

More Is Not Always Better: Oversight of the Military

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An analysis of three case studies reveals the Air Force does not necessarily gain autonomy when government principals are divided over policy, contradicting current scholarship on the issue. Varying levels of service autonomy under divided principals requires tailored approaches to policy development and implementation.

The two government branches that delegate national security to the military, the executive and legislative, sometimes differ on policy preferences. Scholarly literature claims that autonomy increases for the military when these principals are divided on policy because the military can play one branch off the other, gaining latitude for its policy preference. An examination of three cases specific to the Air Force finds (1) the service does not reliably receive more autonomy from divided executive and legislative branches; (2) conditions other than those classically understood by civil-military relations theory contribute to variations in Air Force autonomy; and (3) the Air Force does not always desire more autonomy. These contributions offer practical insights for military advisers and policy makers.

Introduction

Three highly charged issues—the proposed retirement of the A-10 Thunderbolt II, the repeal of the combat flying ban for women, and the creation of the United States Space Force (USSF)—highlight the principal-agent dynamic between the US government and the Air Force in which the military provides national security expertise to the government. The preponderance of scholarly literature on civil-military relations claims that divided principals—instances in policy promulgation when preferences of the executive and legislative branches diverge—permit a less responsive military agent, resulting in more autonomy for the agent to act as it sees fit.¹ Scholars hypothesize that in these cases the military agent plays the principals off one another, providing the agent greater latitude to implement its preferred option.

Principal Agent Theory in Civil-Military Relations

Principal agent theory entails one party, the principal, delegating work to another party, the agent, to perform.² Scholars first tailored principal agent theory to political science in 1975, determining the theory provided a new perspective of government and its policies.³ Almost three decades later, Peter Feaver applied the principal agent theory to American civil-military relations to better understand this relationship.⁴

In Feaver's formulation, the government principal delegates national security functions to the military agent due to expertise. In turn, the military agent presents its recommended policies and preferences to the government principal; together, the civilian principal and military agent work together to harmonize their respective preferences into national security policy.

Certainly, civil-military relations generate unique agency problems. The military agent traditionally prizes autonomy and prefers less intrusive monitoring mechanisms. Liberal rewards and minimal punishments provide the military agent with the autonomy to determine what tasks to complete and how to complete them. Feaver describes how closely military agents satisfy the government principal's intent by using the terms working and shirking.⁵

A military agent is working when the agent accomplishes tasks according to the government principal's criteria. The government principal rewards working agents with greater levels of autonomy. A shirking agent, on the other hand, accomplishes tasks according to the military agent's preferences instead of the government principal's preferences. The government principal punishes shirking agents by reducing levels of autonomy.

While Feaver's model simplifies the government actor as a unified principal, Deborah Avant, modifying Feaver's model, establishes the executive branch and legislative branch as dual government principals for the military agent.⁶ Under the Constitution, the executive and legislative branches share civilian oversight of the military but possess different authorities. The executive branch develops military policy, and the president serves as commander in chief. Congress, as the legislative branch, balances these executive branch authorities by authorizing and appropriating military funding and retaining the authority to declare war.⁷

Divided Principals and Autonomy

Avant elaborates on her discussion of two government principals by categorizing these principals as unified or divided on issues. Unified prin-

cipals agree on how and what tasks the agent should perform, how to monitor the agent, and the incentive or consequence structure. Divided principals, by contrast, disagree on these items. In American civil-military relations, this disunity between the executive and legislative branches causes divided principals. Agent preferences may be most influential when principals disagree since the agent could potentially use the preference difference to gain support for its option. Most scholarship finds, therefore, the military agent tends to gain more autonomy in situations characterized by divided government principals.

In addition to discussing different authorities for divided principals, a distinction needs to be made for the two phases of agent autonomy—the advisory phase, prior to a policy decision, and implementation phase, after a decision has been made. In his modification of Feaver’s principal-agent model, Jeffrey Donnithorne focuses on the different civil-military dynamics on either side of a policy decision.⁸ During the advisory phase, the military agent recommends a course of action based upon best military judgement. Once the principal makes a decision, the implementation phase begins, in which the military agent must carry out the decision.

The advisory phase informs the implementation phase and the amount of flexibility an agent anticipates receiving to enact the policy in its preferred manner. Four attributes of the policy itself—specificity, imminence, durability, and enforceability—determine the degree of anticipated agent autonomy during the implementation phase.⁹

The specificity of the policy language narrows the agent’s freedom of action as opposed to vague language that can be more broadly interpreted. The policy time frame—imminence—also impacts the military agent’s ability to maneuver. The durability of the policy determines whether the prescription is fleeting or enduring. Finally, the inherent enforceability of a policy portends how closely an agent will have to comply with the direction. The autonomy the military agent receives can thus vary from the advisory phase to implementation phase.

Background

The following research determined under what circumstances divided government principals led to more or less Air Force autonomy. The three cases occurred after the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 and reflect the same Department of Defense (DOD) structure that exists today. The issues these cases revolved around occurred at the Air Force level and required policy decisions from the government principals. The analysis examined agent autonomy according to the two phases—the advisory phase and im-

plementation phase. In the cases that decreased agent autonomy, a deviation from the outcome most easily explained by scholarly literature exists.

In the advisory phase, the closer the chosen policy was to the Air Force's preferred policy, the more autonomy the Air Force had. An enactment of the Air Force's position increased agent autonomy and demonstrated support for the prevailing hypothesis. The government enacting an opposing position constrained agent autonomy.

In the implementation phase, four policy attributes—specificity, imminence, durability, and enforceability—helped determine the Air Force's anticipated flexibility in implementation. A specific, immediate, binding, and enforceable policy decreased the service's implementation autonomy. A vague, delayed, short-lived, and unenforceable policy, on the other hand, gave the Air Force wider latitude in implementation. A principal providing flexibility to the service to execute a policy in ways the Air Force sees fit provided autonomy, aligning with the preponderance of the literature.

Case 1: Proposed Retirement of the A-10

The proposed retirement of the A-10 fleet must be understood within the larger context of budget challenges the US military faced in 2013. Due to Congress's inability to reduce the federal budget by \$1.2 trillion that year, in March the Obama administration sequestered "budgetary resources across nonexempt federal government accounts" requiring the Department of Defense take "a 7.8 percent reduction in nonexempt discretionary funding."¹⁰ That year, this amounted to reductions of approximately \$74.4 million in discretionary appropriations and direct spending for the military.¹¹

Given these dynamics, Air Force leaders needed to find additional cost savings with minimal impact to combat capability. Then-Air Force Chief of Staff General Mark A. Welsh III scrutinized the Air Force's five missions—air and space superiority; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; rapid global mobility; global strike; and command and control—to determine where spending decreases were feasible with the least impact to operations. He concluded none of the Air Force's cost-cutting options were ideal, but retiring the A-10 had the least operational impact.¹²

From his perspective, the A-10 was built for a specific threat environment, performing a single-mission role as an exclusive air-to-ground platform.¹³ The belief persisted among Air Force leaders that the service needed to eliminate entire fleets of aircraft to reach the congressionally mandated budget cut levels.¹⁴ The Air Force estimated a cost savings of \$4.2 billion through fiscal year 2019 by divesting itself of the A-10 fleet,

which became its policy recommendation to both its executive branch and legislative branch principals.¹⁵

Welsh advocated for this tough decision through reports to Congress and during a hearing to the House Armed Services Committee on September 18, 2013.¹⁶ By retiring the aging A-10 aircraft, the Air Force intended to modernize its fleet with multirole aircraft that excelled at multiple missions. Reinvesting savings from the A-10 into the F-35 would provide the Air Force with combat capability for a conflict against more advanced adversaries, such as China. Air Force leaders, including Welsh and then-acting Secretary of the Air Force Eric Fanning, consistently advocated for this option, which would allow the service to balance its budget with the least impact to operations overseas.

The proposed A-10 divestiture fell directly within Congress's purview to approve and appropriate funds for military activities. In response to the Air Force's proposal, 33 members of Congress from the House and Senate Armed Services committees and the House and Senate appropriations committees drafted and sent correspondence to the secretary of defense and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff arguing against this proposal.¹⁷ These senators and representatives, most of whom had Air Force bases in their states and districts, asserted the retirement would create a capability gap and endanger service members in future conflicts. The House and Senate subsequently approved an amendment to the fiscal year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) prohibiting the Air Force from retiring the A-10 until the planned replacement was fully operational and flying combat operations.¹⁸ This outcome contravened the position advocated by the Air Force.

The executive branch held constitutional authority to generate policies regarding the A-10 and supported the Air Force's position to retire this fleet. President Barack Obama repeatedly announced the executive branch's preference through statements of administrative policy in May 2014 and June 2015.¹⁹ These statements strongly objected to the congressional provisions restricting retirement and storage of the A-10.

Throughout the three-year duration of this case, the most vocal members of Congress, those with A-10 bases in their states, ensured congressional authorization and appropriation language, prohibiting the retirement of the A-10, was included in the NDAA's. That language, which began in fiscal year 2014, remains in the legislation today.²⁰ In the case of the A-10 fleet, the Air Force as the military agent was prohibited from determining which aircraft could best execute its missions and was prevented from autonomy in assigning budget priorities; instead, specific le-

gal restrictions, imposed after the fact by one principal—the legislative branch—constrained the task of reducing its budget.

The prevailing theory suggests the Air Force should have received more autonomy as a function of the divided policy preferences of its principals. Instead, the findings indicate the Air Force did not, in fact, receive more autonomy to choose or implement its preferences.

Advisory Phase

In the A-10 case, the Air Force agent and the president possessed an opposing position to that of Congress. The legislative branch, under the constitutional authority of authorizations and appropriations, took action to block the A-10 retirement proposal. Consequently the Air Force received less autonomy, which appears to deviate from the prevailing literature's hypothesis.

Implementation Phase

In order to maintain the status quo of the A-10, Congress limited the Air Force's ability to retire its fleet. The policy did not allow for flexibility in implementation because it employed all four attributes—specificity, imminence, durability, and enforceability—that restrict trade space for the agent to negotiate how to complete tasks.

First, the language in the fiscal year 2014 NDAA specifically prohibited certain actions associated with the retirement of the A-10, such as aircraft storage and personnel reductions. Second, the law went into effect immediately after a majority in Congress passed it. Third, A-10 fleet restrictions have been written into national security legislation by Congress for eight years running, signifying its durability. Finally, because Congress has responsibility for defense funding, these provisions are inherently enforceable. These four attributes resulted in limited implementation flexibility and less autonomy for the Air Force, in contrast with the preponderance of scholarly literature.

Outcomes

Two key variables appear to exert significant influence in this case: the outsized effect of geographic constituent interests for members of Congress and the power of specified authorities given to a single principal. Geographic interest—highly influential in Congress—caused preferences to diverge, an unsurprising and nearly universal finding in the literature. Throughout the duration of this case, the chairman or ranking member of

the relevant Senate committees hailed from states with A-10 units.²¹ These committee leaders used their influence to enact legislation blocking the retirement of the A-10.

Congress also maintained sole authority for deciding on the policy preventing retirement of the A-10 and managing its implementation, since both activities revolved around funding. This dynamic effectively removed the theorized maneuver room for an agent in the case of a divided principal. Because Congress held unilateral authority to establish an A-10 policy, a bill prohibiting numerous A-10 activities became law. This legislation ultimately constrained and continues to constrain both the executive branch and the Air Force.

Case 2: Creation of the Space Force

A July 2016 Government Accountability Office report highlighted vulnerabilities within the Department of Defense hindering its ability to secure space.²² The report found lower promotion rates for space professionals, indicating the Department valued space professionals less than other service career fields. Services prioritized funding for space requirements below aircraft requirements in the Air Force, ship requirements in the Navy, tanks in the Army, and amphibious vehicles in the Marine Corps. Ultimately, the report refocused the executive and legislative branches on national space security within the Department.

Representative Mike Rogers, chairman of the House Committee on Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, took up the national space security mantle and became its champion. In a 2017 Space Symposium address, Rogers outlined current problems associated with the Department of Defense's fragmented space organization, disjointed decision making, underprioritized funding requirements, and absence of adequate professional development for those in space career fields.²³ Rogers also introduced legislation calling for the creation of a Space Corps as a new military service responsible for national security programs pertaining to space.²⁴

While a vocal congressional minority preferred to establish a separate military branch to focus on the space domain, the Space Corps proposal met resistance from a majority in Congress for two years due to concerns over an expanding defense bureaucracy and budget. The fiscal years 2018 and 2019 NDAs did not require the Pentagon to create a space-centric military service, which reflected the preferred policy of the legislative branch—to bolster space functions within the Air Force. Aligning with the majority of Congress, the Air Force preferred to maintain space operations within its service responsibility.²⁵

On March 13, 2018, President Donald J. Trump announced his proposal to create a separate military branch, the United States Space Force.²⁶ Although the executive branch does not possess the authority to establish a separate military branch, the president holds the authority to create combatant commands as the commander in chief of the armed forces. Accordingly, on December 18, 2018, Trump established United States Space Command as a functional unified combatant command.²⁷ In doing so, he continued the Space Force discussion, building momentum for a new space-focused military branch.

In a move designed in part to overcome Pentagon resistance, Trump signed a Space Policy Directive in February 2019, dictating the Department of Defense develop a plan for Congress establishing United States Space Force as a branch of the United States Armed Forces.²⁸ Despite widespread opposition from the Air Force, the directive forced the service to craft a plan for a force that would organize, train, and equip military forces to operate in the space domain, similar to the air, land, and sea domain responsibilities of the Air Force, Army, and Navy, respectively.

Throughout 2018 and 2019, Chief of Staff of the Air Force General David L. Goldfein and Secretary of the Air Force Heather A. Wilson continued to advocate for improving space activities while maintaining space functions under the Air Force. In 2019, the Department delivered its proposal for a separate, space-focused military branch according to the presidential directive. The fiscal year 2020 NDAA included language that created a Space Force, and the new military service became law on December 17, 2019.²⁹

In seven short pages, Congress outlined the provisions of the United States Space Force including its leadership structure and its position within the Department of the Air Force, mirroring that of the Marine Corps within the Department of the Navy. The legislation prohibited additional authorizations for military personnel and budget increases beyond those outlined in the bill but ultimately created a separate military branch focused on space. The Air Force, as the military agent, did not determine what space functions to perform and how to accomplish space operations better within the Air Force; instead, a new service took over many of these tasks.

The outcome most easily explained by literature indicates the Air Force should have received more autonomy from divided principals during policy decision making and implementation. Instead, the findings reveal the divided principals became united when crafting policy, restricting au-

tonomy for the Air Force. The Air Force did, however, receive more autonomy to execute its preferences.

Advisory Phase

Trump and Congress initially opposed one another. Trump strongly advocated for creating the Space Force. Congress's preliminary preference against this new service was based mainly on fears of budget and bureaucratic expansion. The executive branch leveraged authorities within its scope—the creation of a unified combatant command and a presidential policy directive—to overcome this opposition. Thus divided principals became unified.

Implementation Phase

Provisions in the fiscal years 2020 and 2021 NDAs provided wide latitude for the Air Force to enact the Space Force because they lacked three of the four attributes—specificity, imminence, and enforceability—that restrict autonomy in implementation.³⁰ First, the legislation did not specify how and what tasks the Air Force agent needed to accomplish to create the new service. Second, while the 2020 bill immediately established a new military branch for space, the transfer of personnel was not a requirement, and numerous deadlines associated with the Space Force extend years into the future.

Third, the laws' provisions, aside from the existence of a new space-focused military service, were not inherently enforceable due to vague wording or absence of guidance. The Air Force, therefore, gained autonomy to establish the US Space Force in the manner it preferred. Although Congress implemented a course of action that opposed the Air Force's option, the legislation, as enacted, gave the service (military agent) greater flexibility to build the Space Force in a way it deemed best.

Outcomes

The president, the primary sole national security decision maker, garnered support for the US Space Force. He leveraged his authority to institute changes to national space security and overcame congressional resistance. Throughout the duration of this case, the idea of the Space Force gained traction with the president strongly advocating for this new service. More and more supporters, including members of Congress, joined the president's camp. In the end, the Space Force became law under unified

principals. This policy decision ultimately decreased the Air Force's autonomy since Congress enacted an opposing position.

Once Congress passed legislation creating the US Space Force, the Air Force—like any agent asked to execute an undesirable policy—preferred an ambiguous, delayed, short-lived, and weakly enforceable one. Congress focused on specifying personnel levels and budgets but gave the Air Force autonomy in all other areas of Space Force implementation. Because Congress possessed a weak preference for the Space Force and maintained sole authority for deciding on the policy, the language in the NDAA was tailored to the authorities Congress retained during the stand-up of the new service.

The remaining details revolving around the establishment of the Space Force overseen by the administration were absent from the law or vague. Policy implementation arrived at a solution satisfactory to the executive branch's strong preferences and the legislative branch's concerns—create a Space Force with no manpower or budget increases. The Air Force, as a result, increased its autonomy during execution and was able to dictate how to stand up the new service.

Case 3: Repeal of Combat Flying Ban for Women

The repeal of the combat flying ban for women was at the core of a much larger discussion involving the role of women in the military. Throughout the military conflicts of the late 1980s and early 1990s, women in uniform helped achieve the nation's military objectives. Eight hundred female service members participated in the invasion of Panama during Operation Just Cause.³¹ During these operations, female service members engaged in hostile firefights, led forces in battle, commanded assaults on opposing force strongholds, and earned air medals for combat-related missions.

Similarly, 41,000 women deployed to Iraq in 1990 and 1991, which constituted 7 percent of all military personnel involved in the Persian Gulf War.³² During this conflict, 16 women died, and 2 women became prisoners of war. The notion that Americans would not tolerate women being killed in action or becoming prisoners of war was proven inaccurate by operations in Panama and Iraq and the attendant media. These military conflicts occurring so close together and involving women in hostile-fire situations precipitated the formal discussion about combat roles for women in the military.

The House Armed Services Committee fired the first challenge to the law barring women from combat. In May 1991, Representative Patricia Schroeder, the first woman to serve on the committee, introduced an

amendment to the NDAA repealing the prohibition barring women from flying Air Force combat aircraft.³³ Additionally, Representative Beverly Byron, the first woman to fly on board an Air Force SR-71 aircraft, proposed a similar amendment to repeal the Navy and Marine Corps combat flying bans.³⁴ These legislative proposals were met with enthusiasm in Congress, which incorporated them into the draft NDAs for fiscal years 1992 and 1993.

The four service chiefs testified in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel about these proposed amendments. Three of the four service chiefs opposed making women eligible for combat, while one, General Merrill McPeak, then-chief of staff of the Air Force, advocated for allowing equal opportunity to battlefield assignments.³⁵

McPeak proved to be an outlier with a majority of the senior military leaders desiring the combat ban remain in place. But with Congress possessing sole authority over legislation, the act repealing the combat aviation exclusion for females became law on December 5, 1991.³⁶ Nevertheless, while the NDAA allowed the assignment of females to operational units with fighter aircraft, bomber aircraft, or helicopters, it did not mandate such assignments.

President George H. W. Bush, like most of the service chiefs, was not keen on the idea of allowing women to serve in combat flying roles. Realizing the legislative branch wielded the power to repeal the law, Bush avoided making public statements endorsing one stance or another. He could instead leverage his commander-in-chief policy authority during implementation. As a result, Bush asked Congress to establish a presidential commission to study the issue of women in combat roles. The commission recommended women continue to be excluded from air and ground combat.³⁷

Due to the commission's findings and as a matter of policy, the Department of Defense refused to assign females to combat units once the repeal took effect and continued prohibiting women from combat assignments. The Air Force began sending females to pilot training to fly fighter and bomber aircraft at the beginning of 1992, but these women were restricted to teaching at pilot training after they completed training because of this DOD policy.³⁸

Since the enacted NDAA covered two years—1992 and 1993—Congress did not have at its disposal a legislative mechanism to force the issue until the fall of 1993. President Bill Clinton took office in January 1993 and decided to arbitrate the different perspectives between the legislative

branch's repeal and the recommendation of the presidential commission. Clinton, in his commander-in-chief role, ordered the military branches to open combat aviation to women.

The preponderance of literature predicts the Air Force should have gained more autonomy under divided principals. While the Air Force did in fact receive more autonomy to craft policy and execute its preferences, this case instead represents an instance wherein the Air Force preferred less autonomy in the implementation phase to lock in its policy decision.

Advisory Phase

Each principal—the executive branch and legislative branch—used the governing tools at its disposal to pursue its preference. Congress, with the ability to repeal laws, proposed eliminating the combat exclusion for women. The Air Force agent was the only military branch to support the repeal of the ban, which aligned with Congress's legislative amendments. Bush, on the other hand, preferred to retain the exclusion and leveraged his presidential authority to establish a commission to study the roles of women in combat. Congress, maintaining sole authority for legislation, ultimately repealed the combat flying ban, allowing women to fly fighter and bomber aircraft.

Implementation Phase

The NDAA provisions provided wide latitude for policy implementation in the absence of three of four attributes—specificity, imminence, and enforceability. First, the vague language did not specify the military had to assign females to combat flying roles. This flexibility allowed the military services to train female fighter and bomber pilots but did not require them to be assigned to combat units. As a result of this ambiguous language, the president was able to prohibit females from combat assignments.

Second, although the repeal of the combat flying ban for women went into effect immediately, under the law, the presidential commission had a year to study this issue, providing time to renegotiate these terms. Third, aside from the repeal of the combat flying ban for women and the commission details requested by the president, the law's terms were difficult to enforce due to their absence of guidance.

Yet, instead of receiving expected greater autonomy from the actions of the legislative principal, the Air Force yielded to the executive branch's decision authority that resulted in a continued ban of females from combat assignments. Unlike Congress, the president did not give the Air Force

room to maneuver with its prohibition of assignments to combat units. The executive branch ultimately constrained the Air Force's autonomy to execute the repeal of the combat flying ban.

Outcomes

Partisan differences had a strong influence on the outcome because of social issues, in particular conservative versus progressive visions for the military. Congress's sole authority to decide on a policy also played a role in the outcome. The legislative branch possessed unilateral authority in this case, and the Air Force's position aligned with Congress's preference. But in possessing this sole authority, Congress also demonstrated restraint by enacting a law allowing women to fly combat aircraft but not *requiring* the service to do so.

These dynamics highlight that the Air Force may have desired less autonomy to implement the combat flying ban for women. Since Congress's repeal of the ban aligned with McPeak's best military advice, the Air Force would have preferred an unwavering policy requiring female assignment to combat units. While literature assumes the Air Force desires more autonomy, there can be instances where the agent prefers its autonomy to be constrained.

Conclusion and Implications

This research offers three new insights on the dynamics of divided principals and agent autonomy in the field of American civil-military relations. First, the preponderance of principal-agent literature claims that divided principals create a less responsive agent, resulting in more agent autonomy.³⁹ The proposed retirement of the A-10 and the creation of the Space Force, however, yielded a different outcome.

Distinguishing between advisory and implementation dynamics reveals that although these cases had divided principals, Congress enacted a policy opposed to the military agent's preference during the advisory phases, thus constraining the Air Force's autonomy during this phase. Similarly, the Air Force's autonomy decreased during the implementation phase of the proposed retirement of the A-10. The reason for these differences lies in the different authorities of the principals that tend to reside on either side of the policy decision—an insight that leads to the second contribution of this research.

Second, Avant's baseline model assumes when there are two principals, they share authority over the agent.⁴⁰ This notion is key to the agent re-

ceiving more autonomy from divided principals because the agent could theoretically play the principals off of one another to gain latitude for its preferred option.

Since the Constitution outlines different authorities for the government principals, in most cases only one principal holds the action authority over the military agent, even though a divided principal situation exists in terms of policy preferences. The A-10 case demonstrates this dynamic: Congress maintained sole authority for both policy decision making and execution. Consequently, Congress was able to prohibit the retirement of the A-10 with legislation and funding. In sole-authority situations, the government principals may use the tools at their disposal to codify their preference in policy or law.

The Space Force case also presents a departure from the literature. Although the legislative branch possessed sole authority to create a new military branch, the president established US Space Command and directed the Air Force to submit a plan to Congress outlining how it would establish the Space Force. As a result, divided-principal scenarios in American civil-military relations once again do not reflect the classic dynamic. Instead, the principals have complementary authorities, where one or both branches of government possess decision-making authority or authority over policy execution.

Third, traditional principal agent theory as expressed in the civil-military model assumes agents always prefer more autonomy. As the cases in this study suggest, however, this assumption does not always hold true in American civil-military relations. Instead, when a principal enacts the military agent's preferred policy option, that agent may want less implementation autonomy for itself and all others in the policy space. The repeal of the combat flying ban for women illustrates this possibility.

Congress possessed unilateral authority for policy decisions and repealed combat exclusions, which aligned with the Air Force's preferred policy option, but the language of the enacted legislation did not bind the executive branch to a specific pathway of implementation, offering instead wide flexibility for execution. If Congress constrained agent autonomy in the implementation phase, the Air Force's option would have been cemented in legislation, eliminating the flexibility to erect such barriers. Therefore, agents do not always desire more autonomy in the implementation phase; there are situations where the military can prefer less autonomy to solidify its preference for the foreseeable future.

The three new contributions impact policy makers and military advisers in the practical sense. Divided principals do not always lead to more au-

tonomy for the military. Understanding this allows those in the legislative and executive branches and those in the military to develop various approaches for issues. In a divided-principals situation, levels of autonomy vary on a scale from constraining autonomy to producing autonomy. Policy makers need to develop policy that accounts for this spectrum. Similarly, military advisers need to provide guidance to military leaders that considers this spectrum.

Additionally, military advisers and policy makers need to account for the military agent's preferred level of autonomy in specific circumstances. Furthermore, even with divided principals, in some cases government principals have complementary authorities and in others principals retain sole authority. The situation itself and authority contexts should drive guidance that military advisers provide military leaders and policy recommendations that policy makers provide the government. Thus, the real-world applications of the three contributions from this research infuse nuance into both policy and advice for military and government leaders. **SSQ**

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Notes

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