Models of Crisis Decision Making and the 1990–91 Gulf War

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JONATHAN MONTEN AND ANDREW BENNETT

The 1991 Persian Gulf War is a "most likely" case for several crisis decision-making models. It commanded presidential attention, arose when bureaucrats were fighting over post-Cold War budgets, and evoked the strong organizational cultures of the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. We use this case to assess the contexts, decision stages, and issue areas in which alternative crisis models have the most explanatory power. We find that presidents are most powerful in agenda setting, choosing among options, crises, and high-politics issues. Bureaucratic politics diminishes in crises and best explains the behavior of mid-level careerists, the formulation of options, and the shaping of post-war budgets. Most striking, even in crises organizational cultures strongly shape tactical military decisions, choices among weapons systems, and the willingness of officials to risk their careers on behalf of their organizations' values. Overall, these findings argue for greater attention to the influence of organizational cultures in crises.

The 1991 Persian Gulf War is commonly considered an unqualified American military success, yet it also presents several puzzling organizational dynamics that in different circumstances could prove disastrous.[1] Why was the United

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[1] There is, however, a large debate over the sources of this success. See Stephen Biddle, "Victory Misunderstood: What the Gulf War Tells Us about the Future of Conflict," *International Security* 21, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 139–79; Thomas Mahnken and Barry Watts, "What the Gulf War Can (and Cannot) Tell Us about the Future of Warfare," *International Security* 22, no. 2 (Fall 1997); Stephen Biddle, "The Gulf

States so dominant in tactical and strategic air power, but lacking in basic equipment such as minesweepers and sufficient air and naval transport? Why did U.S. Marine officers push for an amphibious assault despite the likelihood of high casualties? Why did air force officers downplay the mission of close air support of ground forces in 1991, and why has the United States failed to develop a dedicated replacement in this mission for the A-10 Warthog aircraft over the last twenty years, while pouring resources into both the Joint Strike Fighter and F-22 tactical aircraft programs? Our examination of these questions emphasizes the surprisingly strong role that organizational cultures played in shaping U.S. military policies in the 1991 Gulf War and contributes to the growing literature on how such cultures shape both foreign and domestic policies.[2]

The 1991 Gulf War is a critical test case for the scope conditions of three models of decision making during foreign policy crises: presidential leadership, bureaucratic politics, and organizational cultures.[3] The crisis leading to the war is a most likely case for the competing and at times incompatible claims of these three models, or a case in which each perspective should have great explanatory power. The "presidential dominance" model argues that when important national interests are at stake in a crisis, bureaucratic actors set aside their narrow organizational and personal interests and the president dominates the policy process.[4] Some proponents of bureaucratic politics models, however, maintain that the competition for roles and

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War Debate Redux: Why Skill and Technology are the Right Answer," *International Security* 22, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 163–74; Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), chap. 7; Daryl G. Press, "The Myth of Air Power in the Persian Gulf War and the Future of Warfare," *International Security* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 5–44; and John Mueller, "The Perfect Enemy: Assessing the Gulf War," *Security Studies* 5, no. 2 (Autumn 1995): 77–117. In addition, many view the war as failed or incomplete because it did not remove Saddam Hussein from power. See, for example, Robert Kagan and William Kristol, ed., *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000).

[2] On the research literature investigating the importance of organizational culture in international politics, see Jeffrey Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire: Anglo German Restraint During World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Peter J. Katzenstein, ed. *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Colin Kahl, "In the Crossfire or the Crosshairs? Norms, Civilian Casualties, and U.S. Conduct in Iraq," *International Security* 32, no. 1 (Summer 2007): 7–46; and Luis Payan, *Cops, Soldiers, and Diplomats: Explaining Agency Behavior in the War on Drugs* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006). For a review of cultural theories that include organizational culture arguments, see Michael C. Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," *International Security* 23, no. 1 (Summer 1998): 141–70.

[3] On the concept of "most likely" case studies, see Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005).

[4] For variants of the presidential dominance model, see John R. Oneal, "The Rationality of Decision Making During International Crises," *Polity* 20, no. 4 (Summer 1988): 605–10; Jonathon Bendor and Thomas Hammond, "Rethinking Allison's Models," *American Political Science Review* 2, no. 86 (June 1992): 301–22; Stephen Krasner, "Are Bureaucracies Important? (Or Allison Wonderland)," *Foreign Policy* 7 (Summer 1971): 159–79; Robert Art, "Bureaucratic Politics and American Foreign Policy: A Critique," *Policy Sciences* 4 (December 1973): 478–79; and Jerel Rosati, "Developing a Systematic Decision-Making

missions between organizations becomes even more intense in crises.[5] If so, this should have been especially true in 1990–91, when the U.S. post-Cold War defense budget was in decline and the military services were competing fiercely to maintain their budget shares and preferred programs. At the same time, organizational cultures should continue to influence the policy process even if bureaucrats set aside their parochial concerns over turf and resources.[6] Organizational cultures are particularly strong and stark in military organizations, where training and acculturation practices are pronounced, individuals in tightly knit social groups are called upon to override even their instincts for personal survival, technology and esprit de corps play central roles, and organizational symbols are literally worn on one's sleeves. We should especially expect organizations to use their core shared ideas to guide them in crises, when the time and social space for reflection are sharply limited.

Each of these three broad approaches to decision making contains useful insights. In this article, we frame and test contingent generalizations on the scope conditions under which the mechanisms of each model have the greatest and least explanatory power. Specifically, the literature on foreign policy processes suggests that the roles of presidents, bureaucrats, and organizations vary not just in accordance with the context of decision making (crisis versus noncrisis), but with the stage of the policy process (agenda setting, option formulation, choice, and implementation) and the issue area (for example, "high politics" decisions on the use of force versus less publicly salient decisions on military budgets and procurement).[7] If time allows and a president is motivated, he or she can be powerful at any stage of the process, but usually presidents are most influential at setting the agenda and choosing among options, especially in crises when time is short. Bureaucrats and organizations, conversely, are at their most powerful in formulating options and implementing policies. Presidents are also most likely to be attentive and

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Framework: Bureaucratic Politics in Perspective," *World Politics* 33, no. 2 (January 1981): 234–52. A broader literature discusses how crises and war tend to concentrate power and authority within the state, and particularly within the executive. See, for example, Ronald Krebs, "In the Shadow of War: The Effects of Conflict on Liberal Democracy," *International Organization* 63, no. 1 (January 2009): 177–210.

[5] According to Graham Allison and Morton Halperin, "even, and perhaps particularly, in crises organizations compete for roles and missions." Allison and Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications," in *American Foreign Policy: Theoretical Essays*, ed. G. John Ikenberry (Boston: Scott Foresman and Co., 1988), 386.

[6] James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 91. Wilson does not apply an organizational culture model specifically to crisis decisions, but, as outlined below, his hypotheses have implications for organizational behavior in crises. Additional models—including Allison's organizational process model and various psychological models on individual decision making—are also important to understanding crisis behavior, but beyond the scope of this article.

[7] See Graham Allison, *Essence of a Decision* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), 276; and John Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1984).

influential on high politics issues, whereas bureaucrats and organizations have more discretion on issues that are less politically salient.

We draw five key findings from the case of the 1991 Gulf War that are broadly consistent with these hypothesized scope conditions. First, consistent with the presidential dominance model, President George H. W. Bush was dominant in setting the agenda and making the big-picture choices. Contrary to the argument that bureaucratic parochialism intensifies in crises, Bush was able to expand the options reaching him, make key public commitments with little prior consultation, and set the goal of reversing the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait rather than merely deterring an attack on Saudi Arabia. Second, organizational dynamics were important in determining how the u.s. military implemented the strategic choices President Bush made, including the prioritization of targets for u.s. air strikes, the decision to not stage an amphibious assault, and choices of which weapons to deploy. Third, although organizations had influence over policy implementation, the choices they made were driven more by organizational cultures than by the parochial desire for more organizational resources. The bureaucratic politics dictum that "where you stand depends on where you sit" does not fit the Gulf case very well. Indeed, in one instance detailed below, the role of Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael J. Dugan serves as a reminder that sometimes "where you sit depends on where you stand." Organizational leaders, in other words, may be chosen for views that differ from those of the organizations they manage, and they may set out to change the cultures and structures they inherit rather than being captured by them. Fourth, we find that although bureaucratic parochialism and turf-seeking diminished during the crisis and war, it reemerged in the post-war debates over defense budget priorities. This conclusion is tempered by a fifth finding, that u.s. military organizations before, during, and after the crisis favored the weapons systems and roles that fit their dominant organizational cultures, rather than those that would maximize their budgets. Taken together, these conclusions expand the scope conditions and explanatory power of the organizational culture model (particularly in explaining crisis behavior), and circumscribe those of the bureaucratic politics model, even though the latter remains important in explaining noncrisis decisions.

This article is organized as follows. The first section outlines the presidential dominance, bureaucratic politics, and organizational culture models of crisis decision making, and specifies a set of testable predictions each model generates regarding the u.s. policy process in the Gulf crisis. The second section examines in detail the roles of President Bush, top bureaucrats, and national security organizations across five stages in the Gulf crisis. These include the initial deployment in August 1990, the decision in late October 1990 to double u.s. forces in the Gulf, decisions from November 1990 to January 1991 on the path to war, the planning and implementation of military strategies once the decision to use force was made, and defense

budget policies before and after the Gulf War. This allows an assessment of how the crisis context affected the policy process by a comparison of defense budget decisions before the crisis to those after it. It also provides for an analysis of variations in actors' roles across stages of the policy process and of differences in these roles from decisions on the use of force to those on defense procurement. A concluding section summarizes the evidence for and against each hypothesis, suggests other critical cases against which to test these arguments, and outlines the policy implications of our observations on organizational behavior during crises.

THEORIES OF CRISIS DECISION MAKING

Presidential Dominance

The presidential dominance and bureaucratic politics models are in some sense subsets of principal-agent (PA) theory—with the former emphasizing the president's role as principal and the latter focusing on the leverage that bureaucrats, as agents tasked to carry out the president's policies, have vis-à-vis the president and one another.[8] PA theory argues that when principals and the agents they empower to act on their behalf have different goals—and agents have more information or expertise than the principal decision makers on the details of policy implementation—the degree to which agents' behavior conforms to the principals' desires depends on the costs of monitoring implementation, the rewards and punishments the principals can bring to bear on the agents, and the relative unity of the principals and the agents.[9] The presidential dominance model argues that crisis decision making is a special circumstance in which the threat to national values brings the interests of the president and bureaucrats into alignment, and the president and his or her inner circle have a heightened ability and willingness to monitor implementation closely, minimizing PA problems.

In this view, the alignment of the president's and bureaucrats' interests in crises makes crisis decision making more similar to that of the idealized unitary rational actor model. The essential elements of the unitary rational actor model are that the actor has a set of complete and transitive preferences, surveys all relevant options, calculates the probable consequences of each

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[8] In this article we primarily use the terms and concepts of the presidential dominance and bureaucratic politics models, rather than those of principal-agent theory, as these models are more focused on the specific institutions and actors relevant to the Gulf War case and provide a bridge to traditional literatures on decision making in American foreign policy. For a description of the bureaucratic politics model and other models more explicitly in terms of principal-agent theory, see Bendor and Hammond, "Rethinking Allison's Models."

[9] On principal-agent theory, see John W. Pratt and Richard Zeckhauser, ed., *Principals and Agents: The Structure of Business* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1991). For an overview of principal-agent theory as applied to political science, see Gary J. Miller "The Political Evolution of Principal-Agent Models," *Annual Review of Political Science* 8 (June 2005): 203–25.

option, and selects the one that maximizes the actor's expected utility.[10] The presidential dominance model suggests that crises raise a president's attention and authority to such a high level that the policy process more closely approximates the unitary rational actor model at each of these steps. During crises, presidents are thus able to establish their own rank order preferences as the preferences of the whole government.

Crises increase presidential control and minimize principal-agent problems for several reasons. Most importantly, presidents devote greater attention and energy to crises because important national values are at stake.[11] Much of the power of the bureaucracy in noncrisis policy making derives from the fact that the president cannot attend to everything all the time. In crises, even though time pressure limits presidents' ability to monitor implementation, they pay such close attention to how their policies are carried out that they are hard to put off, delay, subvert, or misunderstand. Similarly, close presidential attention offsets the information advantages bureaucrats frequently hold over the president, as presidents and their staffs focus their attention, take in information from multiple channels, and may have alternative agents who can carry out their policies.[12] Presidents are also more likely in crises to push the bureaucracy for new options or the adaptation of existing ones, although even advocates of this model recognize that such innovations will be limited if time is short.[13]

Moreover, crises tend to concentrate decision making within a small group of leaders at the top of the government, over which the president has close control.[14] This group consists mostly of appointees the president has chosen to reflect his or her values, and the president can dismiss or ignore them if they dissent beyond the limits that the president sets. Disagreements within this group are therefore likely to focus on tactics and strategy, not on widely shared goals, leading to a collegial process of persuasion rather than an adversarial or bargaining process.[15] In addition, top bureaucrats, who are usually political appointees, typically have not risen to power through the organizations they lead.[16] Consequently, the bureaucratic politics dictum

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[10] This formulation follows Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of a Decision* (second edition), 23–26.

[11] Bendor and Hammond, "Rethinking Allison's Models," 316; Art, "Bureaucratic Politics," 478–79; and Rosati, "Developing a Systematic Decision-Making Framework," 245–46.

[12] Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership from FDR to Carter* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1980), 32; and Bendor and Hammond, "Rethinking Allison's Models."

[13] Oneal, "The Rationality of Decision Making," 604; and Krasner, "Are Bureaucracies Important," 176.

[14] Oneal, "The Rationality of Decision Making," 604; and Krasner, "Are Bureaucracies Important," 166–67.

[15] Bendor and Hammond, "Rethinking Allison's Models," 314. Excessive collegiality and homogeneity among a small group of decision makers also raises the risk of groupthink. See Irving Janis, *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-policy Decisions and Fiascoes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).

[16] Oneal, "The Rationality of Decision Making," 605–8.

that "where you stand depends on where you sit" is less true for this group than the observation that "where you stand depends on where the president stands."[17]

Finally, bureaucrats find it more difficult in crises to make an end run around the president by appealing to the public, interest groups, or allies in Congress. A "rally around the flag" effect frequently produces strong public (and hence congressional) support for the president, at least in the short term.[18] Heightened media attention increases the saliency of the White House as a "bully pulpit," and few bureaucrats have the temerity during a crisis to leak to the press against the president's wishes or try to build a countervailing coalition in the Congress.

The scope conditions of the presidential dominance model are qualified, however, by the stage of the decision process and the issue area in question. The model is strongest in explaining important choices among alternatives, but less powerful in explaining how these options are initially formulated (particularly if under time constraints), and weaker still at explaining policy implementation.[19] This derives from the fact that many of the model's hypotheses do not apply to the behavior of organizations beneath the top level of political appointees, and this lower level is usually the one that creates options and carries out implementation. Even if presidents can get much of what they want by paying attention and giving explicit instructions, there is often little time for micromanagement, and the "default value" of organizational behavior may be to follow existing procedures, bureaucratic incentives, and organizational cultures unless the president clearly dictates otherwise and is able to reduce principal-agent problems by improving monitoring over implementation. The model's explanatory strength also varies across issue areas: it is better at explaining high politics, such as the use of force, than issues that directly affect the budgets and jurisdictions of organizations, such as defense procurement.[20]

The presidential model generates several empirical predictions about policy making in the Gulf crisis. First, U.S. policies should have closely reflected President Bush's goals, with little bureaucratic bargaining over the

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[17] The first quote is from Allison, who attributes it to Don Price; Allison, *Essence of a Decision*, 176. The second is from Dan Caldwell, "Bureaucratic Foreign Policy Making," *American Behavioral Scientist* 21 (September-October 1977): 97. Numerous studies of crises have turned up examples where "stands" do not follow closely from "seats." For example, in their study of sixteen crises, Glenn Snyder and Paul Diesing concluded that the "most distinctive point of the Allison-Halperin 'bureaucratic politics' theory does not survive our analysis"; and Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict Among Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 408. Several scholars have pointed out that the correlation between stands and seats is very loose even in Allison's own study of the Cuban missile crisis; see, for example, Bendor and Hammond, "Rethinking Allison's Models," 317.

[18] Oneal, "The Rationality of Decision Making," 605.

[19] Art, "Bureaucratic Politics," 476–77; and Krasner, "Are Bureaucracies Important?" 177–78. Most analysts have not addressed the question of whether the model offers a strong or weak explanation for agenda-setting in crises.

[20] Art, "Bureaucratic Politics," 480–84.

central decisions. Second, given the long time period of the crisis, President Bush should have been able to push successfully for a range of options specifically tailored to the situation in the Gulf. Finally, President Bush's authority should have decreased during the implementation of u.s. military strategies and post-crisis budget and procurement processes.

The Bureaucratic Politics Model of Crisis Decision Making

The bureaucratic politics model challenges the presidential dominance view by asserting that both crisis and noncrisis policy making is the result of bargaining among powerful bureaucratic players, and not simply of policy coordination among a president and his or her like-minded appointees and advisors. According to this argument, governmental actions are the product of "compromise, conflict, and confusion of officials with diverse interests and unequal influence,"[21] often resulting in policies that no single actor would have chosen. Bargaining over policy, in this view, takes place among bureaucrats who occupy defined organizational roles, or "seats," and who defend the parochial priorities attached to those seats. These parochial priorities include "maintaining autonomy and organizational morale, protecting the organization's essence, maintaining or expanding roles and missions, and maintaining or increasing budgets."[22] This set of organizational interests lies behind the assumption that "where you stand (on policy) depends on where you sit (in the bureaucracy)." In this view, new political appointees are captured by the organizations they inherit and take on existing organizational preferences as their own. The outcomes of bargaining over policy thus depend on the balance of formal and informal authority, including information and resources as well as constitutional authority, among bureaucrats.

Leading proponents of this model hypothesize that bureaucratic bargaining over policy continues and may even intensify in crises. Morton Halperin argues that "changes in roles and missions frequently occur during crises. Thus an organization concerned about its mission and desiring either to expand it or prevent others from expanding theirs at its cost will be particularly alert to both challenges and opportunities during a crisis."[23] During crises, presidential, congressional, and public attention is high and greater scrutiny is focused on the organization. Participants are also aware that decisions made during crises can set important precedents for future organizational

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[21] Allison, *Essence of a Decision*, 162.

[22] Allison and Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics," 385.

[23] Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 50. See also Allison and Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics," 386.

missions and budgets.[24] If correct, the argument that bureaucratic competition intensifies during crises should have been particularly true in the Gulf crisis, when the post-Cold War U.S. defense budget was declining and many programs faced budget cuts or outright elimination, and when many observers sought to treat the crisis as the first precedent-setting conflict of the post-Cold War period.

In short, this version of the bureaucratic politics model conflicts with the presidential dominance model on whether bureaucratic parochialism continues in crises.[25] The differences between the two are at least partly reconcilable, however, through the scope conditions that apply to each model. The bureaucratic politics model should be at its strongest when the presidential dominance model is weakest and vice-versa. Thus, the bureaucratic politics model should be strongest in explaining the formulation of options, the implementation of policies, and other behaviors that largely take place below the top level of political appointees. The "stands equal seats" prediction should also be stronger for career bureaucrats than for political appointees,[26] and it should offer better explanations of budgetary decisions than those concerning the use of force.

These considerations lead to several predictions about U.S. policy making in the Gulf crisis. First, if this argument is correct we should expect the jockeying between organizations and agencies for missions and budgets to have persisted throughout the crisis, even if partially mediated by President Bush's preferences. We should expect the military services to push for a central role for their organizations, troops, and preferred weapons platforms in the U.S. war plan. We should also expect this bureaucratic maneuvering to have intensified once the war was over and the policy process moved away from crisis decisions on the use of force to budgeting and procurement. Here, we should expect the military services to use the Gulf crisis and postwar studies of the lessons of the war to justify expanded future budgets, particularly for those weapons platforms in danger of losing funding.

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[24] Halperin cites the Cuban Missile Crisis as an example, where "both the CIA and the military services were concerned with how intelligence operations during the crisis would affect future definitions of roles and missions." Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 50.

[25] For a similar view, see Steve Yetiv, *Explaining Foreign Policy: U.S. Decision-Making and the Persian Gulf War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 190–96. This paper builds on Yetiv's "integrated approach" to explaining U.S. decision making during the Gulf War in several ways. First, we look at the Gulf War case in the context of the research literature on crisis decision making, rather than in the context of general theories of foreign policy. Second, we advance the debate by delineating the specific conditions (or phases of the crisis) where each perspective is likely to have its greatest and least explanatory value (although Yetiv does develop some contingent hypotheses based on the case evidence). Finally, we investigate an alternative model of crisis decision making not included in Yetiv's study—organizational culture—and find evidence that organizational identities and cultures had a greater effect than the standard bureaucratic politics model at several stages of the crisis.

[26] Allison, *Essence of a Decision*, 179.

An Organizational Culture Model of Crisis Decision Making

At first glance, the organizational culture model appears to be inextricably linked with the bureaucratic politics model.[27] However, there are several key differences between the two, as they emphasize different tendencies in organizational behavior, posit different casual mechanisms, and make different empirical predictions about the behavior of organizations during crises. The bureaucratic politics model focuses on the organizational drive for more resources, "turf," and jurisdiction, and emphasizes the advantages bureaucracies have in the governmental principal-agent relationship. In contrast, the organizational culture model centers on shared understandings within the organization about what it does, how it does it, and the values and human relationships that tie together these ends and means.[28] These include not simply tactics and strategies about how to achieve organizational tasks, but ethical norms, hierarchies of goals, and beliefs about "what kinds of people with what expertise, experience, and knowledge should be members of the organization" and should be promoted within it.[29] These shared beliefs are often codified into informal norms and practices as well as more formal procedures, manuals, and written documents. When an organizational culture is widely shared within the organization and fully endorsed at all its levels, the organization is said to have a strong sense of mission. Often, organizational missions are established when an organization is created and nurtured by charismatic founders or leaders, and these missions may be transformed by dramatic successes or failures or by new leaders.[30]

Although often conflated with the bureaucratic politics model, the organizational culture model generates a distinct set of arguments about the conduct of organizations in crises. The Allison-Halperin argument outlined above enumerates a set of organizational interests that include the maintenance of organizational autonomy and morale, but assigns greater importance to the expansion or preservation of roles and budgets. From the cultural perspective, however, organizations will often resist new tasks that

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[27] Because they make divergent predictions, we find it useful to distinguish these models from one another, although some accounts conflate them. The early work of Allison and Halperin, for example, tended to encompass the mechanisms of both bureaucratic politics and organizational cultures. See Allison, *Essence of Decision* (1971 edition); and Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1974). Allison has acknowledged these differences in later writings, most notably in the revised second edition of *Essence of Decision*, published in 1999. Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of a Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1999), 153–58.

[28] Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996). In the context international politics, see Kier, *Imagining War*; Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire*; and Katzenstein, ed. *The Culture of National Security*.

[29] Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics*, 28.

[30] Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, 95–97 and 191–92; and Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics*, 28. Organizations can also have competing cultures or subcultures, which can lead to tension and conflict if one subculture seeks to dominate others. See Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, 105–6.

they deem incompatible with their existing cultures, even if these tasks will garner larger budgets.[31] New tasks or missions that are incompatible with an organization's culture will suffer from lack of attention and resources, as will tasks that require closer cooperation with other organizations, and therefore less autonomy.[32] Organizations often "stick to the knitting," preferring to do accustomed and valued tasks that they do well instead of taking on new tasks that disrupt their shared sense of identity and purpose. Similarly, organizations often readily accept new technologies that better serve existing missions, but resist those that require a change in those missions.[33] Important changes in organizational technologies are therefore often sponsored or enforced from outside the organization, although entrepreneurs or subcultures within an organization occasionally push new technologies.[34] The Allison-Halperin view of bureaucratic politics also overlooks the fact that organizations often face a tradeoff between autonomy and expansion.[35] Broader missions and bigger budgets can come at the cost of diminished autonomy, including closer oversight by the executive and legislative branches and more competition with other organizations.

One way of understanding the differences between the organizational culture and bureaucratic politics perspectives is that while the bureaucratic politics model fits comfortably within the domain of principal-agent theory, the organizational culture model does not. Rather, the organizational culture model addresses issues prior or complementary to the principal-agent relationship: what are the shared values and ideas about ends-means relationships in an organization; what are their origins in the organization's history; how are they transmitted to new members of an organization; and how do they change in response to events, leadership, and outside pressure? In this view, the organizational culture model is not a mutually exclusive alternative to rational or purposive explanations of organizational behavior, but an attempt to describe the nature and identify the sources of ideas and preferences shared within an organization, which in turn constitute the goals

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[31] Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, 180. Wilson notes several examples of these phenomena and cites a study that found that of twenty-five cases in which organizations faced the prospect of gaining or losing an important subunit, in ten cases organizations rejected an additional unit or approved the loss of a subunit. See also Marc Tipermas, *Jurisdictionalism: The Politics of Executive Reorganization* (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1976); and Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics*, 40.

[32] Wilson, *Bureaucracy*; and Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics*, 39.

[33] Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, 222; Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics*, 39; and Stephen Rosen, "New Ways of War: Understanding Military Innovation," *International Security* 13, no. 1 (Summer 1988): 134–68. For an example of how organizational cultures can sometimes slow technological innovation, see Michael O'Hare and Harvey Simon, *The Air Force and Remotely Piloted Vehicles* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government, Case Studies in Public Policy and Management, 1988).

[34] Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, 225–26.

[35] As Wilson notes, this has fostered an overly "imperialistic" view of organizations. Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, 182, 195.

of the strategic and instrumental actions described by principal-agent theory.[36]

We argue that the dynamics of the bureaucratic politics and organizational culture models diverge particularly sharply during crises. Even if the presidential dominance model is correct in arguing that during crises bureaucrats will set aside their parochial interests, the organizational culture model suggests that shared understandings about how an organization should behave will persist and even intensify in crises. The bureaucratic model focuses on power and interests, and in crises these may be overridden by presidential power and the national interest. In contrast, the organizational culture model focuses on the organization's search for meaning and sense of identity, which become even more important guides to action during crises. For this reason, the organizational culture model can help explain behavior which, from a bureaucratic politics perspective, may be inexplicably self-defeating or altruistic: organizations rejecting expansions of their missions even when this would bring them greatly increased budgets, individuals sacrificing their careers over values deeply shared within their organizations, and the relative absence of "shirking" among civil servants.

These observations lead to a different and more detailed set of empirical predictions about organizational behavior during the Gulf crisis than the bureaucratic politics model. First, we should not expect the military services to use the Gulf crisis to justify expanding the budgets of all of their forces and weapons, or even those weapons that were most effective in the Gulf War, best suited to the post-Cold War world, or most likely to win additional funding. Instead, we should expect the services use the crisis to justify only those forces and weapons that best exemplified their favored missions, cultures, and career and command paths, whether or not they were effective in the Gulf War itself.[37] Second, because the model suggests that organizations and bureaucrats fight for their missions and autonomy out of conviction, and not just out of material self-interest, we might expect that, during crises, individuals within bureaucracies will often take actions that may harm their own careers in the belief that they are advancing the worthy causes of their organization. Such acts of "organizational altruism" may arise from the desire to protect the values and social relationships of the organization, or the misperception that those outside the organization fully share these values, but are unlikely to arise from an individual's desire to maximize their organization's share of "turf" alone. This can lead to friction when the president calls upon

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[36] Miles Kahler, "Rationality in International Relations," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 934.

[37] For analyses of the military service cultures and how they influence their preferences, see Arnold Kanter, *Defense Politics: A Budgetary Perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), 14–20; and Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics*, 28–48. For an argument as to why military leaders might have a general preference for avoiding war, see Richard Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

organizations to take actions that cut against the grain of their cultures. In contrast to principal-agent theory, it suggests that individuals may not follow presidential orders even when presidents have strong means of identifying and punishing insubordination. Finally, we should expect organizational cultures to affect both the formulation of options and the implementation of policies, and we should expect them to influence decisions on the use of force as well as those on defense procurement, as both these issue areas are intimately connected with organizational cultures.

Our contingent generalizations on the conditions under which and the ways in which each of the three models applies to crisis decision making are summarized in Table 1. In the sections that follow, we assess these arguments in five stages of the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

THE U.S. POLICY PROCESS IN THE GULF CRISIS

The Initial Deployment Decision: August 1990

The decision to deploy large numbers of U.S. forces to the Gulf emerged through four National Security Council (NSC) meetings on August 2, 3, 4, and 5, 1990. On August 1, the day of the invasion, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Gen. Colin Powell, and their military aides met at the Pentagon to discuss possible military responses. Cheney proposed options ranging from using force to compel an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait to military action to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Powell, in contrast, argued for the more limited goal of deterring a possible attack on Saudi Arabia and suggested that he did not believe the U.S. public would support military action to restore Kuwaiti sovereignty. According to one reconstruction of the meeting, Powell predicted that "The next few days Iraq will withdraw, but Saddam Hussein will put his puppet in. Everyone in the Arab world will be happy . . . I don't see the senior leadership taking us into armed conflict for the events of the last twenty-four hours. The American people do not want their young dying for $1.50 gallon oil."[38] Powell advocated pressuring Saudi Arabia to accept U.S. ground forces for defensive purposes, was skeptical of the capability of long-range air power to defend against an Iraqi offensive in Saudi Arabia without heavy ground forces, and advocated taking a "national sense" before committing to any large-scale troop deployments.[39]

At the first full NSC meeting after the invasion on Thursday, August 2, CENTCOM commander Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, at Powell's request, outlined two military options for responding to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait: (1)

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[38] Based on Gordon and Trainor's reconstruction of the meeting with notes taken by a participant. Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The General's War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995), 31–33.

[39] Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 34.

TABLE 1 Contingent Generalizations on Three Models of Decision Making

	Presidential Dominance	Bureaucratic Politics	Organizational Culture
Focus	Preferences	Power	Identity
Process	President picks stands, seats	Seats→stands	Stands→seats
Control	President controls organizations, leaders (Principle-Agent Theory)	Leaders captured by organizations	Organizations resist presidential demands when inconsistent with culture.
Jurisdiction	President can expand or rein in organizations (P-A Theory)	Organizations seek ever wider turf and resources (not confirmed in Gulf War case)	Organizations often "stick to the knitting" and refuse new missions
Crises	President is dominant in crises	BP intensify in crises (not confirmed in Gulf War case)	Organizational cultures intensify in crises
Stage of Decision Process	President dominates choices among options; except in crises, president is less involved in creating and implementing options	Bureaucratic actors influence creation and implementation of options, and to a lesser extent choices among them	Organizational cultures influence creation and implementation of options, and to a lesser extent choices among them

punitive air strikes by carrier-based aircraft, and (2) a detailed existing contingency plan, Operations Plan (OP) 90–1002, which called for deploying more than four divisions and three aircraft carriers, for a total of one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand U.S. troops.[40] This first NSC meeting ended without any decision between these two options.

That same day, Secretary of Defense Cheney, reportedly unhappy with what he saw as too narrow a range of military options presented to the president by army officers Powell and Schwarzkopf, ordered his staff aides Adm. Bill Owens and Air Force Col. Garry Trexler to consult with their respective services and generate more military options, particularly those involving immediate, punishing air strikes.[41] When Powell heard about this, he confronted Adm. Owens and insisted that Owens stop "freelancing" and instead work through Schwarzkopf. Cheney in turn held a one-on-one meeting with Powell that journalist Bob Woodward recounts as a "come-to-Jesus" meeting about the necessity of getting military options to the president. According to Woodward, Cheney said there could be no more "stalling" or "foot-dragging" on getting serious military options to the president. By this time, however, President Bush had already begun to lean toward OP 90–1002.[42]

By Friday, August 3, after conversations with Margaret Thatcher in Colorado and with NSC advisor Brent Scowcroft, Bush leaned more clearly toward a strong response. At Bush's suggestion, Scowcroft opened the August 3 NSC meeting by outlining the significance of the Iraqi invasion in threatening U.S. national interests and arguing for an aggressive response.[43] The key divide in the meeting was between Cheney, Lawrence Eagleburger, and Scowcroft, who favored an expansive response, and Powell, who remained more cautious about committing U.S. military power and advocated the more limited goal of defending Saudi Arabia from further Iraqi aggression. Bush initially refrained from stating his own view and allowed an open debate, but indicated later in the meeting that he agreed with Scowcroft and tilted toward the "rollback" option over the more limited goal of "containment."[44]

At the NSC meeting at Camp David on Saturday, August 4, Schwarzkopf briefed the president on both OP 90–1002 and an option for using air strikes only. According to Schwarzkopf, it would take eight to ten months to build up the ground forces necessary for a credible offensive option in the Gulf, a

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[40] Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 238. Although Woodward's "narrative method" of attributing direct quotes to conversations reported second-hand is open to question, his account is consistent with numerous news articles, and none of the principals involved have repudiated Woodward's account in general or in detail.

[41] On Bush, Scowcroft, and Cheney pressing the Pentagon for military options, see Thomas Friedman and Patrick Tyler, "A Reconstruction: The Path to War," *New York Times*, 3 March 1991.

[42] Woodward, *The Commanders*, 238–41. See also Patrick Tyler, "The Cheney-Powell Relationship: Blunt Give-and-Take Early in Crisis," *New York Times*, 15 March 1991, A14.

[43] Interview with Brent Scowcroft, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline*, available at www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/scowcroft/2.html.

[44] George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998).

deployment estimate that surprised the civilian leadership.[45] After a brief discussion of the "air power only" option, Cheney and Powell expressed their opposition to any plan that relied on air strikes alone.[46] Schwarzkopf noted that he was "not an air power-only advocate," but asserted that air forces had certain advantages in the Gulf context. In response, Powell forcefully argued for the need for ground forces, calling anything less a "phony defense." Scowcroft in turn maintained that ground forces would signal a more serious commitment to Saudi Arabia. Powell also reiterated his view that U.S. policy should focus on the defense of Saudi Arabia and not the liberation of Kuwait.[47]

That same afternoon, Bush told news reporters "I view [the invasion] very seriously, not just that but any threat to any other countries, as well as I view very seriously our determination to reverse this awful aggression . . . . This will not stand, this aggression against Kuwait."[48] He further stated that "Nobody is . . . willing to accept anything less than total withdrawal . . . from Kuwait of the Iraqi forces." Although Bush had allowed debate within the NSC team at the August 3 meeting, he now showed that he was leaning toward the more aggressive option. Referring to this episode, Bush later stated that:

> I had decided in my own mind in the first hours that the Iraqi aggression could not be tolerated . . . During my press remarks at the outset of the first NSC meeting, I did say that I was not contemplating intervention that perhaps inadvertently led to some confusion about my intent. I did not intend to rule out the use of force. At that juncture I did not wish to explicitly rule it in. But following the series of meetings, I came to the conclusion that some public comment was needed to make clear my determination that the United States must do whatever might be necessary to reverse the Iraqi aggression.[49]

Bush's strong public statement came as a surprise to the NSC team, and especially to Powell, who believed that the limited strategy of defending Saudi Arabia and imposing an economic sanctions regime was still a viable option.[50] After getting Saudi agreement to a large-scale U.S. deployment to

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[45] Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 47–48.

[46] On Powell's consistent cautioning of Bush and the NSC against an over-reliance on air power, see interview with Colin Powell, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline*, available at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/powell/2.html.

[47] Woodward, *The Commanders*, 250–53. For Schwarzkopf's account of this Camp David meeting, see Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 298–300.

[48] "Transcript of News Conference Remarks by Bush on Iraq Crisis," *New York Times*, 6 August 1990.

[49] Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 49.

[50] See interview with Powell, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline*.

Saudi Arabia on Monday, August 6, Bush in turn approved the deployment as outlined in OP 90–1002.[51]

As expected, presidential powers were at their most dominant at this stage of the crisis. First, from the very start, President Bush viewed the invasion as a threat to U.S interests and leaned toward strong action. Throughout the NSC discussions, he and NSC advisor Scowcroft set the tone of the debate over the importance of the Iraqi invasion and consistently favored the most ambitious options discussed. According to Scowcroft, both he and Bush were "distressed" that at the August 2 meeting there "was no sense of outrage or no sense of the imperative that his affected vital US interests and had to be dealt with firmly."[52] Bush allowed for an open debate among his NSC principals over the appropriate level of response, which he then stepped in to resolve. Bush made crucial public commitments, including his statement that "this will not stand," with little prior consultation with his NSC team, and he chose OP-1002 without a strong or united recommendation from the NSC. He also personally implemented many diplomatic moves by calling foreign leaders, such as King Fahd. Cheney, acting on Bush's behalf, pushed for a wider range of options from the military, although he was only partly successful before both he and Bush came to favor deploying massive ground forces.

At the same time, there is some evidence of bureaucratic pulling and hauling over policy, although stands did not always follow predictably from seats.[53] Cheney, the Defense Secretary, generally favored a more aggressive use of military force to compel an Iraqi withdrawal, while Secretary of State James Baker worried that the decision to deploy force was made in haste and viewed forces more as a bargaining chip for diplomacy than a threat to be used. Scowcroft's views closely mirrored the president's.[54] Powell, on the other hand, did not advocate an ambitious mission or large deployment of forces, as the bureaucratic model might expect for a JCS chair facing declining budgets. Instead, Powell pushed the more limited goal of deterring an attack on Saudi Arabia coupled with a new regime of economic sanctions to compel Iraqi withdrawal. Still, Powell urged an all-or-nothing approach: if Bush was to deploy forces, he should do so on a large scale, using enough forces to

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[51] Woodward, *The Commanders*.

[52] Interview with Scowcroft, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline*.

[53] Yetiv also concludes that stands did not closely follow seats in the Gulf War and that the bureaucratic politics model performs poorly in explaining key U.S. decisions. However, Yetiv primarily examines decisions on the path to war, and not operational military decisions or post-war defense procurement, where we argue that bureaucratic political dynamics had the greatest impact. See Yetiv, *Explaining Foreign Policy*, 122–37.

[54] Interview with Scowcroft, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline*.

win with minimal casualties and making an iron-clad commitment that could not be revoked.

Powell's position is best explained by an organizational culture model. Powell's all-or-nothing attitude toward the use of force closely fits the post-Vietnam culture of the U.S. military.[55] In Powell's view, which became known as the "Powell Doctrine," the United States should only deploy military forces when specific criteria are met: it is on behalf of clearly defined objectives and in defense of vital national interests; it is used in an overwhelming manner, with a particular emphasis on ground power; and its goals could achieve wide and sustainable public support.[56] The goal of these rules was to avoid what Powell and his generation of army officers viewed as the mistakes of Vietnam, in which U.S. goals were ill-defined, public support waned, and U.S. civilian leaders failed to bring the full weight of U.S. military power to bear on the conflict. As Powell stated in the 1992 *National Military Strategy of the United States*, guiding U.S. strategic principles included "the concept of applying decisive force to overwhelm our adversaries and thereby terminate conflicts swiftly with a minimum loss of life."[57] The overall result was a cautious and conservative attitude toward the use of force: the military was to be used as a last resort, and only then in an overwhelming fashion. These basic tenets of the Powell Doctrine largely came to define the conventional wisdom among much of the military leadership and officer corps.[58]

As the organizational culture model expects, Powell's and Schwarzkopf's positions on the developing Gulf crisis closely reflected this post-Vietnam consensus within the army. As army officers, Powell and Schwarzkopf favored heavy ground forces and viewed light and mobile ground forces as inadequate.[59] Among the members of Bush's NSC, Powell was the most cautious about the use of force and the most wary of committing U.S. forces

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[55] See, for example, Michael Gordon, "Generals Favor 'No Holds Barred' By U.S. if Iraq Attacks the Saudis," *New York Times*, 25 August 1990, 1.

[56] On the "Powell Doctrine," see Colin Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995); and Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1993). Powell's views are also similar to the "Weinberger Doctrine," named after Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, with whom Powell had worked. See Casper Weinberger, "The Uses of Military Power," News Release 609–84, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, Washington, DC, November 1984.

[57] Colin Powell, *National Military Strategy of the United States* (Washington: U.S. Department of Defense, 1992), 10.

[58] In addition to the influence of organizational culture, Powell's attitudes (and those of other senior U.S. military officers) toward the use of force might also be consistent with a cognitive model of reasoning by analogy, based on his experience in Vietnam. These explanations are complementary—after the painful experience of Vietnam, the lessons taken away from the war (for example, the Powell criteria) were incorporated into the Army's post-Vietnam organizational culture, especially as junior officers moved into leadership positions. On analogical reasoning in decision making, see Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

[59] Woodward, *The Commanders*, 232 and 272.

half-heartedly for objectives that could not sustain public support. Accordingly, Powell presented Cheney and Bush with essentially all-or-nothing options.[60] Even more markedly, Powell disdained the view that air power alone would be sufficient and "deplored the attitude that you could just drop a few bombs, launch a few Tomahawk missiles, and keep the attack 'surgical' and limited."[61] This attitude fits with the organizational culture of the army through which Powell had risen, with the army's dissatisfaction over the limited effectiveness of air strikes in the Vietnam War in which Powell served, and with the army's long-term battle with the air force over what the army viewed as inadequate attention to the mission of close air support of ground forces.[62]

Schwarzkopf, a fellow career army officer, closely shared Powell's views on the difficulty of achieving success, the necessity of ground forces, and the importance of using overwhelming force, providing further evidence for the organizational culture model. Schwarzkopf was somewhat more sympathetic to air power than Powell, but still viewed it as a weapon that could assist in a ground campaign but could not itself be decisive. He shared the army culture's suspicion of "strategic" bombing, having left Vietnam "with the impression that the fly-boys promised more than they could deliver."[63] Powell's and Schwarzkopf's caution was also broadly shared among other senior army commanders in the theater. Gen. Gary E. Luck, for example, privately confided to Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Paul Wolfowitz that he did not believe Kuwait was worth the lives of U.S. service members.[64]

Powell's and Schwarzkopf's strong preference for an all-or-nothing deployment, including heavy ground forces, might instead be interpreted as consistent with a rational actor explanation in view of the military situation in the Gulf—after all, the strategy worked better than anyone, including Powell, expected.[65] However, Powell's strong views on this issue constrained the military options reaching the president in the first critical days of the crisis, so much so that Cheney sought other channels of information and forcefully expressed his dissatisfaction with the options Powell provided. The rift between Cheney and Powell constitutes an anomaly for the bureaucratic politics model that the organizational culture model helps resolve. From a bureaucratic politics perspective, these leaders occupied similar seats and should have shared an interest in expanding the military's role in the Gulf crisis and in the post-Cold War environment more generally. As it turned

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[60] Tyler, "The Cheney-Powell Relationship."

[61] Woodward, *The Commanders*.

[62] See Andrew Rosenthal, "Military Chief: Man of Action and Politics," *New York Times*, 17 August 1990, 1.

[63] Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 47.

[64] Ibid., 149.

[65] On the importance of ground forces to the U.S. victory, see Biddle, "Victory Misunderstood"; and Press, "The Myth of Air Power in the Persian Gulf."

out, Cheney, a political appointee who had not served in the military, was more hawkish on the offensive military option than most of the uniformed military leaders, including Powell and Schwarzkopf.[66]

The Second Deployment Decision: October 1990

The Iraqi invasion set the agenda for the first phase of the crisis, but by October the United States began seizing the initiative in the Gulf. This agenda-setting process was both bottom-up and top-down. Schwarzkopf and Powell were increasingly uneasy with the absence of a clearly defined mission for the U.S. forces arriving in the Gulf, and Powell began pushing Cheney in early October for a more formal decision process to clarify the mission. At the same time, Powell continued to lobby Cheney, Baker, and Scowcroft on behalf of a mission of containing and deterring Iraq while giving sanctions time to work. These efforts culminated in a White House meeting of Bush, Scowcroft, Cheney, and Powell on September 24. Powell attempted to make the case to Bush for a strategy of containing Iraq through sanctions and deterrence instead of building up forces for a military offensive, although he also conceded that he could not guarantee that the sanctions strategy would compel Iraq to exit Kuwait.[67] According to Powell's recollection of the meeting, Bush concluded that "it's good to consider all the options but I just don't think we're going to have time for sanctions to work."[68]

Within days of this meeting, Bush asked Powell and Schwarzkopf to immediately prepare a briefing on possible offensive plans. With such short notice, Schwarzkopf and his staff quickly created a briefing on an offensive option using only forces and deployments currently in the theater. On October 10, Schwarzkopf's chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Robert Johnston, presented a four-phase plan to Bush and the NSC involving air attacks first on Iraqi command and control and air forces, then on supplies and transport facilities, and then on Iraqi ground forces. These would be followed by an "up the middle" army ground assault and a Marine amphibious assault directly into Iraqi forces in Kuwait, with only limited flanking attacks. Both Powell and Scowcroft asked whether a major flanking attack to the west might be possible, but according to Johnston initial analysis showed that the terrain to the west would not support heavy armor. Johnston also warned that Schwarzkopf would need three more heavy armor divisions.[69]

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[66] As will be discussed below, Cheney also tended to be more aggressive in planning the offensive ground campaign. On Cheney's role, see Michael Gordon, "Cracking the Whip," *New York Times*, 27 January 1991.

[67] On this meeting, see interview with Powell, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline*.

[68] Interview with Powell, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline*.

[69] Friedman and Tyler, "The Path to War," 1.

Bush, Cheney, Scowcroft, and the NSC staff were all highly dissatisfied with the initial offensive plan. Scowcroft was "appalled" by the plan, while Cheney found it "unimaginative."[70] Following the briefing, Cheney again tasked his staff to produce alternative offensive options for the president, this time proposing a plan in which the United States would place forces in western Iraq to draw attention away from the main attack into the Kuwaiti theater. According to Cheney, this was intended to "send a message through the organization" that "one way or another we're going to get an option . . . that allows us to launch offensive action to go after the Iraqis."[71]

Shortly thereafter, concerned at the negative response to the October 10 briefing, Powell visited the Gulf to get Schwarzkopf's "wish list" for a better offensive option. Schwarzkopf told Powell that the U.S. forces in the region would need to be doubled, including an increase from three to six aircraft carriers and a second army corps in addition to the one already deployed. Schwarzkopf also told Powell that he was not convinced that an offensive operation was the best U.S. course of action, a view that Schwarzkopf publicly shared in an interview with the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* the following week.[72] When Powell returned to the United States, the new Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen. Merrill McPeak, urged that if an offensive operation were to be launched, "the sooner the better for the Air Force." Further time, he noted, would allow the Iraqis to dig themselves in against air attacks. Powell replied that the other services needed more time to prepare for a ground offensive, particularly the army. The other chiefs agreed with Powell, so McPeak did not take his argument to the president or Cheney.[73]

The final decision to escalate the U.S. build-up came in an October 30 meeting among Bush, Baker, Cheney, Scowcroft, and Powell. Powell presented and supported Schwarzkopf's estimate of the expanded force requirements needed to carry out a successful offensive operation to eject Iraq from Kuwait. In addition to Schwarzkopf's request for a second army corps, Powell recommended doubling the number of Marine forces, deploying three additional aircraft carriers, and doubling the number of air force planes. Cheney stated that he agreed and strongly advocated deploying these forces. Bush approved this move verbally in the meeting and formally the next day. The decision increased U.S. troops in the region from two hundred thirty

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[70] Interview with Scowcroft, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline*; and interview with Richard Cheney, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline*, available at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/cheney/1.html.

[71] On this plan, which became known as the "western excursion," see interview with Cheney, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline*.

[72] Joseph Albright, "Crisis in the Gulf: An Interview With Top U.S. Commander," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 28 October 1990, A12.

[73] Woodward, *The Commanders*, 313–14.

thousand to five hundred thousand and provided the forces necessary to carry out a large-scale ground offensive.[74]

APPLYING THE MODELS TO THE SECOND DEPLOYMENT DECISION

As in the first phase, the president was again dominant in deciding among options, but this sequence does provide evidence consistent with each of the three models. In line with the presidential dominance model, Bush clearly chose among the options before him, even if not all of those options were fully articulated. Throughout the crisis he insisted that Kuwait must be freed. It was Bush who requested that Powell provide a full offensive option, and it was Bush who chose this option once it was presented. Bush rejected the first ground campaign plan for a direct assault into the Iraqi military position in Kuwait and sought other options, eventually producing the army's "Left Hook" plan, which the United States ultimately used to defeat the Iraqi army through a massive army flanking assault from the west. As in first phase, Scowcroft and Cheney sought to expand the range of available military options reaching the president after the briefing of the "up the middle" plan. According to Cheney, he along with Bush and Scowcroft were "the most aggressive in terms of wanting to develop a military option" and "leaned the hardest on the military to produce an adequate plan."[75]

For the bureaucratic politics model, both Cheney and Scowcroft agreed with their boss in advocating an offensive option. Also consistent with this model, Baker preferred a diplomatic approach over a military offensive.[76] In testimony to Congress in September and cabinet debates, Baker urged patience in letting sanctions work.[77] Finally, Powell and Schwarzkopf urged long-term containment and argued that if forces were to be used at all, they should be used massively. Only Air Force Chief of Staff McPeak argued for the use of air forces before massive ground forces were in place, a position consistent with his bureaucratic seat.

Some of this same evidence is also consistent with the organizational culture model. In particular, it was army Gen. Powell who blocked the suggestion from air force Gen. McPeak that air forces should be used before all ground forces were in place. In addition, the services signed on to, or at least did not oppose, Powell's "all or nothing" view of using force, and it is worth noting that every service was included in the initial offensive plan. The organizational culture model expects that this unanimity should have

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[74] Friedman and Tyler, "The Path to War," 1.

[75] Interview with Cheney, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline*.

[76] Thomas Friedman, "Baker Seen as Balance to Bush on Crisis in Gulf," *New York Times*, 3 November 1990.

[77] Andrew Rosenthal, "Baker Warns U.S. To Have Patience on Iraq Embargo," *New York Times*, 6 September 1990, 1.

diminished as the plan came to emphasize some services over others. The Marines, for example, should be expected to have raised objections when the amphibious assault envisioned in this early plan was later dropped.

Finally, as in the first phase, Powell and Schwarzkopf sought to dissuade policy makers from offensive action—or at least to impress upon them the degree of commitment necessary—by presenting high force requirements. Both Scowcroft and Robert M. Gates, the deputy national security advisor, concluded that the large force requests were in part an attempt to deter the civilian leaders from taking aggressive military action. According to Gates, "The White House had been accustomed over the years to the military coming in with very large force requirements for contingency plans. This was clearly partly out of caution, but there was also the perception that at times it was to dissuade the President from action."[78] According to Scowcroft, the October 10 briefing "sounded to me like a briefing by people who didn't want to do it."[79] Cheney also viewed the large requests as reflecting a post-Vietnam military culture in which "senior military commanders had had the experience of a political leadership that was not full square behind the effort."[80]

Decisions on the Path to War: November 1990-January 1991

In November 1990 the United States intensified its efforts to get a United Nations (UN) resolution authorizing the use of force to expel Iraq from Kuwait, with Secretary of State Baker leading the diplomatic initiative. The UN passed a resolution on November 29 authorizing "all necessary means" to compel Iraq from Kuwait if it had not withdrawn by 15 January 1991. Immediately after the passage of this resolution, Bush and Baker initiated a final diplomatic effort to resolve the conflict, over the objections of several presidential advisors.[81] After some haggling, the United States and Iraq agreed on a meeting between Baker and Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz in Geneva on January 9, which ended with no progress.

In the same week as the UN resolution in November, Senator Sam Nunn held a series of hearings on the crisis in the Gulf. Former Joint Chiefs of Staff chairs Adm. William Crowe and Gen. David Jones testified in favor of giving sanctions as much as a year to eighteen months to work.[82] Their views echoed statements by Schwarzkopf and by Marine Gen. Alfred Gray arguing for more time for sanctions. Schwarzkopf, for example, stated to the press

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[78] Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 154.
[79] Interview with Scowcroft, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline.*
[80] Interview with Cheney, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline.*
[81] Interview with Baker, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline.*
[82] House Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings on Crisis in the Persian Gulf Region: U.S. Policy Options and Implications*, 101st Cong., 2nd sess. 1990.

on November 29 that "I really don't think there is ever going to come a time when time is on the side of Iraq as long as the sanctions are in effect . . . if the alternative to dying is sitting out in the sun for another summer, that's not a bad alternative."[83] Cheney and Powell testified that Saddam could ride out sanctions and that the use of ground force was the only way to guarantee the removal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait.[84]

In the absence of diplomatic progress in December and early January, U.S. military preparations continued in the Gulf. In late December, the Deputy Commander of U.S. forces in the Gulf, Gen. Calvin Waller, took the surprising step of announcing that U.S. ground forces would not be ready for an offensive by the UN deadline of January 15.[85] This led to a flurry of criticisms and denials from White House aides, who argued that the U.S. military would indeed be ready to begin offensive operations by January 15.[86] Still, news reports indicated that Waller's view was widely shared within the military.[87] Shortly after Waller's statement, with the collapse of Baker's diplomatic effort in Geneva on January 9, the momentum toward war accelerated. In the face of the UN deadline, Congress voted on January 12 to support the use of force to expel Iraq from Kuwait. Bush signed the order to commence military operations in the Gulf on January 15 and the first air strikes began the next day.

APPLYING THE MODELS TO THE INITIATION OF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

This phase of the crisis again shows Bush in an active role, approving Baker's diplomatic initiative, overseeing strategy with the Congress, and giving the final order to use military force. Bush sought both UN Security Council approval and congressional authorization because he believed each was necessary to keep the international coalition intact and maintain public support. He did so over the objections of advisors who believed that the White House had sufficient authority without either the congressional or UN Security council vote. Bureaucratic players, including Cheney and Baker, maintained roles similar to those they had established early on: Cheney actively preserved the option of using force while Baker concentrated on diplomacy, although Baker eventually shifted his emphasis from sanctions to the threat of force.

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[83] Douglas Jehl, "Perspective on the Persian Gulf: This General Is No Custer Leadership," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 November 1990, 7.

[84] House Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings on Crisis in the Persian Gulf: Sanctions, Diplomacy, and War*, 101st Cong., 2nd sess., 1990.

[85] Eric Schmitt, "Forces Not Ready for January War, U.S. General Says," *New York Times*, 20 December 1990, 1; and interview with Calvin Waller, *Frontline Gulf War Oral History*, available at www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/waller/1.html.

[86] Thomas Friedman, "U.S. Says General's Remark is Hurting Its Gulf Strategy," *New York Times*, 20 December 1990, A20.

[87] Michael Gordon, "Military Leaders Reported to Urge a Delay in Attack," *New York Times*, 25 December 1990, 1.

The most interesting development in this phase concerned the roles of Powell, his JCS predecessors, and other senior military officers. The behavior by Powell and others in the military illustrates the dilemma that actors face when the dictates of bureaucratic politics and the pull of organizational cultures are at cross-purposes. Constrained by the desire to maintain influence within the Bush administration, Powell had been very cautious in voicing his concern that the use of force would be costly and his preference for a policy of economic sanctions and long-term containment. Adm. Crowe and Gen. Jones, free of the bureaucratic ties binding Powell but sharing with him the post-Vietnam culture of the military, openly expressed sentiments that Powell privately shared.[88] Closer to the action, but further from the president, Schwarzkopf, Marine Commandant Gen. Gray, and Gen. Waller each risked friction with the White House by indicating publicly their reservations regarding the early use of force. Waller, in particular, expressed the widespread view in the military that offensive operation should be delayed until mid-February, compelling Cheney and Powell to bring this view to President Bush. Consistent with his defensive orientation from the first phase, Schwarzkopf indicated in public comments that waiting for sanctions to work would be preferable to an unnecessary military offensive. The demands of their organizations' cultures—concern for the lives of their troops, intensified by a post-Vietnam hesitancy to use force unless all the "Weinberger criteria" were met—outweighed even a risk to their careers.[89]

Key Decisions on Military Strategy: August 1990-January 1991

Although by any military measure the ground war to eject Iraq from Kuwait was a resounding success for the United States, the U.S. military strategy was not a subject of unanimous acclaim in the months leading up to war. Instead, it was the outcome of considerable debate and maneuvering over the roles of the air force, army, navy, and Marine forces and the consequence of decades of procurement decisions within each service. As expected, bureaucratic politics and organizational cultures were at their most influential in this implementation stage of the policy process.

The most important debate over U.S. military strategy concerned the roles of U.S. air and ground forces. In terms of air power, many in the air force saw the war as an opportunity to demonstrate that a decisive offensive strategic air campaign was now possible. The initial air force plan presented

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[88] A third former JCS chairman, Adm. Thomas Moorer, joined other former officials in urging President George W. Bush to use force in the Gulf if necessary. See Eric Schmitt, "Use Force in Gulf, 14 Ex-Aides Urge," *New York Times*, 18 December 1990.

[89] For further reports of military officers who worried over the premature use of force but did not speak publicly for fear of damaging their careers, see John Broder, "Disquiet Grows in U.S. Military Over Buildup," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 December 1990, 1.

to Schwarzkopf on 19 August 1990, named "Instant Thunder," called for six days of intensive bombing targeted not only at Iraqi ground forces in Kuwait, but at targets in Iraq, including the Iraqi leadership, its central command and control facilities, and national infrastructure targets such as electrical grid, oil refineries, and transportation and communication networks. The plan thus envisioned air power as the primary offensive weapon: the U.S. military objectives of defeating Iraq's military forces and compelling a withdrawal from Kuwait would be achieved by a strategic air campaign alone, without a protracted ground war. Traditional air missions such as tactical support for ground operations, interdiction, and preparing for a ground campaign by degrading enemy forces would be secondary. In addition, the plan relied heavily on technological advances made in precision guided munitions and stealth aircraft such as the F-117.[90]

The debate over the Instant Thunder plan became public early in the crisis when the Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen. Michael Dugan, gave an interview to several reporters in which he argued that "air power is the only answer that's available to our country" to avoid high casualties in the Gulf. Dugan went on to state that the best way to hurt Saddam was to target his family, his personal guard, and his mistress; that the air force anticipated "latitude" in picking Iraqi targets with few political constraints; and that air attacks on Iraqi forces would be so devastating that U.S. ground forces could merely "walk in and not have to fight house-to-house."[91] The day after this interview appeared, Cheney fired Gen. Dugan for showing "lack of judgment" in disclosing "operational details," denigrating the roles of the other services, and prejudging presidential decisions.[92] Despite the fate of Gen. Dugan, his successor, Gen. McPeak, continued to argue that air power should play the primary role in the Gulf conflict. McPeak urged Powell to begin an air offensive much earlier than the January 15 deadline and argued that an air campaign alone could destroy fifty percent of Iraq's military equipment.[93]

Powell, however, consistently opposed any offensive strategy that relied on air power as the central weapon, arguing that only overwhelming ground power could ensure a victory. In meetings with military planners, Powell made clear that he would not recommend a plan to the president that relied on air power alone to defeat Iraq. Powell was particularly concerned that the plan pushed by Warden, McPeak, and others presented an illusory easy option to policy makers who wanted to commit U.S. military power but were looking to minimize costs. Powell intervened in the key October 11 meeting

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[90] On the planning and formulation of the air campaign, see Thomas A. Keaney and Eliot A. Cohen, *Revolution in Warfare: Air Power in the Persian Gulf* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 22–44; and John A. Warden III, *The Air Campaign: Planning for Combat* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1988).

[91] Rick Atkinson, "U.S. to Rely on Air Strikes if War Erupts," *Washington Post*, 16 September 1990, 1.

[92] R. Jeffrey Smith, "Chief of Air Staff Fired By Cheney," *Washington Post*, 18 September 1990, 1.

[93] Woodward, *The Commanders*, 341.

with Bush and the NSC team, stating unequivocally to Bush that a strategic air campaign "will not meet your objectives. I cannot assure you that Iraqi ground forces will be out of Kuwait just because we do an air campaign."[94] Powell reiterated this view in public, stating in congressional testimony in December that "One can hunker down, one can dig in, one can disperse to try to ride out such a single-dimension attack."[95] Schwarzkopf was more favorable to Instant Thunder when briefed on the plan in August, but like Powell considered it primarily a way to degrade Iraqi military strength prior to a ground campaign rather than a decisive instrument in itself.[96]

A second important strategic issue concerned the role of Marine amphibious forces. Schwarzkopf's hastily devised October "up the middle" plan included a Marine amphibious assault, but this element was subsequently dropped in CENTCOM planning. This was a source of friction between Schwarzkopf, who decided against such a maneuver, and several subordinate Marine commanders who argued in its favor.[97] After the October plan was rejected by Bush and the NSC, Schwarzkopf's CENTCOM planning group, dominated by army personnel, continued to relegate the Marines to a secondary role. Schwarzkopf's planners first envisioned the Marines breaching Iraqi fortifications as the lead-in to the main army land offensive. According to a Marine Corps history, the Marines "became concerned . . . that the CENTCOM planners were developing a concept of operations that treated I MEF [Marine Expeditionary Force] as if it were an Army Corps," or planned to use Marine air assets to support army units.[98] A later version used the Marines as a "feint" or "fixing attack" to threaten an amphibious assault and hold Iraqi forces in place near the Saudi-Kuwait border, protecting the U.S. Army while it conducted the main attack on Republican Guard divisions in southern Iraq. According to Lt. Gen. Walter Boomer, the CENTCOM Marine Air-Ground Commander, these missions asked the Marines "to conduct a supporting attack and that just drove some Marines crazy. They would say, 'We got to be in the main attack.'"[99]

In addition to these strategic decisions, U.S. military operations involved numerous tactical decisions on what kind of forces to deploy and use in the Gulf. In three cases, the United States suffered from important deficiencies

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[94] This is Gordon and Trainor's paraphrasing of Powell in their reconstruction of the October 11 meeting, based on notes and interviews with participants. Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 137. See also interview with Powell, *Frontline Gulf War Oral History*.

[95] Powell, Testimony to the Armed Services Committee, 3 December 1990.

[96] Interview with Norman Schwarzkopf, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline*, available at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/schwarzkopf/2.html.

[97] House Armed Services Committee, *Defense for a New Era: Lessons of the Persian Gulf War* (Washington: US GPO, 1992), 42.

[98] Col. Charles J. Quilter II, "U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf, 1990–1991: With the I Marine Expeditionary Force in Desert Shield and Desert Storm," History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, DC, 1993, 20.

[99] Quoted in Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 159.

in the kinds of forces available for deployment. First, despite the Reagan-era military build-up, the United States was deficient in sealift capability. In previous budget decisions, essential but mundane logistical programs such as ocean transport were consistently assigned a low priority relative to the weapons systems and cutting-edge technologies seen as more central to the services' war-fighting missions. In the year before the Gulf crisis, for example, the Pentagon pushed aside congressional efforts to buy four more of these ships, and the six hundred million dollars that Congress approved for this purpose was shifted to other programs or left unspent.[100] The result was that, following Bush's initial decision to deploy forces to the Gulf, the U.S. military had only a limited capacity in moving forces to the CENTCOM theater. Only about a third of the reserve fleet actually deployed on schedule, and to make up for gaps in transport capacity, the military heavily relied on private and commercial transport, often at an inflated price.[101]

Second, the United States was severely deficient in its mine-clearing expertise, training, and equipment on land and at sea. Mine-clearing capability was necessary to support a possible Marine amphibious assault by placing supporting firepower near the Kuwait coast. As a House Armed Services Committee report concluded, however, the "significant Iraqi mine threat contributed to CENTCOM's decision not to conduct an amphibious landing on the beaches of Kuwait," and the United States was forced to rely heavily on minesweeping ships from America's NATO allies.[102] Gen. Boomer later reported that he and Schwarzkopf decided against an amphibious assault in part because of the expected delay in clearing mines along the Kuwait coast and the resulting concern over high casualties.[103]

In a third case, the United States had a highly effective weapons system in hand, the A-10 ground attack aircraft, but almost failed to deploy it in sufficient numbers. The A-10 was designed for close air support missions, but the air force had long disdained the slow and ungainly A-10, favoring sleeker and faster combat aircraft, and it had slated much of the A-10 fleet for retirement before the war. Early in the planning process, however, Generals Powell and Schwarzkopf decided to increase the number of A-10s projected for deployment in the Gulf.[104] In the end, the 150 A-10s deployed in the Gulf destroyed approximately 1,000 tanks and 1,200 artillery pieces, about one quarter of Iraq's arsenal. Its "mission capable" rate was around 95.7 percent,

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[100] Eric Schmitt, "Pentagon Faces Daunting Challenge in Rushing Sizable Force to Mideast," *New York Times*, 14 August 1990, A10.

[101] Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 57–59.

[102] HASC, *Defense for a New Era*, 29.

[103] Interview with General Walt Boomer, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline*, available at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/boomer/1.html.

[104] Andy Pasztor and Gerald Seib, "Force in Gulf Reflects Colin Powell's Vision: Its Big and Mobile," *Wall Street Journal*, 15 October 1990, A1.

and A-10s flew more sorties—8,084—than any other aircraft in the USAF with the exception of the C-130 (airlift) and the F-16.[105]

Finally, the military services had substantial disagreements over the tactics of American forces in the Gulf. In one of the most significant instances, air force and army staff clashed over targeting priorities in the air campaign. Army staff believed that the air component command was overly focused on "strategic" targets inside Iraq (and particularly in Baghdad) at the expense of degrading Iraqi ground forces in anticipation of the start of the ground war and created daily procedures to ensure that air strikes were not diverted away from the tactical mission of "preparing the battlefield." According to Gen. Waller, "the ground forces commanders were very concerned that the targets out to their immediate front were not being hit with the frequency that they felt that would soften up or destroy these targets so it would make their job easier to breach the enemy lines and to reach their objectives."[106] From the perspective of the chief of the CENTCOM air offensive Gen. Buster Glosson, however, "We believed . . . that the attacking of targets in Baghdad had as much or more to do with the success or failure of that field army than attacking [Iraqi divisions] directly."[107]

APPLYING THE MODELS TO DECISIONS ON MILITARY STRATEGY

Despite these tensions and disagreements among the services, there is some evidence for the presidential dominance model in this phase of the crisis. Bush, through Cheney's firing of Gen. Dugan, made clear that he was the ultimate arbiter on major strategic and political decisions. In addition, the streamlined chain of command created by the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act allowed Bush, Cheney, and Schwarzkopf (and Powell, thought not formally in the chain of command) to craft a coherent strategy and enforce decisions when disputes arose between services. Schwarzkopf's decision not to use a Marine amphibious assault illustrates this process, although the objection of some in the Marine Corps to this decision also indicates that important differences can arise in crises between organizations that share goals but differ on tactics. As one report noted, the single chain of command created by Goldwater-Nichols "did not terminate inter-service disagreements—it made their resolution possible."[108] Finally, Bush made the decision to terminate

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[105] John Fialka, "A-10 'Warthog,' A Gulf War Hero, Would Fly to Scrap Heap if Air Force Brass Has Its Way," *Wall Street Journal*, 29 March 1991, A12; and Judith Miller and Eric Schmitt, "Ugly Duckling Turns Out to Be Formidable in the Air," *New York Times*, 23 November 2001, B1. The most comprehensive assessment of the performance of American aircraft in the Gulf War is Thomas A. Keaney and Eliot A. Cohen, *Gulf War Air Power Survey* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, 1993). On the A-10, see vol. 1, 156 and 167.

[106] Interview with Waller, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline*.

[107] Interview with Glosson, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline*.

[108] HASC, *Defense for a New Era*, 42.

the war on February 27 before all Republican Guard divisions had been encircled and destroyed, over the objections of some commanders in the field.

However, this stage of the policy process provides greater evidence for the other two models. The policy preferences of the army, navy, air force, and Marines, even if overridden at times by the unified chain of command, were largely consistent with what the bureaucratic politics and organizational culture models expect. The air force lobbied hard to place air power at the center of the offensive, pushing a plan in which an air campaign would be allowed to win the war on its own rather than serving as a prelude to a wider ground offensive. Once the air campaign got underway, air force staff prioritized strategic targets in Baghdad over tactical strikes necessary to prepare for the ground offensive, creating friction with army commanders. Similarly, the Marines pushed for a central role in the ground offensive and resisted when they believed plans employed them like ordinary army units or gave them a minor role. Marine Generals Gray and Boomer prepared for an amphibious assault operation, but were constrained by the lack of mine clearing capability and the high risk of casualties. Army Generals Powell and Schwarzkopf continued to emphasize the need for ground forces while expressing skepticism about relying on air power alone.

The evidence from this period suggests that the bureaucratic competition between the military services intensified as the deadline for the initiation of the U.S. offensive approached. However, the ways in which individuals and the services pursued these priorities also suggests that organizational cultures were a more powerful influence than bureaucratic politics. Individuals sometimes risked their careers—and in Gen. Dugan's case ended a career—in their pursuit of organizational goals. Dugan's case is particularly instructive—his statements to the press did not appear to be designed to advance his self-interest or promote any specific programs. Instead, they clearly reflected the air force's dominant organizational culture: take the fight to the enemy, use strategic bombing to threaten what the enemy values most, dominate the air through mano-a-mano victories over the enemy's inferior technology and pilots, and relegate ground forces and close air support to a secondary role. Asked if he had hoped Iraq would be militarily defeated exclusively by air power, Gen. Horner replied, "Of course. I'm an airman."[109]

For the air force, the Gulf War provided an opportunity to turn its strategic air power doctrine—using long-range bombing, stealth, and precision-guided munitions to win a modern conventional war—from theory into practice. The Instant Thunder plan was driven in part by cultural factors within the air force. Air force planners framed Instant Thunder in such a way as to differentiate it from Vietnam-era mistakes. In a briefing to Schwarzkopf,

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[109] Quoted in Keaney and Cohen, *Air Power in the Persian Gulf*, 79.

Warden described the plan as "a focused, intense, air campaign designed to incapacitate Iraqi leadership and destroy key Iraqi military capability in a short period of time," and not, as in Vietnam, a "graduated, long-term campaign designed to provide escalation options to counter Iraqi moves."[110] Air power would be decisive. As Dugan stated in his ill-fated interview, "This wouldn't be a Vietnam-style operation, nibbling around the edges. The way to hurt you is at home, and it's not out in the woods somewhere. We're looking for the centers of gravity where airpower could make a difference early on."[111]

The effects of the military service cultures are even clearer in the availability and selection of forces deployed in the Gulf. The front-line fighting systems that each service considered to be the heart of its mission were abundantly available and readily deployed: main battle tanks, fighter and bomber aircraft, aircraft carriers and submarines, and amphibious assault ships. The forces that each service considered less central to its mission were either deployed on the orders of a commander outside the service branch in question (for example, Schwarzkopf and the A-10s) were deficient in quality or numbers (fast sealift ships) or were entirely absent until provided by U.S. allies or jury-rigged in the final days before the U.S. ground offensive (mine-clearing forces). In general, every service, consistent with the overall culture common to many military organizations, favored "tooth" over "tail." Ground combat forces outran their supply and support systems, and aerial tankers, not fighters or bombers, were the limiting factor in the number of daily air strikes.[112] The U.S. military deployment was slowed by the limited capability to move heavy forces into the theater. As a House Armed Services Committee study concluded from this experience, "an important lesson from Operation Desert Storm is that acquiring support systems consistent with high–tech weapons may be more important than buying the next generation plane or tank."[113]

The Defense Budgetary Process During and After the Crisis

A comparison of defense budget decision making during and after the war allows for a final test of the models in a crisis and post-crisis context. Proponents of weapons systems in budgetary trouble, particularly the B-2 bomber, the C-17 military transport aircraft, the Osprey V-22 tilt-rotor aircraft, and the navy's battleships, began to argue as early as August 1990 that their favored weapons systems would provide the specific capabilities needed in future crises like the Gulf War.[114] Such arguments helped defeat a bill to

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[110] Olsen, *Strategic Air Power in Desert Storm*, 105.

[111] Atkinson, "U.S. to Rely on Air Strikes if War Erupts."

[112] HASC, *Defense for a New Era*, 34–35.

[113] Ibid., 38.

[114] Richard Berke, "Peace Dividend: Casualty of the Gulf?" *New York Times*, 30 August 1990.

decommission the two remaining U.S. battleships.[115] The V-22 program managed to stay alive through the fall of 1990 with cautious advocacy from the Marines, who were in the difficult position of opposing Cheney's repeated efforts to cancel the V-22 program entirely.[116] More generally, Cheney argued in December 1990 that a war in the Gulf would endanger any hopes for a "peace dividend."[117]

Interservice maneuvering over the defense budget intensified after the war. Shortly after the crisis, the services began extolling their contribution to the war effort and downplaying those of rival military branches.[118] The services clashed over a Pentagon report on the lessons of the war and their implications for future budgets.[119] At one point, different service representatives fought over whether the report should use the term "air operations" or "air campaign," as a campaign is the main event in a war while an operation merely serves the purpose of a campaign.[120] The military services sought to influence histories of the war in other ways. Army reports that documented the prewar deterioration of the Iraqi army were kept classified, "apparently out of concern that the unflattering portrait of its adversary would diminish the Army's victory in the Gulf."[121] An official army study contended that air power contributed little to the destruction of the Republican Guard.[122] The air force in turn sought to frame the war as a victory for air power.[123]

The services also used their own interpretations of the lessons of the Gulf War to advance their favored weapons systems. For example, the navy and air force used the success of the F-117 stealth fighter to argue for a stealth naval aircraft and the stealth B-2 bomber.[124] At the same time, the services did not use the Gulf to justify several weapons that were highly effective but were not at the core of their organizational cultures. Despite its effectiveness in the Gulf War, the air force renewed its plans to reduce the A-10 force by 75 percent, which meant that A-10 cutbacks would account for four of the ten aircraft systems eliminated to meet Bush's post-Cold War budget.[125] The air force also continued to move at glacial speed on developing UAVs until

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[115] *National Journal*, 18 August 1990, 2,035.

[116] Mellisa Healy, "Warplane Survives Attacks: The Defense Secretary Twice Tried to Kill the V-22 Osprey, Part Plane and Part Helicopter," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 November 1990, 1.

[117] Mellisa Healy, "Cold War's 'Peace Dividend' Is in Jeopardy," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 December 1990, 13.

[118] Moore, "War Exposed Rivalries, Weaknesses in Military," A1.

[119] *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War: Final Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 1992).

[120] Barton Gellman, "Disputes Delay Gulf War History; Pentagon's Report Will Affect Future Budgets and Authority," *Washington Post*, 28 January 1992, A14.

[121] Gordon and Trainor, *The General's War*, 184.

[122] *Certain Victory: The U.S. Army in the Gulf War*, Office of the Chief of Staff, United States Army, Washington, DC, 1993.

[123] See, for example, interview with Horner, "Gulf War Oral History," *Frontline*.

[124] Moore, "War Exposed Rivalries, Weaknesses in Military," A1.

[125] Fialka, "A-10 'Warthog,' A Gulf War Hero," A12.

the CIA developed the highly-effective Predator UAV, armed it with Hellfire missiles, proved its effectiveness in the invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, and thereby threatened the air force's monopoly on air strike forces. In contrast, the air force readily embraced precision-guided munitions after the Gulf War, as the addition of the relatively inexpensive JDAM guidance package to existing munitions increased the effectiveness of existing piloted aircraft and thus did not threaten the role of the pilots at the core of the air force culture. Meanwhile, the air force continued to favor fighter aircraft like the F-16 and the F/A-18 over key support systems like tankers, reconnaissance aircraft, and older but still effective aircraft like the F-15E.[126] Attack aircraft such as the F-16 and F/A-18, despite limited range and night capability, were available in large numbers and continued to enjoy the navy's support after the war, while a shortage of Low Altitude Navigation Infrared for Night (LANTIRN) "pods" during the war limited the ability of F-16s and F-15Es to deliver precision munitions at night.[127] In an analysis of the post-Gulf War air force combat inventory, the House Armed Services Committee concluded that "looking beyond the aggregate numbers reveals shortages of the most useful combat aircraft and an abundance of the least useful."[128]

This pattern suggests that bureaucratic politics influenced the defense procurement aspect of the policy process, in which the president's personal participation was relatively low, more than they affected decisions on the use of force, although this outcome is mediated by the fact Congress plays a greater role in defense procurement. It also suggests that bureaucratic politics did indeed intensify after the crisis. However, the bureaucratic politics model only tells part of the story. Consistent with the organizational culture perspective, the services did not seize on the opportunities to expand forces and budgets they considered secondary to their core missions, such as the A-10 and support and transport capability.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CRISIS DECISION MAKING

The Gulf experience is consistent with our hypotheses on the conditions under which alternative crisis decision-making models are most and least powerful. The presidential dominance model was the most powerful explanation in the initial decision-making phase. President Bush was clearly in charge of selecting among the options that came before him, and specifically between the limited policy of defending of Saudi Arabia coupled with sanctions on Iraq, and the more aggressive policy of using force to roll back the Iraqi invasion. Scowcroft and Cheney served the president by working

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[126] HASC, *Defense for a New Era*, 39.
[127] Ibid., 40.
[128] Ibid., 40.

to ensure that he received a broad range of options, and in particular pressured the services to produce a better offensive military plan. This model was less powerful in explaining the details of the implementation and budgeting stages of the U.S. policy, although it still provided some leverage in explaining the broad outlines of U.S. military policy.

The bureaucratic politics model was accurate in predicting the stands of some, but not all, of the key players in the Gulf War planning process. In general, it was more accurate for those at the middle level of organizations (such as Dugan or Waller) than those political appointees at the top (such as Cheney, who frequently split with Powell). This model was better at explaining which options made it to President Bush than explaining why he chose particular options. It was at its most powerful at the implementation stage (where the various services fought to keep their missions central and opposed being relegated to a secondary or support role) and in subsequent budget decisions.

The military services competed heavily over the planning of the U.S. military offensive and sought to maximize their missions and roles, as expected by the bureaucratic politics model. However, they only did so in ways that were consistent with the prevailing cultural attitudes within each organization. Air force strategists lobbied for a plan in which air power might achieve U.S. military objectives without a ground offensive. The Marines believed that the initial CENTCOM plan used them in a supporting role to the main army attack and fought to ensure that their preferred doctrine for their service was included in the land offensive. Powell and Schwarzkopf, career army officers, were more cautious about committing military power, pushed for a defensive military mission only, and argued that U.S. policy makers should be prepared to apply overwhelming and decisive ground power if they did decide on the offensive option. They consistently opposed what they viewed as an overemphasis on air power, both in the military planning process and NSC meetings, and strongly cautioned Bush and the NSC staff against the temptation of an easy air power solution.

In addition, the organizational culture model helps explain several anomalies generated by the bureaucratic politics model. In particular, it suggests reasons for why bureaucrats might risk their own career interests, as Generals Dugan, Gray, Schwarzkopf, and Waller did, in publicly expressing their organizations' cultures even when this risked the president's anger. It also helps explain why the military services favored particular weapons systems over others, and why they did not always push for a higher profile or bigger budget for weapons that were vital and effective in the Gulf War but were inconsistent with the dominant culture within each organization. As with the bureaucratic politics model, this model was strongest in explaining the formulation and implementation of options, as well as the post-crisis budget process, and weaker in explaining why Bush chose the options he did.

Overall, these findings argue for greater attention to the influence of organizational cultures in crisis decisions. The tensions between the bureaucratic politics and organizational cultural models also suggest other "critical" cases where each argument might generate competing, testable expectations. In the 2003 Iraq War, for example, the Defense and State Departments competed over the responsibility to plan and oversee post-war nation building operations in Iraq.[129] Despite a war-fighting military culture that traditionally eschewed nation building, the Defense Department under Secretary Donald Rumsfeld initially asserted control over post-war planning and systematically excluded State Department personnel, including area experts and those with experience with postwar reconstruction operations, only to relinquish this control at later stages in the war. The tensions among Rumsfeld's desire for bureaucratic control, the uniformed military's reluctance to take on "nation building," and the State Department's effort to defend its traditional bureaucratic turf deserves close study. Additionally, the poor performance of the civilian and military leadership in transitioning from the end of conventional combat operations to counterinsurgency and stability operations in Iraq in 2003 represents an interesting test of the impact of each model during military crises.

Our research suggests two policy implications. First, Congress and the president will have to push forcefully to get approval of the weapons systems and missions that are vital for military effectiveness but that the military services may consider to be of secondary importance. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and his successor Robert Gates, for example, have been clearly justified in pushing to get the air force to accord an expanded role to UAVS over the air force's preference for advanced combat systems such as the F-22.[130] Gates has also rightly urged the armed forces to put more long-term emphasis on counterinsurgency operations, over resistance to maintain their traditional focus on conventional combat operations.[131] Second, presidents can get what they want during crises, but not by the mere coordination of preferences among like-minded individuals and organizations. Presidents will have to actively push for viable options, closely oversee implementation, and anticipate the biases of organizational cultures, which continue to operate in crises even when bureaucratic self-interest would seem to dictate otherwise.

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[129] See, for example, George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005); and Thomas Ricks**,** *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006).

[130] Robert M. Gates, "Secretary Gates Remarks at Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base, Montgomery Alabama," 21 April 2008, available at http://www.defenselink.mil. See also "Catch F-22 for Obama," *Christian Science Monitor*, 4 March 2009.

[131] Robert M. Gates, "Remarks as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates to the Association of the United States Army," 10 October 2007, available at http://www.defenselink.mil.