INTERSERVICE RIVALRY

After consulting the catalogs and other internal finding aids, one might be surprised to learn that there was no interservice rivalry, only cooperation. Not a single entry here or in the neighboring Army War College library reveals that U.S. armed services ever competed over roles or resources. Interestingly, "interservice rivalry" did appear as a subject heading in AUPI beginning in 1959, but after 1974 it became "cooperation".

Presumably, the absence of such "negative" subject headings or titles does not reflect the actual situation or constitute official policy. It probably suggests that "rivalry" has not been extensively studied as a subject in its own right, rather than incorporated into broader subjects, such as service unification, joint activities, and overall defense organization and policy.

For example, Edward N. Luttwak's The Pentagon and the Art of War: The Question of Military Reform (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1984; UA23.177L86), argues for more efficient and centralized decision-making in U.S. defense policy. To achieve this goal, he advocates a corps of national military specialists who would be unaffiliated with any one of the services and not bound by the usual parochialism and competing interests of the services. His argument, of course, is predicated on the underlying existence of interservice rivalry. Luttwak, like most such studies, does not methodically or comprehensively examine interservice rivalry per se. This subject is usually treated as self-evident, with a few exceptions, viz:


See Chap I.


Journalist's assessment since WWII. Unindexed but documented.


Chap VI is a lengthy (58 p.) historical survey and analysis of rivalry.

_____ "Interservice Competition and the Political Roles of the Armed Services." In Total War and Cold War, cited below, pp. 178-210. JF256C6.


Although he treats rivalry lightly, the thread is evident.
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Collaboration is treated as exception to norm.


See esp Chap 7.


The so called "Eberstadt Report," which includes a review of unification studies and proposals in Cong, 1921-45, pp. 184-90

One should be able to find information on interservice rivalry in the literature covering the 1943-1948 service unification movement and the subsequent creation of the Defense Department and Joint Chiefs of Staff. Pertinent Congressional hearings and other documents, of course, will be valuable sources.

Also pertinent are sources and bibliographies on subjects that cover historic areas of interservice rivalry, such as tactical air support, troop transports, and harbor defense. The Pacific Theater of WWII was fertile ground for Army-Navy rivalry as well as amphibious cooperation. In WWI, the Army's Education Division, while fighting in France, included a brigade of marines, a situation that can lead on to relevant anecdotes at the least.

For material on service roles in national defense, 1950s, see these personal papers:

Ridgway, Matthew B.
Taylor, Maxwell D. (Oral history transcript).
Wood, Robert J. Aide-de-camp to SecDef Forrestal.

On interservice competition over developing the Jupiter missile, see:

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Betts, Austin W.  Oral history transcript. Tab 6, pp. 3-7.  Arch.


See also: