simultaneously one of the most useful and most neglected aspects deserving consideration. Their value is that they reveal or explain so much, yet take so little effort to grasp and remember.

Each of the services can suffer or, in turn, shine by comparison with its sisters on one or more facets of their personalities. Those most loyal to one of the services may take exception to (or pride in) the way their service has been portrayed here. But the proper tests for these comparisons is whether they capture recognizable differences among the services and are substantially correct in direction and color, even if not always in degree or detail. If they are to be useful for their purposes here, these comparisons must be compelling on the basis of what one already knows; their general truth must be self-evident, for they rely on recognition more than revelation.

Finally, the service comparisons have been limited to the Army, Navy, and Air Force. What about the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard? They certainly have distinctive, even colorful, institutional personalities. However, neither the Marine Corps nor the Coast Guard enters the defense planning arena as an independent institutional actor with a significant voice in the national approach to strategy or military force planning. This is partly because of their institutional subordination,<sup>6</sup> partly because of their relative size, and, perhaps, partly because of their own institutional personalities or styles.<sup>7</sup>

Characterizing institutions as personalities can be amusing (or painful), but that, of course, is not the reason for doing so here. Turning institutions into personalities is a way of converting something amorphous and hard to grasp into a vivid picture that can be easily recalled and recognized again. The extraordinary human ability to recognize human faces is well known. Having once seen a face, most of us are able to recognize it again, even though it has changed in expression, age, and context. Giving institutions a personality is a way of giving them a "face" that can be remembered, recalled, and applied in evaluating future behavior or circumstances. As with the police artist's sketch, it need not be photographic in its details; the essential features, even if exaggerated somewhat, are the keys to recognition.

### Institutional Motivations

It is one step to attribute a personality to an institution; it is an even larger step to imbue that personality with motives. Attributing motivations to a person or an institution has great potential for mischief. Motivations are likely to be both more complex and more revealing than either their owner or their observer can admit. There is always more than meets the eye, yet what does show may be too much or too little at the same time, depending on the viewpoint. If one attributes another's action to greed, there may be much more to it than that, yet greed may be the one motivation its owner would most like to deny.

The problem is illustrated by the situation of the firemen for steam locomotives when the railroads began their transition to diesel engines. The new engines did not need anyone to tend the boiler fire; but the firemen argued for retention of the second person in the locomotive cab, a second set of eyes looking down the track, someone to take over if necessary. Their argument and implied motivation was about safety. A much less charitable view attributed the motivation to featherbedding, the retention of an easy job and its income. But it was not simply one or the other. The firemen were not thinking only of safety; nor were they thinking only of their pocketbooks. But it was much more comfortable for the firemen to couch their arguments on the former (which was altruistic) rather than the latter (which was self-serving). The motivations were more complex than safety or income; they also included the firemen's sense of their personal worth and contribu-

tion—a legitimate and common concern, but one that is not easily presented or argued. Indeed, one can conjecture that a fireman must truly believe in the safety argument in order to have respect for himself and his worth to other human beings.

A modern example is the case of flight engineers on commercial aircraft. With the latest generation of jet transports and their microelectronic instrumentation, both the aircraft designers and operators challenged the need for a "third seat" in the cockpit. The arguments from the flight engineers echoed those of the railroad firemen forty years earlier. They presented their motivations as concerns for safety, whereas, if truth be knowable, they were about much more.

The arguments get distorted because all the motivations do not get tabled. Some are too deep to be perceived, others are ignored or avoided because they do not seem admirable. If the motivations are avoided, others are likely to pick them up and attribute them, whether they are admirable or not, possibly driving the arguments into all-or-nothing corners. To say that the firemen's concern was motivated less by safety and more by self-interests (self-worth, esteem, job security, income, etc.) is not the same as saying that they really did not care about the safety of others, only about keeping money in their own pockets. By the same logic, to say that the motivation behind a service's strategy is less about national security than the service's institutional interests is not the same as saying that the service does not give a hoot about national defense, that it just wants to keep its empire alive and is willing to fabricate a strategy in order to do so.<sup>8</sup>

Institutional and personal interests are not intrinsically bad; but they may be made so if they are always cloaked in altruism and not acknowledged as legitimate interests. Has self-esteem become an unworthy (or unmentionable) motive? It is the (perhaps unconscious) perversion of legitimate institutional or personal interests in the guise of noble altruism that sets off the alarms in the minds of suspicious critics.

When I attribute motivations here to the American military services, I recognize:

- No individual member of that institution may have that motivation.
- Motivations are complex and seldom all-or-nothing in their character.
- Institutional motivations toward institutional survival, sovereignty, and well-being are legitimate enough, they just are not necessarily the same as those, say, of the country.

- Institutions are not necessarily free from some motivations sometimes found in individuals, even though they may not be universally admired or socially accepted.

Here, it will be most useful to say things about the services that are widely perceived as being so, but are usually not said in polite or respectful company. Indeed, these are things that the services generally will not say about one another even behind backs, perhaps because of a shared professional respect or because they know that they are all too vulnerable to some equivalent observation about their own service. These things are said here not to insult or impugn, but to get past some of the pompous nonsense and pretensions that have accumulated around strategy and analysis in American military planning. If, in trying to get past these barriers to visibility, the words have been unnecessarily unkind, unfair, or dead wrong, then apologies are due and will be rendered on demand.

The American military institutions are arguably the most powerful such institutions ever created. Two of them possess independent capabilities for waging global conflict on a scale never seen before and difficult, if not impossible, to imagine. All of them pervade almost every aspect of American life, yet they remain largely hidden behind the masks of security and the esoterics of military planning. Their critics, like pygmies surrounding an elephant, jab them with accusations of ineptness, hoping, it would seem, to change their course on this or that aspect. The purpose here is not to criticize the American military services but to understand them better—to see past the masks they hold up in front of themselves to screen some of their motives or self-interests: the masks of war.

## Warriors and Institutions

To imply that the American military institutions hold up masks of war to hide, from themselves as well as from outsiders, some of their less noble institutional interests is not to deny the individual or collective courage, dedication, or skill of the warriors within. The institutional self-interests are most evident in peacetime and among the senior officers of the services. It is the “fathers” of the institution who must look after their institution’s well-being, for they have been entrusted with its care; the junior members of the institution will look to them to ensure the future of a healthy and nationally important institution. The warriors, as ever, are most

evident among the younger members of the institutions; and they generally leave it to the institutional fathers to look to the institution’s future while they hone their warrior skills for today.

When I talk with the young people who have committed themselves to one of the military institutions, I always come away impressed with how many are proud of, and dedicated to, their military crafts and duties. I could relate many examples, but one will illustrate the point. I remember visiting an Air Force base in the 1970s where a squadron of KC-135 aerial tankers of the Strategic Air Command stood alert, ready to refuel the bombers in flight if war came. Four of the tankers, brimmed with fuel, stood side by side on their hardstands, ready to go, next to the runway. Rifle-armed sentries standing in the planes’ shadows made it clear that these four tankers were an important asset if war came that day. Less than fifty yards away was a bunker where the flight crews for the four planes lived for the several days they stood their alert duty.

As a civilian visitor, I was introduced to the flight crews in the bunker; we talked about their airplanes and the need for certain improvements in their performance, particularly about more power for takeoff. As I talked with one of the pilots, a young Air Force captain in his twenties, I noticed behind him, on the wall, a signboard with current information pertinent to the aircraft just outside the bunker. Among other things, it announced that the takeoff distance for the planes, as presently loaded, was 11,111 feet. The number was memorable not just for its repetition: I knew that the runway at that particular air base was only 10,000 feet long. So I asked the pilot whether or not the signboard was correct. He assured me that it was. When he did not elaborate, I protested that the runway was not that long. He simply nodded and said, “That’s right, sir.”

His level look said that it was up to me to press the issue: “What will you do, then, when you get to the end of the runway?”

“When I hit the overrun strip, I’ll just pull back on the stick and hope that it flies. My main concern is that I’ll be able to slide around or between some trees that are out there past the end of the runway.”

I watched his eyes to see whether or not he was putting me on. They were blue and steady. Maybe he knew something I did not—that he had done it before and knew he could make it. So I probed further: “Do you practice these conditions?”

“No, sir, it’s considered too dangerous.”

"But those planes will have to be flown for training."

"Yes, sir. But when we take them off alert, we will offload some of the fuel into trucks so that they are safer to fly."

While there were, undoubtedly, some safety margins (for temperature and obstacles) built into the calculated takeoff distances for those heavily loaded airplanes, the discrepancy between the required and available runway was significant; the variables were many, untested, and not without consequences. Yet, whatever doubt there might be about the safety of the situation, there could be no doubt that those pilots were ready to fly those four airplanes when the horn sounded.

In my experience, that kind of dedication and courage is the norm, not the exception, in our armed forces. The warriors are there, everywhere. It is the institution that holds up the mask of war to cover the pursuit of its self-interests, not the warriors within it. The warriors need no masks to hide behind; it is they who face the prospect of war or its consequences every day.

### Do the Masks Ever Drop?

Do the American military services ever drop their masks of war and admit to their institutional self-interests? Rarely, I think, and then only within earshot of their own family.

The first time I saw an open admission of self-interest by a military institution was in a 1982 White Paper on the British decision to modernize their submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) by exchanging the Polaris missiles for the new Trident.<sup>9</sup> For Britain and the British defense establishment, this was a difficult and contentious decision. For the United States, the Trident program was simply another step in the continuing evolution of its submarine-launched ballistic missile force—from Polaris to Poseidon to Trident—which, in turn, was only a part of a broader program of modernization for the U.S. strategic forces. But the change from Polaris to Trident represented an enormous investment for the British, one that would both bulge their defense budget and cut into the budget slices for other forces and services.

The opposition in Britain to the Trident modernization was substantial; it found voice in both the public and various segments of the British armed forces. In the face of this opposition, the Ministry of Defense took pains to explain the need for modernizing the SLBMs in a White Paper. Most of the paper was devoted to the

typical military planning arguments—Britain's strategic objectives, the threat to those objectives, the strategy being pursued, and so on. Perhaps the strongest possible argument for modernizing the SLBMs—that they were wearing out—was missing because the government had earlier been forced to admit that the old Polaris missiles were good for at least another ten years.

Then, toward the end of the paper, almost as an afterthought, was a remarkable argument that can be paraphrased as follows: "Besides, if we don't modernize the Polaris, we won't be able to continue to attract and retain the very best people for our strategic nuclear forces, and that is the place where we want our very best." That, I would submit, is a very real and important concern of institutions about their future. Whether or not it is considered a valid or appropriate argument for modernizing Britain's strategic nuclear forces or for spending billions of pounds sterling, it reflects the understandable concern of an institution that has been made responsible for those forces. It is not the concern that is remarkable; it is its explicit expression.

Central to most institutions and their future is the ability to attract and retain good people. When I told a colleague<sup>10</sup> about the British using that concern as an argument for modernizing their SLBM force, he recalled one of his experiences with the American Strategic Air Command (SAC):

In the mid-1960s, the Air Force wanted to replace its B-52 bombers with a bomber that would be recognized today as the B-1, only then it was called the AMSA—the advanced manned strategic aircraft. But it was not successful in convincing the administration or Congress of the need; and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was pushing the Air Force to accept a strategic bomber adapted from his controversial TFX program—the FB-111. It would be an understatement to say that none of the services was enthusiastic about the TFX or its variants; it simply was not their airplane; it was McNamara's child.

The then fathers of SAC, who at the time were also essentially the fathers of the Air Force, met in the SAC "board room" to decide what to do about the next bomber they wanted so badly for the institution, since they would probably never fly it. My colleague was a "strap hanger" in the back rows and shadows around the main conference table. It was unlikely that they would be able to get the bomber they wanted, the AMSA, for another ten years. But they could get the bomber they did not want—the small,

short-legged FB-111—if they would go along with Secretary McNamara.

My colleague remembers what he thought to be a telling argument made during the deliberations that day. Someone pointed out that even though the FB-111 was not the right airplane for SAC, it did offer some glamour with its supersonic speed and, therefore, would attract young pilots into SAC. It was those young pilots SAC needed to ensure its institutional future now; the right bomber could come later. And that is pretty much what happened: SAC, as an institution, never loved the FB-111; but a new generation of SAC pilots teathed on it; and SAC finally did get the plane it wanted, the B-1.

If the institutional fathers ultimately make such fateful decisions about forces and weapons, how can they avoid looking out for the future of the institution that has been entrusted to them? The choices for war are seldom clear or unambiguous, despite all the military planning and analysis rhetoric; but the choices for the institution are almost always urgent and painfully apparent. And, thus, the masks of war cover what the institution must do.

## 2

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### FIVE FACES OF THE SERVICE PERSONALITIES

By comparing the services on five aspects, or “faces,” I initially sketch here some basic outlines or features of the service personalities. In the next chapter, these fragmented sketches are more fully developed into institutional “identities,” each with its easily recognized behavior patterns. I originally considered more than two dozen aspects in a search for attitudes, questions, behavior, and concerns that might distinguish the services from one another. Some differences, like uniforms and insignia, while substantial, did not appear to shed any light on service approaches to strategy or analysis. Others, like critical command progressions for officer advancement, seem to show only minor differences among the services. And still others, such as the differences in their public images (as portrayed, for example, in motion pictures), were rich in color but difficult to relate to service self-images and behavior toward strategy or analysis.<sup>1</sup>

The five faces used here for the initial sketches of the service personalities have been deliberately chosen to reveal differences rather than similarities among the services: (1) altars for worship, (2) concerns with self-measurement, (3) preoccupation with toys versus the arts, (4) degrees and extent of intraservice (or branch) distinctions, and (5) insecurities about service legitimacy and relevancy. Their order is one that seems naturally to unfold the distinctions in service identities or personalities. Each of these faces invites a fresh comparison of the three services, comparisons intended to draw out important differences among them, progressively capturing sufficient features to “recognize” the personality that seems to be lurking inside the institution.<sup>2</sup>

## Altars for Worship

What do the services revere most as a principle or cherish as an ideal? How do the services differ in the altars at which they choose to worship?<sup>3</sup> The question concerns the ideas or concepts that serve as inspirations and aspirations. For the knights of old, the altar might be the code of chivalry. For the hippies or "flower children" of the 1960s, it might be "love." Altars worshiped are revealing about how the worshipers see themselves and their values.

Tradition has always been an important part of military life, but the Navy, much more than any of the other services, has cherished and clung to tradition. The U.S. Navy was born and bravely fought its way out from under the massive shadow of the British Royal Navy and its rich traditions. Some who served in the new Navy had served (perhaps involuntarily) in the Royal Navy, and the extraordinary success of that Navy, with its traditions, frequently served as an institutional model of professionalism for the U.S. Navy.<sup>4</sup> This reverence for tradition in the U.S. Navy has continued right to the present, not just in pomp or display, but in the Navy's approach to almost every action from eating to fighting—from tooth to fang. In tradition, the Navy finds a secure anchor for the institution against the dangers it must face. If in doubt, or if confronted with a changing environment, the Navy looks to its traditions to keep it safe.

If tradition is the altar at which the Navy worships, then one of the icons on that altar is the concept of independent command at sea, which, like the Holy Grail, is to be sought and honored by every true naval officer. The reference to religious concepts in describing the Navy is not new: "As Secretary Stimson once remarked, the admirals were wrapped up in a 'peculiar psychology' in which 'Neptune was God, Mahan his prophet, and the United States Navy the only true Church.'"<sup>5</sup> Independent command of ships at sea is a unique, godlike responsibility unlike that afforded to commanding officers in the other services. Until the advent of telecommunications, a ship "over the horizon" was a world unto itself, with its captain absolutely responsible for every soul and consequence that fell under his command.

The idealization of independent command at sea is probably well captured by the exploits of Commodore Matthew Perry in opening up Japan to Western trade in the 1850s. Perry, halfway around the globe and months away from Washington, acted as presidential emissary, ambassador, commander in chief, secretary

of state, and trade commissioner, all under the guns of his ships, as he threatened war and negotiated treaties with feudal Japan. The nearest examples of such autonomy and power being vested in military officers on land are the early expeditions to the new world and the American West. On land, military officers were brought under scrutiny and supervision by means of the telegraph in the middle of the nineteenth century. But naval officers, once their ship was "hull down, over the horizon," remained beyond the pesky grasp of the telegraph. Until the advent of reliable, worldwide radio communications in the middle of this century, the responsibility and opportunity of the independent command at sea remained unique to naval officers. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the Navy as the most disgruntled of the services over the encroachment of Washington into the details of its command and control.<sup>6</sup> The broad authority to engage and retaliate against provocations, granted to the Sixth Fleet commander during that fleet's maneuvers off the Libyan coast in spring 1986, comes close to the naval ideal of independent command at sea.

The Air Force could be said to worship at the altar of technology. The airplane was the instrument that gave birth to independent air forces; the airplane has, from its inception, been an expression of the miracles of technology. The very knowledge of how to fly came from technical devices and experiments, and fliers have been the major instigators and beneficiaries of technological advances in everything from structural materials to microelectronics.

If flight is a gift of technology, and if the expansion of technology poses the only limits on the freedoms of that gift, then it is to be expected that the fountain of technology will be worshiped by fliers and the Air Force. If the Air Force is to have a future of expanding horizons, it will come only from understanding, nurturing, and applying technology. There is a circle of faith here: If the Air Force fosters technology, then that inexhaustible fountain of technology will ensure an open-ended future for flight (in airplanes or spacecraft); that, in turn, will ensure the future of the Air Force. The critical element of this faith, of course, is the continued expansion of flight-related technologies, which is at least arguable as the air and space technologies mature.<sup>7</sup>

The altar at which the Army worships is less apparent than the altars for the other two services. That may be because its ideals are more diffuse or variable or subtle. Several consistent themes surface, however, when the Army talks about itself: They have to do with the depth of its roots in the citizenry,<sup>8</sup> its long and intimate

history of service to the nation, and its utter devotion to country. For example:

Although each of our armed services is unique and different, the U.S. Army holds a special position of significance and trust. Its ranks come from the people, the country's roots, and it is closest to the people.<sup>9</sup>

Out of the Army's long and varied service to our nation, tested and tempered through 200 years of peace and war, have emerged certain fundamental roles, principles and precepts. . . . They constitute the Army's anchor in history, law and custom, suggesting the sources of its present strength and the trust and confidence of the nation in the essential role of the Army.<sup>10</sup>

[T]he Army ethic must strive to set the institution of the Army and its purpose in proper context—that of service to the larger institution of the nation, and fully responsive to the needs of its people.<sup>11</sup>

These ideas are sufficiently altruistic and patriotic that they could be ratified with little modification by any of the military services. What makes them unique to the Army is that they really are important to the Army as matters of belief and expression. They represent, at a level that is probably deep and difficult to express, who the Army thinks it is and what it believes in. Of all the military services, the Army is the most loyal servant and progeny of this nation, of its institutions and people.

If the Army worships at an altar, the object worshiped is the country; and the means of worship are service.

## Measuring Themselves

Each of the military services measures itself against some institutional standard of health:

It is a well-known fact that service Chiefs who advocate in their respective budgets 17 divisions, 27 tactical fighter wings, or 15 aircraft carriers are unlikely . . . to advocate less. Those who hope each year that they will, hope against impossible odds.<sup>12</sup>

For the military services, the size of their budgets—both absolutely and relative to those of the other services—is a measure of organizational success.<sup>13</sup>

The question here is not how the services choose to measure themselves but how important those measurements are to them. How concerned or preoccupied are they with taking or meeting those measurements?

The Navy has been the most consistently concerned of the three services about its size, which it measures first in the number of its capital ships and then, so they may be adequately backed up, in the numbers of other ships, by category, and, more recently, in the aggregate.<sup>14</sup> The Navy's peacetime demand for capital ships has remained essentially unchanged since before World War I, even though the kind of capital ship has changed from dreadnought to battleship to carrier to supercarrier; the perceived enemy and geographical orientation of the Navy have changed as many times. The Navy demand for 100 submarines goes back before World War II, despite dramatic changes in submarines, their role, and the threat.<sup>15</sup> It would be difficult not to notice that the size and composition of the required fleet have been remarkably constant despite the changes wrought by several wars, the fall and rise of empires, dramatic technological advances, new enemies, and even an altered sense of national purpose.

The Navy's concern about meeting these measurements is acute: Being one capital ship down is to be "a quart low," with ominous consequences if not corrected soon. Part of that concern is justified in the long lead times required to produce a capital ship and in the impact of even one key ship on the rotation schedules for forward deployments. Quick to question its ability to "make do" when it is short a capital ship, the Navy is equally quick to rebuff any questioning of the need for the forward deployments that drive its requirements. The Navy is the hypochondriac of the services, constantly taking its own temperature or pulse, finding it inadequate, caught up in an anxiety largely of its own making.

The Air Force has, from time to time, argued strongly for its size in terms of the number of wings of bombers or fighters needed or desired.<sup>16</sup> But the Air Force appetite for newer and more technologically advanced aircraft, with their attendant higher cost, has tempered its demands when the choice came to more of the old or fewer of the new. For the Air Force, the aerodynamic performance and technological quality of its aircraft have always been a higher priority than the number. Thus, in measuring itself, the Air Force is likely to speak first of the kind or quality of its aircraft (speed, altitude, maneuverability, range, armament) and then the numbers.

Evidence for this emphasis on quality over quantity is easily observed: The Air Force does not lament the size of its bomber force so much as it does the age of its B-52s. It considers the necessity of fathers and sons' flying the same bomber as a national disgrace. The trade of larger quantities of arguably less capable F-16s for F-15s was never attractive to the Air Force. Confronted with a mix of the new B-1 bomber and an even newer advanced technology bomber (the B-2), the Air Force favors more of the B-2s. The Air Force concern about self-measurement becomes acute only if its qualitative superiority is threatened. New aircraft developments by the Soviets are of much greater concern if they reflect new flight envelopes than if they are being produced in large quantities. To be outnumbered may be tolerable, but to be out-flown is not. The way to get the American flier's attention is to confront him with a superior machine; that has not happened very often or for very long in the relatively short history of aviation.

The Army appears to be the most phlegmatic of the three services about measuring itself. Although division flags are one indication of its current status, the Army has been accustomed to growing and shrinking with the nation's demands for its services. At least until recently, the Army has consisted mostly of people, and over thirty of the last forty years, conscripted from the citizenry. To the extent that the Army publicly expresses concern about its health, it is likely to be about the "end strength" (number of people) of its "active component" (not counting Guard and Reserve units). That is the salient measure of its readiness to fight or to expand, as may be demanded of it.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, when the Army does talk about its size, it tends to be in terms of people, not equipment. The Army may refer to the number of active divisions, to its state of modernization or readiness, as percentages of the whole, but the basic measure remains the number of people. And the Army is accustomed to that number varying, depending upon the commitment of society and the government to defined causes.

### Toys versus the Arts

How do the services differ in their devotion, possessiveness, or pride toward their equipment and skills? With what do people in military service tend to identify themselves? The things that attract and hold the attention of service professionals at the individual

level provide an insight into the preoccupations of the service that go deeper than the assertions of the institution itself.

The Air Force is, by far, the most attached of the services to toys.<sup>18</sup> Air Force pilots often identify themselves with an airplane: "I'm a 141 driver." "I flew buffs." Sometimes this identification goes right down to a particular model of an airplane: "I fly F-4Cs."<sup>19</sup> The pride of association is with a machine, even before the institution. One could speculate that, if the machines were, somehow, moved en masse to another institution, the loyalty would be to the airplanes (or missiles).

Air Force pilots delight in showing visitors their toys. It is not hard to get an invitation to sit in the cockpit, to share its owner's excitement with the power and freedom of flight. The cockpit visitor will probably find it easier to engage the owner in a discussion of the difficulties and restrictions associated with weather and air-space in peacetime than the relationship of the man and machine to war. This is not to denigrate the great skill and courage of those who are prepared to fly and fight but simply to note that flying and flying machines are nearest to their hearts. The prospect of combat is not the essential draw; it is simply the justification for having and flying these splendid machines.<sup>20</sup>

The history of American airmen flying for foreign governments shows just how strong the draw has been. The Lafayette Escadrille, Chennault's Flying Tigers, the Eagle Squadron, the migration of fliers to the Royal Canadian Air Force in the early 1940s, all attest to the overriding love of flying and flying machines. When America did not possess the planes or the reasons to fly them, the pilots (or would-be pilots) followed the airplanes, even if that meant serving in other nations' military services and wars. To be sure, the pilots rationalized their extranational services sometimes in terms of helping with noble wartime causes, seldom just for money, but almost always, upon reflection, by their love of flight. They rejoined American units when that option became available, but flying came first.<sup>21</sup>

The Navy is far less toy oriented, even though it has a more diverse set of toys to play with and a love for both ships and the sea. But the true lover of the sea and ships can be just as attracted to yachts or working at sea as to the modern fighting ship or the Navy. Whereas the things the Navy owns and operates are clearly a source of interest and pride for those who serve in them, Navy personnel are more likely to associate themselves with the Navy as

an institution. This loyalty to institution appears to extend even to Navy fliers:

Whereas the Army aviators under General Billy Mitchell had continually agitated following World War I for a new aviation service separate from the Army, the Navy fliers had always been Navy officers first and aviators second.<sup>22</sup>

These seagoing aviators, unlike their Army counterparts, had always had a stronger affection for their service than for their aviation units.<sup>23</sup>

Army people have historically taken greater pride in the basic skills of soldiering than in their equipment. Until the last few decades, the Army was notorious for its reluctance to embrace new technologies or methods. The Army took great pride in the marksmanship of the citizen soldier and clung to a marksman's rifle (the M-14) whereas the Air Force, as might be expected, quickly embraced the high-technology, volume-of-fire approach embodied in the Stoner AR-15 (later known as the M-16) rifle.

If one engages, say, an Army artilleryman in conversation about his business, it is soon apparent that his pride is in the art of laying a battery of guns for accurate fire. The kind of gun—155mm, 8-inch, or even a captured gun—is incidental; the power and satisfaction are in the knowledge and skills required to do something that is both important and general to warfare. Conversations with infantry and armored officers reveal a similar pride of skills—a thorough grounding in the basic arts of employing infantry or tanks effectively in battle.

Of late, however, the Army seems to be moving toward the other services in an attachment to machines. The Abrams tank and the Bradley fighting vehicle have some of the color of institutional toys. That shift may be a necessary response to the technology changes now confronting the Army, or it may be seen as a better way for the Army to compete for budget slices in a toy-oriented defense program. In any event, there are signs the Army is getting "hooked" on toys too.

### Intraservice Distinctions

For no service was intraservice competition ever equal in importance to competition among the services. The organizational and administrative ties which bind a service together preclude intraservice controversy from becoming as intense as interservice controversy.<sup>24</sup>

Interservice cleavages ordinarily will dominate intraservice distinctions. . . . Each of the services, however, is itself a complex organization composed of numerous subsidiary units and components. . . . Moreover, these differences are important to the members of each service. In particular, promotions to higher rank typically are reported (albeit unofficially) in terms of a variety of intraservice distinctions.<sup>25</sup>

All three services make intraservice distinctions among their people, particularly their officers, on the basis of their specialties or skills. They differ, however, in how these distinctions are made and used. Therefore, these distinctions are a useful clue to differences among the services on what they think is important and what they are about.

The Navy is the most elaborate in its distinctions among, and the relative ranking of, its various components, branches, or activities. The implicit intraservice distinctions within the Navy provide an extensive, fine-structured, hierarchical pecking order from top to bottom. At the pinnacle of this structure, since World War II, has been carrier-based fighter aviation.<sup>26</sup> At (or very near) the bottom is mine warfare. Submarine and surface warfare specialties, in that order, lie in between. But the distinctions go further. Among aviators, carrier (tail-hook) pilots are above land-based fliers. Within the tail-hookers, attack aviation is not so high as fighters, but above antisubmarine warfare aviation. Among submariners, attack submarines are, without any doubt, preferable over ballistic missile launchers. Nearer the bottom of the heap are amphibious warfare and land-based patrol (VP) aviation. The captain of a carrier with origins in fighter aviation clearly has credentials. The greater the diversity of experience, the better, but it cannot compensate for good bloodlines acquired somewhere in carrier aviation and surface warfare. Career devotion to the VP squadrons or the "boomers" (SSBNs) is deadly; similar devotion to carrier aviation or attack submarines is not.

It is apparent from this hierarchy that the distinctions are made on the basis of what the Navy calls "platforms," the machines in which the men serve, and their basing. These distinctions usually divide careers at their beginning; the blending (if any) usually comes at the O6 level (captain); in between, few cross over from one career (platform) path to another. The Navy supports the notion that every new line officer is a potential candidate for the Navy's top job, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). Therefore, the hierarchy in career specializations can be associated with the experience relevant to the management of the total Navy: The

SSBNs are too isolated from the mainstream of naval operations; carrier aviation is at the heart. Curiously enough, despite these strong and important discriminations, naval officers see themselves, first, as naval officers, and only secondarily as specialists (e.g., as fighter pilots or submariners).<sup>27</sup>

The Air Force and Army are quite similar in their intraservice distinctions, perhaps because the Air Force has been separate from the Army for only forty years. Both have divided their officers into two groups that stand on different levels—in effect, a two-plateau or two-caste system of status. In the Air Force, the division is between pilots and all others. Whereas there has always been a healthy rivalry among pilots of different types of aircraft (not only among the categories of aircraft flown, but even down to models of the same category), pilots are collectively on a plateau quite far removed from all others, including flight crew members and ballistic missile officers.<sup>28</sup> Pilots are likely to identify themselves with a specific model of aircraft and to see themselves as pilots even more than as Air Force officers.

Although the ownership of the Air Force is clearly in the hands of pilots, the rivalry between fighter and bomber pilots still manifests itself in swings of ruling power between the Strategic and Tactical Air Commands (SAC and TAC). Currently, the Air Force is dominated by TAC. Although the major commands tend to capture and put their marks upon officers throughout their careers, crossovers and mavericks are more evident in the Air Force than in the Navy.

In the Army, the basic division is between the traditional combat arms (e.g., infantry, artillery, and armor) and all others, who are seen in (and fully accept) support roles to the combat arms.<sup>29</sup> The branch distinctions are a source of pride and banter, but their effect upon promotion and power within the Army is not so clear as it is with the Navy and Air Force. Kanter argues that the Army is the least differentiated of the services, noting: "It is perhaps symptomatic of the relatively low salience of intra-Army cleavages that, when Army officers are promoted to flag grade, they remove their branch insignia from their uniforms."<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, Army officers are more likely to offer up their specialty when identifying themselves than are officers in either of the other two services. Whereas Navy and Air Force officers, as authors, may be content to be identified by their service alone, Army officers almost always append their specialty (e.g., artillery or infantry). This identifying probably has less to do with status than

it does with pride or candor in the officer's qualifications. When an Army officer identifies himself with the Army Engineers, it is evident that he is saying much more about his background and qualifications than he is about his status in the Army, since his branch is not one of the traditional combat arms.

Despite self-identification by branch within the Army, the branches have a brotherhood not evident among the specialties in the other services. To a degree significantly beyond that exhibited by the Navy and Air Force, the Army branches acknowledge their interdependency and pay tribute to their siblings. Whereas the Navy submariners and fliers and the Air Force TAC and SAC pilots may privately think that they could get the job done largely on their own, the Army branches of infantry, artillery, and armor each see themselves as inextricably dependent upon their brother branches if they are to wage war effectively. That dependency is longstanding, comfortable, and almost eagerly acknowledged. While each branch is proud of its unique skills and contribution, there is seldom any hint of dominance over, or independence from, its brothers.<sup>31</sup>

### Institutional Legitimacy and Relevancy

If institutional concerns about the legitimacy and relevancy of a military service were plotted as orthogonal vectors, the three services would be found widely separated at three of the four corners. Here, institutional legitimacy refers to the confidence of the service in its rightful independent status, and relevancy refers to the pertinence of its missions and capabilities. The substantial differences among the three services in their concerns about legitimacy and relevancy are important because they mark the behavior of the institutions in their approaches to strategy, analysis, and military planning.

The Air Force, as the newest of the three services and the one whose separation from the others had to be justified within living memories, has always been most sensitive to defending or guarding its legitimacy as an independent institution. The fight for autonomy by the Air Force was long and hard; and the victory was not total: The Navy retained control of its aviation, and the Army has periodically threatened encroachments. If aviation in support of naval operations is controlled by the Navy, why should not aviation in support of ground operations be controlled by the Army? If

the Air Force is not a decisive and independent instrument of warfare, the reasons for having a separate service to wield aerospace power evaporate.

[T]he doctrine and the decisiveness of strategic bombardment in future warfare were inextricably tied to the AAF case for autonomy. If strategic bombardment could not be decisive in warfare, and if victory could be obtained only by having an army actually meet and defeat the enemy on the battlefield, then it would be difficult to refute the case for maintaining with the United States Army the Army Air Corps (with its missions of close support of ground troops and interdiction of lines of communication) in order to support the majority of this nation's forces.<sup>32</sup>

Even though the Air Force has broadened its purview beyond strategic bombardment, particularly in the last half of its forty-year life, to include tactical air warfare, its legitimacy as an independent, autonomous institution still rests on the decisive and independent nature of the air war. Support of the ground troops and interdiction of the lines of communication may be the ultimate ends, but the means to those ends is success in waging the air war; and that is the true business of the Air Force.

At the same time, the Air Force is supremely confident about its relevance, about the decisiveness of air power as an instrument of war, whether that instrument is wielded for strategic or tactical objectives. Indeed, the Air Force arguments for its autonomy and legitimacy are rooted in the very same theory that provides its confidence about its relevancy and pertinence. With such vital institutional interests vested in a single theory, the institution can no longer question the validity of that theory:

Making all due allowances for the difficulties and the genuine accomplishments of our strategists, it should, nevertheless, be perfectly clear that every salient belief of prewar American air doctrine was either overthrown or drastically modified by the experience of war.<sup>33</sup>

The one great, determining factor which shaped the course of the Second [World] War was not, as is so often said and so generally believed, independent air power. It was the mechanization of the ground battlefield with automatic transport, with the "tactical" airplane and above all with the tank. Airpower in its independent form was, in sober fact, relatively ineffective. It was the teaming of the internal combustion engine in the air and on the surface, in order to take the traditional objectives of surface warfare which, together with the

remarkable development of electronic communications, really determined the history of the Second World War.<sup>34</sup>

Instead of making the common mistake of planning to fight the next war with weapons and techniques that had been effective in the last, the Air Corps planners were laying plans to conduct the next war using weapons and techniques that had been proven largely ineffective in the present war. The reason is quite obvious: the planners were not making detailed plans for fighting the next war but rather *were planning for a force that could provide the justification for autonomy*.<sup>35</sup>

In exactly the opposite corner is the Navy. The Navy is supremely confident of its legitimacy as an independent institution, but with the advent of long-range aviation, and again with nuclear weapons, its relevancy has come into question.

After 1945, U.S. naval power ceased to be something explainable in its own right and assessable in its own terms. . . .

. . . Advocates of strategic air power argued that World War II had proven decisively that there would never again be a war like it, and that armies and navies were now virtually obsolete. . . .

. . . The Navy's position in this regard was by no means curious; in a unified Department of Defense, it saw grave threats to its institutional identity, and with some justification. The Navy had long viewed itself as possessed of a peculiar strategic mission and faced with peculiar strategic and technical problems beyond the ken of the other services. In the establishment of a higher central control lay risks that the Army and the Air Force would dominate both strategic planning and resource allocation, leaving the Navy in the perennial position of poor step-sister.<sup>36</sup>

The institutional Navy has been buffeted by technology since the advent of steam power, through iron-cladding, rifled guns, air-planes, the atomic bomb, ballistic missiles, space surveillance, and antiship missiles. It was the airplane and atomic bomb, in the hands of the air-power enthusiasts, that brought the relevance of the Navy explicitly into question. The threat posed by the airplane was ultimately co-opted by transferring the capital ship mantle from the battleship to the carrier;<sup>37</sup> but the Navy has dealt with the threat of nuclear weapons to its relevance by its dismissal of nuclear war as being much less likely than a protracted conventional war.<sup>38</sup> The ballistic missile was adapted to the submarine, but it has never been close to the heart of the Navy, despite the envy of the Air Force and the affection of the arms control community.

The Army has always been the most secure of the three services on both counts. Although the Air Force seriously challenged the relevancy and necessity of both the Army and Navy after World War II, the Army was secure in the absolute necessity of its purpose and continued existence. The Army could console itself in the view that modern warfare, as demonstrated in Korea, the Middle East, and Vietnam, was ultimately decided on the ground. There might be air campaigns and support from the sea, but in the end, someone had to take and hold the ground. To be sure, the Army's size might be whittled down to a shadow because of new strategic theories, but the Army had suffered drastic expansion and reduction before; its job was fundamental and remained, even if its popularity and support might vary over time and circumstances.

This Army sense of security has been evident throughout the forty years of efforts to unify the U.S. armed services. If the Navy has been the most resistant of the three services to accepting the constraints of unification and "jointness," the Army has been cooperative to the point of taking the initiative, with the Air Force falling in between. A good example is provided by the Army's pursuit of the Air Force in the evolution of the AirLand Battle doctrine. Though such joint planning is obviously appropriate, the Army appears to be the more enthusiastic of the two services for the venture.

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## THE SERVICE IDENTITIES AND BEHAVIOR

Comparisons of five faces of the three services are sufficient to sketch their unique personalities—who they are and what they are about. The purpose of the sketches is to capture the salient characteristics of each service that seem to bear upon its approaches to strategy and analysis. The sketches are deliberately brief and vivid so they can be held easily in the mind; their order of introduction is intended to contrast their differences.

### The Navy

The Navy, more than any of the other services and over anything else, is an institution. That institution is marked by two strong senses of itself: its independence and stature.

The . . . Navy argument [in the Woodrum Committee hearing of April 1944] was the principle that each service should be assigned a broad general mission and then left free to obtain whatever forces and equipment, within budgetary limitations, that it needed to carry out this mission.<sup>1</sup>

"The Department of the Navy," General David Jones volunteered, "is the most strategically independent of the services—it has its own army, navy and air force. It is least dependent on others. It would prefer to be given a mission, retain complete control over all the assets, and be left alone."<sup>2</sup>

The Navy's stature as an independent institution is on a level with that of the U.S. government (which the Navy must sometimes suffer):

"Let us remember," warned [Admiral Bradley A.] Fiske, "that the naval defense of our country is our profession, not that of Congress." The naval profession . . . must have room to work out its own "rules of strategy, tactics, and discipline."<sup>3</sup>

So fierce had been the Navy's opposition to service unification, that even Truman was intrigued with one exasperated Army unification proposal which suggested that "the only way to overcome the Navy's resistance would be to do away with the War Department, transfer all of its elements to the Navy, and redesignate that organization as the Department of Defense."<sup>4</sup>

Who is the Navy? It is the supranational institution that has inherited the British Navy's throne to naval supremacy. What is it about? It is about preserving and wielding sea power as the most important and flexible kind of military power for America as a maritime nation. The means to those ends are the institution and its traditions, both of which provide for a permanence beyond the people who serve them.

## The Air Force

The Air Force, conceived by the theorists of air power as an independent and decisive instrument of warfare, sees itself as the embodiment of an idea, a concept of warfare, a strategy made possible and sustained by modern technology. The bond is not an institution, but the love of flying machines and flight.

The coincidence of opinion within the Air Corps on the supreme importance of autonomy can be explained by years of frustrated efforts, the common bond of the joy of aviation, and the crusading attitude of these men. At last the tenuous theoretical arguments of Douhet and Mitchell had been justified in the eyes of the Air Corps leaders and the years of frustration were over. The great joy and overstatement in the period immediately following the successful explosion of the two atomic bombs was well recorded in the press and in the congressional hearings of 1945 and 1946. Airpower would defend this nation; air power would guarantee the success of a new international security organization; air power would punish aggression wherever it might manifest itself; air power would save the world. Salvation had come; all America and the world needed to do was to maintain and support a strong United States Air Force—a simple, reliable formula. The airplane was not considered just another weapon; it was the ultimate weapon for universal peace-keeping.

Objectivity about this weapon was absent within Air Corps circles for many reasons. Perhaps the foremost reason was the psychological attachment of the airman to his machine. To him the airplane was not just a new and exciting weapon; it was what carried him miles behind enemy lines and brought him back; it was a personal possession which was given a personal, usually feminine, name, kissed upon return from a mission, and painted with a symbol for each enemy plane shot down or bombing mission completed. The affinity of pilot for airplane has its parallel in the history in the cavalry soldier and his horse. The airman, like the cavalryman of the past, was not known for his modesty, or his objectivity, when it came to the employment of his chosen steed.<sup>5</sup>

Who is the Air Force? It is the keeper and wielder of the decisive instruments of war—the technological marvels of flight that have been adapted to war. What is it about? It is about ensuring the independence of those who fly and launch these machines to have and use them for what they are—the ultimate means for both the freedom of flight and the destruction of war.

## The Army

The Army sees itself, ultimately, as the essential artisans of war, still divided into their traditional combat arms—the infantry, artillery, and cavalry (armor)—but forged by history and the nature of war into a mutually supportive brotherhood of guilds. Both words, *brotherhood* and *guilds*, are significant here. The combat arms or branches of the Army are guilds—associations of craftsmen who take the greatest pride in their skills, as opposed to their possessions or positions. The guilds are joined in a brotherhood because, like brothers, they have a common family bond (the Army) and a recognition of their dependency upon each other in combat.

What is the Army? It is, first and foremost, the nation's obedient and loyal military servant. It takes pride in being the keeper of the essential skills of war that must be infused into the citizenry when they are called upon to fight. "Traditionally, the American Army has considered itself the neutral instrument of state policy. It exists to carry out the government's orders and when ordered into action does not ask 'Why?' or 'What for?'"<sup>6</sup>

What is it about? It is about keeping itself prepared to meet the varied demands the American people have historically asked of it, but especially prepared to forge America's citizenry into an expeditionary force to defeat America's enemies overseas. And in this

latter role, the Army accepts (with understandable unease) its utter dependence upon its sister services for air and sea transport and firepower.

## Behavioral Patterns

Can these identities be observed in the behavior of the services? If the sketches capture the essence of the services, then we should be able to see those personalities again and again in many of their actions and positions. The evidence is not hard to find. A few examples are provided here, but those who have dealt with the services will probably be able to provide their own.

Should not the three service academies reflect the personalities of their parent institution? The academy mottos should capture who the service is and what it is about. Indeed, the mottos are splendid and, in the light of the personality profiles that have been drawn, need no identification or further explanation:

- *Ex scientia tridens*: From knowledge, sea power.
- Man's flight through life is sustained by the power of his knowledge.<sup>7</sup>
- Duty, honor, country.<sup>8</sup>

The ultimate objects of affection or aspiration are obvious in each case. Even the singular use of Latin among the three is somehow fitting.

The service academy chapels also exhibit their institutional personalities. All of them, of course, reflect the time and place of their construction and fit in with the architecture of their surroundings. The Air Force Academy chapel is the most dramatic of the three, inside and out. From the outside, it resembles seventeen B-49 bombers<sup>9</sup> standing on their swept-back wingtips, prepared to bolt for the sky. Inside, it is a surprisingly small cavern of softly colored light and aluminum strutting, giving the impression of being inside an airplane that has had half of its skin panels replaced with stained glass.

The chapel at West Point would not be out of place in a Scottish glen: small, dark, solidly built of stone. As compared to the chapels of its sister service academies, it is remarkable for its provincial character, its lack of display or attempts to awe. This is a quiet place for simple ceremonies with people who are close to each other and to the land that has brought them up.

The Naval Academy chapel is the largest of the three. With vaulting dome, light marble stonework, and huge stained glass windows throughout, it could be a Christopher Wren church in the West End of London. Everywhere the eye is given a feast of architectural or decorative detail. A stained glass window showing Faragut damning the torpedoes in Mobile Bay gives away its American heritage; but it is a chapel fit for nineteenth-century royalty and ceremonies.

The halls of the Pentagon provide a striking reflection of the service personalities as sketched here.<sup>10</sup> Each service has a corridor devoted to its chief of staff (all of them in the "E" or outside ring of the Pentagon). Each corridor is elegantly decorated in a motif that reflects how the services see themselves (or would like others to see them).

The Navy's corridor is rich in dark wainscoting and brass door hardware. Stern faces in gilded frames stare from the wall at all who pass here. Along the walls are low glass cases with exquisitely detailed ship models. Change the ship models from steel and steam to wood and sail, and one could easily imagine being in the British Admiralty offices of the nineteenth century. The whole effect is one of a stuffy British men's club somewhere in the Mayfair or Haymarket districts of London. Truly, one gets the message that it is an institution with stability, with a history and a rich set of traditions. It is a place for gentlemen, properly attired, to meet and decide the fate of empires.

The Army's corridor is much warmer, with the bright colors of its division and command flags set off against light walnut paneling along one wall, all in their standards, attesting to the loyalty of the men who have fought under them. Many of those flags show their roots in the citizenry (e.g., the "Yankee" division). A cavalry officer of the old American West, with boots and spurs and a dusty hat, would not be out of place here if you met him "ching-chinging" in the opposite direction. This is a proper setting for weary, dedicated soldiers to draw strength from those who have served before as they set about to learn what task the nation is laying on their shoulders today.

Until recently, the Air Force's corridor was bright with chrome, glass, and fluorescent lights, yet it had a churchlike quality, perhaps because of a wide stairwell leading up to its centerpiece: Six tall, modern, lighted, museum exhibit cases displayed the instruments of flight—models of airplanes, past and present.<sup>11</sup> The Collier Trophy, as modern and cold as the hub of an airplane propeller, had a

place of honor on the edge of the stairwell. It was a place not for people so much as for things—like a museum or church where people sometimes go to talk in hushed tones while they look at things that inspire pride or wonder.

With a recent renovation, however, the Air Force corridor has taken on the look of the modern corporation. Portraits of past corporate executives mounted on designer wall panels line a hall that might well lead from the board room to the CEO's office in any "Fortune 500 executive suite." The image is of corporate taste, stability, and, above all, power. If these corridors are harbingers of the future, then the Air Force may be changing from an adventure to a business.

## The Power of Identity

From the analysis of high-performing groups—groups of people who have performed well above expectations or the norm—one of the most consistent attributes is a shared sense of identity and purpose.<sup>12</sup>

*[T]he definition and clarification of purposes is . . . a prominent feature of every high-performing system [HPS] I have ever investigated.*

. . . HPSs are clear on their broad purposes and on nearer-term objectives for fulfilling these purposes. They know why they exist and what they are trying to do. Members have pictures in their heads that are strikingly congruent.

Motivation is "peculiar" in the literal sense of that word: "Belonging exclusively to one person or group; special; distinctive; different."<sup>13</sup>

Thus, a collective, shared sense of identity and interests is a hallmark of the most successful institutions. The cause and effect, between the hallmark and success, can be deduced. A clear, shared sense of identity and purpose may lead to high performance because it facilitates decision making that would otherwise be difficult, perhaps so difficult as to be deferred, to the group's detriment.

Of the American military services, the Navy currently has the clearest sense of its identity and interests. Whether or not one admires the Navy's identity or agrees with its interests, the clarity of its identity and interests in Navy decision making is remarkable. The Navy knows what it wants and knows its priorities. Even though the Navy, like the other services, must deal with diverse interests within the institution, there is little doubt of, or challenge

to, the exquisite and well-established hierarchy of those interests.<sup>14</sup> The salutary significance of this hierarchy is that everyone knows where one stands in the Navy and what the Navy priorities will be. Thus, the Navy is less likely than its sister services to have difficulty in making decisions, even painful decisions. The Navy may resist cuts in its budgets, but if forced to take them, it immediately knows how and where to proceed for the interests of the Navy. If higher authorities—outside the institutional Navy—override the Navy's decisions, then they have made a direct assault on the Navy's sense of itself as an independent arm of the nation. More than once, such an insult has prompted the Navy to respond with an insult of its own: resignation of its leadership.<sup>15</sup>

The Navy may very well face tough times in the years to come, but it will not be burdened by a lack of clarity about who it is, what it is about, or what it wants to be. Those things are embodied in the clear vision the Navy has of itself. There may be troubles lurking in the validity of the Navy's vision, but not in any lack of clarity or confidence in how it sees itself. It will find its decisions easy to make, even though outsiders may criticize, dispute, or overturn them.

Why is that sense of self so clear in the Navy and less so in the Air Force and Army? And how, then, does any institution come to a clear sense of its identity and interests? Institutions are made up of people. Some people come early and easily to a sense of identity and purpose; others struggle to achieve that sense throughout their lives. And of those who do achieve it, some have realistic and constructive self-visions, whereas others do not. Still others develop a distorted sense of identity as a result of "heady" experiences.

Institutions display similar variety. The Navy came early and easily to its sense of identity. The Navy sees itself, first and foremost, as an institution. The Air Force identifies itself with flying and things that fly; the institution is secondary, it is a means to those things. A brave band of intrepid aviators, bonded primarily in the love of flight and flying machines, may have a clear sense of themselves, but it is not so much an institutional as it is an individual sense of self. And it is not focused so much on who they are as it is on what they want to do.

Of the three services, it appears that the Army is currently suffering the most with its sense of identity and interests. Though many would point to the traumatizing effects of the debacle in Vietnam, I see a longer-term problem: The Army's identity as the nation's "handyman" or loyal military servant is a fair characterization of

most of its history. But something happened to the Army in its passage through World War II that it liked; and it has not been able to free itself from the sweet memories of the Army that liberated France and swept victoriously into Germany. That heady experience has marked the Army with an image of itself that is distinctly different from that which it had before and, more important, from its experiences since.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the Army finds itself dealing with something like a "split personality." Part of the Army is trying to revert to its traditional, historical role; and part is hanging on to an image of the Army at its finest year, the last year of World War II.

### Future Behavior

Because these sketches of the service identities are based on historical behavior, they do not necessarily portray how the services will behave in the future. There is evidence that all three services are changing:

- The submariners (or more generally, the nuclear power community) are rising relative to the aviators and surface warfare officers in the Navy.
- The fighter pilots have superseded the bomber pilots in control of the Air Force.
- The Army increasingly emphasizes high-cost toys.

But much more is constant. The personalities of the services, like those of individuals, are hard to change quickly or deliberately. They are the products of the culture and acculturation of hundreds of thousands of people, whose leadership requires decades of institutional experience, and whose behavior is continuously reinforced by social and professional incentives.<sup>17</sup> A strong, radical leader, such as Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, may disturb the identity of a service while in command, but reactionary, restoring forces are likely to form quickly and persist longer. Since people are more likely to associate themselves with an institution for positive rather than negative reasons, a large reservoir of restorative attitudes always maintains those values which originally attracted the institution's membership.

Many who choose a particular military institution and dedicate their lives to it make their choice because there is something about

the service—who it is or what it is about—that appeals to them. They see something in that service attractive or admirable and make an implicit contract with that service to serve in exchange for the associative benefit they perceive.<sup>18</sup> If impending changes in their service then threaten that which they found attractive, they will exert a restoring or stabilizing pressure. With tens or hundreds of thousands of such implicit contracts outstanding, the potential for voluntarily changing the institution is very small. Significant, rapid change is almost certain to be imposed from the outside and vigorously resisted from the inside.

Thus, barring a catastrophe that decimates one or more of the services,<sup>19</sup> the unique service identities (whether they have been portrayed here correctly or not) are likely to persist for a very long time. Indeed, the service identities or personalities are likely to be one of the most stable aspects of the nation's future security prospects.

### The Engines for Stability

The engines for stability in institutions are visible when one looks not only at the whole but also at any level of detail, right down to the individuals who compose the institution. Like fractals, the pattern appears to be the same no matter what magnification one uses to examine it. Though the ballistic missile has never enjoyed the status of the airplane in the Air Force, the history of the MX missile illustrates the stability and persistence of eddies or side currents off the mainstream of the institution. In 1965, the blueprints for the last of the Minuteman missile series, the Minuteman III, were finished and being rolled up from the drawing boards. Fresh sheets of paper were then rolled out on those same boards, and the designers began to lay out the lines of the next missile—the follower to the Minuteman III. The missile that took shape there would be instantly recognized today, more than twenty years later: the MX, the Peacekeeper, in all of its essential features—a large, solid propellant, highly MIRVed, silo-based ICBM.

For the next twenty years, the Air Force tried vainly to bring that missile, under various program names, into the world. Each time it tried to go ahead with development of the new missile, Congress or the Department of Defense (DoD) or the White House would push it back up its birth canal. And each time, the Air Force and its contractors went back to the drawing boards, made

some changes (more in the basing, which they did not care about, than in the "bird," which was what they really coveted), and tried again a few years later. After twenty years of watching this natal pushing and shoving, any logical observer would be impelled to ask, "What is going on here? Do these people really want or need a new missile?" The arguments were about land-based missile basing and its vulnerability; but the shoving match looked as if it was about the missile itself.

After twenty years, and over considerable objection, a few of these missiles were allowed to enter the world, where they were put into the same cribs as the Minuteman missiles that had preceded them. One could reasonably infer this compromise: The Air Force got its new bird, with unexpressed hopes that it might be able to get more of them, while its opponents felt assured that they had firmly limited the size of that unwanted flock (or clutch).

But the troubling residual of this history was the source of the continuous, sustained pressure to develop a new ICBM. After the new ICBM was rejected the first time, why did not the effort stop there and then? The pressure to continue did not come from any urgent concern about the existing missiles wearing out and needing to be replaced; the life of the Minuteman missile was greater than expected. It did not come from an accepted need for a bigger missile, because the Scowcroft Commission immediately recommended the development of a smaller missile. Was it—one hesitates even to suggest—simply an example of Eisenhower's warning about the evils of the "military-industrial complex"?

This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every State house, every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. *Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.*

In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.<sup>20</sup>

It would be easy to attribute the twenty-year sustained pressure for a new ICBM to the Air Force and its contractors in their pursuit of power and profit. But if one carefully watched and listened to the people who were most committed to the birth of a new ICBM, power and profit were not their motives. They argued

effectively and ardently, in national security terms, about why America needed a new ICBM and what would happen if it did not develop one. If someone suggested that the country did not need a new ICBM, they could only shake their heads in disbelief. Such suggestions were either Soviet-inspired or rooted in wishful thinking. They really believed (then and now) in what they were trying to do.

At some abstract level, perhaps power and greed came into play, as we sometimes suppose they do when nations choose to go to war. But those who are on the front lines are not there for those reasons. The ardent advocates of the new ICBM were committed to that cause because they could not be otherwise. They had devoted their professional lives to those machines. Their own personal worth and the worth of ICBMs had become intertwined in a way that could not be easily separated. To consider that development of new ICBMs might no longer be necessary or worthwhile was equivalent to considering whether they, themselves, were any longer necessary or worthwhile. And for their sense of personal worth, people will fight hard and long.

The fight over the MX was not a test between good and evil, right and wrong, or simply the predations of a military-industrial complex. Eisenhower had touched upon the very core of the problem in the words emphasized above: "Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society." We have a society in which people identify themselves with their toils and, thence, with things. As with railroad firemen, their livelihood and self-worth are involved. Though the debates about the MX were carried out in the esoterica of the nuclear age—first strike, throw weight, window of vulnerability, deterrence, counterforce, and so on, they were really very much about people, what they have devoted their lives to, and the worth of their contribution to community, society, and country.

The engines for stability in the American military services are evident not only in the subinstitutional pressures to continue the development of a weapon, such as the ICBM, but in the institutional resistance to the introduction of new weapons, such as the cruise missile. Cruise missile technology and its implications for weaponry became widely recognized in the late 1970s, when the DoD instigated the serious development of modern cruise missiles in a joint Navy-Air Force program, and when the potential of cruise missiles for good or evil was the subject of much public debate.

But the technology for modern cruise missiles had been lying fallow for more than ten years, ignored or dismissed by the services, because it offered little for, or even threatened, their institutional interests. The critical technology components of the modern cruise missile were small, efficient turbofan engines to propel them and terrain-following and matching radars to guide them at low altitude. Both these developments had been carried into the flight testing stage by the mid-1960s; their potential combination in cruise missiles of revolutionary capabilities were immediately evident to the few who were aware of the developments. They imagined such small missiles being built by the thousands, being carried by the dozens in airplanes, ships, trucks, and submarines, and capable of saturating any defenses against them by their sheer numbers.

Alas, those few visionaries had not reckoned with the affected institutions. The Air Force certainly had no love for a small, unmanned aerial torpedo flying hundreds of miles into enemy territory to attack the target—that was precisely the job of big, manned airplanes. When the cruise missile advocates suggested to the Air Force that the new missiles might be carried by big, manned airplanes to a safe point outside the enemy's defenses and then launched toward their targets, one SAC colonel reminded them that SAC was not about to abandon its intention to fly over the targets, open the bomb-bay doors, and watch the bombs fall until they detonated. The imagery of World War II was alive and well—twenty years later.

Nor did the prospect of such cruise missiles offer much to a Navy dominated by carrier aviators, except as another potential threat to the carriers themselves. The attack submariners might have become advocates if the new missiles could be stuffed into a torpedo tube, if they had more of a voice in the Navy, or if they had been aware of the technology; but all these things would have to wait for another ten years. The only advocates were the technologists and analysts; and they had little effect inside or outside the services. The cruise missile had no home in the technology laboratories that had been organized around airplanes and ballistic missiles. The cruise missile was neither an airplane nor a ballistic missile, so it was a technological orphan and, therefore, an institutional orphan.

Hence, for the next ten years after their conception and the demonstration of their critical technologies, cruise missiles became back-burner developments for both the Air Force and Navy. Then, in the late 1970s, when the DoD was confronted with rising claims

by the services for resources, the cruise missile surfaced again, this time as a cheaper alternative to some big ticket items, like the Air Force B-1 bomber. When the DoD set up a joint program office to coordinate the development of cruise missiles and put a naval officer in charge, things began to move much more quickly. Today, a decade later, modern cruise missiles are an accepted (if not universally loved) weapon carried by airplanes, ships, submarines, and trucks in the Navy and Air Force. But, if the DoD had not forced the issue upon those two services, cruise missiles might still be simmering slowly as experimental programs, being deferred by more urgent expenditures for new airplanes or another carrier and its entourage.

Thus, the engines for stability within the American military institutions tend to continue those activities that have established a significant constituency within their ranks and, at the same time, tend to reject any new activities that might encroach upon those already established. The effect of those engines is sufficiently powerful and predictable as to be a good guide to institutional actions in the future on new and old issues.