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The Political and Strategic Impact of Tactical-Level Subcultures, 1939-1995

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The Politics of Combat

The Political and Strategic Impact of Tactical-Level Subcultures, 1939–1995

Tony Ingesson

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1

Introduction

> Everything is very simple in war, but the simplest thing is difficult. These difficulties accumulate and produce a friction which no man can imagine exactly who has not seen war.
>
> — Carl von Clausewitz ([1832] 1997, p. 66)

Within political science, the lower levels of military organizations and their potential political impact have frequently been overlooked. Traditionally, the tactical level has been associated with the conduct of the practical aspect of operations, and it has rarely been considered to be relevant from a political science point of view. This despite the fact that military leaders at the lower levels, who command between a dozen and a few hundred troops, can have a major political impact (see for example McEvoy, 2011, p. 108). In addition, this phenomenon is becoming increasingly common (Ruffa et al., 2013, p. 323). Thus, robust theoretical tools for analyzing these military leaders as political actors are needed to further our understanding of both their impact and the mechanism behind their decisions.

This dissertation shows that *the subcultures at the lower levels of military organizations can have a major political impact, by influencing the decisions of lower-level military leaders.* Thus, military units with subcultures that have attitudes that converge with the attitudes required to achieve the political objectives are more likely to be successful, from a political point of view. By this I mean that they are more likely to be able to implement the policy goals in question.

To support this claim, I present cases in which decisions by lower-level military leaders have forced the resignation of a government,

escalated conflicts, and resulted in atrocious acts that have prompted massive cover-ups. In addition, I also analyze cases in which leaders from this category have decided the outcome of an entire war and saved countless civilians from violence and starvation.

I argue that lower-level military leaders are part of the public administration apparatus of a state. In essence, they are a type of street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 2010). This dissertation is, however, not only a contribution to the field of public administration. Since it concerns the extent to which political decision-makers can exercise control over military organizations, it also adds to the literature within the field of civil-military relations. Lower-level military leaders are thus relevant from a political science perspective both because they have a direct impact on the implementation of policies related to the security of the nation-state, and because their decisions can have exceptionally far-reaching political consequences. The political feedback resulting from their decisions can also act in either a constraining or an enabling way, which can have a direct impact on policy.

The main challenge for these military leaders is that under conditions of uncertainty and stress, they will not be able to rely fully upon previously issued orders, standard operating procedures or similar formal instructions, simply because not every situation can be assessed with sufficient precision within the time frame required for a decision. In short, the stress factor prevents the decision-maker from acquiring more information to reduce the uncertainty.[1] This is similar to how urgency and uncertainty affects policymakers (Holsti, 1977, p. 466).

Under such circumstances, organizational subcultures can provide clarity (Martin, 1992, p. 83). Indeed, just as in civilian organizations (see for example Hofstede, 1998; Detert et al., 2000; Bellou, 2008), I have found that military organizational cultures are made up of subcultures rather than being homogeneous entities. Since I focus on the subcultures that are found at the tactical level, as opposed to the strategic or operational levels, I refer to them as *tactical-level subcultures*. There is good reason to assume that subcultures also exist at the operational and strategic levels, but I have chosen to focus exclusively on the tactical level, for two reasons. First, the largest number of subcultures should logically exist at the tactical-level, where

[1] If there is stress, but not uncertainty, the result would be still be an informed decision. If there is uncertainty but not stress, the decision-maker could simply trade time for information, reducing the uncertainty until sufficient information had been obtained to make an informed decision. Thus, it is the combination of stress and uncertainty that produces the effect in question.

most of the personnel are to be found. Second, the impact of subcultures at this level is overlooked, since the existing literature on cultures in related empirical contexts focuses on the strategic level (see for example Allison and Zelikow, 1999, p. 153ff. Ångström, 2012b).

Within the vast landscape of public administration, there is arguably no organization better suited for the study of the impact of subcultures than the military, and especially the tactical level. Firstly, the core task of military organizations at the tactical level is to engage in combat, an inherently chaotic activity that is frequently characterized by uniquely high levels of uncertainty and stress, which triggers the circumstances where subcultures are most likely to have an impact.

Secondly, the stakes are uniquely high in military operations. Deployed units kill, and die, in the name of the state. Failure can mean the end of a regime, or the death of countless people, combatants and noncombatants alike. Third, military organizations are relatively large and relatively diverse in terms of specialization. Even if we exclude the civilian support elements, they include a myriad of branches and units, such as engineers, pilots, sailors, tank crews, infantrymen, rangers, and so on.

For these reasons, I have chosen to study subcultures in military organizations. While I argue that military organizations are unique within public administration, I nevertheless also argue that they are part of the latter. The difference is one in kind, rather than in degree.

In order to analyze these subcultures, I created a conceptual framework that defines the concept of tactical-level subcultures. Using a definition created by Stenelo (1972, p. 14), my framework should be regarded as a classification instrument, which serves to illuminate certain mechanisms. According to Stenelo (ibid., p. 14), conceptual frameworks "can be used in grouping or organizing material in categories which one wishes to investigate." More specifically, the conceptual framework can "sensitize the investigator to certain problem areas which seem highly relevant to a study of particular political phenomena" (ibid., p. 16). Thus, the concept of tactical-level subcultures is used as a tool to draw our attention to the factors that are of theoretical relevance for this dissertation. Once this has been achieved, a theory with predictive capabilities can be developed, using the conceptual framework.

Since the theories on subcultures used in civilian management research were unsuitable for military contexts, I kept only the bare minimum of them in my conceptual framework, namely the definition of subcultures as an expression of inconsistency in an organization and the idea that subcultures provide consensus. Using the empirical data

to guide me, I then constructed the rest of the framework, specifically designed to analyze subcultures in military organizations.

Using the conceptual framework to analyze my cases, I developed a theory that identifies the conditions under which these subcultures are more likely to have a positive or negative impact. In essence, my conclusion is that military units sent to implement crucial policy decisions in demanding environments, where they may encounter conditions of uncertainty and stress, should have a tactical-level subculture that is compatible with the political and strategic objectives. By this I mean that the attitudes of the tactical-level subcultures sent to implement policy should converge with the attitudes required to achieve those objectives. If that is not the case, leading politicians and generals may find themselves in a position where they have to deal with the repercussions of serious incidents caused by decisions made by lower-level military leaders.

The concept of tactical-level subcultures provides us with a tool for the better understanding of the role of junior military service members as implementers of policy. This is not merely a matter of increasing the effectiveness of military units, the most important aspect being to avoid the disasters associated with outcomes related to the opposite side of the scale. Rothstein (2002, pp. 76–77) has described implementation research as "the pathology of social science," referring to the frequent waste of resources as well as the unexpected side effects, unsuitable organizational structures and malevolent bureaucrats that have been scrutinized by this discipline. I argue that this pathology is not only useful to analyze traditional civilian bureaucracies, but that it is equally applicable to military organizations. However, I will not focus solely on the unwanted outcomes, as Rothstein's analogy implies, but also on examples of success, since this expands the universe of cases and adds policy-relevant insights that can be used not only to avert disasters, but also to facilitate successful implementation, and to improve effectiveness.

1.1 Theoretical Contribution

This dissertation views military decision-making from an implementation perspective, and argues that the findings brought by this approach are relevant not only to implementation research, but also to other

subfields of political science. In particular, this applies to civil-military relations, and more specifically, the "operational styles" literature (see for example Ruffa et al., 2013), which studies how cultural factors shape the decision-making of lower-level military leaders. According to (ibid., p. 216–217), national cultural factors have a decisive influence on the daily activities of military units deployed in peacekeeping operations.

By adding an explicit effectiveness perspective that includes a wide spectrum of armed conflicts, this dissertation expands considerably on the operational styles literature. In addition, I argue that the supposedly national-level characteristics studied by the operational styles literature are in fact subcultures. The conceptual framework and theory presented in this dissertation are also relevant for the issue of democratic control, which is commonly discussed in the civil-military relations literature. More specifically, the core of the literature in question revolves around the civil-military dilemma, usually defined as the need for society to ensure protection both by and from its armed forces (Schaub Jr., 2011, p. 238).

By highlighting the pitfalls of micromanagement, and instead proposing a different approach, emphasizing the importance of convergence between tactical-level subcultures and strategic objectives to ensure successful implementation, this dissertation contributes to that aspect of civil-military relations as well. I argue that democratic control that is too direct and detailed is actually counterproductive, and that a certain degree of autonomy must be granted to lower-level military leaders in order to achieve the political objectives. This conclusion corresponds to the street-level bureaucracy concept developed by Lipsky (2010, p. 15), who in a similar manner argues that lower-level employees in civilian public administration need to have a certain degree of autonomy in order to cope with the complexity of their everyday work.

The impact of organizational cultures on the implementation of policy has been thoroughly investigated through various theoretical approaches in political science. For example, March and Olsen (1989) describe what they call "the logic of appropriateness," defined as sets of norms outlining appropriate and inappropriate courses of action, which in turn influences the implementation carried out by lower-level officials in public administration.

In this dissertation, I have combined March and Olsen's framework with the concept of subcultures, as defined in civilian management research, adding perspectives drawn from military psychology and tactical decision-making. In my concept of tactical-level subcultures, I have expanded on March and Olsen's norm-oriented concept by adding

dimensions to include perception and decision-making. I also take the physical constraints and opportunities related to equipment into account, and how these functional aspects can shape tactical-level subcultures.

The tactical decisions that are an integral part of the implementation of foreign policy have to be made in conditions of extreme pressure and considerable risk. Tactical-level commanders carry a heavy burden of responsibility for the safety of the personnel under their command and for the potential political repercussions on their nation. As instruments of national security policy, military units frequently have a diversity of tasks and duties, both in wars between nation-states, and as part of other types of armed conflict, such as peacekeeping/peace enforcement operations.[2]

Some of the decision-makers involved in these often highly complex operations find themselves faced with extraordinarily difficult choices to make, frequently with cameras rolling to capture their every move. These choices, made in the mud of the battlefield, the red glow of a submarine or the pressing heat and acrid smell of a moving tank, are the focus of this dissertation. Among the myriads of uncontroversial routine decisions are to be found a significant number of high-stakes choices that have shaped the outcome of wars or contributed to the fall of governments. The tactical-level subcultures that shape these decisions should thus be of great interest to those who do research related to the use of military force, as well as the policy makers who send these men and women in uniform to implement their policies.

1.2 Hypotheses

The hypotheses that guide this dissertation are based on the assumption that lower-level military commanders can have a major political and strategic impact through their decisions. This assumption is supported by current research into civil-military relations. According to Ruffa et al. (2013, p. 323), "the lowest levels of military authority can have

[2]Intrastate conflicts ("civil wars") feature a dynamic different from those occurring on foreign soil. In the former, internal strife, matters of legitimacy, domestic judicial constraints, etc. play a prominent role. The inclusion of units involved as parties in such conflicts (as opposed to units participating as external actors, such as peacekeepers) would make the project too extensive, and for that reason they are considered to be outside the scope of this dissertation.

strategic consequences for the mission as a whole, and potentially, the reputation of the state conducting it."

In many cases, these military commanders will be able to rely on detailed orders, and to implement them in a fairly straightforward manner. However, military operations, in particular those that involve combat, can take on a relatively chaotic dimension. In addition, there may arise difficulties in surveying the situation and predicting the results of any given decision. This means that the commander's ability to make decisions becomes severely limited.

Thus, some sort of guidance is required, and this is where subcultures come into play. According to Martin (1992, p. 83), subcultures "bring clarity into a domain that would otherwise be overwhelmed by the unknown and uncertain." The concept of subcultures assumes that there are differences within a single organization, and that these differences challenge the notion of a single organizational culture.

By including the concept of subcultures, I challenge the proposition that a military organization has a single organizational culture. This leads us to the first assumption: *a single, national, military organization contains multiple subcultures.*

This goes against a common assumption in the literature on "operational styles" in contemporary civil-military relations: that national military organizations are homogeneous in terms of organizational culture (see for example Ruffa and Soethers, 2014, p. 223). The assumption that military organizations are comprised of subcultures also challenges the view that all professional military officers share certain values and norms, a concept known as the "military mind," coined in the hugely influential book *The Soldier and the State*, by Huntington (1964, p. 59). In the concluding chapter, I will discuss these rival concepts against the backdrop of the empirical material presented in this dissertation.

I will argue that not only is the concept of the military mind misleading, but that the entire dichotomy professional/non-professional is based on problematic assumptions. Similarly, I will argue that the operational styles literature overlooks important nuances in military organizations by ascribing too much importance to national-level organizational cultures in military organizations.

Now that we have assumed that subcultures exist within military organizations, we can logically expect that these subcultures shape decision-making among lower-level military leaders, which leads us to the following hypothesis:

H1 *The decisions of lower-level military leaders, especially under conditions of stress and uncertainty, are shaped by subcultures.*

By virtue of being subcultures, we can also expect differences to exist between these cultures, i.e. if they had all been identical, they would not be subcultures. In order to measure the differences between subcultures, I have chosen to focus on two key aspects. Most, if not all, deployed military units will have to cope with at least one of them.[3] The first is the attitude toward risk, as in direct physical danger. The second is the attitude toward noncombatants, defined as civilians and prisoners of war. Thus, we can expect to find a variation in attitudes toward risk and noncombatants among tactical-level subcultures.

Since we have already established that lower-level military leaders can have a major military impact, this logically leads us to a second assumption: *major political outcomes can be shaped by tactical-level subcultures, through the decisions made by lower-level military leaders.*

The theory developed using the conceptual framework follows logically: since subcultures shape decision-making and thus influence major political outcomes, these subcultures should be compatible with the political objectives at hand in order to maximize the likelihood of successful implementation. This leads us to the second hypothesis:

H2 *Convergence between the attitudes required to attain the political objectives, and the attitudes of the tactical-level subcultures of the implementing units, increases the likelihood of successful implementation, and vice versa.*

In order to test the hypotheses outlined above, we will need a suitable research design; this is the matter to which we will turn next.

1.3 Research Design

This dissertation employs a comparative case study design to test the hypotheses outlined above. Four case pairs are used, for a total of eight cases. The strategy that has guided the selection of cases is based on achieving the maximum amount of variation in terms of time period, geographical location, type of warfare, and organizational branch.

[3] By "deployed," I mean that the military unit is engaged in an actual operation, as opposed to training or exercises.

I also wanted the cases to be relatively well-known and thoroughly documented. The reason for this was two-fold: first, to facilitate discussion by drawing on cases of which a substantial number of people have at least some knowledge; second, to use cases generally recognized as at least somewhat typical within their category of conflict/warfare, rather than entirely unique cases (a limiting factor was that the cases had to be accessible in languages I can read).

They are drawn from a wide range of historical conflicts, the oldest dating back to World War II and the most recent to peacekeeping operations during the 1990s. The cases reflect unconventional units during traditional war in WWII; conventional units during traditional war in WWII as well as the 1973 Yom Kippur War; atrocities during WWII and the Vietnam War; and finally, peacekeeping operations in Bosnia.

DEFINITIONS: MILITARY LEVELS

The distinction between the strategic and tactical levels has ancient origins. Clausewitz defines it as follows: "tactics is *the theory of the use of military forces in combat.* [S]trategy is *the theory of the use of combats* [sic!] *for the object of the War*" [orig. italics] (Clausewitz, [1832] 1997, p. 75). However, Clausewitz (ibid., p. 22) also argued that "War is a mere continuation of policy by other means." Departing from this assumption, I consider the strategic and political level to be identical, within the context of this dissertation. While there are differences, they are of no consequence as regards the analysis of the political conseuqences of decisions made at the tactical level.

A more recent definition of the military levels can be found in *Field Manual No. 3-0: Operations* (2001), according to which they comprise the strategic level, the operational level and the tactical level. This field manual also states that the strategic level is "the level at which a nation [. . .] determines national and multinational security objectives and guidance[...]" (ibid., ch. 2-2). The tactical level is concerned with "the employment of units in combat", including "small unit and crew action", "engagements" and "battles" (ibid., ch. 2-3 to 2-5). The third and last level, the operational, is a more recent addition, linking the strategic and tactical levels, but is rarely mentioned outside purely military contexts. According to the *Field Manual No. 3-0: Operations* (2001, ch. 2-2 to 2-5), it is the level "at which campaigns and major operations are conducted and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives."

The level of interest for this dissertation is primarily the tactical one, since this is where implementation takes place. The events that take place at the strategic level, and the formation of policy, will not be scrutinized. The operational level will be touched upon in few cases, since it serves as a bridge between strategy and tactics, but only to the extent that it has a direct influence on tactical decisions.

1.4 The Evolution of Tactical Command

In order to attain a more thorough understanding of why I have chosen to include cases that date back to World War II but no further, a brief discussion in the historical context may be helpful.

Within a tactical unit, there are a significant number of formally appointed leaders. Ranging from the squad leader commanding approximately 4–8 soldiers to the brigade or division commander in charge of thousands, the hierarchy features a multitude of leaders, the most numerous of which are those in the lower levels, i.e. the fireteam/squad, platoon and company leaders in ground units, the flight and squadron leaders in air units and the individual captains and squadron or flotilla leaders in naval units.[4] The lower-level commanders are located primarily at the level that is directly involved in combat.

For thousands of years, tactical-level commanders had to use their voices to exercise command, their eyes to keep track of their subordinates and their ears to listen to them. In addition, the generals of old had to be physically located far behind the battlefield at a high vantage point to be able to see what was going on and consequently had to rely on messengers to convey orders or else to forfeit the ability to maintain oversight to lead the battle personally. From the days of ancient Greece up until the American Civil War, it was common to arrange troops in rigid formations which the battlefield commander could then control and keep track of. This was the only practical solution to the problem of command and control in the days before the radio, when the noise of battle made it difficult to make oneself heard more than a few meters,

[4]The division, comprised of approximately 10,000–15,000 troops, is often regarded as the largest of the tactical units. Formations that include several divisions, such as army corps, are arguably more appropriately defined as operational-level units. A division is constituted of a large number of subunits within subunits, ranging from battalions of around 500 troops to companies of 100–300, to platoons of 20–30, to squads of 4–8 to fireteams of 2–4 soldiers.

and in which the chaos of melee combat or the smoke of crude rifles and cannon limited visibility. In such formations, most lower-level leaders could do little more than inspire their men and control their pace, as well as giving them orders regarding how and when they were to deploy their weapons. Since battles were relatively rare and usually associated with considerable strategic risk, it was the task of strategic commanders to direct them. It took exceptional leadership and extraordinary circumstances for a tactical-level commander to make a decision with strategic consequences. When it happened, the commanders tended to be relatively senior. For example, in 197 B.C. an unnamed Roman military tribune took ten maniples and led them in an attack on the rear of the Macedonian unit in which the king was located, which led to the defeat of the Macedonian force and consequently a strategic victory that concluded the war (van Creveld, 1985, p. 270).[5] Such infrequent events were little more than coincidental, and as such the tactical-level commanders of the past are of limited interest within the scope of this dissertation.

The most significant change was born in the blood-drenched mud of the western front during World War I. It was there that the truly autonomous tactical-level commanders first appeared in a systematic manner. This happened after years of stalemate, when the Germans introduced the concept of *Stosstruppen*, usually translated as "shock troops". The Germans noticed that decentralized command produced results and decided to formalize and extend this doctrine further. The shock troops were born out of sheer necessity, since the strength of the enemy defenses made advances impossible and thus the strategic deadlock remained. The lower-level commanders were given objectives and then the freedom to achieve them in what they themselves considered to be the most efficient manner (Zetterling, 2008, p. 17). The shock troop concept was a huge success, and in March 1918 the Germans managed to break through the Entente defense line. By then it was too late, however, and the Germans were unable to take advantage of this breakthrough (ibid., p. 18). During the interwar years, the German Army continued to develop the concept of decentralized command, which came to be known as *Auftragstaktik*, usually translated

[5] A Roman maniple was comprised of 136–160 men (Goldsworthy, 2006, p. 466), meaning that the military tribune in the example wielded command over probably around 1,000 men (taking possible losses into account). Thus, this military tribune was considerably more senior than most modern lower-level tactical commanders. In addition, military tribunes were recruited exclusively from the aristocratic classes (Finer, 1997b, p. 552).

as "mission command". The concept can trace its roots back to the 19th century (Shamir, 2010, p. 647), but it was the stalemate of WWI combined with the development of portable radios that speeded up its development and expansion to the point where it starts to resemble modern conditions. Decentralization was extended to the lowest possible levels, and all officers and non-commissioned officers were trained to act independently and to use their initiative (Zetterling, 2008, p. 19). While this approach proved itself once again to be highly successful during World War II, the Germans found themselves on the losing side for a second time. This time, however, the world had taken notice of the combat efficiency of the German tactics and they were picked up by other nations. Today, the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Israel are but a few of the nations that have adopted mission command as their guiding principle for command in the field, see for example *Field Manual No. 3-0: Operations* (2001, ch. 4–15); McEvoy (2011, p. 111); Blomgren (2007, p. 94) and van Creveld (1985, p. 196). It should be noted, however, that some of these nations have been somewhat selective in their implementation of *Auftragstaktik*. Most of the US military hasn't adopted it in practice (Shamir, 2010, p. 668), whereas Germany, Israel and Sweden are more dedicated to the concept.

Auftragstaktik meant the formalization of the autonomy of tactical-level commanders and as such it provided the freedom of action among lower-level commanders required for the phenomenon studied in this dissertation. Since the end of the Cold War, conflicts in general have become increasingly complex, while at the same time smaller military units are given more important tasks. Never before in history have so many tactical-level commanders had such prominent strategic roles, regardless of whether they themselves realize it or not. On the strategic and operational levels, the decision-making will tend to revolve around map studies and analyses in the relative safety of headquarters (HQ) positions well behind the front line. On the tactical level, a multitude of lower-level commanders have to make split-second decisions while coping with extreme pressure in life-threatening situations. Keegan (2004, p. 47) provides a vivid description of the difference between the soldiers on the ground and the senior officers:

> [the commander] fights his battle in a comparatively stable environment – that of his headquarters, peopled by staff officers who will, because for efficiency's sake they must, retain a rational calm. The soldier on the battlefield, on the other hand, has a different view: Battle, for him, takes place

> in a wildly unstable environment [...] he may suddenly be able to see nothing but the clods on which he has flung himself for safety, there to crouch – he cannot anticipate – for minutes or for hours.

While Keegan acknowledges the distance between the combat on the ground and the staff officers, he uses a commander-soldier dichotomy that gives the impression that there is only one commander, who is situated in the staff headquarters. Thus, he neglects the lower-level commanders who are as exposed as the soldiers they command. This limits Keegan's usefulness in the context of this dissertation. The concept of *Auftragstaktik* and the role of lower-level commanders within this framework highlight the importance of defining structure and agency, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.1.

2

Politics and War

> The uncertainties of warfare are so great that the most elaborate peacetime planning and the most realistic exercises are at best weak indicators of emerging imponderables.
>
> — Morris Janowitz (1964, p. 24)

In order to understand the link between tactical decision-making and political/strategic goals, we must first establish the context in which these levels interact. Previous research on the political role of tactical-level commanders is scarce. In one of the few existing examples, a former commandant of the US Marine Corps, General Charles C. Krulak (1999), coined the interrelated concepts *Three-Block War* and *the Strategic Corporal* in a seminal article.

Three-Block War denotes a type of conflict in which a military organization has to carry out a wide range of tasks related to humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, and possibly combat, more or less simultaneously, in the same area (in the example used in the article, these three activities take place within the span of one day, in three contiguous city blocks).

The Strategic Corporal concept describes the potential strategic impact lower-level leaders can have in such complex operational environments, where the media are ever-present. In the fictional example Krulak employs in his article, a young Marine corporal has to make several very difficult decisions in a short period of time, while struggling to maintain control over a hostile and chaotic situation (ibid.). Ruffa et al. (2013) have developed Krulak's concept into something they call *the Strategic Corporal 2.0*, by taking the potential impact on domestic

civil-military relations into account as well. Ruffa et al. (2013, p. 328) argue that the expansion of ancillary tasks, i.e. tasks other than combat, such as serving as a military government in occupied territory, military assistance tasks, and police functions, have increased the likelihood that lower-level soldiers may influence politics in complex operations. However, the Strategic Corporal 2.0 concept is not developed theoretically much further than that. Consequently, the strategic corporal concept, both its original and its 2.0 versions, remain under-theorized and subject to more or less arbitrary limitations.

I argue that the strategic corporal phenomenon should not be limited to non-commissioned officers, as in Krulak's article, or "soldiers", as Ruffa et al. do, but should rather be expanded to include all tactical-level commanders who have the capacity to make decisions that can have strategic and political consequences. In addition, I argue that not only non-traditional missions, such as peacekeeping/peace enforcement should be included, but also traditional warfare. Thus, the group of potential "strategic corporals" will differ from case to case, but can include all leaders, from enlisted men all the way up to colonels.

In order to present my argument, a more comprehensive theoretical understanding of the political role of these actors is required. Thus, we must first understand the political context in which their decision-making is most critical, i.e. combat. In order to place combat in a political context, this chapter will discuss the political role of the military from a general perspective, and then proceed to analyze the unique role of tactical-level commanders as instruments of policy.

I will argue that lower-level military leaders are, in essence, a type of street-level bureaucrats, as defined by Lipsky (2010). I will then present my conceptual framework, outlining the concept of tactical-level subcultures, and my theory of how the likelihood of successful implementation is linked to the degree of convergence between the political objectives and the tactical-level subcultures of the implementing units.[1] Finally, I will criticize the concept of the military profession, as defined by Huntington (1985) and Finer (1962). The chapter is concluded by a theoretical summary.

[1] As stated in the previous chapter (see page 3), the conceptual framework should be seen as a classification instrument, which can "isolate and illuminate carefully certain mechanisms" (Stenelo, 1972, p. 15). The conceptual framework lays the foundation for the theory, which can have a predictive potential (ibid., p. 14).

2.1
The Political Role of the Military

Military organizations tend to be associated with a diverse set of political tasks. For some it may be the defense of the nation-state, for others it may be the oppression of civil society. In one case the upholders of democratic ideals, in the other the tools of despotic rule. If we are to transcend such paradoxes, we must establish the general and most basic characteristics of military organizations.

Even the most ancient of governments had military forces, in an age when sovereigns were often viewed as gods personified (Finer, 1997a, p. 186). Over the course of thousands of years, military organizations have been present in countless kingdoms, empires, nation-states, city-states, fiefdoms, and other political entities. The common denominator between the armed political instruments of the distant past and the more recent twentieth century is quite limited, but nevertheless important, since it illustrates the political essence of all state-based military organizations. There are few theoretical approaches to war of such a general nature.

The arguably most prominent politically oriented military theorist of all time, Carl von Clausewitz, has provided us with one of the very few theoretical frameworks sufficiently abstract to lend itself to such tasks. In contrast, one of the other giants of military theory, Henri de Jomini ([1862] 2013, ch. Def. of the Art of War, para. 1), lists a considerable number of idiosyncratic reasons for war, and disassociates the conduct of war proper from politics in a broad sense. He does, however, consider "Diplomacy in its relation to War" to be the sixth branch of the art of war, separate from the five "purely military" ones, being: strategy, grand tactics, logistics, engineering and tactics. Since de Jomini's perspective assumes that politics and combat are separate spheres, it cannot be used to further our understanding of the topic under scrutiny.

Consequently, I will not elaborate more on de Jomini, but instead proceed with a discussion about Clausewitz's theories.

THE CLAUSEWITZIAN PERSPECTIVE

Clausewitz ([1832] 1997, p. 22) famously argued that "War is a mere continuation of policy by other means." He elaborated by stating that "for the political view is the object, war is the means, and the means

must always include the object in our conception." According to Clausewitz, every activity in war relates either directly or indirectly to combat. Furthermore, combat can be concerned with other objectives than the destruction of the enemy (ibid., p. 33–34).

The essence of combat is that it is a measure of strength, that is valuable only to the extent that it provides a result, in the words of Clausewitz, a *decision*. Clausewitz thus provides a useful basis for further analysis, through these postulations. Since war is a mere continuation of policy by other means, and combat is the point of decision, then combat is logically the nexus where policy reaches a decisive point, during which it shifts from idea or ambition into action. The commander at the tactical level where combat plays out has an influence on the outcome of combat and thus also on the realization of policy.

While Clausewitz attempted to establish a universal theory of war, he was critical of contemporary attempts at constructing general theories concerning the *conduct* of war. He argued that "The conduct of war, as we have shown, has no definite limits in any direction, while every system has the circumscribing nature of a synthesis, from which results an irreconcilable opposition between such a theory and practice" (Clausewitz, [1832] 1997, p. 84). Clausewitz' meaning was arguably that the open nature of war renders any attempts at "positive theory" pointless, i.e. there can be no universally applicable guidelines or recommendations that hold true in all circumstances.

My own theoretical ambition takes heed of his warning, and I argue that it is not incompatible with the above conclusion, since my theory is not an attempt to provide a general framework for success in war, but rather attempts to predict the likelihood of successful implementation by lower-level military leaders. From this does not necessarily follow military success *per se*. Neither do I aspire to divide the concept of war into subcategories, to be analyzed separately to provide guidelines for the pursuit of the whole. As Beyerchen (1992) has eloquently argued, war cannot be reduced to its component parts for the purpose of combining explanations for them into a whole, since Clausewitz' definition of war is inherently nonlinear.[2] What I do attempt is to

[2]Beyerchen (1992, p. 62–63) employs the mathematical definition of linearity, which has two conditions: proportionality, i.e. changes in system output are proportional to changes in system input; and additivity, i.e. that the whole is equal to the sum of its parts. If these conditions are fulfilled, a problem can be broken up into smaller parts that can be solved separately and then added together to solve the original problem. War as defined by Clausewitz, however, is not linear,

show a causal link between two phenomena: tactical-level subcultures, and the likelihood of successful implementation under conditions of uncertainty and stress.

It is important to keep in mind that my theory only permits generalization regarding the decisions, i.e. the output. It does not predict the actual events that follow, i.e. the outcome. Thus, I differentiate between the actions of the units under scrutiny, which I define as output, and the consequences of these actions, which I define as outcomes. External factors could have the consequence that implementation failure could hypothetically occur even when the actions of the implementing unit are perfectly aligned with the objectives. However, all other things equal, compliant behavior on behalf of the unit should logically be more likely to produce desirable outcomes. Similarly, non-compliant behavior on behalf of the unit is highly likely to produce undesirable outcomes.

STRUCTURE AND AGENCY

The literature on civil-military relations and the literature on military history frequently use two contrasting views of structure and agency within military organizations, which I argue are misleading. The military structure is seen by several authors writing about civil-military relations as the most important characteristic of military organizations, see for example Finer (1962, p. 9), Huntington (1985, p. 59–60) or Abrahamsson (1972, p. 83). They argue that its rules restrict the individual freedom of the members of the military organization, while its values are different from those of the civilian world. Thus, the physical as well as psychological freedom of the soldiers, officers and sailors is limited. In this ideal type of the military organization, each new recruit would be absorbed into the organization through hardships, isolation and the necessity of comradeship. After a period of initiation, the recruit would become an indistinguishable component of the military machinery, operating efficiently and without question.

Under such circumstances, innovation and independence would seem highly unlikely if not impossible. Each soldier, officer and sailor would be predictable and obedient. This stands in stark contrast to the way in which many military historians portray agency in the form of military leaders. The most famous military officers in history, such as Heinz Guderian, Napoleon Bonaparte, Julius Caesar and George Patton are

according to Beyerchen's interpretation. It is more akin to weather, fluid turbulence, combustion and other nonlinear phenomena.

typically described as individualists and innovators, see for example Smedberg (2005, p. 44), van Creveld (1985, p. 192) or Frankson and Zetterling (2002, p. 36–37).[3] These commanders are often praised for their analytical minds and their ability to make competent decisions under pressure, but also as non-conformists who were ready to defy conventions and break old patterns. Furthermore, these well-known military leaders seem to have been just as individualistic while they were still junior officers, serving at the tactical level. For example, both Douglas MacArthur and Dwight Eisenhower were known to break the rules even as cadets at the West Point military academy (Janowitz and Shils, 1948, p. 155–157), while Heinz Guderian was considered impetuous by some superiors while he was still a mere major (Guderian, [1952] 2009, p. 25).

In the case of several other famous leaders, this kind of behavior brought them criticism and difficulties, which they later overcame through perseverance and belief in the soundness of their own assessments. Admiral George Rodney's tactical maneuvers during the Battle of the Saintes in 1782 is a case in point. While the Royal Navy had developed strict regulations for naval tactics, printed in the *Permanent Fighting Instructions* in response to the tactical circumstances of the mid-1600s, these regulations had become obsolete by the late 1700s. Nevertheless, commanders were expressly forbidden from deviating from the rule that ships had to maintain the formation "line ahead" unless the whole enemy fleet fell into disorder. The development of heavy guns led to a focus on close-range gunnery, which was incompatible with the "line ahead" formation. Consequently, as long as this tactical contradiction remained, the Royal Navy failed to win a single tactical victory over a fleet of comparable strength. The rigidity of this doctrine prevented a victory that was within grasp during the Battle of Chesapeake Bay in 1781, when Admiral Thomas Graves stuck to the regulations even though he was presented with a golden opportunity to settle the battle during its early phases.

During the Battle of the Saintes in the following year, Admiral Rodney deliberately disobeyed the *Permanent Fighting Instructions* and used his own judgment to redeploy his forces in response to the tactical situation. The result was the most successful British naval action in nearly eighty years (Koenig and Mayer, 2004, p. 13). Admiral Rodney is an example of how the audacity of a brilliant commander

[3] This list is kept short for brevity, but is by no means exhaustive. Additional persons sharing the same characteristics could be added, such as Erwin Rommel, Hannibal Barkas, Erich Ludendorff, Ariel Sharon, and so on.

in defiance of rules and norms provides the opportunity to excel in such a conspicuous manner that the apparent success cannot be denied, resulting in general approval by the commander's peers. The previous paradigm is thus challenged and reshaped accordingly. The apparent clash between the automaton of the ideal type organization and the free agent of the military leader ideal illustrates the problematic dimensions inherent in both ideal types.

Consequently, I argue that Finer and Huntington are guilty of generalizing too far concerning the impact of the military organization while a multitude of military historians are guilty of taking a much too simplistic approach to individual military leaders. I argue that first of all, attention must be paid to differences in the degree of situational awareness and limits on the ability to exercise command.

UNCERTAINTY AND FRICTION

Clausewitz identified two key two challenges related to situational awareness and the ability to exercise command. These two were *uncertainty* and *friction*. According to Clausewitz ([1832] 1997, p. 42), "three-fourths of those things upon which action in war must be calculated, are hidden more or less in the clouds of great uncertainty." According to Shalit (2003, p. 146), who also recognizes this, the most pressing need for a soldier who faces this uncertainty, which he calls "battle fog", is to understand the situation. Shalit argues that the more confusing the situation is, the more the soldier has to depend on previously learned behavioral patterns. This uncertainty can also be exploited through the use of deliberate deception methods intended to make the enemy draw the wrong conclusions. This approach was particularly favored by the Soviet Union, and remains important in Russian military doctrine (Ulfving, 2005, p. 153–155). Situational awareness is thus restricted by uncertainty, both a result of the difficulty of identifying all aspects of a situation along with all possible consequences, but also possibly as a result of deliberate enemy action. In addition to uncertainty, Clausewitz ([1832] 1997, p. 66–67) adds "the influence of an infinity of petty circumstances," also referred to as friction. He elucidates by employing a metaphor:

> Activity in war is movement in a resistant medium. Just as a man immersed in water is unable to perform with ease and regularity the most natural and simplest movement, that of walking, so in war, with ordinary powers, one cannot keep even the line of mediocrity (ibid., p. 67).

He provides a few illustrative examples: weather may lead to the failure of a report to reach the general in time, prevent the discovery of enemy forces or delay an artillery battery from firing while even "the most insignificant" of soldiers can delay his or her battalion. Smedberg (2005, p. 22) also lists mistakes, misunderstandings, misinterpretations, delays and accidents as examples of friction.

Only a commander in possession of a high degree of situational awareness, unencumbered by uncertainty, and who is in a position to overcome the challenges of relaying orders, can, *ceteris paribus*, exercise command to the full extent of his or her intellectual faculties. Under such circumstances the previously mentioned ideal type of the military leader can be attained as far as the individual's ability and other hindering factors permit. In many other situations, however, uncertainty will effectively prevent the commander from achieving sufficient situational awareness to identify all available options and assess their consequences, while friction may prevent the effective implementation of given orders.

Under such circumstances, the commander must rely upon the guidance provided by a tactical-level subculture to classify the situation and determine the most desirable course of action. This tactical-level subculture will primarily be shaped by the norms and values prevalent in the unit the commander is serving in, rather than the military organization as a whole. Consequently, I argue that military organizations are not as homogeneous as the military structure ideal type may lead us to believe.

AN IMPLEMENTATION PERSPECTIVE

The absence of general judicial restraints and the mandate to exercise physical violence grants the military an extraordinary freedom of action in combat. Despite this, tactical-level commanders are not independent political agents. They exist to implement policy, and as such are servants of the state in the same manner as civil servants and bureaucrats. The concept of the *street-level bureaucrat* can shed some light on this aspect. According to the creator of the concept, Michael Lipsky (2010, p. 3), a street-level bureaucrat is a public service worker who interacts directly with citizens in the course of his or her job, and who has substantial discretion in the execution of his or her work. Lipsky goes on to list a few examples: teachers, police officers and other law enforcement personnel, social workers, judges, public lawyers and other court officers, health workers, etc. Arguably the most important

political aspect of street-level bureaucrats is their ability to make policy through their discretion and relative autonomy from organizational authority (ibid., p. 13). In this manner, political policies with clearly expected results can be altered by the implementation of the street-level bureaucrats in such a manner that the outcome can diverge significantly from the expectations of the political decision-makers (ibid., p. 21).

The most essential components of the street-level bureaucrat concept are the interrelated concepts of a relatively high degree of discretion and relative autonomy from organizational authority (ibid., p. 13). In traditional public administration, this means that the civil servants can make independent decisions within their scope of authority, and that they do not necessarily conform to what the organization's management expects of them (ibid., p. 13–28). I argue that the everyday challenges of having to cope with the inherently unpredictable and complex nature of client interaction that makes discretion and relative autonomy from organizational authority necessary components of street-level bureaucracies, have a military functional equivalent in the concept of friction, as described in chapter 2.1. While hierarchical control may be considerably easier to wield by means of strict military discipline, the impact of friction and uncertainty inevitably leads to situations that require discretion, either because creative solutions are required to obtain results, or because the situation does not conform to any existing standard. The adoption of *Auftragstaktik* (see p. 11) reflects the acceptance of this fact. In my analysis, I have for reasons of brevity and clarity chosen to include both discretion and relative autonomy from organizational authority in my definition of autonomy.

Tactical-level commanders are not included among Lipsky's listed examples of street-level bureaucrats. I argue, however, that they have the same capacity to influence policy outcomes. For example, McEvoy (2011, p. 108) states that: "Decisions taken, and the general conduct of troops at the tactical level, can have considerable consequences at the operational, strategic and political levels." The traditional street-level bureaucrats have the ability to influence policy through their direct interaction with the citizens of the state. While the street-level bureaucrats analyzed by Lipsky are thus fairly easily located, the tactical-level commanders with similar capacity to influence outcomes are not quite as easy to classify. In a given military unit, there will be a number of tactical-level commanders, a typical platoon comprised of circa 40 soldiers will have four or five squad leaders and an equal number of assistant squad leaders in addition to a platoon leader and an assistant platoon leader. While all persons who wield military

command arguably have some degree of autonomy, that autonomy may be too restricted to be of interest in this context. Rank or position does not provide any means for discriminating between those who have the capacity to shape outcomes and those who do not.

Meyers and Vorsanger's (2007, p. 154) interpretation of Lipsky's definition of street-level bureaucrats is more general and thus more suitable for use as a foundation: "[b]y virtue of their position at the interface between citizens and the state, street-level bureaucrats have significant opportunities to influence the delivery of public policies." The position of a civil servant at the interface between citizens and the state is the key enabler that allows street-level bureaucrats to shape policy. The citizens are thus the targets of policy and the interface is the implementing function that stands between them and the formulators of that policy. By subscribing to the Clausewitzian definition of combat outlined previously, I argue that combat is the interface between the policy behind the strategic objectives, and the target of this policy. This target is more abstract and fluid, since military organizations are capable of implementing a wide range of different policies.

The most crucial difference is arguably that while street-level bureaucrats may have to cope with recalcitrant citizens, tactical-level commanders are quite likely to find themselves pitted against a hostile adversary who is not necessarily bound by any rules, and who will actively attempt to thwart every effort. The presence of an adversary combined with the influence of friction makes decision-making extraordinarily difficult. In order to cope with this challenge, tactical-level leaders rely upon subcultures, which is what we will turn to next.

2.2
Subcultures

Before we delve into a discussion regarding subcultures, we first need to define the word "culture." I have chosen to rely upon a relatively old and well-established definition by Tylor (1891, p. 1), which states that:

> Culture [...] is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

Note, however, that for the purposes of this dissertation, the inclusion of law into the definition of culture is only applicable when I

discuss national cultures, and not subcultures. Furthermore, in the case of subcultures, the culture is acquired by man as a member of a subculture, not society in the more general sense.

Within management research, organizational cultures, and subcultures, have been studied since the 1970s. According to Martin (1992, p. 46), the concept of "organizational sagas" as coined by Clark in the early 1970s, was the precursor to the concept of organizational culture. This led to the development of research into organizational cultures from a point of view which Martin (ibid., p. 46) calls the *Integration* perspective.

According to this perspective, organizations are characterized by consensus and harmony, which merge the public and private domains (ibid., p. 46). The result is that organizations are seen as families, and the family members of the employees are similarly regarded as part of the organization. While not all organizations are successful in achieving such consensus, it is, according to the Integration perspective, regarded as a highly desirable state. It promotes consistency, egalitarian structures, and clarity (ibid., p. 48–51).

In her influential *Cultures in Organizations*, Martin (ibid.) also describes how organizational cultures can be viewed from what she calls a *Differentation* perspective. According to Martin, this challenges the Integration perspective. She states that the Differentiation perspective highlights the co-existence of subcultures within organizations (ibid., p. 82). Furthermore, Martin (ibid., p. 83) claims that the Differentiation perspective "unveils the workings of power in organizations, acknowledges conflicts of interest between groups, and attends to differences of opinion."

The existence of subcultures in various organizations has since been confirmed empirically by for example Hofstede (1998). In addition, the importance of studying subcultures in organizations has been emphasized by Detert et al. (2000, p. 858), who encouraged further research into the phenomenon. Subcultures have also been studied in cases drawn from public administration, such as the study of Greek hospitals carried out by Bellou (2008).

However, subcultures in military units have certain unique characteristics. The transparent and strict formal hierarchy in a military organizations eliminates some of the issues related to informal power structures identified by Martin (1992). In addition, the unique tasks carried out by military organizations means that some of the analytical perspectives employed to analyze civilian enterprises are inapplicable. For example, if we are to analyze combat performance, it is irrelevant to

try to discern whether the units under scrutiny are "process oriented" or "results oriented," which is one of the dichotomies studied by Hofstede (1998, p. 3).

Since the strategic objectives assigned to military organization are based on policy, they are more complex and fluid than what most civilian enterprises have to contend with. Furthermore, since this is a study within the realm of political science, and more specifically, implementation research, we will focus on the extent to which tactical-level subcultures influence the accomplishment of these strategic objectives. Consequently, our first priority is to create a model that allows us to study those aspects of tactical-level subcultures that influence the implementation of policy.

This is where models from civilian management become difficult to apply, and a new framework, adapted to the unique nature of military organizations and operations, must be developed.

2.3

Tactical-Level Subcultures

Tactical-level commanders who face the burden of constant decision-making in situations of uncertainty and danger need some sort of guidance. No decision-maker can attend to every detail simultaneously and consider every possible option along with every possible consequence (for a more detailed discussion, see Egeberg, 2007, p. 78). The challenges unique to the military setting, outlined above in the form of uncertainty and friction, add to the difficulty during combat. I argue that guidance is provided by tactical-level subcultures, which serve to accumulate experience and norms in an accessible manner.

A tactical-level subculture is, in essence, a set of cultural norms, ideas and priorities, which are shared by the members of a military unit. These norms, ideas and priorities not only distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behavior, they also influence perception, decision-making in general, and the ability to take action. In addition, they are shaped by the constraining and enabling aspects of the equipment used by the unit. Tactical-level subcultures are shaped and perpetuated by *focal points*, which serve to remove ambiguity and contradictions among the various influences.

The concept of tactical-level subcultures combines several previous theoretical approaches to decision-making. The first of these is John

Boyd's "OODA-loop" (Observation, Orientation, Decision, Action), a framework for analyzing decision-making in high-stress combat situations.

BOYD'S OODA-LOOP

Boyd, originally a fighter pilot in the Korean War, argues that a military commander has first to *observe* the enemy, after which a phase of *orientation* is required to assess what the enemy's intentions are and how to proceed. Then, a *decision* is required, after which follows *action*. Success is achieved by having an OODA loop that cycles faster than the enemy's, which prevents the enemy from taking effective action and opens up vulnerabilities (Boyd, 1987, slide # 7).[4] Boyd is highly influential in military circles as well as in business, and mentions that the orientation stage is shaped by "genetic heritage, cultural tradition, previous experiences, and unfolding circumstances" (ibid., slide # 13). I have chosen not to pursue the "genetic heritage" part, since it falls outside the scope of this dissertation. The remaining three aspects are, however, covered. According to Brehmer (2008, p. 44), Boyd is best regarded as a "philosopher of combat" as opposed to Clausewitz, who is considered a "philosopher of war." Boyd's focus on the urgency of decision-making in combat, along with the interplay with the adversary, provides a useful contrast against Clausewitz' more general theories.

I argue that the tactical-level subculture influences all four aspects of the OODA loop. I will elaborate in more detail on this after the other approaches have been described. Next, we turn to the second approach, by March and Olsen.

MARCH & OLSEN'S LOGIC OF APPROPRIATENESS

The second theoretical approach comes from a civilian context. I have drawn on what March and Olsen (2008, p. 690) calls "the logic of appropriateness," which states that actions are fitted to situations according to rules of appropriateness, which in turn are guided by identities and roles. Actors are guided by rules rather than the perceived consequences of their action (ibid., p. 690). The rules are sustained by trust, defined as a confidence that appropriate behavior can be expected most of the time (March and Olsen, 1989, p. 38). Interestingly enough,

[4]John Boyd never wrote a comprehensive paper, article or book outlining the OODA loop. Consequently, most authors who discuss this concept refer to slides from his original presentations.

this is where March and Olsen share common ground with Boyd, who argues that "implicit bonds or connections, associated with similar images or impressions" are necessary in order to enable harmony and individual initiative (Boyd, 1987, slide # 21). In Brehmer's (2008, p. 52) interpretation, this means that all military commanders (or subordinates, in his example) share the same orientation, i.e. interpret situations in an identical manner, and that they will also make decisions that are similar, without having to confer with each other or superiors. Boyd uses a quote by German WWII general Hermann Balck, who explicitly mentions that "implicit connections or bonds based upon trust, not mistrust [...] permit wide freedom for subordinates to exercise imagination and initiative–yet, harmonize within intent of superior commanders" (Boyd, 1987, slide # 7).

Goldmann (2005, p. 37) has criticized March and Olsen's definition of the logic of appropriateness for not being clear on whether these logics are: perspectives from which politics may be seen; theories about politics; or ideal types. I argue that tactical-level subcultures may be neither of these three, but rather that they can function as frameworks for providing guidance to decision-making, in particular under uncertain and chaotic conditions. These cultures facilitate rapid decision-making without forcing tactical-level commanders constantly to scrutinize every aspect of an unfolding event.

Goldmann (ibid., p. 39–41) also criticizes March and Olsen for the potential overlap between anticipatory (consequence-based) action and obligatory (rule-based) action. While I concur with Goldmann to the extent that March and Olsen's definitions tend to be muddy at times, I argue that this distinction is unimportant for the theoretical argument in this dissertation. When the culture of appropriateness, manifested in the tactical-level subculture, determines the value hierarchy of the outcomes and has a major influence on the ability to identify agency options, it has a direct influence on the anticipatory actions. At the same time, decisions are made without reflection, which makes these actions rule-based. I argue that since tactical-level subcultures are rule-based, but also determine the value hierarchy and thus influence anticipatory behavior as well, the distinction becomes pointless.

MILITARY PSYCHOLOGY

The third theoretical approach is based on military psychology. Shalit (2003, p. 17) argues, based on surveys conducted on Israeli infantry soldiers and officers with combat experience, that the most frightening

aspect of combat for an infantry officer is the fear of failing in one's duties towards one's subordinates. Among the soldiers, the most frightening aspect was the fear of failing in one's duties towards one's comrades. These fears outweighed the fear of death or injury in both categories, by a clear margin. This extreme sense of loyalty is also reflected in Janowitz and Shils's (1948, p. 281) study of German infantry during WWII. They reached a similar conclusion, arguing that as long as a soldier's *primary group* was able to meet his basic needs, offer him affection and esteem from both superiors and peers, supplied him with a sense of power and "adequately regulated his relations with authority," that soldier's concern for his own safety in battle would be minimized.

Janowitz and Shil's definition of primary group in this context is somewhat vague. They refer to the squad or section, and platoon, meaning that the primary group would be around 10–30 troops. However, the platoon did not operate in isolation. According to Janowitz and Shils (ibid., p. 287), the officers saw that "groups who had gone through a victory together should not be dissolved but should be maintained as units to the greatest degree possible". The upper limit for front-line soldiers seem to have been the company, encompassing 100–300 soldiers. Janowitz and Shils (ibid., p. 298) argue that these soldiers seldom saw their battalion commanders and even less frequently were spoken to by him.[5] They conclude that "battalion commanders and other higher officers played a less central role in the personality system of the German soldier." Among Israeli soldiers decades later, Shalit (2003, p. 172) found that the infantry similarly considered the battalion commander to be remote and absent, and also that the artillery regarded company commanders in the same way whereas tank forces drew the line at the brigade commander.[6]

Consequently, we can conclude that the limits of the primary group and other units relevant to the individual soldier and junior officer are fluid, but that the span ranges from the company commander to the brigade commander. In no case, neither German nor Israeli, were the platoon commanders excluded or the division commanders included. According to another study, which is more specific with regards to the time frame required to develop a cohesive primary group, the members of a military unit internalize the values of the unit and organization during the tenth to twelfth month of the unit's life cycle, which is

[5] A battalion is comprised of multiple companies, and usually includes around 500–1,000 eersonnel.

[6] A brigade is, in terms of size, the next unit after the battalion, and is usually comprised of circa 5,000 troops.

when the unit becomes mature for combat operations (Bartone and Kirkland, 1991, p. 397–402). It should be mentioned, however, that this perspective applies to units that have been formed from recruits, and thus provides less guidance in cases where units are made up of reservists with previous military experience, who already know each other.

I argue that the loyalty found in military units is a more extreme expression of the same kind of group logic that March and Olsen discuss. Since combat is in itself an extreme experience, the primary group and its norms becomes more important than in a civilian context, which makes the norms of the group an even more influential factor. Even in peacetime, military units face risks that are mostly absent in civilian life. For example, during tactical movement while using live ammunition, each soldier has to move in such a manner that every other soldier can be assured that no one will suddenly appear in his or her field of fire.

According to March and Olsen (1989, p. 38), the rules and routines of an institution reflect organizational experience. However, the logic of appropriateness only makes the rules, not the experience itself, available to the individuals. The rules and routines bring order, but at the same time they may also bring conflict, contradiction, and ambiguity. The result is that they may produce deviation as well as conformity, variability as well as standardization. It is thus important to keep in mind that tactical-level subcultures are not necessarily productive, nor do they always provide useful guidance. They can also be destructive. In addition, they may not correspond with the values and norms of the civilian population or political decision-makers.

The classic concept of *esprit de corps* to some extent describes the unique identity and norms that many associate with military organizations. According to Finer (1962, p. 8), an *esprit de corps* is a necessity, an army must be "animated by consciousness of its martial purpose and inspired by a corporate spirit of unity and solidarity." Only then can it move beyond being a "mechanical" organization and fulfill its function. While Finer (ibid., p. 9) lists several factors which he argues are required for an army to establish an *esprit de corps*, of particular interest in this context is the claim that an army "demands a separate code of morals and manners from that of the civilian population." While this indicates a separation between civilian and military norms, I argue that a fragmentation of norms is also present within the military organizations. Thus, a military organization could be said to be comprised of numerous *esprits de corps*, that are constantly being reproduced within their respective units.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON MILITARY SUBCULTURES

There is very little research related to what I define as tactical-level subcultures. The few examples include Sion (2006, p. 459–460) who has studied the difference between Dutch infantry soldiers and artillerymen; Pipping (1947) who studied a Finnish machine gun company 1941-1944; Ångström (2012a, p. 282), who wrote about the culture among staff officers in the late 19th and early 20th century; and Shalit (2003, p. 120–122) who has analyzed the difference between paratroopers and armored units in Israel.[7]

According to Sion, the expected proximity to the enemy and the ratio of combat-oriented tasks expected by military units directly influence the self-image of the soldiers (Sion, 2006, p. 459–460). While Sion restricts her analysis to the self-perceived status of the soldiers within the army, Shalit (2003, p. 120–122) traces the differences in norms and definitions of appropriate behavior to differences in the type of tasks the units normally face. This argument comes close to the logic of appropriateness if one assumes that the tasks normally faced by these units have produced experiences that have been internalized as norms, but Shalit does not make the connection to political issues. Being a military psychologist with a more narrow organizational focus, he uses these observations to support the argument that discipline can be implemented differently in different branches of the Israeli army.

There is also a broader literature on "operational styles," that is mostly concerned with national-level characteristics of military organizations. Ruffa and Soethers (2014, p. 223) even argues that units are only of interest as long as they are representative of national contingents' actions. I argue that this approach fails to detect the full extent of the existing diversity of cultures within military organizations, since it is based on the assumption that there are national, organization-wide characteristics for organizations as huge and diverse as militaries. Instead, I argue, military organizations are not homogeneous cultures, but rather comprised of a large number of very different subcultures.

What both Sion and Shalit have observed empirically, even if they do not use this terminology explicitly, is that units with different combat tasks regulating how they interact with the enemy have developed different subcultures. For example, artillery troops, who rarely expect

[7]While the analyses of Pipping (1947) and Ångström (2012a) contain several interesting aspects, they are both too context-specific to be of much use in this dissertation. Sion and Shalit are more directly relevant, and will consequently be discussed in more detail.

to encounter the enemy, do not expect or yearn for combat to the same extent as airborne infantry. As a direct consequence, they become less restless and displeased than airborne infantry when they're deployed on missions where routine tasks fill their days and where danger and combat is absent. The cultures of appropriateness not only cover aggressiveness, as shown by Shalit (2003, p. 120–122). Views on the relative importance/unimportance of formal regulations, proper appearance and adherence to routines may also be determined by such rules.

My theoretical framework has some similarities to Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT), as defined by Hazy and Uhl-Bien (2015), where its closest equivalent would be found within the Community-Building Leadership (CBL) approach. Like the CBL approach, my theory addresses aspects of identity and belonging and how these relate to the overall nature of the organization. However, while CLT is a large, comprehensive theoretical construct, which deals with many different aspects of organizations, my theory is specifically designed to measure the political and strategic impact of cultures within an organization.

In addition, certain factors that I argue are related to culture, or more properly, subcultures, are separated into different categories in CLT. This could for example be the composition of teams in terms of rotation and size, or the response to failures, which in the CLT framework falls within the Generative Leadership category rather than the more culturally oriented CBL category (ibid., p. 82). Thus, the main difference between my theory and CLT is that my theory is specifically designed to measure the impact of cultural factors on political and strategic output, which I argue will be particularly prevalent under conditions of uncertainty and stress.

Tactical-level subcultures also touch upon some of the elements of the concept of *groupthink*, as coined by Irving Janis. For example, Janis' definition states that groupthink is a "mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group" (Janis, 1982, p. 9). In a more recent definition that also highlights a similarity, Sims and Sauser (2013, p. 79) state that "Groupthink is a process of rationalization that sets in when members of a team or group begin to think alike". However, there are significant differences as well. Janis as well as Sims and Sauser describe groupthink as a negative process that impairs the ability of those affected to make rational, ethical or otherwise sound decisions. According to Janis (1982, p. 9), groupthink "refers to a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment that results from in-group pressures." The most crucial

difference is thus that groupthink can occur as a result of a tactical-level subculture, but the concept of tactical-level subcultures is much broader than that of groupthink. A tactical-level subculture can, for example, be a very useful and necessary asset, providing guidance under conditions of uncertainty and stress, while not necessarily impairing individual abilities to make rational decisions in other situations, when they are well-informed and have time to deliberate. In addition, a tactical-level subculture is not necessarily built on unanimity, it can just as well be the exact opposite. Groupthink refers to *a specific set of norms* within a defined group, while tactical-level subcultures can refer to *any set of norms* within a defined group.

Next, we will delve deeper into the tactical-level subcultures by analyzing the factors that make them coherent.

FOCAL POINTS

A tactical-level subculture will be most effective when it encompasses multiple primary groups, creating a coherent culture within a unit. In order for this to happen, the tactical-level subculture must attain a high degree of cohesion and intersubjectivity. By this I mean that it must first of all be *coherent* in the sense that it must be unambiguous and have no inherent contradictions. This is what distinguishes a functioning tactical-level subculture from the fragmented and potentially dysfunctional cultures of appropriateness described by March and Olsen. Second, this unambiguous framework must be clearly perceived by the whole unit sharing the tactical-level subculture, so that the troops can rest assured that their fellow unit members will act in a homogeneous manner under uncertainty and stress. This builds the trust required for a harmonious and effective tactical-level subculture.

Cohesion and intersubjectivity are difficult to achieve without some sort of rallying points. The members of a unit cannot be expected to deliberate over these factors themselves, since they are mostly abstract and more or less subconscious aspects of their everyday lives. The difficulties involved with harmonizing the tactical-level subculture with other units would be even greater. The improbable nature of such arrangements means that a coherent and intersubjective tactical-level subculture cannot be expected to arise as a result of endogenous factors. Instead, exogenous forces must be present to achieve this effect, by providing *focal points*, around which the influencing factors converge in a coherent manner. Since they are accessible to all members of the unit, these focal points also strengthen the intersubjectivity.

A charismatic operational-level leader who can provide a framework for interpretation and action can be such a focal point. An institutional tradition, such as the revered tradition of "spit and polish" can be another. In the case of the latter, it should be pointed out that exaggerated attention to personal appearance can lead to increased attention to detail in other aspects of a soldier's service. The function performed by the focal point is that it gathers the myriad of potential influencing factors into a single, coherent concept (see figure 1). When the members of a unit become confused as to how they should act, the focal point provides clarity. For example, a junior leader who is confused may consult his or her superior officer, if that person is a focal point. This does not have to be done literally. The junior officer may, for example, rather than having a verbal exchange, act in the manner he or she thinks the superior officer/focal point would have acted. A role model can thus be a powerful focal point.

However, as stated, a focal point does not need to be a person. As long as it is sufficiently precise and able to provide clarity in the situations encountered, a focal point can be more abstract. The most important aspect of a focal point is that it removes any contradictions or ambiguity in the different factors that contribute to a tactical-level subculture: formative factors; personnel, commanders and equipment; and functional imperatives.

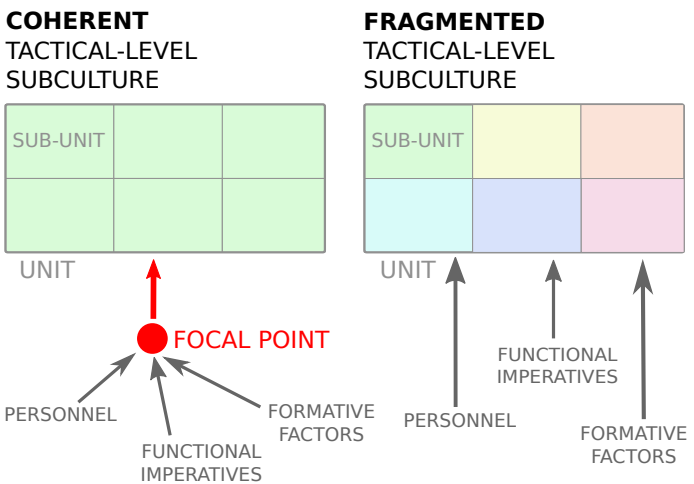

Figure 1: Coherent and Fragmented Tactical-Level Subcultures.

If, for example, there are multiple potential formative factors, which contradict each other, the focal point must clearly specify which formative factors are to be incorporated, and which are to be disregarded, thus removing contradictions and ambiguities. Similarly, if personnel are recruited from different sources, meaning that they bring different norms and influences to the unit, the focal point must streamline them by defining a set of shared norms and influences. Finally, the focal point must adapt the tactical-level subculture to the functional imperatives (this concept will be discussed in detail on p. 35 below) in such a manner that the tactical-level subculture can benefit from the equipment at hand, rather than be hindered by it.

In the empirical case studies in this dissertation, I discuss several different types of focal points, ranging from ideologies and unit-specific doctrines to charismatic leaders. What they all have in common is that they remove ambiguity and contradictions, and that they have normative elements, which provide guidelines for proper and improper courses of action.

Since focal points differ, and are highly contextual, each focal point will be discussed in detail in each of the empirical cases. In order to locate the focal points, the tactical-level subculture has to be analyzed thoroughly.

In units where such focal points are absent, the tactical-level subculture will become fragmented and heterogeneous, and several different subcultures may develop within a single unit. This will make it difficult to coordinate and cooperate within the unit. The result may be slower or outright dysfunctional OODA loops among the leaders in the unit, which will make the unit as a whole less effective, or, in a worst-case scenario, render it entirely useless. This will be particularly apparent in chaotic and uncertain situations. In addition to the more abstract focal points discussed in this section, there are also material aspects that will shape the tactical-level subculture of a given unit. We will turn to these next.

FUNCTIONAL IMPERATIVES

The equipment used by a military unit can be both constraining and enabling. I argue that military equipment provides its users with what I call *functional imperatives*. The classic trinity of military equipment (Smedberg, 2005, p. 25) can provide some guidance in the analysis of these functional imperatives. The three components of the trinity are:

1. firepower

2. protection

3. mobility

These three factors are usually held to counteract each other to some extent, i.e. a vehicle or other piece of equipment that excels in two of the three parts of the trinity will be deficient in the third. Take for example a fighter plane armed with air-to-ground missiles. It has formidable weaponry (firepower) and can move at supersonic speed (mobility), but is extremely fragile, vulnerable even to ordinary small-arms (protection). A heavier plane can be deployed, that can withstand at least some ordinary small-arms, but then it will have to sacrifice some speed, which explains why for example the American A-10 is only capable of subsonic speeds. Similarly, a torpedo boat has significant firepower and is very fast, but can be destroyed by a single well-aimed shell from a destroyer or cruiser. At the other end of the spectrum, battleships and heavy tanks are both well-armed and well-protected, but also very slow and difficult to maneuver. Some highly specialized platforms will be focused on only one of the aspects of the trinity, such as high-altitude, high-speed reconnaissance aircraft (for example the SR-71 Blackbird), which feature unsurpassed mobility in terms of operational ceiling and speed, but have no firepower or protection at all.

The logic behind the functional imperative is that the pilot of an SR-71 Blackbird will know that regardless of any uncertainties, his or her aircraft can neither attack nor defend itself in any other way than by attempting to use its superior speed and operational ceiling to escape. Consequently, his or her reflex will be to escape when threatened rather than attack. The commander of a torpedo boat will likewise know that his or her vessel cannot withstand projectiles fired from large surface ships, but also that these adversaries have far superior range, which leads to only one course of action: employ the superiority in speed and maneuverability to close the distance to the target, launch the torpedoes, then move out of range again. These actions require quick decision-making and unhesitating action. In contrast, the commander of a battleship or heavy tank will necessarily have to take a different approach, since a vessel or vehicle of considerable bulk, once committed, will find it relatively difficult to change its course, evade or retreat. Consequently, battleships and heavy tanks force their commanders to plan ahead, and to remain firm in the face of the unexpected.

The above mentioned platforms have specialized roles dictated by their designs, which provide functional imperatives that can only be

disregarded at the peril of the crews. Many other vehicle and other types of equipment will, however, be evenly balanced, featuring equal emphasis on all three aspects of the trinity. The medium tank of World War II or the typical destroyer are examples of this. An equally balanced design is a jack of all trades, but master of none. Consequently, it provides very little in the way of functional imperatives, which means that it will not provide any significant guidance, which in turn means that tactical-level subcultures will have to fill this gap.

In most units, a certain degree of interplay between functional imperatives and tactical-level subcultures can be expected. More specifically, this means that the functional imperatives enable and constrain the unit in certain ways, and the tactical-level subculture will tend to adapt to these conditions, providing guidance within the limits set forth by the functional imperatives.

2.4
Tactical-Level Subculture Categories

One way of measuring the degree of convergence or divergence between strategic objectives and tactical-level subcultures is to place the tactical-level subculture of the unit being analyzed into a category matrix, and compare this to a category matrix based on the requirements determined by the strategic objectives. The purpose of the matrix is to highlight how a tactical-level subculture can influence priorities in the face of uncertainty and stress. Many different strategic aspects of tactical-level subcultures can be operationalized in this manner. There is no strict theoretical limit to the kinds of attitudes that could be similarly studied. Everything from the attitude toward formal regulations (which might be relevant in a context where restrictions absolutely have to be followed) to the attitude toward democracy (for example for assessing the likelihood of supporting coups d'etat) could hypothetically be analyzed, depending on the strategic objectives at hand. However, in order to make my analysis as crisp and concise as possible, I have chosen to focus on just two: attitude toward risk and attitude toward noncombatants.

Since the impact of a tactical-level subculture on priorities is very difficult to quantify, I have settled on a scale with three values, each representing a category. These categories reflect a simplified view of prioritization within a tactical-level subculture, but provide a useful

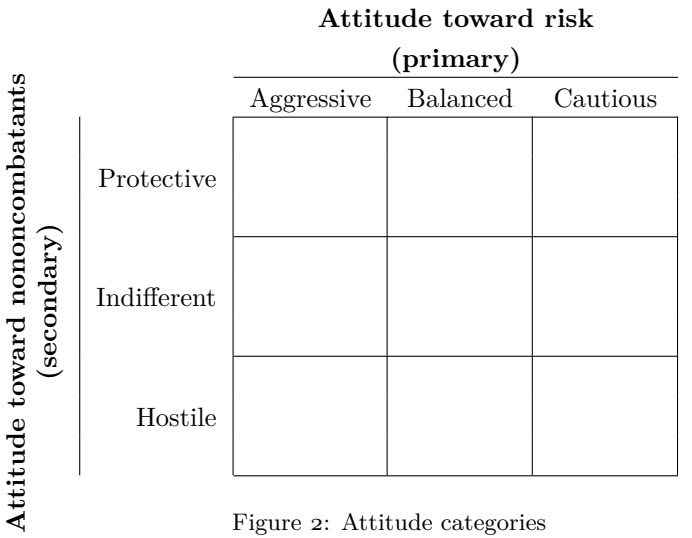

Figure 2: Attitude categories

theoretical tool for predicting convergence/divergence between tactical-level subculture and strategic objectives.

The first axis, attitude toward risk, shows how the tactical-level subculture approaches risk in the form of physical danger to the members of the unit. The first category, *Aggressive*, reflects an attitude that makes the tactical-level subculture prone to attack against overwhelming odds, and even when the outcome or usefulness of an attack is uncertain. When faced by uncertainty, this category will take extreme risks. The second category, *Balanced*, means that the tactical-level subculture may prompt the unit to attack against a superior enemy, but only if the situation is sufficiently critical to warrant such risk-taking. For example, the unit may consider other options to be even more risky, or it may consider the situation to be of such strategic importance that it is willing to make sacrifices for the greater good. The third category, *Cautious*, will in most cases avoid enemy contact. Even when a situation presents itself, in which the risk-taking is associated with a high probability of producing strategically valuable results, the unit will still seek to avoid placing itself in harm's way.

The second axis, attitude toward noncombatants, shows how the tactical-level subculture regards civilians, prisoners of war, and other people that are neither active threats nor allies. The first category, *Protective*, represents a tactical-level subculture that will prompt the

unit to shoulder considerable responsibility for the safeguarding of civilians and/or the proper treatment of prisoners of war. The second category, *Indifferent*, indicates a tactical-level subculture that will not actively seek to protect civilians and prisoners of war, but neither is it interested in trying to harm them. It may, however, accept significant noncombatant casualties in the pursuit of what it perceives to be legitimate military goals. The third category, *Hostile*, is associated with a tactical-level subculture that actively seeks out civilians and noncombatants with the intent of doing them harm. This may be part of a systematic campaign of atrocities, or it may be to inflict more or less spontaneous violence on random civilian victims.

Attitude toward risk is a primary factor, while attitude toward noncombatants is a secondary factor. What this means is that if the primary factor is present in a given situation, the unit will have to address this first (i.e., it becomes the first priority), and this will determine to what extent it can act in relation to the secondary factor (which becomes the second priority). Since tactical-level subcultures will be more prominent in situations of uncertainty and stress, and risk is closely associated with stress (such as in combat), the attitude toward risk is central in a tactical-level subculture. To clarify, a tactical-level subculture that is *Cautious* and *Protective* will usually try to avoid combat and other risks, even if it finds that civilians are at risk. Similarly, a tactical-level subculture that is *Cautious* and *Hostile* will not attempt to attack civilians that are protected by a force that poses a significant threat to it.

A given tactical-level subculture can thus be given a value on two of these axes to provide us with a rudimentary tool for prediction. For example, a tactical-level subculture that is *Aggressive* and *Protective* will probably take significant risks to protect civilians against perceived threats. This could for example be a well-trained local militia defending its own neighborhood. An *Aggressive* unit, however, will always be dismissive of risk, regardless of whether secondary factors are in play or not (if it is selective with regards to risk, it should be categorized as *Balanced* instead of *Aggressive*). A tactical-level subculture that is *Cautious* and *Hostile*, on the other hand, may try to avoid enemy contact, preferring instead to prey on defenseless civilians. This could for example be a paramilitary unit in an archetypical New War as defined by Kaldor (2007). If the civilians are not defenseless, or are protected by capable military units, the unit will avoid contact, reflecting the overriding importance of primary priorities over secondary.

Between these two extremes we find tactical-level subcultures that are *Balanced* and *Indifferent*, which I argue would be quite common in most of the traditional wars. Such units will take risks when they perceive that it is meaningful to do so, and will accept that civilians may be killed in the process, but not actively target them specifically. Individual criminal acts may occur though, since the tactical-level subculture is rarely so effective as to suppress all kinds of individual characteristics, all the time, in every single serving member of a unit.

In order to predict convergence/divergence, we must first analyze the strategic objectives at hand, and try to determine what kind of attitudes would be most suitable for the attainment of these objectives. Secondly, we must study the tactical-level subculture of the unit(s) available for the task at hand. The degree to which the attitudes of the tactical-level subculture correspond to the attitudes required to attain the strategic objectives is the degree of convergence we can expect to find.

2.5

Formal Autonomy versus Actual Autonomy

In order to discuss autonomy, we must distinguish between formal and actual autonomy. By this, I mean that formal autonomy is the degree of autonomy granted to a tactical-level military leader by the strategic and political levels. In order to operationalize this autonomy, I will use a simple scale with three different values: Low, Medium and High degrees of autonomy. A High degree of autonomy means that the tactical-level commander is relatively unrestrained and free to choose different means to pursue the strategic objective. In most cases, there will be some options that remain off limits, such as actions that would be defined as war crimes. The strategic and political level will not set up rules of engagement that restrict the tactical options available to the commander, nor will it attempt to interfere with tactical decisions. A Medium degree of autonomy means that the tactical-level commander has to adhere to rules of engagement that are restrictive in the sense that they limit options that the commander might otherwise make use of, or that the commander's decisions are subject to reoccuring micromanagement. A Low degree of autonomy means that the commander both has to take restrictive rules of engagement into consideration, and is subjected to continuous micromanagement by the strategic and political levels.

Actual autonomy is, according to Lundquist (1987, p. 43) based on three conditions. The individual exercising it must *understand* the extent of its actual autonomy; the individual must be *capable* of making decisions and shaping the environment; and *willing* to act in such a manner, which depends on the individual's preferences. Two of the conditions, *understanding* and *willingness*, are defined by the tactical-level subculture, and therefore relevant in a later stage of the analysis, where the tactical-level subculture is discussed.

In the kind of scenarios that are relevant to this dissertation, the *capability* condition precedes the other two. Therefore, it must be dealt with first. In my adaption of Lundquist's (ibid.) conditions, *capability* takes on a relatively broad dimension. In some cases, a commander may be incapable of exercising autonomy because the circumstances simply prevent it from happening. For example, the commander may not be able to exercise effective command, because of limits in communications. Or, the situation at hand may require such a high degree of coordination that everyone must follow a preordained plan to the letter. There are countless other possibilities that may prevent a commander from exercising any significant degree of actual autonomy, which is why we must establish that this condition has been fulfilled before we can proceed with an analysis of the impact of the tactical-level subculture in each case. For the sake of brevity, if the empirical data indicate that the unit has exercised a High degree of actual autonomy, I consider it unnecessary to state explicitly that there were no practical or technical obstacles of the kind mentioned above preventing the unit from attaining a High degree of actual autonomy. If the unit, on the other hand, has displayed a Low or Medium degree of actual autonomy, I will assess the impact of the *capability* condition before looking to the other two conditions for answers.

Lundquist's two remaining conditions are shaped by the tactical-level subculture, and consequently are only of interest once we have established that the *capability* condition has been met. The first of the remaining two conditions, *understanding*, is related to a commander's perception of the situation, and how that which is perceived is interpreted. In this regard, it is linked to the Observation and Orientation phases of the OODA-loop. A commander with a subculture that encourages autonomy will be more inclined to identify opportunities along those lines, and vice versa.

The second of the remaining conditions, *willingness*, has no relation to the OODA-loop but is still linked to the tactical-level subculture through the norms the latter instills. A subculture that values inde-

pendent action will create an urge for autonomous action, and vice versa.

Note that the degree of formal autonomy is the primary limiting factor, in the sense that a unit can, when the capability condition is met, choose to disregard its formal autonomy and thus have a higher degree of autonomy in practice, whereas the opposite is highly unlikely to occur. To clarify, this means that a unit can, through *conscious* actions, increase its own autonomy, but is not likely to limit it through *conscious* actions. Even if the unit commanders consciously choose not to make use of their autonomy, that too is a choice. Hypothetically, a commander may, like Ulysses, order his men to tie him to the mast and not release him until the song of the Sirens has quieted down. Imagining something similar in the empirical context relevant for this dissertation is, however, quite difficult. In none of the eight case studies does anything of the sort occur.

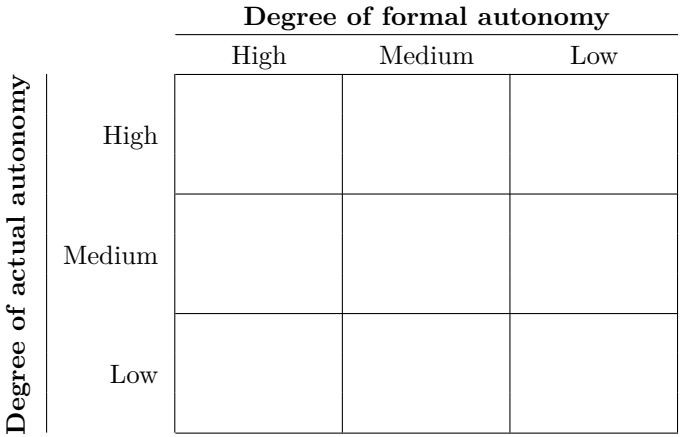

Figure 3: Degrees of autonomy

In the analysis of each case, I will assess the degree of actual autonomy compared to the degree of formal autonomy. This is done by assessing the orders and regulations (formal autonomy), and comparing it with the autonomy of the actions of the unit (actual autonomy). Establishing the degree of actual autonomy is a necessary part of the discussion of the impact of the tactical-level subculture, since it shows the contrast between what a unit has been ordered to do, and what it has actually done. If there are any practical or technical obstacles

preventing the unit commanders in question from exercising their actual autonomy, i.e. factors related to the *capability* condition, these will be presented before the following discussion about the impact of the tactical-level subculture.

2.6
Huntington's Professionals

In contrast to Clausewitz' claims that war and the military organization are subject to general and timeless principles, there are influential authors who argue that the introduction of so-called professionalism has fundamentally changed the nature of military organizations. Since this argument contains assumptions that are incompatible with my conceptual framework, as well as my theory, I will now explain why I consider this to be an incorrect proposition.

Ever since Huntington's seminal *The Soldier and the State* was published in 1957, the concept of the military profession has been omnipresent in discussions on the political role of military organizations. According to Huntington, the three criteria that distinguish a professional are *expertise*, *responsibility* and *corporateness* (Huntington, 1964, p. 8).

Expertise refers to a specialized body of knowledge, that is furthered through "contact between the academic and practical sides of a profession through journals, conferences, and the circulation of personnel between practice and teaching" (ibid., p. 8). The *responsibility* criterion refers to the fact that the professional performs a service that is essential to the functioning of society. Interestingly enough, Huntington states that a professional ceases to be professional when he or she refuses to accept this social responsibility. As an example, he mentions a physician who uses his skills for "antisocial purposes" (ibid., p. 9).

Finally, the *corporateness* criterion implies that the professional shares a sense of organic unity and sees himself or herself as part of a special group that is separate from laymen (ibid., p. 10). Huntington's definition of a professional was clearly inspired by the work of Talcott Parsons (see for example Parsons, 1954), revealing that he was strongly influenced by the research on professions that was in vogue within sociology at the time. Huntington thus sought to apply the concept of professions used in sociology in a military context.

Huntington's argument referred to the classic civil-military dilemma, usually defined as the need for society to ensure protection both by and from its armed forces (Schaub Jr., 2011, p. 238). In short, the civilian leadership of a state needs to have armed forces strong enough to cope with the responsibilities with which they are entrusted, but not so strong or independent as to tempt them to stage a coup and seize power. Huntington's analysis concluded that the relative balance between military and civilian power can be kept in favor of the civilians through either subjective or objective control. The former is achieved by establishing direct civilian control mechanisms through 1. institutions, such as the historical practice of keeping military forces directly subordinate to the crown; 2. social class, such as when the aristocracy dominate the officer corps; or 3. constitutional form, which can apply to both democratic and totalitarian governments (Huntington, 1964, p. 80–83).

According to Huntington, these three methods of exercising subjective control have up until the 20th century been the only tools for ensuring civilian control over the military. His core argument is that all forms of subjective control are inherently problematic, and that the preferable alternative is what he labels "objective civilian control," which is dependent on what he calls a *professional* officer corps. While the civil-military dilemma *per se* is outside the scope of this dissertation, Huntington's definition of the professional officer is relevant to the theoretical discussion since he claims that the so-called professional officers are a homogeneous group characterized by a permanent set of values. More specifically, Huntington argues that military officers are characterized by a specific mindset. He argues that "The military ethic is thus pessimistic, collectivist, historically inclined, power-oriented, nationalistic, militaristic, pacifist, and instrumentalist" (ibid., p. 79). Huntington's argument comes with a caveat, only "professional" officers are so inclined. Military officers who don't share the military ethic are not professional and vice versa. This military ethic is in either case too abstract to provide us with any useful insights into actual decision-making in combat. In addition, the definition of the military ethic indicates that there is a form of ethos external to the officer community, since the ethic is "non-dated and non-localized" (ibid., p. 62). If such an ethos exists, it would provide some guidance to the lower-level military leaders, reducing the necessity of tactical-level subcultures. However, I argue that there is no such ethos, and will now explain the basis for this proposition.

The mandate to exercise force in the name of the state does not make military organizations unique among political institutions. The branches of the criminal justice system are authorized to fulfill a similar role. However, there is one crucial difference: all officers of the criminal justice system, no matter how junior or senior, must obey the letter of the law. Regardless of whether the legislation is respected in accordance with the rule of law or if it is abused as an arbitrary instrument of power, it is an external framework to which the servants of the criminal justice system owe their ultimate allegiance, at least in ideal terms. While the law is a highly formalized type of external ethos, there are other external frameworks that provide guidance to professionals who have to make life-and-death decisions on a daily basis. Doctors and other medical staff, for example, can rely upon the Hippocratic oath and its essential components. The well-being of the patient and the principle of doing no harm are general rules within this context. These external normative frameworks provide overarching guidance, emphasizing the supremacy of the external ethos over short-term political goals.

There is no equivalent for the soldier and officer. Huntington and others have asserted that nationalism is the external ethos of the military organizations, but this political phenomenon is limited to a specific time period, starting with the 19th century.[8] In the days of the Roman Empire, to invoke but one example, there was no nationalism and not even a nation in the modern sense. Soldiers were often loyal only to their general, who had the power to grant them land and wealth (Finer, 1997a, p. 433).[9] While nationalism may have been a strong driving force during a certain period in history, it cannot be considered a truly general external ethos. Even if it was, it would not be able to provide guidelines of such clarity and detail as those a doctor or police officer can rely upon. Whereas the doctor may have to refer to his or her judgment to decide what is best for the patient, and the police officer may find it difficult to interpret the letter of the law in every conceivable situation, these external frameworks are nevertheless far more precise than the hazy concepts of national interest and the good of the nation. While conventions and international law may restrict the actions of soldiers and officers and provide them with some element of guidance, these restrictions are always at the mercy of the political

[8] See for example (Abrahamsson, 1972, p. 95) or (Finer, 1962, p. 9).

[9] This is not a mere historical curiosity. During the Bosnian wars of the 1990s, for example, warlords were once again filling the same role, commanding their own personal military units who expected material rewards in return for service (Kaldor, 2007, p. 50, p. 108).

decision-makers. A police officer who disregards the law is arguably not a "real" police officer and a doctor who performs gruesome experiments on patients is arguably not a "real" doctor.

It is far more difficult to think of a hypothetical example in which a military officer disqualifies him- or herself in relation to his or her peers by failing to living up to an external ethos. Even if heinous acts are committed, a tactical-level commander remains as much a "real" soldier and officer, even while being subject to contempt and criticism. The individual accountability precedent set by the Nuremberg trials and the war crimes tribunals of the 1990s may herald a new era, but they are still a rather recent phenomenon. In the history of military organizations, 70 years is but the blink of an eye. Who can say whether that precedent will remain a factor in another 70 or 700 years? Even if it does, laws and norms will likely continue to change and develop over the years to come. Since laws are the result of political decisions, we return to our point of departure: the only truly general and timeless essence of the military is that of the pragmatic political instrument.

In contrast to Huntington, Morris Janowitz (1964, p. 417–440) argues for a pragmatic approach to military professionalism, and recognizes the strategic role of lower-level commanders. However, Janowitz' solution to the dilemma of democratic control over the military, which he presents as an alternative to Huntington's objective control concept, is to increase the ties between the military and the civilian sphere. He argues that military personnel should be trained to, in a sense, be more civilian. In this manner, they would uphold the values of democracy by virtue of their moral code and because they are integrated into civilian society (ibid., p. 440).

The problem with Janowitz' argument is that he, like Huntington, argues for a universal ethos that can solve all problems. The difference is that he argues for a specific ethos to be created, while Huntington argues that a military ethos already exists. Janowitz' proposition is easier to reconcile with my conceptual framework and theory, if it were to be regarded as a potential formative factor. However, an influence as powerful and universally accepted as those within the traditional professions is an unrealistic ambition. That would require a streamlining of the entire military organization, which would be detrimental to the effectiveness of the units. In addition, it would be excessively difficult to uphold over time, since there is no obvious universal link between the military and any specific ethos, unlike the link between physicians and the Hippocratic oath, or legal professionals and the law.

2.7

Theoretical Summary

The chaotic nature of combat operations means that friction and uncertainty make decision-making extraordinarily difficult. When the chaos becomes too intense, lower-level commanders have to rely upon tactical-level subcultures to guide their decision-making. With this in mind, the only way to guard against decisions that are detrimental in a political sense is to select units with tactical-level subcultures that can be expected to produce decisions that are compatible with the strategic and political goals.

Consequently, if tactical-level subcultures diverge from the political goals of an operation, and events unfold in a rapid and/or chaotic manner, decisions on the tactical level may diverge from the political expectations. The result will be negative, taking the form of failures, scandals, atrocities or loss of prestige for the government in question, depending on the nature of the operation. If, on the other hand, the attitudes of the tactical-level subculture converge with the attitudes required to attain the political goals, the tactical-level commanders may exceed the political expectations even under very challenging circumstances, thanks to the guidance provided by the tactical-level subculture.

The above theoretical arguments are not only relevant in their own right, they also have implications for Finer's (1962) and Huntington's (1964) well-known works on civil-military relations and the military structure ideal type they employ. First of all, I argue that military organizations cannot be reduced to a single purpose, as Finer claims (defending the state). Expeditionary wars and humanitarian interventions are two types of commonly occurring military operations that do not fit in Finer's and Huntington's mold. Secondly, Finer's claim that a military organization "has to be indoctrinated with nationalism" is misleading. Armies existed long before nationalism did, and continue to play a role in a contemporary world where nationalism is nowhere near as prominent as it once was. The deterministic nature of Finer's argument thus has to be challenged.

In addition, both Huntington and Janowitz argue that specific types of ethos should be implemented in the officer corps. I argue that even if such an endeavor were possible, which I doubt, any attempts at mainstreaming attitudes among military leaders would reduce diversity, and thus reduce flexibility. The end result would be that the organization

as a whole would be less effective when coping with a diverse range of situations under conditions of stress and uncertainty.

In mainstream military literature, the problematic aspect of commander autonomy resulting in politically detrimental outcomes tends to be treated with the same assumption of perfectly rational and perfectly informed actors as the military leader ideal type, McEvoy (see for example 2011). Frequently, the proposed solution is increased training in the rules of war and/or ethics (Pryer, 2011, p. 8). The implied logic is that the commanders responsible for the undesirable decisions were unaware of the rules at the time of their decisions, or failed to appreciate the full extent of the ethical dilemma. However, this does not take into account the impact of the uncertainty which will prevent commanders from being fully aware of the details of each situation. In addition, ambiguous political objectives and preferences can add to this confusion, for example in the form of operations with unclear and contradictory mandates. The situation will be further complicated if the commander is in a life-threatening situation in which decisions have to be made in seconds.

Consider the following example: a commander who is unable to identify a potential hostile has to decide whether to accept the risk of losses in her own unit in order to ensure that no civilians are hurt, or accept the risk of hurting civilians in order to minimize casualties in her own unit. A detailed set of rules of engagement (ROE) may seem like the solution, but what if the potential hostile is holding something that appears to be a weapon? Remember that all phases of the commander's OODA loop will be shaped by her tactical-level subculture. The decision then reverts to a matter of priorities. Is it more important to prevent accidental firing at civilians, or to prevent attacks on the unit? This lack of certainty will always confound rule-based approaches to command and control. The intuitive nature of tactical-level subculture comes into play. If the commander is influenced by the idea that civilian lives never can be sacrificed for the convenience and safety of the soldiers, then that will tell the commander that she has to make sure beyond any reasonable doubt that the person is a threat. If, on the other hand, the commander is influenced by a sense of responsibility for her soldiers that stretches further than her empathy for strangers, she will probably give the order to open fire rather than risk the lives of her subordinates.

These examples demonstrates the sheer impossibility of trying to micromanage the actions of tactical-level commanders through regulations. In the end, discretion will be decisive in uncertain and pressing situations.

3

A Comparative Case Study

The methodological approach I have employed to conduct the empirical study is influenced by an ambition to illustrate the broad applicability of the theoretical discussion, in order to provide a basis for potential future generalizations. In order to achieve this, and to introduce a degree of control for contextual idiosyncrasies, I have chosen to draw my empirical material from a broad universe of cases, defined by the following criteria: an uninterrupted period of time featuring events involving a unit where tactical-level commanders made decisions that had political consequences, and where the political and strategic output can be measured in terms of negative or positive feedback in relation to the political and strategic goals. In this context, I have chosen to define the political and strategic spheres as being essentially the same, due to the close relations between the highest leadership of military organizations and the political decision-makers to whom they are subordinate. This simplification is far from unproblematic in certain contexts but I argue that it will not have a significant impact on the evaluation of the cases studied in this dissertation.

Preference has been given to long-term impact whenever possible, since short-term conflicts between political/strategic decision-makers and their subordinates are far from unusual, but can be overshadowed by long-term results once a comprehensive impression has developed. Since combat and armed conflict are riddled with confusion, it is only natural that a definite stance can develop only over the course of time once events have become clearly understood.

The underlying logic for the case selection is based on an ambition to locate four case pairs which are different in as many aspects as

possible, but which have in common that tactical-level commanders have produced politically and strategically relevant output through their tactical-level decision-making. Each pair illustrates how tactical-level subcultures shape the political output of military units. They perform better than expected by the political decision-makers when the degree of convergence between the political goals and the tactical-level subculture is high, but the very same tactical-level subculture can also have a politically detrimental effect in a different context where the degree of convergence is low. In each case pair, the units have earned some degree of popular renown or infamy. The advantage with this approach is that I can then compare my own conclusions with how the cases are described in other literature, in terms of political and strategic impact. I have chosen to draw empirical cases in three of the pairs from the same state and conflict, i.e. Germany during WWII, to introduce a degree of control for the the impact of national characteristics. In addition, it also serves as a control for the idiosyncrasies of this controversial and extreme regime as well as its frequently mythologized armed forces.

Collier and Mahoney (1996, p. 71) argue that selecting extreme cases will be problematic if the goal is to generalize across the full spectrum of cases. It is difficult to establish exactly what qualifies as "extreme" while analyzing cases related to combat, armed conflict and atrocities, since these categories are already closely associated with phenomena of an extreme nature. The cases I study include some of the most extreme conditions humans can experience, in the form of fear, stress, killing and dying. Thus, my cases have to be judged against what is "normal" within the realm from which they are drawn.[1]

I have tried to maximize variation in the cases in four dimensions. The first of these dimensions is the geographic, which represents the differences in nations and conflicts included, ranging from Israel in the Middle East to European nations at war in the Atlantic and Russia, and the United States in both Vietnam and the Pacific. The second dimension is temporal, and reflects different time periods, from 1939 to 1995, via the 1970s.[2] The third dimension is thematic, in the sense

[1](Gomm et al., 2007, p. 107) argue that in order to determine what is "typical," the researcher needs to have some indication of the level of heterogeneity in the overall population as well as be able to assess the availability of this information. While these four case pairs include unusually well-known units and incidents, I argue that they are not sufficiently unique to warrant the label "extreme." All eight cases have been covered extensively in more empirically and/or historically oriented literature.

[2]The temporal dimension thus covers a span of more than half a century. While this may seem like a very long time, I argue that the cases are nevertheless compa-

that unconventional and conventional warfare is included, as well as atrocities and peacekeeping operations.[3] Finally, the last dimension is organizational, which means that different military branches are included, naval as well as ground-based. I have chosen not to include any cases involving air force units, since air combat generally requires a higher degree of coordination, which limits the autonomy of the units and thus reduces the potential impact of tactical-level subcultures.[4] Naval units also tend to be subject to the same limitations, which is why I have only included a rather atypical kind of naval unit in the form of submarines, which tend to operate alone and often have to refrain from communicating with superiors, in order to avoid detection.

The dependent variable is defined as decisions (output) made by tactical-level commanders, which have influenced major political outcomes in an unexpected manner. The independent variable is defined as the degree of convergence or divergence between the tactical-level subculture and the political goals in each case. The degree of convergence can be seen in the convergence/divergence figure included in each case. According to the theory, a high degree of convergence between the tactical-level subculture and the political goals would be expected to produce positive output, while a low degree of convergence would be expected to produce negative output.

3.1 The Case Selection Bias Issue

In order to cope with the risk of case selection bias, I have selected cases that display variation in the values of the dependent variable, in

rable. The most dramatic milestone in modern command, which separates modern command from the more archaic version, was the widespread adoption of radios in the 1930s-1950s, which meant that commanders were no longer limited by their voices, or had to rely on crude instruments such as signal flags. The cases included here all occurred after the introduction of radios in their respective organizations. See chapter 1.4 for more details.

[3] The conventional/unconventional dichotomy used above is based on the strategic approach employed. Conventional warfare indicates a strategy in which military forces are used to target the adversary's military, while unconventional warfare is used to describe a strategy that directly targets the adversary's ability to wage war by striking against his economy (Lautenschläger, 1988, p. 245).

[4] *Auftragstaktik* is most useful in situations where the degree of uncertainty is high, and the degree of coordination can be kept low. This means that *Auftragstaktik* is best suited for operations on the ground, according to Neretnieks (2014).

Cases	Branch/type	Period	Nationality	Setting
Pair I	Submarine arm	1939–1940	Germany	Unconventional
		1941–1942	United States	
Pair II	Armored corps	1973	Israel	Conventional
		1942–1945	Germany	
Pair III	Infantry	1968	United States	Atrocities
		1933–1942	Germany	
Pair IV	Mechanized inf.	1993–1995	Swe/Den	Peacekeeping
		1994–1995	Netherlands	

Figure 4: Case selection

accordance with the recommendation presented by King et al. (1994, p. 149). I have chosen eight cases, all of which feature events with variation in the dependent variable. The variance of values on the dependent variable should also satisfy the recommendation by Collier and Mahoney (1996, p. 67) to include a "contrast space," i.e. that the variance on the dependent value should not be more narrow than suggested by the research question. In order to avoid limiting myself to what George and Bennett (2005, p. 138) call "cross-case inferences," I will also subject each case to a within-case analysis.[5]

The time frame of the cases differs considerably, from a few days in the Israeli case in the second case pair, to the nine years of the *Totenkopf* case in the third. I argue, however, that the cases are quite evenly balanced. In the first case, Germany and the US fought without interruption for an entire year. The nature of submarine operations means that this is not as intense as it may sound. A submarine has to locate a target before it can engage it, and even located targets may be too fast to catch. In the Israeli case, the event studied is a non-stop combat operation that spanned several days and had a decisive strategic impact on the whole war. In comparison, the German armor case covers slightly less than three years, i.e. the autumn of 1942 to the fall of 1944, which covers the entire life span of the units under

[5] According to George and Bennett (2005, p. 138), cross-case inferences is the practice of basing conclusions solely on the comparison of cases without looking at the particulars of each case.

scrutiny in that case. While this may seem like a long time period, there were very few of these units and much of the documentation was lost during the final months of WWII. Consequently, a longer time period is required. The atrocities covered in the third pair differ in the sense that in the German case, a longer time frame than in the American is necessary in order to describe the deliberate development of perpetrators of atrocities, whereas the spontaneous process in the American case unfolded at a much faster rate. Since the conscripts and volunteers in the Charlie Company of the US Army Americal division served six-month tours in Vietnam, there's not much continuity within the lower-level units.

The Swedish unit for deployment overseas studied in the fourth case was constantly engaged in peacekeeping duties in more or less tense areas, including combat situations. While these troops also served tours averaging approximately six months, there was more continuity than in a regular conscript army, since a considerable portion of the troops served multiple tours, thus providing a cadre for subsequent units. In order to study how rotations influence the process over time, and to accumulate a sufficient number of interesting events, I have chosen to study this case for a period of one and a half years.

3.2

Within-Case Analysis

The within-case analysis sections of this dissertation are based on process-tracing and the congruence method, as defined by George and Bennett (ibid.). Process-tracing is defined as an approach in which each case is being "asked" the same set of questions (ibid., p. 207). Not only does this approach produce a clear structure, it also reduces the risk of arbitrary interpretation and circular reasoning. In those cases where a long period of time is studied, and where it may be difficult to trace the process in its entirety, I have used the congruence method instead. According to George and Bennett (ibid., p. 181), the congruence method means that the investigator "begins with a theory and then attempts to assess its ability to explain or predict the outcome in a particular case." Unlike process-tracing, the investigator "does not have to trace the causal process that leads from the independent variable to the case outcome." George and Bennett (ibid., p. 182) also state that process-tracing and the congruence method can be combined,

which is what I have attempted in this dissertation. More specifically, I have attempted to use process-tracing wherever possible, and to the greatest extent possible, and in the remainder of cases, relied on the congruence method. In order to cope with the limitations of the congruence method, I have relied on the following advice given by George and Bennett (2005, p. 184):

> the investigator can attempt to deal with the limitations of the congruence method [by providing] a plausible or convincing argument that the deductive theory or empirical generalization employed is powerful and well validated, that it fits the case at hand extremely well, and that it is not rivaled by competing theories or at least is better than conceivable alternative theories.

Each chapter begins with a general introduction and a note on the sources used, followed by a brief note on the empirical context of the case pair. Each case study begins with a discussion about the formative factors that have shaped the unit being analyzed. After that, I turn to the political and strategic objectives at hand, and what kind of categories a unit should belong to in order to be compatible with these objectives. Then, I discuss the challenges the unit has to cope with in the pursuit of the objectives, followed by a description of the personnel, commanders and equipment at its disposal. After that I present an analysis of its tactical-level subculture, followed by an analysis of the impact of that tactical-level subculture on the unit's ability to achieve the political and strategic objectives. Each chapter is concluded by a summary, in which I present the arguments in support of my theoretical approach, along with one or more alternative explanations.

3.3 Source Material Considerations

While the primary purpose of this dissertation is to develop theory rather than adding new empirical material in any of the cases studied, I have also uncovered new empirical data for several of my cases. Initially, I've used secondary sources to establish "roadmaps" of each case. In order to get a more complete picture and verify the facts presented in the secondary sources, I have collected primary material, through archival research and cross-referencing with numerous autobiographies.

Each empirical chapter contains a section that discusses the source material used and new empirical findings, since there are idiosyncratic aspects of this issue related to each of the eight cases. In some cases, reliability is more of an issue, while in others, some aspects remain controversial.

A few of the sources used have no page numbering, frequently as a result of being posted on websites in formats that differ from their original publication or because they are electronic editions of printed books. In some cases, the publications have no page numbers in their original format. In such cases I have chosen to make references to specific chapters and paragraphs, unless the document is very brief.

4

Pair I: Dilemmas of the Deep

THE GERMAN SUBMARINE arm, henceforth referred to by its German name, *der Ubootwaffe*, and its American counterpart, colloquially known as the Silent Service, both struggled with budgetary restraints and micromanagement from above during the pre-war years. Both organizations were at a disadvantage when they were called upon to engage in combat operations, in the sense that they had neither the quantity nor quality of equipment they had requested in order to achieve full combat readiness. More specifically, both the German and American crews and commanders were stuck with vessels they considered outdated or poorly designed for the circumstances they expected to encounter. Both the Germans and Americans were called upon to wage war against island nations (Britain and Japan respectively). They had a direct strategic role to play, i.e. to seek out and destroy civilian shipping supplying the enemy with strategic goods such as food, munitions, rubber, oil, etc. The guiding principle was that island nations with scarce domestic natural resources can be starved into surrender by denying them food, fuel and strategic war materials. Consequently, while enemy warships would be considered targets of opportunity, the main effort would be directed against the civilian vessels transporting strategic goods, a concept known as *guerre de course.*

The Germans met qualified opposition from the very start of the war, resulting in losses. The Americans, on the other hand, quickly noticed that their Japanese foes had neglected to develop the appropriate weapons and methods to deal with hostile submarines. As a result, the Japanese depth charges were completely ineffective against submerged American boats. From the start of the war, the German boats were

subject to severe restrictions regarding target selection. Only after several months of war were these restrictions lifted. The Americans, on the other hand, were authorized to wage unrestricted submarine warfare from day one until the very end of the conflict, which meant that they could not only freely choose targets but also did not have to expose themselves more than necessary while pursuing them.

In sum, these circumstances seem to favor the Americans rather than the Germans. Nevertheless, during their first years of combat operations, for the Germans from September 3rd 1939 to the end of August 1940 and for the Americans from December 7th 1941 to the end of November 1942, the Germans were significantly more successful than their American counterparts. The Germans also suffered considerably more losses. The inability to achieve results among many of the American commanders also led to a comparatively large portion of Americans being relieved of their commands by their superiors. In this chapter, I argue that a significant part of the differences in performance, losses and relieved commanders can be attributed to tactical-level subcultures.

4.1 Sources

During the research for this chapter, a mix of primary and secondary sources have been used. Among the primary sources are a number of American and German wartime documents: war patrol reports written by the submarine commanders, evaluations of war patrols written by their superiors and war diary entries from wartime staffs.[1] Also among the primary sources are a number of autobiographies written by German and American submarine captains and crew members. While all factual details in these accounts have been treated with caution, the emotionally oriented descriptions of how events were perceived and interpreted are taken at face value. Particular attention is paid to details concerning what is emphasized and what is omitted. The autobiographies thus provide important clues as to how the crews and captains felt and thought.

[1] A war diary is essentially an official chronological record of events of importance for a specific staff or command, written locally and during or shortly after the events have taken place. Within the *Ubootwaffe*, each submarine had its own war diary (*Kriegstagebuch*, abbr. "KTB"), which is the equivalent of the American "war patrol report".

I also compiled statistical data from several different sources to build a dataset covering 91 German and 132 American submarine commanders. For the Germans, I included only captains sailing on patrol in the North Atlantic during the time period in question. This excludes a few patrols carried out in the Baltic Sea, but these were typically of a different and less important nature, and not suitable for comparative purposes. For the Americans, I included only captains operating against Japanese forces in the Pacific. The Americans operating out of Panama and from the American East Coast had a different mission and different objectives, and were in addition few in number. For that reason I did not include them in my dataset. Most of the patrol information originates from Blair (2004a) and Blair (2001), but has been cross-referenced with the very detailed submarine and commander databases at the website uboat.net (*uboat.net*). Where required, the previously mentioned primary material has been used to fill in the gaps. Since the figures on sunk and damaged ships listed in the primary material are notoriously unreliable for both sides, I have based those figures exclusively on post-war sources. For the German U-boats, extensive research by a number of scholars has resulted in accurate figures accounting for most ships lost to German U-boats during WWII. The database at uboat.net is based on these references. For the American submarines in the Pacific, the post-war JANAC commission investigated all claims made during the war and lowered the scores of several American commanders, by cross-referencing with Japanese archives.[2] I've used these verified post-war figures for my dataset.

Most of the German war diaries were obtained through the *Deutsches U-Boot Museum* (formerly known as the *U-Boot Archiv*) in Cuxhaven-Altenbruch in Germany. Most of the American patrol reports and war diary entries were downloaded from the Fold3.com website. In addition to this, many documents can be found dispersed among several different websites, such as interrogation reports by captured German U-boat crews and American evaluations of captured German U-boats. I have also used these documents whenever I have been able to verify the reliability of the source.

The end result is a combined dataset listing commanders, the boats they commanded, tonnage sunk and damaged, number of ships sunk and damaged, as well as information concerning commanders who were relieved, captured or killed in action. This combined dataset has been the basis for all the statistics listed in this chapter..

[2] JANAC = Joint Army-Navy Assessment Committee

4.2

A Brief Note on Submarine Warfare in WWII

Throughout the 20th century, submarines were used in many different tactical roles. Originally conceived as short-range coastal defensive craft, the major powers later experimented with submarines as escorts to surface ships, large gun platforms, clandestine transport vessels, and later during the Cold War as intelligence-gathering platforms, "hunter-killers" and nuclear missile platforms. Before WWII, there was still no international consensus on how to use submarines. The most common perception was that submarines should support the surface fleet by attacking enemy high-value combatant targets, such as battleships. The German strategy, however, was different. It entailed sending submarines to attack merchant ships headed to or from the British isles. It was hoped that an effective submarine blockade would starve Britain into submission, based on the success of the German U-boats of World War I.

Submarine combat operations against merchant vessels during WWII were influenced by a few constant factors. First, the primary advantage of the submarine is its stealth. By diving beneath the surface, it becomes very difficult to detect visually. For submerged attacks, submarines would normally only dive deep enough to be concealed, remaining close enough to the surface to be able to raise the periscope to see the target. This is referred to as *periscope depth*. Second, in order to attack a ship, the captain of the submarine has to solve a mathematical problem to acquire the correct firing angle for the torpedo. For this reason, the torpedo settings are derived from what is known as a firing solution. A firing solution typically requires data on the launching platform, torpedo and the target. The periscope, which was often connected to a torpedo data computer (TDC), could be used to acquire all the necessary data. The TDC would then provide the appropriate gyro angle for the torpedo, which was the setting that determined the course of the torpedo once it had been launched. After launch, the torpedo would travel along the pre-set course at the pre-set speed and depth until it struck the target or missed.

Later in the war torpedoes capable of homing in on targets were developed, but these were not operational until 1943–1944. The accuracy of a torpedo shot was thus defined by the accuracy of the data used to calculate the firing solution, the acquisition of which required the submarine to expose the periscope. More data would normally mean a

more accurate solution, but would also require more exposure of the periscope. If the periscope was spotted and the target took evasive action, the firing solution would become inaccurate. If the periscope was not used, the submarine could still use its passive sonar (a.k.a. hydrophone, a device that picks up sound underwater) to determine the bearing of the target and make an approximation of its speed by counting the turn rate of the screws (propellers). Such solutions would be inherently inaccurate however, due to the lack of precision of the passive sonar. An exact measurement of distance could only be attained by using the active sonar (a device that emits a sound pulse, and then listens to how it bounces back, similar to radar), but that would also reveal the exact position of the sub to any escort vessels also equipped with sonar.[3]

The most common countermeasure against submarines consisted in gathering civilian ships in convoys, and then assigning warships specialized in anti-submarine warfare (ASW) to escort and protect them. While the civilian ships could only pose a moderate threat to the submarine, and then only while the latter was at the surface, the escorts could locate and attack submerged boats by using sonars and depth charges. A submarine caught on the surface could quickly be destroyed by the guns most surface ships carried. Aircraft also posed a serious threat since they could detect a submarine cruising on the surface from a long distance, approach quickly using their superior speed, and then drop depth charges on the submarine before it had time to disappear beneath the waves. As the war progressed, Allied escorts and aircraft were equipped with radars that could detect submarines even in adverse weather conditions and during the night hours.

The danger posed to submarines by aircraft was primarily related to the submarines' need to surface regularly. Almost all WWII submarines were propelled by diesel engines on the surface and battery-operated electric motors while submerged. While cruising submerged, submarines could rarely achieve even half of the speed they were capable of on the surface, and even then they would quickly deplete their batteries. As a result, submarines would normally have to move very slowly while submerged. Even a common merchant ship with its modest cruise speed of 10–12 knots could easily outrun a submarine crawling along at 4–5 knots (Blair, 2004b, p. 29). In addition, the breathing of the crew would inevitably lead to a build-up of carbon dioxide (CO_2),

[3]While this approach was inherently risky, it was still used occasionally. For example, Conner (1999) describes how the active sonar was used by the USS *Guardfish* to measure range to a target during an attack in mid-1944.

which limited their ability to stay submerged. If the CO_2 level became too high, the crew would become disoriented and eventually die of asphyxiation. While subs often had emergency canisters that could be used to absorb CO_2, these could only extend submerged endurance marginally. Eventually the sub had to surface and ventilate to purge the boat of the CO_2 and recharge the batteries. While ventilating was a relatively quick process, battery recharges would usually take several hours.

4.3

The *Ubootwaffe*, 1939–1940

> "Captain, we can't just let this steamer go. The BdU would never forgive us!"[4] A second later Bleichrodt tore the curtain aside. "You're all mad!" he screamed. The two officers were standing eyeball to eyeball and Wissmann was giving no ground. "Very well," the commander roared after a few moments' silence, "if that's what you want. Control room! Prepare for gun engagement!"
>
> — Wolfgang Hirschfeld, former U-boat crew member[5]

The *Ubootwaffe* was originally a small and exclusive organization within the German Navy. Considering themselves to be the elite of the Navy, the men of the U-boats had a strong sense of identity and unique norms developed through organizational experiences of a previous war and the efforts of a determined leader with a strategic agenda of his own devising. They were initially hampered by restrictions when WWII broke out. Numerous incidents followed, which produced several politically uncomfortable situations that influenced key phases of the Second World War. As the restrictions were gradually lifted, the U-boats proved their worth as a strategic weapon, but also suffered heavy losses in the process.

FORMATIVE FACTORS

The *Ubootwaffe* was an essential component of the German Imperial Navy (*Kaiserliche Marine*) during the First World War. The efficiency of the German submarine campaign was attributable not only to the fact that the German boats were technologically superior to their French and British counterparts in 1914 (Smedberg, 2005, p. 104), the quality of its well-trained and highly motivated crews also had a crucial impact. The British reliance on maritime imports made it vulnerable to targeted attacks on its merchant fleet and other ships bringing goods to the British isles. Consequently, the goal of the German submarine warfare was to restrict British imports to such an extent that the British isles would have to face severe shortages of food and strategic commodities. The most successful year for the German submarines during the First

[4] In this example, *Kapitänleutnant* Bleichrodt is the captain and commander of the submarine. *Oberleutnant* Wissmann is the executive officer and thus the next highest ranking officer but still subordinate to the captain.

[5] The quote appears in Hirschfeld and Brooks (2011, p. 125f.)

World War was 1917, the fourth year of the war between Great Britain and Germany. In April alone, German submarines sank 350 ships, comprising a total of 849 000 tonnes. Great Britain came to the verge of disaster when the shipyards were unable to replace lost merchant vessels as quickly as they were destroyed by the U-boats. The average life span of a ship plying the North Atlantic was down to a mere four weeks. When the situation peaked, Great Britain had no more than six weeks' worth of food in stock (Smedberg, 2005, p. 107). The submariners were hailed as heroes in Germany and vilified in the Allied press, where the focus lay on the ungentlemanly conduct of submarine warfare. According to Hadley (quoted in Blair, 2004a, p. 20), the submarine arm was subject to more myths than any other branch in either of the two world wars. The Allies eventually managed to counter the threat from the German submarines by introducing mandatory convoys escorted by warships capable of anti-submarine warfare (ASW). In addition, intensified air surveillance improved the chances of spotting submarines on the surface and directing ASW ships to the location before the submarines had a chance to attack a convoy.

During the interwar years of the Weimar Republic, the German Navy was subject to considerable ridicule from the public for its enormously expensive surface fleet, which had failed to engage the Royal Navy in a decisive battle (Blair, 2004b, p. 52). The Navy was under siege from two opposite sides, accused on the one hand of harboring radical elements which had undermined the royal throne and the army, and on the other hand accused of being opposed to the democratically elected Weimar government. The massive criticism against the Navy and demands that it be disbanded led to a low-water mark in the morale of the Navy personnel, of whom many left service to seek civilian employment (ibid., p. 52). In 1921, the German navy was reshaped as the *Reichsmarine*. The recruitment policy was strict, according to Blair (ibid., p. 53) only men of high qualifications, character, and intelligence were accepted. After Hitler's rise to power in 1933, the Reichsmarine adopted a new name, *Kriegsmarine*, which appropriately reflected its new, more bellicose nature.

In 1935, *Fregattenkapitän* Karl Dönitz was chosen to lead the *Ubootwaffe* when he was appointed commander of the submarine arm. After this, he was frequently referred to as the *Befehlshaber der Unterseebote* (BdU). Dönitz had served on submarines during World War I, first as second in command under one of Germany's most successful submarine commanders, then as a commander on a submarine of his own. During his final patrol in October of 1918, Dönitz attacked a convoy,

sinking one enemy ship. He successfully evaded a destroyer attack, and prepared for a new attack. While cruising at periscope depth, his boat suddenly suffered a mechanical malfunction and started to dive at an alarming rate. Dönitz was able to prevent the boat from going beneath its crush depth only at the last minute, by blowing his tanks of compressed air. The boat submerged even faster than it had gone down, emerging suddenly in the middle of the enemy convoy, in broad daylight. His submarine was consequently engaged by escort vessels. Under heavy fire from the escort ships, unable to dive since his tanks of compressed air were exhausted, Dönitz ordered his crew to abandon ship (Dönitz, 2012, p. 3–4). He was picked up by British warships and spent the next 10 months as a prisoner of war (Blair, 2004b, p. 60). Once he had returned to Germany, Dönitz stayed in the Navy, persuaded by the promise by one of his superiors that Germany would soon have U-boats again, even though they were expressly forbidden for the German Navy under the terms of the Versailles treaty (Dönitz, 2012, p. 5).

After serving on surface ships until 1935, Dönitz was finally chosen to rebuild the submarine arm. He studied the experiences from World War I, and according to Blair (Blair, 2004b, p. 61) he then became convinced that the submarines had almost brought victory to Germany. When Dönitz took command, the German Navy had the same idea about submarines as most of the rest of the world: their primary purpose was to support the main fleet (Westwood, 2005, p. 33). Dönitz, enjoying complete freedom to develop tactics and doctrines and drawing on his experiences as a WWI U-boat commander, immediately started preparing the *Ubootwaffe* for a completely different role. In stark contrast to what his commander-in-chief and the head of the German Navy were hoping to achieve, Dönitz considered conflict with Britain inevitable and his plan was formulated accordingly.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

During the first phase of World War II, Germany wanted to avoid an escalation of the conflict with France and Great Britain. During the operations against Poland, Germany was very vulnerable to attack from the West, where 110 French and British divisions stood ready, facing no more than 23 German divisions on the other side of the border. According to General Jodl, a dedicated French and British assault would have meant a "collapse" in the west for Germany (Shirer, 1977a, p. 20). Once the Polish campaign was concluded, Hitler made

peace offers to France and Britain. While it remains unclear whether or not Hitler was sincere, he was at the very least anxious to buy time while the *Wehrmacht* prepared for an offensive in the west. The *Kriegsmarine* had quickly dispatched those parts of the Polish Navy that didn't manage to escape and was the only branch available for offensive operations against the Western powers from the very start of the war. Sent to the waters around the British isles, the U-boats had to adhere to extensive restrictions: only British and Allied vessels were legitimate targets, even though a significant portion of the strategic goods being shipped to Britain was carried by neutral vessels. The situation was assessed at a Führer conference on naval affairs held on September 7, 1939. According to Raeder, the head of the *Kriegsmarine*, (quoted in Westwood, 2005, p. 61):

1. Great Britain is unable to draw France into the war unconditionally.

2. France fails to see any war aim and is therefore trying to stay out of the war.

3. After the collapse of Poland, which can be expected soon, it is possible that France, and perhaps afterwards Great Britain, might be ready to accept to a certain extent the situation which has been created in the east.

4. Therefore **an attack should not be forced** and **our strength should be saved** for the time being [my emphasis].

Hitler agreed with Raeder's assessment, and it was agreed that restraint was to be exercised until the situation became clearer (ibid., p. 61–62). This included even more restrictions for the U-boats: all offensive acts against French targets were prohibited, and passenger ships remained off limits, even if they sailed in convoys. The two costly "pocket battleships" *Graf Spee* and *Deutschland*, which were originally intended for use against Allied merchant vessels, much like the U-boats, were ordered to remain at their waiting stations to avoid any additional provocation (ibid., p. 61–62).

A new Führer conference on naval affairs was held on September 23rd, 1939. By then 35 ships had been sunk by German U-boats in the North Sea and the Atlantic. Hitler then gave the *Kriegsmarine* permission to attack any armed merchantmen without warning, but retained the embargo on attacks against passenger liners (ibid., p. 62). On November 10th, Hitler removed yet another restriction, allowing

attacks on armed passenger liners carrying troops, as long as they could be positively identified as operating in that role (ibid., p. 70). During this time period, the *Ubootwaffe* had expanded their operations from targeting British ships to include also French vessels, and thereafter also those from the neutral powers such as Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark. Gradually, as peace with Britain became increasingly unrealistic, Dönitz' original strategic plan met less opposition from Hitler. From the 24th of May, any vessel, including unescorted neutral vessels and passenger liners, could be sunk without warning in British and French waters (Blair, 2004a, p. 208). Restrictions against operations directed against US shipping, however, remained in force, since Hitler did not want to give the Americans grounds for entering the war. It was not until the Japanese attack on the US and the subsequent declaration of war by Hitler that the fear of provoking the US finally disappeared (Westwood, 2005, p. 151).

In April 1940, an unexpected event added a new strategic objective to the mix: supporting the German invasion fleet in operations against Norway. This meant that eight U-boat groups, a total of 31 boats at a time when no more than 37 were available (ibid., p. 101), were diverted from their regular operations. After the U-boat campaign in Norway had been concluded, Dönitz still had to divert a third of the ocean-going U-boat fleet to ferry supplies to Norway. In addition, a number of boats required maintenance and repairs, which was difficult since the shipyards were busy constructing new boats (Blair, 2004a, p. 208). After a slow start, full-scale operations against transatlantic shipping were resumed in June 1940.

With these strategic objectives in mind, we can conclude that in cases of uncertainty, it was during the first months of the war important that the U-boats should avoid sinking targets that were defined as off-limits, such as passenger liners and American ships. At the same time, the U-boat fleet was quite small, and the offensive against the Western powers had not yet begun. Consequently, the point in time when the war against the Western powers would reach a decisive point was still in the future. Based on this, I argue that the most suitable tactical-level subculture for the first months (September to November, 1939) would be one that is Balanced with regards to risk and Protective with regards to noncombatants. This would be sub-optimal, since it would seriously limit the ability of the U-boat fleet to inflict losses on the civilian merchantmen, but it would significantly reduce the risk of sinking a target that was off-limits.

Attitude toward noncombatants (secondary)	Attitude toward risk (primary): Aggressive	Balanced	Cautious
Protective		*diplomatic option Sept-Nov 1939*	
Indifferent	*short campaign*	*long campaign*	
Hostile			

Figure 5: Strategic objectives, *Ubootwaffe*

For the long term, if the strategic objectives require unrestricted submarine warfare against merchantmen vessels, it would be preferable instead to have a tactical level subculture that is Indifferent to noncombatants. Hostile would be counterproductive since the U-boats should target ships of strategic value, not simply those with the most civilians. In its attitude toward risk, the strategic objectives would be best served by a Balanced tactical-level subculture if the U-boats and crews need to be preserved for a long-term campaign, or it could be Aggressive, if we expect a decision within a short period of time.

CHALLENGES

During the first six months of *Ubootwaffe* combat operations, the restrictions imposed by treaties formulated during the interwar years had a significant impact on the strategic role of the U-boats. During the interwar years, considerable efforts had been made by the British to limit the use of submarines in a future conflict. While the First World War was won by Germany's enemies and the peace treaty meant the end of the German Empire, the feats of the *Ubootwaffe* had not been forgotten. The infamous sinking of the passenger liners *Lusitania*, *Arabic* and *Hesperian* in 1915 remained in public memory. During the First World War, the New York Times had described the German submariners as "savages, drunk on blood" (Blair, 2004b, p. 32). After the sinking of the Lusitania in 1915, mobs in London attacked businesses

with German names, while the former American president Theodore Roosevelt called the act "piracy on a vaster scale than any old-time pirate ever practiced" (Ballard and Dunmore, 1995, p. 118).

These sentiments were comparable to the public outrage against the poison gases that had been deployed during the battles on land, with horrifying results. Consequently, in 1921, Great Britain demanded a total ban on the use of submarines, arguing that they were inhumane (Blair, 2004b, p. 49). The British government also had strategic reasons for wanting a ban on submarines, since Britain was dependent on maritime trade and the stealthy nature of the submarines, rendering them less vulnerable to traditional maritime weapons, meant that they presented a unique opportunity to challenge the mighty Royal Navy in its own element. Resistance from the other Great Powers, including France, the United States and Japan, prevented a complete ban. Nevertheless, the British efforts resulted in the 1930 London Declaration, in which the total tonnage of submarines was restricted for all the Great Powers.

In addition and more importantly, the tactical conduct of submarines became subject to strict rules. Submarines as well as surface ships, were required to take precautions to ensure the safety of the crews of civilian ships before sinking them. This meant that the crew along with any passengers and the ship's documents had to be permitted to leave the ship in good order and that life boats were only considered safe refuge if the weather conditions were calm, land was nearby or if other ships nearby were capable of taking them on board (ibid., p. 51). These rules of engagement were formally applied to the *Ubootwaffe* in 1936 and while they were gradually diluted, some aspects remained in effect until mid-1940 (see page 66), although Dönitz repeatedly asked Hitler to grant the U-boats the freedom to attack without warning. During the first months of WWII, the German submarine captains were under orders to adhere to the rules laid down in the London Declaration.

This challenge became significantly more difficult to cope with as soon as mandatory convoying was reinstated. The use of mandatory convoying was one of the most important Allied lessons of the U-boat warfare of World War I. Forcing all merchant vessels to sail in convoys made them more difficult to detect than if they were scattered all over the Atlantic, and they were easier to defend by allocating escort vessels capable of destroying U-boats. While it took three years to finally adopt mandatory convoying in World War I, it was quickly implemented at the start of World War II (ibid., p. 38, 105). However, this had been anticipated by Dönitz, who had been planning for a new *guerre de*

course during the interwar years and the U-boat commanders were trained to cope with this eventuality. The new "wolfpack" doctrine meant that the U-boats operated in groups ("wolfpacks") rather than as solitary vessels. While each boat would search for targets individually, they would gather before attacking a convoy simultaneously from multiple directions, thus confusing the escort vessels (Blair, 2004b, p. 63). Sonars and aircraft presented another potentially serious threat at the outset of the war, but the limited range of sonars and the inability of aircraft to operate at night and detect submerged submarines during the day meant that they had serious limitations during the first years of the war, which the U-boats exploited (ibid., p. 63).

PERSONNEL, COMMANDERS AND EQUIPMENT

A German submarine captain was formally a vessel commander (*Kommandant*), but often referred to as "*Herr Kaleun*," a shortening of the most common rank of a U-boat captain, *Kapitänleutnant*. His second in command was known as the First Watch Officer or *1 Wachoffizier* (1WO). The 1WO was responsible for the boat's weapons systems and would aim the torpedoes during surface attacks. The third officer, the 2WO, was responsible for the watchcrew on the deck, the anti-aircraft gun and the deck gun, as well as the radio crew. The last of the officers was the *Leitender Ingenieur* or LI, who was in charge of all the mechanical systems on the boat, including the engines and batteries. The officers were assisted by petty officers, of whom the most senior were the *Oberbootsmann* (responsible for crew discipline), *Obersteuermann* (navigation and supply), as well as two *Obermaschinisten* (engineers, one for the diesel engine and one for the electrical engine) (*U-Boat Crew*). In total, a Type VII U-boat had a complement of around 44 men. The smaller Type II carried only 25, while the larger Type IX versions had a crew of between 48 and 57 men (Miller, 2004, p. 142–153).

The crewmen on a German submarine had to suffer through terrible conditions while at sea. The boat was unstable in the water on the surface, causing it to roll violently as soon as the weather took a turn for the worse. Fresh water was strictly rationed and, as a result, none of it could be used for purposes of personal hygiene. Bodily odors were concealed using perfume sprays (Blair, 2004b, p. 89). Cold sea water would frequently spill down from the conning tower into the control room located directly below the hatch. Most of the time only one toilet was available for the whole crew of 40–50 men. The temperature inside the boat was unstable, tending to be either too hot or too cold and the

humidity was always too high for comfort. The food tended to rot or spoil and much of the technical equipment was prone to breakdowns (ibid., p. 92).

Serving as lookout meant standing at a specified spot on the bridge with a pair of binoculars, constantly scanning a 90-degree assigned sector visually. This meant an opportunity to be on the outside of the boat and thus in fresh air and possibly sunshine, and that smoking was permitted. If the weather conditions were adverse, it would on the other hand be not only uncomfortable but also potentially dangerous. High waves would pound the lookouts, who nevertheless had to pay constant attention to their assigned sectors. Failure to detect a threat or target could lead to severe consequences. The men were kept from being washed overboard by safety harnesses. At the end of a watch in harsh weather a lookout would be soaking wet, cold and often bruised (ibid., p. 92). A typical patrol would, however, at least be over after a few weeks, after which they would enjoy extended shore leave.

Functional Imperatives. A submarine is by design stealthy and usually armed with powerful weapons in the shape of torpedoes and possibly also a deck gun. It is, however, very vulnerable to the weapons carried by surface vessels. Even an unarmed civilian vessel can sink a submarine by ramming it. Its functional imperatives are first of all determined by its specific design, which in turn is based on its intended strategic role. For the Germans, this was a non-issue. The success of the German boats in their *guerre de course* against Allied merchant shipping during WWI had set a convincing precedent that their successors were eager to emulate. Consequently, the U-boat fleet prepared to engage enemy merchantmen and warships, even if they operated in escorted convoys. The first functional imperative for any commander of a vessel during such operations will be to remain concealed from armed surface vessels, since a single volley from a destroyer would be enough to spell doom for the average U-boat.

The second functional imperative is provided by the relatively short range of the submarine's primary weapons, i.e. the torpedoes, which means that it has to close the distance to its targets. This complicates the matter, since submarines during the first half of the 20th century were quite slow while submerged, due to the drag imparted by the water surrounding the vessel, combined with the limited endurance of batteries. The two functional imperatives thus clash, by satisfying one it becomes difficult to achieve the other, save for when the submarine can ambush its targets by remaining more or less stationary in its path.

When the ambush option is unavailable, the commander will have to accept a certain degree of risk in order to close the distance and bring his weapons to bear on the target. The precise extent of this risk will normally be obfuscated by the uncertainties of war: the ability and resolve of the enemy, the equipment deployed by the enemy, any defects on the boat that could jeopardize its stealth (such as oil leaks unnoticed by the crew), etc.

The solution to this problem as employed by the Germans was to exploit the surface speed of the submarines as much as possible. By attacking at night, the German submarines could remain undetected even on the surface. Running on the surface rendered the submarine invisible to Allied sonars, while the low profile of the boats made them difficult to detect visually in the dark. However, if a German boat was caught in the searchlights of a hostile escort vessel, it was in dire straits, since the enemy would be able to fire its guns at the fragile submarine, forcing it to dive, and then move up to the point where the boat had submerged and saturate the area with depth charges. The slow speed of a boat beneath the surface meant that the fast escort vessels usually would be able to close the distance well before the boat could escape the area. The submarine commander then had to keep evading the inevitable depth charges and sonar pings until he could extract himself and his boat from the search area.

TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURE

Despite the trying conditions, or perhaps because of them, the men of the *Ubootwaffe* had a strong sense of pride and professionalism. All submariners in the *Kriegsmarine* had volunteered for their assignments and they considered themselves to be part of an elite force (Blair, 2004b, p. 92). This self-image is supported by a post-war study by the US Navy, which concluded that the effective operation of technically inferior submarines was largely attributable to the considerable skill level of the German crews (*Former German Submarine Type IXC* 1946, p. 1). The first U-boat commanders who would come to make up the core of this elite were trained by Dönitz himself, and the bond between the BdU and his subordinate commanders was personal as well as professional (Robertson and Rohwer, 2003, p. 45). Dönitz perpetuated the role-model of the aggressive commander, quick to dismiss the capabilities of enemy anti-submarine warfare. An American officer interviewing a former U-boat captain shortly after WWI reported that the German dismissed not only Allied ASW but also mines, even though

these posed a lethal threat to any submarine. The American officer concluded that this attitude was attributable to "bravado" (Friedman, 1995, p. 161). The measure of success for a submarine commander was the amount of tonnage he had sunk. This was not only part of the unofficial competition between the commanders but also formalized in the rule that 100,000 tonnes of sunk enemy shipping would more or less automatically make the commander eligible to receive the Knight's Cross (Blair, 2004b, p. 63), which was one of the highest German military decorations during WWII.

Focal Points. The most important focal point in the *Ubootwaffe* was Dönitz himself. He had a very clear vision of how the *Ubootwaffe* was supposed to operate when he assumed command over it in 1935, and never made any radical changes to this concept. In his view, the German U-boats were a strategic weapon best suited for blockading the British isles. The new anti-submarine weapons developed since then were overestimated, in his opinion. Bold attacks would be able to defeat even escorted convoys, especially if the U-boats could coordinate themselves in "wolf packs" to spread confusion and force the escorts to disperse. Dönitz maintained operational command over his boats until January 1943, when he was promoted to commander-in-chief of the *Kriegsmarine*. Until then, he had been the unquestionable leader of the *Ubootwaffe*, overseeing everything from vessel design to training to combat operations. The flotilla commanders who formally stood between him and the captains were nothing more than heads of administrative functions.

When Dönitz was appointed BdU in 1935, he also took command over the submarine training flottilla, and quickly decided that the optimal attack distance was 600 yards, instead of the previously used 3,000 yards, if firing from a submerged position (Westwood, 2005, p. 36). The rationale behind the previous, more cautious approach was that a safety distance to the British sonars must be maintained. Dönitz considered this an exaggeration. In addition, Dönitz emphasized the importance of training focused on attacking. As a result, crews had to perform 66 surfaced and 66 submerged practice attacks before they were allowed to fire their first live practice torpedo. One German submarine captain stated that "the crews were tested to the limits of human endeavour" (ibid., p. 37). We can thus conclude that the tactical-level subculture of the *Ubootwaffe* most closely corresponds to the Aggressive-Indifferent categories.

Attitude toward nononcombatants (secondary)	Attitude toward risk (primary): Aggressive	Balanced	Cautious
Protective		*diplomatic option* *Sept-Nov 1939*	
Indifferent	*short campaign* **Ubootwaffe**	*long campaign*	
Hostile			

Figure 6: Convergence/divergence, *Ubootwaffe*

If we juxtapose this with the category analysis from the discussion on the strategic objectives, we can conclude that the tactical-level subculture of the *Ubootwaffe* converges with the desired categories for a short campaign (see Table 6). During September-November 1939, there is a divergence, which can be expected to produce undesirable outcomes during this time period. After this, we can expect *Ubootwaffe* to produce strategically valuable output, but in the case of a long campaign, it will probably suffer unsustainable losses due to being Aggressive rather than Balanced.

IMPACT OF TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURE

During the first months of 1939, the formal autonomy of the *Ubootwaffe* was Medium, due to the restrictive rules of engagement imposed on the U-boat captains. However, these restrictions were ineffective, since the U-boat captains nevertheless sank a number of targets that were supposedly off-limits. This means that the actual autonomy of the *Ubootwaffe* was nevertheless High. Once the restrictions were lifted, the *Ubootwaffe* enjoyed a High degree of autonomy, both formally and in practice (see figure 7). Thus, the *Ubootwaffe* maintained a High degree of actual autonomy throughout the war, simply because the U-boat captains were so difficult to restrain in practice.

Degree of actual autonomy	Degree of formal autonomy: High	Medium	Low
High	**Ubootwaffe** may 1940-	**Ubootwaffe** sept 1939- may 1940	
Medium			
Low			

Figure 7: Degrees of autonomy, *Ubootwaffe*

The tactical-level of the *Ubootwaffe*, emphasizing aggression and daring, in combination with its High degree of autonomy, brought both successes and problems to the *Ubootwaffe* during its first year of combat operations. The *Ubootwaffe* did manage to sink a considerable number of ships during its first year, but it was not until a few months into the second year, during the "happy time," that it started to produce truly impressive results.[6] Despite Allied efforts to counter the U-boat threat by deploying merchant vessels in escorted convoys, the ferocious coordinated attacks decimated several convoys. These losses show the limits of convoying as a countermeasure and the remarkable efficiency of the commanders in engaging and destroying enemy merchant shipping. However, during the first year, the performance of the *Ubootwaffe* also featured problematic aspects in the form of the sinking of targets that were off-limits.

Diplomatic Debacles & Trigger-Happy Captains. On the very first day of war between the United Kingdom and Germany, an infamous U-boat incident occurred when *Kapitänleutnant* Fritz-Julius Lemp in *U 30* sank the passenger liner *Athenia*, mistaking it for an armed auxiliary cruiser, which were legitimate targets. In theoretical terms, Lemp's actions can be understood by taking into account how his tactical-level

[6] Another "happy time" was to occur in 1942, after which situation grew increasingly difficult for the *Ubootwaffe*.

subculture of aggressive behavior influenced the observation phase of his OODA-loop. Lemp wanted to sink ships, and so when he was faced with uncertainty, he interpreted what he saw in a manner that enabled him to take aggressive action. This despite operational orders that clearly forbade the sinking of civilian vessels without prior warning and unless a number of precautions were taken, intended to ensure the safety of the crew and passengers. To make matters worse, the *Athenia* carried American passengers. Lemp realized his mistake as he approached the sinking ship (Blair, 2004b, p. 97). His reaction was quietly to leave the location, maintaining radio silence. Only a few members of the crew came up to the bridge and saw the sinking *Athenia* at close range.

One of the men who had been on the bridge to see the *Athenia*, Adolf Schmidt, was wounded when *U 30* was attacked by aircraft eleven days later. Lemp then decided to drop Schmidt off in neutral Iceland, where he would be able to receive proper medical care. Before Schmidt debarked, Lemp demanded that he sign an oath in which he swore never to disclose what happened on the day the *Athenia* was sunk (*Nuremberg Trial Proceedings, Vol. 5* 1946, p. 264–265). The German government was very concerned that this might provoke the US, at the time still neutral, to side with Britain in the war (Shirer, 1977a, p. 22). 28 of the 112 passengers who had died that night had been Americans. The State Secretary at the German Foreign Office, Ernst von Weizsäcker, reminded Admiral Raeder of the political distaster following a similar incident during World War I, when the sinking of the British passenger liner *Lusitania* by a German U-boat contributed to the American decision to join the war. The incident sparked a major international incident, and caused an outcry from the public in the US and Great Britain. The whole affair was so embarrassing to Germany that a major cover-up operation was initiated (*Nuremberg Trial Proceedings, Vol. 5* 1946, p. 265). The day after the incident, Hitler issued a stern order forbidding any attacks on civilian passenger liners, followed by instructions from Dönitz, emphasizing the importance of adhering to the restrictions concerning civilian vessels (Blair, 2004b, p. 112).

It is important to note that when uncertainty was not an issue, German U-boat commanders could be more careful even when faced with a large and tempting target. For example, on June 11, 1940, *Kapitänleutnant* Fritz Frauenheim in *U 101* spotted a large steamer off the coast of northern Portugal. By that time, unrestricted submarine warfare had been authorized for British and French waters, but not as far south as *U 101* was operating. He assumed it was Greek and proceeded

to close the distance and order the captain to present its papers, in accordance with the London Declaration rules. The captain brought the papers on board the boat. Then suddenly an unidentified submarine surfaced nearby. According to Frauenheim, it looked French but had the markings of the German boat *U 43*. When it dove again, Frauenheim too ordered his boat to submerge. By that point, Frauenheim had concluded that the ship he had found was associated with a British company and headed towards the British isles, i.e. a viable target. He also suspected that the mysterious submarine was cooperating with the ship. Frauenheim fired one torpedo at the vessel, but missed when the torpedo depth-keeping malfunctioned and it passed underneath the target. The other submarine then too fired a torpedo against the ship, which also missed. The fact that the other boat tried to destroy the vessel as well reassured Frauenheim that it was probably *U 43* after all. However, Frauenheim decided to stay submerged and planned to straighten things out during the following day.

U 101 surfaced two hours and fifteen minutes later, at 03:45 in the morning. When he spotted a large steamer, he assumed that it was the Greek ship he had previously been pursuing. According to the war diary, the ship was moving slowly and the visibility was good. The *U 101* was in an intercept position and in no hurry. Frauenheim ordered the captain of the vessel to abandon ship since it was going to be torpedoed. The captain responded by morse code that he didn't understand, and added "Washington" to the message. When the ship came closer, Frauenheim realized that it was the American passenger liner *Washington*. He apologized to the captain, told him to proceed and wished him a good journey (*Kriegstagebuch, U 101*). No more than a couple of hours later, Frauenheim caught and sank the Greek ship he had originally been chasing. Whereas Lemp engaged the fast-moving *Athenia* in conditions of poor visibility and knew that he only had one chance, Frauenheim had been following the Greek steamer for some time and knew that it wouldn't be able to run away from him. Thus, he could take his time.

During the early phases of the war, passenger liners weren't the only sensitive targets. On the 17th of September 1939, *Kapitänleutnant* Otto Schuhart in the U-29 managed to sink the British aircraft carrier *Courageous*. The sinking of a major British warship by a German submarine made the headlines all over the world (Blair, 2004b, p. 125). While Hitler had preferred not to sink any British aircraft carriers, fearing that the ensuing humiliation would reinforce the determination of the British to continue the war against Germany, Dönitz was delighted

(Blair, 2004b, p. 126). Since no explicit order to the contrary had been issued, Schuhart wasn't subject to any sanctions for this action. Nevertheless, it clearly illustrates the discrepancy between operational conduct and strategic objectives, as outlined during the first Führer conference on naval affairs (see page 66), and how Dönitz condoned this type of behavior.

Depletion of Strength & Unnecessary Losses. In addition to the sinkings of politically sensitive targets, the tactical-level subculture also made the German U-boat captains dangerously reckless in their aggressive attacks on well-defended convoys. The losses suffered during the first year of combat operations were difficult to replace, since the men with long pre-war experience were lost at an alarming rate. No less than 74 percent of the commanders captured or killed during the first year had commanded boats of their own since October 1938 or earlier. 34 percent had commanded boats of their own since 1935 or 1936, meaning that they were among the first U-boat captains after the rebirth of the *Ubootwaffe* in 1935. While these men were not necessarily better prepared for combat than their brethren with less experience, they did know their boats in more detail. This meant that they would be better equipped to handle emergencies related to damaged boats, either as a result of enemy attack or following accidents. Their replacements had to go out on patrols with less training and practical experience.

Despite the risks, this attitude was upheld within the *Ubootwaffe*, both by Dönitz and the captains themselves. According to Wolfgang Hirschfeld, a former crew member of the *U 109*, *Korvettenkapitän* Hans-Georg Fischer was criticized in front of his men in a humiliating manner for managing to sink only a single ship during the first war patrol of the *U 109* (Hirschfeld and Brooks, 2011, p. 54). This was despite the fact that the *U 109* was subjected to depth charge attacks by several British destroyers while trying to approach a convoy. One of these attacks lasted for more than 16 hours and resulted in such heavy damage that the U-boat lost trim, sank to a depth far beyond the safe limit and was nearly lost. After temporary repairs the U-boat was still unable to dive without risking the whole boat, so the captain made the decision to abort the patrol prematurely (ibid., p. 47). *Kapitänleutnant* Heinrich Bleichrodt was subjected to similar treatment after a war patrol between June 28th and August 17th 1941, when he and the crew of the same boat as Hirschfeld commanded, the *U 109*, were scorned by Dönitz upon their return for their failure to sink a single ship during their patrol. This despite the fact that the U-boat had been suffering from serious

mechanical malfunctions and been subjected to numerous attacks which made it extremely dangerous to pursue attacks against convoys (ibid., p. 81). Dönitz was not the only one to express contempt, Bleichrodt's fellow commanders ridiculed him during his leave after the war patrol, calling the *U 109* a "torpedo carrier" (ibid., p. 83).[7] As illustrated in the quote at the start of this chapter, during one patrol Bleichrodt chose not to pursue an attack against an unidentified surface vessel, fearing that it might be a "U-boat trap."[8] His subordinate officers then protested vigorously until Bleichrodt relented and the attack could proceed, illustrating the effect of the tactical-level subculture. When a commander deviated from the norm, his subordinates immediately took action to rectify the situation.

SUMMARY

The tactical-level subculture within the *Ubootwaffe* had two major strategic consequences. First of all, it contributed to hardening the British in their view on Germany, making Hitler's attempts at de-escalation futile. Secondly, the *Ubootwaffe* suffered excessive losses at a time when no strategically decisive point was in sight. While considerable tonnage was sunk, along with several valuable warships, it was a high price to pay, in the form of the loss of so many experienced veterans. The year after these events, Dönitz was becoming increasingly concerned about the losses. His solution was to send a large contingent of U-boats to operate off the coast of the US in an operation called *Paukenschlag*, where they were not expected. Since there were few escort vessels in that area, the patrols were less dangeorus. However, that also meant that the German U-boats lost sight of their primary strategic objective: preventing imports from reaching Great Britain. During the six months of operations in American waters, valuable goods were able to reach the British isles relatively unmolested (Westwood, 2005, p. 255).[9] If Dönitz' captains had been less reckless, they might

[7] The joke was based on the idea that the *U 109*, which had not fired a single torpedo during its patrol, was a vessel that simply transported torpedoes rather than using them.

[8] The Allied deployed "Q-ships", which were armed merchant vessels acting as decoys. The purpose was to tempt U-boats into approaching within gun range, then the hidden guns were unveiled and a lethal volley was fired against the vulnerable U-boat (Hirschfeld and Brooks, 2011, p. 126).

[9] While the operations in American waters certainly had a strategic impact in the destruction of large numbers of oil tankers, which were far more valuable and difficult to replace than ordinary merchant vessels, pipelines were constructed on land to cope with this problem (Westwood, 2005, p. 259).

have been able to keep up operations against convoys without suffering such heavy losses, making *Operation Paukenschlag* unnecessary to begin with.

4.4

The Silent Service, 1941–1942

> It is the opinion of the Division Commander that too much importance is being given to the efficiency of air reconnaissance in the spotting of submarines both on the surface and while submerged which tends toward an over cautious attitude in the estimate of the situation.
>
> — Charles Edmunds, Division Commander, Pearl Harbor [10]

The US Navy's submarine arm, known as the "Silent Service," was during its nascent years overshadowed by a doctrine that favored capital warships for decades. When the German U-boats took a heavy toll on Allied shipping during World War I, the potential of the submarine seemed finally to have been proven. While the Silent Service grew both in size and prestige in the immediate postwar period, it soon fell back into obscurity. Subject to bureaucratic infighting between different echelons of the US Navy during the 1930s, the role of the American submarine force remained unclear until the new large vessel types of the late 1930s provided more distinct functional imperatives. Then it was settled that the mainstay of the fleet would be operating on independent long-range missions rather than in direct support of the surface fleet. The functional imperatives did not, however, provide guidance with regards to target selection and to what degree risk-taking was appropriate. Without any clear focal points to provide answers to these unresolved questions, the Silent Service developed a heterogeneous tactical-level subculture and, as a result, became a strategically unpredictable weapon that failed to live up to its potential during the crucial first year of war against Japan. While the Silent Service would later develop into one of the most formidable branches of the US Navy and make a significant contribution to the war effort, the first year remained lost.

FORMATIVE FACTORS

During the early 20th century, the US Navy adopted Alfred Thayer Mahan's theories of sea power, which emphasized the need for a sizable

[10] The statement, dated February 27, 1942, is printed in the evaluation of the patrol report from the commander of the USS *Thresher* (*U.S.S. Thresher - Report of Second War Patrol* 1942, encl. B, p. 3)

fleet of large battleships capable of defeating a foe on the high seas in a single decisive action (Blair, 2001, p. 27, 46). Mahan ([1890] 2011, ch. 1) argued that *guerre de course* was a suitable strategy for countries like France, which possessed ports near their targets, while it was in his opinion wholly unsuitable for the US. In his assessment, Mahan focused on the limited range of commerce-destroying vessels and the vulnerability inherent in fast vessels suitable for such pursuits. According to Mahan, commerce-destroyers should be able to seek refuge in ports, since they would otherwise risk destruction by superior enemy warships. However, Mahan's seminal *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783* was written in 1890, well before the submarines of the 20th century had started to appear. The unique ability of the submarine to conceal itself from surface vessels arguably rendered Mahan's theories inapplicable to its specific brand of *guerre de course*, at least as long as the enemy did not possess anti-submarine assets capable of effectively locating boats patrolling the open seas, before they engaged their targets. This was not, however, generally realized in the US Navy and related political functions.

American submarine policy remained erratic throughout the inter-war years due to a lack of consensus. Some argued that submarines were primarily a defensive asset, to be used close to coasts. Others wanted offensive vessels, capable of long-range operations. Among the latter there was also a divide between those who advocated submarines that could cruise alongside the surface fleet and those who wanted boats capable of operating independently. While the conflict over the strategic role of the submarine went on, types were developed, that were vastly different. Pre-WWI doctrine called, among other types, for coastal defense boats, of which a number of different types were developed. Even while WWI raged on, the Atlantic Submarine Flotilla was dissatisfied with the coastal defense boats and their small size, which limited their range, the space available in the conning tower and the ability to ride out rough weather (Friedman, 1995, p. 117–118). The result was the S-boat, larger than the previous coastal submarines. The S-boats suffered from a number of problems: their engines were unreliable, they were slow on the surface, they had insufficient range for the Pacific and the obsolete weapons systems did not live up to the demands of post-1918 tactics (ibid., p. 137).

There was originally a parallel process in the years after WWI, with the objective of developing a "fleet submarine," i.e. a boat that would sail alongside the surface fleet and support it in combat. The first three such boats, the *Barracuda* class, were utter failures. They were

incapable of achieving sufficient speed to keep up with the fleet and were in addition unreliable, slow to dive and unwieldy (Blair, 2001, p. 59). A new generation of huge boats followed, the *Argonaut*, *Narwhal* and *Nautilus*. They also turned out to be too slow for their intended role, as well as difficult to maneuver and slow to dive (ibid., p. 57). It was then decided that the concept of submarines following the fleet had to be abandoned. The new role for submarines that was envisaged was that of long-range scouting and intelligence-gathering and the "cruiser" submarines were developed. These were designed to operate individually in a reconnaissance role, to locate the enemy battle fleet. This required considerable range, high speed and endurance. The first of such designs was the *Dolphin*-class, followed by the *Cachalot*-class. Boats from both these classes served during WWII (Miller, 2004, p. 222–226, p. 475).

The controversy over the proper strategic role continued to plague the Silent Service. As late as 1938, bitter infighting developed between submarine division commander Charles Lockwood and Admiral Thomas Hart, chairman of the General Board.[11] Lockwood was a proponent of developing new submarine types with long range, advocating a return to the doctrine of including submarines in the battle fleet, whereas Hart wanted smaller submarines with fewer "gadgets" like air conditioning and TDC, for use in the coastal defense (Blair, 2001, pp. 67–68, p. 76). Although Lockwood managed to get most of his requirements for the new *Tambor* class of submarines through, he had to make some concessions to Hart. The offensive weaponry was limited by the removal of the 5-inch deck gun and in the end only six new submarines were ordered (ibid., p. 68).

In mid-1940, Lockwood still hadn't given up on his dream to include submarines in the battle fleet. When exercises with the latest fleet boat designs to enter service, the *Porpoise*- and *Salmon*-class vessels, turned out be as unsuccessful in this regard as the previous attempts, it was finally decided that submarines would be excluded from a direct-support role and instead serve as independent long-range scouts (ibid., p. 76).

[11]The reason for having a General Board as opposed to a conventional naval general staff dates back to the late 19th century, when Congress were opposed to permanent military staffs in general, since it wanted to ensure civilian control by concentrating authority to the civilian secretary. Secretary of the Navy Herbert Long instead formed an advisory body for war planning, the General Board (Friedman, 1995, p. 1).

Ironically, when the *Tambor*-class boats entered service in 1941 and found themselves in a role for which they hadn't been designed, the US Navy finally had a truly capable submarine design. The scouting role remained the primary strategic role for the Silent Service until the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, when this was changed, without any prior warning.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Six hours after the fateful attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th 1941, the Navy Department somewhat surprisingly issued the order "Execute unrestricted air and submarine warfare against Japan" (Blair, 2001, p. 106). The commander of submarines stationed at Pearl Harbor, Thomas Withers, gathered his chief of staff and the commanders of the two submarine squadrons stationed there, for an immediate conference. The four of them had to adjust their plans to their new instructions, but quickly concluded that they had to send boats on patrols to Japanese-controlled waters (ibid., p. 106). This meant that the submarine captains had to adapt to a new role. Fortunately, the latest fleet boats were well suited for this assignment.

While the bulk of the American surface fleet was being repaired after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the rest were being prepared for combat operations, the submarines were the only asset that could immediately be sent on offensive operations against the enemy. While the Japanese forces were mounting major offensives in Southeast Asia, the number of enemy merchant targets increased dramatically in the Pacific. The seas were full of Japanese ships carrying troops, fuel, supplies or goods to and from the islands at the core of the empire. During the first months of the war, submarines enjoyed a very high priority since they were the only American warships available to attack the Japanese in their own waters, while the surface fleet was on the strategic defensive (Friedman, 1995, p. 206). Throughout the war, the primary strategic objective of the American submarines would be to destroy Japanese merchant shipping, i.e. a traditional *guerre de course*, much like the one waged by German boats against Allied shipping in the Atlantic.

Similarly to how a substantial part of the German U-boat fleet was diverted to operations of a secondary nature during the campaign against Norway, the Silent Service had to shoulder additional responsibilities during the last stages of the Japanese assault on the Philippines. General MacArthur commanded a ground element defending the islands

of Bataan and Corregidor. This was intended in pre-war doctrine as a pre-determined last line of defense where MacArthur and his troops were supposed to hold out until American naval reinforcements could arrive (Blair, 2001, p. 129). This force was in desperate need of food and ammunition, while the Japanese forces were posing a serious threat to surface units. Consequently, MacArthur requested that submarines be used to ferry supplies. In late February 1942, no less than five boats out of the total 26 available to the Asiatic Fleet were sent on a similar mission, to evacuate key personnel to Australia (ibid., p. 185). After the loss of the Philippines, American subs were still sent on various special missions, usually to conduct reconnaissance. These operations were, however, on a more limited scale.

Consequently, we can conclude that the first operational order for the Silent Service was to wage unrestricted submarine warfare. This requires the submarine commanders to be Indifferent toward noncombatants, just like their German counterparts. Again, they can't be Protective, since that would severely limit their effectiveness against their primary target, civilian merchantmen, but neither can they be Hostile, since this could make them target ships of low strategic value. Their limited number of torpedoes makes it crucial that they target the most strategically important ships first and foremost.

In their attitude toward risk, they should be Balanced, since the campaign against such a powerful foe over such an enormous expanse could not reasonably have been expected to be short. Against a qualified enemy, i.e. effective Japanese anti-submarine warfare units, a Balanced approach will be a compromise between inflicting casualties on the enemy and preserving the strength of the submarine fleet over time. If, on the other hand, the Japanese anti-submarine warfare units are incompetent, then an Aggressive stance is more effective, without the risks normally associated with such an approach. While the Germans knew full well that the Allies had extensive experience operating in an anti-submarine role from WWII, the Americans had no similar experience on which to base an assessment of Japanese capabilities.

CHALLENGES

When the Silent Service received the order to wage unrestricted submarine warfare against Japan, six hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor, this was, according to the commander of Submarine Squadron Six, a "new and completely unexpected mission" (ibid., p. 106). The logistical challenge posed by this strategic role was, however, one for which the

Attitude toward nononcombatants (secondary)	Attitude toward risk (primary): Aggressive	Balanced	Cautious
Protective			
Indifferent	*most effective incompetent enemy*	*most effective qualified enemy*	
Hostile			

Figure 8: Strategic objectives, Silent Service

US Navy had prepared. Submarines capable of operating independently on long cruises in hostile waters were, as stated above, already available in the form of the fleet submarines.

While the Japanese ASW forces were capable of destroying American submarines under favorable circumstances from the very start of the war, they were considerably less competent than their Allied counterparts. For more than a year, Japanese depth charges were often ineffective due to insufficient depth settings and a lack of tenacity on the part of Japanese ASW commanders (Roscoe and Voge, 1949, p. 215). In addition, during the first year of the war between Japan and the United States, many Japanese vessels sailed without any kind of escort. They also frequently employed zigzagging, i.e. regular course changes at a steep angle to the previous course, to make it more difficult for submarines to obtain accurate targeting information for their torpedoes. This was, however, completely ineffective against the American submarines hunting them. Instead of confounding the US subs, it helped them, by slowing down the Japanese vessels in relation to the time it would otherwise have taken them to get from point A to point B (ibid., p. 214).

PERSONNEL, COMMANDERS AND EQUIPMENT

The typical American submarine skipper in late 1941 was a career officer in his late thirties, usually a lieutenant-commander (Blair, 2001,

p. 107). On a *Tambor*-class submarine, he would command four other officers and 55 enlisted men. The later *Gato*-, *Balao*- and *Tench*-class boats had larger complements of about 81 men in total. His second in command, the Executive Officer (often known as the "exec" or "XO"), was normally fully qualified for command and could step in if the captain was disabled. The exec played an important role in administration, discipline, navigation and day-to-day details (ibid., p. 108). A good exec would deal with the routine problems, allowing the commander to concentrate on the objective and the big perspective. The three remaining officers were: the fire control officer, who operated the TDC; the engineering and diving officer, responsible for the mechanical aspects of the boat; and finally the most junior officer, who would shoulder minor duties and accumulate experience. The 55 enlisted men included six chief petty officers. The most senior of these was known as the "chief of the boat" (ibid., p. 108). The chief of the boat kept the enlisted men under control check and dealt with the administrative issues. In addition to him, there would also be a yeoman (secretary), one pharmacist's mate and two stewards. The rest of the crew were specialists in their own fields, such as torpedomen, machinists, electricians, quartermasters, cooks, gunner's mates, seamen and firemen. Most of the crew stood watches, four hours on followed by eight hours off. While not on watch, the officers had other duties to attend to, while the enlisted men serviced the machinery and torpedoes. When they had some free time, they would gather in the crew's mess to play cards or listen to the radio. The food was "hearty" and "wholesome," in keeping with the US Navy tradition (ibid., p. 109). The quality of the meals was far better than for sailors serving on surface vessels (Conner, 1999, p. 18–19).

Unlike the German boats, the US Navy boats started to implement air conditioning as early as 1936 (Friedman, 1995, p. 200). This meant that the temperature and humidity were kept at comfortable levels at all times. Of all the American submarines sent on patrols during the first year of combat operations for the Silent Service, no less than 65 percent were so equipped. In addition, they often also had water distillers, capable of producing fresh water continuously during a cruise. Some of the most modern types even had refrigerators. This meant that the American crews did not have to put up with the cold and humidity that was a part of everyday life on the submarines of most other countries. The use of water distillers meant that American enlisted men could take showers once a week. In addition, they could maintain a higher standard of hygiene overall. American submarines also could cruise

almost twice as far as German submarines on the surface (Miller, 2004, p. 147, p. 232), which is related to the difference in distances between bases and operational areas in the Pacific as compared to the Atlantic.

Functional Imperatives. The sheer number of different designs and the shifting views on the roles for which they were built, made it impossible to identify a single set of functional imperatives. The S-boats forced their commanders to be careful, since they could quite easily break down or leak oil, revealing the submarine's location to the enemy. The huge and clumsy *Narwhal*-class boats were slow to dive and sluggish underwater (Friedman, 1995, p. 180). Consequently, the captains of these boats also had to be extra careful if enemies were in the vicinity. Nevertheless, these vessels could be useful for attacking if used properly.

The fleet boats, in contrast, were relatively quick to dive and quite capable of destroying the enemy. As such, they rewarded the aggressive skippers by providing excellent platforms for attacks, especially during the first years of the conflict, before the Japanese escorts realized that their depth charges were ineffective against American subs.

The functional imperatives of the US Navy submarines thus differed between the types. The huge V-boats were designed for scouting and reconnaissance rather than attacking, but could nevertheless be used successfully in a commerce-destroying role, especially against unescorted targets. The S-boats were primary designed as defensive platforms, meant to launch hit-and-run attacks against approaching enemy warships relatively close to their own bases. The fleet submarines that later became dominant were the only boats specifically designed and built for the role they would assume during WWII, i.e. general-purpose long-range vessels operating independently against enemy shipping. The functional imperatives thus provided no single unambiguous guidance for the commanders.

TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURE

American submariners were trained for two different roles during the interwar years, first as fleet boat captains who were supposed to steam with the surface fleet and provide close direct support to its offensive operations. Then they were trained to operate in a more independent reconnaissance-oriented role when the scout doctrine was in vogue, only once again to have to conform to the demands of fleet boat captains during Lockwood's failed exercises of 1940 (see page 83). The commanders were thus trained to perform in two different and mutually

incompatible roles, one that required stealth and independence, and another that required coordination and offensive spirit. The one thing they weren't trained for at all was commerce-raiding operations, which is exactly what they were ordered to do on December 7th 1941. While this may give the impression that lack of training is the explanation, one must keep in mind that although the captains weren't trained to attack merchantmen, they had been taught how to attack and sink enemy warships. These targets would normally be more challenging, since they would be faster and more often move in groups, which would enable the survivors of an attack to strike back at the attacking sub. Herein lies a fundamental influencing factor that seems to have made a deep impression on more than a third of all American submarine captains: the tendency to overestimate danger. In the absence of escorts, many feared aircraft even when there was no reason to expect airborne enemies. While one third were overly cautious, there were also a few captains who were every bit as aggressive as their German counterparts. This fragmentation in the tactical-level subculture was a direct result of the lack of focal points needed to provide clarity and homogeneity.

Focal Points. The Silent Service initially had three operational-level commanders, one for each fleet. Commander, Submarines, Pacific (COMSUBPAC) was in charge of the submarines stationed at Pearl Harbor.[12] Commander, Submarines, Atlantic (COMSUBLANT), directed the boats operating in the Atlantic out of New London. Lastly, the Commander, Submarines, Asiatic Fleet (COMSUBAF) was responsible for the boats stationed at Manila. The three fleets each had a different role: the Atlantic fleet maintained a neutrality patrol to prevent German incursions, the Pacific fleet covered most of the vast expanse of that body of water, while the Asiatic Fleet was given the task of protecting the Philippines. Training at the these bases differed. While crews at Pearl Harbor were trained in long-range patrolling, that was not the case at Manila (Blair, 2001, p. 156). In fact, the submarines at Manila, under the command of Captain John Wilkes, dedicated time to training surface maneuvering using signal flags. This frustrated the submarine crews, one of whom described it as "just one big bloody mess which never contributed a thing toward improving our readiness" (ibid., p. 156).

[12] COMSUBPAC was responsible for boats operating in the Pacific east of the 159 degrees east longitude (Whitman, 2001)

The submarine crews of the Pacific Fleet had also been taught to be timid. Commander Thomas Withers, commanding the subs at Pearl Harbor, took captains on flights to illustrate how easily a submarine could be detected from above and even ordered aircraft to drop "firecracker" bombs on detected subs during exercises (Blair, 2001, p. 83–84).

From this, we can conclude that the Silent Service was Cautious-Indifferent (see Table 9). Consequently, we can expect the Silent Service to perform poorly with regards to the strategic objectives.

Attitude toward risk (primary)

Attitude toward nononcombatants (secondary)	Aggressive	Balanced	Cautious
Protective			
Indifferent	*most effective incompetent enemy*	*most effective qualified enemy*	**Silent Service**
Hostile			

Figure 9: Convergence/divergence, Silent Service

IMPACT OF TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURE

The Silent Service enjoyed a High degree of autonomy, both formally and in practice, throughout the time period analyzed in the case study (see figure 10). There were no restrictive rules of engagement. While a number of boats were assigned special missions that diverted them from their main strategic tasks, this was not really micromanagement, since it only provided the captains with specific tasks, as opposed to detailed instructions regarding the execution of an assigned task. In this sense, it was no different from when the *Ubootwaffe*'s captains were ordered to support the campaign to invade Norway in 1940. The captains of the Silent Service, however, made relatively limited use of this autonomy. It is important to note that while many captains were passive, that was not a reflection of restricted autonomy. Excessive

caution does not indicate an absence of autonomy. At any point any of these captains could have changed their demeanor, if they had been so inclined.

Degree of actual autonomy	Degree of formal autonomy: High	Medium	Low
High	**Silent Service** entire period		
Medium			
Low			

Figure 10: Degrees of autonomy, Silent Service

Fragmentation and Exaggerated Caution. For the American captains, the sudden shift in tactics brought by the war came as a shock. Their operational-level leaders, who had previously done things differently, but been equally eager to emphasize caution, suddenly demanded something radically different. Some were able to adapt, but many were confused and instead followed their old routines. The result of this was a fragmentation of the Silent Service into three groups with regards to their attitude toward risk: those who were Aggressive, and thus acting in accordance with the new strategic objectives; those who were Balanced, who would be reluctant to engage defended targets, and those who were Cautious, who would be reluctant to engage even defenseless targets, out of unwarranted fears of enemy reprisals.

We have already established that the Japanese anti-submarine warfare units were almost completely ineffective against the American subs, and this quickly became apparent to the Americans. Consequently, the most effective tactical-level subculture would be the Aggressive-Indifferent version. However, the group within Silent Service that corresponded with this tactical-level subculture was relatively small, as is apparent from their total performance figures.

While it is inherently difficult to estimate how large the three groups were in relation to the total number of American captains, we can use their performance data to get a rough impression. If we use the German average (circa 21,000 tonnes sunk) as a baseline for Aggressive performance, and count all those who have sunk that much, or more, as Aggressive, we end up with a total of 11 captains, or 8 percent. If we then count captains who sank between 5,000 and 21,000 as Balanced, we end up with 31 of those, the equivalent of 23 percent. The remainder, 90 captains, or 68 percent, sank less than 5,000 tonnes, i.e. less than a fourth of the German average.

Attitude toward noncombatants (secondary)		**Attitude toward risk (primary)**		
		Aggressive	Balanced	Cautious
	Protective			
	Indifferent	*most effective* 8%	23%	68%
	Hostile			

Figure 11: Fragmentation in the Silent Service

The first year of operations for the USN submarines features numerous events in which commanders exercised caution to such an extent that they were subsequently relieved of command. While all these cases cannot be outlined, a few typical examples will be described. In the first example, the USS *Cachalot* under the command of Waldeman Christensen sighted a large enemy merchant vessel cruising alone. He approached it and then fired four torpedoes at periscope depth from a distance of 2,500 yards. The last periscope observation done before firing was a whole minute before the first torpedo was launched, seriously compromising accuracy. After this, Christensen ordered the boat to

dive to 100 feet to "get clear of any erratic run and to reload."[13] Ten minutes after the attack, the sound of approaching destroyers kept Christensen from going to periscope depth until half an hour had passed since the torpedoes had been launched. By then, no vessels, including his target, were in sight. In his report, Christensen mentioned that surface conditions were such that any torpedo tracks would have been very difficult to observe, meaning that the risk of detection would have been at a minimum (*U.S.S. Cachalot - Report of First War Patrol* 1942, enc. A, p. 7).

The post-patrol assessment by Withers criticized Christensen for his behavior, stating that "the Cachalot should have remained at periscope depth to observe results of the attack, particularly since no escort was observed." He also remarked that Christensen should have pushed home the attack, and that the source of the sound suspected by Christensen to be destroyers could have been observed through the periscope.[14] Withers also pointed out that Christensen's decision to cruise submerged during daytime resulted in excessive loss of time, meaning that the *Cachalot* lost many days in transit that could have been better spent patrolling its assigned area (ibid., p. 1). After this, Christensen was relieved of command (Blair, 1975, p. 818).

Christensen's successor, George A. Lewis, did not fare any better. After sighting a lone tanker, an even more important target than the one Christensen failed to sink, Lewis fired a torpedo that hit the tanker. After that, he fired another one without proper preparation and aiming, then immediately took the sub deep for more than five hours (*U.S.S. Cachalot - Report of Second War Patrol*, enc. A, p. 2), claiming in the report that the large and unwieldy tanker attempted to depth-charge his boat. The *Cachalot* observed several other ships but made no attempt to attack them. After Lewis' first patrol in the *Cachalot*, the new COMSUBPAC Robert "Bob" English wrote with ill-concealed wrath that "The second war patrol of the U.S.S. CACHALOT was most disappointing." English even stated bluntly that "The reason for deep submergence after obtaining one hit cannot be fathomed. Commanding Officers are enjoined to remain on the surface at night or at periscope

[13]The perceived need to steer clear of an "erratic run" refers to the risk of a torpedo missing its target and then veering off on a circular course that could make it turn back and hit the launching submarine with disastrous consequences.

[14]It is interesting to note the difference compared to when Charles Wilkins in the equally bulky and slow *Narwhal* encountered two destroyers on March 9th 1942, and had to crash dive, he quickly returned to periscope depth to observe the destroyers, in his own words: "so that the periscope could be used in evasive tactics and counter attack" (*U.S.S. Narwhal - Report of First War Patrol* 1942, p. 10).

depth during day attacks as long as possible [...]" (*U.S.S. Cachalot - Report of Second War Patrol*, p. 1). Two division commanders, George Crawford and John Brown, agreed with English. Crawford stated in the same report that "A more determined and aggressive attack would undoubtedly have resulted in the loss of a valuable ship to the enemy" (ibid., enc. B) and Brown commented that Lewis' decision to dive deep for more than five hours was "inexplicable" (ibid., enc. C). Lewis' first patrol was also his last, within a month of his return, he was relieved of command (*Cachalot SS-170*).

The patrol reports of other relieved commanders show the same pattern; a reluctance to engage in attacks, or when attacks were made, they were not followed through even when there was no credible threat. The commander of USS *Saury* inexplicably dived after damaging a tanker, fearing a non-existent air attack. When he returned to periscope depth, the tanker was gone (Blair, 2001, p. 289). The captain of USS *Snapper*, Ham Stone, was relieved for similar lack of aggression. His successor, Harold Baker, then proved to be just as timid and was also relieved. Similar experiences bedeviled the USS *Sargo*, *Grampus* and *Grayback*. Furthermore, the commanders had a tendency to remain submerged to an excessive extent, which made detection of targets considerably less likely. Allan R. McCann, commander of Submarine Squadron Six, wrote in his endorsement of one of Donald McGregor's patrols in USS *Gar* that "the failure to inflict any damage whatever on the enemy during this patrol is a keen disappointment to the Squadron Commander," criticizing McGregor's preference for remaining submerged during daytime and his lack of initiative (*U.S.S. Gar - Report of Fourth War Patrol* 1942, endorsement 1, p. 2). The task force commander, Charles Lockwood, concurred with McCann in the second endorsement, in which he also pointed out that the two previous war patrols by McGregor had been less than satisfying (ibid., endorsement 2). Even McGregor's own executive officer, John A. Fitzgerald, was dissatisfied with McGregor's reluctance to accept risks (Blair, 1975, p. 230). McGregor was promptly relieved of command of the USS *Gar* in November 1942 but would be able to return to commanding submarines less than six months later on board the USS *Seahorse*. Note that the *Saury*, *Snapper* and *Sargo* were *Sargo*-class boats, comparable to the German standard boats of the Type VII family, while the *Grampus*, *Grayback* and *Gar* were modern *Tambor*-class vessels. Consequently, these failures cannot be linked to functional imperatives.

I argue that the behavior of these cautious captains can be understood as the impact of the tactical-level subculture, primarily on the

Observation and Orientation phases of the OODA-loop. Some believed that there were threats in the vicinity that did not exist. Others expected hostile responses that were beyond the capability of the enemy. All this contributed to prompting them to make decisions that gravitated strongly towards a cautious stance. The sudden shift in attitude from their operational-level officers was confusing and unexpected. Some were able to adapt immediately, and went on to become the aces of the Silent Service. For others it took some time, which manifested itself in a few unproductive patrols and critique, after which they shaped up. For a third group it was impossible altogether, and they were transferred to other positions for the remainder of their careers. The conflicts that took place on several boats when the officers questioned the competence of their captain, or when the XO and captain had differences of opinion, clearly indicate the frictions that arise when there's no unified sense of appropriateness provided by a homogeneous tactical-level subculture. These conflicts negatively influenced the effectiveness of these boats.

On average, the 38 Americans who were relieved of command scored only 35 percent of the total average tonnage sunk per American commander. Records do not mention a single captain being relieved for being reckless, too aggressive or in any other way being prone to take excessive risks. While a few were relieved for medical reasons, most lost their commands because they either failed to sink enough ships or spent too much time submerged. An example of the latter is James E. Stevens, who upon sighting a periscope, dived the USS *S-35* and remained submerged for more than twelve hours, neglecting to warn the USS *S-33*, which was also operating in the general area. These shortcomings were brought up in the endorsement by the commander of Task Group 8.5 and when the *S-35* returned from overhaul, Stevens had been stripped of his command. It would take more than a year and a half before Stevens could captain another submarine (*James Edward Stevens, USN*).

There is only one satisfying explanation for the large number of relieved skippers: they were insufficiently aggressive. In early 1943, this realization was sinking in. The newly appointed commander of the submarines based in Brisbane, Jimmy Fife, attributed the poor performance during 1942 to "overcaution" and took measures to correct this (Blair, 1975, p. 372). In time, he and the others who thought like him would succeed, but by then 1942 was already in the past, and a full year had been lost.

SUMMARY

The culture of caution was not the only element in the US Navy's submarine force. There were rivaling camps within the Silent Service: one was comprised of the cautious, those who wanted to make sure they could return with their boats and crews unscathed. The other were the relentlessly aggressive, who were willing to accept significant risks to press home attacks and sink enemy ships. The rest were somewhere in between, trying to decide which way to go. Occasionally these camps were mixed on the same sub, as is evident from the example above, concerning the USS *Gar*, in which the executive officer went to the division commander to complain about his captain. Some younger officers also requested transfers after patrols, asking to be assigned to more aggressive skippers (Blair, 1975, p. 199).

The behavior cannot be attributed to improper training, since all skippers received the same training at the submarine school. Neither can the caution be linked to the different training regimes employed at the submarine bases, since captains stationed at all bases tended to include both the timid and the aggressive. All submarine commanders in the US Navy knew well enough how to set up an approach and perform an attack. Once the doctrine changed shortly after the war broke out, it wasn't lack of knowledge or skill that kept so many of them from attempting more daring attacks. The fragmented subculture meant that many clung to the pre-war ideas, unable to adapt to the new environment they faced. As time went by, the subculture gradually transformed, becoming more aggressive and coherent, but not until a significant amount of time had been wasted.

The cautious skipper issue has remained very sensitive in the American submarine community, especially among those who were active during the time period in question. While Clay Blair, who was himself a crew member on the USS *Guardfish*, openly discusses the issue and its consequences, it is completely omitted in several autobiographies by American captains who served during WWII.[15] Instead, the torpedo reliability issue is portrayed in a most damning manner and held responsible for all shortcomings of the American submarine force during its first years. In fictional accounts, the frustration and conflict within the submarine force could be portrayed more openly. For example, in the fictional but very realistic movie *Run Silent Run Deep*, based on a novel by former submarine commander Edward L. Beach, the captain of a fictional American WWII submarine is at first suspected of being

[15]See for example Conner (1999), Calvert (1995) and Beach (2004).

cautious by his crew. The word "cautious" is used in a strongly derogatory manner and a single incident in which the captain avoids rather than attacks a target almost leads to mutiny, until the executive officer intervenes. Eventually, the captain turns out to be single-mindedly reckless rather than cautious, caught up as he is by a personal vendetta with a Japanese destroyer. This seems to be more palatable to the crew, but leads to a conflict with the executive officer.

4.5

Summary of Case Pair

The probably most common explanation for the poor performance of the American submarine arm during its first year of combat operations is the well-known torpedo scandal (Blair, 2001, p. 361) that haunted the American submarine fleet. Another potential explanation is technological differences between German and American submarines. I argue that neither of these are sufficient to explain the full extent of the remarkable difference between the Germans and Americans.

RIVAL EXPLANATION 1: SUBMARINE TECHNOLOGY

The Germans produced several highly innovative submarines and systems, such as the revolutionary Type XXI and the *Schnorchel* device for submerged running of the diesel engines, which have earned the German engineers a reputation for excellence in post-war analyses.[16] However, these inventions did not see operational service until 1943–1944, when the German U-boats had fought for more than four years. The US Navy studied several captured German submarines of various types, both during and after the end of the war with Germany, and concluded that the German boats had been superior in terms of sonar equipment, periscopes, maximum diving depth, cruising range in relation to boat size, the elimination of revealing bubbles when firing torpedoes, and maneuverability (Friedman, 1995, p. 252–253). The German submarines were, however, significantly inferior in terms of habitability, which made longer cruises impractical due to the wear on the crew (ibid., p. 252–253).

While these technological differences mostly favored the Germans, it must be remembered that the standard German attack U-boats of the VIIB and VIIC types as well as the long-range IX and IXC types had fewer torpedo tubes and thus less available firepower per attack than the American *Tambor*, *Gar* and *Gato* classes, which no less than 34 percent of the the American commanders captained on at least one of their war patrols during the US Navy's first year of combat operations.[17]

[16] It should be mentioned that the *Schnorchel* was a Dutch invention, implemented on Dutch boats long before the Germans started fielding them in early 1944 (Jones, 2005, p. 990–991).

[17] The German boats had four tubes in the bow and one (Type VIIB/VIIC) or two (Type IX) in the stern for the German boats compared to six tubes in the bow and

While these 34 percent featured superior firepower and crew habitability, 58 percent of the American boats were roughly comparable to their German counterparts while no more than 8 percent were clearly obsolete in comparison. On the German side, 56 percent of the commanders spent at least one of their war patrols during the period captaining a sub that was obsolescent compared to the German standard types, the VII and XI classes.[18] The technological differences related to diving depth, bubble suppression and sonar equipment mainly contributed to help the German submarines defensively. The American boats, on the other hand, were considerably more silent and thus more difficult to detect using passive sonar. In early 1942, the range at which a German submarine could be detected using passive sonar was approximately ten times (!) that of an American boat, 1,600 yards as opposed to 160 yards (ibid., p. 247). While the advantage in terms of attack periscopes may have helped the Germans perfect their attacks to a higher degree, it did not improve their overall accuracy during the time period in question. This might be a result of the differences in torpedo data computers, where the American TDC was considerably more sophisticated than the equipment used by the Germans, which may have compensated for the inferior attack periscopes.[19] Between September 1, 1939 and December 31, 1940, the average *Ubootwaffe* hit rate was 49 percent (Rössler, 1984, p. 94). In comparison, the US Navy calculated in 1944 that the average hit rate for US submarines during the war thus far had been approximately 50 percent, with the exception of attacks against enemy destroyers and submarines, for which the estimated hit rate was 33 percent (Friedman, 1995, p. 234). Since there was no significant difference in hit rates, and the technological differences should, during attacks against merchant vessels, have favored the Americans rather than Germans, we will next turn to the issue of the torpedoes.

four in the stern on the American *Tambor*, *Gar* and *Gato* classes (Miller, 2004, p. 144–155).

[18] All but six of these were versions of the small Type II U-boat that had only three bow tubes and no stern tube at all, and which could only carry a total of six torpedoes. In addition, their seaworthiness was poor since their small size caused them to roll heavily even in relatively moderate sea states (ibid., p. 144–155). Dönitz recommended as early as 1936 to discontinue production of the Type II since he considered it to be "too weak" with regards to armament, radius of action and speed (Dönitz, 2012, p. 29).

[19] The sophistication of the American TDC eliminated the delay in gyro-setting that might have been associated with having six rather than four torpedo tubes in the bow, as early as 1939. The TDC was thus one of the factors that enabled the superior firepower of American fleet submarines compared to the German types (Friedman, 1995, p. 195).

RIVAL EXPLANATION 2: TORPEDO WOES

Due to design flaws, vast numbers of American torpedoes failed to detonate or missed their targets. However, the Germans too experienced serious problems with their torpedoes during their first year (Blair, 2004b, p. 140–142), primarily concerning the reliability of the magnetic exploders and faulty depth-keeping. Dönitz himself stated that the crews had lost faith in their torpedoes by the summer of 1940 (ibid., p. 205), after a series of failures. According to data listed by Rössler (1984) the average malfunction rate in German torpedoes between September 1939 and December 1940 was 23.8 percent. The corresponding figure for American torpedo malfunctions between December 1941 and December 1942 is considerably higher. It is, however, very difficult to establish an exact estimate. During the first year of combat in WWII, American submarine torpedoes, like their German counterparts, suffered from a combination of faulty depth-keeping and malfunctioning magnetic exploders. In addition, the American torpedoes also had defective contact exploders. American sub captains soon realized that the depth-keeping was off and that the magnetic exploders were unreliable. Consequently, many decided to disobey standing orders by adjusting the depth setting of the torpedoes and deactivating the magnetic exploders, leaving the contact exploder as the sole means of detonating the torpedo. Since this was potentially a court-martial offense, the crews were sworn to secrecy and the adjustments were not recorded. This makes it impossible to recreate accurate statistics.

Torpedo tests carried out during the summer of 1942, i.e. halfway through the first year of combat operations for the American submarines, resulted in official orders to compensate for the depth-keeping issues by using shallower settings. In August of 1942, the American torpedoes were striking targets at higher rates since the depth-keeping issue had been resolved. The magnetic exploder issue remained. To make matters worse, skippers also realized that even the backup contact exploders were malfunctioning. Tests carried out in 1943 confirmed that torpedoes striking their targets at a 90-degree angle, which is normally the optimal firing angle for maximum precision, would misfire in 70 percent of all cases. A hit from a 45-degree angle cut this figure in half, to 35 percent (Shireman, 1998).

There are reports from the first year of combat indicating that captains were well aware of the problems with both depth-keeping and the magnetic exploder, and that many both set zero depth on their torpedoes and deactivated the magnetic exploders, which meant that

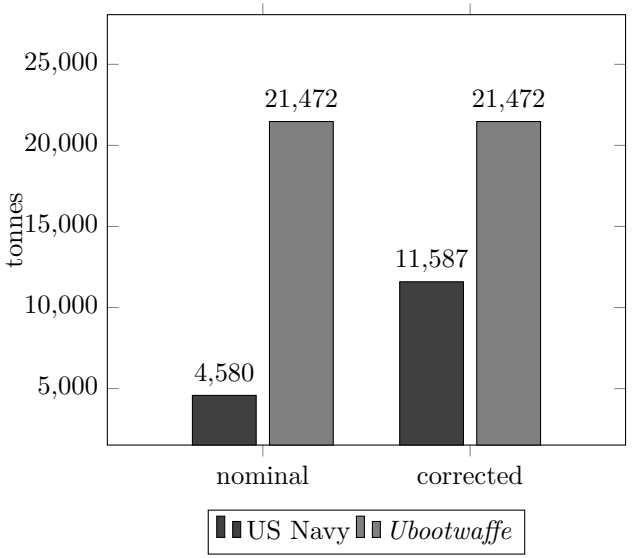

Figure 12: Average tonnage sunk per captain, nominal and corrected for the difference in torpedo failure rate.

their torpedoes would have been dependent on the contact exploder. Consequently, I will use the 70 percent failure rate of the contact exploder as the overall reliability estimate for this case study. While this is a relatively rough estimate, it should be close to the actual mark. Blair (1975, p. 818) states that of all the torpedoes fired by American subs in 1942, one in eight (12.5 percent) resulted in a sinking. Taking into account the 50 percent average hit rate, only half of those torpedoes would have hit a target anyway, meaning that the 25 percent of all torpedoes we can expect to hit resulted in a sinking. In addition, of all ships hit, no more than approximately 79 percent were actually sunk. The final formula would thus be:

$$x = 1 - s/h/d$$

where x=total failure rate, s=ratio of total number of torpedoes fired resulting in a ship sunk, h=average hit ratio of torpedoes, and d=average ratio of ships sunk per total number of ships hit. According to this formula, 31.6 percent of all ships we would normally expect to be hit

and sunk, assuming perfectly functioning torpedoes, were actually sunk. This means a failure rate of 68.4 percent. Assuming that Blair's original figure of one in eight was slightly rounded off it thus seems reasonable that the actual total average failure rate should have been quite close to the figure of 70 percent used above. This means that German torpedoes were on average 2.53 times more reliable than American ones. However, German commanders sank 4.69 times more tonnage than their American counterparts, meaning that a difference of 1.85 remains unaccounted for. Holding the German performance constant, while correcting for the difference in torpedo reliability, shows that the Germans were still 85 percent more effective, see figure 12.

TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURES AS EXPLANATION

Having established that the Germans were considerably more effective than their American counterparts, we can also conclude that the difference in autonomy does not provide the explanation. If anything, they would have contributed to the opposite, if the Germans had been more strict in their adherence to the restrictions imposed on their autonomy during the first months of the war. We now turn to organizational anomalies that are unrelated to differences in technology and autonomy, as well as torpedo issues. Most crucial of these organizational anomalies is arguably the difference in the number of captains relieved of command of their boats, see figure 13. During its first year of warfare against Japan, the American submarine force relieved 38 out of 132 captains operating in the Pacific. A few were removed because of poor health or fatigue, but most for being insufficiently aggressive (Blair, 2001, p. 361).

During the same period, records indicate that the Germans relieved one (1) captain for incompetence and reassigned an additional eight to duties other than submarine command after less than stellar patrol results, which may be interpreted as a more subtle equivalent of being relieved. The German total is thus nine out of 91 captains, or circa 10 percent, compared to the American total of 29 percent. A total of 23 percent of the German commanders on patrol were killed during the same time period, while an additional 10 percent were captured after their boats had been sunk, leading to a total casualty rate of 33 percent (see figure 14). The captains lost during their patrols were on average less successful than those who survived, since their careers were cut short during the time period. However, they were still quite effective compared to their American counterparts. Even though there

were only 30 of them, by themselves they sank more than half as much tonnage before meeting their fates as 132 American submarine captains put together managed during their whole first year.[20] The American submarine force lost three boats to enemy action in 1942, and only two out of 132 captains were killed in action, while one was captured by the enemy. That brings the total casualty rate among American submarine captains to 3 men, the equivalent of 2 percent.

The number of relieved commanders and the casualty rates speak for themselves. The German commanders were far more willing to take risks, as indicated by both their success and casualty rates. In addition, they were far less likely to be relieved of their commands or reassigned as a result of unproductive patrols. German commanders were, simply put, willing to risk it all for success. Their American counterparts far less so, even when their superiors demanded it. The high number of relieved commanders indicate that it wasn't career considerations that motivated the Americans to be more careful in safeguarding themselves and their boats, since being relieved was considered disgraceful and hardly conducive to the career of any naval commander. Out of the 132 American commanders who sailed on at least one patrol during the first year of combat, no less than 48 percent came back without having sunk or damaged a single enemy vessel (see figure 15). Such unproductive commanders were far less common in the *Ubootwaffe*, where only 18 percent of the 91 commanders who conducted patrols failed to hit a single vessel during the year.

I argue that the "cautious skipper" issue plays a crucial role in explaining these differences. This issue, I argue, is a direct manifestation of a fragmented tactical-level subculture that prompted captains to act in a manner that was strategically unsuitable. This was expressed by widespread reluctance among American submarine captains to act in the aggressive and daring manner necessary for the conduct of successful attacks on enemy shipping. This meant that many opportunities to attack were squandered by failure to detect targets, caused by overly cautious measures that limited the detection range of the boat. In addition, many targets were able to escape unscathed due to unnecessary caution during attacks. Finally, of the ships that were attacked and hit, a significant number were able to escape without being sunk because the submarine failed to press home the attack until the target had been confirmed as destroyed. This behavior was, as stated above, in no way

[20]The exact number is 365 787 tonnes sunk for the Germans lost through death or captivity, compared to 609 094 tonnes for all the American captains combined.

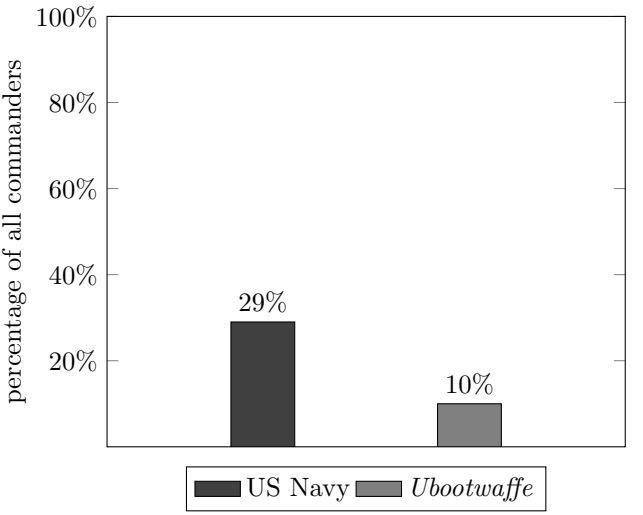

Figure 13: Ratio of commanders who were relieved of command.

condoned by the operational commanders, who repeatedly expressed harsh criticism against subordinates who failed to be aggressive.

The statistics presented above show that technical factors had a major impact on the performance of the US Navy's submarine captains. However, these technical factors do not explain the whole difference. Poor torpedo performance does not explain why so many captains were relieved. Those who suffered from torpedo malfunctions could at least show that they had fired torpedoes. The main reason so many were relieved of command were that they had not fired torpedoes or taken the appropriate steps to try to detect targets. The habit of cruising under the surface for prolonged periods of time, even when no actual enemy threat was present, made it very difficult for the sub to detect and pursue contacts. Thus, the cautious approach was directly responsible for the failure to detect targets and for the missed opportunities to fire torpedoes. This conclusion is also present in the endorsement reports quoted above. Secondly, even when targets were found by these cautious captains, they tended to botch their attacks by either engaging from distances that were detrimental to accuracy, or by failure to observe the full run of the torpedoes, even when there was no credible threat to their submarines. Their failure to observe the effect

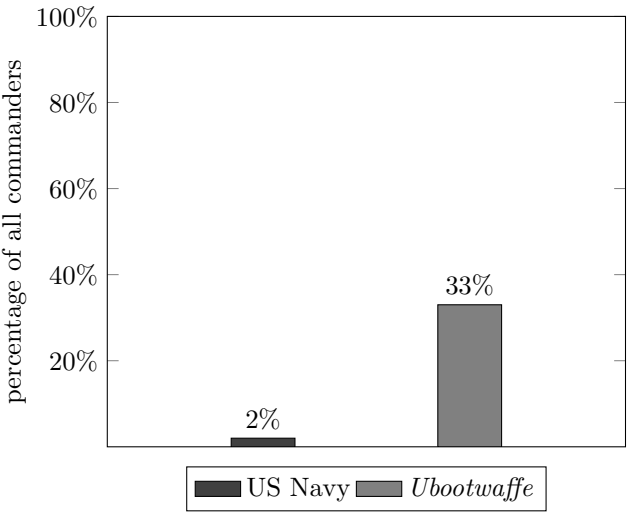

Figure 14: Ratio of commanders killed in action or captured.

of the torpedoes effectively prevented them from finishing off damaged ships before they could escape. This explains part of the high ratio of damaged ships versus ships sunk among American captains, 79 percent as opposed to 93 percent for *Ubootwaffe* commanders.[21] In some cases it would seem likely that the reason a ship was damaged rather than sunk can be attributed to torpedo performance issues, provided that the damaged ship was too fast or too well-protected to permit follow-up attacks. However, as illustrated by the examples above, the tendency to dive deep and stay submerged for prolonged periods of time made follow-up attacks utterly impossible. Since these captains did not make periscope observations to establish the degree of enemy threat, their failure to launch follow-up attacks cannot be attributed to an actual enemy threat but rather to the imagined dangers that accompany the habit of exaggerated caution. The superior firepower of many American subs compared to their German counterparts made them more suitable for follow-up attacks since they could launch more torpedoes without having to go through the time-consuming reloading process. The fact that such attacks were not carried out is thus even more incriminating.

[21]The figures mean that 79 percent of all ships hit by Americans were sunk, as opposed to 93 percent of all ships hit by Germans.

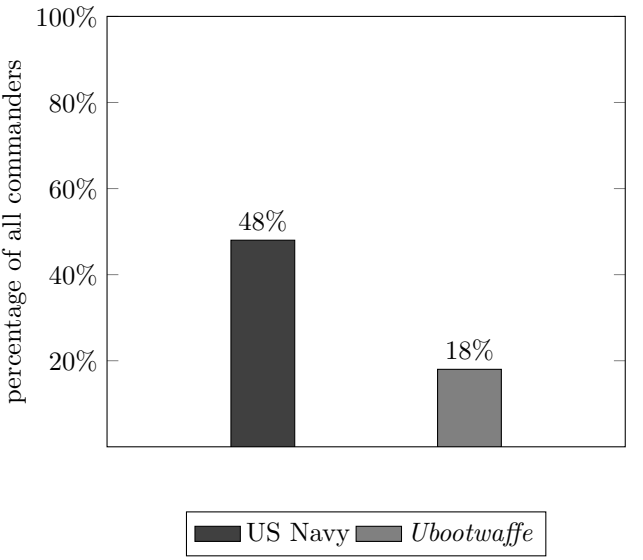

Figure 15: Ratio of commanders who failed to sink or damage a single ship during the first year.

It should, however, be noted that there are both positive and negative aspects of both subcultures. While the Americans failed to have an impact on the Japanese fleet movements during their first year, they did preserve almost the entire submarine fleet intact, which facilitated a more forceful campaign in later years. In addition, the lack of results during the first year did nothing to prompt the Japanese to improve their ASW capability.

The behavior of the Germans, on the other hand, was more detrimental than useful from a strategic point of view during the first months of the war, when Hitler wanted to avoid an escalation with France and Britain. Once Germany was committed to the war against these powers, the *Ubootwaffe*'s fierceness became a useful asset instead. On the other hand, their daring was also destructive to the organization by depleting the number of experienced boat captains, who knew their vessels well after having trained with them before the war. The kind of selfless dedication to attacking displayed by most *Ubootwaffe* captains was only a strategic asset if it was concentrated in time and space to a

point where a strategically decisive outcome could be attained. The scarcity of U-boats available in 1939–1940 should have made it obvious to all that such a decisive point was out of reach until more boats could be sent to maintain a more effective blockade of the British isles. By the time such numbers became available, many of the veterans were already dead or locked up in Allied POW camps.

5

Pair II: Behind Armor

In the previous chapter, I compared what is generally considered a success story with another case that is universally recognized as a failure. Thus, my main challenge was to argue that the explanation for this difference can be attributed to tactical-level subcultures. In this chapter, I again compare two different cases, but only one of them can easily be classified: the remarkable accomplishment of the Israeli 7th and 188th tank brigades during the first days of the Yom Kippur War in 1973.[1] My second case, the Tiger battalions of the German Army during WWII, is more difficult to categorize. I will argue that the two cases took place during two very different wars in two different eras, but nevertheless feature key differences and similarities, which serve to highlight the impact of tactical-level subcultures. In one case, the strategic outcome of a short and intense conflict hinged on the decisions made by the tactical-level commanders. In the other, the units under scrutiny were caught up in a massive war spanning several years. In the latter case, the strategic impact was limited, since no single event presented an opportunity for decisive action. However, both cases have one thing in common: the strategic impact, regardless of its scale or importance, was a direct consequence of the tactical-level subculture of the units in question.

[1]The conflict in question is also sometimes referred to as "the October War," but since my sources all use the name "the Yom Kippur War," I have chosen to do so as well.

5.1

Sources

Martin van Creveld (2002, p. xxii), one of the world's leading experts on the history of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), has pointed out that "Israel's leaders have traditionally made it rather hard to gather information on defense in general and the IDF in particular." As late as the turn of the millennium, the Israeli state archives and those of the IDF were still only open through to the 1956 Suez campaign (ibid., p. xxii). For this reason, and the rather formidable language barrier involved in researching data written in Hebrew, I have relied heavily upon secondary sources for the Israeli case study. Concerning the actions of the 7th and 188th brigades on the Golan Heights, the secondary material is quite detailed. The first-hand material is more difficult to access, but a number of autobiographies by the persons involved have been studied closely. Due to the limited number of people involved and the short duration of the combat events, the autobiographies and secondary sources have been cross-referenced and no significant discrepancies have been noted. However, since the battle analyzed in the case study has taken on an almost mythological dimension in Israeli history, the material should be approached with that in mind. Considering that more than forty years have passed since the Yom Kippur war, many of the main characters of interest are dead, while those who remain may have difficulties in remembering details and specifics. This, in combination with the language barrier and secrecy, makes archival research very challenging, meaning that the collection of new empirical material has not been a priority.

For the German case, the original war diaries of the units studied are very difficult to obtain since most of these were lost at the end of World War II. There are, however, copies of these war diaries as well as various related reports available in secondary sources. In addition, I have used highly detailed secondary sources which specialized historians have painstakingly compiled by cross-referencing large numbers of data, such as surviving German primary material in the form of industry and personnel records, with Soviet war diaries. It has not been considered productive to engage these peripheral primary sources directly since they are only indirectly related to the case in question, and since they suffer from reliability issues that require substantial experience with the data material in order to detect discrepancies. Consequently, I have

compared several independent secondary sources to search for common ground.

I have also obtained a number of autobiographies and so-called "comrade books," i.e. compilations of reproduced diary entries and reminiscences originally printed in very limited numbers for circulation among veterans of the units in question. These have been considered to be a reliable source of information for tactical-level subculture data, since they were never intended for the public and thus there would be no reason to conceal or mislead the reader with regard to the cultural aspects of the unit, with the exception of condoning behavior that might be subject to post-war criminal prosecution. In factual terms, the "comrade books" are not considered more reliable than the secondary sources, since the memories of veterans are not necessarily accurate in relation to specific factual details. Reprinted contemporary material (i.e. war diary entries) is considered to be the most reliable factual source for losses, movements, etc. directly related to the organization that produced it, within the reasonable limits imposed by the degree of situational awareness. However, any data on the opposing side in contemporary printed sources (such as kill claims), has been treated with substantial skepticism.

5.2

A Brief Note on Tank Warfare

The tanks used during WWII and the 1950s-1970s were direct descendants of the crude vehicles developed during WWI to overcome the stalemate on the Western front. Originally intended to be protected platforms capable of penetrating enemy defenses by being invulnerable to small-arms fire while still able to traverse muddy terrain and trenches, the tanks of WWI were slow and difficult to maneuver. In terms of protection, they only needed to withstand ordinary rifle and machine-gun bullets, and in terms of mobility they only needed to be able to move in one direction: forward. The static nature of the front lines meant that the location of the enemy was known beforehand. Since the tanks were in principle little more than mobile bunkers, their primary task was to support advancing infantry (Chant, 2006, p. 12). Toward the end of the war, some officers, such as J.F.C. Fuller and Basil Liddell Hart, argued that the primary virtue of the tank was its ability to remain mobile under fire, rather than its armor or firepower

per se (Chant, 2006, p. 12). According to this idea, the most useful aspect of the tank was wasted if it was slowed down by having to move in tandem with infantry on foot.

During the interwar years, there was no consensus on what was the most effective way to deploy tanks in combat. The controversy was similar to that surrounding submarines at the same time. Some advocated that tanks should be used exclusively to support infantry, while others claimed that tanks should operate independently, with organic infantry units mounted in vehicles that could keep up with the tanks.

At the outbreak of WWII, the German army had formed independent tank (*panzer*) divisions, which were intended to penetrate the enemy lines of defense and then press on, spreading confusion while threatening the unprotected valuable assets located behind the main enemy lines, such as artillery, supply and headquarters. The French army, on the other hand, had developed technologically more sophisticated tanks, but had failed to realize the potential of the doctrine adopted by the Germans. The French tanks were dispersed among infantry units, and were easy prey for the German armored spearheads that could compensate for their technical deficiencies by being able to amass superior numbers of armored vehicles in any given location and then move on quickly, before the Allied forces could prepare defenses or launch a counterattack.

After the fall of France, the Allies quickly switched to the same doctrine as the Germans and re-organized their tank forces. At the end of WWII, tanks had evolved dramatically. They had become more heavily armored, more reliable and capable of carrying considerable firepower. At the same time, anti-tank weapons had also been revolutionized by the introduction of very powerful man-portable short-range weapons capable of knocking out tanks if the infantry could get close enough to the vulnerable sides or rear of a tank. Towed artillery guns dedicated to anti-tank warfare remained in service and had become considerably more powerful as well. They were, however, usually not more powerful than the tank-mounted guns, while having no protection to speak of, and consequently had to rely on ambushes and quick kills, before the tanks could locate them and counterattack.

By the 1950s, the tanks of WWII had evolved further but less dramatically, to even heavier versions, with more powerful guns. The next revolution in tank design appeared in the 1960s, when night-vision and fire-control equipment became more practical. While night-vision optics had existed since WWII, it took several decades for them

to become widespread. In the same decade, anti-tank weapons also experienced a revolution of their own with the introduction of the Soviet-designed AT-3 Sagger missile. For the first time, infantry could engage and destroy tanks at considerable distance, with precision, without having to rely upon a heavy towed weapon. By 1973, it was not uncommon to see modified tanks from WWII fighting alongside considerably more sophisticated vehicles developed in the 1960s.

Thus, while a few revolutionary innovations were introduced between WWII and 1973, in this chapter the most relevant being the portable anti-tank guided missile and night-vision equipment, the tank battles of the Yom Kippur War were not drastically different compared to the armored clashes of WWII.

5.3

The Israeli 7th and 188th Brigades, 1973

> Kilyon scored a hit, but the Syrian kept coming – till a shell from another of our tanks finished him off. I was covered in a cold sweat. It all seemed a nightmare. As the Syrian crews abandoned their tanks and raced for cover, I turned to find a good position from which to block the enemy advance.
>
> — Avigdor Kahalani (1992, p. 97), 7th Armored Brigade

When the Yom Kippur war broke out in 1973, during the most holy of Jewish holiydays, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), Israel was caught by surprise. While Egyptian troops crossed the Suez Canal, a large Syrian force assaulted the Golan Heights. Official doctrine mandated that the intelligence services would be able to anticipate an attack at least 48 hours before the fact, allowing reservists to be mobilized. After that, the Israeli Air Force would deal the decisive blow against the Syrian armored spearhead (Dunstan et al., 2011, p. 21). As it turned out, there was no warning at all and in the first hours of the conflict, the air force suffered severe losses inflicted Egyptian missile batteries over the Suez. The 7th Armored Brigade was not at full strength, but along with the 188th Armored Brigade, a.k.a. the Barak Brigade, two infantry battalions and four artillery battalions, it was the only force left to prevent the Syrian tanks from advancing into northern Israel. Along the Suez Canal, the Israeli troops at least hypothetically had the option of giving up parts of the Sinai to buy more time, but at the Golan Heights, there was no buffer zone available. The whole battle would be decided where it started: either the Israelis held their ground, or the war would be lost. In hindsight, it can be argued that Israel could have avoided disaster by threatening to use its nuclear weapons, but in 1973, both the general public and troops fighting were unaware of this. In either case, the tenacity of the 7th and 188th armored brigades managed to hold off the Syrians for four days. In an astonishing feat of determination and aggression, they even counterattacked, despite horrendous losses that would have rendered a normal armored unit completely inoperable. Even if the secret deterrent could have, or did have, a more substantial impact, both the general public and the troops themselves were in 1973 convinced that these two brigades had saved the state of Israel from annihilation.

FORMATIVE FACTORS

The Israeli self-image is strongly influenced by the perceived military threat from the surrounding Arab nations, which in Hebrew is known as *i katan be-toch yam arvi*, "a small island in an Arab sea" (van Creveld, 2002, p. 125). In addition to this perceived threat, the relatively small size of Israel's territory and population vis-a-vis its neighbors adds to its strategic predicament, which in Hebrew is referred to as *meatim mul rabbim*, "the few against the many." The Hebrew term for the situation this combination brings is *en brera*, meaning "no choice."

These sentiments are not only a reflection of the historical facts, most notably the Holocaust, but also of the statements made by several Arab leaders shortly before the Six Day War in 1967, when they said that their intention was to "meet in Tel Aviv" and "drive the Jews into the sea" (Oren, 2006, p. 137). During that time, there was even frequent talk among the older generation of a second Holocaust (van Creveld, 2002, p. 127). One illustration of how acutely this danger was felt is the price the Israelis were willing to pay in order to achieve security. After 1967, the Israeli defense budget surged to 21.6 percent of GNP, while conscription was extended from two and half years to three years for males. For females, it remained two years. After serving up to three years as conscripts, Israeli citizens would find themselves getting called up so often that some men spent as much as three months per year in uniform (ibid., p. 141). 250,000 out of a total population of just over two million could be mobilized by the IDF (ibid., p. 124). Taken together, this meant that the average Israeli not only spent a considerable amount of his or her taxes on security, but also he or she would need to accept the hardships of military training for years on end, followed by weeks or months of reserve duty every year. The fact that the population of Israel was willing to accept this heavy price for security is in itself a testament to how frightening the alternative must have seemed.

In connection with the above, the mentality prevalent in many parts of the IDF during the 1950s-1970s was also influenced by the concept of Jewish heroism. According to van Creveld (ibid., p. 10–11), the Zionist pioneers wanted, as early as the late 19th century, to distance themselves from the stereotype of "the gentile Jew." Starting with the *shomrim* (guards) in the early 20th century, Jewish paramilitary organizations in Palestine emphasized the importance of bravery and prowess in combat (ibid., p. 12–13). This new ideal resurrected the story of the mass suicide at Masada during the Jewish revolt against

the Roman rule in 66–73 A.D., which had been all but forgotten by Jewish scholarship during the centuries of Diaspora (van Creveld, 2002, p. 10). After World War I, the early mounted bands of such guards were replaced by a popular militia, *Haganah*, which assumed the role of carrier of this tradition. During the Arab uprising in Palestine in 1919–1920, the new ideal was personified by a man called Yosef Trumpeldor, who commanded a small defense force comprised of fifteen men at a village called Tel Chai. When the village came under attack, Trumpeldor and seven of his men died while fighting. He became a martyr, inspiring the members of the fledgling *Haganah*, which would later become the IDF. In fact, his feats were so famous that songs were sung in his honor by children thirty years later (ibid., p. 20).

The desperate struggles before and during the War of Independence in 1948–1949 reinforced the concept of *en brera*. The political objectives of the IDF were clearly affected by the geopolitical and historical sentiments, leading to the impression that Israel could not under any circumstances afford to allow any enemy force to advance onto its territory without risking its few population centers, all of which were of fundamental importance for its continued survival. Thus, the IDF had the task of defending the territory of Israel by taking the fight over to enemy territory at the earliest opportunity (Smedberg, 2010, p. 161; Dunstan et al., 2011, p. 197). Since Israel's small population base would be unable to withstand attrition, any major conflict also had to be resolved quickly. Consequently, for Israel any major armed conflict necessarily involved an element of gambling. The numerically and frequently technically inferior IDF had to try to achieve a swift victory regardless of the risk, since the alternative would be a slow but inevitable defeat.

A key element for the attainment of victory was the Armored Corps. A short note on the origins of the Israeli tank forces is required for a fuller understanding of how that branch came to occupy the exalted position in which it found itself in 1973. The Israeli tank forces were a somewhat neglected part of the IDF as late as 1956, when infantry was still the most important part of the Israeli ground forces. However, during the Sinai war of 1956, the 7th Armored Brigade, being dissatisfied with orders to play little more than a symbolic role, disobeyed direct orders from the general headquarters. The brigade commander, Uri Ben Ari, not only initiated his attack 24 hours ahead of schedule, he also spoiled a deception plan conceived by the minister of defense, Moshe Dayan (Luttwak and Horowitz, 1975, p. 152–153). The results were glowing: the 7th Armored Brigade won a spectacular

victory, which had a significant impact on the outcome of the entire war. After this, and the similar victories reaped by the 27th Armored Brigade, the Armored Corps became the new main force of the IDF, displacing the once celebrated and revered infantry. In 1958, the new direction of the IDF was personified by the new Chief of Staff, Haim Laskov. Being a former Air Force commander and head of the Armored Corps, Laskov developed the IDF into an organization focused on a strong air force and Armored Corps as its main elements (ibid., p. 173). In 1960 the first armored division was established in Israel, and the old WWII-vintage Sherman tanks and the relatively fragile French AMX-13s started to be replaced by powerful British-made Centurion tanks. Although Laskov was forced to resign after a political conflict with the minister of defense, his successor Zvi Zur continued to develop the IDF along the same path (ibid., p. 137; 177). When Yitzak Rabin replaced Zvi Zur in 1963, the transformation was well under way, and the IDF grew increasingly complex, becoming a truly modern army by the standards of the day (ibid., p. 178–179).

The previously informal and more or less spontaneous doctrine of the IDF was also formalized into the concept of "optional control" (ibid., p. 163). Emphasizing the autonomy of battalion and brigade commanders, it awards them the authority to make decisions during the course of the battle, while retaining the ability of more senior commanders to guide their actions in a more general sense. According to Luttwak and Horowitz (ibid., p. 172–173), optional control requires self-reliant officers who are able and willing to shoulder responsibility without waiting for clearance from senior officers. The friction and uncertainty of war is treated as "a protagonist" rather than an obstacle, and officers are taught not to pause and regroup when the situation becomes chaotic, but rather to advance in full force, without hesitation (ibid., p. 174).

The effectiveness of the armor- and air force-centric doctrine was proven during the Six Day War of 1967, when IDF tank crews scored stunning victories. The IDF's status in Israeli society became even more elevated, and the tank crews and officers were the new stars of both the army and Israeli society at large. The 7th Armored Brigade had once again played a key role, this time by taking the initiative to attack during a confused stage of the war, thus achieving results while other units remained passive. In addition, the 7th also fought the only major tank-vs-tank engagement of the war, against Egyptian Soviet-made T-54s and T-55s, winning decisively (van Creveld, 2002, p. 188). Thus, when the Yom Kippur War broke out, the Israeli tank forces had the

greatest confidence in their own ability, and were held in high esteem throughout Israeli society.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The primary strategic objective for the 7th and 188th Armored Brigades was to prevent a Syrian breakthrough at the Golan Heights. If the Syrians had been able to overcome the Israeli defenses, they would have been able to reach major Israeli population centers within hours. In addition, holding on to the Golan Heights was an important strategic objective in itself, since the heights could be used to mount an effective defense against attack. In Syrian hands, artillery deployed on the heights could fire on large parts of northern Israel without having to move.

Further complicating matters, the Middle East was a geopolitically sensitive region in which the superpowers had key strategic interests. Both the Israelis and Syrians knew that once war broke out, it would only be a matter of time before the superpowers would force both Israel and Syria to agree to a ceasefire. Both sides thus wanted to achieve as much as possible within a short time frame, to present the other side with a *fait accompli* once the ceasefire was imposed. For this reason, the Syrians depended on a speedy advance, while the Israelis had to launch a counteroffensive at the earliest possible opportunity if any gains were to be made. Consequently, the secondary strategic objective for the 7th and 188th brigades were to launch a counterattack at the earliest possible opportunity, and seize as much ground as possible, as quickly as possible, once they were on the offensive.

From this we can conclude that the attitude toward risk that would be required for a successful outcome is Aggressive. Since the campaign would necessarily be decided in a short time anyway, and losing territory would mean long-term risks, an Aggressive stance would be most productive even if it probably would be unsustainable in the long term. In terms of the attitude toward noncombatants, it's more difficult to make an assessment. Relatively few noncombatants would be expected to appear on the Golan Heights. However, since the war would be decided quickly, situations might appear in which a Protective attitude, and subsequent concerns for the local civilians, might distract the IDF brigades, which could favor the Syrians. Thus, I argue that Aggressive-Indifferent would be the most strategically effective combination.

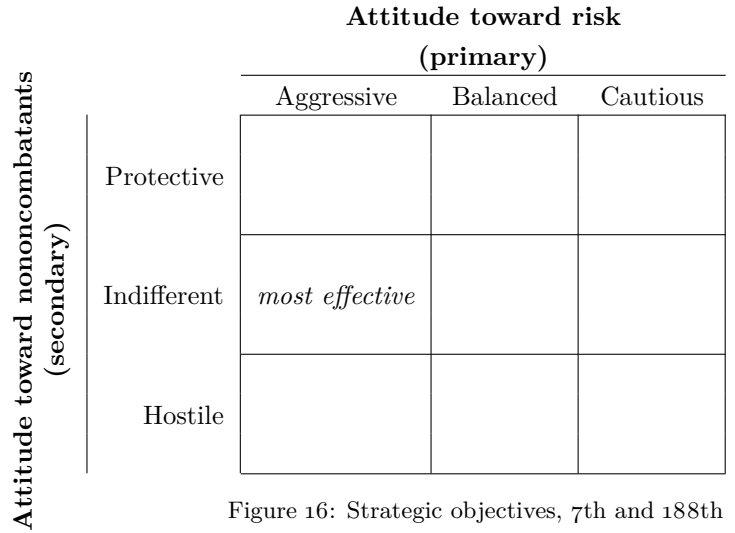

Figure 16: Strategic objectives, 7th and 188th

CHALLENGES

The IDF as a whole faced the over-arching strategic challenge of having to defend a relatively small area of land without natural barriers against potential enemies surrounding it to the east, south and west. After the victory in the Six Day War of 1967, Israel did, however, seize control of two natural barriers: the Golan Heights and the Suez canal, which remedied the situation somewhat. The downside was that the IDF was unaccustomed to the type of defensive fighting required to make full use of such barriers, which reduced their utility. During the period between 1967 and 1973, there was a debate within the IDF on how best to defend these newly-acquired barriers, in particular the Sinai desert. According to van Creveld (2002, p. 211–212), one school of thought was represented by the Chief of Staff, Chaim Bar-Lev, who wanted to construct fortifications in order to prevent the enemy from getting a foothold. This stood in stark contrast to the alternative approach, endorsed by Yisrael Tal and Ariel Sharon, which emphasized armored counteroffensives (ibid., p. 211–212). In the end, fortifications were erected in the Sinai in a chain of installations that came to be known as the Bar-Lev Line. In the Golan Heights, fighting positions were prepared along ridges overlooking the valley Syrian troops would have to cross in order to attack.

Israel's small population base was the source of another challenge, by imposing a limit on the number of available troops, whereas its enemies easily could muster several times as many. The difficulties involved with obtaining military hardware prior to the change in American policy in the late 1960s added yet another complication, since Israel's enemies, including Syria, could easily obtain both military hardware and advisors from the Soviet Union.

An additional challenge was the influence of the superpowers. Syria was considered by the Soviet Union to be its most promising Arab client state (Luttwak and Horowitz, 1975, p. 275), which meant that the Soviets quickly tried to impose a cease-fire as soon as they thought that Syria stood to lose anything. This applied to Egypt as well, and was one of the reasons behind the construction of the Bar-Lev Line. If the Egyptians and/or Syrians could gain a foothold, they could use that as leverage in the negotiations after an imposed cease-fire. Thus, it was crucial for the Israelis to initiate a counteroffensive at the earliest possible opportunity to try to take as much territory as they could before the inevitable cease-fire. Even the US might become an obstacle under such circumstances, since they too had reasons to pursue a quick cease-fire, in order to appease their oil-producing allies in the region.

Thus, the IDF's challenges were four-fold: in relation to its enemies, the IDF had to cope with a very small population; a very small territory; in some cases inferior technology; and potential interference from the superpowers.

PERSONNEL, COMMANDERS AND EQUIPMENT

The Israeli ground forces were comprised of three parts: what van Creveld (2002, p. 114) calls the "core force", i.e. professional officers and NCOs who serve during both peace and war; the conscripts, who served for two and half years; and finally, the reservists, reserve officers and ex-conscripts who were called up for refresher training on an annual basis and mobilized in times of emergency.[2]

In terms of personnel, the IDF early emphasized the importance of highly skilled junior commanders, who could act independently (van Creveld, 1985, p. 228). In the face of an enemy attack, the IDF prepared to re-take the initiative as soon as possible and at the earliest opportunity launch counterattacks. One officer in the 1960s summarized it by saying "when in doubt – attack" (ibid., p. 199). The doctrine

[2]Female conscripts only served for two years, but since they were prohibited from serving in combat roles in 1973, they are not included in this case study.

instilled in the offensive ground units of the IDF also emphasized the ability to act quickly (ibid., p. 198). It was, for example, explicitly stated that commanders and headquarters should be able to conduct their operations while on the move (Smedberg, 2010, p. 162). The uncertainty and confusion brought by the "fog of war" was not to be overcome by pauses and regrouping, instead the Israeli officers were trained to keep fighting and continue the attacks and thus "impose their will on the confusion of battle and determine its outcome" (Luttwak and Horowitz, 1975, p. 174). While some of the generals were critical of the lack of control over these forces once they had engaged in combat operations, Israeli Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan brushed their objections aside by stating that it is "better to be engaged in restraining the noble stallion than in prodding the reluctant mule" (ibid., p. 160).

The Israeli officers were also considerably younger than the norm in many other armies. According to Luttwak and Horowitz (ibid., p. 181–182), in 1967, platoons were often commanded by twenty-year old lieutenants, while companies were led by captains in the mid-twenties and battalion commanders usually were in their mid-thirties. Brigade commanders were typically in their late thirties, while no serving general officers, including the Chief of Staff and Area Commanders, were older than fifty. Officers were encouraged to retire, retaining half their salaries, while they were still young enough to pursue new civilian careers (ibid., p. 182).

IDF officers were also frequently rotated, switching between combat positions to staff jobs, from support to command and back again (ibid., p. 183). The purpose behind this scheme was to promote innovation and integration, as well as to ensure that most IDF officers were exposed to combat. In the post-1956 expansion of the Armored Corps, any officer, regardless of rank, who transferred to serve in a tank unit had to take the specialized courses for tank crews, followed by crew leader courses, and only then proceed to learn how to command companies and battalions (ibid., p. 183).

The enlisted men also received very extensive training in their respective roles. For example, tank gunners trained so much that they could accurately hit moving targets at a distance of 2.5 miles, which was very impressive at the time. In addition, tank crews were trained in each other's roles, so that any crew member (commander, driver, gunner, loader) could take another's place in an emergency (van Creveld, 2002, p. 161).

In terms of equipment, the situation was more complex. While the Soviet Union had supplied Israel's enemies since the 1950s, Israel

initially found it more difficult to acquire arms, in particular American weapons. Both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations maintained a policy of refusing to supply arms to Israel, since this could jeopardize relations between the US and several Arab states, who as a result might gravitate toward the Soviet Union (Haron, 1986, p. 315–319). Consequently, the IDF had to turn to Britain and France for equipment. In addition, to create and maintain a qualitative edge to compensate for the quantitative superiority of its enemies, the Israeli army had to develop an ability to upgrade and rebuild whatever arms it could get hold of, creating unique designs, adapted for Israeli conditions.

One example of this is the *Sho't* main battle tank, which was originally a British design known as the Centurion, dating back to the last months of WWII. Israel imported more than 1,000 of these tanks during the 1950s and 1960s. They were then modified by replacing the fire-prone gasoline engine with a diesel powerpack; installing a modern 105mm L7 main gun; upgrading the transmission, fuel tanks and munitions storage compartments and improving the brakes (Chant, 2006, p. 142–143). During the 1950s and 1960s, the UK had developed a successor to the Centurion, called Chieftain, with considerable input from Israel. Considered the best tank in the world at the time, sales of the Chieftain were suddenly refused by the UK in 1969 (*Files reveal British-Israel tank secrets* 3 January 2002), a dramatic and sudden interruption in the flow from one of Israel's two most important allies. In addition, France, once the second of Israel's most important suppliers of military hardware, placed an arms embargo on Israel at the outbreak of the Six Day War in 1967 (Oren, 2006, p. 137).

Fortunately for the Israelis, the Johnson administration in the US was more forthcoming than its predecessors, marking a major shift in US-Israeli relations. In 1965, 210 modern M48 Patton tanks were exported, followed by 48 A-4 Skyhawk attack aircraft (Rodman, 2004, p. 132). On the eve of the Six Day War in 1967, the US under president Lyndon B. Johnson was more positively inclined towards Israel than Truman and Eisenhower had ever been, but Congress was nevertheless unwilling to support an initiative from the president to try to break the Egyptian blockade of the Straits of Tiran (Oren, 2006, p. 135–137).

Finally, in 1968, the US decided that Israel would be allowed to purchase state-of-the-art Phantom fighters, to replace the heavy losses suffered by the Israeli Air Force in the 1967 war. This was an important step toward closer relations with the US, although the process would not be finalized until near the end of the Yom Kippur War in 1973,

when the Nixon administration finally committed itself to a closer relationship with Israel (Golan, 2006, p. 171).

The decision on behalf of the Israelis to choose two relatively old tank designs was in line with the unique Israeli doctrine of tactical mobility, developed by Yisrael Tal in 1964. While the Soviet, West German and French armies experimented with lighter and faster tank designs in the 1960s, Israel chose British and American designs, which were still heavy and well-armored. According to Soviet, West German and French thinking, the new fast-moving tanks would use their agility to maneuver around and defeat heavier opponents. Tal, on the other hand, defined mobility as the ability to move *in the presence of the enemy* (Luttwak and Horowitz, 1975, p. 189). Consequently, Centurions and M-48s might be slower while driving along, but on the other hand, they could advance through heavy enemy fire, which would force lighter tanks to take detours to avoid being destroyed. Thus, moving from one given point to the other could be done in a more direct route using a Centurion, which according to this logic, made it more mobile than the lighter, more agile designs.

When the Yom Kippur War broke out in October 1973, Israel had a diverse range of old and new weaponry. The Israeli Air Force had fielded its American-made Skyhawks and Phantoms, but the army still didn't have enough modern American equipment to replace its Centurions and obsolete WWII-vintage Super Shermans. Consequently, when the Syrians attacked the Golan Heights, it was the Centurions that had to do most of the fighting on the ground, while Skyhawks provided support from the sky. However, as the Israelis would learn during the course of the Yom Kippur War, their enemies had acquired weapons systems that had a clear technological edge over anything in the Israeli arsenal. Most notably this included portable anti-tank missiles, night-vision equipment and surface-to-air missiles. Used together, these systems invalidated the Israeli armor-air doctrine by presenting a lethal barrier for the supporting aircraft, while the anti-tank missiles enabled infantry to inflict casualties on the Israeli tanks even from a considerable distance. Since the Israeli tanks had relatively limited infantry and artillery support, this was a serious threat. The night-vision equipment also enabled Syrian tanks to close the distance to Israeli fighting positions under the cover of darkness, which negated the Israeli advantage in long-range gunnery.

In summary, the Israeli equipment was, by and large, well-suited for the conditions under which it was used, but in no significant way technologically superior to the equipment fielded by Israel's enemies.

Training, on the other hand, was vastly superior within the IDF. This included tactics and strategy as well as more technical skills.

Functional Imperatives. The 7th and 188th brigades were both equipped with Centurions, along with a few M48 Patton tanks. The Centurions were upgraded to *Sho't* standard and as such more modern than the original Centurions. The *Sho't* tanks were considerably better armored than the Syrian Soviet-made tanks, while being more or less equal in armament, but significantly slower and less agile. The difficult rock-strewn terrain on the Golan Heights further reinforced the necessity of minimizing movement. Unlike their Syrian counterparts, the Israeli crews were extensively trained to emphasize gunnery over maneuvers. Prepared tank positions provided the Israeli tanks with some extra cover, but also further limited their mobility. In essence, this meant that the tactical options available were strongly geared towards engaging the advancing Syrians while they were still far away, and holding their ground, moving only short distances to take up new firing positions.

TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURE

The IDF, due to its policies of early retirement and officer rotation, along with the unique Israeli geopolitical situation, was more homogeneous than most, if not all, other military organizations. The Armored Corps as a whole had a few unique traits, however. One of these was the adherence to formal discipline, "spit and polish," and the stress on following rules and routines. This separated it from the informal discipline within the infantry and especially the paratroops (Shalit, 2003, p. 120–122). Compared to the paratroops, the armored corps had tidier camps and neater uniforms. They also saluted in a textbook fashion (ibid., p. 121). This split was a result of reforms made to the Armored Corps in the post-1956 build-up, after it had been noted that lack of attention to detail with regards to maintenance had resulted in avoidable availability problems during the 1956 Sinai war, when a large number of vehicles turned out to be unusable after the mobilization began (Luttwak and Horowitz, 1975, p. 147). One brigade had been promised 153 trucks, which were necessary for its movement across the desert. Twenty-four hours before the Sinai War broke out, they were notified that they would be receiving 90 rather than 153. When they went into action, they had no more than 46. To make matters even worse, within the unit there wasn't a single spanner that could be used

to change tyres on front-wheel drive vehicles, which meant that trucks with punctures had to be abandoned (ibid., p. 147).

When Yisrael Tal was appointed to command the Armored Corps in 1964, he realized that these maintenance problems within the Armored Corps were having a significant effect on its fighting ability. The complex mechanical and optical systems required for the operation of a tank in the 1960s and 1970s were less rugged than those of a typical civilian car. This in combination with the need to train conscripts and reservists to maintain these vehicles meant that the crews could not be expected to learn fully all the intricacies of their machines. Tal's solution was to introduce specialization and strict operating routines (ibid., p. 189–190). Within the army, which cherished versatility and originality, there was initially considerable resistance to these reforms. Tal's operating routines essentially demanded that crews were expected to carry out orders they did not fully understand, which was anathema to the IDF tradition. Tal, however, stayed his course and implemented strict formal discipline within the Armored Corps. All its members became conspicuous in their regulation dress, including correctly worn black berets and prescribed boots (ibid., p. 190). As it turned out, Tal's assumptions were proven to have been correct: the new discipline soon had a profound impact on the maintenance of the previously neglected vehicles. A strict inspection system followed, along with detailed maintenance logbooks for each tank. By 1967, the system was operating smoothly, and when the Six Day War broke out, the corps' tanks were in perfect running order and ready for action (ibid., p. 191).

The 7th Armored Brigade was a regular unit, as opposed to a reserve unit, and as such manned by professional officers and NCOs along with conscripts. It had a very impressive service record, having fought with distinction during the 1956 Sinai war as well as the 1967 Six Day War. It was known for its heroic and aggressive attitude. Indeed, during the victory parade in 1967, Colonel Shmuel Gonen, commander of the 7th Armored Brigade, stated that the 7th had "stared death in the eye until *he* looked away"(van Creveld, 2002, p. 197–198). By 1973, the 7th was an elite formation, and one of the most distinguished units in the IDF (Herzog, 1975, p. 65). Even if the 7th brigade had few veterans from the Six Day War, it had extensive experience of fighting in skirmishes on the Golan Heights and along the Lebanese border.

The 188th was also a regular armored brigade, which according to Herzog (ibid., p. 68) had been "honed to a fine instrument of war," having participated in skirmishes along the border during previous year.

This included an advance into Lebanon in 1972, as well as firefights along the Syrian front in late 1972 and early 1973.

Consequently, the 7th and 188th brigades were among the most distinguished armored brigades in the IDF. Both were regular units and both had recent experience from the kind of low-intensity warfare that the IDF regularly engaged in between the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War. Not all units in the Armored Corps, even the regular ones, were of such high and even quality. For example, on the southern front in Sinai, there were initially problems related to conflicts between the senior officers, lack of initiative and a shortage of available vehicles (van Creveld, 2002, p. 240–241). The 7th and 188th brigades had taken the values of the IDF and Armored Corps to heart to a greater extent than most other units, and since the situation on the Golan Heights turned out to be far more critical than in the Sinai, the fact that these two brigades were stationed there turned out to be a stroke of luck for Israel.

Focal Points. One of the most crucial focal points, that united the entire IDF, was the recognition of the extremely vulnerable situation of Israel, as expressed in the previously mentioned concept of *en brera* (see p. 115). According to van Creveld (ibid., p. 167), it provided the IDF with clarity concerning the overall strategic objective. The necessity of being prepared for sacrifices in lives, since territory could not be traded in their place in case of major conflict, was apparent to the IDF as a whole. This was for example expressed in a speech held by Yitzhak Rabin in 1967, when he was chief of staff of the IDF:

> [Our victory] is entirely a result of the spirit. Our fighters surpassed themselves not because they have better weapons, but because they are supremely conscious of their sacred mission. They recognize the justice of our cause; they deeply love the fatherland; and they are deeply aware of their task. To wit, to secure the existence of the nation in its land; and to maintain, even at the cost of their lives, its right to live in its own country, free, independent, in peace and quiet.(van Creveld, 2010, p. 135).

Not only senior officers expressed themselves in this manner. In a private letter written in 1968, IDF paratrooper, tank officer and commando Yonathan Netanyahu expressed his worries:

> It seems to me that we are facing another war. [...] We must, we are obliged, to cling to our country with our fingernails, with our bodies and with all our strength. Only if we do that, if we give all that we have for the well-being of our country, will Israel remain the State of the Jews. Only then will they not write in the history books that once indeed the Jews roused themselves to action and held on to their land for two decades, but then were overwhelmed and became once more homeless wanderers (Netanyahu, 2001, p. 161).

It was this necessity to accept risks, along with the need for rapid offensive action against an enemy that could potentially annihilate the Jewish population of Israel, that formed the basis for the propensity to attack, regardless of risks or odds, that was prevalent in the IDF. The alternative would be the destruction of the state of Israel. On the second day of the Yom Kippur War, the minister of defense, Moshe Dayan, feared this very scenario. To the air force commander, he said: "Benny, the Third Temple is falling." This was a reference to the First Temple, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. and the Second Temple, destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. (Spector, 2009, p. 302).

The formal discipline introduced by Yisrael Tal in 1964 provided another focal point. Unlike *en brera*, formal discipline was, within the context of the army, unique for the Armored Corps. It enabled the Armored Corps to maintain a high state of readiness in its vehicle fleet. It is important to note that Tal was not personally a focal point, he merely introduced and implemented the formal discipline with all its related attributes. In 1969, he was appointed to take charge of the efforts to develop a new Israeli tank design, and thus left the Armored Corps to work within the Ministry of Defense (van Creveld, 2002, p. 211). In 1972, he went to serve as deputy Chief of Staff (Luttwak and Horowitz, 1975, p. 296). Thus, Tal was not in a position to exercise any personal influence after 1969, but the tradition of formal discipline lived on without him in the Armored Corps.

From this we can conclude that the 7th and 188th brigades were Aggressive. Their attitude toward noncombatants is more difficult to gauge, but since neither hostility nor explicit concerns over civilians are apparent in the data, I will assume that their attitude was Indifferent. This places them in perfect convergence with the strategic objectives, and the prediction is thus that they will be politically and strategically effective.

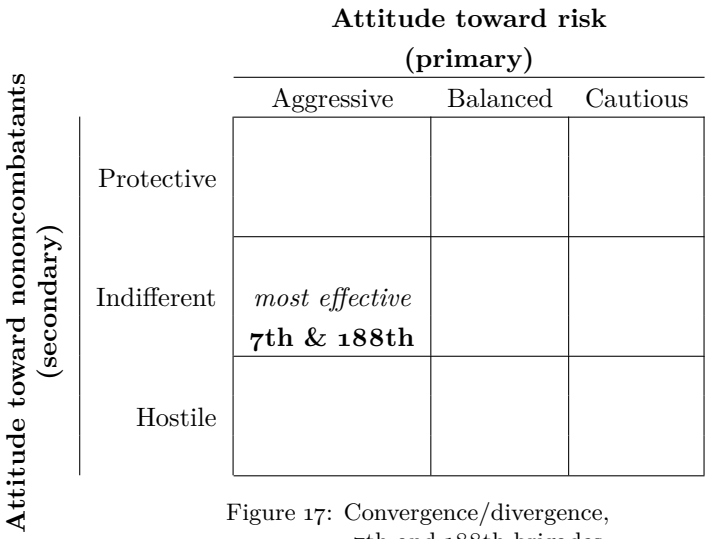

Figure 17: Convergence/divergence, 7th and 188th brigades

IMPACT OF TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURE

The 7th and 188th brigades enjoyed a High degree of autonomy, both formally and in practice (see figure 18). There were no restrictive rules of engagement, nor were there any attempts at micromanagement from above. Even though the two brigades faced a situation of great strategic importance, they were allowed to handle it as they themselves saw fit.

Next, before we embark on the continued analysis, a key aspect of the Yom Kippur War needs to be clarified: the matter of the surprise. During the days before the outbreak of the Yom Kippur war, there were several indications of an impending attack. However, the head of Israeli military intelligence, Eli Zeira, refused to believe that the Egyptians and Syrians were about to initiate a large-scale conflict. Nevertheless, on September 26, eleven days before the assault, increasing Syrian activity near the Golan Heights was detected, and the Israeli General Staff ordered elements of the 7th Armored Brigade to reinforce the 188th Armored Brigade by taking responsibility for the northern part of the heights, while the 188th would defend the southern part (Herzog, 1975, p. 60–62). For example, Avigdor Kahalani, commander of the 77th battalion of the 7th Armored Brigade, was alerted and reported for duty on the same day (Kahalani, 1992, p. 6–7). In contrast, the Southern Command responsible for the Suez Canal, had done very

Degree of actual autonomy	Degree of formal autonomy: High	Medium	Low
High	**7th & 188th** entire period		
Medium			
Low			

Figure 18: Degrees of autonomy, 7th and 188th brigades

little in terms of preparation. Even so, the 7th and 188th brigades were only a small part of the force designated to defend the Golan Heights. The full mobilized strength of the Northern Command included an additional six armored brigades from the reserves (Dunstan et al., 2007, p. 22). According to Herzog (1975, p. 115), the Syrian army would have been "doomed" if the whole IDF force had been mobilized twenty-four hours earlier, and been prepared for battle. However, since the Minister of Defense and Prime Minister of Israel were reluctant to mobilize, two armored brigades, one of which was not even at full strength, had to shoulder the responsibility originally intended to be shared by no less than eight armored brigades. While the reserve units that started to arrive to provide support at around midnight on the first day, played an important role as well, the 7th and 188th brigades remained absolutely vital to the successful defense of the Golan Heights. Since most of the enlisted men were conscripts, and officers both rotated in and out of combat positions, as well as retired relatively young, there were few Israelis in the 7th and 188th brigades who had experienced the Six Day War of 1967. For example, in the 77th battalion of the 7th Armored Brigade, the battalion commander was the only one who had fought in 1967 (Kahalani, 1992, p. 31).

Consequently, while the attack was expected on the Golan Heights, it was not known for certain if that attack would indeed take place on October 6th. Since full-scale mobilization had a very significant

negative effect on the Israeli economy, which was already strained during this time period, the reserve units designated to reinforce the Golan Heights were completely unaware of the Syrian build-up. The well-trained and highly motivated, but in terms of conventional full-scale combat, inexperienced, troops of the 7th and 188th brigades thus found themselves shouldering a disproportionate responsibility when the Syrian offensive started.

To make matters worse, the IDF planes that arrived to provide close air support were promptly shot down by the Syrian air defenses (van Creveld, 2002, p. 231), effectively disabling a key element of the air/armor doctrine. Thus, the two armor brigades found themselves in a position where they had to fight a vastly superior enemy force, without the air support they had counted on. From this point on, their tactical-level subculture provided three types of guidance that were necessary for the successful defense of the Golan Heights. The first was a readiness among all lower-level leaders to take the initiative along with a strong propensity to attack against all odds, whenever practically possible. The second was resilience in the face of casualties, which enabled the Israeli units to continue to fight even after they had taken severe casualties and lost many of the unit leaders. A third type of guidance was also necessary, but it played its key role not during the battle but rather before it took place, by ensuring that the tanks of the 7th and 188th brigades were well maintained and combat-ready.

Initiative and Propensity to Attack. During the trying conditions of the four days of intense fighting, the officers and NCOs of the 7th and 188th brigades took numerous initiatives. This was crucial, since the armor-air doctrine with weak infantry and artillery support was shattered on the first day of the war by the strong Syrian surface-to-air missile batteries and the proliferation of anti-tank guided missiles. The tank crews quickly developed countermeasures, however, drawing on the available artillery and armored personnel carriers to suppress enemy infantry (ibid., p. 232). In addition, the eagerness to attack, even against impossible odds, also manifested itself frequently in limited counterattacks that slowed down the Syrians. I argue that both of these types of action were necessary to prevent the Syrian breakthrough.

One of the best examples of the initiative and propensity to attack is "Task Force Zvika," a small force led by Lieutenant Zvi "Zvika" Greengold. Zvika, serving with the 188th Armored Brigade, was attending a company commander's course when the war broke out, but managed to hitch-hike to Nafekh when he heard of the Syrian

attack (Herzog, 1975, p. 84). When he arrived, no vehicles or personnel were available for him to command, but after a while four tanks, of which three were damaged, arrived. The tanks were quickly repaired, dead bodies removed, and then Zvika was authorized by the deputy commander of the 188th brigade, Lieutenant-Colonel Yisraeli, to lead this ad-hoc force, which Yisraeli named "Force Zvika." This small contingent started by ambushing a Syrian armored column, during which Force Zvika lost all its tanks but one, in which Zvika himself resumed the fighting. He then proceeded with another ambush, in which he single-handedly attacked a battalion of Syrian tanks at one of the main advance routes, the Tapline Road (Wickman, 2001, p. 34).

Zvika fired, moved to a new position, fired again, and kept repeating this procedure, which made the Syrians believe that they were facing a sizeable Israeli force, and prompted the withdrawal of the remnants of the enemy tank battalion (Herzog, 1975, p. 85). After a few hours, Zvika received seven tanks from the 17th Reserve Brigade as reinforcements and was placed under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Uzi, a battalion commander. Uzi and Zvika then drove into a Syrian ambush, and fought desperately until the whole unit except Zvika's tanks had been wiped out. Zvika had managed to pull his tanks back, but shortly after they made contact with other Syrian tanks, who scored a hit on Zvika's vehicle. Zvika jumped out of his burning tank, his clothes on fire, and rolled on the ground to extinguish the flames. Then he ran to another Israeli tank and ordered its commander to switch places with him. Donning a helmet, Zvika resumed command over "Force Zvika" and destroyed the remaining Syrian tanks. The small force kept fighting throughout the night, eventually joining up with other elements of the 188th brigade, blocking a main Syrian effort in the process (ibid., p. 92).

In another example, the headquarters of Northern Command found itself in dire straits when approaching Syrian tanks were spotted. Brigadier-General "Raful" Eytan finally evacuated the position after Syrian tanks had bypassed the command post on both sides and additional tanks were about to attack it (ibid., p. 91). Lieutenant-Colonel Pinie, deputy commander of the Brigade District, remained at the site and ordered his operations officer and the district assistant intelligence officer to join him. Pinie found an anti-tank launcher with six shells, and assumed the role of loader, while the operations officer was appointed gunner. The intelligence officer became a machine-gunner. Together, they attacked a Syrian tank that was no more than 200 yards away. The operations officer, who had never been under fire, missed the

tank twice.[3] The third shell hit the target, and after a sharp explosion, the tank crew abandoned their vehicle (Herzog, 1975, p. 91). Tanks from the Israeli 79th Reserve Brigade started to arrive, destroying two Syrian tanks. The intelligence officer took over as gunner, scoring the second kill for the ad-hoc anti-tank team. When a third tank appeared, he missed, using up their last shell. At that moment, the tank went up in flames, destroyed by a lone Israeli tank, commanded by Zvika, who had suddenly appeared. By the late afternoon, the 79th Reserve Brigade and Zvika had managed to secure the area around Nafekh (ibid., p. 93). After this, Zvika finally left his tank, having gone through twenty hours of non-stop combat, and said "I can't anymore" to a senior officer, after which he collapsed. By then he was wounded and bloody, his clothes burnt (ibid., p. 92).

Zvika personifies the tactical-level subculture of the 7th and 188th brigades: exceptional resilience, and a strong tendency to attack at every opportunity, even under circumstances that would prompt most commanders to fall back and regroup. It is also noteworthy that Zvika spent much of his twenty hours of combat as an independent commander, reporting directly to the brigade staff, even though he was a mere lieutenant and no more than twenty-one years old. Even after both the brigade commander and his deputy had been killed, and he himself had been wounded, Zvika had continued to fight.

As the second example shows, the instinct to attack also manifested itself in the decision of the deputy commander of the Brigade District, to form an ad-hoc anti-tank/machine-gun team using himself and two staff officers. Even though they were clearly not well-prepared for such a task (as is evident from the fact that they missed with more than half of their shells), and faced several enemy tanks, they nevertheless neither surrendered nor tried to find cover. Instead, they set out on an almost suicidal mission, and would probably have been killed if Zvika and elements from the 79th Reserve Brigade had not arrived when they did. While the actions of the three staff officers had no discernible strategic impact in themselves, they are indicative of the determination to attack against all odds that permeated the ranks of the 7th and 188th brigades. This enabled the units of these brigades to continue fighting even when they were facing impossible odds and their flanks were exposed.

[3]It was unusual at the time for an Israeli officer, even if he was serving in a staff position, not to have been under fire, since the policy of mandatory rotation ensured that officers were posted to combat units on a regular basis, see p. 121.

In another example, Captain "Tiger" Meir Zamir, a twenty-six year old company commander, who had been commanding a small unit of his own since the first night, had no more than seven tanks left on the third day. Even so, he was able to hold his position all day, destroying some 30 tanks and 20 armored personnel carriers. After nightfall, Tiger encountered a Syrian tank company and armored infantry. He then attacked this force, even though the enemy had a clear advantage, being equipped with night-vision equipment while Tiger's crews had to rely on their eyes and the few available illumination shells provided by the artillery. Tiger's unit was able to repel this enemy force too (ibid., p. 108–109).

Perhaps the most significant example of the importance of this aspect of the tactical-level subculture of the two brigades is the decision to attack the Syrians as soon as a small group of Israeli reinforcements arrived. This relief force was a motley collection of no more than thirteen half-repaired tanks manned by lightly wounded crews fresh from a hospital, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Yossi Ben Hannan of the 188th Armored Brigade (Dunstan et al., 2007, p. 57). Ben Hannan had been on vacation in the Himalayas when the war broke out, and upon hearing the news, had rushed home. His family met him at the airport and handed over his uniform and equipment, after which he headed directly to the front (Herzog, 1975, p. 112). When Kahalani saw that reinforcements had arrived, he ordered his troops to attack the Syrians, to retake the ridge they had been forced to retreat from earlier (Kahalani, 1992, p. 108). The seven remaining tanks of the 7th brigade, together with the thirteen vehicles of the relief force, proceeded to attack, destroying at least 30 Syrian tanks. The Syrians, possibly assuming that the Israeli reinforcements were the advance elements of a much larger force, then withdrew from the battle.[4] Shortly after this small-scale counterattack, Brigadier General Raful Eytan contacted the remnants of the 7th Armored Brigade and told them "You have saved the people of Israel" (Herzog, 1975, p. 113).

Resilience in the Face of Casualties. The 7th Armored Brigade had 105 tanks on the eve of battle, while the 188th had circa 60 (ibid., p. 78). They faced some 600 Syrian tanks. During the morning of the 7th of October, the 77th battalion of the 7th brigade was subjected to a particularly intense assault, as the Syrians attempted to break

[4]The theory that the weary Syrians may have assumed that the Israeli reinforcements were followed by larger Israeli units has been presented by, among others, Dunstan et al. (2007, p. 57).

through. Several company and platoon commanders belonging to the battalion were killed, but the battalion held on to its positions, destroying considerable numbers of attacking tanks. The battalion commander, Avigdor Kahalani, was surprised to see how steady his forces were, despite the casualties, the overwhelming odds and the total lack of air support (Kahalani, 1992, p. 72).

The 188th faced an even worse situation. By the first night, the 188th brigade had been reduced to 15 Centurions, the equivalent of 75 percent casualties (in terms of tanks), facing some 450 Syrian tanks (Herzog, 1975, p. 84). On the morning of the 7th of October, the situation in the southern sector was critical. Syrian forces had broken through the Israeli defenses, and a force of three brigades were pouring through, a total of more than 500 tanks (Wickman, 2001, p. 35). Tanks from the reserves arriving at the front were hastily formed into platoons comprised of three tanks each, and rushed to assist the 188th brigade.

Major Lenschner, an officer from an independent tank battalion attached to Northern Command, reported that his initial force of 14 tanks had been reduced to two vehicles and that he was being attacked by a Syrian brigade. He stated that his position was untenable, but was ordered by the brigade commander, Colonel Ben Shoham, to hold his position at any cost. Major Lenschner was killed by an anti-tank missile and his position was overrun. After the brigade headquarters came under attack, Colonel Shoham was ordered to return to Nafakh. He ordered his deputy, Lieutenant-Colonel Yisraeli, to provide cover. En route, they noticed several Syrian tanks, which were bearing down on them. Ben Shoham ordered his deputy to provide cover while he proceeded towards Nafakh. Yisraeli's tank fought until it ran out of ammunition, after which, according to Herzog (1975, p. 89–90), he "instinctively" ordered the driver to charge the remaining Syrian tanks, while Yisraeli fired his machine gun, knowing full well that it would hardly make a dent in the enemy vehicles. The leading Syrian tank promptly destroyed Yisraeli's tank, killing him in the process. The reflex to attack even against utterly hopeless odds is yet again illustrated in clear terms. Shortly thereafter, Colonel Shoham too was killed (Wickman, 2001, p. 35).

When the four days were over, more than 75 percent of the personnel in the 188th brigade had been wounded or killed, including 90 percent of the commanders (Dunstan, 2009, p. 74; Gal, 1986, p. 160). Only one original deputy company commander remained, along with two platoon commanders. Not a single company commander had survived the first battles (Herzog, 1975, p. 130). The 7th brigade took its share of losses

as well. Before the end of the second day of fighting, several company and platoon commanders had been killed, and the unit had suffered 75 percent losses across all categories of personnel (Dunstan, 2009, p. 74). Despite this, the two brigades participated in the counteroffensive against Syria.

To put this resilience in perspective, an American field manual from 1991 states that casualties in excess of 30 percent normally will render a unit combat-ineffective (*Field Manual No. 6-30: Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for Observed Fire* 1991, ch. 4–14). Another American field manual, from 1997, states that units can be classified into the following categories, in relation to its casualties: GREEN, 15 percent or less (combat capable); AMBER, 16 to 30 percent (combat capable with minor deficiencies); RED, 31 to 50 percent (combat ineffective, unit has major losses or deficiencies); and BLACK, more than 50 percent (requires reconstitution before next mission) (*Field Manual No. 101-5-1: Operational Terms and Graphics* 1997, p. C-1).

The reserve units, on the other hand, were less resilient than the regular units. The reserve brigades that were fighting alongside the 7th and 188th brigades had also lost many of their officers, but unlike the 7th and 188th, their morale had started to suffer. The two remaining staff officers from the 188th brigade, Major Dov and Major Hanan then took responsibility not only for their own subordinates, but also for those from other units. When they encountered some fleeing stragglers, including artillery and tanks, they took command over them, turning them into ad hoc platoons and companies. During the evening, these forces were turned over to the 79th Reserve Brigade and sent back into action, while the two majors moved down to their rear headquarters in the Jordan Valley (Herzog, 1975, p. 95).

Perhaps the most critical moment of the battle took place on the fourth day, shortly before the previously mentioned reinforcements under the command of Yossi Ben-Hannan arrived. By then the 7th brigade had no more than seven of its original 105 tanks left, the equivalent of suffering 93 percent casualties (in terms of tanks, not personnel). The 1st battalion, with less than half its tanks remaining, left three tanks to hold its original position, while the rest moved out to prevent a Syrian breakthrough, which resulted in the death of its battalion commander. The remainder of the 1st battalion was transferred to the command of Avigdor Kahalani, commander of the 7th battalion. Kahalani then used this force to engage two battalions of Syrian tanks, which had already bypassed the brigade and was moving behind it, firing at the 7th brigade from behind. Kahalani's unit fought

enemies on all sides, continuing to destroy enemy tanks. Each tank had only three or four shells left. At this point, the brigade commander's operations officer lost consciousness due to exhaustion, and the brigade commander reported that he might not be able to hold on. Nevertheless, his men kept fighting (Herzog, 1975, p. 111–112). If the brigade had fallen back at this point, the reinforcements would not have been able to launch the previously mentioned counterattack. Consequently, this resilience was as necessary to prevent the Syrian breakthrough as the counterattack that followed.

Maintenance and Availability. When the war broke out, the Centurion tanks of the 7th Armored Brigade were in "tip-top condition", and they had been checked out by armorers only a few weeks before (Kahalani, 1992, p. 7). As in June 1967, the IDF did not have to face any delays or avoidable reductions in strength as a result of maintenance issues. Since several units within the 7th and 188th brigades were decimated down to no more than a handful of vehicles, or even single vehicles, they clearly had no margins to lose. Consequently, the availability of vehicles at the outbreak of the war was a necessary component that enabled the tenacious defensive fighting carried out by the two brigades.

SUMMARY

The Armored Corps of the IDF is, like the *Ubootwaffe* during the last months of its first year, a good example of how a tactical-level subculture can be in perfect harmony with the overall long-term political objectives. On the Golan Heights in 1973, the tactical-level subculture of the Israeli Armored Corps, as manifested in the 7th and 188th armored brigades, had three strategic effects. The first was the availability of tanks at a critical point in time, thanks to the impact of the tradition of formal discipline on the maintenance of these vehicles. The second strategic effect was the ability of the two brigades to keep fighting despite extreme losses, and the third was the launching of a counterattack under circumstances of significant exhaustion, severe losses, considerable uncertainty and shortage of ammunition, against a numerically and technologically superior enemy. This counterattack may have been responsible for the final withdrawal of the Syrian forces. The 7th and 188th brigades thus achieved their two strategic objectives, which were to prevent and/or contain an enemy breakthrough at all costs; and to switch to a counteroffensive at the earliest opportunity.

The IDF is a unique organization in many ways in the sense that it is not only relatively small in relation to its extensive war record, but also because it is based on a population base that is exceptionally small in relation to the size of its armed forces. To this was added the uniquely exposed and vulnerable strategic situation of Israel, coupled with the experience of the Holocaust, the lack of any reliable allies and the unusually vehement statements made by its enemies. This resulted in unprecedented homogeneity within the IDF, reinforced further by the policies of officer rotation and early retirement from active duty. Consequently, tactical-level subcultures within the IDF were considerably less diverse than in most, if not all, military organizations around the world.

However, there was one aspect of the tactical-level subcultures that, within the context of the Israeli Army, was unique: the formal discipline and strict adherence to routines and regulations. While the Israeli Air Force had a similar tactical-level subculture, the air force was different in the sense that it employed a far higher ratio of career officers and NCOs, and thus was considerably less reliant on conscripts. The combination of formal discipline and the other, more general, influences from the army, such as a strong propensity to attack; a readiness to take individual initiatives; and resilience in the face of casualties, were all necessary components for the achievement of the strategic objectives during those four fateful days on the Golan Heights.

If the 7th and 188th Armored Brigades had had only the formal discipline, and not the other aspects of its tactical-level subculture, then they would have dissolved in the face of the extremely heavy losses and hopeless odds. If, on the other hand, they had had all the general traits of the IDF but not the formal discipline, then they would most certainly not have had such a high degree of readiness in the vehicle fleet when the war broke out. Since the individual units were reduced to no more than a handful of vehicles on several occasions, they had no margins to spare. Thus, without the formal discipline, the 7th and 188th Armored Brigades would have been helpless, since they needed tanks to fight.

Consequently, I argue that the unique tactical-level subculture of the 7th and 188th brigades was directly responsible for the successful defensive battle on the Golan Heights during the Yom Kippur War. While some historians have argued that the outcome of the battle was decided by other factors, the 7th and 188th brigades nevertheless managed to hold fast, and to counterattack. The strategic impact of this feat cannot be measured by this victory alone. Account must also

be taken of the effect this most likely had on tactical and strategic planning among its enemies in the years after 1973. Knowing that Israeli units could absorb horrendous casualties while simultaneously inflicting casualties on the attackers that were tens of times higher than their own probably raised the threshold for future Syrian offensive plans.

5.4

The German Tiger Battalions, 1942–1945

> Our tank was more than just a means of combat to us. It was our transportation, it was where we spent our free time and found recreation, where we lived and slept. It protected us from more than just the effects of enemy weapons. Therefore the crew had a very close relationship with its tank.
>
> — Alfred Rubbel (2008, p. 23), former Tiger crew member

The Heavy Tank Battalions (*schwere Panzer-Abteilungen*, abbreviated s.Pz.Abt.) of the German Army (*Heer*) were created to function as field units for the then brand-new heavy Tiger (official designation: *Panzerkampfwagen VI*) tanks, starting in mid-1942. Throughout World War II, no more than fourteen such battalions were set up (Frankson, 2012, p. 245–246), along with a number of smaller and more or less short-lived ad-hoc units.[5] Ten of these battalions were created as independent units, i.e. they were not an organic part of any larger unit. Instead, they were sent to areas of the front where their special abilities were required, and temporarily attached to units operating there. In this case study, I analyze the unique tactical-level subculture of these independent battalions and compare it to that of a few different organic Tiger units, which I argue had a different tactical-level subculture. This shows that the combination of unique vehicles (Tigers) and independent status was required for the development of the tactical-level subculture of the *schwere Panzer-Abteilungen*.

I argue that the tactical-level subculture had a three-fold strategic impact. First, it contributed to a reduction in losses during secondary operations. Second, as a result of the first factor, this enabled the Tiger units to be used in force during high-stakes battles as well as to inflict heavy casualties on enemy tank forces. Third, as a synergy effect of the first and second factors, the myth surrounding the Tiger was perpetuated and could be used to boost the morale of friendly troops, as well as to some extent to deter enemy attacks wherever Tigers were posted. By comparing the independent battalions with the organic units, I argue that the differences show that it was the tactical-level subculture of the independent units that had a decisive influence on

[5] The ad-hoc units were frequently attached to larger formations, and/or absorbed by one of the pre-existing battalions.

the strategic impact, rather than the material characteristics of the vehicle itself.

FORMATIVE FACTORS

During the interwar period, the German army was prohibited from having a tank force. Along with submarines and combat aircraft, tanks were considered too potent to be deployed by the Germans. The Germans did however manage to circumvent this ban, just as they did with submarines and combat aircraft. The early experiments with tanks were carried out using dummies, largely thanks to the tireless efforts of an Army colonel, Heinz Guderian. A former infantryman in the light infantry (*jäger*) and later signals officer during World War I, Guderian became one of the most energetic and influential tank advocates in Germany during the 1920s and 1930s.

While many German officers regarded the tank as a useful weapon, there was no consensus regarding its deployment. One commonly held view was that it was best used as an infantry support weapon, operating as an organic part of an infantry unit. This would imply dispersing the tanks evenly, to provide support to the infantry units to which they were attached. This view was dominant in for example France in the 1930s. The other view, advocated by Guderian, was to deploy tanks in dedicated units of their own, armored (*Panzer*) divisions, where they would operate independently of the regular infantry and make full use of their mobility, firepower and armor. Each Panzer division would have specialized infantry units for close support, mounted on trucks or armored half-tracks. These troops were called *Panzer-Grenadiere* ("armor grenadiers"). The term "grenadier" invoked the image of the grenadiers of the 17th and 18th centuries: specialized soldiers, selected for physical strength and courage, equipped with heavy grenades which they would lob at the enemy from close range. The *Panzer-Grenadiere* had little in common with the original grenadiers,but the designation served to separate them from regular infantry by transferring some of the status of the original grenadiers onto these new units. This highlights the hierarchy of prestige within the German army, in which the armored corps (*Panzerwaffe*) was above the infantry.

Guderian outlined his ideas regarding the employment of tanks as early as 1937, in his groundbreaking book *Achtung-Panzer!* (Guderian, [1937] 1995). In this, Guderian describes, among other concepts, a special type of mission, which he calls "breakthrough missions." He states that the breakthrough mission "is perhaps the most demanding

mission that could be set" (ibid., p. 178). During such an operation, the destruction of the enemy tanks is essential: "If we are unable to defeat the enemy armour the breakthrough has as good as failed" (ibid., p. 180). Originally, Guderian thought missions of this type could be carried out by medium tanks, but a few years into the war it became obvious that something heavier was required for this role. Thus, the Tiger was specifically developed to be a *Durchbruchswagen*, i.e. a breakthrough vehicle (Wilbeck, 2004, p. 25). From this we can gather an important fact: the Tiger was primarily intended for the most demanding mission any tank could be sent on, which explains why it could immediately attain an elevated status, within a branch that was already more prestigious than the rest of the German army. In addition, we can also conclude that the destruction of enemy tanks was its primary objective.

Guderian ran into stiff opposition from more senior officers during the early years of his advocacy, but after managing to get Hitler's attention and support, he was able to create the first Panzer divisions. Once these units had proven their worth in Poland 1939 and France 1940, the controversy died out in favor of Guderian's vision. After this, Guderian was a prominent figure not only among the generals surrounding Hitler, he was also known and seemingly appreciated by the rank and file, with whom he maintained something of a personal relationship. In one example taken from 1940, Guderian passed a column from the 1st Panzer Division during the campaign in France, when the men, according to Guderian ([1952] 2009, p. 108) himself, cheered and referred to him by his nickname, *schneller Heinz* ("Speedy Heinz").[6] While Guderian was a proponent of decisive offensive action, he was also determined to avoid squandering his troops on pointless attacks or by defending captured territory of lesser importance. During the campaign in the Soviet Union in 1941, this caused several disagreements with Hitler and the general staff (ibid., p. 212, p. 265). Guderian's insistence on minimizing casualties provoked Hitler, who according to Guderian's memoirs complained in the winter of 1941 that "You have been too deeply impressed by the suffering of the soldiers. You feel too much pity for them. You should stand back more. Believe me, things appear clearer when examined at longer range" (ibid., p. 266). According to Guderian (ibid., p. 270), who had by then advanced to the rank of *Generaloberst* ("Colonel-General," the second highest rank in the army), he argued that Hitler's personal staff had no insight into the

[6]The nickname in question is a reference to the speed of advance of Guderian's panzer units.

situation at the front and suggested that officers with recent experience of fighting in winter conditions in the Soviet Union should occupy these positions in the general staff instead. This provoked both Hitler and his most senior generals, and the heated debate ended with Guderian's dismissal from active service on December 26th 1941. Guderian spent more than a year inactive until after the disastrous events at Stalingrad, when Hitler decided to recall him to active service by appointing him to the new office of *Generalinspekteur der Panzertruppen* (inspector-general of the armored forces) on February 28th 1943 (Guderian, [1952] 2009, p. 291). This gave Guderian a bird's eye view of all the armored units of the Army, Air Force and *Waffen-SS*.[7] In this capacity, he continued to develop the doctrines of the *Panzerwaffe*, as well as to oversee production and development of tanks, training of crews, etc. It is important to note, however, that he never wielded direct control over any of the heavy tank battalions.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The German independent tank battalions were operational-level assets (*Heerestruppen*), assigned to divisions, corps or *Kampfgruppen*, where they would be used for decisive blows against the enemy in operationally or strategically (and thus politically) significant situations (Wilbeck, 2004, p. 30).[8] By virtue of being *Heerestruppen*, the Tiger units, both on a battalion and company level, were more closely linked to the higher command levels than ordinary tank units of the Army. The general idea was that the Tigers should be concentrated against the enemy's "*Schwerpunkt*," usually translated as "center of gravity." The concept itself is attributed to Clausewitz ([1832] 1997, p. 351), who defined it as a centre "on which everything depends" and stated that "against this centre of gravity of the enemy, the concentrated blow of all the forces must be directed." In the same paragraph, Clausewitz elaborates so as to clarify that the *Schwerpunkt* is not the centre of the enemy's strength per se, but rather the point at which the enemy is most sensitive to attack. By employing the most powerful weapon available against the most crucial point, a decisive blow could thus be dealt.

[7] The armored assault gun units were the sole exception. The exclusion of these was a result of bureaucratic intrigue at the highest levels, where the artillery branch was reluctant to relinquish control over one of their most prized assets.

[8] *Kampfgruppe* was a broad designation used to describe ad-hoc formations created for specific missions. These groups were of differing sizes and compositions, ranging from company-sized elements to multiple battalions.

During the war, the Tiger battalions were, however, often split up in individual companies or even smaller units and then attached to larger formations to provide support. In this manner, local commanders ignored the concept of concentrating Tigers against the *Schwerpunkt*, instead using them to achieve short-term goals. As the strategic situation deteriorated in 1942 and 1943, the type of offensive operations for which the Tigers were originally designed became increasingly rare. Instead, they had to participate in defensive battles in more or less desperate attempts to hold on to captured ground, to inflict as many casualties as possible on the enemy, and to assist friendly troops that had been surrounded or cut off. Tiger units did take part in a few major offensive operations, notably the operations *Zitadelle* in mid-1943 and *Wacht am Rhein* in late 1944, but they were for the most part used to block enemy advances, in more or less desperate temporary offensives, or for more local attacks.

Since the German independent tank battalions were not fielded until late 1942, it was obvious that the campaigns in which they would fight would not be short. The unrealistic expectations of a short war in the east had been crushed when the drive toward Moscow got bogged down in late 1941. Consequently, they would need to be prepared to fight a long war, with scarce and highly specialized equipment. An Aggressive stance would thus be the equivalent of premature self-destruction. At the same time, they couldn't be Cautious, since they had to be prepared to engage the enemy, often when at a disadvantage in terms of numbers, to function in their intended role. Thus, I argue that Balanced would be the most strategically productive category in terms of attitude toward risk. When it comes to attitude toward noncombatants, I argue that, with the strategic objectives in mind, the most effective approach would be Indifferent. This would enable the Tiger units to focus on their primary strategic role, taking on hostile armor and well-defended positions, without distractions.

CHALLENGES

Tiger units faced two challenges: the sheer multitude of enemies, and the fragility of specific mechanical components of their own vehicles. Later in the war, the enemy tanks also became increasingly capable, which added yet another dimension to the challenge posed by them. For more details regarding the mechanical problems, see page 146. While in 1942–1943 the Soviets had few tanks that could match the Tigers in terms of armor and firepower, they had vastly superior numbers,

Attitude toward nononcombatants (secondary)	Attitude toward risk (primary)		
	Aggressive	Balanced	Cautious
Protective			
Indifferent		*most effective* *long campaign*	
Hostile			

Figure 19: Strategic objectives, s.Pz.Abt.

which they could use to outflank the Tigers and engage them from their more vulnerable sides or rear. In mid-1943, less than a year after the introduction of the Tigers, the Soviets introduced a new and improved version of their famous T-34 tank, featuring a vastly improved 85mm main gun, which made the Tiger far more vulnerable than it had been previously (Zetterling and Frankson, 2000, p. 59). Later in the war, enemy tanks became even more capable, which further reduced the Tiger's advantage in armor and weaponry.

On the Western front, from 1944 until the end of the war, the enemy also enjoyed air superiority, which it could use to damage or destroy Tigers by use of tactical aircraft, against which the Tiger could not effectively defend itself. While the Tiger battalions included anti-aircraft weapons, these were hardly more effective as a deterrent than the improved anti-aircraft weaponry used on U-boats during the same time period.

PERSONNEL, COMMANDERS AND EQUIPMENT

Of the fourteen Tiger battalions created during the war, three were part of the *Waffen-SS* and one was an organic part of an elite German army unit, the *Panzer-Grenadier Division Großdeutschland*. The remaining ten battalions were independent units within the German army, which

meant that they could be ordered quickly to any location along the front where they were needed. From their creation, the Tiger units were considered to be uniquely powerful: according to a 1943 German army training manual, the Tiger company was "the strongest combat weapon in the *Panzerwaffe*" (Jentz, 1997, p. 32). The huge conspicuous vehicles of the Tiger battalions further added to their prestige. This meant that the independent Tiger battalions had higher status than their counterparts in the regular tank units, which already occupied an elevated position in the prestige hierarchy of the army. One example of this is the habit of referring to a member of a Tiger unit as a *Tiger-Mann*/*Tigermann* ("Tiger man"), a practice that separated the Tiger crews from regular tank crews (*D 656/27* 1943, p. 7; Jentz, 1997, p. 59).

Even the training manual used in Tiger training, the *Tigerfibel* (*D 656/27* 1943), differed from regular training manuals in being written in a more humorous manner, featuring plenty of racy illustrations. An attractive female character, called "Elvira Tiger", often portrayed nude, is used to symbolize the tank. On the final page of the *Tigerfibel*, an illustration shows one of the fictional crew members ("*Obergefreiter* Hülsensack"), who were used to demonstrate certain technical aspects of the manual, getting engaged to Elvira (ibid., p. 93). The foundation for the personal bond between the tank and its crew was thus established during the training phase. Even though the *Tigerfibel* had an informal character, it was formally endorsed by Guderian, as was plain for everyone to see on one of the first pages (ibid., p. 8). That the unique status was part of the self-perception of the Tiger men in the independent battalions is evident in a statement by former Tiger tank commander Alfred Rubbel, who in a publication written after the war stated that the Tiger battalions had "separate-unit status, which elevated us a bit above the 'normal' tank formation through preferential selection of personnel and equipment and, accordingly, led to a reinforced self-awareness as a formation" (Rubbel, 2008, p. 24–25).

When the first three independent battalions (501, 502 and 503) were fielded, they received very little guidance with regards to tactics (Wilbeck, 2004, p. 31). According to Wilbeck (ibid., p. 32), the first battalions "were generally left to experiment and report back to the Army General Staff." Jentz (1997, p. 23) states that their only tactical guidance was a memorandum, labelled Nr.87/42, that outlined the general capabilities of the Tigers, along with a few comments on appropriate tactical applications, but without any details. However, the unique nature of the Tiger was immediately obvious, especially since

even before the first vehicles had been deployed, the crews had heard the rumors surrounding the new "super-weapon" (see for example Rubbel, 2008, p. 21). The first three battalions were originally deployed with not only Tigers but also the medium-sized but fairly weak Pz.Kpfw.III, a medium pre-war design that was already outmatched by many Allied tanks by 1942. During the experimental phase, the three battalions tested "practically every possible combination of Pz.Kpfw.IIIs and Pz.Kpfw.VIs" (Jentz, 1997, p. 23). At the end of the experimental phase, some Tiger commanders argued for the retention of the lighter tanks, whereas others preferred "pure" Tiger companies with no other tank types. At the end of the experimental phase, during which some Tiger battalions had been temporarily incorporated within existing Panzer regiments, Guderian decided that all the battalions should be pure Tiger formations without Pz.Kpfw.IIIs and that they should be independent, with the exception of the previously established organic battalion created for the *Großdeutschland* division, and the *Waffen-SS* formations (ibid., p. 23). The all-Tiger company structure was thus established, with each company being comprised of three platoons of four Tigers each, plus two Tigers in the HQ element: a total of 14 Tigers per company. This made the battalions more homogeneous, by reducing the previous two categories of tank crews to a single one, further emphasizing the role of the Tiger within the unit. A short time later, the final configuration for the independent Tiger battalion was decided by Guderian. It included three Tiger companies, a maintenance/repair company and a battalion headquarters with an additional three tanks, for a total of 45 Tigers per battalion.

As previously mentioned, despite its fearsome reputation, the Tiger was a design with serious flaws. One of these issues was a result of the inability of the designers to acquire engines and drivetrain components that could effectively cope with the sheer weight and bulk of the vehicle. The Tiger was significantly underpowered compared to its adversaries, in terms of engine horsepower per ton of vehicle weight, having only 12.3 hp per ton (10.7 hp per ton for the Tiger II) compared to the Russian T-34, which had 18 hp per ton (Rubbel, 2008, p. 22; Jentz, 1997, p. 11). In addition, the transmission and drivetrain were prone to breakdowns if the vehicle was handled with anything but the utmost care. In Tunisia, s.Pz.Abt. 501 reported problems with failing rubber seals that resulted in water contaminating the lubricating oil; carburetor breakdowns; leaking fuel lines; leaking radiators; leaking oil pans; transmissions that failed to up-shift; loose steering controls; leaking final drives; loose fan drives; loose bolts on the driving wheels; and tracks that climbed up

the sprocket (Jentz, 1997, p. 46). Alfred Rubbel, a tank commander on the Eastern front, also reported problems with the engine being overloaded, as well as many of the same issues as those listed above: leaking cylinder seals; problems with the transmission, final drive and running gear; loosening road wheels, etc. (Rubbel, 2008, p. 21–22). He added that "the final drive is as fragile as an egg" and that backing up the tank when the track tension was inadequate would result in a thrown track, i.e. rendering the entire vehicle immobile.

The Tiger was followed by an even heavier successor, known as the Tiger II or *Königstiger* (usually translated as "King Tiger", even though the animal that provided the name is known as the Bengal tiger in English). This tank had all the strengths and weaknesses of its predecessor, but to an exaggerated degree. Consequently, it was even more expensive, less mobile and more prone to breakdowns. The Tiger battalions gradually received Tiger IIs as replacements from 1944 on.

Functional Imperatives. The sheer weight of the armor and armament on the Tiger, in combination with its underpowered engine and fragile drivetrain, made it less maneuverable and mobile than its light and medium-sized counterparts. By "mobility," I am here referring to its ability to traverse distances of any serious length, not its cross-country ability. Moving at slower speed and being more prone to getting stuck (not to mention considerably more difficult to recover once stuck) meant that the crews of the heavy tanks had to be more methodical. In addition, if enemy tanks or anti-tank infantry were able to get into close range, the superior armor and armament of the Tigers would be less useful since lighter adversaries could then move around the heavy tank and engage its more vulnerable sides or rear. At close range, the gun on the heavy tank would still be lethal, but it would traverse more slowly and, most importantly, it would be on a more equal footing with the armament carried by the enemy.

The Tiger's main advantage was that it was near-invulnerable to attack from most tank guns firing normal projectiles at ranges over 800 meters while the Tiger's gun was effective up to 2,000 meters, against stationary targets even up to 2,500 meters (Jentz, 1997, p. 12). By engaging the enemy at a distance, the heavy tank would be able to pick off enemy tanks at ranges where the enemy's guns would be completely unable to penetrate its hull, making it not only lethal but also nearly invincible as long as it could prevent the enemy from closing in. Consequently, the functional imperatives of the crews and commanders of heavy tank units were to plan ahead to ensure that they

were not surprised by enemies at close range. The sheer difficulties involved in recovering vehicles that had been damaged by the terrain or stuck as a result of driving over soft ground also prompted the tank commanders to carry out careful reconnaissance of any terrain they planned to traverse. In summary, careful and well-considered actions, preceded by thorough preparations, were fundamental for the successful operation of a Tiger.

TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURE

While Guderian exercised considerable influence over the development and final configuration of the Tiger units, it is important to note that he was absent from the everyday situations that the Tiger units faced. In addition, feedback from him in the form of comments on filed reports would take weeks or months to reach the Tiger units, making them less useful as sources of guidance in the heat of the moment. This is why he is listed among the formative factors rather than as a focal point.

On May 20th 1943, after the previously described experimental phase (see page 145) involving the three oldest Tiger battalions, two manuals (*Merkblätter*) were distributed, in which the role of the Tiger battalion was clarified. One of these manuals, *Merkblatt 47a/29*, was concerned with the company level, while the other, *Merkblatt 47a/30*, dealt with the battalion level. Based on experience to date, the first manual confirmed the independent status and decisive role of the independent Tiger battalions, stating that they: "will be attached to other Panzer units in [sic!] the decisive point of the battle in order to force a decision." It also clarified the need to avoid unnecessary squandering of these precious vehicles: "[Tigers] may not be used up too early from [sic!] being employed for secondary tasks" (Jentz, 1997, p. 37). The exclusive nature of the Tigers was further underlined by the following item in the same manual, prohibiting them from being used to carry out menial tasks: "It is forbidden to assign the Tigers missions that can be accomplished by the lighter Panzers or Sturmgeschuetze [sic!, translated by source]" (ibid., p. 37).

To this was added the specific instructions for the use of the Tiger, as outlined in the *Tigerfibel*, which described the heavy tank as an extremely powerful and valuable vehicle, which also needed delicate and expert handling. The fact that the status of the independent units was inextricably linked to the Tigers also exercised influence in the sense that the preservation of the unique vehicles was necessary to maintain the unit's identity, since replacing lost vehicles was difficult

and once all vehicles had been lost, the entire unit was considered to have been destroyed. In an unusually clear example, Alfred Rubbel (2008, p. 157), a Tiger commander between March 1943 and May 1945 in s.Pz.Abt. 503, stated that:

> Although the completion of the mission was always of primary importance, the responsible leader also had to ensure that the combat strength of the unit was preserved. If the losses rose disproportionately or if the destruction of the unit was feared, the officer had to refuse to carry out the mission, possibly having to accept personal consequences in the bargain. That was the way our company commanders and battalion commanders had led and, in so doing, protected us from senseless losses.

This attitude, reflecting Guderian's sentiments as expressed in his argument with Hitler in the winter of 1941 (see page 141), is in marked contrast with Dönitz' demands for aggressive attacks against all odds and his willingness to accept crippling losses, as described in chapter 4.3. It also separated the Tiger units from regular *Panzerwaffe* units. On March 8, 1944, the 1st company of s.Pz.Abt 503 received a new company commander, *Oberleutnant* Reutermann. The troops in the Tiger company already knew Reutermann since they had operated alongside his former regiment, which used Pz.Kpfw.IV medium tanks. When Reutermann joined the company, he was told by *Unteroffiziere* Lochmann and a few other subordinates in stern terms not to act as he had in his old units, since it was not acceptable to lose as many Tigers as he had previously lost Panzer IVs (Lochmann, 2008, p. 125). It must be emphasized, however, that the Tiger crews were not cautious in the sense that the American submariners were cautious, i.e. they did not actively avoid combat or risks. On the contrary, Tiger units often spearheaded attacks and took the initiative to advance to accomplish mission objectives, pushing on even when other units were faltering, as long as the operation at hand was considered to be of sufficient importance.[9] The main difference is that the Tiger units wanted to fight on their own terms. They preferred to plan and prepare carefully

[9]For example, Operation *Zitadelle* was described by Hitler, in the order of the day read to the troops on July 5th 1943, as a decisive battle that would decide the outcome of the war. Consequently, s.Pz.Abt. 505 kept attacking heavily defended enemy positions until it only had three operational Tigers left, out of an initial total of 42 (Schneider, 2005, p. 224).

for each combat operation, and to carry out reconnaissance in order to avoid getting stuck in difficult terrain or at impassable bridges.

Interestingly enough, the veterans seem to have retained their enthusiasm and affection for the Tigers even long after the end of the war. Nearly sixty years after the war, Otto Carius, former commander of the 2nd company, s.Pz.Abt 502, wrote that "I wouldn't have wanted to go into battle with any other tank but the Tiger, because it was superior in every aspect to all other tanks fielded by the German military" (quoted in Wilbeck, 2004, p. 2).

Focal Points. The Tiger battalions owed their status, independence and even military identity to the tanks they used. The battalions were set up to provide an organizational framework for the Tigers, not the other way around. Without the Tigers, the "Tiger-men" would have been regular tank crews, anonymous among the rest of the *Panzerwaffe*. It is thus hardly surprising that the preservation of these vehicles was a crucial focal point. It was not, however, an unconditional principle. The whole raison d'être for the Tiger battalions was to achieve decisions in particularly important battles. They saved their strength for these occasions. When such a battle was at hand, they were willing to go to considerable lengths to achieve results.

I argue that the tactical-level subculture of the independent battalions developed gradually during the experimental phase, and was later reinforced and homogenized by the previously mentioned manuals of May 1943. The *Tigerfibel*, which appeared in August 1943, further added to this subculture, by reinforcing some of its core values regarding the uniqueness of the vehicles, and the nature of the Tiger as exceptionally powerful, but also requiring delicate expert handling. From there on, it helped establish the bond between man and machine as early as the training phase. Even though the crews were perfectly aware of the shortcomings of the Tiger, most notably its underpowered engine and unreliable drivetrain, they often disregarded these factors when they assessed the overall capabilities of the Tigers.

I also argue that the memory of the failed first deployment of Tigers on the Eastern Front in November 1942, during the experimental phase, served as focal point for subsequent Tiger units. Guderian described the operation as follows: "[Hitler] was consumed by his desire to try his new weapon. He therefore ordered that the Tigers be committed in a quite secondary operation, in a limited attack carried out in terrain that was utterly unsuitable; for in the swampy forests near Leningrad heavy tanks could only move in single file along the forest tracks,

Attitude toward nononcombatants (secondary)	Attitude toward risk (primary): Aggressive	Balanced	Cautious
Protective			
Indifferent		*most effective* *long campaign* **s.Pz.Abt.**	
Hostile			

Figure 20: Convergence/divergence, s.Pz.Abt.

which, of course, was exactly where the enemy anti-tank guns were posted, waiting for them. The results were not only heavy, unnecessary casualties, but also the loss of secrecy and of the element of surprise for future operations. Disappointment was all the greater since the attack became bogged down in unsuitable terrain" (Guderian, [1952] 2009, p. 280). Inept leadership above the battalion level along with unsuitable terrain were the most significant factors contributing to the failure, and from that point on the battalion and company commanders were most likely even more skeptical of ignorant superiors and wary of the risks of operating under unfavourable conditions.

Consequently, we can conclude that the tactical-level subculture of the independent battalions converged perfectly with the demands of the strategic objectives (see Table 20). Their strict adherence to the Tiger doctrine, which was developed to maximize their impact while avoiding unnecessary risks or squandering of vehicles on secondary objectives, places them in the Balanced category. Their attitude toward noncombatants is difficult to ascertain, but there is no indication in the data that they were particularly hostile toward civilians or prisoners of war, nor is there any evidence of tendencies to be protective. Thus, I have placed them within the Indifferent category.

IMPACT OF TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURE

The independent Tiger battalions faced limitations in their formal autonomy imposed by operational-level commanders, who often had a limited understanding of how Tiger battalions were supposed to be deployed. While they had no restrictive rules of engagement, the details regarding their deployment were frequently determined by commanders above the battalion level, against the protests of the battalion commanders. This means that they were subject to operational-level micromanagement. The nature of this arrangement, even if each relationship with an operational-level commander was limited in time and scope, places the Tiger battalions in the Medium category of formal autonomy (see figure 21). However, the resistance to such leadership on the part of the battalions was often successful to such an extent (see below) that I argue that the Tiger battalions should be considered to have had a High degree of autonomy in practice.

Degree of actual autonomy	Degree of formal autonomy: High	Degree of formal autonomy: Medium	Degree of formal autonomy: Low
High		**s.Pz.Abt.** entire period	
Medium			
Low			

Figure 21: Degrees of autonomy, s.Pz.Abt.

I argue that the tactical-level subculture of the independent battalions had a three-fold strategic impact: first, by reducing losses it also reduced the expenditure of scarce strategic materials, which were required in unusually large quantities to construct a Tiger, as well as the extraordinary number of skilled labor hours necessary for its production. Second, the preservation of the Tiger units by the actions of the crews of the independent battalions enabled them to save their strength for combat operations in which they could have a strategic or operational

impact. Third, the combination of the first two factors had a synergy effect, which perpetuated the Tiger myth. The independent battalions were highly visible to large numbers of troops since they frequently moved around to different areas of the front. If they had taken losses more frequently during secondary operations, many different friendly units would have noticed. This in turn could arguably have shaken the faith in the Tigers that infantrymen in particular seem to have had. Instead, the Tiger units preserved their strength until high-stakes operations appeared, during which they fought ferociously in battles that had a direct impact on large numbers of friendly troops. Losses incurred during these operations most likely seemed more warranted to the friendly troops. In consequence, the Tiger myth was perpetuated, which enabled all Tiger-equipped units to bolster the morale of friendly troops by adding a sense of security, as well as to some extent deter enemy attacks where they were posted.

Avoidance of losses. We will start with the first of the strategic impact factors listed above, the avoidance of unnecessary losses. In Figure 22, the losses as a result of unit decisions for each of the independent Tiger battalions on the Eastern front are listed as monthly totals. In my definition of "losses as a result of unit decisions" I've included combat losses, vehicles lost as a result of immobilization following combat damage or mechanical failure (usually destroyed by the crew members if the tank was at risk of falling into enemy hands), and vehicles lost as a result of getting bogged down in soft terrain. I've excluded losses as a result of air attacks, since the unit could arguably not do much to avoid them; losses as a result of extensive maintenance/repair requirements (i.e., when the tank had to be sent back to Germany for maintenance or specialized repairs, and was thus listed as a loss) and losses linked to the destruction or capture of workshops and maintenance depots.

The rationale behind the latter decision is that the loss of maintenance facilities was usually linked to sudden large-scale fluctuations of the front, and thus not attributable to the individual Tiger unit. The reason I excluded tanks shipped to Germany for repairs/maintenance is because those vehicles had already been successfully moved to the workshops of the battalions. The fact that they could not be repaired in situ is a result of logistical arrangements and organizational limitations rather than tactical decisions. Losses listed attributed to unknown causes have also been excluded. In addition, I have chosen to end the graph at December 31st 1944, since the situation in 1945 quickly became fairly chaotic, which means that the sources from early 1945 until

the end of the war are less complete and less reliable. In addition, this had a detrimental effect on the logistics, cohesion and effectiveness of other friendly units, etc., all of which had a negative external effect on the Tiger battalions. I chose to include only data for the Eastern front, to facilitate comparison, since not all units operated in all theatres, which had an effect on the data. For example, losses attributable to aircraft were disproportionally high on the Western front.

The reason for using monthly totals is that the data are not sufficiently accurate to track losses on a daily basis, even if the tables provided by Schneider (2004) may give that impression. A closer inspection of these tables while cross-referencing with the war diaries shows that, in several cases, weekly losses are listed on a single date in the table. Consequently, I summed up the losses for each month in the graph instead.

The resulting graph, I argue, provides an indication of the losses that are most relevant for my theoretical analysis, i.e. those that can be traced back to decisions within the unit and as such would be linked to the tactical-level subculture. The graph for the independent Tiger battalions (see Figure 22) shows that the vast majority of losses took place during the same months as crucial operational-level events, outlined on the graph.[10] While the graph shows only temporal correlation, rather than both temporal and spatial, I argue that with data on this scale, it is inherently problematic to attempt to establish exactly which casualties should be linked to operational-level events. First of all, the data on the location of specific losses is frequently difficult to link decisively to operational-level events, especially events that are very large in scale, such as Operation *Bagration*. Secondly, an attack in a different location from that of the operational-level event could still have an operational-level or strategic impact, by forcing the enemy to divert resources to a secondary area. Consequently, I argue that the temporal correlation, while inherently inaccurate, is the closest we can come to connecting losses to operational-level events.

Compare this with the graph outlining the losses for three Tiger-equipped units that were not independent battalions, in Figure 23. These are: the previously mentioned (see page 160) Tiger component in the *Panzer-Grenadier Division Großdeutschland*; the 13th company of SS Panzer Regiment 1, later absorbed into *schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung* (s. SS-Pz.Abt.) 101/501; the 8th company of SS Panzer Regiment 2, later

[10] The definition of an "operational-level event" used here is: an operation, initiated by either friendly or hostile forces, with the objective of achieving results significant on a operational or strategic level, as opposed to purely tactical operations.

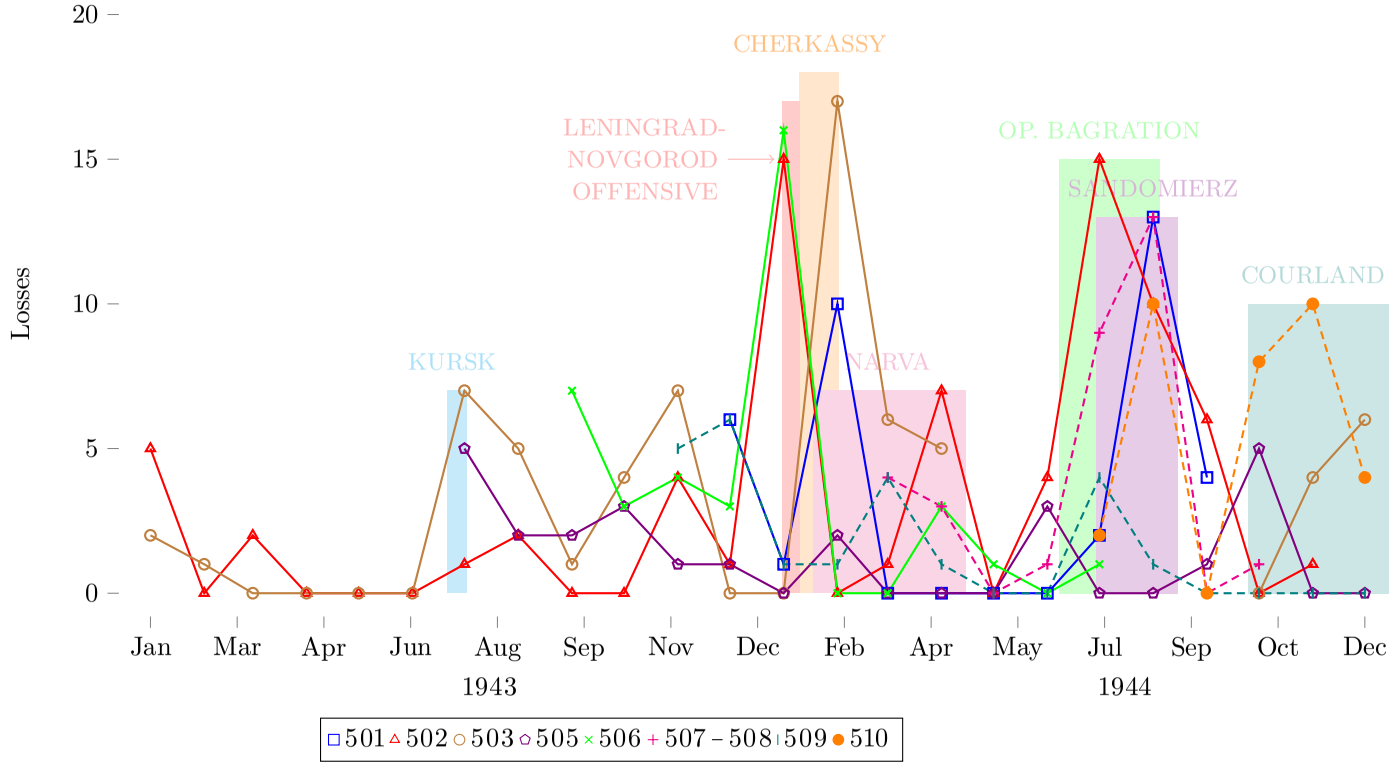

Figure 22: Monthly Tiger losses per battalion, attributable to battalion actions.[a] Data source: Schneider (2004)

[a]The losses listed in the graph include combat losses and vehicles blown up after being immobilized or bogged down, but not maintenance write-offs or vehicles lost in workshops.

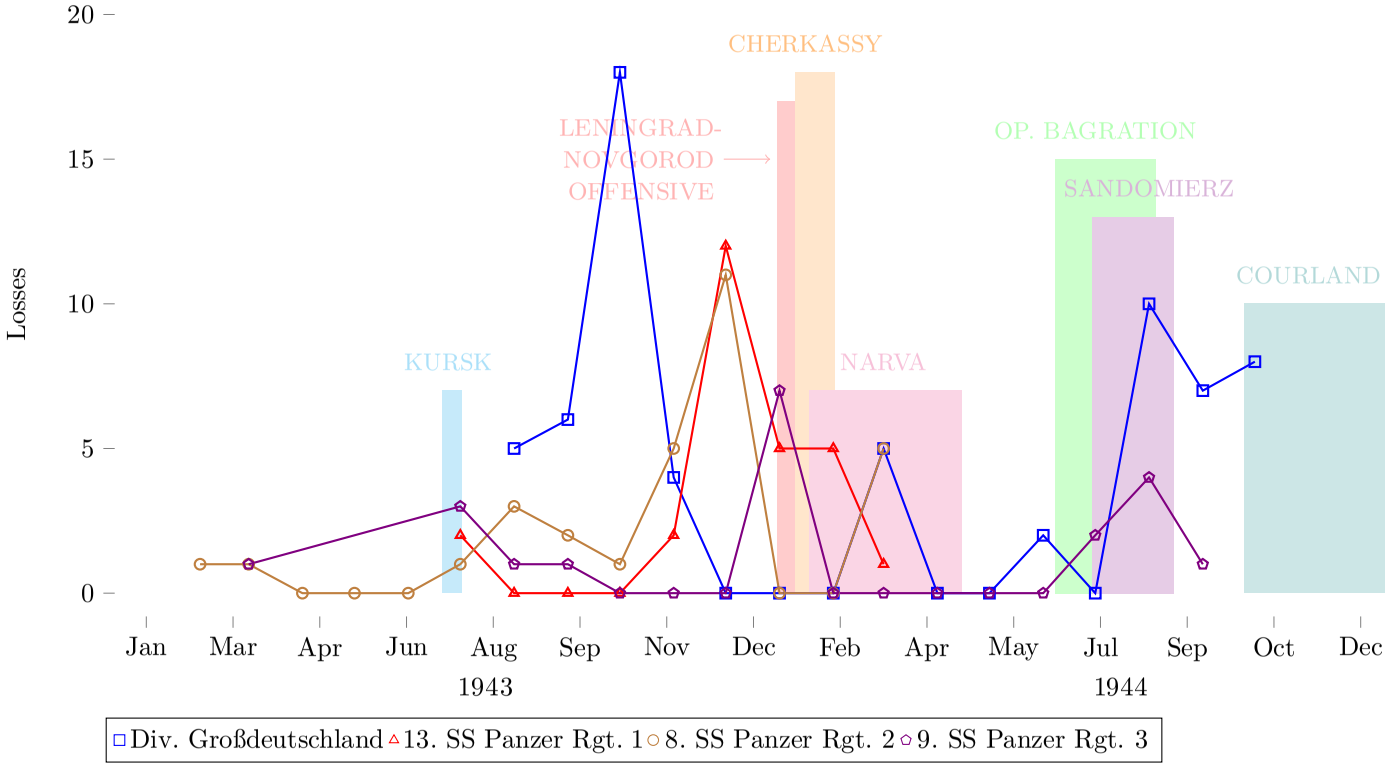

Figure 23: Monthly Tiger losses per Tiger-equipped unit other than the independent battalions, attributable to unit actions.[a] Data source: Schneider (2004)

[a]The losses listed in the graph include combat losses and vehicles blown up after being immobilized or bogged down, but not maintenance write-offs or vehicles lost in workshops.

absorbed into s. SS-Pz.Abt. 102/502 and finally the 9th company of SS Panzer Regiment 3 (note: this was the organic Tiger company of the *Totenkopf* division of the *Waffen-SS*, not s. SS-Pz.Abt. 3, which wasn't formed until January 1945). This graph shows that the non-independent units took heavy losses during phases that were not associated with any of the previously listed operational-level events. This tells us two things: first, Tigers could be lost during ordinary tactical operations (i.e., the concentration of particular assets associated with an operational-level event was not required to inflict heavy casualties on a Tiger-equipped unit). Secondly, it tells us that the independent battalions were able to avoid taking losses during the same time periods. The latter observation may be linked to the special status of the independent battalions, which hypothetically could have meant that they were withheld until operational-level events appeared. However, the war diaries and biographies clearly show that on several occasions, the units to which the independent battalions were attached tried to commit the Tigers to less significant tactical operations under circumstances that would have been unfavorable to the Tigers and thus could easily have resulted in serious losses. To make matters worse, the overall commanders to which the Tiger units were attached in many cases did not possess basic knowledge of how Tiger units should be employed, and sometimes had not even mastered the basic principles of tank tactics (Jentz, 1997, p. 124). For example, in November 1944 the commander of s.Pz.Abt. 503 stated that "[...] most of the higher commands that were encountered did not perceive the technical and tactical importance of a Tiger-Abteilung"(ibid., p. 155).

When such situations arose, the Tiger battalion or company commanders occasionally refused or obstructed orders. For example, when s.Pz.Abt. 502 was operating on the Eastern front in February 1943, during fighting against Soviet troops near Rostov, members of the battalion scouted the area the day before an intended operation. When they found the terrain in their allocated sector unsuitable, they chose not to employ their Tigers there. The combat report covering those days simply states that "Employment of the Pz.Kpfw.VI was therefore declined" (ibid., p. 64). In a similar incident on the 12th of August 1943, the commander of the same battalion refused to carry out a "nonsensical mission". However, this was met with less understanding from his superiors and as a result he was relieved of his command the following day (Schneider, 2004, p. 77).

A company commander in s.Pz.Abt. 502, Otto Carius, had more luck when in July 1944 he first was ordered to advance across roads and

bridges that had not been reconnoitred by a *Tigermann*. Carius refused, and when he was informed that assault gun crews had already inspected the roads and bridges, he replied that he didn't trust them. The general issuing the order became furious and ordered Carius to comply and not behave like a "prima donna"(Carius, 2012, p. 169). Instead of obeying, Carius decided together with the commander of the supporting infantry to postpone the whole operation by two hours. When the general found out, he quietly accepted this. In another incident the same year, Carius was ordered by another general to attack a bend in the front, for no other reason than to make the front look more tidy on a map. The commander of the infantry regiment responsible for supporting this attack, a colonel (*Oberst*), was equally appalled by the proposition, but did not dare oppose the general. Carius, who was a mere *Oberleutnant* (four ranks below the colonel), then volunteered to discuss the matter with the general, after which the general agreed to cancel the attack (ibid., p. 172). This shows that the confidence required to repeatedly obstruct orders by generals was not a result of rank, nor was it universal in the German army.

When the Tiger commanders were unable to obstruct, they protested vigorously, including in official reports. s.Pz.Abt. 503 stated in a report dated October 10th 1943 that "Proposals and advice of the Tiger unit commander are frequently not listened to and left unconsidered" (Jentz, 1997, p. 131). The company commander of the 1st company, s.Pz.Abt. 503, an *Oberleutnant* named Olmer, filed similar complaints after an operation with another *Kampfgruppe* in a report dated November 15th 1944: "Through this totally inappropriate employment, four Tigers broke down due to track, drive-sprocket, and transmission damage. Working together with the division was extremely unenjoyable. Absolutely no attention was paid to the tactical principles for employing Tigers"(ibid., p. 159). In such cases, the Tiger crews at least tried to keep a low profile and then disengage at the first possible opportunity.

For example, on the 28th of August 1943, s.Pz.Abt. 503 was ordered to hold an excessively long section of the front, no less than 18 kilometers. The day after, the battalion war diary states that "the exposed position cannot be maintained," indicating a withdrawal (Schneider, 2004, p. 126). In another incident that occurred on December 26th 1943, the commander of s.Pz.Abt. 509 was ordered to advance through unsuitable terrain, in spite of his protests. A few hours into the mission, the battalion commander radioed the *Kampfgruppe* commander who had ordered the advance, to protest once again after two Tigers had become stuck and hit by enemy fire. The *Kampfgruppe* commander again

ordered the battalion to advance. A short while later, the battalion commander had had enough and refused to advance any further, of which he notified the *Kampfgruppe* commander (Jentz, 1997, p. 140). Shortly thereafter, s.Pz.Abt. 509 fought its way back, minus the Tigers lost, and was attached to a different unit. There is no indication in the war diary of any consequences for the battalion commander for his refusal.

In their assessment of orders, the Tiger units frequently referred to the prescribed doctrine for Tiger employment, or Guderian. For example, one of the commanders of s.Pz.Abt. 503 referred to the doctrine as "the wise maxims of Guderian" (Kageneck, 2008, p. 112). In the war diaries, orders that are not in line with the doctrine are frequently described as "ridiculous", "useless", "incompetent" and in several other ways subject to strongly normative assessment (see for example Schneider, 2004, p. 126-128). This indicates how the battalion members felt about commanders who were unable to grasp the special nature of the Tiger and the expertise required to deploy it properly, and how strongly the crews felt about taking losses during operations of a secondary nature. It also shows that the doctrine, as outlined by Guderian in the manuals, provided the benchmark against which orders were measured.

Another risk faced by the Tiger units, which could lead to unnecessary losses, was the tendency of superior commanders to attempt to "grab" parts of a battalion when it was in transit and elements were separated from the battalion command. In November of 1943, s.Pz.Abt. 509 was rapidly scattered when it was transported on several different transport trains while its battalion commander was held up far behind the front. Elements of the battalion were ordered into action by several different local commanders, at the places where they had been unloaded from the trains. In addition, seven Tigers had been attached to the *Waffen-SS* division *Das Reich*. When the battalion commander arrived, he met with a general at the corps headquarters and managed to get all the detachment orders rescinded immediately, and could thus, with some difficulty, reassemble his unit (Jentz, 1997, p. 139). This shows that the Tigers were not only an asset that many local commanders sought to control and use in ways completely different from those prescribed by the official doctrine, but also that efforts were required by the leaders of the battalions to keep the units intact.

Combat Actions. The second aspect of the strategic impact of the Tiger units, their combat record, can be analyzed from two different

perspectives. First, we can look at the number of enemy tanks destroyed by the Tigers. This was, as stated by doctrine, the primary task of the Tigers in any operation. At first glance, the independent battalions seem to have been more successful in this regard than their organic counterparts, judging from the ratio between "kills" and Tiger losses.[11] It is important to note that these figures must be treated with considerable caution. They are of limited value for assessing the actual number of enemy vehicles destroyed, since it was difficult for any tank crew to assess accurately whether they had scored a kill or not. An enemy tank might have been disabled and abandoned, but later repaired and returned to service. In addition, several vehicles may have hit the same enemy tank, each one of them assuming that it was responsible for the kill. The safest assumption is to treat all kill counts as inflated. They can, however, provide an indication of the number of kills *claimed* by each unit. Since kill claims could be confirmed or discredited by multiple witnesses, and each tank had several crew members who worked together, we can assume that outright exaggerations and lying would be more difficult than for, for example, pilots, who often engaged their enemies one-on-one.[12] Consequently, we proceed on the assumption that most of the kill claims were made in good faith, and therefore at least are useful as a basis for comparing different units.

If we look at the ratio of kill claims to combat losses (see Figure 24, we can see that five of the ten Tiger battalions achieved remarkable ratios. For comparison, the three non-independent Tiger-equipped units are listed to the far right: the organic Tiger battalion of the Panzer-Grenadier division *Großdeutschland*, the 101. *schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung* (later renamed the 501. s. SS-Pz.Abt.) and the 102. s. SS-Pz.Abt. (later renamed the 502. s. SS-Pz.Abt.). In the original data table, the 103./503. s. SS-Pz.Abt. was included as well, but its claim of a kill ratio of 50 (!) both lacks credibility and validity since it would have been achieved over the course of no more than a few months in 1945, by a unit that was never fully equipped. Consequently, I concur with Wilbeck (2004, p. 186) , who considers that claim to be implausible. In either case, the kills it claims, well as its losses, were accumulated within a much shorter time frame than the other battalions, which

[11] The concept of a "kill" does not actually measure killed enemies, but rather the number of destroyed enemy tanks. The destruction of a tank does not per definition imply the death of its crew.

[12] One example of this verification process is mentioned in a report dated January 7th 1943. It states that a liaison officer has been sent to clarify the kill claims made by s.Pz.Abt. 503, since radio communications with the battalion had been disrupted (Jentz, 1997, p. 64).

makes it problematic to compare. Also note that figure 24 is based on a different, more comprehensive, dataset than figures 22 and 23: it covers the entire war and all fronts. The reason for this is that the previously used dataset does not contain kill statistics. Consequently, I've chosen to use the data for kills and losses provided by Wilbeck (ibid., p. 186).

Note that of the least successful of the independent battalions, some were either deployed to Italy, a highly unfavourable theater for Tigers (504,508) and/or established considerably later in the war than the older battalions (508). The most successful units, with the exception of 504, are also the oldest ones. 507 also achieved a remarkable ratio, which is made even more impressive by the fact that it wasn't deployed in a combat role until the end of March 1944. The *Großdeutschland* and *Waffen-SS* units, on the other hand, were established around the same time as the five most successful independent battalions, and served on the same fronts.

From the second perspective, we can see that the Tigers were not only successful in their role as tank destroyers, they also played an important role during several very significant operations. For example, during the failed Operation *Zitadelle*, two of the independent battalions participated: the 503rd and the 505th. The former was attached to the III Panzer Corps and, against the advice of Guderian and the objections of the battalion commander, was split up in individual companies, which were then attached to each of the corps' Panzer divisions (ibid., p. 67). The 505th, on the other hand, was attached in its entirety to the 6th infantry division of the XLVII Panzer corps, in accordance with the doctrine (ibid., p. 66).[13] The 503rd did amass an impressive number of kills, but was unable to achieve a breakthrough. The 505th, on the other hand, was, according to its own reports, able to penetrate the defenses of the Soviets. According to the war diary, the battalion was exasperated to find that the supporting 2nd Panzer Division was unavailable immediately after this breakthrough, since it could have resulted in the collapse of the "entire Soviet front"(Schneider, 2004, p. 224).[14] The reason that the 2nd Panzer Division was unable to exploit the gains by the 505th battalion was simply that the overall commander,

[13]According to Wilbeck (2004, p. 69), Tiger battalions were not supposed to be attached to infantry divisions, according to official recommendations. However, this is not mentioned in the manuals of May 1943, nor does it seem to have had an adverse effect in this case.

[14]Wilbeck (ibid., p. 233) argues that the battalion commander probably meant "Soviet echelon" rather than the entire Soviet Central Front, since the latter would have been an unrealistically optimistic claim.

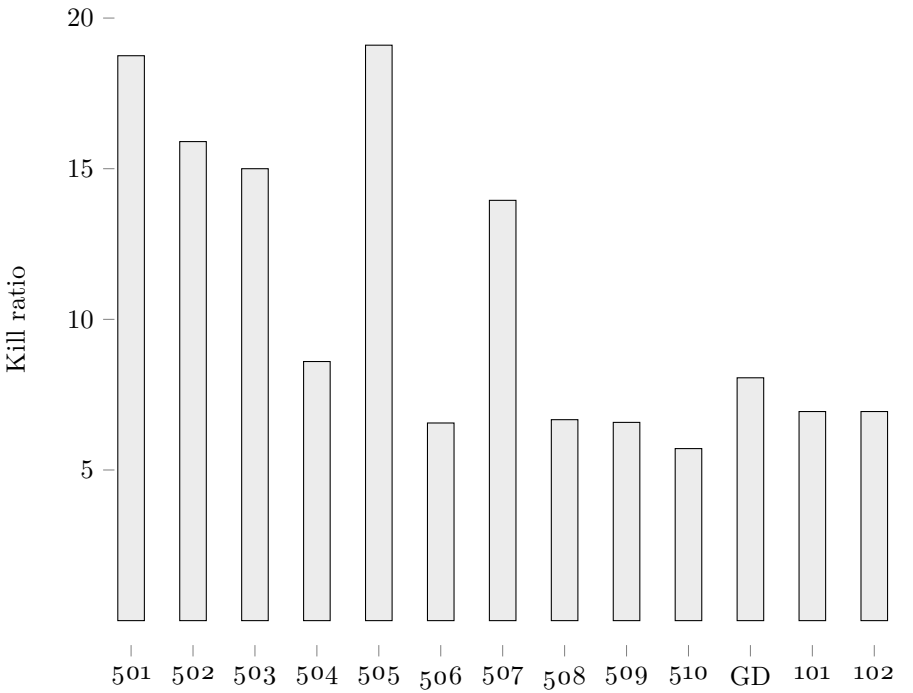

Figure 24: Kill ratios measured in enemy tank kills per Tiger loss, entire war (includes only vehicles lost in action, not total losses). 501. . . 510: independent battalions, per unit number. GD: organic Tiger unit of division *Großdeutchland*. 101,102: s. SS-Pz.Abt. 101 and 102. Data source: Wilbeck (2004, p. 186)

Generaloberst Walther Model, had not expected it to be able to advance so far at such speed (Wilbeck, 2004, p. 71). This shows clearly the potential inherent in the independent battalions, when deployed in accordance with the doctrine. While the operation as a whole was a failure, the strategic performance of the 505th battalion exceeded even the high expectations placed on it at the time.

Another notable operation took place in 1944, at the Korsun-Cherkassy pocket. Within the pocket, some 56,000 German troops were cut off and in poor shape (ibid., p. 86). As the Soviets prepared to launch a final assault on the trapped German soldiers, the efforts to open up an escape route became increasingly desperate. At the time, s.Pz.Abt. 503 was assigned to the ad-hoc unit Heavy Panzer Regiment Bäke, named after its commander, *Oberstleutnant* Franz Bäke. Along with the twenty-five Panther tanks of the 2nd battalion of Panzer Regiment 23 and several support units, s.Pz.Abt. 503 played a key role during the efforts to relieve the pocket.

On the 16th of February 1944, the German units in the pocket were ordered to break out. When the Soviet forces noticed the breakout attempt, they launched their attack to prevent as many Germans as possible from escaping. On the following day, the escaping units were suffering heavy losses. Throughout the fighting, s.Pz.Abt. 503 was given difficult and dangerous tasks. At the end of the operation, the battalion was ordered to seize and hold an area around a terrain feature known as Hill 239. Since the encircled troops were using the surrounding terrain as an escape route, it was vital that the hill be taken and held while the trapped troops fled past it. By that time, the battalion only had seven combat-ready Tigers left. Elements of s.Pz.Abt. 503 spearheaded the attack and held the passage open during two chaotic but crucial days while the mass of trapped Germans passed through (Rubbel, 2008, p. 180-182). Bäke's unit also had a number of Panthers, but the unique characteristics of the Tigers were utilized in a manner that the Panthers could not mimic. For example, they engaged and destroyed anti-tank gun positions and launched frontal attacks against enemy tanks, which enabled the Panthers to outflank the enemy. According to Wilbeck, the battalion deserves much of the credit for enabling 30,000 of the 56,000 trapped Germans to escape before the Soviets could launch their final attack (Wilbeck, 2004, p. 86). While the battle for the pocket was ultimately a German defeat, the complete loss of all the surrounded units would have been a far more devastating operational-level blow, with strategic and political consequences. The blow to morale inevitably following such huge losses

in such a short time frame would likely have had an impact on the German public as well as its armed forces. Hitler and the general staff were very enthusiastic over the performance of Heavy Tank Regiment Bäke, and awarded Franz Bäke the Diamonds to the Oak Leaves of the Knight's Cross (Rubbel, 2008, p. 165).

Morale boosters. The third strategic impact of the Tigers was their ability to function as morale boosters and deterrents. For example, Major Lüder, commander of s.Pz.Abt. 501, wrote in a combat report from Tunisia, dated December 16th 1942, that "The morale effect of Tigers was especially noticeable on this day" (Jentz, 1997, p. 43). In another report from Tunisia, dated March 18th 1943, the interplay between the impact on morale and the actual material characteristics are mentioned explicitly: "Concentrated employment of the Tiger unit as the **Schwerpunkt** brings success because of its actual *and moral effect* as well as its reduced susceptibility to damage due to its thick armor"[original emphasis, my italics] (ibid., p. 59). Note that Lüder also refers to the concept of employing the Tigers as the *Schwerpunkt*, which is in exact accordance with the prescribed doctrine.

The morale effect had an impact not only on friendly troops, but also the enemy, as we can see in the following quote:

> On the employment of "Tigers" in individual groups [...] succeeded for the most part in keeping the main battle line of the corps intact. Wherever "Tigers" were employed, the Russians called off their attacks or only repeated them with infantry in suitable terrain (woods and the area around lakes).
> – Major Hans-Joachim Schwaner, commander, s.Pz.Abt. 502, cited in (Wilbeck, 2004, p. 100)

Sometimes, the role of morale boosters became a burden for the Tiger crews, since friendly units were so focused on them and their actions. In a report covering the 2nd to 22th of February 1943, s.Pz.Abt. 503 states that one of the companies of the battalion repeatedly had to "pull our own infantry forward" by advancing and that the infantry "followed only haltingly and in thick bunches, closely following behind the Panzers instead of spreading out and clearing the enemy out of the houses" (Jentz, 1997, p. 65). The same type of behavior on the part of the infantry was reported by s.Pz.Abt. 506 in a report signed on September 30th 1943 by Major Withing, the battalion commander (ibid., p. 135). In the same report, the major complains that while the

division to which he had been attached understood the basics of how to employ the Tigers, its commanders asked too much of the Tiger unit. He concluded that the division commanders are too prone to believe in the propaganda and consider the Tiger to be an invulnerable "battering ram", a misunderstanding that had contributed to unnecessary losses (ibid., p. 135). Consequently, the morale effect of the Tigers could have a detrimental effect on the Tiger units themselves.

Nevertheless, the Tiger crews adapted to this role, and often shouldered the role as morale boosters. The previously mentioned company commander Otto Carius (2012, p. 162) mentions in his autobiography how important it was for a Tiger commander to maintain good relations with the infantry. He also states that he himself did on numerous occasions manage to get stalled attacks to move again by leaving the safety of the Tiger to inspire the infantrymen to move forward. There are plenty of other examples of Tiger commanders rallying faltering infantry units (see for example Jentz, 1997, p. 67, p. 140).

In other cases, local commanders tried to exploit the morale effect, but in a way that was abhorrent to the Tiger commanders, which too could prompt obstruction. In an example from August of 1943, s.Pz.Abt. 503 was ordered to temporarily provide three Tigers to an infantry division. Their mission was simply to drive along a 10–12 kilometer stretch of the front line, to bolster the morale of the division's infantry. Instead of detaching three Tigers, the battalion sent the whole 2nd company, with six Tigers, since (in accordance with the doctrine) it refused to employ Tigers in such small numbers needlessly. Once there, the company commander objected to the order and instead proposed to launch attacks in critical locations, another example of behavior in accordance with the prescribed doctrine. The division accepted this proposal (ibid., p. 132).

SUMMARY

I have argued above that the unique tactical-level subculture of the independent Tiger battalions had three strategic effects. First, it reduced losses through a tendency to avoid unnecessary risks, which reduced the expenditure of strategic materials and enabled the Tiger units to preserve their units strength. Second, it prompted the Tiger crews to disregard their usual view on risks while participating in an operation of strategic or operational-level significance, to good effect. As a result of the first strategic effect, the units had sufficient strength to maximize their impact in thses situations. Third, by avoiding

unnecessary losses and fighting with determination during high-stakes operations, the myth of the invincible Tiger was upheld, which enabled Tiger units to act as morale boosters and deterrents. This not only had an impact on the troops at the front, it also provided a valuable propaganda tool for the German regime.

I argue that these three effects were not the result of the material characteristics of the Tiger, by comparing the independent battalions with three other non-independent units. The non-independent units did not to the same extent adhere to doctrine, nor did they manage to avoid losses during operations of a secondary nature. As a result, they did not achieve the same kind of kill ratios as the most successful half of the independent battalions, despite acting under similar conditions. The difference between the tactical-level subculture of the independent Tiger units and that of a non-independent unit, in this case the organic Tiger component of the *Großdeutchland* division, becomes clearer when we look at a reply from Guderian to an experience report filed by the organic Tiger company of that division's Panzer-Regiment. Guderian states that:

> The experience report states that it is self-evident that the Tiger-Kompanie is constantly employed as the point unit. Fundamentally, this statement cannot be endorsed. (Jentz, 1997, p. 79).

In another response to another report, Guderian again found reason to criticize the division, this time in far harsher words:

> The proposal to issue three or four Tigers to every Panzer-Abteilung is decisively rejected. The Tiger is a Schwerpunktwaffe within the Panzertruppe. Dispersing them into the two Panzer-Abteilung is an idiotic squandering of this valuable equipment (ibid., p. 74).

While references to Guderian and the doctrine outlined in the manuals of May 1943 were occasionally made interchangeably, it is important to note that the manuals were the most immediate source of guidance. In his assessments and comments on reports, Guderian merely reiterated the contents of these manuals. It is important to make the distinction in order to separate Guderian's personal role from persons who had a more direct influence over tactical-level subcultures, for example the influence Dönitz had over the *Ubootwaffe*. Dönitz was in command of the units he influenced, and in this capacity he continued to provide guidance

even after the tactical-level subculture had developed. Guderian, who never exercised command over a Tiger unit, provided guidance in the shape of the doctrine manuals, rather than directly.

The tremendous costs of producing Tigers and their excessive consumption of fuel and other scarce assets casts doubts over whether or not their combat value was proportional in relation to the cost of producing and maintaining these units. However, as political and strategic instruments they were unique. The added value of this impact arguably did justify the costs. Like the U-boats, they inspired fascination among the public and struck fear into the enemy. The lasting interest in these vehicles which survives to this day in popular culture, for example the use of Tigers in the movies *Saving Private Ryan* and *Fury*, is, however, quite disproportionate in relation to their actual impact on the war. Especially compared to the ubiquitous but humble Pz.Kpfw.IIIs and Pz.Kpfw.IVs that provided the actual backbone of the *Panzerwaffe*. As such, it is a powerful testament to the efforts of the Tiger crews, who in the end were the ones who perpetuated the Tiger myth.

5.5

Summary of Case Pair

In terms of autonomy, the Israelis had fewer formal restraints than the Germans. However, since the Germans enjoyed a High degree of autonomy in practice, the real difference was negligible. Rather than illustrating a difference between the cases, it shows how difficult it can be to restrict the autonomy of an independent unit even in traditional warfare.

Israel's Armored Corps fought ferociously and seemingly without regard to losses and hardships during the Yom Kippur War. The crews and officers were essential in the turning of what could have become an utter disaster into a victory. By contrast, the German independent Tiger battalions, elite formations of the German army during WWII, took a very different approach to combat. They emphasized caution, reconnaissance and careful planning as a precondition to any successful combat actions. This highlights an interesting difference between the two organizations. In one case, the outcome would inevitably be decided within days, which made the long-term impact of very high losses less important than the immediate objectives at hand. In the other case, the units had to maintain their scarce and valuable assets in a lengthy war of attrition.

The Israeli Armored Corps was immensely successful from a strategic point of view, earning itself the appreciation of its political and strategic superiors as well as worldwide recognition for its outstanding tactical performance. Not only did it achieve its objectives, it also compensated for the failure of Israeli military intelligence to predict the attack in time for mobilization before the outbreak of hostilities. The horrendous losses suffered by the Armored Corps were felt after the war, when the organization suffered from a serious shortage of tank commanders and junior officers, and officers from other branches of the army had to transfer to the Armored Corps to undergo transition training to fill the gaps (see for example Netanyahu, 2001, p. 231ff.). If the war in the north hadn't been largely decided during those four initial days, such losses would eventually have destroyed the entire Armored Corps. However, the instincts of the troops of the 7th and 188th brigades were right: if the Armored Corps hadn't been prepared to accept such casualties, there would perhaps have been no army left to worry about replacements after the war.

The German Tiger battalions also earned worldwide fame, but for more obscure reasons. They never had any decisive strategic impact, although they too achieved impressive tactical results. On an operational level, the Tigers contributed to some local successes, such as the evacuation of the Cherkassy/Korsun pocket in 1944, and the defense of the Baltics. The most important contribution of the tactical-level subculture of the Tiger battalions was that it enabled the units to preserve their strength by obstructing superiors who tried to commit them to combat in situations that weren't sufficiently important from an operational and strategic point of view to warrant the deployment of such valuable assets as the Tigers, or who failed to take into account the degree to which successful Tiger operations depended on suitable terrain, preparation and planning. Another significant contribution of the tactical-level subculture of the Tigers was the tendency among the crews and commanders to shoulder a responsibility for the overall tactical and operational situation by providing "moral support" for infantry units by their mere presence, and taking this role into account in their operations. The ability of the Tigers to inspire friendly troops and discourage enemies did not stand in proportion to the actual capabilities of the vehicle, but acted as an effective force multiplier. This was well understood by the men of the Tiger units, which provided them with yet another incentive to preserve their vehicles. In doing so, they could act as a "force in being" in addition to their regular combat functions.[15]

From a theoretical point of view, one of the most interesting aspects of these two case studies is the differences in formative factors, which illustrates the diversity of influences that can shape a tactical-level subculture. For example, the tactical-level subculture of the Tiger units revolved around an almost metaphysical view of their material assets rather than personal leadership or ideas. The Centurion tanks of the 7th and 188th brigades, on the other hand, were appreciated vehicles, but in no way affiliated with the identity of the crews in the same way as the Tiger was. In both cases, it is also interesting to see that while charismatic leaders had some influence, in the Israeli case Yisrael Tal and in the German case Heinz Guderian, they had a very limited or no personal impact at all on the units once they went into action. Instead,

[15] "Force in being" is here used as a contextualized analogy to the concept of a "fleet in being." While the latter is a subject of some controversy (see for example Hattendorf, 2014), the interpretation on which the reference is based is that of a passive force that acts as a deterrent by virtue of its sheer existence rather than its actions or intentions.

both organizations had internalized these ideas and made them into their own.

RIVAL EXPLANATION: THE UNIQUE DESIGN OF THE TIGER

It could be argued that the causal link between the tactical-level subculture of the Tiger units and their vehicles was actually the reverse, i.e. that the fearsome reputation of the Tiger was either warranted by its performance, or by its appearance. However, a comparison with another contemporary design indicates that this was not the case. When the Pz.Kpfw. V Panther, was fielded the year after the Tiger, a *Pantherfibel* was designed, to mimic the successful and appreciated *Tigerfibel*. Interestingly enough, the *Pantherfibel* was a considerably more conservative publication, without any of the nude drawings that were so characteristic of the *Tigerfibel* (Carruthers, 2011, ch. 2). The Panther was in many ways a more modern design than the Tiger, incorporating lessons learned from the Soviet T-34. The frontal armour of the Panther was, according to Zetterling and Frankson (2000, p. 60) "much better" than that of the Tiger. The side and rear protection of the Tiger remained superior, though. When the T-34/85 was introduced in early 1944, the balance shifted in favor of the Panther. The main gun of the T-34/85 could easily penetrate the sides of both the Panther and Tiger, and even the frontal armor of the Tiger at distances of less than 1,200 m, while the frontal armor of the Panther remained immune (ibid., p. 61). In addition, the main gun of the Panther was superior to that of the Tiger, since its muzzle velocity more than compensated for its smaller calibre (ibid., p. 61). The Panther was also more mobile than the Tiger, meaning that it was less prone to get stuck in mud, easier to recover and tow, and could cross many bridges that were impassable for Tigers. In fact, even though the Panther was heavier, better armored and better armed than the older German tanks (the Pz.Kpfw.III and Pz.Kpfw.IV), it was actually more mobile than either of these (ibid., p. 61). Finally, one Panther cost less than half compared to a Tiger: 117,100 Reichsmark compared to 250,800 Reichsmark.[16] The most serious issue with the Panthers were their unreliable drivetrains and engines, but by 1944, these problems had

[16] Strangely, the *Tigerfibel* (*D 656/27* 1943, p. 91) states the cost of a single Tiger to be 800 000 Reichsmark. However, the consensus in secondary sources seems to be around 250 000 Reichsmark for a Tiger without optics, radios, etc. and circa 300 000 for one with all equipment included.

been resolved with the introduction of the new A version in August 1943.

This would seem to indicate that from at least early 1944, the Panther was at least comparable to the Tiger, albeit with different strengths and weaknesses. The Panther was also produced in considerably larger numbers, 5,976 as opposed to 1,354 Tiger Is and 489 Tiger IIs (ibid., p. 59-61).

This, I argue, clearly shows that the reputation of the Tiger and the tendency to preserve the strength of the Tiger battalions were not a result of technological superiority. The Panther never acquired the same mythical status as the Tiger and even though its crews were carefully hand-picked, they never acquired the status and esprit d'corps of the "Tiger-Men." One possible explanation is that the Panther, when hit by enemy shells, could suffer explosions in the internal ammunition storage, which could be lethal to the crew (Carruthers, 2011, ch. 1). This affliction was not shared by the Tiger, which arguably made the Tiger crews appreciate their vehicles more, since their chances of surviving the destruction of their tank was greater. This does not, however, explain how the Tiger achieved such mythological status among other troops and the general public.

The size and bulk of the Tiger is sometimes mentioned as a characteristic. This could possibly explain the myth to some extent, since a menacing appearance could have a psychological impact of its own. However, that only applies when compared to the older vehicles. The Panther was both longer and taller than the Tiger, while the latter was only 30 centimetres wider (see Figure 25). Consequently, I argue, there is no substance to the argument that the Tiger's reputation vis-a-vis the Panther's was based on material characteristics.

TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURES AS EXPLANATION

The two empirical cases presented are different in some respects, and similar in other. As for the similarities, it should hardly be surprising that the tendency to take initiative and act independently is very similar in both organizations, since the Israelis adopted the German concept of *Auftragstaktik* (in practice, if not in name). In both cases, the tank crews were also highly trained and fought against numerically superior foes. Even more interesting, the Israeli tank commanders preferred to fight with their hatches open, to enable them to peer out and improve their situational awareness, just like the Germans had done before them.

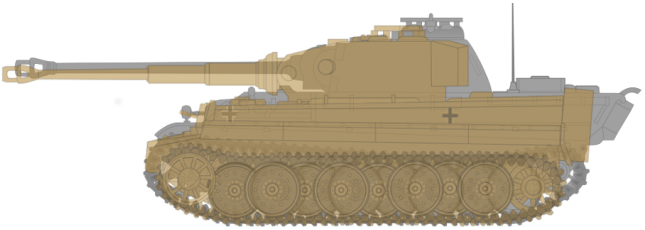

Figure 25: Size comparison, Tiger and Panther tanks. The Tiger (tan) is slightly transparent and superimposed on the Panther (grey). Size source: Chant, 2006, p. 61-62. Composite image created using illustrations from Wikimedia Commons.

The Syrians, like the Soviets, fought with their hatches closed, and in a more mechanical, orchestrated fashion.

The differences, however, are more telling than the similarities. While the Tiger crews carefully avoided unnecessary losses, to save their strength for decisive battles, the Israelis showed an astonishing willingness to accept losses. Sometimes, this tendency produced undesirable results, as troops were lost needlessly in the pursuit of secondary objectives. This happened both during the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War, as well as during the Lebanon War in 1982 (Gal, 1986, p. 161). To make matters worse, it was not only the case during the major wars. Even during small-scale skirmishes against infiltrators between the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War, the IDF troops were, according to van Creveld (2002, p. 209), "reckless". Consequently, I argue that while the two cases share many similarities, they reflect opposite reactions to uncertainty. The Tiger units intuitively avoided losses, unless they were certain that they were participating in an event of operational-level significance. The Israelis, on the other hand, accepted losses, even when they were uncertain of the significance of the situation at hand.

As previously stated, it is crucial to note that the case of the Tiger crews provides an important contrast to the previously discussed *Ubootwaffe*. The German U-boat commanders were, in their almost reckless eagerness to attack and accept risks, more similar to the Israeli tank crews than their countrymen behind armor. This is important, since it shows that national characteristics can have a strong impact, as in the case of Israel, but does not necessarily have that effect, as in the two German cases. Consequently, I argue that the explanation

for these differences cannot be reduced to the factors influencing the tactical-level subcultures, since these factors fluctuate from case to case. Consequently, the explanation lies in the different tactical-level subcultures.

6

Pair III: Unspeakable Deeds

In the two case studies described in this chapter, I depart from the context of combat and effectiveness that I focus on in my other three empirical chapters. Instead, I will focus on atrocities committed against civilians by military units. My reason for including these two cases in this dissertation is not simply to add variation, but rather to emphasize the enormous destructive potential of tactical-level subcultures. My second case in particular is sensitive, since it concerns the implementation of the Holocaust, the worst atrocity in the history of mankind. It was with great apprehension I wrote this chapter, and I hope that I have been able to convey that I am in no way dismissive of the enormous suffering this event brought to countless people, and the repercussions it has to this day. With my contribution, I hope that I will be able to shed some more light on the mechanisms that enabled that terrible tragedy, so that we will be better equipped to avoid such horrors in the future.

In one of the cases discussed in this chapter, atrocities resulted more or less spontaneously, as a result of a severely dysfunctional tactical-level subculture, which resulted in a total breakdown of discipline. This in combination with an environment that not only tolerated but even encouraged predatory and ruthless behavior against civilians, resulted in the massacre of hundreds of civilians in the village of Song My. In my second example, the murder of civilians was the result of direct orders to this effect, and the tactical-level subculture was instead used as a tool to produce the willing killers required to undertake such tasks in a controlled and predictable fashion (unlike the chaotic and more or less uncontrollable killing described in the first case). The conclusion

is that tactical-level subcultures can produce a very similar effect, although through two different mechanisms. The main difference is that in one case, the outcome was spontaneous and caused considerable discomfort in the political and strategic levels, whereas in the other case, the outcome was in line with the atrocious policies of the Third Reich. For the victims this makes little difference, but to political decision-makers it highlights the importance of avoiding dysfunctional tactical-level subcultures, while it simultaneously shows how soldiers can be transformed into murderers by regimes that are so inclined.

6.1

Sources

For the first case, concerning the US Army unit known as "Charlie Company" (which strictly speaking only means that it was the "C", i.e. third, company in its battalion), I have relied upon a combination of secondary and primary sources. An example of a secondary source is Bilton and Sim's (1992) *Four Hours in My Lai*, which in a 1992 review was criticized for downplaying the behavior of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army in general, but lauded for its detailed and accurate portrayal of the massacre itself and the subsequent cover-up ("An Atrocity Revisited: Two British Journalists Probe the My Lai Massacre" February 23 1992). The primary sources include autobiographies by American officers who served during the Vietnam War, but did not partake in the massacre, to provide a general background. In addition, Lieutenant William Calley, who was a perpetrator of the massacre, has written an autobiography, which is included as well, with a generous measure of caution since it was published specifically to shift blame from Calley to his superiors. However, the autobiography has been used to confirm some of Calley's attitudes, as described by other authors.

The most extensive and detailed primary source used for the first case is the so-called Peers Report (a.k.a. the Peers' Inquiry), the result of a thorough investigation conducted by Lieutenant-General William Peers in 1969–1970. It includes numerous witness statements as well as maps and other clarifying illustrations. The Peers report, which covers some 20,000 pages and includes 398 witness statements, is generally considered to be an unbiased and accurate description of the massacre and the events preceding and following it (see for example "Lieu. Gen. William R. Peers, 69, Led Inquiry into My Lai Massacre" April 9 1984).

For the second case, the *Totenkopfverbände* 1933–1942, I have made extensive use of Sydnor's (1977) excellent *Soldiers of Destruction: The SS Death's Head Division, 1933–1945*. In addition, I have used other well-established secondary sources, such as Shirer's (1977b) *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, as well as more recent scholarship, for example d'Almeida's (2013) *Ressources Inhumaines: Les gardiens de camp de concentration et leurs loisirs* and Neitzel's (2013) *Soldaten: On Fighting, Killing and Dying*, as well as a few selected articles published relatively recently.[1] I have also made extensive use of primary sources in the form of the protocols from, and evidence presented during, the 1946 Nuremberg Proceedings. I have not attempted to argue with the mainstream view of the role of the *Totenkopfverbände* in Holocaust research, but rather added my own theoretical lens to shed light on this organization, as well as how it influenced the combat unit named after it, which was known for atrocities and brutality.

6.2
A Brief Note on Atrocities

Atrocities have arguably occurred during almost every war in history, to varying extents. The definition can of course vary. The kind of atrocities discussed in this chapter fall within the category of violations of what is usually called *jus in bello*, i.e. the international humanitarian law that regulates how (as opposed to when/why, which is regulated by *jus ad bellum*) wars are to be fought (see for example Byers, 2005, p. 115). The contemporary judicial framework regulating these aspects of war can trace its lineage back to the Hague conventions of 1899 and 1907, and the four Geneva conventions (the last of which was added in 1949). While these conventions covered a broad spectrum of humanitarian issues, including right and obligations for both combatants and civilians (referred to as non-combatants), this chapter will primarily be concerned with violations of the rights of the latter category.[2] The cases outlined in this chapter are transgressions, regardless of the policy of the state to which the military units belonged, since the protection of civilians and prisoners of war from deliberate cruelties and violence is a violation

[1] Please note that I have used Swedish translations of Shirer (1977b), d'Almeida (2013) and Neitzel (2013).

[2] The definition of noncombatant usually also includes prisoners of war.

of both the written and customary laws of war (see for example *Peers Report, Volume I* 1970, p. 9-1ff.).

However, the legal aspects of the atrocities outlined in this chapter will not be elaborated further. The acts committed by the units covered in these case studies are noteworthy because in neither case can they be explained as mistakes, or as unintended deaths in the pursuit of legitimate military objectives. Instead, they are examples of how military units can engage in deliberate, systematic and wholesale slaughter of civilians who are in no way obstructing or resisting, and among whom none are armed or in any way capable of posing a threat to the military units.

6.3

Charlie Company, 1968

> You reach a point over there where you snap, that is the easiest way to put it, you finally snap. Somebody flicks a switch and you are a completely different person. There is a culture of violence, of brutality, with people all around you doing the same thing.
>
> — Fred Widmer, radio operator, Charlie Company[3]

The case of the Song My (a.k.a. My Lai) massacre is not the only instance of American atrocities towards civilians during the Vietnam War. There is a multitude of incidents involving indiscriminate killing, rapes, torture and other brutal transgressions. The reason I've chosen to focus on the Song My massacre is because it features a combination of three characteristics that makes it unique. The first and most obvious is the media attention, which forced the US Army as well as the Department of Defense to react. It also had a profound impact on public opinion in the United States, by creating a polarization that overshadowed the actual events.

Secondly, the systematic and exceptionally brutal nature of the massacre, in which the troops seemingly went to lengths to kill every single person encountered during the operation. The number of victims, estimated to be 347 by the Criminal Investigation Division (ibid., p. 6–18), was also unique for such a small unit. Since indiscriminate killing had a tendency to be reported as enemy kills, a unit that had committed extensive indiscriminate killing would most likely also have a very high body count. The First Platoon of Charlie Company had, according to a later platoon commander, probably one of the highest body counts in all of Vietnam (Bray, 2010, p. 36), as a direct result of the massacre. While this is very difficult to verify, it does indicate that Charlie Company, and in particular First Platoon, were unusually brutal in the quantitative sense. While many other units engaged in spontaneous murders and rapes, committed by individual troops or groups of soldiers during operations, the sheer scale of the Song My massacre makes it a crucial case to study.

Finally, all the killings took place at close range, which differentiates it from the otherwise similarly indiscriminate manner in which aircraft, helicopters and artillery were used. Since the troops in most cases deliberately aimed at their victims, there is no doubt that the victims

[3]Quoted in Bilton and Sim (1992, p. 80)

were killed knowingly, and with intent. It is also noteworthy that the American units did not encounter any hostile forces and never once came under fire. Thus, there was no significant element of temporal stress (the presence of booby traps and mines did, however, cause a different type of stress).

Another company from the same brigade, Company B a.k.a. Bravo Company, also participated in the operation during which the massacre took place. According to the Peers Report, there is considerable evidence indicating that elements from Bravo Company also massacred civilians, albeit on a more limited scale (*Peers Report, Volume I* 1970, p. 7-2). Since Charlie Company was not entirely unique within its brigade, it is hardly surprising that another company acted in a similar manner. The reason this chapter is focused on Charlie Company is because it provides a useful delimitation, and because Charlie Company committed the worst and best-documented atrocities during the operation in question.

The story of the massacre and the events preceding and following it is also the story of a process. When the news of the Song My massacre broke in American media, the initial public reaction was limited. However, once the detailed color photographs of the massacre were published, there was "public outrage, shame, remorse, and a fit of national self-examination" (Bilton and Sim, 1992, p. 12). It did not take long for the issue to become politicized, and by the time of Lieutenant Calley's trial in 1970–1971, there was widespread support for Calley in the United States (see for example Sack, 1971, p. 8–12; Bilton and Sim, 1992, p. 339–340). President Richard Nixon considered the massacre to be strongly detrimental to the public support for the war, and mobilized his staff to remedy the situation (Bilton and Sim, 1992, p. 316).

The Criminal Investigation Division (CID) concluded that there was sufficient evidence to charge an additional twenty-nine troops with major crimes, but eventually, the Army legal staff decided to press charges only against those still in military service: four officers and nine enlisted men (ibid., p. 323). The courts-martial turned into more or less bizarre events in which various technicalities and implausible interpretations were used to acquit troops who had in some cases even admitted to murder (ibid., p. 329–330). Lieutenant Calley, however, was found guilty of premeditated murder of twenty-two civilians. He was sentenced to hard labor for the duration of his natural life (ibid., p. 338). However, only days after his sentence, Calley was transferred from the military prison and placed under house arrest, following an

intervention by President Nixon. Less than six months later, Calley's sentence was reduced to twenty years of hard labor. Three years after his sentence, Calley was released on parole and has remained a free man ever since (ibid., p. 383–385). All other officers and enlisted men were acquitted, or had the charges dropped.

FORMATIVE FACTORS

Two formative factors had a major impact on US Army ground units fighting in Vietnam during the war: the rotational policy, and the side effects it produced; and the strategy of attrition, along with its side effects. The rotational policy of the US Army during the Vietnam War produced several adverse effects on the ground units fighting there. Each person was rotated out after a 12-month tour of duty, and company and battalion commanders held their posts for an average of less than six months (van Creveld, 1985, p. 236). Consequently, by shifting people in and out of units to such an extent, it disrupted continuity and did not facilitate the establishing of new harmonious tactical-level subcultures.

According to Savage and Gabriel (1976, p. 341), this rotation system resulted in the destruction of primary military groups within the US Army, and subsequently, to disintegration and loss of cohesion.[4] This process of disintegration started in 1961 and went on until 1971, accelerating toward the end of the time period. The primary groups, as the attentive reader will recall (see page 29), are closely related to the tactical-level subcultures. A harmonious tactical-level subculture depends on the cohesion provided by the primary group. In other words, the destruction of the primary groups inevitably led to the disintegration of any pre-existing harmonious tactical-level subcultures, and their subsequent transformation into dysfunctional ones. Indeed, the symptoms of a military unit that has lost primary group cohesion, as outlined by Savage and Gabriel (ibid., p. 341): desertions, mutiny, assassinations of leaders, and other violations of discipline, do in several ways correspond with the indications of a dysfunctional tactical-level subculture. Since the rotational policy applied to all US Army units during the Vietnam War, it is hardly surprising that breakdowns in unit discipline were more common than in previous American wars. In some units, enlisted men chose when to obey and when to disregard

[4] The negative impact of the rotational policy on unit morale and combat efficiency is quite well-established in literature on the Vietnam War, see for example (Gilbert, 2006, p. 63).

orders by superiors. The tactical-level subcultures that contributed to this attitude also had an impact on the NCOs and officers, who simply accepted that they were unable to exercise control over their men. This phenomenon was not confined to Army units, but also afflicted the Marine Corps, which had a similar rotational policy, albeit using a 13- rather than 12-month period (Gilbert, 2006, p. 63). In one rather typical example, a Marine sergeant who considered it immoral to gang-rape a woman simply walked away to another part of the village, where he "just sat and stared bleakly at the ground" while his men committed this atrocious act (Bourke, 2000, p. 212).

Another expression of this insubordination was the deliberate killing of superiors by enlisted men. In Vietnam, the number of deliberate killings of officers or NCOs by their subordinates grew dramatically, from 0.4 per 1000 in 1969 to 1.8 in 1971 (Yarmolinsky, 1976, p. 219). The increase may be attributable to the significant increase of American troops in Vietnam in 1967–1968. From an initial number of 184,300 in 1965, the number of American troops in Vietnam had grown to 485,600 in 1967 and peaked at 543,400 in 1968 (Savage and Gabriel, 1976, p. 348). This reflected an increase in personnel turnover, in which experienced, well-trained and more cohesive units suffered from the influx of new personnel and the subsequent weakening of their tactical-level subcultures. A concrete example of this is the 1st Cavalry Division. In 1965 it was one of the best and most famous divisions in Vietnam. However, by 1969, the rotation policy had replaced many of its experienced and skilled troops with poorly trained replacements. The quality of the division sank to such a degree that some members of the division claimed that the poor weapons training caused more casualties than the enemy (King, 2013, p. 58). While the poor training is used as an example of the detrimental impact of the rotational policy, the effect this process had on the tactical-level subculture is arguably a potentially much greater problem than poor training.

The killing of superior officers, and threats related to it, became so widespread that it was given a name of its own, "fragging." The name refers to the fragmentation grenades carried by ground troops, since the archetypical method for accomplishing this bloody task was to throw a grenade at the position where the officer or NCO was lying in cover. The number of US Army desertions is another indicator of the state of the army during the Vietnam War. The desertion rate more than tripled between 1965 and 1970, from 15.7 per 1,000 to 52.3 per 1,000 (Savage and Gabriel, 1976, p. 348). The increase in fragging

and desertions was not the result of poor training, but of disintegrating units.

The strategy of attrition also had a profound impact on American units fighting in Vietnam. In essence, this strategy had two major problems that quickly became apparent. First of all, even if as many as 300,000 North Vietnamese troops were killed every year, North Vietnam would still be able to replace them (Andrade, 2008, p. 163). Thus, the strategy was ultimately futile. In addition, it did not provide the troops with any concrete measure of success or progress beyond killing, unlike the traditional capturing of territory. The second was that it was rather difficult to verify, both in terms of the numbers killed, and of whether those killed were actually NVA soldiers or NLF insurgents.[5]

In short, ground troops had strong incentives either to exaggerate their kills, or to kill indiscriminately, since either (or a combination of both) would be interpreted as successful performance. According to one US Army Sergeant, platoons were willing to kill anybody simply in order to beat another platoon's kill record (Bourke, 2000, p. 217).

The war itself also underwent gradual changes during its course. During the Tet offensive, which started on January 30th 1968, NLF guerillas started to fight in the cities of Southern Vietnam for the first time. The American forces reacted by removing the previous restraints on using artillery and helicopter gunships in urban areas. During several months, American firepower was brought to bear in areas with a high density of civilians and the resulting high risk of civilian casualties. The new generation of helicopter pilots and artillery crews who served during this time period came to regard this as normal. Once the offensive was over, the emergency measures instituted to cope with an extraordinary situation had been normalized. Even though the orders changed, the practices remained (Ellsberg, 1972, p. 245).

Thus, the problems created by the rotational policy and strategy of attrition were exacerbated by the Tet offensive in early 1968. This deadly combination accelerated the systematic destruction of unit cohesion and discipline, as well as reinforced the tendency to accept civilian casualties.

[5]The NLF was known as the *Viet Cong* by the South Vietnamese government and US armed forces. However, since this label was not used by the insurgents themselves, I have chosen to use the more neutral term NLF.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The strategic objectives for the American ground forces in Vietnam were complex and contradictory. On the one hand, the North Vietnamese Army fielded large (battalion- and regiment-sized) units in South Vietnam, while National Liberation Front (NLF) insurgents simultaneously fought as guerrillas (Andrade, 2008, p. 153).

This confounded the US Army, which had to cope with the dual challenge of defeating fairly large regular North Vietnamese units while simultaneously dealing with the constant presence of insurgents and infiltrators. The head of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), General William C. Westmoreland, decided on a strategy of attrition and pacification (ibid., p. 159). The former was considered to be a necessary precondition for the latter. According to Andrade (ibid., p. 160), MACV's campaign planning for 1966 called for the purging of insurgent elements as a "prelude to pacification." The attrition part of the campaign came to be known as "search and destroy." In short, once a North Vietnamese or NLF unit or logistic base had been located, American ground units were deployed using their mobility and firepower, to destroy the enemy by killing as many enemy soldiers as possible.

For the 11th Brigade, Americal Division, to which Charlie Company belonged, the strategic objective of attrition through search and destroy operations was translated into the goal of destroying a local NLF battalion. This battalion, known as the 48th Local Force Battalion, had been operating in the area in which the 11th Brigade was stationed since August 1965. It had been in battle with American units on many occasions, and taken heavy losses from time to time, but had proven itself remarkably resilient (Bilton and Sim, 1992, p. 66). The strategic objective at hand for Charlie Company on the eve of the massacre was thus to find and destroy enemy soldiers, with the ultimate goal of destroying the elusive 48th Local Force Battalion. However, the overall strategic objective was also dependent on good relations with the local civilians, an approach that has often been called "hearts and minds," since the goal was to win the hearts and minds of the civilians. In a planning document, Westmoreland stated that "There is no doubt whatsoever that the insurgency in South Vietnam must eventually be defeated among the people in the hamlets and towns [...] However, in order to defeat the insurgency among the people, they must be provided security" (quoted by Andrade, 2008, p. 156).

Consequently, the strategic objective was two-fold: killing as many enemy troops as possible, while simultaneously providing security for

the local civilians. Based on this, I argue that the most suitable category combination would have been Balanced-Protective. Balanced, because the Americal Division was an infantry division with very few armored vehicles to protect its troops, and thus liable to suffer excessive casualties if it had completely disregarded risks. The risk of encountering ambushes and booby traps was high, which further reinforces the need to avoid rushing into situations. At the same time, a Cautious approach would have rendered the American ground forces more or less useless, precisely because the risk of ambushes and booby traps would otherwise have made it extremely difficult for them to move in the dense Vietnamese vegetation.

In terms of attitudes toward noncombatants, Westmoreland's statement leaves no doubt that the safeguarding of the civilian populace was a necessary component for strategic success. Consequently, a Protective stance would be most useful to win hearts and minds.

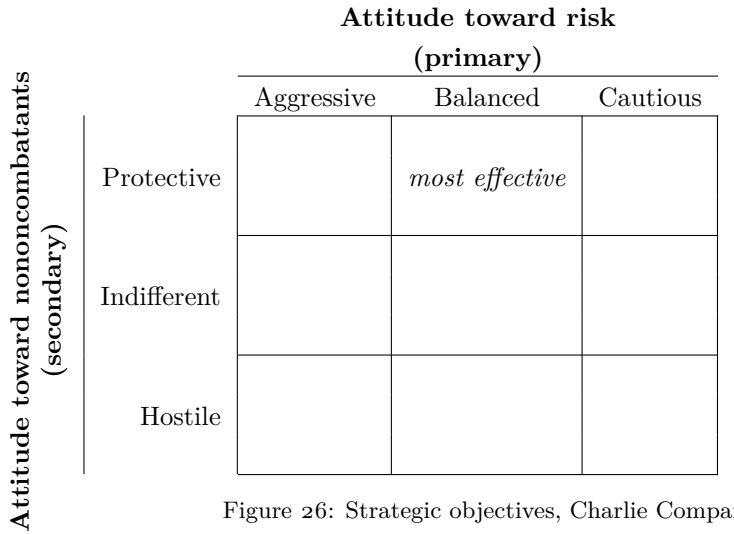

Figure 26: Strategic objectives, Charlie Company

CHALLENGES

In Vietnam, the American ground troops faced two very different enemies. On the one hand, they had to cope with units from the regular North Vietnamese Army (NVA). On the other hand, they faced local guerillas organized within the National Liberation Front (NLF), known to the Americans and South Vietnamese as the Viet Cong

(VC). The two adversaries required rather different approaches, which turned out to be very difficult to combine. The NVA units were initially quite large, numbering hundreds of troops with support weapons and supply caches. This required the deployment of sufficiently large units of American soldiers and enough fire support to overwhelm the NVA units. However, the NVA units were able to make skillful use of another challenge: the unforgiving and very difficult terrain. In the jungles, visibility was very poor, both on the ground and from the air, and the dense vegetation combined with considerable heat and high humidity, made movement on foot slow and exhausting. It also made it relatively easy to conceal booby traps.

Consequently, in order to deal with NVA units, the Americans had to first locate them, then transport enough soldiers to the area, and finally, cut off any retreat routes the NVA elements could use to hide in the jungle before superior American firepower could be brought to bear. Operations of this kind were carried out with some frequency and a fair amount of success during the first years of the war.

The second adversary was more elusive, however. The NLF guerillas were able to hide in plain sight as well as the jungle, and could exercise influence on the local civilian population. As such, defeating them required a counterinsurgency approach. The American strategic leadership realized this at an early stage, and thus dictated that it was of the utmost importance to win the hearts and minds of the civilian population, to isolate the guerillas and rob them of the support they needed. However, in practice, this turned out to be very difficult to achieve. As time went by, and the number of civilians killed by American and South Vietnamese forces, unintentionally as well as deliberately, grew, it became increasingly difficult to achieve this goal. The soldiers on the ground were well aware that they were supposed to win hearts and minds, but also that this conflicted with their other orders, to destroy villages and kill suspected NLF personnel and sympathizers (see for example Bray, 2010, p. 116; Schell, 1968, p. 37).

PERSONNEL, COMMANDERS AND EQUIPMENT

The battalion to which Charlie Company belonged, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, was a historic unit with a tradition dating back to the civil war. The battalion had subsequently fought in a number of wars, up until the Korean War. However, this had a very limited, if any, impact on Charlie Company, since the battalion had been deactivated and had to start from scratch in the summer of 1966

(Bilton and Sim, 1992, p. 51). The division to which this newly formed battalion belonged, known as the Americal Division, was also a recently reconstituted historical unit. The name Americal was a contraction of America and New Caledonia, a relic from the unit's original creation in the Southwest Pacific in 1942 (Stanton, 2003, p. 79). The Americal Division served in the Pacific until its deactivation in 1945. It was briefly re-activated in 1954, but served only for a year and a half until it was deactivated again. When the division was once more re-created in late September of 1967, its historical heritage from WWII had no meaning for its new recruits. For all practical intents and purposes, except its name and insignia, it was a new division. Finally, the 11th Brigade was yet another recently reactivated unit, set up again in 1966 (*Peers Report, Volume I* 1970, p. 4-4). It was originally an organic component of the 6th Infantry Division, but was deployed separately to Vietnam in February of 1968, and by mid-March of 1968, was attached to the Americal Division.

Thus, Charlie Company's parent units (battalion, brigade and division) did not have a shared past and were only loosely affiliated with each other. In addition, the Americal Division faced major problems in meeting the 12-month rotational policy, and transferred troops between brigades on a regular basis to maintain unit strength within the permissible percentages each month (ibid., p. 4-2). This amplified the negative impact of the rotational policy.

On the eve of the massacre, Charlie Company was part of a temporary task force, known as Task Force Barker, after its commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Frank Barker. This ad-hoc unit, created to enable the 11th Brigade to conduct operations in sufficient strength, included three rifle companies, one from each battalion. The companies were chosen by the brigade commander, who wanted the best company from each battalion (ibid., p. 4-6). Also included in the task force were a reconnaissance platoon from the 1st Cavalry, elements from the engineer battalion, as well as a squad of military police. It was supported by a howitzer battery of four guns (ibid., p. 4-7).

Between January 22nd and March 15th 1968, Task Force Barker suffered 110 casualties, about 40 percent of which occurred during operations in the Song My area during February (ibid., p. 4-7). During the same time period, the task force claimed to have killed and wounded 300 enemy troops, as well as captured an additional 50. The total number of enemy weapons captured was 20 (ibid., p. 4-7). Charlie Company's casualties during this time period numbered 4 killed and 38 wounded, mostly from mines and booby-traps. Only one of the killed

and two of the wounded were the result of direct enemy contact (*Peers Report, Volume I* 1970, p. 4-8). None of the men in Charlie Company had significant combat experience (ibid., p. 4-8).

In terms of personnel, Charlie Company was a typical cross-section of American youth assigned to most combat units, according to an official US Army report (quoted in Bilton and Sim, 1992, p. 3). The majority of the 23 NCOs in the company were above the average in all evaluated areas, and the percentage of high-school and college graduates was higher than the Army average (*Peers Report, Volume I* 1970, p. 4-9). Charlie Company was generally considered to be well-trained and capable and, as is also evident by the fact that it was selected to be part of Task Force Barker, it was considered to be the best company in its battalion before the massacre (Bilton and Sim, 1992, p. 52).

Functional Imperatives. The 11th Brigade was a light infantry unit, supported by the division's transport helicopters. It also enjoyed heavy fire support provided by the division's helicopter gunships and artillery. It did not have any armored vehicles to protect its infantry, with the exception of a few organic armored vehicles among its reconnaissance elements. Consequently, the troops of the 11th Brigade were very vulnerable to small-arms fire, mortars, booby-traps and mines, but could deploy significant firepower with relative ease. This meant that the infantry units in question had a tendency to call on artillery and gunships to pour shells and rockets at positions that could potentially host enemy troops, before the infantry units moved within range of these positions. During these preliminary bombardments, there was a significant risk of civilian casualties, which were considered acceptable by the brigade's troops.

The physical vulnerability of the infantry made it prone also to use its own firepower directly against civilians, either as an excuse or as a result of genuine fear. There were plenty of rumours of women and children holding concealed hand grenades or other explosive devices, who would approach American troops to lob these weapons at them from close range. This excuse was used by Charlie Company's commander, Captain Ernest Medina, explaining why he had been seen shooting an unarmed woman lying on the ground, when he was questioned by the brigade commander, Colonel Oran Henderson (ibid., p. 173). The fact that Henderson readily accepted this explanation shows how established this scenario was in the minds of American troops.

TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURE

The Americal Division and its sub-units had no practical historical lineage to serve as a basis for a tactical-level subculture, nor did it maintain stability in terms of personnel in its units. Instead, it contributed to the dysfunctional and heterogeneous tactical-level subcultures of the subordinate units of the 11th Brigade. The limits on the number of troops allowed to rotate out of a unit in any given month could have at least to some extent countered the dissolution of tactical-level subcultures, but since Americal Division's solution was to move troops around between units, the effect was instead made worse.

It is noteworthy that the tactical-level subculture of Charlie Company was not a result of exposure to direct combat, since none of the company members had any significant combat experience. They had, however, experienced considerable stress, since the company had suffered casualties as a result of mines and booby traps.

Focal Points. Since Americal Division and its subordinate units provided few, if any, focal points for the troops to turn to, this meant that the void had to be filled by company, platoon and battalion commanders.

At the company level, Captain Ernest Medina was an admired and respected, albeit harsh, company commander (ibid., p. 63). Medina was liked by the enlisted men, for whom he apparently cared (*Peers Report, Volume I* 1970, p. 8-9), but he showed far less concern for his platoon commanders, toward whom he was condescending and disparaging (ibid., p. 8-9). In the case of at least one platoon commander, Lieutenant Calley, who was in charge of First Platoon, he even did so in front of Calley's men, which further undermined Calley's authority (Bilton and Sim, 1992, p. 74). The effect was that Charlie Company became "a one-man show" that Medina ran by himself. Regardless of his intentions, Medina was incapable of single-handedly exercising effective control over more than 100 soldiers (*Peers Report, Volume I* 1970, p. 8-12).

Medina was not only exercising poor judgement by making it near-impossible for his platoon leaders to function effectively, he also set his men an example of brutality toward civilians. For example, early during Charlie Company's deployment, while the company had still not had any contact with the enemy, nor suffered any casualties, it was based on a safe and well-defended island nicknamed "Gilligan's Island" by the troops. Photographs from this time period show members of Charlie Company happily posing with Vietnamese children (Bilton and

Sim, 1992, p. 62). In January 1968, the company had relocated to another relatively safe area, a fire base known as LZ Charlie Brown.[6] When members of the company spotted two fishing boats with two men in them, Medina ordered his troops to kill them (Bilton and Sim, 1992, p. 64). His subordinates complied, and the two men were killed, even though the area was quiet, and the two men obviously posed no threat to the company. No NLF movements had been reported and no weapons were found (ibid., p. 64). Circa two months into Charlie Company's tour, Medina ordered his men to execute prisoners, while other prisoners were tortured (ibid., p. 77). One of the members of Charlie Company later described the process:

> It started with just plain prisoners–prisoners you thought were the enemy. Then you'd go on with prisoners who weren't the enemy, and then the civilians because there was no difference between the enemy and civilians. It came to the point where a guy could kill anybody (ibid., p. 78).

The killing of prisoners is not the only atrocious activity perpetrated by members of Charlie Company before the massacre. According to the Peers Report, members of the company had "participated in the mistreatment, rape and possible murder of Vietnamese, with no apparent retribution" (*Peers Report, Volume I* 1970, p. 8-14).

In addition to Medina, Lieutenant Calley also had an impact on the company, his own platoon in particular. He stated in his own memoirs that while the other members of his platoon seemed to get along well with the Vietnamese children during the first parts of their deployment, he hated them from the beginning (Sack, 1971, p. 31). According to Calley, he was afraid of the children, since he had heard stories that they could be carrying grenades or other explosives (ibid., p. 31–34). Later, this mentality spread to the troops (Bilton and Sim, 1992, p. 74), even though they described him as an exceptionally poor platoon commander, who was universally disliked (ibid., p. 73). The men thought he was glory-hungry and willing to sacrifice them for his own personal advancement; that he was nervous and excitable, and prone to yelling a lot; that he was incompetent; and that he did not know how to handle the authority accorded him by the army (ibid., p. 74).

Based on the above, I argue that Charlie Company best fits in with the Balanced-Hostile categories (see Table 27). Balanced, because

[6] LZ = Landing Zone

there is nothing in the data that indicates a tendency to be either particularly aggressive or cautious in relation to risks. In this regard, Charlie Company was quite similar to most American infantry units in Vietnam at the time.

In its relation toward noncombatants, Charlie Company was clearly Hostile. The repeated atrocities against civilians, who were specifically targeted during operations, clearly show this tendency well before the massacre. This is particularly disconcerting, since it indicates a divergence of two steps in terms of attitude toward noncombatants, which signals that Charlie Company was very likely to produce output that would be detrimental from a political and strategic point of view.

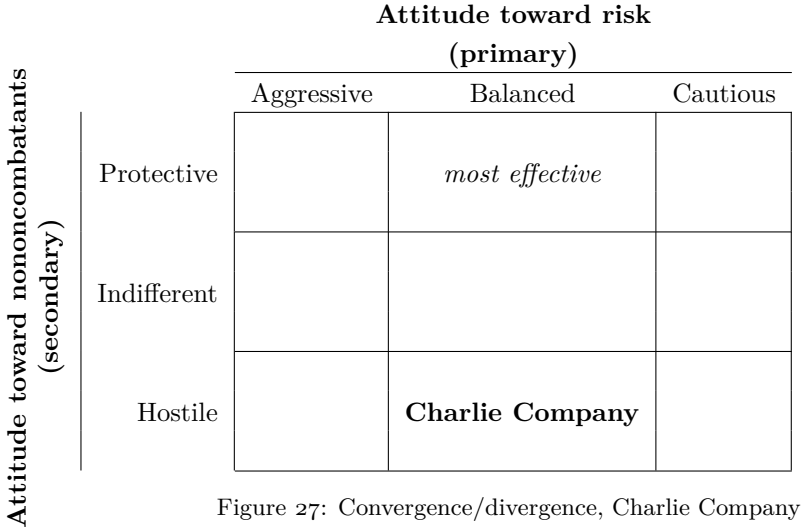

Figure 27: Convergence/divergence, Charlie Company

IMPACT OF TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURE

The formal autonomy of Charlie Company was normally limited by sets of rules of engagement, not too dissimilar from the concept as it is known today. The purpose of these rules of engagement included the protection of noncombatants. The fact that Song My was located within a so-called free-fire zone did not suspend all rules of engagement (*Peers Report, Volume I* 1970, p. 9-7). The real definition of a free-fire zone, which technically was known as a "specified strike zone" (SSZ) was that it was a mostly unpopulated area, and therefore strikes could be conducted without *additional* clearance from local political leaders

(*Peers Report, Volume I* 1970, p. 9-7). The rules of engagement for the 11th Brigade clearly state that any person targeted by direct or indirect fire must be clearly identified before fire can be opened:

> Personnel who attempt to evade and are identified as members of NVA or VC forces by the wearing of a uniform, web gear or pack and/or have possession of a weapon may be engaged. Every attempt will be made to halt these personnel by giving the command halt (Dung Lai) and firing warning shots overhead. If attempts to halt evading personnel fail they will then be engaged by fire with intent to wound by firing at lower extremities. The wounded captive will then be treated and evacuated as rapidly as possible for exploitation of intelligence he may possess (quoted in ibid., p. 9-21).

However, since Charlie Company, along with most of 11th Brigade and a significant portion of the American forces in Vietnam, was able to ignore these rules of engagement, their actual autonomy was High (see figure 28).

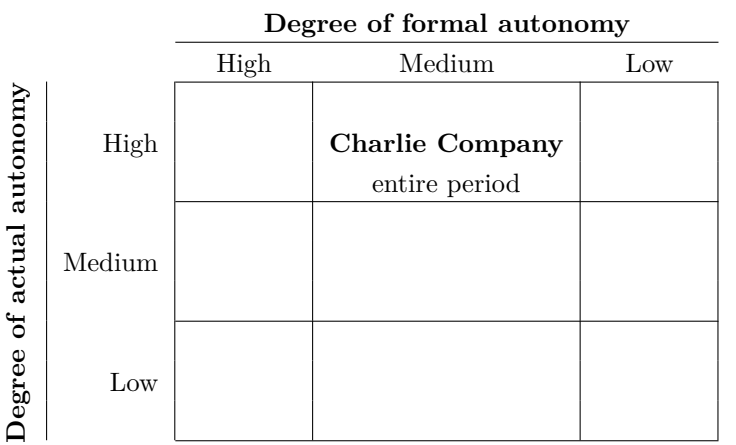

Figure 28: Degrees of autonomy, Charlie Company

Before the operation in the area of Song My, the Task Force commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Barker, did not issue any written orders, but there is no concrete evidence that he ordered any killings or the destruction of the village of Song My. He did, however, share with

his company commanders an intelligence assessment that stated that the whole of Song My was "controlled and inhabited by VC and VC sympathizers" (ibid., p. 5-8). In the following briefings by the company commanders to their subordinates, Captain Michles, commander of Bravo Company, passed on the intelligence assessment to his command group (the platoon leaders and a few other key members of the company), but did not say anything specific about revenge or how civilians were to be treated (ibid., p. 5-11).

Captain Medina, addressing most of Charlie Company (thus not only his command group, unlike Captain Michles), told his men that they should expect "heavy contact", and that they would be outnumbered by the enemy, approximately 2 to 1. Medina also ordered his men expressly that Song My should be burned and destroyed, and to kill all livestock and destroy other foodstuffs. He also alluded to the operation as an opportunity for revenge, to "get even" for the men lost to mines, booby-traps and sniper fire (ibid., p. 5-13). Thus the stage was set for the tragedy that was to follow. In the description that follows, it is however important to remember that Medina did not order any of his subordinates to engage in the systematic murder of any and all civilians that they came across. Medina did, however, give a different briefing than the commander of Bravo Company, which I argue shows that there were some differences between the two companies, which explains the difference in the extent of atrocities committed by the two companies.

Indiscriminate Killing to Inflate Body Count. Within 70 minutes of touchdown in the area of operations, Charlie Company reported 90 enemy troops killed (ibid., p. 10-22). After the company left the scene of the massacre, a total of 128 enemy kills were claimed by Task Force Barker. Since the task force only suffered 13 casualties (two killed in action, ten wounded and one self-inflicted wound), this looked on paper like a resounding success. However, the ratio of enemy weapons captured to enemies killed was only one in forty, significantly lower than the already low average for the task force, which was one in ten (ibid., p. 10-24).

Discrepancies between the number of weapons captured and the number of kills claimed was nothing new in the 11th Brigade. The following example shows just how widespread knowledge of what this really meant was: when a private in Company A of the brigade was helping a helicopter door gunner unload a resupply helicopter after the massacre, the door gunner asked the private, Tom Glen, if he

had heard of Charlie Company's body count. Glen replied that he hadn't, so the door gunner said "Over three hundred".[7] Glen then asked how many weapons Charlie Company had retrieved, to which the door gunner replied "None". According to Glen, the two men then exchanged "knowing, sarcastic grins", since both knew that this meant that civilians had been killed (Bilton and Sim, 1992, p. 175).

The indiscriminate killing of civilians was not unique to Charlie Company, even though the sheer scale of the massacre perpetrated by the company was. From a military point of view, it had a two-fold negative strategic impact, in addition to the negative press coverage and resulting impact on the public view of the war in the United States. On the one hand, the practice of which it was part produced erroneous data for those who assessed the effectiveness of the strategy of attrition, which may have reinforced their belief that the counterproductive strategy was having an effect. On the other hand, it made the other strategic goal, the winning of hearts and minds, impossible. Any trust the local population had in the American and South Vietnamese troops was effectively destroyed by these ruthless acts of violence, which made a lasting impression on the civilians. Unsurprisingly, the Song My massacre had a profound effect in this regard. More than a year after the atrocity had been committed, American troops operating in the area were met with hostility and suspicion, and the events of Song My were used by the NLF for propaganda purposes (ibid., p. 44–45).

However, while the ground troops of the 11th Brigade in general and Charlie Company in particular had become accustomed to atrocities, the aviation element within the Americal Division had not. This was the factor that would eventually stop the slaughter, but by then not many remained to save. A reconnaissance helicopter pilot, Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson, was flying low over the area of operations on the day of the massacre, as part of his regular duties to locate enemy troops and direct the fire support helicopters, a.k.a. the gunships. While flying over the area, Thompson noticed several wounded civilians, and marked them with green smoke, which indicated to other American units that they needed medical attention (ibid., p. 137). When he later returned to the same area, he saw that those who had previously been wounded were now dead. Then Thompson witnessed the murder of a woman he had marked with green smoke, perpetrated by an infantry captain, who turned out to be Captain Medina. Minutes later, Thompson and his crew saw a large number of bodies in an irrigation ditch. When

[7] It seems as if the door gunner is referring to an estimate of the actual number of people killed rather than the formally claimed number of kills.

Thompson landed to ask some infantry troops what was going on, he was told by Lieutenant Calley that it was none of his business (ibid., p. 138).

Thompson took off again, and then saw the infantry troops firing into the ditch with all the bodies. Realizing that another group of civilians were about to be massacred as well, Thompson landed his helicopter between the remaining civilians and the troops from Charlie Company who were pursuing them. Thompson ordered his machine gunner, Lawrence Colburn, to train his weapon on the soldiers from Charlie Company and told Colburn to open fire on the Charlie Company troops if they started shooting at the civilians. The civilians had by then sought refuge in a homemade bomb shelter. Thompson asked Lieutenant Stephen Brooks, commander of Charlie Company's Second Platoon, for assistance with getting the civilians out of the bunker, but the lieutenant told him that the only way to get them out of the bunker was to use hand grenades (*Peers Report, Volume I* 1970, p. 6-15). Thompson then told the lieutenant that he would personally get the civilians out of the bunker, and that the lieutenant, who outranked Thompson, should stay put. Thompson requested assistance from the other two helicopters currently flying above the area, since his small reconnaissance helicopter was ill-suited to evacuate people. The two gunships landed and transported the nine or ten civilians away to safety (Bilton and Sim, 1992, p. 139).

After this, Thompson had to return to base to refuel, but as soon as that was done, he returned to Song My and the irrigation ditch. Thompson's crew chief, Glenn Andreotta, reported that he saw someone move. Thompson landed the helicopter and covered his gunner and crew chief with the machine gun. Colburn took an assault rifle to protect Andreotta against Charlie Company, while the latter went down into the ditch filled with corpses and managed to find what he was looking for: a child, about three years old, covered in blood but not seriously injured (ibid., p. 140). Thompson evacuated the child to a nearby hospital. After this, Thompson returned to base and reported the atrocities he had witnessed to his section leader. The two gunship pilots confirmed Thompson's story, and together they sought out their company commander, Major Fred Watke. He, in turn, passed on the information to Lieutenant-Colonel Frank Barker, who then radioed his executive officer, Major Charles Calhoun, and ordered him to find out what was happening and put a stop to it (ibid., p. 140).

After the operation, there were tensions between the flight crews and ground personnel, since the former were upset over what had taken

place, and tried to report the matter to the divisional leadership for further investigation (Bilton and Sim, 1992, p. 177).

Loss of Discipline, Cohesion and Control. During the massacre, Captain Medina was not with the three platoons of his company as they moved through Song My. He followed behind the third platoon and only became aware of the extent of the massacre when he saw the dead victims (*Peers Report, Volume I* 1970, p. 6-11). Although Medina was no stranger to indiscriminate killing, and committed at least one murder himself during the day, according to witnesses he looked visibly disturbed when he came across a pile of twenty to twenty-five corpses of men, women and children, including babies (Bilton and Sim, 1992, p. 127). This, I argue, shows that he had indeed lost control over Charlie Company during those terrible hours.

While Medina was occupied elsewhere, First Platoon was running amok. Several soldiers started to kill villagers randomly and for no apparent reason, exhibiting behavior that has been described as "deranged" (ibid., p. 112). One of the troops, Dennis Conti, who was known within the company for his habit of abusing women, forced a woman to give him oral sex while he held a gun to the head of her 4-year-old child (ibid., p. 81, 113). Calley found him and angrily ordered him to pull his pants on and get to where he was supposed to be (ibid., p. 113).

Shortly thereafter, a soldier from Second Platoon, Gary Roschevitz, "became hysterical" and suddenly tried to grab another soldier's assault rifle. Roschevitz, who carried a grenade launcher instead of an assault rifle, demanded the weapon because he wanted to kill a small group of villagers being led back for screening. To the troops escorting the villagers, Roschevitz said: "Don't turn them over to the company, kill them!" When Roschevitz was unable to grab the weapon of one soldier, he was able to grab another's and promptly shot a Vietnamese farmer in the head (ibid., p. 113–114). Roschevitz then shot two more peasants before handing the weapon back to its owner (ibid., p. 114).

After a few children came running toward the Americans to ask for candy, and were shot down as a result, the troops started to shoot wildly into groups of civilians who huddled together (ibid., p. 114). At this point, one soldier, Dennis Bunning, informed his squad leader that he wasn't going to fire on women and children. The squad leader then ordered Bunning to move out on the flank, into the rice paddies, away from the carnage (ibid., p. 114). At least two men demanded that those who carried machine guns swap weapons with them, presumably so that they would be able to kill more effectively (ibid., p. 115). The

commanders of the First and Second Platoons, Lieutenants Brooks and Calley, had completely lost control over their men.

At one point during the massacre, Calley and a few troops had gathered up a large number of civilians when Medina radioed Calley to ask what was going on, challenging the slow progress of First Platoon. Medina wanted Calley and his men to proceed to their original objective. Calley replied that they had a large number of civilians slowing them down, to which Medina simply replied "Get rid of them" (ibid., p. 119). Calley then went to the two troops, Conti and Meadlo, who guarding the group of civilians and told them to "Take care of them." When nothing happened, Calley asked the troops what they were doing. They replied that they were guarding the civilians, which is what they thought they were supposed to do. Calley then stated that he wanted the civilians killed and ordered the men to form a line and fire into the group of civilians. Conti and Meadlo wanted no part of this and started to back off. Conti tried to excuse himself by saying that he only had a grenade launcher, and that he perhaps should keep guard by the tree line instead (ibid., p. 129). Calley and Meadlo then started shooting, changing magazines from time to time. After a minute or so, Meadlo could not continue. Tears flooded down his cheeks. He handed his weapon to Conti and said "You shoot them," but Conti refused to take it. "If they are going to be killed, I'm not doing it. Let him do it," Conti said, pointing at Calley. By that point only a few children were left standing. Mothers had thrown themselves on top of the young children to protect them, and now the children were trying to stand up. Calley killed them one by one (ibid., p. 121). A short while later, Calley tried to persuade his men to open fire on yet another group of civilians when two other soldiers refused to take part in the killing. Again Calley ordered Meadlo to shoot, which he did, but he started to cry hysterically and was screaming to one of the refusers "Why aren't you firing! Fire, why don't you fire?" (ibid., p. 123).

These events show that the company had disintegrated into three groups: the willing and enthusiastic killers, who in a deranged and random fashion were murdering villagers; the reluctant killers, who either killed simply because they felt that they were expected to, or like Meadlo, because they were ordered to; and finally the refusers, who wanted no part of the massacre.

The third platoon commander of Charlie Company, Lieutenant LaCross, felt ill while his men, who were following in the tracks of First and Second Platoon, were killing animals and the few remaining civilians. On a single occasion, LaCross tried to fire his weapon at an

animal, but it jammed, and after that he did not use his weapon again for the rest of the day (Bilton and Sim, 1992, p. 125). Some men in the third platoon were also refusing to take part (ibid., p. 124).

After the massacre, Medina lost control completely. Instead of being the strong disciplinarian, he turned passive to the point of apathy, which quickly had the effect that the company disintegrated. When Charlie Company returned to the control of its parent battalion after the disbanding of Task Force Barker, the battalion commander immediately noticed that morale had slipped (ibid., p. 196). Charlie Company had begun drinking in the field and their behavior as well as physical condition had deteriorated to such an extent that the battalion commander no longer regarded them as a top-notch company (ibid., p. 196). During patrols, the men would throw down their gear and tell their superiors to carry it for them, and officers were frequently insulted (ibid., p. 197). When battle-hardened sergeant James H. Raynor, who joined Charlie Company after the massacre, tried to regain control over the men, the troops reacted badly and the sergeant began to fear for his life (ibid., p. 198).

By then, Lieutenant Calley was more detested than ever, and First Platoon finally put a bounty on his head. Calley was moved to the mortar platoon, where a sergeant reacted to Calley's rough treatment of local civilians (ibid., p. 197–198). Meanwhile, new replacements arrived to Charlie Company, and reacted strongly to the prevailing culture of brutality within the company. One new replacement discovered that another soldier of the company was trying to rape an elderly woman, and when he failed to stop his attempts at doing so, he became so enraged that he tried to shoot the other soldier (ibid., p. 198).

SUMMARY

Charlie Company is an example of a unit with a dysfunctional tactical-level subculture that resulted in loss of cohesion and discipline, as well as extreme brutality against innocent people. It is also clear that while Charlie Company was arguably the worst unit of all in Task Force Barker, the other companies had similar problems. Indeed, the whole of 11th Brigade was afflicted to some extent by the same problems as Charlie Company. The dramatic increase in frequency of "fraggings" all across Vietnam shows that the pattern seen in the 11th Brigade spread throughout the American ground units in the years after the massacre. This should come as no surprise, since the same formative factors applied to all American ground units fighting in Vietnam. I

argue that the dramatic build-up in manpower in Vietnam in 1967–1968, combined with the stress placed upon these fragile units by the Tet offensive, produced with a certain element of delay, a multitude of dysfunctional units by 1969 and onward. Charlie Company and the 11th Brigade were merely the shape of things to come, albeit in an unusually extreme form.

It is particularly important to note that Charlie Company received the same training as other US Army ground units, and was even considered unusually well-trained by the standards of the day. In addition, during its first weeks in Vietnam, it displayed none of the hostility toward civilians that would later lead to the massacre, with two notable exceptions: Medina and Calley. The process that led to the dysfunctional status of the unit by the time of the massacre thus began while it was deployed, and was not related to its training.

Once Charlie Company had been deployed to Vietnam, the rotational policy started to break it down, along with the rest of the 11th Brigade. The disastrous policy of rotating troops and officers even within the brigade further accelerated this development, by removing the people who could have become focal points. This was combined with the negative impact of the strategy of attrition that promoted the act of killing instead of conventional tactical objectives, and included the systematic destruction of civilian property. To this was added the knowledge that NLF insurgents were hiding among the civilian population, and a tolerance for civilian casualties, which made the mostly unprotected infantrymen, with heavy firepower at their disposal, prone to shoot first and ask questions later. That the whole of this was a recipe for disaster should have been obvious long before the Song My massacre. The fact that Charlie Company became the worst unit of all was a result of the destructive influence of Medina and Calley, who both reinforced the effects of the formative factors.

Medina set an example as a brutal role-model, who did not shy away from indiscriminate killing. However, there is no indication that he condoned completely random slaughtering on the scale that took place in Song My. Neither does the evidence indicate that he accepted the killing of infants before the massacre. Consequently, his absence during the massacre combined with the fact that he had effectively undermined the authority of his platoon leaders may have contributed to the tragic outcome.

In the case of Calley's First Platoon, atrocities were most likely inevitable either way, since he was one of the men who took an active role in the massacre. Lieutenant Brooks seems to have been more

indifferent to the whole affair. Had his position of authority been stronger, he might have felt himself compelled to intervene, but this is uncertain. The third platoon leader in the company, Lieutenant LaCross, was obviously disturbed by what was going on. If he had been able to exercise authority, it seems likely that he would have tried to put a stop to at least the worst of the atrocities. The fact that not all members of Charlie Company participated in the massacres shows that the company had a dysfunctional and heterogeneous tactical-level subculture, in which brutal individuals and groups could engage in any sort of deranged behavior without being subject to disciplinary actions, rather than a uniformly brutal and homogeneous one.

It is noteworthy that it was pilots from the same division as Charlie Company who reacted to the massacre and interfered, as well as reported it. This shows that the pilots, although accustomed to combat and killing, were not used to seeing wholesale slaughter of civilians.[8] While Charlie Company was the unit that committed most of the atrocities at Song My, and also became the most dysfunctional unit of all in its battalion (and possibly all of 11th Brigade), the example of the discussion between the door gunner and soldier from Company A indicates that the whole of the 11th Brigade suffered from problems similar to those of Charlie Company. This is hardly surprising, since the brigade- and battalion-level leadership was mostly absent and ineffective in providing focal points.

Perhaps the best illustration of how volatile was the tactical-level subculture of Charlie Company is the fact that a year and a half after the massacre, it had changed radically. By then, as a result of the rotation policy, almost all of the men who had participated in the operation at Song My, along with the commanders, had left the unit. The young lieutenant who took command over Calley's former platoon describes in his memoirs that the new commander of Charlie Company was "compassionate" and "professional" (Bray, 2010, p. 66). Charlie Company had changed for the better without Medina, but it could not free itself from the spectre of the formative factors that influenced all combat units serving in Vietnam. At least one case of indiscriminate killing of a civilian and subsequent reporting of this victim as an enemy soldier occurred (ibid., p. 136). In addition, the company also participated in forcing civilians to leave their homes in order to create

[8] This was not only the case in this particular helicopter unit. Other scout helicopter units also had their own rules of engagement, which were more restrictive than the official ones, prohibiting indiscriminate shooting at women and children (see for example Mills, 1992, p. 36).

free-fire zones. However, in contrast with these practices, the young platoon leader recalls troops that would play with Vietnamese children, and that US Army helicopters on at least one occasion were used to evacuate two of these children after they had become wounded by a booby-trap placed by insurgents (ibid., p. 127–128).

For all its shortcomings, Charlie Company in 1969–1970 was nevertheless a far cry from the homicidal madness displayed by the previous iteration of Charlie Company. This was most likely a result of the fact that two company commanders who were fairly similar to each other, but both very different compared to Medina, were in command in succession during that time period. Since the disruptive rotational policy and inept leadership at the division-, brigade- and battalion levels remained, the company and platoon leaders had a huge impact on the company. The tragedy thus reflects a failure on multiple levels. A different set of formative factors, less prone to encourage indiscriminate killing, could possibly have prevented the massacre. Failing that, different leadership at the battalion, company and platoon level could have prevented or at least reduced the extent of the tragedy. Unfortunately, all levels of command contributed to a greater or lesser extent to the outcome.

6.4

The *Totenkopfverbände*, 1933–1942

> Most of you must know what it means when 100 corpses are lying side by side, or 500 or 1,000. To have stuck it out and at the same time–apart from exceptions caused by human weakness–to have remained decent fellows, that is what has made us hard.
> — Heinrich Himmler, speech to SS generals, 1943[9]

The *Totenkopfverbände* (Death's Head Units) were a branch within the infamous *Schutzstaffel* (SS) in the Third Reich. While all branches of the SS, and most of the Reich's state apparatus, in some way contributed to the Holocaust, the *Totenkopfverbände* were arguably those most involved in its implementation. They made up the core of the camp guards, and developed the routines and procedures for the crimes that took place in the camps. The *Totenkopfverbände* considered themselves an elite within an elite, being the most dedicated servants of the Führer and the National Socialist cause. They willingly shouldered the most repulsive tasks, which even battle-hardened veterans found difficult to undertake. They shared a tactical-level subculture which trivialized killing, violence and humiliation, but at the same time carefully regulated it. The Reich needed predictable killers, men and women who could dedicate their careers to taking part in one of history's greatest atrocities, but at the same time avoid being overwhelmed by emotions. Neither pity nor frenzied aggression had any place in the *Totenkopfverbände*.

I have chosen to study the formative period of the *Totenkopfverbände* and its offspring, the *Totenkopf* division of the *Waffen-SS*, from the birth of the Third Reich in 1933, until the start of the Holocaust in late 1941/early 1942. I chose to delimit the case study to this time period, because it would otherwise be too extensive to fit within the limits of this chapter, and because that time period is the one that is most relevant from a theoretical point of view.

In Holocaust research, the formative period from the 1930s to the early 1940s has received only marginal attention (Hördler, 2011, p. 100).[10] There is broad support, however, for the idea that the concen-

[9] Quoted in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression Volume 1: Chapter XI - The Concentration Camps* (1946)

[10] The systematic mass killings that characterize the Holocaust started in earnest in 1942, when the number of victims grew rapidly, to the extreme figures we today associate with this horrible event (d'Almeida, 2013, p. 50).

tration camp system grew out of Dachau, masterminded by Theodor Eicke (ibid., p. 100). In this chapter, I will not challenge that argument, instead, I will study the tactical-level subculture created at Dachau by Eicke, and how it spread throughout the concentration camp system in the years that followed. During the 1930s, the *Totenkopfverbände* was a close-knit organization with a strong homogeneous tactical-level subculture. When the concentration camps expanded after the start of the war and spread throughout the occupied territories, the *Totenkopfverbände*, which had served under Eicke, formed the nucleus for this expansion. As such, it was instrumental in the Holocaust, even though the tactical-level subculture as such crumbled in the early 1940s under the stresses imposed by the expansion. However, while it was weakened in the *Totenkopfverbände* as such, it remained strong in the military unit created out of *Totenkopfverbände* units, the *Totenkopf* division. This division is also analyzed, since it became the bearer of the tactical-level subculture of the *Totenkopfverbände*, which expressed itself on the battlefield in the form of fanatical recklessness and ruthless brutality.

FORMATIVE FACTORS

The Third Reich was a unique nation-state during the short time it existed, the only one constructed entirely around the ideology of national-socialism. Germany was not, as the casual observer might think, transformed into a homogeneous mass of uniform anti-semitic and violent thought between 1933 and 1945. On the contrary, there was plenty of dissent and diverging attitudes within the Reich. However, such sentiments were usually only expressed openly in private or semi-public circles, such as among friends or in traditional social structures like congregations, village communities, within the conservative elite, and so on (Neitzel, 2013, p. 48).

The National-Socialist ideology revolved around nationalism, a deeply negative attitude toward democracy as a form of government, and racial supremacy, most notably in the form of anti-semitism (see for example Tingsten, 1965, p. 49; Larsson, 1997, p. 92). According to Weinstein (1980, p. 120–121), who outlines a more detailed cultural perspective, the people of the Third Reich experienced National Socialism in the form of four themes: an orientation toward the past; an emphasis on struggle as a fundamental aspect of life, and consequently, that aggressive activity was desirable; the elevation of emotion above rationality; and finally, the promotion of a strongly hierarchical social order, including utter contempt for those who were considered

subordinate to the German people. The extension of anti-semitism into persecution and subsequent attempts at annihilation was thus a reflection of the very core of the national-socialist movement (Neitzel, 2013, p. 48). However, while the citizens of the Third Reich were constantly subjected to anti-semitic and other ideological sentiments, that in itself was not enough to turn them into ruthless and willing killers, as will be explained in more detail below. It did, however, provide them with a foundation that made them more receptive to the tactical-level subculture of the *Totenkopfverbände*.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The primary strategic objective for the *Totenkopfverbände* was to serve as an instrument for the implementation of state-sanctioned atrocities. Initially, this was limited to protecting the fledgling Nazi regime from internal threats, real or perceived, by manning the concentration camps in which those who would oppose it, or otherwise were considered to be undesirable, were incarcerated and tormented. This served the dual purpose of discouraging opposition, while at the same time punishing those perceived to be enemies of the Reich. As the years passed, the number of camps grew and the *Totenkopfverbände* became more and more brutal.

After the war had broken out, the killing had to be accelerated in order to implement the Reich's genocidal policies in newly occupied Poland. Another escalation took place after the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, in order to accommodate Hitler's orders to execute all political commissars, political functionaries, Jews and communists found among the Soviet prisoners of war (Riedel, 2010, p. 571–572). Around the same time, the measures implemented against the Jews also became significantly more destructive. The plans for a "Final Solution" (*Endlösung*) can, according to Shirer (1977b, p. 74), be traced back to January 1939, when Hitler openly stated that the Jewish people would be annihilated in case of war. He phrased it in a somewhat opaque manner, however, by saying that this annihilation would be the result if war broke out because of the "international Jewish businessmen" (quoted by ibid., p. 74) . Apparently the end result was intended to be the same even though the actual war was instigated by the German government under Hitler himself. The most notable evidence of the concept of the Final Solution is the well-known written protocol from the Wannsee conference held in January 1942, but by then, the essence of the concept, i.e. the genocide of all Jews within reach of the German

regime, was already well known to the attending officials (ibid., p. 75). The purpose of the Wannsee conference was thus not to determine the definition of the Final Solution, but rather the logistics and details of its implementation. By the time of the conference, Heydrich stated that the number of Jewish people concerned by the Final Solution was eleven million. In this figure, he included the estimated number of Jews in all of Russia, the Ukraine, Poland, France and England (ibid., p. 76).

The *Einsatzgruppen*, mobile killing squads who executed prisoners and buried them in mass graves, had already begun their work in the summer of 1941, by executing Polish and Russian Jews. Their efforts were complemented by the two different kinds of concentration camps: the regular concentration camps (*Konzentrationslager*, a.k.a. *Arbeitslager*) and the extermination camps (*Vernichtungslager* a.k.a. *Todeslager*). The former had the purpose of exploiting victims for slave labor, working them to the death in the process, while the latter were intended to kill as many as possible as quickly as possible. In order to accomplish this task, a unique organization was required, one that was already available in the form of the *Totenkopfverbände*.

What the Third Reich needed to execute its plan was a unit that first of all was Hostile toward noncombatants. With regards to risk, the Aggressive stance was the category most closely related to the ideology of the Third Reich, by emphasizing the heroic ideal. Belonging to this category would maximize the ideological convergence, making the implementing unit more zealous, and thus, more reliable. In addition, serving in the camps meant that the risks involved with this attitude were negligible, while it would make it more difficult for the inmates to intimidate the guards, which makes it the most effective category for the attainment of the strategic objectives at hand.

CHALLENGES

One of the key challenges to dealing harshly with the victims of the Reich's ruthless policies was the tendency among even those sympathetic to the regime to show at least some degree of restraint. It wasn't hard for the Nazi regime to vilify entire groups, but to convince the concentration camp guards of the necessity to be equally harsh and brutal toward every single person in these targeted groups was difficult. In a speech to SS major-generals at Posen on October 4th, 1943, Himmler expressed it in the following words:

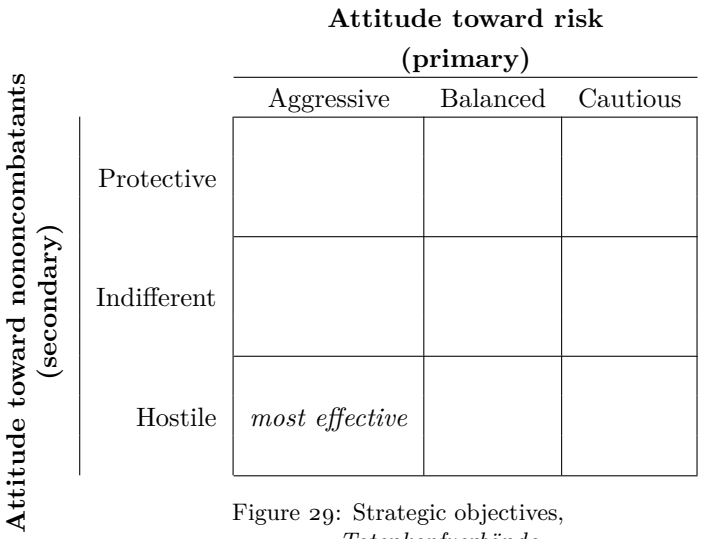

Figure 29: Strategic objectives, *Totenkopfverbände*

> I mean the clearing out of the Jews, the extermination of the Jewish race. It's one of those things it is easy to talk about-'The Jewish race is being exterminated', says one party member, 'that's quite clear, it's in our program, elimination of the Jews, and we're doing it, exterminating them'. And then they come, 80 million worthy Germans, and each one has his decent Jew. Of course, the others are vermin, but this one is an A-1 Jew. Not one of all those who talk this way has witnessed it, not one of them has been through it. Most of you must know what it means when 100 corpses are lying side by side, or 500 or 1,000. To have stuck it out and at the same time—apart from exceptions caused by human weakness—to have remained decent fellows, that is what has made us hard (quoted in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression Volume 1: Chapter XI - The Concentration Camps* 1946).

Thus, Himmler identified the need to remove every last shred of human sympathy among his executioners. Even so, many of the troops responsible for implementing the Final Solution suffered from psychological trauma after having been involved in large-scale massacres of unarmed, unresisting people. A former commander of *Einsatzgruppe D*, Otto

Ohlendorf, stated to an American officer after the war that he always ensured that his men would fire simultaneously while executing their victims, to make each feel less culpable. He never ordered anyone to administer shots to the back of the neck, since he considered this to be a terrible psychological burden for both the victim and the perpetrator (Shirer, 1977b, p. 69).[11]

The engineers of genocide in the Third Reich tried to address this problem by devising a new method for executing people, based on modified trucks that vented engine exhaust into sealed passenger compartments in the back of the vehicles. The unsuspecting victims would be ushered onto the truck, which would then drive around aimlessly, under the pretense of transporting them somewhere. After a short while, the victims would lose consciousness and eventually die. However, Ohlendorf complained that this method too could result in psychological trauma for his men, and that it resulted in headaches (ibid., p. 70). In either case, each truck could only kill fifteen to twenty-five people at a time, which was insufficient for the sheer scale of the planned genocide. Consequently, the *Einsatzgruppen* continued their executions, while the extermination camps came to play a more prominent role.

Ensuring that sufficient numbers of personnel were available, who were willing to participate actively in the murdering of civilians on a daily basis, was a challenge. In addition, the sheer scale of the operation demanded that the killing was carried out in a systematic and dispassionate fashion. The Third Reich did not want to produce tens of thousands of frenzied homicidal maniacs, who could become a burden and a problem for the state. Instead, it wanted to produce perpetrators who regarded the mass killings as a job, which they could carry out in accordance with rules and regulations. The tool with which this could be accomplished was a particularly sinister tactical-level subculture.

PERSONNEL, COMMANDERS AND EQUIPMENT

The concentration camps were an essential part of the Third Reich, and in some form they existed from its earliest days, and remained up to the very end. The very first camp, in Dachau, was established on

[11] *SS-Oberscharführer* Fritz Swoboda, who was one of the perpetrators of mass executions of civilians in occupied Czechoslovakia, has also stated that the psychological strain was significant, even for experienced front-line troops (Neitzel, 2013, p. 149).

March 20, 1933, less than two months after Hitler had been appointed Chancellor. It was ready four days *before* the passage of the Enabling Act in the German parliament, which gave Hitler sweeping legal powers. Consequently, mass arrests had been anticipated, and planned for, well before Hitler could formally authorize such actions (Sydnor, 1977, p. 9). Originally, the Dachau camp was guarded by regular police officers, but on April 2nd, 1933, the day after Heinrich Himmler had been appointed head of the Bavarian State Police, the police officers were replaced by SS personnel (d'Almeida, 2013, p. 9).

The SS itself was a byzantine organization. In 1934, its main branches were the *Allgemeine SS*, which was the "general" branch, to which most of its pre-war members belonged; the *SS-Verfügungstruppe* (later renamed the *Waffen-SS*), which was the combat branch; and finally, the *SS-Totenkopfverbände* (originally the *SS-Wachverbände*), which was the branch responsible for guarding the concentration camps.

The SS structure was reformed several times between 1934 and 1945, during which the lines between the three branches became increasingly blurred, but the important thing to note is that the *Totenkopfverbände* was a branch of its own from the very beginning, which facilitated the creation of a specific tactical-level subculture, tailored to produce concentration camp guards. The different origins and functions of these three main branches also explains the otherwise perplexing differences in tactical-level subcultures within the SS as a whole.[12] For example, a few judges within the SS court-martial system found the extrajudicial mass killings within the concentration camp system to be abhorrent and worked feverishly to prosecute camp commandants, even after they realized that the Holocaust was ordered by both Himmler and Hitler. During the Nuremberg Trials, at least one of these, *SS-Sturmbannführer* Konrad Morgen, continued to defend the SS and distance himself from the *Totenkopfverbände*, which he claimed was not part of the real SS (*Nuremberg Trial Proceedings, Vol. 20* 1946). Morgen, as a member of a small and isolated part of the SS, apparently did not come into contact with these other parts of the same organization until he was assigned

[12]The complicated SS bureaucracy can be more easily deciphered by looking at the main "offices" (*Ämter*) of the SS: the *Rasse-und-Siedlings-Hauptamt* (RuSHA); the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* (VOMI); the *Wirtschafts-und-Wervaltungs-Hauptamt* (WVHA); the *Reichskommissariat für die Festigung deutschen Volksstums* (RKFDV); and the *Reichssicherheits-Hauptamt* (RSHA). The camp guards were subordinate to the WVHA, while the RSHA commanded the other functions that are most relevant for this chapter: the *Einsatzgruppen*, the Gestapo, and the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD). However, for the sake of clarity and brevity, I will keep referring to the three main branches in the main text.

to investigate cases of suspected corruption within the concentration camp system.

The first batches of inmates at Dachau were socialists, communists and syndicalists. Shortly after the facility had been transferred to the SS, "race" prisoners started to appear as well. By March 1935, there were six concentration camps. The Dachau guard unit (*SS-Oberbayern*), along with the guard units at the other camps, had been divided into six battalions. Each battalion guarded one concentration camp (Sydnor, 1977, p. 24). In this manner, those who had served in the original Dachau guard unit were disseminated to the other camps, to spread the tactical-level subculture to these new places as well.

In September 1935, Hitler recognized the camp guard units publicly as party formations in the service of the Reich, which meant that the German state assumed responsibility for their costs (ibid., p. 24). In March 1936, Himmler authorized an increase in the camp guard personnel, from 1,800 to 3,500 men (ibid., p. 25). During the same month, the concentration camp guard formations (*Wachverbände*) were also formally designated as *SS-Totenkopfverbände* (ibid., p. 25). In September 1937, the five then existing *Totenkopfverbände* battalions were enlarged into three regiments (*Totenkopfstandarten*), which were posted in the three large concentration camps: Dachau, Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald (ibid., p. 31).

Everyday life for the concentration camp guards was surprisingly similar to a regular job. They started out with nine months of training (d'Almeida, 2013, p. 44).[13] Having completed their training, and been stationed at a camp, they worked for eight hours a day, with one-hour lunch breaks. Guards manning towers had six hour shifts. Most personnel worked from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with fewer guards being on duty during nights. Most of the guards were free at weekends. Personnel assigned to the sections responsible for receiving new prisoners and the political section, which was responsible for security and interrogations, had more irregular hours (ibid., p. 52–53). The *Totenkopfverbände* also enjoyed some perks. The food served to concentration camp guards, for example, was better than in most of Germany (ibid., p. 87). In addition, guards were given alcohol as a reward after carrying out executions or preventing escapes (ibid., p. 87)

To ensure that the camp guards and other staff were subjected to continued ideological indoctrination, the camps had libraries with a selection of books that was decided by the SS, rather than by the

[13]However, from 1944 on, new guards were stationed in the camps without prior training (d'Almeida, 2013, p. 134).

Ministry for Culture, as was the custom elsewhere in the Reich. The shelves featured anti-semitic ideological works such as Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Rosenberg's *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (d'Almeida, 2013, p. 122–123). In line with this ideological policy, sexual relations with camp inmates were strictly forbidden, both for reasons related to discipline, as well as concerns that the racial purity of the SS staff would be tainted (ibid., p. 71). Homosexual relations were also strictly prohibited (ibid., p. 74). The *Totenkopfverbände* were taught that they in particular were the guardians against foes from both within the Reich, and from the outside (ibid., p. 127).

In August 1938, Hitler declared that the *Totenkopfverbände* would be comprised of four regiments of three battalions each. Each battalion was allotted three infantry companies and one machine gun company. In addition, the regiments would be fully motorized with enough cars and trucks to transport all the men and equipment. In case of mobilization, the *Totenkopfverbände* would be at the Führer's disposal, while the concentration camps would be manned by older reservists from the *Allgemeine SS* instead (Sydnor, 1977, p. 33). The *Totenkopfverbände* were activated for this wartime function during the occupation of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia in 1938, when four of its battalions were placed under army command during the mobilization. Two of the battalions crossed the border even before the invasion, to support indigenous Nazi sympathizers (ibid., p. 33). While the *Totenkopfverbände* units were serving in their combat functions, the *Allgemeine SS* reservists guarded the concentration camps for three months.

In February 1939, men from the *SS-Verfügungstruppe* whose enlistments were about to expire were to be given the chance to join the *Totenkopfverbände* as NCO candidates. In addition, Himmler reached an agreement with Rudolf Hess, to encourage SA men to join the *Totenkopfverbände*. By mid-1939, the *Totenkopfverbände* had grown to 22,033 men, and it had enough weapons to equip them (ibid., p. 34). During this spring, Hitler also declared that service in the *Totenkopfverbände* would count as military service, thus making it impossible for the *Wehrmacht* to mobilize the men of the *Totenkopfverbände* for service in the regular armed branches. Finally, the decree also defined the wartime role of the *Totenkopfverbände* by stipulating that its formations would serve as combat replacements for the *SS-Verfügungstruppe* (ibid., p. 35).

In September 1939, circa 21,400 people were incarcerated in six concentration camps in the Reich (*Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression Volume 1: Chapter XI - The Concentration Camps* 1946). On September

7th, 1939, a week after the war broke out, the *Totenkopfverbände* had 24,000 men in their ranks. Three *Totenkopfverbände* regiments were ordered to Poland, to serve as independent *SS-Einsatzgruppen*, fulfilling "police and security" functions behind the front lines (Sydnor, 1977, p. 35–37). In essence, this meant that the *Totenkopfverbände* men did not fight against Polish troops at the front, but instead dedicated their time to hunting down straggling Polish troops, confiscating agricultural produce and livestock, as well as the torturing and murdering of large numbers of Polish political leaders, aristocrats, businessmen, priests, intellectuals, and Jews (ibid., p. 37). In October 1939, the *Totenkopfverbände* units were used to create a full division, *SS-Division "Totenkopf"* (ibid., p. 43–45).

The systematic atrocities perpetrated by *Totenkopfverbände* units in Poland were quickly noticed by the army, and some senior officers protested against what they considered to be unacceptable behavior on the part of the *Totenkopfverbände* (ibid., p. 43). In one incident, the army court-martialed two SS men when it discovered that they had shot fifty Jews (*Nuremberg Trial Proceedings, Vol. 20* 1946). This prompted Himmler to request judicial separation between the SS and the army. Subsequently, on October 17th, 1939, the SS field formations were granted judicial independence from the army. This meant that personnel from the *Totenkopf* division would from that point on be tried by a divisional tribunal, led by its commander, instead of *Wehrmacht* military tribunals (Sydnor, 1977, p. 60).

During this time period, the division grew rapidly, and new problems arose. In mid-November 1939, only 7,000 out of 15,000 *Totenkopf* division personnel were from the original *Totenkopfverbände* formations. Unlike the core troops, who had served under the division commander, Theodor Eicke, for years, the new recruits had not been inculcated with the strict discipline of the *Totenkopfverbände*. Disciplinary problems ensued, and the division started to lose cohesion (ibid., p. 58)

Eicke's solution was to implement draconian punishments for disciplinary infractions and crimes in late 1939. In one notable example, six enlisted men from the *Totenkopf* division stole a truck and drove off for a night on the town in Munich, which ended in a crash with a tram. While the incident ended without any fatalities or serious injuries, Eicke was enraged, and the six men were stripped of all rank and incarcerated indefinitely in the Buchenwald concentration camp (ibid., p. 61). This was technically illegal, but none of the judicial organizations within the Reich reacted. Disloyalty was also punished with equal severity. An SS private who requested a transfer out of the *Totenkopf* division, with

the intent of resigning from the SS, since he had fulfilled his mandatory military service, was dressed up as a camp inmate, paraded in front of the entire assembled division, and then sent to Buchenwald to serve an indefinite sentence (Sydnor, 1977, p. 62). In the spring of 1940, the policy of using concentration camp incarceration as punishment for his own men was abandoned by Eicke. Instead, he created a penal section within the *Totenkopf* division's engineer battalion, which was given particularly dangerous or otherwise unpleasant tasks (ibid., p. 74). Men convicted by the *Totenkopf* divisional tribunal were thus expelled from the SS and permanently assigned to this penal section.

The harsh reforms had the desired effect. By May 1940, the *Totenkopf* division had become a well-trained and strictly disciplined formation. Eicke had by then weeded out many undisciplined members of the division, and restored morale (ibid., p. 64).

According to Sydnor (ibid., p. 70) Eicke considered the *Totenkopf* division, as well as the *Totenkopfverbände* guarding the concentration camps, along with the reserve *Totenkopfverbände*, to be his own "private empire" and tolerated no interference from either subordinates or superiors in matters regarding the division. He even went so far as to disobey direct orders from Himmler himself, since he thought these orders encroached on his authority as division commander (ibid., p. 70). In August 1940, the senior SS leadership had had enough of this, and in order to support the *Waffen-SS* enlargement, stripped Eicke of many of his units. Consequently, former *Totenkopfverbände* units were incorporated into other parts of the *Waffen-SS*. *Totenkopfstandarte 11*, which was responsible for the atrocities committed in Poland in 1939, was transferred as a whole to the *SS-Verfügungsdivision*, later to become the *SS-Division "Das Reich"*. The *Totenkopf* units thus transplanted into the rest of the *Waffen-SS* certainly did nothing to alleviate any tendency to commit atrocities in these units. [14]

Functional Imperatives. The *Totenkopfverbände* were, compared to a regular military unit, lightly armed. While camp guards frequently carried rifles during the construction of the camps, at the established camps the guards usually carried only clubs or batons (d'Almeida, 2013,

[14]Four years later, *SS-Panzer-Grenadier Regiment 4 "Der Führer"* from the *Das Reich* division massacred 642 civilians in the French village of Oradour-Sur-Glane (Shirer, 1977b, p. 106). This regiment was a descendant of the *Totenkopfstandarte 11*, which was first renamed the *SS-Infanterie-Regiment 11*, and later dissolved in October 1941, when the remaining men were transferred to the *"Der Führer"* and *"Deutschland"* regiments (Altenburger, 2015).

p. 49). They needed nothing more, since they faced no significant threat while guarding the camps. The emaciated prisoners, worn down by the extreme conditions, were in no position to instigate an insurrection. Since the guards operated in an environment that featured very few constraints, obstacles or threats, they had very few functional imperatives.

The *Totenkopf* division, by virtue of being a combat unit, was a different matter. It was originally a motorized infantry division, one of few in 1940, and was quite strong compared to a general German infantry division at the time. It had more than enough manpower, support weapons and transportation to go around. Being an infantry division, it did not, however, have the degree of protection offered to tank units and mechanized infantry (*Panzergrenadier*) units. As such, its functional imperative would have been fairly similar to that of Charlie Company (see page 188), i.e. that the troops would be expected to make use of its support weapons to reduce the risks of exposing unprotected personnel. However, the fanatical nature of the division's tactical-level subculture made them completely disregard the fact that they were a highly mobile but poorly protected unit.

TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURE

The *Totenkopfverbände* belonged to neither the army, the police, the *SS-Verfügungstruppe* nor *Allgemeine SS* (Sydnor, 1977, p. 27). Being separated from the larger SS organization as well as the traditional armed and judicial branches of the state, the *Totenkopfverbände* considered themselves a unique sort of elite, answering only to the highest echelons of the Nazi state. Eicke constantly dismissed or transferred subordinates who failed to conform to the *Allgemeine SS*, or the police, or to disagreeable posts within the concentration camp system (ibid., p. 30). In so doing, he took active measures to develop and maintain his own particular kind of tactical-level subculture within the *Totenkopfverbände*. Eicke enjoyed considerable freedom in the shaping of his *Totenkopfverbände*, and tried to infuse in them a political fanaticism, elitism and camaraderie that would make them unique even within the SS (ibid., p. 26). In his model camp in Dachau, Eicke was able to transplant his tactical-level subculture in his subordinates, who would eventually go on to become the camp commandants and leaders of the *Totenkopfverbände*. According to Hördler (2011, p. 110):

> the attitudes of senior SS camp personnel had been formed primarily by shared experiences and formal training in

> Dachau, and through the transfer of such personnel the early Bavarian camp exercised a strong influence all the way to the end of the Nazi regime.

At Dachau, systematic humiliation was part of the daily routine as early as 1934. This was not exclusively reserved for the "racial enemies." The political prisoners, including Social Democrats, were also targeted. For example, Josef Simon, a Social Democrat chairman of a trade union, was sent to Dachau in 1934 where he was forced to pick up horse dung with his bare hands, and then not allowed to wash his hands before eating. The guards also forced Simon to carry a sign with the text "I am a Social Democratic tormentor," intended to provoke Communist inmates to violence (*Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression Volume IV: Document 2335-PS* 1946).

Eicke believed that a high measure of *esprit de corps* could make a unit invincible, and thus placed considerable emphasis on developing a homogeneous set of norms, as well as close bonds between his men. For example, he ordered unmarried officers to eat some of their meals in the enlisted men's mess, and he himself spent a lot of time with the young SS recruits there (Sydnor, 1977, p. 29). The definition of the enemies of the Reich, which the *Totenkopfverbände* considered themselves to be a bulwark against, was based on Eicke's own analysis. It concluded that in order of importance, these enemies were 1. the Jews; 2. freemasonry; 3. Bolshevism; 4. the churches (ibid., p. 28). As a result, Eicke exercised intense pressure on his men to renounce any church affiliations, which occasionally resulted in breaches between his young recruits and their parents. Eicke then opened up his own home to these men, to give them a place to spend their leaves, and also declared that all members of the *Totenkopfverbände* had a duty to befriend any fellow *Totenkopfverbände* member who found himself in such a situation (ibid., p. 29). In the same tradition, Eicke ordered in February 1937 that no "outdated and useless" military formalities were to be practiced within the *Totenkopfverbände* and that "real comradeship" must exist between officers and the men (ibid., p. 26).

The *Totenkopfverbände* saw themselves as an elite within the SS and considered the manning of the concentration camps as a key responsibility within the Reich, since these camps housed the most dangerous enemies of the Nazi regime (Sydnor, 1977, p. 26; Riedel, 2010, p. 565). This did not mean that anything was permissible within these camps; individual spontaneous acts of sadism or independent brutality were not accepted by Eicke (Sydnor, 1977, p. 23). However,

neither were such acts prosecuted (Hilberg, 1993, p. 54). The exercise of violence was to be subject to the same discipline as everything else, and not the result of individual whims. In order to normalize such acts, Himmler, Rudolf Höss, and others repeatedly emphasized that committing atrocities was repulsive, but that such tasks were necessary for the greater good (Neitzel, 2013, p. 172). Consequently, an individual who committed atrocious acts for his or her own personal gratification would be considered to be an undisciplined brute, whereas someone who acted "for the greater good" would be ethically beyond reproach. The practice of violence against prisoners and other targets of the regime's wrath was taught in a systematic fashion in the concentration camps. In the Esterwegen camp, for example, the guards were ordered to watch as two prisoners were being whipped. The purpose of this was to dull the emotions of the guards (Riedel, 2010, p. 564).

The peculiar case of Adam Grünewald highlights how this strangely paradoxical belief system worked in practice within the SS. Grünewald was a commander in Dachau before the war, and when the war broke out, he was given command of the bakery company in the *Totenkopf* division. He remained with the division from November 1939 until October 1942, and was promoted to command the division's procurement service (Sydnor, 1977, p. 329). After that, he was reassigned to the concentration camp system, where he served in several different camps, moving to increasingly greater assignments. In early 1944, an SS investigation showed that Grünewald had sanctioned particularly brutal treatment of prisoners without proper authorization, and that overcrowding had resulted in unsanitary conditions, which had killed a number of political detainees in the Vught camp in occupied Holland (ibid., p. 329). For these infractions, Grünewald was court-martialed by the SS, demoted to the rank of SS private and sentenced to serve in combat indefinitely in the *Totenkopf* division (ibid., p. 329). Consequently, acts of brutality, or deaths as a result of mistreatment, were only permitted as long as they were conducted within the realm of SS discipline.

The *Totenkopfverbände* did not place any value on human life, but it demanded complete dedication to discipline, obedience and total respect for regulations and the hierarchy. In the above example, one must also keep in mind that the harshness of the reaction on behalf of Grünewald's SS superiors was arguably also rooted in the fact that his victims in Vught were political prisoners rather than "racial inferiors." Corruption was also a very serious offense within the *Totenkopfverbände*. When the camp commandant of Buchenwald, Karl Koch, was found to

have embezzled and then had three inmates killed to cover up this and other transgressions, he was sentenced to death by an SS court-martial (*Nuremberg Trial Proceedings, Vol. 20* 1946).

As an offshoot from the *Totenkopfverbände*, the *Totenkopf* division also considered itself an elite formation. According to Sydnor (1977, p. 3), the division "retained a distinct and individual identity, ethos, and character that stamped it indelibly with the imprint of Theodor Eicke's personality and marked it unmistakably as the product of its prewar origins" (ibid., p. 3), from its creation in October 1939 until it was dissolved in May 1945.

Eicke tried to uphold this self-image, and maintained his commitment to the ideology of racial purity even when the rest of the *Waffen-SS* adopted a more pragmatic attitude. During the great enlargement of the *Waffen-SS* in the summer of 1940, the division received a large number of replacements who were considered by Eicke to be unqualified and racially impure (ibid., p. 127–128). The enraged Eicke argued with the recruitment authorities, and refused to integrate them with the existing units until they had been scrutinized thoroughly by *Totenkopf* training officers. In addition, he ordered the division's "racial expert," *SS-Standartenführer* Dr. Führländer, to conduct racial examinations on the new replacements (ibid., p. 128). While this may today seem like little more than the ravings of an unstable fanatic, it sent a clear message to the men of the *Totenkopf* then. They, who already considered themselves to be an elite formation, and who were still celebrating their successful campaign against the Allies in France, saw clearly that their leader considered them to be vastly superior even to other Germans and SS personnel.

The *Totenkopf* division trained very hard to hone its combat skills. In true *Totenkopf* fashion, the training was taken to extremes, which resulted in no less than 10 dead, 16 wounded and 250 hospitalized soldiers as a result, during the otherwise calm period in France in January-April 1941 (ibid., p. 147). Eicke's reaction was one of acceptance, he considered these losses to be the price an elite unit had to pay. He even encouraged his unit commanders to be recklessly aggressive during field exercises, so that this fanatical approach would reflect itself in actual combat (ibid., p. 147).

Focal Points. The most important focal point for the *Totenkopfverbände* was Theodor Eicke. As one of the two men who shot the leader of the SA, Ernst Röhm, during the Night of the Long Knives in 1934, he had shown his loyalty to the SS and Nazi regime in one of its earliest internal

conflicts (ibid., p. 17). A fervent believer in the Nazi ideology, he even considered the standard SS indoctrination journals (*SS Leithefte*) to be too bland, and tried to instill more violent and coarse views in his men (ibid., p. 28). In a circular Eicke sent to all concentration camp commandants, dated March 2, 1937, he wrote:

> We believe in God, but not in his son, for that would be idolatrous and paganistic. We believe in our Führer and in the greatness of our Fatherland. For these and nothing else we will fight. If we must therefore die, then not with 'Mary, pray for us.' We will depart as freely as we have lived. Our last breath: Adolf Hitler! (quoted in ibid., p. 29)

Eicke was obsessed with discipline, down to every last detail. One of the first things he did as head of the concentration camp in Dachau in 1933 was to weed out the sadists and bullies from the original guard unit, replacing them with "reliable, disciplined" SS personnel (ibid., p. 24).

In another example, during the division's period of occupation duty in France 1940–1941, Eicke reserved several brothels for the exclusive use of the *Totenkopf* division. He then issued orders warning all the men of the division that contracting venereal diseases would be considered a "racial crime," punishable by court-martial. In addition, he ordered the doctors within the division to report any cases of venereal disease to Eicke personally, so that he could take punitive measures (ibid., p. 126). Once Himmler learned of this, he was outraged. Eicke's order to the doctors was a violation of the Reich's civil laws, and Himmler considered it to be madness. Himmler even questioned Eicke's sanity and fitness to command the division (ibid., p. 127). This clearly shows that Eicke's idea of discipline was considered to be bordering on the absurd even by the *Reichsführer-SS*.

Eicke was not simply a ruthless disciplinarian though, he was also perceived as someone who stayed close to his men and shared their everyday lives. As previously stated (see page 214), while in the *Totenkopfverbände* he frequently spent time in the mess of the enlisted men. As division commander, Eicke led from the front, taking considerable risks, which eventually got him killed on the Eastern front in 1943 (ibid., p. 271). According to Janowitz and Shils (1948, p. 284), the degree to which the troops identify with their leaders can have a significant impact on the cohesion of the unit. In Eicke's case, it was clear that he went to great lengths to avoid distancing himself from

them. His decision to do away with many military formalities arguably contributed to this as well.

Attitude toward nononcombatants (secondary)	Attitude toward risk (primary)		
	Aggressive	Balanced	Cautious
Protective			
Indifferent			
Hostile	*most effective* **Totenkopfverbände**		

Figure 30: Convergence/divergence, *Totenkopfverbände*

Thus, we can conclude that the *Totenkopfverbände* were best represented by the Aggressive-Hostile categories (see Table 30). The recklessness, evident from the attitude towards avoidable losses during training, is a clear indication of the Aggressive stance. The systematic manner in which the *Totenkopfverbände* personnel were trained in not only the theories of racial supremacy, but also subjected to, and expected to participate in, violence against defenseless victims, shaped them into adherents of the Hostile approach. This made them a perfect choice to implement the atrocities planned by the Nazi regime. The extent of the crimes committed by the Third Reich shows just how potent this convergence was in terms of destructive capacity.

IMPACT OF TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURE

The *Totenkopfverbände* and the *Totenkopf* division enjoyed a High degree of autonomy, both formally and in practice (see figure 31). While both were deeply involved with the political and strategic layers, any attempts at interference were promptly stopped by Eicke, which ensured their continued autonomy throughout the time period studied.

Degree of actual autonomy	Degree of formal autonomy: High	Medium	Low
High	**Totenkopfverbände** **Totenkopf div.** entire period		
Medium			
Low			

Figure 31: Degrees of autonomy, *Totenkopfverbände*

This autonomy served the Third Reich well. The *Totenkopfverbände* were instrumental in the implementation of the Holocaust, by providing the personnel for the concentration camps, as well as by pioneering the techniques of mass execution.

Within the *Waffen-SS*, the *Totenkopf* division was even more reckless and brutal than the other *Waffen-SS* units, in particular during the first years of the war. While the *Totenkopf* division was not the only *Waffen-SS* unit to commit atrocities, it showed that it was unusually prone to engage in such practices, and on a larger scale than most other outfits, starting out as early as the Polish campaign and in France in 1940. According to Mitcham (2007, p. 140), the division was "[p]robably the most brutal German division to serve in World War II".

During the subsequent enlargement reforms, *Totenkopf* units spread throughout the organization as they were incorporated into other *Waffen-SS* units. While this was most likely not the only reason for the brutal acts committed by other *Waffen-SS* units, the uniquely ruthless and brutal tactical-level subculture that flourished within the *Totenkopf* division and *Totenkopfverbände* must have reinforced any such tendencies.

It is also important to note that officers from the *Totenkopf* division were transferred back into the *Totenkopfverbände* to serve as commandants of concentration camps after the division had been severely decimated on the Eastern front in 1942. No less than seven comman-

dants came from the *Totenkopf* division during the second half of the war (Orth, 2010, p. 53). Thus, the links between the *Totenkopf* division and the *Totenkopfverbände* were upheld throughout the war.

Professionals in Murder, Torture and Brutality. The *Totenkopfverbände* developed their methods during the early 1930s, and created a tactical-level subculture to support their implementation in all the concentration camps of the Reich. One of the pioneers of the concentration camp system, Hans Loritz, met Eicke in 1933. The two men got along well, and Loritz soon requested to serve under Eicke in Dachau, a request that was granted in 1934 (Riedel, 2010, p. 561). That same year, when Eicke was promoted to the post of Inspector of Concentration Camps, he appointed Loritz commandant of the Esterwegen camp. Loritz, who was as enthusiastic as Eicke with regards to the concepts of racial supremacy and ruthlessness, ensured that the Jews in his custody at Esterwegen were treated particularly harshly (ibid., p. 562). Loritz excelled as commandant of Esterwegen, and Eicke was most pleased with his performance. In 1936, Loritz was promoted again, this time he became commandant of Dachau, at that time the largest of the camps. Again, Loritz implemented the racial policies of the Reich with brutal zeal, making sure that the guards were even more ruthless, particularly against the Jewish inmates. One of his "innovations" in Dachau was to implement breaks after every two blows an inmate received from a rod, to prolong the ordeal and make the victim suffer more. His enthusiastic new subordinates took turns meting out blows, trying to impress their new commandant (ibid., p. 565).

Two other disciples of Eicke, Hermann Baranowski and Karl Koch, ensured that the other two large concentration camps, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, underwent similar escalations in the level of violence in 1938 (ibid., p. 564). In order to ensure that candidates for higher posts at the concentration camps corresponded to the ideals promoted by Eicke, they were frequently sent to Dachau or Buchenwald, where they would serve under Loritz or Koch during a trial period (ibid., p. 565). In this manner, the tactical-level subculture created by Eicke in Dachau was cemented throughout the concentration camp system in the latter half of the 1930s.

When the *Totenkopfverbände* were assigned to handle other, even more brutal, tasks they proved themselves to be just as useful to the regime as they were in the camps. During the campaign in Poland, the *SS Brandenburg* regiment immediately set out on a campaign of murder and destruction. In Bydgoszcz the regiment executed circa 800 Polish

civilians who had been put on a death list by the *Sicherheitspolizei* and SD. Other *Totenkopfverbände* units were equally enthusiastic about their assignments, and the battalion *SS Heimwehr Danzig* shot 33 civilians in the village of Ksiazki while another battalion, *SS Wachsturmbann Eimann*, massacred people in the area between Karthaus and Neustadt in the former Polish Corridor (Sydnor, 1977, p. 41).

Two other original *Totenkopfverbände* regiments, *SS Oberbayern* and *SS Thuringen*, also received orders to conduct operations against Polish Jews and civilians. When the original *Totenkopfverbände* units left Poland in early October 1939, they were replaced by newer *Totenkopfverbände* units that had been created in 1938. These newer units turned out to be just as willing to participate in atrocities as the older ones. One of these regiments, *Totenkopfstandarte 12*, sent a company to the town of Owińsk, where it executed more than 1,000 patients from a local psychiatric hospital (ibid., p. 42).

These atrocities were not expressions of spontaneous brutality, but part of an overall strategy, devised and ordered by Hitler himself (ibid., p. 43). However, they were also typical of the *Totenkopfverbände* units committing them. While the *Totenkopfverbände* were not the only German units responsible for massacres and brutality, some German army units seem to have been quite surprised when they encountered *Totenkopfverbände* personnel carrying out their assigned genocidal tasks. For example, see the previously mentioned (see page 211) case where an army division court-martialed two SS men for killing fifty Jews, sentencing them to prison for manslaughter, for nine and three years, respectively. The prosecution even suggested that capital punishment for murder would be the most appropriate course of action for these men (*Nuremberg Trial Proceedings, Vol. 20* 1946). This shows that a special type of unit was required to implement these orders, at least this early in the war, when many other units might have been reluctant to do so. In another example, from mid-1941, a Lieutenant-Colonel of the regular army, Helmuth Groscurth, discovered a number of small children who were due to be executed by an SS-*Sonderkommando*. Groscurth immediately sought out the local SS commanders, wrote a scathing report, and then managed to postpone the executions pending a decision from Army Group South. In the interim, he ensured that water and bread was delivered to the children. The following morning, Field Marshal von Reichenau intervened, presumably after having been contacted by the SS, and ensured that the executions could proceed as planned. Groscurth was criticized for comparing the executions with "the atrocities of the enemy" in his report (Hilberg, 1993, p. 60).

Once the war against the Soviet Union had been launched in mid-1941, the *Totenkopfverbände* were given the task of executing some 10,000 Soviet prisoners of war who had been defined as political commissars, party functionaries, intellectuals, Jews or active communists (Riedel, 2010, p. 571–572). Loritz turned out to be the man for the job, devising entirely new methods to kill large number of prisoners of war without their even realizing what was going on until it was too late, by tricking the captured men into leaning against a wall, which had holes in it, supposedly to measure their height. SS personnel in the adjacent room then shot the victims in the back of the neck (ibid., p. 571–572).

Another problem arose during the period of accelerated killing, when the men assigned to shoot people reacted adversely to participating in mass executions. While they did not refuse, the experience was in some cases so traumatic that they became ineffective after a short period of time. These *Einsatzgruppe* units were mobile ad-hoc formations serving directly under the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA), rather than being *Totenkopfverbände* units (which served under the WVHA, see the footnote on page 208). Consequently, only a few Einsatzgruppen were composed of *Totenkopfverbände* personnel, which may explain this reaction. One of Eicke's disciples, Rudolf Höss, was in 1941 given the task by Himmler of finding a more effective solution for the killing (d'Almeida, 2013, p. 55–56). Höss, who had served under Eicke in Dachau in 1933, and later became the commandant of Auschwitz, then devised the procedure for gassing people using the substance known as *Zyklon B* (Shirer, 1977b, p. 78–79).

Reckless Bravery and Complete Ruthlessness in Combat. The men of the *Totenkopf* division had their first real chance to prove themselves in combat during the campaign in France in 1940. Their own peculiar tactical-level subculture soon manifested itself in their combat performance. Utterly devoted to the heroic ideal, the men of the division took reckless risks on several occasions. Near Arras, the tank destroyer battalion of the *Totenkopf* division discovered that their 37mm guns were near useless against the British Matilda tanks. They then attacked the tanks singly and in pairs using hand grenades, a suicidal tactic, which resulted in heavy casualties (Sydnor, 1977, p. 95). The British armored attack was finally stopped when the more sensible solution of using artillery against the British tanks was employed. Shortly thereafter, the *Totenkopf* division was ordered by its army superiors to probe the bank of a canal, searching for weak spots in which to mount a crossing. Eicke, however, decided to immediately cross the canal,

without reconnoitering first. The SS men ran into stiff British resistance, and had to withdraw under heavy fire, taking additional unnecessary losses. The day after, Eicke ordered yet another canal crossing, which he himself led in an amateurish fashion, pistol in hand. After taking yet more losses, the men of the *Totenkopf* division managed to secure a bridgehead after about an hour. However, Eicke had once again been too rash, as he then received orders to fall back and abandon the bridgehead, to prepare defensive positions instead. When the British troops noticed that the SS men were retreating back across the canal, they opened up an intense barrage that forced Eicke's men to retreat under somewhat chaotic circumstances, once more taking heavy casualties (ibid., p. 99). The division's superior officer from the army, General Erich Hoepner, met up with Eicke once he was safely back on the other side of the canal. Hoepner was furious, and reprimanded Eicke in front of his own men, accusing him of disregarding losses and according to Sydnor (ibid., p. 100) even called him a "butcher". Eicke, on the other hand, is alleged to have stated that casualties were irrelevant as long as a position was being held (ibid., p. 99). In the ten-day period from May 19th to May 29th, 1940, the *Totenkopf* division suffered 1,140 casualties, including circa 300 officers, along with large numbers of vehicles, anti-tank guns, motorcycles, and other types of equipment (ibid., p. 112).

After the French campaign, the next combat assignment for the *Totenkopf* division was the gigantic assault on the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941. When the German offensive toward Leningrad got bogged down, and the Soviets started to launch fierce counterattacks, the *Totenkopf* division played a crucial role. In late September 1941, the Soviets planned to launch a massive counteroffensive against the flank and rear of the German armies besieging Leningrad. The main thrust of this operation was to drive a wedge between the *Totenkopf* division and the German 30. Infantry Division (ibid., p. 188). During the initial attack, large numbers of Soviet troops charged the *Totenkopf* division, supported by Soviet aircraft pouring down machine-gun fire and rockets on Eicke's men (the *Luftwaffe* fighter planes that were supposed to provide cover had been withdrawn to support another area of operations). Several units were isolated from the rest of the division and surrounded, but kept on fighting. Nevertheless, the *Totenkopf* division managed to absorb the blow and, toward the end of the day, counterattack and re-take lost ground (ibid., p. 189). For days, the Soviets kept attacking in strength, but were still unable to break the division. Finally, the Soviets had to give up on this idea, and the

Totenkopf division had thus played a key role in ensuring the continued German operations on the northern part of the front. The success came at a high price, however. The division, as in France, suffered heavy losses in the process (Sydnor, 1977, p. 197). When reinforcements were sent, Eicke complained that they were not sufficiently racially pure, even though they were ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*), and that they lacked the proper Nazi convictions (ibid., p. 205). This was a clear reflection of the fanaticism still very much alive within the division's tactical-level subculture in late 1941.

One enlisted anti-tank gunner, *SS-Sturmmann* Fritz Christen, the sole survivor in his battery, continued to fight alone against the Soviet onslaught for 72 hours, gathering ammunition from knocked out anti-tank guns in the vicinity during the night, and firing wildly during the day. After three days of fighting, other *Totenkopf* troops were finally able to link up with him. By then, he had personally knocked out thirteen tanks and killed nearly 100 enemy soldiers. For this feat, Christen was awarded the Iron Cross, First Class and the Knight's Cross, the latter from Hitler himself (ibid., p. 195). According to Sydnor (ibid., p. 196), the willingness to fight against impossible odds and to die rather than retreat in the face of "racial inferiors" proved crucial for the *Totenkopf* division's ability to salvage seemingly hopeless situations throughout the war.

In addition to being reckless, the *Totenkopf* division was also exceptionally ruthless in its dealings with both prisoners of war and civilians. According to Neitzel (2013, p. 322), the *Totenkopf* division was the unit responsible for the highest number of war crimes in France 1940. For example, in one of the first instances where members of the division took prisoners of war during the campaign in France, a four-man reconnaissance group from the division wounded a lone British motorcycle courier. The commander of the small group, an *SS-Obersturmführer* by the name of Harrer, then promptly executed the man with a shot to the head at point-blank range (Sydnor, 1977, p. 102).[15] Ironically, the same men involved in this incident, minus *SS-Obersturmführer* Harrer, were themselves captured later the same day. They managed to escape a few weeks later when the Allied forces in France crumbled, and reported that they had been well treated by the British, who had given them clean clothes, warm food, cigarettes, and protected them from a French mob intent on lynching them (ibid., p. 102).

[15] In the SS, the rank of *SS-Obersturmführer* was roughly the equivalent of a First Lieutenant in the US Army.

Only two days after Harrer's expedition, another atrocity took place, this time on a much larger scale, according to Sydnor (ibid., p. 106), "the most hideous wanton brutality committed during the German campaign of 1940". A unit from the *Totenkopf* division, led by *SS-Obersturmführer* Fritz Knöchlein, captured 100 British soldiers who surrendered at Le Paradis. Knöchlein then had all 100 of his prisoners lined up against a barn wall, and executed, using two heavy machine guns. The gunners continued to fire into the heap of bodies until every last one of them was quiet and unmoving. After that, Knöchlein's men fixed bayonets and searched among the bodies for any survivors, who were stabbed or shot in the head (ibid., p. 106). This continued for a full hour, until Knöchlein was satisfied that all the British soldiers were dead. Miraculously, two of the victims of the massacre survived, albeit with serious wounds. They managed to hide for a few days, and then surrender again, this time to a regular German army unit, which provided them with medical care and treated them well. One of them was later repatriated to Britain, while the other was sent to a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany for the remainder of the war. After the war, the testimonies of these two men contributed to Knöchlein being convicted of war crimes and sentenced to death by a British military tribunal (ibid., p. 107).

After the massacre, the army general Hoepner, still above Eicke in the chain of command, heard rumours of what had happened and ordered a full investigation. Hoepner had already issued an order clarifying to all his subordinates that killing prisoners of war would be considered murder by an army court-martial (ibid., p. 109). Nothing seems to have come of this investigation, however, which is hardly surprising, since by then the SS had secured judicial independence from the army (see page 211). It did, however, draw criticism from Himmler for being too conspicuous and forced Eicke to rein in his men to some extent (ibid., p. 109, 114). After this, the *Totenkopf* men managed to refrain from massacring white prisoners of war, but true to their ideology of racial supremacy, they did not extend this policy to enemy soldiers they considered to be "inferior." On several occasions, Eicke's troops refused to take French Moroccan and black troops prisoner, preferring instead to kill them on the spot (Sydnor, 1977, p. 117; Neitzel, 2013, p. 322).

SUMMARY

The tactical-level subculture of the *Totenkopfverbände* served as a foundation for the entire concentration camp system of the Reich as it grew in the 1930s, swallowing up increasing numbers of victims, while simultaneously requiring additional numbers of willing and effective perpetrators to serve its needs. Replacing individual and more or less spontaneous acts of violence with a systematic, regulated approach, it ensured that all concentration camps became places of intense terror, especially for Jews. Through a process designed to numb the guards to human suffering, which at the same time encouraged them to be brutal, it strove to eliminate any traces of compassion or sympathy that might have existed in the individuals serving in the camp system. Those who were "too soft" were weeded out, as were those who were undisciplined, in order to create an elite cadre within the SS, which would be more ruthless, more fanatical and more racially motivated than any other outfit in the Reich.

When the killing accelerated in 1942, as the Final Solution was to be implemented, the men of the *Totenkopfverbände* were perfectly suited to devise the methods for this task. The tactical-level subculture had begun to crumble by then, stressed by the rapid expansion in manpower as more and more men had been transferred out of the camps and into the *Totenkopf* division. Eicke's absence from the camps arguably contributed to this process as well. However, the legacy of brutality and eagerness to innovate new ways to kill survived. The extremely harsh discipline, on the other hand, was lost, and commandants as well as guards began to use their power for personal gratification as well as the systematic killing for which it was intended. Loritz was relieved of his command and sent to Norway as punishment for unauthorized use of prison labor for his own purposes (Riedel, 2010, p. 572). As previously stated (see page 216), even an old favorite of Eicke's, Karl Koch, turned to corruption and vice, for which he was eventually sentenced to death by an SS court-martial (*Nuremberg Trial Proceedings, Vol. 20* 1946). This shows how crucial Eicke's influence as focal point was. Without him, the *Totenkopfverbände* changed, although unfortunately the harsh brutality remained the same.

The *Totenkopf* division, enjoying Eicke's presence as commander, became the new bearer of the original *Totenkopfverbände* tactical-level subculture. On the battlefields where the division served, those norms and attitudes took a different and new expression, as the division pioneered atrocities as early as during the French campaign. During

the later expansion of the *Waffen-SS*, the men from the *Totenkopf* division were transferred to other units, existing as well as new ones, where their fanaticism and ideas could spread to others, albeit in a diluted form. While many units were fully capable of committing atrocities in the name of the Reich without any direct or indirect links to either the *Totenkopfverbände* or the *Totenkopf* division, the *Totenkopfverbände* were nevertheless influential as role-models for the ultimate Nazi fighting units: overtly political, fanatical and completely ruthless. They pioneered both large-scale atrocities against prisoners of war and civilians in war, as well as new methods for more efficiently executing the victims of the concentration camps. The case of the *Totenkopfverbände* serves as a chilling reminder of how tactical-level subcultures can be very effective tools in the hands of a ruthless regimes.

6.5

Summary of Case Pair

Charlie Company and the *Totenkopfverbände* both committed atrocities. The fact that Charlie Company's autonomy was formally limited specifically to prevent this did not stop it from carrying out these acts. In the first case, the acts were spontaneous and while tolerated, they were not sanctioned, nor were they desired. As shown, they were in fact formally prohibited. In the second case, the acts were not only sanctioned by the state, they were planned and ordered by the highest authority. The two cases highlight that atrocities can be committed both by fragmented, heterogeneous and dysfunctional units, as well as their polar opposite. The *Totenkopfverbände* units were highly cohesive, disciplined and operated very efficiently. As the examples Höss and Loritz show, members of the *Totenkopfverbände* even pioneered new techniques and procedures for tormenting and killing the victims of the Third Reich. In this sense, they went above and beyond the expectations of the Nazi regime. The most important lesson this brings is that tactical-level subcultures can produce atrocities in two different ways: either by being neglected, or by being specifically tailored for that purpose. As such, tactical-level subcultures can be a danger for democratic governments, as well as a horribly effective tool for ruthless authoritarian states.

RIVAL EXPLANATION: NATIONAL TRAITS

In both the Charlie Company and *Totenkopfverbände* cases, some have argued, directly or indirectly, that national traits had a decisive impact on the outcomes. For example the argument that the American national character, colored by the frontier spirit, where violence was commonplace and exercised constantly to fend off natives and threats to the settlers, made the Americans particularly prone to war and violence, and particularly ruthless against those perceived as savage and comparable to the Native Americans whom the settlers had fought (see for example Hilfrich, 2003).[16] Similarly, the highly controversial argument that Germans had embraced antisemitism already before the Nazi regime has been presented. According to this view, the Germans were, by and large, willing killers (see for example Goldhagen, 1997).

[16] A more indirect link between American national character and war/violence can also be found in for example (Lewis, 2007).

I will not delve deeper into these theories, since both my case studies provide evidence to the contrary. The empirical data in this chapter shows that there was opposition, or at least reluctance, to the atrocities among both Americans and Germans. Very few Germans dared to actively make a stand against the atrocities committed in the name of the Reich, but in cases where it was unclear whether they were actually sanctioned by the state, such as the prisoner-of-war massacres in France, the army actively intervened to punish the offenders. During the harsh and prolonged fighting on the Eastern front, the German army too was desensitized, and before long had implicated itself in war crimes. However, in France in 1940, the German army still seems to have respected the traditional ideals of how to treat prisoners and civilians. This is why it found the behavior of the *Totenkopf* division so outrageous.

In the case of Charlie Company, it seems quite clear that many units in both the US Army and US Marine Corps tolerated atrocities, albeit on a more limited scale than the one perpetrated in Song My. On the other hand, there were also individuals who clearly did not appreciate such behavior. The reaction of the new recruit who arrived at Charlie Company is telling, as is the intervention by the helicopter crews. The experienced officers of the Peers Commission clearly did not condone such behavior either, dispelling the idea of an American national character that would be particularly prone to produce such acts.

TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURES AS EXPLANATION

The dysfunctional tactical-level subculture of Charlie Company made it significantly more prone to commit atrocities, especially since the damaging influence from men like Calley was boosted rather than counteracted. While it was far from the only American unit to commit acts of indiscriminate killing and sexual violence, its particular propensity for such behavior was the factor that explains the unusual scope of the massacre perpetrated at Song My.

In the case of the *Totenkopfverbände*, the tactical-level subculture was harmonious, but served a destructive purpose. The tendency among a number of soldiers to avoid taking active part in the atrocities, which was apparent in the case of Charlie Company, was effectively and constantly addressed by the tactical-level subculture in the *Totenkopfverbände*. Anyone who was unwilling to emulate the example of Eicke, Loritz and Koch, along with the other role-models of brutality and

ruthlessness, were weeded out and subjected to draconian punishments. However, the tactical-level subculture of the *Totenkopfverbände* did not only emphasize violence, it was also deeply ideological and fanatically obsessed with obedience, discipline and sacrifice. This not only enabled the men to perpetrate the most horrendous crime in the history of mankind, it also made them reckless and brutal on the battlefield. As such, they never tried to adhere to the pre-war codes of conduct that still had a strong influence on the German army on the western front in 1940. Instead, they pioneered the practices of systematically executing prisoners of war, in particular those who were considered "racially inferior" by their ideology of white supremacy.

It is also interesting to compare the private relations of the Charlie Company troops and the *Totenkopfverbände* guards. The Americans were in many cases severely traumatized after the massacre, and their private relationships in many cases suffered. The *Totenkopfverbände* guards, on the other hand, enjoyed relatively normal private relations during and after the massacres, thanks to the efforts of the SS to normalize and sanitize the killings in which they participated. Whereas many Charlie Company veterans became more of a liability to American society after Vietnam, suffering from severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), indications of similar trauma among *Totenkopfverbände* guards are almost non-existent in the literature and documents related to these events. Quite a few former *Einsatszgruppen* members complained about psychological trauma during the war, but similar experiences among concentration camp personnel are very difficult to find. This is a testament to the truly horrifying effect of the tactical-level subculture of the *Totenkopfverbände*: not only did it enable the concentration camp guards to take part in genocide, it also seems to have stripped them of any remorse, even in the long term.

7

Pair IV: In the Name of Peace

THE UN MILITARY mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990s has come to represent a failure of gigantic proportions. Thousands of peacekeepers from dozens of nations managed neither to protect the lives of civilians, nor to keep the peace. The conflict raged on for years while the UN peacekeepers were little more than bystanders. In the summer of 1995, this culminated in the infamous massacre at Srebrenica. The massacre became the ultimate manifestation of the UN's inability to lead and coordinate this type of operation. Within months of this disaster, the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was replaced by the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR).

The Dutch soldiers who were supposed to keep the inhabitants and refugees in the Srebrenica enclave safe were arguably the most despised of all the UN peacekeepers after 1995. Their spectacular failure has been attributed to many factors in the years since, most notably the dysfunctional UN command hierarchy and the lack of a clear mandate. However, what most studies fail to note is that within the same area (Sector North-East), another battalion operated in a completely different manner. The Swedish-Danish-Norwegian battalion Nordbat 2, responsible for the Tuzla Safe Area, played by its own rules. It engaged the parties to the conflict in several combat operations, employed unorthodox methods to build relations with the civilian population, and openly defied both its own government and the UN hierarchy. Ultimately, Nordbat 2 succeeded where most of its other counterparts failed. While the UNPROFOR deployment is either ignored or a source of controversy to this day in many other countries, most notably the Netherlands, the situation is exactly the opposite in

Sweden and Denmark. Two of the best-known officers from Nordbat 2, Ulf Henricsson and Lars Møller, have achieved almost legendary status in their home countries, resulting in book publications, lectures and even appearances in TV shows. Nordbat 2 and Dutchbat had exactly the same mandate, and the same UN command hierarchy, and were both subject to political micromanagement from their respective governments. Nevertheless, Nordbat 2 was able to achieve most of its mission objectives, overcoming significant difficulties. Manned mostly by ex-conscript volunteers, Nordbat 2 outperformed the all-professional Dutchbat. I argue that the key explanation for this lies in the different tactical-level subcultures of these two units.

7.1 Sources

For this chapter, data concerning Nordbat 2 were retrieved from a mix of autobiographical accounts, interviews, reports, official documents from the governments and armed forces in question as well as UN documents. The autobiography written by Ulf Henricsson (2013) was used to provide an insight into his experiences and motives as the first commander of Nordbat 2, since he had a major impact on the tactical-level subculture of the newly-formed battalion. To this was added short anecdotal stories written by lower-level leaders and enlisted men, published by the Swedish National Defence College (Tillberg et al., 2007). Four interviews have been conducted to establish a more comprehensive picture: two Danish officers added to the data on the Danish contribution to Nordbat 2, while one former Swedish officer and one former enlisted man provided more detailed information about the situation in Nordbat 2 and Bosnia-Herzegovina 1993–1995.

Most of the data concerning Dutchbat was found in the very extensive report on Dutchbat compiled by the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation (*Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie*, NIOD), published in 2002. I have chosen not to pursue any interviews with Dutchbat veterans for several reasons, primarily because 40 percent of them are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) directly related to their experiences in Srebrenica ("Dealing With Genocide: A Dutch Peacekeeper Remembers Srebrenica" July 12 2005). Rather than burdening them with additional interviews, I have found the testimonies already provided to the NIOD, which are the result of far more

extensive efforts than I would be able to undertake, to be sufficient in that regard. I have also used several interviews published in various news media and magazines over the years that have passed since 1995, and an autobiographical chapter from an anthology on military command, written by one of the former Dutchbat commanders who served before the massacre. The UN Security Council resolutions have been retrieved from the online UN document archives.

7.2

A Brief Note on UNPROFOR 1992–1995

Following the secession of Slovenia from the Yugoslavian federation and the clashes between Croatia and Serbia in 1991, the main conflict in the Balkans came to be centered in Bosnia-Herzegovina. From the spring of 1992 until the end of 1995, there was a "full-scale civil war" (Paris, 2004, p. 98). Originally, the war pitted the former Yugoslavian federal army (JNA) against forces intent on defending the newly-proclaimed independent republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) and Croatian Defence Council (HVO) mobilized, joining forces with the JNA and the Croatian army (HV) respectively (Kaldor, 2007, p. 34). Following the declaration of independence in 1992, the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ABiH) was formed to defend the new government. Soon, it came to be regarded as the primary military organization for the Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks). Although the JNA was formally multiethnic, it was dominated by Serbs and Montegrins, and took its orders from Belgrade. However, even in the Serbian heartland, willing soldiers in sufficient numbers were not easy to find. Consequently, recruitment became a serious problem due to large-scale defections and draft evasion. As early as 1992, during the war against Croatia, up to 80 percent of the draftees in the major Serbian cities, including Belgrade, failed to report for duty (Lampe, 2000, p. 373). In some cases, military commanders solved the problem by recruiting replacements from even the most notorious paramilitary organizations. The paramilitaries had in some cases grown out of the previously existing Territorial Defence units and recruited volunteers by appealing to various unsavory elements the larger military organizations either failed to attract or preferred to avoid, such as extreme nationalists and criminals (*NIOD I* 2002, p. 76–77). The paramilitaries were willing to engage in ethnic cleansing, harassment of civilians and similar reprehensible activities, maintaining

a convenient distance between themselves and the political leadership (Honig and Both, 1996, p. 74).

When Nordbat 2 and Dutchbat were deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina in late 1993/early 1994, the VRS and HVO as well as numerous paramilitary outfits operated more or less independently. Criminal activities were an important source of motivation. Being the archetype of what Kaldor calls a "New War" (Kaldor, 1999, p. 41), many aspects of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina were driven by a multitude of local agendas, based on financial incentives, quests for power and personal vendettas. The situation developed over the two following years, a process in which key political actors strengthened their control.

Throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, groups affiliated with the parties established checkpoints along the roads, which they used to prevent UNPROFOR from responding to local emergencies. These checkpoints were also used for illicit extraction of goods and cash from civilians and NGO aid convoys. Throughout the conflict, cease-fires and offensives occurred with regular intervals, with the associated shifts between relative calm and chaotic combat operations. An ineffective command organization, confusion over the mandate and recurring attempts by the parties to take UNPROFOR personnel hostage marred the UN operations from the beginning and lasted until NATO took over command responsibility in 1995.

7.3

Nordbat 2, 1993–1995

> Once the order had sunk in, I slumped and thought with resignation: "So this is where it's going to be, the final battle. What a crappy and unglamorous place to leave this earth". But we're doing the right thing, we're protecting the hospital. We're the guardians of morality in this insane and sick valley. If we fail now, we lose perspective, our footing, our human dignity and our mission would have no meaning.
>
> — Anders Karlsson, Nordbat 2 (BA01)[1]

Nordbat 2, using the suffix number 2 to separate it from the Nordbat unit stationed in Macedonia at the time of its formation in 1993, was composed of a Swedish mechanized battalion supported by a Danish tank company and a Norwegian element comprised of one field hospital company and a helicopter squadron. From its first deployment, Nordbat 2 quickly established a reputation for being aggressively uncompromising when faced with the friction imposed by the common delaying/obstructing/harassing tactics employed by the parties against the UNPROFOR units. Even though UNPROFOR was widely considered a failed mission, Nordbat 2 managed to maintain its unflinching approach to threats and its determination to act against violations of human rights. The battalion came to be known as "the lucky battalion" since not a single soldier was killed in action during its deployment, despite repeated attacks employing both artillery and anti-tank missiles. It was also called "Shootbat" (Englund, 1994) for its habit of returning fire, making use of its considerable firepower.

Ulf Henricsson, the first battalion commander, was awarded the Swedish Armed Forces medal for international service in gold in 1997 for his service in Bosnia-Herzegovina 1993–1994. The award in question is dedicated to personnel who have served with distinction in combat or under warlike circumstances during international operations. He was celebrated as a hero and later made appearances in various TV shows. Over the years, the public praise for Nordbat 2 and its commanders has not been weakened. In 2010, Swedish public radio channel P3 broadcast

[1] In the quote, Karlsson is describing his feelings during the stand-off at the hospital in Bakoviçi, 1993. The quote was originally published in Tillberg and Victor Tillberg (2007, p. 12), translated from Swedish by the author.

a documentary about Nordbat 2, in which they were portrayed as steadfast and determined. According to the radio show, the Swedes left with their good reputation intact (Johnsson, 2010).

While Henricsson is the most remembered of the battalion commanders, it should be noted that his two immediate successors followed his lead quite closely. His immediate successor, Christer Svensson, continued in the same spirit as Henricsson while commanding the second rotation, known as BA02. During BA02, the Danish tank company engaged Serb positions and vehicles in a ferocious firefight, an incident later known as *Operation Bøllebank* (see p. 251). Svensson was succeeded by Peter Lundberg, who commanded BA03. During the early months of his command, the last major offensive operation took place, Operation Amanda. After Lundberg and BA03 came Göran Arlefalk and BA04. This marked a significant shift toward a more passive Nordbat 2. The previously coveted freedom of movement became severely restricted. BA04 was eventually replaced by BA05, which was to be the last battalion to serve under the auspices of UNPROFOR. On the 20th of December 1995, BA05 was transferred to IFOR and placed under NATO command. A new era began, during which IFOR as a whole took a considerably more active role than its UN predecessors. In Sweden and Denmark, the success of BA01 and BA02 in particular have become a symbol of national pride.

FORMATIVE FACTORS

The Swedish Armed Forces, which provided most of the commanders and the majority of the personnel for Nordbat 2, had in 1993 a strong heritage of formalized autonomy in the shape of *uppdragstaktik*, a direct word-for-word translation of *Auftragstaktik*. The implementation of *uppdragstaktik* was a consequence of the observed German tactical innovations during WWII. Senior Swedish Army officers were analyzing the trends in warfare with a special emphasis on the German tactical behavior even before WWII had ended (see for example Ehrensvärd, 1943, p. 49–52). In the 1982 tactics manual for the army (*Arméreglemente del 2: Taktik* 1982), which was the most up-to-date edition in 1993–1994, it is clearly stated that:

> "The ambition and ability on behalf of our commanders and soldiers to act independently, and to shoulder responsibility, in combination with suitable tactics and good knowledge of the terrain, provides us with the means to seize the initiative and achieve success even against considerable forces. One

> condition is that the commanders allow their subordinates to act independently under their own responsibility". [this and all subsequent quotes from AR2 have been translated from Swedish by the author] (ibid., 3:6)

The same manual also states that "Indecisiveness and lack of action usually has more severe implications than if a commander makes a mistake regarding how to proceed" (ibid., 6:12). This served to inculcate in Swedish officers a spirit of action, knowing that they would be more likely to be forgiven for doing something wrong than for doing nothing at all. They also knew that in the war scenario they were training for, conditions would be chaotic and the enemy would have vastly superior numbers at his disposal. They were trained to cope with the unexpected and always to be prepared to take action. They were also solely responsible for the consequences of their actions. As stated in AR2: "The commander is responsible for accomplishing the mission objectives and alone bears the responsibility his command entails" (ibid., 6:4).

The international missions in which the Swedish International Forces were deployed during the Cold War were, with the notable exception of the Congo mission in 1960–1963, according to Thakur's (2006, p. 39) definition, of the "traditional" type. This typically meant that the UN forces maintained a relatively passive presence, manning a buffer zone, acting more as a physical obstacle than an active party. Such was the nature of the UNEF I (Sinai/Gaza), UNEF II (Sinai), UNIFIL (Lebanon) and UNFICYP (Cyprus) missions. While a Swedish contingent served in the more complex and ultimately failed UNITAF mission in Somalia, the Swedes there served as hospital staff and never came into direct contact with the hostile parties (*Truppinsatser*). In a 1992 report by the Swedish Defence Research Establishment, FOA (from 2001 known as the Swedish Defence Research Agency, FOI), it is stated that operations will likely require an increasing degree of enforcement, as opposed to the consensus-based approach that was the previous standard (Engnér, 1992, p. 58). This report reflects the growing awareness in the Swedish defense establishment that the nature of UN peacekeeping operations were changing, but no concrete conclusions were presented. The Danish Army, however, had participated in similar missions, and had been deployed in Croatia as early as 1992. Nevertheless, when the decision was made to form Nordbat 2, it was not yet clear that a Danish element would be included. Consequently, the Danish experiences had a very limited impact on Nordbat 2. The most influential formative factor

was the strong influence of *uppdragstaktik* on personnel on all levels, as will be evident later in this chapter.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The strategic objectives for Nordbat 2 were characterized by a considerable degree of ambiguity. The appointed commander, Ulf Henricsson (2013, p. 19), stated that even ten years after the mission, he still did not know exactly what the strategic objectives had been. According to Henricsson, Carl Bildt, who was prime minister in 1994 when the decision to deploy Nordbat 2 was taken, told him in 2004 that the Swedish government wanted to convey to the rest of Europe that Sweden was not a "free rider." According to Bildt, this image of Sweden was held by influential persons in Western Europe, based on the experiences of WWII and the Cold War. By sending a unit that was larger than that of most NATO members, Sweden had an opportunity to improve the reputation of its foreign policy (ibid., p. 20).

The strategic objectives can thus be identified as support to the UN mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina, specifically in the area surrounding Tuzla. The overriding raison d'être for the UN mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina was arguably to protect civilians, and to alleviate their suffering by providing humanitarian support. This was how it was portrayed in Swedish media before the first rotation of Nordbat 2 was deployed (see for example "Rädslan finns inför FN-uppdrag i Bosnien" June 28 1993). Once the battalion was in place, this focus remained and if anything, became more central ("Efter överstens larmsignal" February 2 1994). Thus, I argue, the main strategic objective was to protect the civilian population, while simultaneously maintaining a UN presence to watch over the parties to the conflict and remind them that the international community was watching. Of these, however, the most crucial priority must have been to protect the civilians.

As a concrete example, when the third rotation of Nordbat 2 was deployed on October 1st 1994, its objectives were (listed in Lennartsson, 2002, p. 11):

- Provide humanitarian assistance through humanitarian activities and medical support
- Monitor military activity along the confrontation line within the Area of Interest

- Monitor the Tuzla Safe Area through presence and in cooperation with UNMO, ECMM, UNHCR, and NGOs[2]
- Be prepared to clear snow from the main roads within the Area of Responsibility

Based on the above, I argue that the type of unit required to fulfill these strategic objectives would ideally be Aggressive-Protective. Firstly, an Aggressive approach is required since the UN troops would, most of the time, be in very exposed situations, in which hostile elements would enjoy considerable superiority in terms of firepower and troops. In addition, the sheer complexity of the situation would make it difficult to identify situations in which risk-taking would be warranted, as opposed to situations in which risk-taking should be avoided. Since the UN troops would not normally be involved in combat operations, the risk associated with an Aggressive stance would be significantly mitigated, while at the same time it would enable the unit to act decisively by simply forcing hostile elements to take action instead of allowing them to impose delays and friction (which were common tactics in Bosnia-Herzegovina as early as 1993). In addition, this would be the most effective way to demonstrate resolve and willingness to take an active part in the peacekeeping efforts, along the lines of Bildt's secondary strategic objective, to improve Sweden's reputation in Western Europe.

Secondly, the unit should be Protective, since the main reason for the intervention is to protect civilians. If the unit is not willing to go to considerable lengths to achieve this, then the justification for deploying the unit at all is questionable. In peacekeeping/peace enforcement operations of the kind described in this chapter, there are no military objectives that supercede the protection of civilians in priority.

CHALLENGES

The UN mandate in effect during the UNPROFOR mission had several contradictory and limiting aspects, making it difficult to implement effectively (*NIOD III* 2002, p. 50). While the UN peacekeepers were authorized to use force in self-defense or to defend civilians against attack, the gray areas of the mandate provided the parties to the conflict with considerable room for maneuver. Most importantly, they were able to

[2]The original Swedish sentence says "Övervaka," which I have translated to "Monitor." However, it should be noted that "Övervaka" implies observing with the intent to enforce compliance. This nuance is difficult to get across in a translation but is particularly important with respect to the Safe Area.

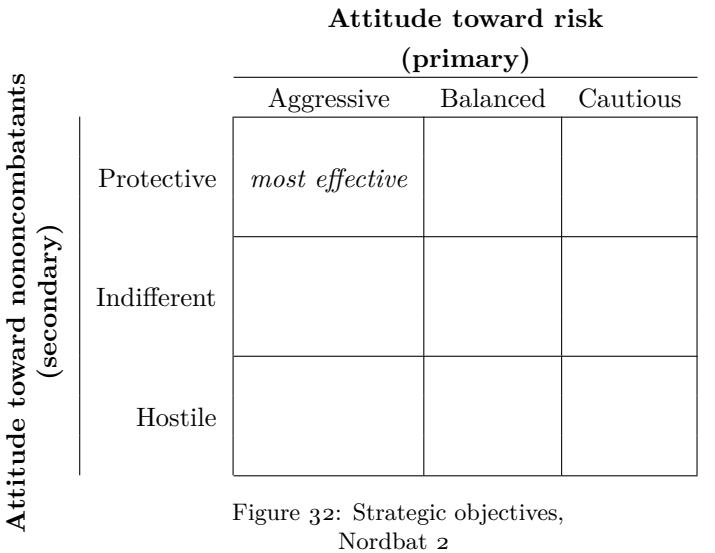

Figure 32: Strategic objectives, Nordbat 2

make incremental moves, issue ultimatums and take peacekeepers as hostages, which complicated the situation. During the peacekeeping missions in Cyprus, the Sinai and Gaza as well as in the Lebanon, the peacekeepers had been supposed to keep the parties of these conflicts separated, thus preventing an escalation and a subsequent return to open hostilities. This mindset also guided the mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina, even though the policy of objectivity and non-intervention became considerably more difficult to uphold. The volatile situation in the country came as surprise to the peacekeepers, who had to decide to what extent they would accept risks as opposed to taking a step back. Hostage-taking, road blocks and ambushes became increasingly common challenges during the 1990s. Responding to these challenges became a matter of finding a balance between force and passivity.

The command structure of UNPROFOR was another challenge for Nordbat 2. It was impractical at best and the different levels occasionally had differences in opinion over how UNPROFOR should act. At the strategic level, there were both the UN headquarters in New York and the various national governments, of which the latter took precedence. At the operational level, there was the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb, followed by the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo and Kiseljak, and finally the Sector North-East Command

in Tuzla. The Bosnia-Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo was known as Bosnia-Herzegovina Command Forward while the detachment in Kiseljak was known as Bosnia-Herzegovina Command Main (*NIOD II* 2002, p. 9). The Main command, led by the chief of staff of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, dealt with UNPROFOR operations in the country, while the Forward command, led by the Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander, conducted negotiations with the parties at the strategic level. Communications between these two commands was so poor that the commander and his chief of staff were frequently out of touch with each other (ibid., p. 9). Sector North-East, an HQ unit below Bosnia-Herzegovina Command Main, was established in March 1994 and led by a Swedish Brigadier General by the name of Ridderstad.

The Rules of Engagement (ROE) Nordbat 2 was supposed to adhere to originated at UNPROFOR's operational level. The Force Commander of UNPROFOR in Zagreb issued a first set of ROEs in March 1992. These rules were amended in July 1993 and then again in June 1994. UNPROFOR was authorized to use weapons to defend itself; other UN personnel and persons; or land under UN protection in case of a direct attack (ibid., p. 17). Weapons could also be used to resist violent attempts to prevent UNPROFOR from carrying out its tasks. UNPROFOR was in addition authorized to use weapons to prevent incursions into the Safe Areas. Initially this only applied to Croatia, but after the amendments in July 1993 and June 1994, all Safe Areas were included (ibid., p. 17).

The ROEs were comprised of seven rules, each of which had multiple options. The Force Commander would then decide which option would be appropriate under normal conditions. There is considerable ambiguity and a fair amount of complexity included in the rules. For example, *NIOD II* (2002, p. 18) describes rule four as follows:

> The fourth rule prescribed the response to hostile action in which UNPROFOR troops were taken under fire. In that case, there were two possible responses. The first option for a unit under fire was to immediately take protective measures, make observations and report to superiors. The commanding officer on location would then warn the aggressor that force would be used and make necessary preparations for doing so (as option c of the third rule). The firing of warning shots was authorized. If the hostile action did not cease and the UNPROFOR unit was in a life-threatening situation, the next higher commanding officer could give the order to open fire. This last action in effect comprised the second option

> for responding to hostile action. Next to these options, the fourth rule also explicitly stated that retreating, breaking out or escaping were also allowed, as were staying put and defending oneself.

The fifth rule seems to overlap considerably, since it concerns how UNPROFOR may react to "hostile action":

> The fifth rule concerned self-defence against hostile action. In these situations, protective measures had to be taken immediately and direct shots could be fired.

Making the whole matter even more confusing, lower-level commanders could disregard the Force Commander's instructions. However, *NIOD II* (2002, p. 18) states that UNPROFOR in general adhered to the following standard:

> In UNPROFOR, the standard procedure was to carry semi-loaded weapons when leaving the compound (rules 1 and 2, option b). In case of a hostile threat without force, UNPROFOR would remain in place (rule 3, option b); the standard response to a hostile threat with force was to give out a warning that force would be used and if necessary to fire warning shots (rule 4). In response to enemy fire, UNPROFOR would shoot in self-defence (rule 5), but would not disarm civilians, paramilitary troops or soldiers (rule 6, option a) and would not get its [heavy] weapons ready in the presence of the conflicting parties (rule 7, option a).

As if this was not enough, several additional rules were added to further restrict the use of force. Most importantly, UNPROFOR troops were permitted to fire in self-defense only after they had verbally ordered the aggressor to cease firing. If that failed to have an effect, the UNPROFOR soldier was supposed to fire a warning shot, and only after that was direct fire permissible (ibid., p. 18).

PERSONNEL, COMMANDERS AND EQUIPMENT

Nordbat 2 was a pure ad-hoc unit created for the specific purpose of being deployed on a peacekeeping mission to Bosnia. Initially, the size of the Swedish contingent of the force, 850 troops, was determined. Then, Colonel Ulf Henricsson was asked whether he would accept the position as unit commander. Henricsson proceeded by determining the

composition of the force, taking into account the political pressure to create a multinational Scandinavian force (Henricsson, 2013, p. 36). He and his Danish counterparts both wanted to include a tank company, since it would enable Nordbat 2 to hold its ground even under fire, and enable the Nordic troops to return fire with precision (ibid., p. 37–38). Henricsson (ibid., p. 22) refers to his own background in the armored corps of the Swedish army as a reason for wanting to have fully mechanized rifle companies, meaning that they would ride in armored vehicles, even though other senior officers argued that regular, unprotected trucks would suffice. The three mechanized rifle companies, each comprised of 171 troops, were equipped with PBV 302 armored personnel carriers (APCs) armed with 20 mm automatic cannons. In addition to these, Henricsson managed to lease 25 Finnish Sisu Pasi wheeled armored vehicles, armed with heavy machine guns, for use as ambulances and supply trucks.

The mechanized rifle companies carried their usual complement of individual assault rifles and support weapons, i.e. squad machine guns, sniper rifles and grenade launchers. In addition, they brought nine advanced RBS-56 anti-tank guided missile systems, equipped with thermal sights. This provided the rifle companies with the ability to destroy hostile tanks and enabled them to observe troop and vehicle movements at night.

The Danish tank company came equipped with Leopard 1A5(DK) tanks originally purchased from Germany in 1976–1977, modernized in 1991–1992. These tanks had a powerful and accurate main gun, as well as thermal sights, allowing them to operate in the dark. Once the first full-strength version of Nordbat 2 had been set up, it comprised a brigade-sized staff of 45, a supply/HQ company of 319, three rifle companies of 171 troops each and the 125 troops of the Danish tank company, a total of 1,002 personnel.

The Swedish units sent abroad on deployment had to undergo pre-deployment training which, according to the Swedish Armed Forces, emphasized the establishment of checkpoints and observation posts, convoy driving, and how to prevent clashes. In addition, the training was comprised of background knowledge related to the conflict, the political situation, the activities of the parties to the conflict, working conditions in the area, and training related to the mandate applicable to the situation. They also had lectures on the history of Yugoslavia and the "ethnic differences."

Functional Imperatives. The over-sized staff, the fully mechanized rifle companies with their anti-tank missiles and the Danish tank company made Nordbat 2 a well-led, well-protected and heavily armed force. Its combat elements could operate in a high-risk environment with a relatively good degree of protection against small-arms fire and mortars. The unit had enough firepower to take on anything the parties could field, in moderate numbers. The modern technology installed in the Leopard tanks gave them a considerable advantage over any enemy tanks and gun emplacements. Thus, Nordbat 2 could operate with impunity as long as it did not risk encountering hostile forces in considerable numbers. The mobility of the tracked vehicles used by the rifle companies and the tank company meant that regular checkpoints could be bypassed as long as there was adjacent open terrain without any major obstacles. This gave the tracked vehicles an advantage against the numerous checkpoints. While the armored Sisu vehicles were less mobile in difficult terrain, they were sufficiently well-protected and powerful to simply drive straight through most barriers designed to stop regular cars and trucks.

The PBV 302 armored personnel carrier used by Nordbat 2's rifle companies was relatively well-armed with its 20 mm automatic cannon, which was housed in an enclosed low-profile turret to protect the gunner. Being designed for front-line combat, the PBV 302 was versatile enough to act as a deterrent in tense situations. While it would be easy enough to destroy a PBV 302 using the ubiquitous anti-tank weapons fielded by all the parties to the conflict, taking one on in an open fight probably seemed like a high-risk prospect given the significant firepower of the vehicle. Consequently, when the parties did fire on PBV 302s, this was usually done using anti-tank missiles in ambush situations from long range, where they could remain concealed. The PBV 302 thus provided Nordbat 2 with a vehicle that allowed the mechanized companies to stand their ground in hostile confrontations and, when necessary, to use it to force their way through blocking positions.

TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURE

Nordbat 2, being an ad-hoc unit formed for a specific task, had the benefit of having all personnel recruited for the same purpose at the same time, but also the disadvantage of lacking collective experiences over any significant length of time before deployment. Each consecutive rotation of Nordbat 2 (i.e. BA02, BA03, BA04 and BA05) had the same advantage and disadvantage. This was to a large extent remedied by

the selective recruitment policy based on previous personal relations, in which the battalion commander recruited his subordinate company commanders among people he already knew, who in turn recruited their platoon commanders. Each company commander could then hand-pick the remainder of his company in discussions with the platoon commanders (see for example Lennartsson, 2002, p. 52). Once a cadre had thus been established, the remaining vacant positions were filled up by regular applicants, based on their merits. This enabled Nordbat 2 to start out with bonds of trust already established between key personnel. This arguably facilitated and sped up the creation of trust and unit cohesion within the battalion as a whole. After the ranks had been filled and training begun, soldiers with "Rambo tendencies" were immediately purged from the ranks, according to company commander Håkan Birger (quoted in "Inryckning för FN-uppdrag i Bosnien" September 1 1993; see also "850 svenskar till blodbadet. Här är översten som leder styrkan" May 20 1993).

The can-do attitude that permeated Nordbat 2 was another key factor behind its success. This is arguably attributable to the strong influence of *Auftragstaktik*, which requires senior commanders to delegate tasks to subordinates and trust them to perform these tasks without detailed instruction. It also means that subordinates have to shoulder great responsibility, which arguably builds confidence even when faced with the unexpected. In one example, Nordbat 1, which predated Nordbat 2, was deployed to Macedonia in 1993, when Serbs seized a fuel truck driven by UN personnel. A junior and relatively inexperienced liaison officer, Gary Bergdahl, was given the task of securing the release of the vehicle and its drivers by his battalion commander. When the truck was located, it was guarded by three Serb soldiers and an NCO. Bergdahl decided that the best course of action was to conceal his insecurity behind a veil of confidence. He ordered his two Swedish subordinates to provide fire support if needed, from positions 50–75 meters away, then walked up to the Serbs, armed with a revolver and a radio, and by bluffing managed to intimidate them. He was thus able to get the drivers released and later also the truck (Tillberg and Victor Tillberg, 2007, p. 18).

In addition to the ability to improvise brought by this confidence, the troops of Nordbat 2 were also fully aware of the risks even before they were deployed, and on numerous occasions showed that they were willing to accept them. However, Nordbat 2 was more than confident and confrontational. The traditional motto for UN peacekeepers, used as overall guidelines for the training of Swedish UN battalions, was

"firm, fair and friendly" (Henricsson, 2013, p. 26–27). The "fair" part meant that they would remain impartial in their relations with the parties to the conflict, while "friendly" meant that Nordbat 2 personnel should, as far as possible, try to approach soldiers as well as civilians in a non-confrontational and helpful manner.

Focal Points. Ulf Henricsson was the most crucial focal point for Nordbat 2, by virtue of his personal leadership during the first rotation and by setting a standard for his successors. Henricsson formulated the ground rules for all Nordbat 2 personnel, and he made officers subject to stricter rules than the enlisted men, to emphasize their function as role models for their subordinates. In addition, he provided every member of Nordbat 2 with a form used to describe what kind of arrangements they wanted for their funerals, to force everyone to realize the gravity and potential danger of the mission ahead (ibid., p. 60). He also openly told Swedish media that he would bring body bags along to Bosnia, to ensure that the public was aware of the risks of the mission ("FN-trupp beredd på strid" August 27 1993).

During pre-deployment training in Denmark, Nordbat 2 concluded with a live-fire exercise in which the entire battalion, including anti-tank missiles and tanks, supported by F-16 fighter aircraft, employed their weapons in a show of force. Afterwards, Henricsson instructed the battalion to remember the firepower they had witnessed during this exercise, to keep in mind that Nordbat 2 would not be forced to concessions through the threat of force and to consider the demonstration as proof that Nordbat 2 could protect itself (Henricsson, 2013, p. 69). He also stated to the Swedish press, on several occasions before the deployment, that he considered himself authorized to open fire, not only in self-defense, but also to address threats toward those under the unit's protection, and to achieve mission objectives ("Nordiska Bosnienstyrkan ensam - länder tvekar" August 26 1993).

In his autobiography, Ulf Henricsson asks rhetorically whether the rules or the mission take precedence. He concludes that if the rules were to be more important, then computer-based decision-support software would be able to run everything. He argues that rules are necessary, but that they need to be applied to the context and that the overarching intentions and mission objectives are more important than how things are done (Henricsson, 2013, p. 71). This attitude is a direct reflection of the core elements of *Auftragstaktik*.

With the above description in mind, I argue that Nordbat 2 most closely fits in the Aggressive and Protective categories. The Aggressive

Attitude toward nononcombatants (secondary)	Attitude toward risk (primary): Aggressive	Balanced	Cautious
Protective	*most effective* **Nordbat 2 BA01-BA03**	**Nordbat 2 BA04-BA05**	
Indifferent			
Hostile			

Figure 33: Convergence/divergence, Nordbat 2

stance is very clear from Henricsson's statements to the press before deployment, in which he emphasized that the mission would be risky and that this must be accepted. He also clearly stated that he would authorize the use of the firepower at the battalion's disposal, if necessary, and that the troops under his command were prepared for combat.

The Protective aspect is more implicit than explicit. Firstly, since the whole battalion was recruited specifically to serve in Bosnia, after which it would be disbanded, it was not career motives or necessity that motivated the troops serving in it to apply. In addition, the decision to purge applicants with "Rambo tendencies" from the ranks sent a clear signal about the priorities of the mission. For the officers, serving abroad was even considered to be detrimental to one's military career at the time, which means that they would have to be even more motivated in order to take that risk. The raison d'être for the deployment was clearly communicated in humanitarian terms via the media, which influenced many of the applicants. For example, in several newspaper interviews in mid-1993, several freshly recruited soldiers from BA01 explain their motives for going to Bosnia-Herzegovina in humanitarian terms ("Rädslan finns inför FN-uppdrag i Bosnien" June 28 1993; "Fredrik ska göra FN-tjänst i Bosnien" August 24 1993). Ulf Henricsson also made it clear in an interview in late August 1993 that the justification for risking Swedish lives was that civilian lives could

be saved in the Balkans, and that this risk must be tolerated in the name of international solidarity ("FN-trupp beredd på strid" August 27 1993). Since Henricsson was well-known to be outspoken rather than diplomatic in his relations with the media, while at the same time he was the most important focal point for Nordbat 2, I argue that this statement was earnest, and a reflection of the values he instilled in the battalion during its formation and pre-deployment training.

The second aspect to consider is that most of the unit came from civilian life, having completed their conscription service, and would return to civilian life once again after the mission had been completed. This arguably made it easier for them to relate to other civilians.

IMPACT OF TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURE

Nordbat 2 formally had to adhere to the same restrictive rules of engagement and was formally subject to the same micromanagement by the UN and its national government as all the other UN peacekeeping units. However, Nordbat 2 was not in the habit of complying. Instead, Ulf Henricsson in particular, but also his immediate successor, Christer Svensson, on numerous occasions disregarded both the UN hierarchy and orders from Stockholm. In addition, Nordbat 2 had its own interpretation of the rules of engagement, which was far less restrictive than most, if not all. This, I argue, places Nordbat 2 in the Low category formally, but the High category in practice (see figure 34).

Nordbat 2 quickly established itself as a force to be reckoned with in Bosnia. Its tactical-level subculture made it behave quite differently compared to most other UNPROFOR units in Bosnia-Herzegovina at the time. When faced by threats and obstructions, Nordbat 2 reacted with a ferocity the parties to the conflict clearly did not expect from UN personnel. The Protective dimension also manifested itself clearly when Nordbat 2 found itself in situations in which civilians were in peril. On several occasions, Nordbat 2 personnel placed themselves in danger in order to protect the local population, and to disrupt atrocities. Another expression of their tactical-level subculture, which falls outside the scope of the Aggressive-Protective categories is the friendly approach from the "firm, fair and friendly" motto. This manifested itself in attempts to establish cordial relations with civilians as well as combatants who did not pose a direct threat.

Firm and Fearless Protectors. On December 25–26 in 1993, a Swedish platoon was given the task of safeguarding a hospital in Bosnia. The

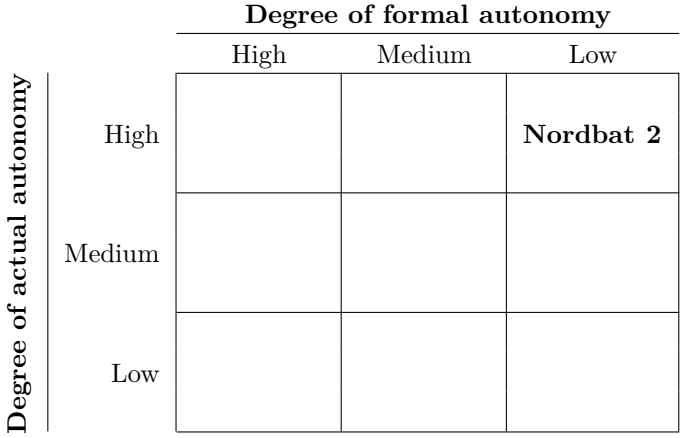

Figure 34: Degrees of autonomy, Nordbat 2

same night, a Croatian battalion issued an ultimatum: the Swedish unit was told to hand over the Muslim nurses by 1700 hours or the Croats would attack the site and seize them by force.[3] The Croats also blocked the road to the hospital with land mines to ensure that the Swedes would be unable to receive reinforcements or attempt to leave. The platoon commander, Captain Stewe Simson, rejected the Croat ultimatum and ordered his soldiers to prepare for combat. At 16:30, the Croats began shelling the village of Bakoviçi with mortars. By 18:00 nothing had happened and the mortar fire ceased. Then the Croats issued a new ultimatum: the Muslim nurses can stay if the Croats are granted free passage to the hospital area. Again Captain Simson refused. The Swedish platoon maintained combat readiness throughout the night but nothing happened. Early the next morning, the threats were revoked after negotiations with the local Croat commander, and the situation was defused (Simson, 2007, p. 23–24). The Swedish platoon remained isolated for three weeks, helping the local medical staff with routine care duties, but no further incidents occurred (Almgård, 2007a, p. 34). Captain Simson was later awarded a medal for bravery, and praised for his actions.

Another confrontation took place shortly after the massacre in Stupni Do in October 1993. While patrolling the area around the

[3]Tillberg and Victor Tillberg (2007, p. 12) claim that the unit was Croatian, but do not specify whether it was a regular or paramilitary outfit.

village to investigate the rumours of an atrocious event, a detachment from Nordbat 2 managed to find 25 refugees who were hiding in the woods (*Stupni Do, oktober 1993*). After calling to them repeatedly, the refugees emerged. At that moment, a minivan carrying HVO troops appeared. The gunner on the Sisu APC quickly chambered a round in his heavy machine gun, took the safety off, and prepared to fire warning shots at the approaching HVO soldiers. Before he could do so, the soldier driving the minivan got so scared by seeing the weapon aimed at him, that he drove into a ditch. The men from the minivan left the scene, along with two other HVO troops who had already been captured and disarmed by the Nordbat 2 detachment. The refugees were then loaded into the detachment's APCs and transported to a safer area where they could meet up with their relatives. Since the vehicles were overloaded, the gunner had to expose himself more than usual, which did not prevent him from continuing to man his weapon. When the detachment returned after having dropped off the refugees, the HVO was prepared for them and they were promptly stopped at a checkpoint.

The detachment commander, Major Daniel Ekberg, radioed battalion commander Ulf Henricsson, who asked the detachment if the road was mined. Upon receieving a negative reply, he instructed them to wait two minutes, then drive straight through the roadblock (ibid.). After they had done so, they were stopped again in the city of Vareš by several soldiers carrying anti-tank weapons. The gunner realized that he would be killed instantly if the hostiles were to open fire and started to issue orders to the rest of the crew to ensure that someone would take over the gun in that case. The stand-off remained extremely tense until Ulf Henricsson arrived at the scene and started yelling at everyone. The HVO troops were reportedly surprised, and Henricsson's forceful attempt to take control over the situation worked. The detachment could proceed. After this, Henricsson was determined that Nordbat 2 would no longer be prevented from entering the village of Stupni Do to investigate what had happened and ordered two mechanized platoons to take up positions and prepare to "seize terrain," a military euphemism for attacking (ibid.).

One of these Swedish platoons in PBV 302s was advancing towards the village when it encountered an HVO checkpoint. A handful of soldiers were guarding a tunnel that they had mined and the Swedes suspected that they were supported by a concealed strongpoint. The platoon commander, Captain Jan Almgård, then informed the battalion commander, Ulf Henricsson, and waited for instructions. Within 30

minutes, Henricsson arrived in a jeep. He then instructed Almgård to proceed towards the village and ordered the platoon to go around the checkpoint, authorizing the use of the vehicle-mounted automatic cannon to suppress the strongpoint if necessary. At first, Almgård considered this a crazy idea, and asked incredulously if he was supposed to start shooting. Henricsson replied "If it's necessary, then do it." Almgård ran back to the vehicles and shouted for his men to prepare to attack the checkpoint. Henricsson overheard this and corrected him, pointing out that their orders were to advance, not necessarily attack. When the vehicles did move around the position, they did not encounter any resistance from the strongpoint and were able to proceed to Stupni Do. As they passed the checkpoint, the troops in the PBV 302s cheered (Almgård, 2007b, p. 21–22). Captain Almgård was later awarded a medal for valor for leading his platoon around a minefield while taking fire from anti-tank weapons, along with another incident in which he prevented the destruction of a mosque (Tillberg et al., 2007, p. 34–35).

The arguably most famous incident took place on April 29th 1994, one of Nordbat 2's observation posts, called "Tango 2," manned by seven soldiers, came under intense artillery fire. Two platoons from the Danish tank company were dispatched to assist the troops trapped in the observation post. Seven tanks moved out, commanded by the company commander, Major Carsten Rasmussen. The plan was to rendezvous with a command APC carrying the deputy company commander, Colonel Lars Møller, at Saraci. Inside the APC, battalion commander Christer Svensson was also present, as well as his interpreter and adjutant, Sergeant Ruzdi Ekenheim. Since Svensson had no first-hand experience of tank combat, he delegated command to Møller (*Interview with Ruzdi Ekenheim* September 19, 2013). At first, Møller thought that the appearance of the tanks would put a stop to the shooting, since they usually had a sobering effect on the parties. To this effect, the tanks were running with their lights on (*Operation Bøllebank, untitled report, appendix 2* April 30 1994, p. 1). The vehicles met up in Saraci and while Møller was issuing orders, a shell impacted close to one of the tanks. Since this posed only a limited danger to the heavily armored vehicles, they proceeded. Shortly thereafter, at a point in the road where all the tanks were forced to slow down due to a sharp turn, they came under fire from anti-tank missiles. The APC took shelter inside a building. One missile hit between two tanks, and a second missile impacted against the wall of the building in which the APC was located. A third missile barely missed another tank due to an evasive maneuver by the driver. A fourth missile was fired, but missed completely. A

40mm automatic cannon then started firing at the tanks, which had very limited room to maneuver on the road. Two tanks were ordered to proceed toward Tango 2, while the remaining vehicles withdrew toward a village. They were then targeted by artillery and mortar fire. Upon noticing more activity at the missile positions, the company commander, Major Carsten Rasmussen, ordered the tanks to return fire at the missile positions. Simultaneously, Møller took a similar decision and ordered all tanks to neutralize the anti-tank positions. An anti-tank gun joined the firing against the tanks, also from a concealed position.

The tanks then started returning fire, destroying the bunkers used by the missile crews and the gun position. After this, everything went quiet for 30 minutes. By then, the two tanks sent to Tango 2 had fought their way there. The decision was made to return to base, provided that the situation at Tango 2 remained calm. The two tanks at Tango 2 confirmed that there was no activity there at the time. When the remaining vehicles moved out to return to base, the hostile fire came back with a vengeance, targeting the returning tanks. These vehicles again returned fire to cover a withdrawal. The tanks covering the retreat fired an intense barrage for 15 minutes (Hansen, 1997). One of the shells triggered a huge explosion, later believed to have been caused by unintentionally hitting an ammunition depot (*Operation Bøllebank, untitled report, appendix 2* April 30 1994). A total of 72 tank shells were fired. The Bosnian Serbs claimed that they lost nine men as a result of the combat, but other sources claim that as many as 150 men may have been killed. Nordbat 2 suffered no casualties, although Colonel Møller suffered a minor cut on his throat, caused by a piece of shrapnel, which he later referred to as "a long-distance shave" (Hansen, 1997).

The last major offensive operation executed by Nordbat 2 was Operation Amanda, on the 26th of October 1994. By then the tension between VRS and Nordbat 2 was already high, and once again an observation post was contested. The tank company was deployed to demonstrate resolve and deter further attacks. The OP was subjected to concentrated artillery and anti-tank gun fire. One Danish tank was hit, while the remaining tanks responded by firing 21 rounds. The VRS then threatened to retaliate against the civilians in Tuzla unless Nordbat 2 terminated the operation. Faced with this threat, the battalion commander chose to withdraw (Lennartsson, 2002, p. 12,74). According to battalion commander Peter Lundberg, Nordbat 2 did

nevertheless succeed in earning the respect of the parties through the operation (ibid., p. 10).

Friendly De-Escalation. In addition to the above examples of firm behavior, the friendly approach also produced results. When a company from Nordbat 2's fourth rotation was blockaded by two men who parked a car in front of the camp, company commander Major Bo Sigeback ordered that they be served hot coffee and refreshments. In an emergency, any of the company's armored vehicles could simply have crushed the small car, but Sigeback did not want to escalate the matter needlessly. Instead he waited until the local staff working inside the company's camp left for the day. As they passed the car, they recognized the men inside and scorned them for blockading the camp. The two men responsible for maintaining the blockade apparently felt uncomfortable with the prospect of having to argue with people from their own village on a daily basis, and the day after they were gone (*Interview with Bo Sigeback* July 19, 2013).

In another example involving the same company, which shows how even enlisted men had learned how to play the political game in a non-confrontational manner, a Bosniak general responsible for blocking several supply convoys to Nordbat 2 was invited to the company's camp. When the general showed up, Nordbat 2 demonstrated its equipment, including the anti-tank missiles, which the general found quite impressive. After that he was served a meal. The cook then took the initiative to serve a very crude meal made up of ingredients of poor quality, without any spices, even though he was perfectly able to cook something much more appetizing. To really make it noticeable, the mashed potatoes included lumps, and the whole meal was served cold. The general probably interpreted this as a sign that his blockades had depleted Nordbat 2's food stocks (since he most likely assumed that he would be served the best food the company had). When Major Sigeback pointed out that the company had been experiencing difficulties moving across Bosniak checkpoints, the general immediately ordered his accompanying lieutenant that the company would have complete freedom of movement. After this, the company could indeed move unhindered (ibid.).

SUMMARY

The Swedish army was an early and uncompromising adopter of the German *Auftragstaktik*. The strong autonomy of junior officers and the

relentless pursuit of the mission objectives permeated the training in both the Danish and Swedish armies, while formality and adherence to rules were considered to be less important than the fulfillment of the mission objectives.

Most of the enlisted men in Nordbat 2 (the Danish tank company being a notable exception) were recruited among former conscripts, who volunteered to go to Bosnia. This meant that they came from civilian life, received some extra training, and were then deployed. Upon returning home, they were discharged from the army again. This link to civilian life may explain how they found it so easy to build relations with the local population in Bosnia, and also to some extent why they were willing to take such risks to protect them.

The most important factor behind Nordbat 2's success, however, was arguably Ulf Henricsson's leadership and his willingness to defy both his own government in Stockholm and the UN chain of command, when he felt that interference from these channels threatened the successful fulfillment of the mission at hand. His own interpretation of the mandate took precedence over the official RoEs as well as any directives from superiors. From a political perspective, it was probably luck more than anything else that resulted in the appointment of Ulf Henricsson as battalion commander, since he was anything but popular with members of the Swedish government once he had been deployed. Nevertheless, he was allowed to continue serving in that capacity until he was due to rotate home.

During the initial months of the deployment, Henricsson's physical presence or direct orders were frequently required when his subordinates were faced with dangerous and unexpected situations, as is evident from the events surrounding the massacre at Stupni Do, described on page 249. After a while, the unit became more independent of Henricsson, once its new tactical-level subculture had been firmly established. Both the second and third rotation battalion commanders followed in Henricsson's footsteps, maintaining a firm posture and a readiness to use force. The fourth battalion commander, Göran Arlefalk, was more absent, which forced the company commanders to step up and shoulder more responsibility. Arlefalk also seems to have embraced a more cautious approach than his predecessors. Sergeant Joakim Bom, who had previously served under Henricsson in BA01, returned to serve in BA04. He expressed his disappointment over how cautious the battalion had become in an interview many years later, and how BA04 had failed to uphold the freedom of movement secured by BA01 (Johnsson, 2010).

This was confirmed by Sergeant Ekenheim, who said that the decline began in BA03 and grew worse in BA04 (*Interview with Ruzdi Ekenheim* September 19, 2013). In the case of Sigeback's 8th mechanized rifle company, things worked relatively well, even though he was far less confrontational than his predecessors, since he was adept at using other methods to achieve results. Other company commanders, however, found it more difficult to cope with the complex situation. Even the well-armed Danish tank company accepted restrictions to its freedom of movement (*Minnesbok: Nordbat 2, BA04*, p. 69).

Thus, when the battalion became more careful and less confrontational during the fourth and fifth rotations, the battalion moved into the Balanced category.

7.4

Dutchbat 1994–1995

> It was absolute chaos. Women were walking around crying, searching for their children, family or friends. Children were calling for their mother... Women, men and children with gunshot and other wounds ... were asking for a doctor ... People were fainting. A couple of pregnant women spontaneously went into labour because of the tension. Medics worked overtime with the little material they could still use.
>
> — Eelco Koster, Dutchbat III[4]

On the 6–11th July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces assaulted the Bosnian Army defenders of the safe area of Srebrenica, with the intention to "evacuate" civilians from the safe area for purposes of ethnic cleansing and mass executions. The Dutch peacekeeper unit assigned the task of safeguarding the area at first took up positions, but later fell back when pressured by the Bosnian Serb forces. The result was one of the most infamous massacres in Europe since World War II, in which nearly 8,000 people were killed ("Court Declares Bosnia Killings Were Genocide" February 27 2007). The ensuing scandal in the Netherlands forced the resignation of the government (*Dutch Government quits over Srebrenica* April 16 2002), led by prime minister Wim Kok, who was prime minister of the Netherlands at the time of the massacre in 1995, and minister of finance at the time it was decided to dispatch Dutch peacekeepers to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1993 (*Dutch cabinet resigns over Srebrenica massacre* April 17 2002). In addition to Kok, several of the other members of the 2002 administration had been members of the government in 1995: the minister of finance, Gerrit Zalm (same in 1995); the minister of housing, spatial planning and the environment, Jan Pronk (minister of development cooperation in 1995); the minister of health and vice PM Els Borst-Eilers (same in 1995, minus vice PM); the minister of foreign affairs Jozias van Aartsen (minister of agriculture in 1995); and the vice PM and minister of economic affairs Annemarie Jorritsma-Lebink (minister of transport and water in 1995).[5]

[4] Describing the fall of Srebrenica, quoted in Honig and Both (1996, p. 28).

[5] For biographical data on these ministers, see the following sources: Gerrit Zalm (*Dr. G. (Gerrit) Zalm*); Jan Pronk (*Prof.Dr. Jan Pronk*); Els Borst-Eilers (*Dr. Els Borst-Eilers*); Jozias van Aartsen (*Jozias van Aartsen*); Annemarie Jorritsma-Lebink (*Annemarie Jorritsma-Lebbink*).

Over the years, the failure at Srebrenica is still remembered. In 2005, after a documentary about the massacre had aired in the Netherlands, the former commander of Dutchbat III, Thom Karremans, left the country to live in Spain, after he had received several death threats (*Karremans Recalls Srebrenica Fall* November 9 2005). As late as 2011, the Dutch High Court ruled that the Netherlands was directly responsible for the deaths of three of the victims, after their relatives had filed a lawsuit against the Dutch state (*Dutch state 'responsible for three Srebrenica deaths'* 5 July 2011).

FORMATIVE FACTORS

The Netherlands was an active participant in a considerable number of UN operations, starting as early as 1953, when Dutch troops participated in the Korean War. The Royal Netherlands Army also sent 15 military observers to the UNTSO mission, supervising the truce between Israel and its neighboring states, from 1956 on.[6] In 1958, Dutch military observers were sent to the UNOGIL mission in Lebanon and between 1960 and 1963, a Dutch medical contingent and staff personnel participated in the ONUC mission in the Congo. Dutch military observers were also sent to Yemen and the border between India and Pakistan in the mid-1960s. In 1963, the Netherlands offered the UN a permanent contingent of 300 marines for peacekeeping operations (*NIOD I* 2002, p. 267). Two years later, the offer was expanded to include 600 marines as well as a supply ship, four helicopters and several ships for patrol duties. If requested, the Netherlands could in addition also contribute with a mechanized infantry battalion and a medical company. The air force also kept one transport aircraft and three helicopters in readiness for such deployments (ibid., p. 267). This substantial offer indicates that the Netherlands took their role in the UN peacekeeping operations seriously as early as the 1960s. The sheer size of this offer is quite impressive considering the size of the Netherlands, barely 11.5 million in 1960 (*Population of the Benelux States*).

This development culminated in the large Dutch deployment in support of the UNIFIL mission in Lebanon, where 800 troops were sent to serve in 1979. The Netherlands maintained this unit for one year, then extended its service to four years. However, when Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, the Dutch enthusiasm started to cool considerably. In October 1983, the majority of the battalion was withdrawn prematurely due to the perceived risks. Two years later, the remainder were brought

[6] UNTSO = United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization

home. This caused resentment against the Netherlands in the UN secretariat for some time (*NIOD I* 2002, p. 267–268). Thus, the political level was as sensitive to the prospect of troop losses in the early 1980s as it was in the mid-1990s. The paradox of wanting to contribute troops, and indeed offering substantial numbers to serve under the auspices of the UN, while at the same time being extremely unwilling to accept any casualties was thus something of a tradition in the Netherlands when Dutchbat was offered in 1993.

One of the reasons the Netherlands was able to send such a large contingent to UNIFIL in 1979 was because it had the option of ordering conscripts to serve abroad. While most of the recruitment for the UNIFIL contingent was done on a voluntary basis, no less than 120 troops were conscripts who were sent against their will (ibid., p. 272). This sparked a major controversy, which prompted the Dutch National Servicemen's Association (VVDM) to file a lawsuit against the state. In the end, the supreme court ruled against the state. When the Military Service Act was amended in 1988, it did include the possibility to send conscripts abroad, but only following a royal decree and consultation with the parliament. In practice, this meant the end of conscripts serving in UN missions.

This provided the marines with an advantage, since they had very few conscripts in their ranks even long before the general professionalization of the armed forces. When the marines, who were already deployed in Cambodia in the early 1990s, were considered for deployment in ex-Yugoslavia as well, this caused resentment in the army. According to the NIOD report, this was one reason for the decision by the Ministry of Defense to allocate Cambodia to the marines and ex-Yugoslavia to the army (ibid., p. 273). The problem was that the army had no professional units until the Airmobile brigade was formed in 1993–1994. Thus, when the Airmobile brigade became available, it provided the army with an opportunity to prove itself in an international context.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The political objectives as defined by the Dutch government were to boost the reputation of the Netherlands internationally through a display of international solidarity, while at the same time showcasing a recently established prestige project: the Airmobile brigade (ibid., p. 710). Several prominent military officers, active as well as retired, voiced concern over any military deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina and in particular the use of a light infantry unit instead of a mechanized

formation. Retired Brigadier General J.C.A.C. de Vogel warned against a military intervention in August 1991, referring to the proliferation of weapons in the area and the military competence of the Krajina Serbs (ibid., p. 133).

Among the advocates of a Dutch deployment were Joris Voorhoeve, who later became minister of defense. In an interview in a Dutch newspaper on 17 November 1992, he expressed support for the concept of "safe areas" protected by UN troops (Honig and Both, 1996, p. 102). In a later televised debate, Voorhoeve argued that soldiers stationed in a safe area would take sides with the civilian population, dismissing the concerns of the chief of the Dutch defense staff (ibid., p. 102).

I argue that the long-term strategic objectives had to include the protection of civilians, since the minister of defense had publicly taken this stance. It was inevitable that he and the rest of the cabinet would be held accountable for these statements.

According to the commander of the second rotation of Dutch peacekeepers, which was deployed to the Srebrenica enclave on July 19, 1994, its mission was (a), to support the delivery of humanitarian aid to the enclave of Srebrenica by UNHCR and other relief organizations; and (b), to create an environment that would, in general terms, favor the evacuation of wounded people, the care of the population, and the cessation of hostilities (Everts, 2000, p. 66).[7] The commander of Dutchbat II also states that "the assumptions at the outset of the mission were that all parties would respect the safety of the enclave's habitants and that no weapons would be available to the Bosnians inside the enclave" (ibid., p. 66). The total population of the enclave numbered circa 35,000 people (ibid., p. 69).

Since Dutchbat faced a situation very similar to that of Nordbat 2, I argue that the same type of unit was required, i.e. one that was Aggressive-Protective. In the case of Dutchbat, both aspects were arguably even more important, since Srebrenica was an isolated enclave filled to the brim with refugees, surrounded by hostile forces. Consequently, an Aggressive stance would be required to cope with the constant threats and obstructions presented by the VRS units surrounding Srebrenica, while a Protective stance would facilitate an

[7]Note that Dutchbat was numbered according to the rotation that was currently deployed in Bosnia, starting with the first battalion being Dutchbat I while Nordbat 2 maintained its numerical suffix between rotations since Nordbat's number was used to distinguish it from the other Nordbat stationed in Macedonia. Instead, as previously mentioned, the Swedish names for Nordbat 2, i.e. BA01, BA02, etc. reflected the rotation numbers.

understanding of the importance of the role of Dutchbat in protecting such a large number of defenseless civilians. A Protective stance would arguably also make it easier to build good relations with the local population, which would seem necessary for a successful deployment, given the crowded conditions within the enclave.

Attitude toward nononcombatants (secondary)	Attitude toward risk (primary)		
	Aggressive	Balanced	Cautious
Protective	*most effective*		
Indifferent			
Hostile			

Figure 35: Strategic objectives, Dutchbat

CHALLENGES

Dutchbat faced the same diversity of hostile actors with heavy weaponry as Nordbat 2, and acted within the exact same chain of command, since both units were part of Sector North-East. Consequently, they were subject to the same RoEs. The terrain proved to be more of a challenge to the Dutch troops than to the Swedes and Danes of Nordbat 2. Muddy and icy road conditions, especially in steep hills and mountains, proved difficult for Dutch drivers who had not been adequately trained to drive heavy vehicles under such circumstances. A few incidents involving stuck Dutch trucks led to the adoption of the nickname "Ditchbat."

The Srebrenica enclave, including the city of Srebrenica as well as the village of Potočari, was located in a mountainous setting with peaks as high as 1,500 meters (Everts, 2000, p. 66). The enclave itself was approximately 225 km² in size. There was only one hardened road, in the eastern part of the enclave. The majority of the population lived in either Srebrenica or Potočari, in the eastern part.

In 1994–1995, the Bosnian Serbs had approximately three brigades deployed outside the enclave to control its surroundings. The commander of Dutchbat II also claimed that the Bosnian Serbs "had direct influence over" a formation from the Bosnian Army, known as the 8th Operational Group, comprised of circa 3,000–4,000 young men, armed with light weapons as well as mortars and heavy machine guns (ibid., p. 66). In addition, the Bosnian Serbs could cover the entire enclave with artillery fire.

Throughout the existence of the enclave, the Bosnian Serbs controlled the flow of supplies in and out of Srebrenica. Dutchbat I, for example, was only able to get 16 percent of its recommended minimum level of supply past the Bosnian Serbs and into the enclave (ibid., p. 68).

The chain of command posed another challenge for Dutchbat. Formally, the operational-level commander of Dutchbat was the commander of Sector North-East, in Tuzla. However, the Bosnian Serbs prevented him from visiting the enclave, limiting his ability to exercise command over Dutchbat. The battalion therefore interacted with a higher level of the command chain than it would otherwise have done. In addition, they also communicated with the Netherlands through a Dutch detachment in Zagreb. As if that was not enough, they also reported to the Situation Centre of the Royal Netherlands Army in The Hague. The commander of Dutchbat II has described this command arrangement as "ambiguous" (ibid., p. 69).

PERSONNEL, COMMANDERS AND EQUIPMENT

The Airmobile brigade was the first fully professional army unit in the Royal Netherlands Army. It was conceived after the end of the Cold War, for a new era. Instead of the more traditional Dutch mechanized infantry in their armored vehicles, the Airmobile brigade would be transported in helicopters. Similar units already existed in other countries, and had done so since the 1960s, which prompted some critics to argue that the Airmobile brigade was in fact a relic of the Cold War, with its emphasis on large-scale strategic mobility (*NIOD II* 2002, p. 83).

When Brigadier General J.W. Brinkman, the commander of the Airmobile brigade, started to plan for the deployment of an infantry battalion from the Airmobile brigade to Bosnia, he decided that it would be equipped with APCs. These had to be provided by other army units and personnel from the brigade had to be trained how to

drive them. Brinkman considered the vehicles to be "battlefield taxis," to be used for transportation and then all other operations would be conducted dismounted, using the vehicle-mounted guns for support (*NIOD II* 2002, p. 85). The battalion's mission objectives would be to secure the area of operations against breaches of the ceasefire; to provide limited humanitarian aid to the population; and to take action in the event of aggression on the part of any of the parties (ibid., p. 85). Brinkman's vision included the ability to wage combat operations when necessary, such as the neutralization of hostile artillery and mortar batteries, anti-sniper operations and small-scale infantry offensives (ibid., p. 85). In addition, a platoon of special forces operators from the 108th Commando Company was added to the battalion to compensate for the shortage of reconnaissance units within the Airmobile brigade (ibid., p. 87).

When the choice of APCs had to be made, two versions were available. One was equipped with a standard 25 mm automatic cannon, while the other featured a considerably less capable .50-caliber heavy machine gun. The Chief of the Defense Staff, General Van der Vlis, and the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Couzy, both advocated the version with lighter armament. Among the reasons given were: the increased time required to train soldiers to use the 25 mm gun; the maintenance requirements of the cannon; and the risk that heavy armament might provoke the VRS (*NIOD I* 2002, p. 771–772). The decision was not uncontroversial, and the surrounding debate eventually came to include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The latter urged the Ministry of Defense to send vehicles with 25 mm guns instead of the .50-caliber heavy machine guns, but the MoD refused (ibid., p. 774). In the end, the MoD prevailed.

After the deployment, the unit commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Karremans, also stated that he thought that the majority of the battalion had been too young and inexperienced for the difficult tasks expected of them (*NIOD II* 2002, p. 220). The pre-deployment training used to prepare the Dutch airmobile brigade personnel for peacekeeping assignments was primarily focused on combat (ibid., p. 220–221). "Theoretical" aspects related to the local conditions and background info on Bosnia-Herzegovina were a low priority (ibid., p. 220–221). The soldiers were taught during their training that in crises and war, initiative, rapid action and – when the use of force was required – superiority in escalation were the keys to success (ibid., p. 319).

Using the second rotation of the battalion as an example, the battalion comprised an HQ company that included two security platoons

and engineers, three rifle companies equipped with APCs, a logistical company, an engineer company, a medical company and an indirect support unit (Everts, 2000, p. 68). Of these, two units were stationed outside the enclave: one rifle company was in the Sapna area, and the indirect support unit was stationed in Tuzla. Of the total of 1,200 personnel that made up Dutchbat II, circa 600 were deployed inside the enclave (ibid., p. 68). Out of these 600, circa 75 percent would be available at any given time, since a portion of the battalion would normally be on leave at any given time (ibid., p. 70). Inside the enclave, the troops were split up in two elements, one based in Potočari and one based in Srebrenica.

When Dutchbat I had been relieved by Dutchbat II, the VRS tightened its grip on the enclave and started seriously to disrupt the supply flow. As a consequence, food and fuel became difficult to come by. As a result of the lack of food, Dutchbat personnel had to spend weeks eating nothing more than combat rations. The lack of fuel manifested itself most clearly by the lack of electricity, since diesel was required to run the generators used to produce power for Dutchbat. Without electricity and fuel, water could not be heated for showers and fresh food could not be stored in the refrigerators. Even worse, the meagre rations resulted in conflicts among the Dutchbar personnel (*NIOD II* 2002, p. 320), who started to compare their allocated amounts.

Functional Imperatives. The original defining characteristic of the Airmobile brigade was, as indicated by its name, its mobility. Since the brigade was deployed without its most significant assets, its helicopters, it had to adapt to a new set of functional imperatives. The YPR-765 APCs it found itself using were lightly armed and offered only a minimum of protection against small-arms fire and shrapnel. Avoiding confrontation with heavily armed opponents was thus crucial for survival, since the APCs were neither fast nor mobile enough to compensate for their vulnerability. While the YPR-765s deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina did have turrets for their heavy machine guns, these turrets had a high profile and did not fully enclose the gunner, exposing him to snipers and small-arms fire (see for example the pictures taken by Van Iren, 2008). This meant that in a stand-off, the gunner on the YPR-765 would have been relatively easy to neutralize, for example by throwing hand grenades at the top of the vehicle or by concentrated small-arms fire. This arguably made it relatively difficult for Dutchbat to use their vehicles to deter attacks or force their way through roadblocks and checkpoints.

TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURE

The Airmobile brigade was created as an elite formation, which was emphasized by the adoption of the prestigious red beret, a symbol of paratroopers and elite soldiers worldwide. The privates and corporals were Short-Term Professionals (STPs) while the officers and NCOs were Long-Term Professionals (LTPs). The first battalion to complete its training, the 11th, was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel C.H.P. Vermeulen, who had also been in charge of their training. According to NIOD, one of the officers described the early months of the Airmobile brigade as a "circus", stating that personnel of all ranks were highly motivated (*NIOD II* 2002, p. 83). In addition, the mentality of the brigade, striving to be harder than the rest of the Army, made the unit more isolated (ibid., p. 83).

The Royal Netherlands Army units that made up Dutchbat were trained at least to some extent in the spirit of *Auftragstaktik*. According to the commander of Dutchbat II, his subordinates were accustomed to taking initiative and exercising freedom when carrying out their tasks (Everts, 2000, p. 71). However, since both the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosniak units in the enclave observed Dutchbat closely and retaliated with reprisals against the entire battalion whenever an individual belonging to Dutchbat did something to displease either of them, the battalion commander considered it necessary to ensure uniformity of behavior, thus restricting the ability of subordinates to take initiatives. The commander of Dutchbat II stated that he learned that both the ABiH and VRS could strike at the Dutch troops arbitrarily whenever they wanted, and that the battalion was completely dependent on Serb approval for its supplies. Since he also learned that the UN support amounted to little more than promises, he concluded that "the battalion must avoid all unnecessary risks" (ibid., p. 73).

To add further to this, the decision to send armored vehicles with only light armament sent a clear signal to the troops that any serious firefights would be impossible, further reinforcing the tendency to be cautious. The brigade staff also revised the organizational chart of Dutchbat before its first deployment, removing "green" (i.e. combat-related) elements in favor of other elements considered more suitable for "blue" (i.e. peacekeeping) assignments (*NIOD II* 2002, p. 88).

Based on the above, I argue that Dutchbat (all rotations) fall within the Cautious-Indifferent categories. In addition, the fact that an all-professional career unit was dispatched effectively removed the opportunity to recruit applicants who would be interested to serve

for humanitarian reasons. As such, I argue that before deployment Dutchbat was at best Indifferent toward civilians. However, this is difficult to gauge with any degree of precision due to the lack of data on this in the otherwise extensive material. However, once Dutchbat had been deployed, its tactical-level subculture deteriorated quickly anyway, which makes this less relevant than the tactical-level subculture that developed during the deployment.

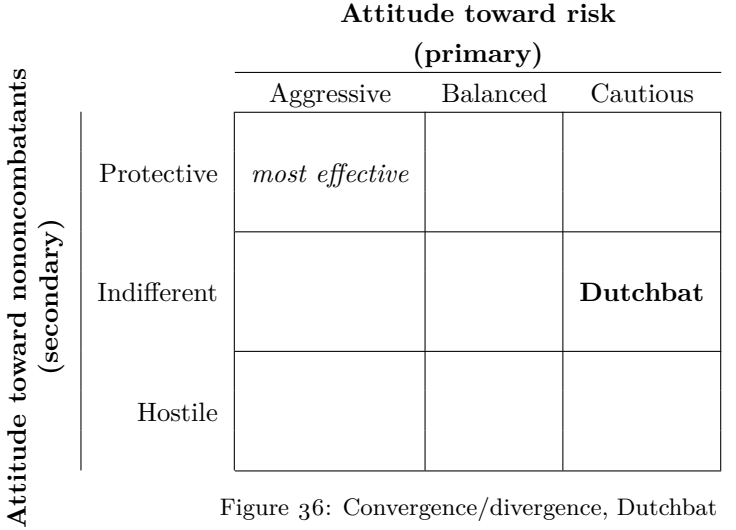

Figure 36: Convergence/divergence, Dutchbat

Focal Points. The troops who had originally been part of an exclusive and prestigious Airmobile unit found themselves operating as regular mechanized infantry, using vehicles they barely knew how to drive instead of the helicopters they had been promised. In addition, they had been separated from their parent brigade and found themselves bundled together with a commando platoon that was originally part of completely different army unit. This, in combination with the confusing command arrangements implemented by UNPROFOR and the unique situation inside the enclave meant that Dutchbat needed guidance more than most. Even so, there were no focal points for them to rely upon. While the first battalion commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Vermeulen, may have been relatively inspiring, his passive successors during the second and third rotations did little more than reinforce the notion that self-preservation was the most crucial factor in all

decision-making. Both Everts (2000, p. 73) and Karremans (see for example *NIOD III* 2002, p. 495) advocated this position. In either case, Karremans was, according to one external observer, rarely seen by his troops (*NIOD II* 2002, p. 315–316). It should be remembered that Vermeulen was an officer with practical experience who had worked with the Airmobile Brigade from its earliest beginnings, and personally overseen the training of his battalion, while Everts and Karremans were General Staff officers with less of a practical inclination (ibid., p. 318).

Making matters worse, the different levels in the UNPROFOR command hierarchy occasionally had different opinions regarding the use of force, for example when it came to Close Air Support (CAS). The UNPROFOR Force Commander, French Lieutenant-General Bernard Janvier, was very restrictive in 1995 when it came to using air support, since he wanted to avoid the risk of reprisals against UNPROFOR troops. His own staff as well as the Bosnia-Herzegovina Commander, British Lieutenant-General Rupert Smith, wanted to take a more forceful position on the matter (*NIOD III* 2002, p. 8–9). Janvier, however, seems to have been more focused on the experiences of the French Army in Vietnam, and repeatedly compared Srebrenica to Dien Bien Phu, where the French Army was overrun by the North Vietnamese Army in 1954 (ibid., p. 8–9). The Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Akashi, shared Janvier's concerns and was afraid that Smith would provoke a war (ibid., p. 10). Even so, Janvier later testified in a French parliamentary hearing that Dutchbat had been ordered to fight and that he had expected them to engage the VRS. He also added that in his opinion, French soldiers would have fought (ibid., p. 517). However, given his previously passive and cautious attitude, he was hardly sending out that sort of signals to Dutchbat just before the assault on the enclave.

Other superiors paid visits to the enclave, but hardly made a good impression. Brigadier General Brinkman (see page 261), by then chief of staff for Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, visited his old unit in February of 1995. He complained loudly about the UN in the Dutchbat bar inside the enclave, even as one Warrant Officer replied "But General, we've still got four months to go, you know!" Two weeks later a story by Brinkman was published in the *Defensiekrant* (the Dutch Armed Forces publication), in which he praised the UN for its wonderful operation (*NIOD II* 2002, p. 317). Such hypocrisy certainly did not go unnoticed by Dutchbat personnel. The Director of Personnel of the Netherlands Army, Major-General Warlicht, also visited Dutchbat in the enclave. During his stay, he took a long, hot shower, while Dutchbat personnel,

owing to the lack of fuel, were only able to shower once a week, and then only communally. When several soldiers confronted Warlicht about this, he failed to comprehend the nature of their reaction (ibid., p. 317).

The only conclusion to be drawn from the above is that Dutchbat had no focal points, with the possible exception of its battalion commanders, who in either case only reinforced the notion of risk-avoidance and hopelessness. The last one, Karremans, was in addition mostly absent in the eyes of his troops. The problems with morale and the conflicts within the unit related to the scarcity of food are symptoms of a lack of unit cohesion, brought by a dysfunctional tactical-unit subculture. Without any focal points to provide guidance, the battalion struggled to find any meaning in its mission and the hardships it endured. When it failed to do so, the unit became increasingly agitated and fragmented. As could have been predicted, certain elements started to develop deviating and even more destructive tendencies on the company level, as indicated by the deterioration of the Bravo company (see p. 268).

IMPACT OF TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURE

The formal autonomy of Dutchbat was Low, as stipulated by the UN hierarchy and the Dutch government. Since the battalion commanders were willing to comply with these restrictions, as well as the demands of the VRS, the autonomy was Low in practice as well (see figure 37). There were no practical or technical obstacles preventing the Dutchbat commanders from exercising a higher degree of autonomy, as Henricsson had already done. Thus, the Low degree of actual autonomy was a result of the tactical-level subculture.

The tactical-level subculture of Dutchbat was compatible with the formal autonomy, but it was a poor fit for the political and strategic demands of protecting the Srebrenica enclave. Once Dutchbat had been deployed, things got even worse, as the tactical-level subculture of the unit deteriorated under the strain of operating in such an extreme and complex environment without any focal points to provide guidance. By the time Srebrenica was attacked, the third rotation of Dutchbat was responsible for its safety. This was also arguably the most dysfunctional of the three rotations, since it had started to fragment.

Fragmentation & Poor Relations With Civilians. The relationship between the Dutch peacekeepers and the civilians was tense. Dutchbat personnel had limited contact with the local Bosniak population and the refugees. According to Honig and Both (1996, p. 131), “Many soldiers

Degree of actual autonomy \ Degree of formal autonomy	High	Medium	Low
High			
Medium			
Low			**Dutchbat** entire period

Figure 37: Degrees of autonomy, Dutchbat

spoke in disparaging terms of the Muslims."[8] All Dutchbat personnel were ordered by their battalion commanders to avoid "non-functional" contact with the local population, since according to them this could be interpreted as indications of partiality (*NIOD II* 2002, p. 320).

Bravo company of Dutchbat III stands out in this regard, since it not only avoided the locals, but was openly hostile towards them. This was manifested in the company's refusal even to state their names in contacts with civilians. In addition, they distanced themselves from the rest of the battalion (ibid., p. 340–341).[9] In one incident, a hand grenade was thrown over the fence to the Bravo company compound, where it detonated without causing any damage. It was later concluded that this was a reaction to the heavy-handedness of Bravo company and in particular to an offensive remark by one of its patrol commanders. Allegedly, one of them had said to another in German, using his

[8] Some of them were more amiable though: Dutchbat explosives experts held mine awareness classes in the schools, and other soldiers tried to rebuild the eight schools in the enclave (Honig and Both, 1996, p. 132). I have, however, been unable to find any additional information on these activities or whether they produced any tangible results.

[9] Note that the designation "Bravo" means that it was the second company of the battalion, following the NATO standard of designating companies alphabetically, starting with A, then referring to them verbally by using the NATO phonetic alphabet, in which A becomes Alpha, B becomes Bravo, etc.

portable radio, that he had just returned from a *Sonderkommando*.[10] In addition to this, openly racist behavior, harassment of the female company members and the use of postcards featuring swastikas as decoration further tainted the reputation of Bravo company (ibid., p. 342–343). Even more incriminating, Bravo company soldiers were reported to greet each other with Nazi salutes (ibid., p. 343). Company commander Captain Groen later attributed this behavior to joking, stating that the Nazi salutes and German WWII phrases were simply expressions of humor (ibid., p. 344). Even if that is true, the behavior was nevertheless extremely inappropriate since it was conducted in full sight of the local population, and hardly in line with the rest of the battalion.

The unusually hostile behavior of Bravo company towards civilians, and the growing distance between it and the rest of the battalion, marks a shift in the tactical-level subculture of Dutchbat during Dutchbat III's rotation (see Table 38).

Attitude toward nononcombatants (secondary)		**Attitude toward risk (primary)**		
		Aggressive	Balanced	Cautious
	Protective	*most effective*		
	Indifferent			most of **Dutchbat III**
	Hostile			**Bravo Company**

Figure 38: Fragmentation during Dutchbat III

Passive and Cautious in the Face of Danger. The passive nature of Dutchbat quickly became apparent to the VRS. It could maintain complete control over all transports going to and from the enclave

[10] The word *Sonderkommando* refers to an SS death squad, see p. 221. See also Hilberg (1993, p. 58).

without any noticeable resistance. The Bosnian Serbs enforced strict rules regarding what the Dutch troops could bring in and out of the enclave. Whenever "contraband" was detected, they would simply hold up an entire convoy. The battalion commander of Dutchbat II reacted by criticizing his subordinates for jeopardizing whatever little freedom of movement the battalion had (Everts, 2000, p. 74). In essence, the battalion commander held the victims of Bosnian Serb arbitrary regulations responsible for the collective punishment handed out by the VRS. This not only enabled the VRS to maintain a firm grip on the enclave unchallenged, but also limited the ability to bring supplies vital to the fighting ability of Dutchbat into the enclave. In addition, it contributed to the deterioration of morale among the troops.

While Dutchbat was officially entrusted with the task of demilitarizing the Bosniak soldiers within the enclave, they were just as passive against the ABiH units as they were against the VRS. For example, when attempts to disarm Bosniak troops led to stand-offs, the Dutch peacekeepers backed down (Honig and Both, 1996, p. 130). When 100 Dutchbat soldiers were sent to investigate reports of fighting in the southern part of the enclave, they were taken hostage for several days. After this, Dutchbat avoided that area entirely (ibid., p. 130).

When the VRS started to block an increasing number of convoys during Dutchbat III's service in the enclave, they allowed troops to exit the enclave to go on leave, then prevented them from re-entering when they were scheduled to return. Since Dutchbat was accustomed to not challenging the VRS on matters of passage, this enabled the VRS to prevent 180 troops from rejoining their unit. This, in combination with the absence of fresh food, mail and electricity, reduced the level of the morale in Dutchbat III even further (ibid., p. 135). According to the NIOD report, an observation made by a Dutch staff officer in 1995 indicated that among the battalion staff "Communal spirit was lacking and communication between the ranks seemed to have reached low ebb" (*NIOD II* 2002, p. 315–316). This is supported by a lieutenant from the Army Crisis Staff, who reported that the relationship between higher and lower ranking officers and NCOs within the battalion was poor (ibid., p. 315–316).

Shortly before the assault, the VRS continously probed the determination of Dutchbat. In late May and early June 1995, VRS soldiers initiated destabilizing activities near a strategically important observation post, OP Echo, and demanded that the Dutch soldiers withdraw. The responsible company commander, Captain Groen, initially reinforced the OP and dug a foxhole behind and above it, where three men

were stationed with anti-tank weapons (*NIOD III* 2002, p. 220). Two days later, VRS soldiers surrounded the OP, instructed the Dutch troops that they had ten minutes to abandon their position and then opened fire on the OP. When the Dutch troops inside the observation post radioed the battalion command post, they received neither guidance nor orders (ibid., p. 224). After a few minutes of hesitation, they left in an APC with the VRS still firing at them. No doubt this event proved to the VRS that the Dutch could be coerced out of their observation posts, and that they would hesitate to return fire even when fired upon. This increased the strain on the Dutch personnel. In June, letters from a Dutchbat soldier stationed in Srebrenica indicated a sense of exasperation, and that the troops desperately wanted to get out of the enclave (Honig and Both, 1996, p. 136).

When the VRS attack on the Bosnian Army units defending Srebrenica was launched, the Dutchbat response was confused and concern for the safety of the Dutch soldiers was a major factor. During the first days of the assault, observation posts in the vicinity of Srebrenica were seized by the Bosnian Serbs with little resistance from the Dutch peacekeepers. The first observation post to be occupied by the Bosnian Serbs was called "OP-F." The local commander, sergeant Van Rossum, decided to evacuate when VRS units advanced (*NIOD III* 2002, p. 310). During another of these events the observation post labeled "OP-D" was abandoned. The company commander, Captain Groen of the infamous Bravo company (see page 268), at first intended to have his men take up a blocking position. However, out of concern for their safety, he instead ordered them to take cover in their armored vehicle where they remained passive until VRS forces arrived (ibid., p. 331). During the seizure by VRS units of another observation post, "OP-U," the Dutch unit manning it was instructed via radio by the command staff to open fire on the advancing Bosnian Serbs but the local commander, Sergeant J.A.J. van Eck, considered such actions to be "suicidal." The Bravo company operations room took van Eck's assessment into consideration and then amended the previous order, leaving it up to the discretion of van Eck to decide on the most appropriate course of action. Van Eck surrendered to the VRS, who ordered the Dutchmen to leave for Srebrenica. The Sergeant, however, feared ABiH reprisals for abandoning his post and instead offered themselves as hostages to the VRS (ibid., p. 317–318). The VRS allowed Van Eck to contact the Bravo company operations room, but again they deferred the decision, stating that "Whatever you decide to do, we wish you luck" (ibid., p. 317–318). Thus, the first six Dutchbat hostages were transported to Bratunac.

Repeated requests for air support at first resulted in promises that such support would be forthcoming, then in refusals from UNPROFOR HQ in Zagreb. Once it was approved, the timing was poor, since the planes were already in the air, waiting for the go-ahead, and had been on station for so long that they had to return to base to refuel (*NIOD III* 2002, p. 402). When the aircraft finally arrived, four hours had passed since the last request. At first, two Dutch F-16s arrived and after some initial confusion, Dutchbat Forward Air Controllers were able to guide them towards their targets. The Dutch planes released their bombs and left the area. The next wave of aircraft were American F-16s, which had difficulty establishing contact with the Dutch Forward Air Controller, and then were prohibited to drop bombs by their NATO command unless the Forward Air Controllers were under direct attack, which was no longer the case. Additional American aircraft arrived but did not attack. Once the VRS threatened to execute Dutchbat hostages in Bratunac, taken during the assault on the observation posts, the Forward Air Controller requested that the aircraft leave the enclave (ibid., p. 400–407). The threats made against the Dutchbat hostages were initially treated with skepticism by Karremans, who did not believe that the VRS would actually kill any Dutch soldiers. He did, however, believe that the VRS would kill civilians as a reprisal. After Karremans had reported the threats, his government successfully intervened to stop all Close Air Support operations in the enclave, fearing for the lives of its soldiers (ibid., p. 454).

During the hours before the final assault on Srebrenica by the Bosnian Serb units, the Dutch peacekeepers set up blocking positions and were ordered to act in a "green" manner, indicating traditional combat roles rather than the "blue" UN roles they had previously been occupying (ibid., p. 346). However, the subordinate commanders were concerned with escalation and the "suicidal" nature of any attempt to stop the Bosnian Serbs from advancing into Srebrenica (ibid., p. 351). When shrapnel from a nearby mortar impact hit the side of one of the Dutch vehicles, platoon commander Captain Hageman ordered his vehicles to withdraw from the three blocking positions (ibid., p. 365). Throughout the assault on Srebrenica, there is only one recorded instance of a Dutch unit firing directly at advancing Bosnian Serb troops, this being the result of an order by Captain Hageman. However, the only purpose of this order was to secure the withdrawal of Dutch troops by forcing the Bosnian Serbs to take cover and thus had no lasting effect even though it made the VRS troops pull back temporarily (ibid., p. 363). On the afternoon of the 11th of July, the Bosnian Serbs

launched their final push, which made the Dutch units withdraw at full speed. Shortly thereafter, they retrieved sensitive equipment from their compound and the last Dutch units left the town of Srebrenica, gathering at their base in nearby Potočari. In the ensuing panic, the population fled toward Potočari and Tuzla. NIOD estimates that circa 20 people from the population of Srebrenica along with circa 14 ABiH soldiers were killed during the five-day assault on the city, while the VRS casualties are estimated at 60 (ibid., p. 413–414). All the other victims were killed during the systematic massacre that followed in the days after. Consequently, the artillery barrage employed by the VRS can hardly be said to have been effective. NIOD partly attributes this to defective ammunition and fuses, as well as the outdated guns and lack of accurate meteorological data, which reduced the accuracy of the artillery fire (ibid., p. 413–414). The other part of the explanation is that the VRS deliberately fired at the edges of the city to drive the population out, in a specified direction, in this case north. With the city of Srebrenica being more or less deserted, it was easier for the VRS to seize it. In addition, the population had then been gathering in a more open area, where they were easier to control during the upcoming massacre.

After the fall of the city, thousands of refugees gathered in Potočari, accompanied by Dutchbat personnel and their APCs. Many sought protection by gathering around the Dutchbat troops and vehicles. Dutchbat did set up a blocking position on the road to Potočari, but when VRS troops showed up, they were able to disarm the Dutch troops without firing a shot. The VRS troops took whatever weapons they were interested in and left the rest behind (ibid., p. 416). Meanwhile, the remaining observation posts were seized by the VRS, while the Dutch crews were disarmed. The company commanders instructed the sergeants in command of the observation posts to cooperate with the VRS and to surrender their posts without any fighting (ibid., p. 418–424).

After this, Dutchbat had been reduced to disarmed bystanders. Karremans attended a meeting with Mladić, in which he was bullied in front of a TV camera, while he murmured excuses. The complete and utter humiliation of Dutchbat reached its climax when Karremans drank a toast with Mladić. The footage of that event is still readily available for anyone to see on the internet. In the following days, the worst massacre in post-war Europe was perpetrated.

SUMMARY

Dutchbat was handicapped by political and strategic-level interference even before it was deployed. The decision to send the light Airmobile brigade can to some extent be explained by the fact that it was the only readily available fully professional unit in the army, and the option of sending the professional marines had already been ruled out, as outlined on page 258. However, the decision to issue vehicles armed with mere .50-caliber heavy machine guns instead of the 25 mm standard cannon was typical of the micromanagement that had a detrimental effect on Dutchbat's ability to perform. The planning by the original brigade commander, Brinkman, included a diverse range of operational options, including the use of force. However, when the time came to implement the planning, the emphasis on risk avoidance had already taken precedence over any other operational concerns. In addition, Dutchbat II and III went from being highly motivated soldiers to being utterly demoralized, to the point where formal discipline started to fragment. The inability of the battalion commanders and even company commanders to take responsibility and provide clear guidance speeded up the process.

7.5

Summary of Case Pair

The case pair illustrates the difficulty faced by traditional military units when they have to cope with the complexity of peacekeeping in a volatile situation. The parties created significant difficulties for the UNPROFOR units by seeking to limit their freedom of movement, using harassing fire and making reoccuring threats. While both Nordbat 2 and Dutchbat encountered similar challenges, and operated in geographically adjacent areas, their lasting political impact could hardly have been more different. The mandate is often blamed in discussions concerning Dutchbat and Srebrenica (see for example Malešič, 2000, p. 18), but I argue that the formal UN Security Council mandate is not a central issue. Nordbat 2 shows that even when the formal degree of autonomy is severely restricted, a unit can still have a High degree of automomy in practice, by simply disregarding the restrictions. While this could have been easily stopped by relieving Ulf Henricsson or his successors of command, along with any other leaders with similar tendencies, it quickly became obvious to the strategic and political decision-makers in Stockholm that a High degree of autonomy produced far better strategic output than any other alternative, even if it had the side effect of producing more than a few minor political incidents.

The textbook adherence to formal autonomy displayed by Dutchbat ultimately helped neither them, nor the people they were supposed to protect. The problem is not that Dutchbat had no options, but that they were unable to see the options available to them in the way Nordbat 2 did. This is a result of their tactical-level subculture, not the mandate, or any practical or logistical obstacles.

RIVAL EXPLANATION: THE FAULTY MANDATE

The instructions conveyed to Henricsson at the time by the Swedish Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs (Utrikesnämnden) was that the mission would be under the aegis of Chapter VII of the UN charter (Henricsson, 2013, p. 43–44). The distinction between Chapter VI (Pacific Settlement of Disputes) and Chapter VII (Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace and Acts of Aggression) is crucial. Chapter VI enables the UN Security Council (henceforth: UNSC) to call upon the parties to settle their dispute by:

> negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their choice (*Charter of the United Nations*, Chapter VI, Article 33)

In addition, it also authorizes the UNSC to "recommend appropriate procedures or methods of adjustment" (ibid., Chapter VI, Article 36, para. 1). By invoking Chapter VII, on the other hand, the UNSC may "take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security" (ibid., Chapter VII, Article 42). UNPROFOR was initially intended to be a traditional peacekeeping force, serving as a buffer between Croatia and Serbia. As the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina deteriorated, UNPROFOR's mission expanded. The step from peacekeeping to enforcement was taken as early as August 13, 1992, when the UN Security Council authorized the UN member states to "take all measures necessary" to facilitate the delivery of aid to Sarajevo and the rest of Bosnia-Herzegovina (White, 1997, p. 242). The fact that UNPROFOR imposed strict rules of engagement and other limitations on itself was not linked to the formal mandate by the UN Security Council. According to White (ibid., p. 242), "Although on paper at least, UNPROFOR was authorised to use enforcement action or at least to use significant amounts of self-defence, in practice coercive action was left to NATO." Consequently, while Nordbat 2's approach may have been in violation of UNPROFOR organizational policies, it did not violate the UN Security Council mandate. On the contrary, Nordbat 2 was one of very few units to take the mandate seriously.

Before Nordbat 2 was deployed, Ulf Henricsson concluded that since the deployment would be a Chapter VII mission, the primary objective was peace enforcement rather than peacekeeping. When he expressed this view openly in national media during the fall of 1993, he was criticized by government officials for being too aggressive (Henricsson, 2013, p. 45). Henricsson ignored this feedback by referring to UNSC resolution 836, which invokes resolution 819, which in turn invokes Chapter VII. The applicable chapter is clearly stated in resolution 819, dated April 16, 1993:

> Recalling the provisions of resolution 815 (1993) on the mandate of UNPROFOR and in that context acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations,
>
> 1. Demands that all parties and others concerned treat Srebrenica and its surroundings as a safe area which

> should be free from any armed attack or any other hostile act;
> 2. Demands also to that effect the immediate cessation of armed attacks by Bosnian Serb paramilitary units against Srebrenica and their immediate withdrawal from the areas surrounding Srebrenica; [...]
> 8. Demands the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance to all parts of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular to the civilian population of Srebrenica and its surrounding areas and recalls that such impediments to the delivery of humanitarian assistance constitute a serious violation of international humanitarian law
>
> (*Resolution 819* 1993)

UNSC resolution 836 was added less than two months later. It states the following:

> Reaffirming in particular its resolutions 819 (1993) of 16 April 1993 and 824 (1993) of 6 May 1993 [...]
>
> Authorizes UNPROFOR, in addition to the mandate defined in resolutions 770 (1992) of 13 August 1992 and 776 (1992), in carrying out the mandate defined in paragraph 5 above, acting in self-defence, **to take the necessary measures, including the use of force, in reply to bombardments against the safe areas** by any of the parties **or to armed incursion into them** or in the event of any **deliberate obstruction in or around those areas to the freedom of movement of UNPROFOR or of protected humanitarian convoys** [my emphasis, original underscore] (*Resolution 836* 1993)

Resolutions 836 and 819 in combination can thus clearly be interpreted as providing a mandate to exercise force in response to both bombardments and armed incursion against safe areas, as well as to prevent obstruction of freedom of movement of UNPROFOR units and UN convoys. The mandate itself was fairly robust, albeit with a few somewhat ambiguous sentences (i.e. adding "acting in self-defense" to the sentence authorizing the use of force). The reason UNPROFOR's ability to exercise force was limited was not due to a problem with the mandate, but rather how the mandate was implemented by the UN

command hierarchy. However, disregarding orders from the command hierarchy that were in direct contradiction of the mandate was a viable option, as Nordbat 2 clearly illustrates.

TACTICAL-LEVEL SUBCULTURES AS EXPLANATION

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, both Nordbat 2 and Dutchbat faced a completely new situation, and any previous guidance provided by operational-level leaders at home was of little use to clear the confusion surrounding the mandate, the task at hand and how to behave towards the parties to the conflict. The regional UNPROFOR commands only added to the difficulty with their complex RoEs, disunity and remoteness. Consequently, the battalion commanders had to assume the role of focal points. In Nordbat 2's case, this worked very well during the first and second rotations, relatively well during the third rotation, and less than satisfactorily during the fourth rotation. In Dutchbat's case, it went from poor to worse. Karremans in particular gives the impression of having been a passive and indecisive leader. Henricsson, Svensson and Lundberg, on the other hand, stepped up and simply did things the way they saw fit, with relatively little regard for how the more senior UNPROFOR commanders would react.

Both Nordbat 2 and Dutchbat had to cope with conflicting and ambiguous strategic objectives. The battalion commanders thus faced the same dilemma as their civilian counterparts in public administration. As Lipsky (2010, p. 40) states: "Street-level bureaucrats characteristically work in jobs with conflicting and ambiguous goals." Just like the street-level bureaucrats in civilian life, the battalion commanders had to prioritize. The first three Swedish battalion commanders, Henricsson in particular, chose to pursue the core mission objectives as they had interpreted them, even if that meant defying both their own government and the UN hierarchy. In doing so, they acted in the best tradition of *Auftragstaktik*. The end result for Nordbat 2 was that the primary strategic objective outweighed secondary concerns related to the risk of taking casualties. Henricsson and his successors thus achieved results that in a long-term perspective proved to exceed what most political leaders could reasonably have expected, even though that may not have been apparent to his superiors at the time.

While the Swedish strategic and political level did try to micromanage Nordbat 2 also in terms of equipment, it was Henricsson who ultimately decided what Nordbat 2 would bring and use throughout its deployment. As an officer of the tank corps, he favored armor,

firepower and mobility. Pushing this through despite opposition, he went to Bosnia-Herzegovina with exactly the sort of battalion he had originally wanted. The micromanagement of the equipment allocated to Dutchbat, on the other hand, had a strongly detrimental influence on their functional imperatives. While several senior officers voiced their opposition, the battalion commanders complied with the decisions by the minister of defense, the Chief of the Defense Staff and the Commander-in-Chief of the army. More heavily armed vehicles, like the PBV 302s of Nordbat 2, would have inspired more confidence in the troops by virtue of their robustness and lethality, and provided them with additional tactical options. In addition, the gunners would have enjoyed better protection in enclosed turrets instead of being exposed behind the machine gun. Gerald Verhaegher, one of the Dutchbat troops stationed in Srebrenica during the massacre, told Der Spiegel in an interview in 2005 that he wished that the Dutch government had provided Dutchbat with better equipment ("Dealing With Genocide: A Dutch Peacekeeper Remembers Srebrenica" July 12 2005). He also argued that three times as many peacekeepers still would not have been able to prevent the VRS from seizing the city. Ulf Henricsson disagrees. In a radio interview in 2010, he refused to give a direct answer when asked whether Nordbat 2 would have fared any better at Srebrenica, but argued that his confrontational high-risks game paid off in Vareš, and that it probably would have worked in Srebrenica as well (Johnsson, 2010). He asked rhetorically what the Serbs would have done if the UN troops had put up a fight. If they had gone through with the attack and massacred hundreds of UN troops, the UN would have been forced to commit to large-scale air strikes immediately, something the VRS most certainly wanted to avoid. Karremans and his Dutch troops, on the other hand, did their utmost to follow the biddings of their civilian government. This may meant that Karremans could enjoy a far less confrontational relationship with his government while he was serving in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but it also meant that he chose not to exercise any ability he may have had to make independent decisions.

Consequently, it can be argued that the actual number of UN peacekeepers was not the decisive factor. Their unwillingness to accept the risk of being drawn into direct combat against an overwhelmingly superior foe enabled the VRS to take the city. The big question is what Mladić would have done if Dutchbat had decided on a more confrontational stance. Henricsson thinks he would have backed down, but there is a huge distance between mere speculation and actually staking the lives of 370 troops on an assumption. In the end, it is a typical case of

uncertainty under pressure. Assertive and confrontational commanders like Henricsson or Svensson would most likely react differently than the cautious Karremans and Everts, who were reluctant to disobey their government. Sergeant Ruzdi Ekenheim, who participated in several of the incidents and events outlined in chapter 7.3, remains convinced that Nordbat 2 would have been able to prevent the massacre if it had been protecting Srebrenica instead (*Interview with Ruzdi Ekenheim* September 19, 2013).

At first glance, it may seem unsurprising that Nordbat 2 would fare better than Dutchbat, considering that the Scandinavian unit was more heavily armed and subject to less interference from its governments. However, one has to keep in mind that while Dutchbat did not have a tank company, their infantry companies were not drastically inferior in terms of equipment. When the Swedish infantry companies broke through checkpoints and held their ground in stand-off situations, they frequently did so at considerable risk to their own safety. In most cases, the tank company was too far away to provide any support within a reasonable amount of time, and in many high-risk situations the PBV 302s were still vulnerable to ambush. The main difference was that the Swedes acted aggressively and confidently from the very moment they arrived. Their tendency to return fire earned them respect and served to deter the parties from inviting escalation. The gung-ho spirit among Nordbat 2's troops, inspired by Henricssons's daring feats, made them unpredictable and difficult to handle for the parties. The Dutch, on the other hand, were known to be passive and cautious. It is no coincidence that Nordbat 2 was known as "Shootbat," while Dutchbat was known as "Ditchbat."

Their training was similar, in the sense that combat was emphasized. While the Swedes probably received more information on the cultural and historical background, Henricsson dismissed this part of the training as flawed. The experts used to train the Swedes claimed that the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina had deep roots in history and ethnicity, while Henricsson later came to view the conflict as a struggle mainly over power, money and real estate, instigated by the former Communist nomenclatura (Johnsson, 2010). The complicated and counterproductive RoEs did nothing to facilitate Nordbat 2's and Dutchbat's already challenging situations. However, in the case of Nordbat 2, Henricsson and his successors up until the fourth rotation, commanded by Colonel Arlefalk, simply exploited the possibility to override the RoEs, with reference to the mandate. On several occasions, this resulted in stern criticism from his UNPROFOR superiors. The head of Sector

North-East, Brigadier-General Ridderstad, even threatened to send Colonel Svensson, who commanded the second rotation of Nordbat 2, home to Sweden immediately in the aftermath of *Operation Bøllebank* (*Interview with Ruzdi Ekenheim* September 19, 2013). The Dutchbat commanders' adherence to the letter of these regulations limited their freedom of action considerably. While a confrontational approach might have been more difficult to implement in 1995, it is noteworthy that there are no records of the Dutch attempting alternate strategies either, such as the friendly and/or manipulative approaches employed by, for example, Major Sigeback.

Faced with an extreme situation, Dutchbat more or less froze and adapted itself to the demands and arbitrary decisions imposed on it by the parties. It has been argued that Karremans could not know that Mladić planned a massacre of such proportions. Neverthless, his second in command, Major Franken, told the NIOD investigators that "in the worst case," he expected the men to be killed (*NIOD IV* 2002, p. 225). In addition, Mladić had voiced threats against the population of Srebrenica for years. While drunk, he threatened to kill every Muslim in Srebrenica, within earshot of Swedish Colonel Bo Pellnäs and his interpreter, Sergeant Ekenheim, as early as 1993, during the first Bosnian Serb attacks on Srebrenica. Pellnäs and Ekenheim reported this to UNPROFOR command, but Ekenheim does not know if anyone took notice (*Interview with Ruzdi Ekenheim* September 19, 2013). The lack of air support or indeed any other form of support was of course an important factor behind the failure at Srebrenica. The actions by The Hague in preventing further air support did nothing to help Dutchbat's already difficult position. Especially since Karremans doubted that the VRS were serious about killing the Dutch hostages. It must be taken into account that for example the Swedish unit defending the hospital in Bakoviçi did not have any support either, and was also outnumbered and outgunned.

The isolation of the Srebrenica enclave and the apparent powerlessness of the battalion commanders took a toll on the morale and cohesion of the unit. By the time Srebrenica was attacked, it had started to experience a breakdown of formal internal discipline. NCOs refused to follow orders that they perceived as too risky and officers were all too willing to listen to these arguments. Nordbat 2 under Henricsson and his successor were, on the contrary, quite willing to take risks, occasionally bordering on recklessness. If Nordbat 2 had been responsible for protecting Srebrenica, it would also have been in possession of significantly heavier armament, in the form of the tank

company. Henricsson expressly said that he refused to shoulder the responsibility of protecting Srebrenica without the tanks. Thus, in the situations where Dutchbat claimed that they had no way of stopping the VRS tanks, Nordbat 2 would have been equipped for such an eventuality. As is shown by *Operation Bøllebank*, they did not hesitate to use these assets.

In summary, the recipe behind Nordbat 2's success was its literal adherence to the motto "firm, fair and friendly," guided by its tactical-level subculture, which was shaped by the heritage of *Auftragstaktik* and Henricsson's interpretation of the original mission objectives. This allowed Nordbat 2 to make it through the difficult and confusing situation it encountered in Bosnia. Dutchbat, on the other hand, was perhaps fair, but neither firm nor friendly. For the people trapped inside the Srebrenica enclave, the cost of their failure was extremely high.

8

Conclusions

The eight case studies presented in this dissertation illustrate how tactical-level subcultures guide decision-making, especially under conditions of uncertainty and stress, and that these tactical-level decisions can have major political and strategic consequences. The examples in the preceding chapters include tactical-level subcultures that have determined the outcome of a war, undermined top-level diplomacy, and produced decisions that forced the resignation of a government. In addition, they relate to a unique category of public servants, invested with the mandate to take the lives both of citizens of the state they serve, as well as of citizens of other states, as part of their role as implementers of policy. Consequently, they are highly relevant from a political science perspective.

As is indicated by the case studies, tactical-level subcultures can contribute to outcomes that are both beneficial and detrimental, from a political perspective. In order to improve the likelihood of successful implementation, i.e. outcomes that are in line with the expectations of the policy-makers, it is crucial that the tactical-level subcultures of the implementing units are compatible with the requirements of the political objectives at hand. In addition, dysfunctional and fragmented tactical-level subcultures pose a risk that goes beyond implementation failure. The terrible massacre in Song My in 1968 in particular serves as a reminder of this. The political feedback resulting from decisions made by lower-level military leaders can directly influence the policy of the state they serve. This dissertation features several examples of this.

To mention but a few such examples from the preceding chapters, we have seen that the actions by the German U-boat captains undermined the diplomatic efforts by the German government in 1939, effectively removing the de-escalation policy option. In a similar manner, the Song My massacre prompted President Nixon to take a sympathetic position vis-a-vis the perpetrators, in an attempt to manage the political rift that followed once the trial was under way. In the case of Dutchbat III, the failure to prevent the Srebrenica massacre had a significant and lasting impact on the political view of peacekeeping operations in the Netherlands. The eventual resignation of the government led by Wim Kok ensured that the massacre had not been forgotten even seven years after the fact. In Israel in 1973, the 7th and 188th Brigades directly contributed to enabling the Israeli government to negotiate a ceasefire from a position of strength, while the failure of the American Silent Service prevented the Americans from immediately implementing a policy of forceful retaliation against Japan following the attack on Pearl Harbor. The feedback created by lower-level military leaders can thus, in addition to being an implementation issue, have a direct enabling or constraining impact on the available foreign policy options.

In this chapter, I will focus on the implications of what I've found in my empirical analyses. Since summaries are given at the conclusion of all four of my empirical chapters, this chapter is kept short, to avoid unnecessary repetition. First of all, I will revisit the discussion on theoretical contributions that I presented in the first chapter. Thereafter follows a section on the policy relevance of my theory, from the perspective of civil-military relations and steering effectiveness. I conclude the chapter with a brief discussion regarding the broader applicability of my research, and a few final words.

8.1

Theoretical Contribution Revisited

As outlined in chapter 1.1, it has been my ambition in this dissertation to expand the scope of public administration research into a new empirical context, and to provide a theoretical contribution to the study of subcultures within public administration. I have argued that lower-level military leaders can be regarded as street-level bureaucrats, who serve in a more extreme context than their civilian counterparts. Through their decision-making, lower-level military leaders shape major

political outcomes and have a lasting impact that directly influences policy. Consequently, they are also, in addition to the above, relevant from a foreign policy perspective.

The conceptual framework used to define tactical-level subcultures links Lipsky's (2010) street-level bureaucrat concept with March and Olsen's (2008) logic of appropriateness, adding decision-making elements, such as the OODA-loop, as well as framing it within the realm of subcultures. As such, the conceptual framework represents a theoretical development relevant to these traditions, as well as a new comprehensive approach that unites them. The concept of tactical-level subcultures can highlight the multitude of cultures in any large organization, providing a tool that can be used to trace their origins as well as the factors that reinforce them.

My theory, derived from the application of the conceptual framework, predicts that convergence between political and strategic objectives on the one hand, and the tactical-level subcultures on the other, is more likely to produce compliant output in accordance with the expectations of the policy-makers. As we have seen in the eight case studies, a high degree of convergence can even make military units perform far above expectations, as was the case for the Israeli 7th and 188th brigades on the Golan Heights; Nordbat 2 in Bosnia; and the *Ubootwaffe*, once the restrictions had been lifted. The darker side of the theory is that it also illustrates how perpetrators of atrocities can be shaped, as was the case in the *Totenkopfverbände*.

When the degree of convergence is very low, the output is far more likely to be at odds with the expectations of the policy-makers. This explains the poor track record of the American submarines in the war against Japan 1941–1942. Exacerbated by dysfunctional tactical-level subcultures, this can also lead to terrible spontaneous atrocities, as in the case of Charlie Company and the Song My massacre. Micromanagement offers no solution either, as is evident from the passivity of Dutchbat in the face of VRS harassment, and the attack on Srebrenica in 1995.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE OPERATIONAL STYLES LITERATURE

The conceptual framework distinguishes general formative factors from material and personnel-related aspects, facilitating the analysis of units within large organizations. In addition, the conceptual framework helps us to identify the presence or absence of focal points that are decisive in the shaping of subcultures.

In this manner, the conceptual framework separates more general influences, such as national culture and traits specific to certain military organizations, from the focal points that are necessary to interpret these general influences and incorporate them in, or exclude them from, coherent subcultures. For example, this helps us understand why national culture can have such a significant impact in some cases, but not in others.

This finding is highly relevant to the study of operational styles in civil-military relations, since as pointed out on page 31, the current literature in this subfield is heavily oriented toward national characteristics. By framing the impact of national characteristics as merely one among many potential formative factors (see figure 39), my conceptual framework provides new analytical tools for such studies.

In some cases, national characteristics do play a key role, and the conceptual framework can accommodate these cases as well. For example, the case of the Israeli 188th and 7th brigades is a clear illustration of when national culture has a significant impact. This is explained by the unusually powerful influence of the concept of *en brera* on a national scale, combined with the policy of rotating officers between staff and combat positions, as well as the limited size of the IDF and the policy of routinely rotating officers between staff and

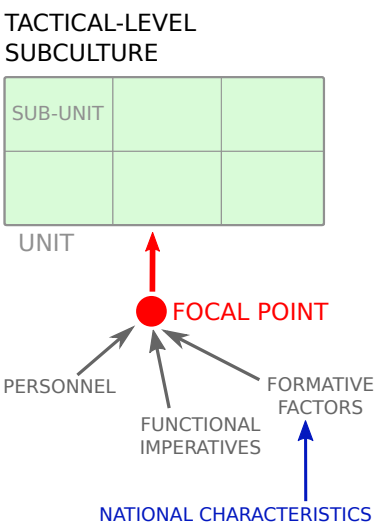

Figure 39: National Characteristics in Tactical-Level Subcultures.

combat positions. Nevertheless, it is also important to keep in mind that not all Israeli units were as resilient as the 188th and 7th brigades. The fleeing units described on page 135 serve as a reminder of this.

The preceding case studies also illustrate the wide range of diversity than can exist within a single nation, even during a single conflict. This is made clear by the three German cases, which have very different tactical-level subcultures. They range from the highly aggressive *Ubootwaffe* to the more balanced risk-taking of the heavy independent tank battalions, to the brutality and ruthlessness of the *Totenkopfverbände*.

The Germans were not all aggressive, nor were they the only ones to display this trait. The Israeli 188th and 7th armored brigades were just as aggressive as the *Ubootwaffe*, and just as able to absorb casualties without falling apart as the *Totenkopf* division. On a similar, and perhaps more counterintuitive note, Nordbat 2, comprised mostly of ex-conscripts who briefly returned to serve in uniform, most coming from a country that had not experienced war in two hundred years, were also highly aggressive. The American submarine captains, on the other hand, although hailing from a country that has fought more wars than most over the course of its history, were in many cases outright timid.

All this illustrates that while national cultures *may* have an impact as formative factors, they do not decide how tactical-level subcultures develop. Instead, this is the result of an interplay between formative factors, personnel and functional imperatives, as filtered through focal points. The focal points determine which formative factors will influence the tactical-level subcultures, and how, as well as shaping the personnel. Focal points are important not only to the creation of a tactical-level subculture, but also to its continued existence. The case of Nordbat 2 illustrates that even a very strong homogeneous tactical-level subculture can deteriorate over time when it loses its focal point. In cases where there was no focal point to begin with, the stress imposed by exposure to uncertainty and stress can quickly break a unit down into an undisciplined rabble, as is particularly evident in the Charlie Company case, but can also be clearly discerned in Dutchbat III.

The consequences of having troops serving in war zones in such units, such as the events that occurred in Song My and Srebrenica, are stark reminders of the importance of ensuring that military units have functioning tactical-level subcultures.

SUBCULTURES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

As stated on page 25, subcultures in public administration have already been the subject of previous research. However, this dissertation adds new dimensions to this research by framing it within the realm of street-level bureaucracy. In addition, the conceptual framework represents a more comprehensive tool for analyzing subcultures, allowing us both to trace continuity, and to explain the fragmentation of subcultures where it occurs.

The concept of tactical-level subcultures expands on both the logic of appropriateness and the concept of street-level bureaucrats, by combining the cultural aspect of the former with the policy dimension of the latter. The addition of the concept of subcultures allows us to see the multitude of different logics of appropriateness within single organizations. As such, this dissertation represents a development of the study of cultures in public administration, as well as how these cultures can influence policy.

The existence of subcultures, and the impact they have on decision-making, may seem counterintuitive in the strictly hierarchical military organizations. However, as the case studies illustrate, the transparent and strongly formalized hierarchies of military organizations are not as rigid and predictable as many assume. My case studies indicate that command at the lower levels tends to be based at least in some degree on consensus (consciously or subconsciously) in the sense that orders that subordinates consider to be inappropriate may be questioned. While this may not lead to outright mutiny or disobedience, it may prompt the commander to alter the original order.

As surprising as this may seem in a strict, formal hierarchy, it has a logical basis. The members of a military unit need to be able in some degree to coordinate the actions and decisions of their fellow soldiers as well as their superiors. The tactical-level subculture provides a point of reference that makes this possible. It allows the unit to act more or less as one, and makes them effective even in the chaotic conditions of combat, where uncertainty and stress is prevalent.

This adds a functional dimension to the cultural aspects that are at the core of the logic of appropriateness and the concept of subcultures. The tactical-level subcultures can greatly facilitate coordination between individuals, especially in situations where they have to make decisions in conditions of stress and uncertainty. The fact that in any large organization different groups of individuals, as units, have to perform

different tasks, means that different cultures have to exist to provide coordination. Thus, subcultures become a necessity.

Consequently, just as the street-level bureaucrat has to secure autonomy in order to cope with the challenges of his or her daily work, groups of street-level bureaucrats need subcultures in order to coordinate their autonomous decisions.

THE CIVIL-MILITARY DILEMMA

The findings presented in this dissertation also have repercussions for the more overarching dilemma that is in focus in much of the literature on civil-military relations. The classic civil-military dilemma concerns how civilian policy-makers can achieve a sufficient degree of control over the military to prevent them from interfering with civilian matters, while simultaneously avoiding to limit their military capacity.

The issue of tactical-level commanders influencing political outcomes, as defined in this dissertation, is a contribution to the literature on civil-military relations that goes beyond Huntington and Finer, by addressing more fundamental issues than deliberate military intervention into civilian politics. Regardless of whether a military junta or a democratically elected government is at the helm, the distance between the strategic/political and tactical levels ensures that the phenomenon will remain a potential problem for both the politician and the general. For any government, being accountable for actions beyond political control is probably the most important concern related to the subject of this dissertation.

Huntington famously argued that professionalization is the key to the civil-military dilemma, and that this would keep the military out of politics. My perspective challenges this by arguing that lower-level military leaders are inherently political actors, who have a real political impact, whether they want to or not. Since combat is, in essence, the implementation of policy, military leaders simply cannot be apolitical. Even if they are not aware of it, lower-level military leaders inevitably shape policy, in precisely the same way as Lipsky's street-level bureaucrats. Thus, they cannot be separated from the political sphere, in the manner suggested by Huntington. Instead, we must come to terms with the fact that they are inherently political, and find means to cope with that reality.

There are also empirical phenomena that we need to take into account, such as the concept of *Auftragstaktik*. The essence of *Auftragstaktik*, that tactical decisions should be delegated to the local

commanders, contrasts starkly with the notion of civilian control over the military. Nevertheless, in a complex environment, where decisions have to be made quickly and then followed through decisively, political or strategic micromanagement is impractical at best and ineffectual at worst. As my case studies illustrate, the degree of formal autonomy is not always the same as the actual autonomy. To make matters more complex, sometimes the best output is attained when the tactical-level commanders disregard their allocated degree of formal autonomy, as in the case of Nordbat 2 or the independent Tiger battalions. At other times this can lead to disaster, as in the case of Charlie Company, or the first months of *Ubootwaffe*'s campaign against the Allies in 1939. On the other hand, even when a unit adheres to restrictions on its autonomy, this too can lead to disaster, as in the case of Dutchbat.

The problem with trying to limit the autonomy of tactical-level decision-makers is two-fold: first, it is difficult to ensure compliance. Second, micromanagement is inherently problematic in a rapidly unfolding and highly complex operational environment, even if compliance can be obtained. For these reasons, giving tactical-level commanders a high degree of autonomy may in many cases be significantly more effective, in terms of the likelihood of compliant output. Combined with an institutionalized approach that emphasizes this autonomy, and prepares lower-level military leaders to exploit it to the full, it becomes very powerful. It is no coincidence that the Israeli, German and Swedish military organizations featured in the case studies, all of which had adopted *Auftragstaktik*, produced compliant output even in very challenging scenarios.

8.2

Civil-Military Policy Lessons

The first lesson for political leaders is that they cannot rely solely upon military decision-makers at the strategic level. These senior officers are too close to the political sphere and too remote from the operational and tactical levels. In none of the eight case studies did strategic-level officers play any key role in the outcomes described. They were just as disconnected from what was going on at the tactical level as the civilian policy-makers.

The simplest course of action for the civilian leadership to achieve convergence is to take an active role in the selection of operational-level

leaders and units, ensuring that these commanders view the overall strategic objectives and priorities in the same way as the political level, and that units are not expected to carry out tasks that are significantly different from what they are used to or expect. If an entirely new situation arises, creating an entirely new unit may be the best course of action. This was a key factor behind the success of Nordbat 2. Most importantly, political leaders have to accept that ambiguity is not a safe option. Either, strict priorities have to be established, or a single overall objective must be specified, which is then allowed to override all other concerns. Ideally, these priorities should be made before an actual deployment, to ensure that the operational-level commander has enough time to transplant these priorities in the organization under his or her command. If this is beyond the capabilities of the political decision-makers, then they have to accept a certain level of discomfort as their selected military implementers will have to handle the priorities for them.

The second lesson for political leaders is that they have to accept that any attempts at micromanagement are done at their own peril. The more uncertainty and stress their subordinates face, the higher the risk of complications and unwanted outcomes, if such an approach is adopted. In a rapidly developing situation, such as the events in Srebrenica in the summer of 1995, it is virtually impossible to exercise control from afar. It will become apparent to the adversary, who will exploit the inevitable friction imposed by such an arrangement to get inside the OODA-loop of the unit, which can lead to disastrous consequences.

Politicians as well as generals have to accept that they will probably not be in a position to know the best course of action once an operation is underway. However, the strategic and political decision-makers have to be mindful not only of *which* units to deploy, but also *when* to do so. In the *Ubootwaffe* case, it might have been wiser to keep the U-boats at home during the initial month of the war, while de-escalation with the UK was still a strategic objective. If a unit has been created, trained and equipped for a specific role, it cannot be expected to carry out completely different tasks without complications arising. Thus, a unit created, trained and equipped to fight a relentless and unrestricted war against merchant shipping should be expected to do just that, regardless of attempts to restrain and micromanage it.

If the chosen units fail to live up to their expectations, then the quickest solution, short of replacing the whole units, is to replace one or more leaders in positions where they could function as focal points.

The replacements must then be given enough time to reshape their units. Naturally, this means that time will be lost, and the unit(s) may become more or less unusable during the transition process, which is why it should only be a last resort. Nevertheless, this is what ultimately turned out to be the solution for the dysfunctional American submarine arm.

In a multilateral operation, the best strategy may be to pass the buck to someone else, who can provide different units, that are better suited for the task at hand. In the Dutch case, if casualties were such a sensitive domestic issue, Dutch troops should never have been deployed at all to such a dangerous mission and certainly not to one of the most exposed positions of all. This would have meant that someone else would have had to assume to role of protector of the Srebrenica Safe Area, quite possibly a unit that was better armed and less willing to submit to the restrictions imposed by the VRS. This might have forced a decision at an earlier point in time, and denied the VRS the opportunity to seize the initiative. Even leaving Srebrenica completely without a UN battalion to protect it might have been a better option. At least then the refugees would not have been under the false impression that they would be protected.

In essence, this means that that political decision-makers have to be prepared to relinquish control over day-to-day operations, but also that they have to be more thorough during the phase of preparation and planning. In addition, they have to be willing to sacrifice short-term prestige if they want to attain outcomes that are desirable in the long term. The quarrels between the political/strategic decision-makers and their operational-level subordinates in the *Ubootwaffe* and Nordbat 2 cases are today little more than anecdotes, while the accomplishments of these units are remembered as having been highly effective from a political and strategic point of view.

8.3

Broader Applicability

The conceptual framework and theory I have developed have been tested on eight different cases. Together, they represent a considerable diversity. While these eight cases are not sufficient to draw any definite conclusions regarding to what extent my findings can be generalized, the results indicate that the theoretical framework and theory may be

applicable on a very large number of cases over a significant period of time.[1] The primary preconditions are that the units under scrutiny need to have enough autonomy for the tactical-level subcultures to have an impact, and that the capability criterion is met (see page 41).

The eight cases together cover a time period ranging from 1939 to 1995, and include conventional as well as unconventional warfare, atrocities, and peacekeeping operations. If we define the total span covered by these eight cases as the universe of cases, then there should be a myriad of different cases that could be similarly analyzed using these theoretical tools. As long as the autonomy criterion is met, the conceptual framework and theory may also be applicable to cases before 1939 and after 1995.

The autonomy criterion may be the most limiting factor, since it is usually associated with a specific type of military organization, namely the German army of WWII and later also with Western and Israeli forces that adopted the concept of *Auftragstaktik*. However, there are probably other examples of similarly autonomous military units that have not been inspired by the Germans, where the conceptual framework and theory would be just as applicable. After all, the application of the concept of tactical-level subcultures, and of the theory of convergence, does not require the adoption of *Auftragstaktik* per se, as long as there is a sufficient degree of autonomy.

In addition, the applicability of the theoretical tools developed in this dissertation need not be limited to military cases. While the OODA-loop employed in this dissertation was developed for use in military contexts, it can also be used as a more general heuristic device for analyzing decision-making. Indeed, it has already been embraced in this manner among business analysts ("What A Fighter Pilot Knows About Business: The OODA Loop" February 19 2013). The adversarial aspect of business, where the competitor takes on a role similar to that of the enemy of the military unit, could possibly make the conceptual framework extra useful in such contexts. As previously stated (see page 25), Detert et al. (2000, p. 858) encouraged the study of subcultures in organizations. The conceptual framework and theory outlined in this dissertation could be useful tools in any such endeavors. Stress and uncertainty exist in the corporate world too, albeit in a more limited and mundane fashion than in a combat context.

[1] For a more elaborate discussion regarding the limits of generalization following hypothesis-testing on a limited number of case studies, see George and Bennett (2005, p. 114-124).

Consider for example Xerox, once enormously wealthy and powerful, when it had a virtual monopoly on photocopiers. It created an entirely unique research division called Xerox PARC, with a subculture that was very different from the rest of Xerox, and this enabled them to create some of the most groundbreaking innovations in computer history. However, other factions within the company undermined these efforts, and it all came to naught (Hiltzik, 2000, p. 263). The conceptual framework could highlight the cultural differences within the organization, and explain how one unit within Xerox could produce results of immense strategic value, while another did what it could to undermine these efforts.

While it may have certain specific advantages in a business context, the conceptual framework is probably just as useful for studying subcultures within traditional public administration. For example, NASA's famous Apollo program, which sent men to the moon and back, was according to Murray and Bly Cox (2004, ch. 11) "the story of three cultures": the Germans from Peenemünde, the old NACA staff from Langley and Lewis, and the systems engineers from the ICBM program. The conceptual framework and theory could be used to analyze these three subcultures, and how in combination they were able to achieve such remarkable results. While NASA did not have an adversary, the OODA-loop is still a useful heuristic device for understanding decision-making processes, and the street-level bureaucracy and policy dimensions would be well-suited for such a context. Even without an adversary, the stress and uncertainty dimension can be found in public administration. In the case of NASA, the challenge of developing untested technology for a huge undertaking no-one had ever tried before definitely added uncertainty. The stress factor was there too, in the form of the 1969 deadline imposed by President Kennedy.

In addition, it could be argued that adversaries exist even outside of business contexts. For example, Allison and Zelikow (1999, p. 255) presents a model in which public administration is portrayed as competing interests. In such a context, the OODA-loop component could, for example, help explain why some actors are more successful than others.

Finally, the conceptual framework could be used to find dysfunctional subcultures in both public administration and business contexts, as well as to trace the impact of specific formative factors, and identify focal points. This could provide a deeper understanding of the inner workings of organizations, regardless of empirical context. The theory could similarly be used to study effectiveness or implementation failures

by establishing the degree of convergence between the objectives at hand and the subcultures of the organizational units responsible for implementing them.

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